Looking Back & Moving Forward

By SEDFREY M. CANDELARIA

Three years have gone so swiftly at the Law School with even a list of daunting tasks ahead of us. But we could not move on to the next three years without reviewing the building blocks entrenched by the Law School Administration in line with the University’s Strategic Thrusts and Concerns. These would not have been possible without the collective effort of our faculty, students, and staff.

On formation, ALS engaged the Bulatao Center early on to conduct a study on the profile of the Ateneo Law Student (TALSS). This study gave us a baseline information and perspective on the needs of our students. School programs, both curricular and co-curricular, were eventually anchored on the specific findings of the study. The initial phase of Lawyers-in-Balance was rolled out through the Ethics classes and selected elective offerings (e.g. Leadership, Human Rights, Judicial Mind, among others). Our annual Jesuit Legal Education (JLE) workshops progressed in content and participation. The inclusion of beadle widened the pool of potential student leaders. There is also more synergy between student activities and the ALS curricular calendar. It is heartening to note the increased involvement of our faculty in the design and conduct of the JLE. ALS also conducted the first Parents Orientation Seminar for the parents of the first year students in 2013. We have received positive feedback on the orientation from the parents.

On research and development, ALS realized the establishment of the Graduate Legal Studies Institute (GLSI) intended to consolidate programs related to the enhancement of the Juris Doctor (J.D.) curriculum and the Master of Laws Program (LL.M.). GLSI was initially tasked to gather syllabi of core and elective courses. Syllabi templates were then developed for common offerings in order to address the need for uniformity in course content and coverage. These exercises provided the tools to sharpen the J.D. curriculum preparatory to a tracking system of electives dovetailing with the LL.M. specialized fields in International Law. Thus, the door towards internationalization had, finally, been opened and, consequently, provided the opportunity to pursue dual degree programs with Kyushu University, Coventry University, and Malaga University. The level of competitiveness of our faculty has been raised to a greater height with the proposed student and faculty exchange programs. I am hoping that our faculty members could avail of these programs to broaden comparative law perspectives, which are essential in a globalized legal education today. ALS will continue to pursue this direction hand in hand with the strengthening of the core bar-oriented subjects. A healthy balance will be struck between the core and tracked electives for a more wholistic approach in the preparation of our students for both domestic and international law practice. Students were exposed the past three years to visiting lecturers and eminent persons who discussed a wide range of issues, such as, sovereign debt crisis, comparative civil law, environmental concerns, maritime dispute, arbitration, and human rights. The annual student study tours among
Students of University of San Francisco go to ALS for externship.

ALS offers Eminent Person Lecture Series and Liberty and Prosperity Series.

The Graduate Legal Studies Institute (GLSI) is established to serve as a resource center for academic research and studies in various fields of law and law reform and to enhance the research capacity of students in producing quality theses and other academic research papers.

The Teehankee Center is rededicated as a Center for the Rule of Law.

ALS starts the process of enhancing the J.D. curriculum and developing the tracking system for electives to complement the core subjects.

ALS initiates partnership with UK universities and takes concrete steps towards offering a double degree program in cooperation with University of Coventry.

Infrastructure and systems development take place, such as the renovation of the Ateneo Legal Services Center, Thesis Center, student organization rooms; installation of faculty work stations; and digitization of school records.

ALS goes a step further into internationalization with its first student exchange program program in partnership with Kyushu University.

ALS conducts the Public International Law Lecture Series.

ALS pilot tests the tracking system and holds summer classes as it transitions to a new academic calendar that starts in August and ends in May.

“Fully aware of the distinction of the Professional Schools at Rockwell from the other units of the University, I will define my vision of a Law School and suggest a point-by-point mapping of how my vision and the University Strategic Concerns may be located in the following aspects of Law School life – formation, research and development, and infrastructure and systems development.”

Dean Sedfrey M. Candelaria
The Ateneo Law School starts AY 2015-2016 by refining its mission statement. Moving forward, the Ateneo legal education will be guided by its mission to form lawyers who are spiritually developed, academically competent and excellent, socially involved, and culturally rooted global citizens.

**SPRITUALLY DEVELOPED**
- Students, faculty, and staff undergo an Ignatian spirituality formation program consisting of recollections, retreats, immersion, and exposure trips.
- Students are assigned advisers who guide and walk with them through law school life.
- Student leaders undergo Jesuit leadership education seminars.

**ACADEMICALLY COMPETENT & EXCELLENT**
- The J.D. curriculum has enhanced core subjects that are offered with tracked or specialized electives.
- Academic departments provide mentoring to faculty and students.
- The bar review is reinforced with faculty-generated review materials, mock bar exams, spiritual and psychological care, and logistical support.

**SOCIALLY INVOLVED & CULTURALLY ROOTED**
- Ethics is infused in the curriculum.
- Social involvement is integrated in the curriculum through courses offering in-service learning and apprenticeship with the Ateneo Human Rights Center, Ateneo Legal Services Center, and partner institutions.
- Students are encouraged to focus their J.D. theses on social justice and human rights issues.

**GLOBAL CITIZEN**
- The thrust of the Law School is to build lasting academic partnerships with global universities and international organizations.
- Opportunities for student and faculty exchange are offered in cooperation with partner universities in the U.S., Asia, and Europe.
- J.D. graduates may pursue a double degree with an international partner university.
Ateneo Stetson team wins Best Memorial

By ANNA ISABEL F. CASTELO

Last April, Stetson University College of Law held its 19th International Environmental Moot Court Competition (IEMCC) in Gulfport, Florida. This year’s topic involved the growing concern of shark finning and the development of the practice of shark spining.

The Ateneo team, comprised of Mike Gerald David (4A), Perpetua Calliope Ngo (3A), Mary Grace Hicban (2D), and Charmee Ann Mercado (2D), won overall Best Memorial, reaching the semifinal rounds with Hicban winning 5th Best Oralist. The team was guided by their coaches, Atty. Patrick Simon Perillo (J.D. ‘08) and Atty. Marvin Edgar Haduca (J.D. ‘13). The same team was previously adjudged Best Team, Best Memorial and Best Oralist in the Final Round (Hicban) in the Southeast Asian Regional Round of the IEMCC earlier in January.

For the preliminary rounds, the team went against University of Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir (India), NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad (India), and The Law School of China University of Political Science and Law. The team later went against National Law University, Jodhpur (India) for the power match, later advancing to the quarterfinals and winning the match against Wake Forest School of Law (USA). They made it to the semifinals against the Law Society of Ireland, the team who eventually won as Champion of the Competition.

Ateneo has consistently qualified for the international rounds of the Stetson competition, winning First Runner-Up for the Stetson international rounds in 2007.
AHRC conducts Foundational Course on Children’s Rights in Bangkok

By KRISTINE C. BORJA

Last June 15-18, 2015, the Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) with Save the Children conducted a seminar course entitled Foundational Course on Children’s Rights. Held in Bangkok, Thailand, the course was attended by some 30 participants representing different civil society organizations (CSOs) advocating for children’s rights from the different member-states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The Foundational Course on Children’s Rights aimed to provide the participants with an overview of international laws and regional mechanisms on children. It included lectures on the evolution of these laws and the recent legal developments and issues facing children’s rights. The course’s objectives were to create a network of civil society organizations advocating for children’s rights and empower the CSOs to apply what they learn when they return to their respective countries.

The participants had a field trip as part of the course where they visited Ban Kanchanipisek, a juvenile vocational training center for young male offenders. The center is known for practicing restorative justice—a community-based approach involving wrongdoers and their victims.

The course ended with the participants presenting a draft policy proposal to address the children’s rights issues in their jurisdictions.

The four-day session was moderated by Atty. Klarise Estorninos, the head of the Children’s Rights Desk of AHRC. Former UN Special Rapporteur for the Protection of Children Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, ACWC Representative of Brunei Datin Paduka Hajah Intan bte Haji Mohd Kassim, Senior Policy and Programme Director of the Center for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility Mr. Kris Kardaszewick, AICHR Representative Dr. Seree Nonthasoot, Legal Officer of ECPAT International Ms. Ana Martin Beringola, and the AHRC’s very own Atty. Ray Paolo Santiago and Atty. Nina Patricia Sison-Arroyo were among the list of notable speakers.

The same course will be offered to government officials from the staff of ACWC, AICHR, and the ASEAN Secretariat within the year.

Teehankee Center visits Justice Carpio

By LUIS ALFONSO S. SEÑA and DANIELLE M. ZERRUDO

“Research is priceless information.” This was one of the many ideas shared by Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio when the Teehankee Center for the Rule of Law (TCRL) made a courtesy call to the office of the esteemed adjudicator last June 29, 2015. The contingent from TCRL was comprised of Ambassador Manuel A. Teehankee and the TCRL members.

Known for his extensive knowledge on International Law, Justice Carpio shared his ideas as to how members of the academe and students can contribute to the resolution of the dispute involving the West Philippine Sea. He stressed the need for institutions that are knowledgeable on the historical background and substance of the claims of the various countries involved in the dispute. He believes that this endeavor would greatly contribute to the protection of our country’s interest.

During the courtesy call, Justice Carpio showcased his personal collection of maps of the Philippine archipelago. The summer interns of the TCRL also presented to Justice Carpio the TCRL’s own collection of Philippine maps, which they plan to exhibit sometime this year.

Justice Carpio told the students that he will be attending as an observer the oral arguments at the Hague this July concerning the West Philippine Sea dispute. Although the upcoming hearing is expected to settle the issue on the jurisdiction of the UN tribunal, Justice Carpio said that the ruling would only be a first step to the peaceful resolution of the dispute. It would take several generations dedicated to research and negotiations to form the world opinion that would eventually resolve the issue. He urged the students to pursue their interest in the matter and eventually aid the establishment of more think tanks in the country.
Chief among the missions of the Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) is forming and sustaining human rights lawyers and advocates in the Philippines – kindling not only passion for the law, but, in the words of Fr. Joaquin Bernas, S.J., “more importantly, for the human faces and communities which such law should serve.” The AHRC is able to fulfill this mission primarily through its Internship Program, which produced its first batch of interns in the summer of 1987. Twenty-eight years and close to a thousand intern-graduates later, the program continues to prove its relevance.

This summer, a total of 22 students participated in the AHRC Summer Internship Program. Joining the students from the Ateneo Law School (ALS) were eight students from St. Mary’s University Nueva Vizcaya, Ateneo de Zamboanga University, and Western Mindanao State University. These eight students took part in the program as “replicate interns,” in the hope that they will eventually be able to organize an internship program in their respective law schools similar to what they have experienced with the AHRC.

The program commenced with a five-day Basic Orientation Seminar (BOS) conducted in Antipolo City. A series of lectures exposed the interns to issues faced by marginalized groups. To complement what they learned from the lectures, the interns also participated in workshops on paralegal training, popular education, client interview, and affidavit-making.

The BOS was followed by a week-long immersion with the Aeta communities in Botolan, Zambales. The interns walked across over 40 kilometers of lahar to reach their assigned communities, equipped with only the most basic of necessities. Stripped of their usual comforts and mobile devices, the interns learned to eat, work, and sleep as the Aetas do. Some interns took the opportunity to explain to the Aetas what their rights are, particularly under the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act.

Upon returning from their immersion, the interns were assigned as paralegals to various non-government organizations (NGOs). A total of 13 NGOs opened their doors to this program, including our very own AHRC and the Ateneo Legal Services Center (ALSC). While most of the NGOs were situated in Metro Manila, a few interns were sent to NGOs in Palawan, Iloilo, Cebu, and Cagayan de Oro.

Supporting the ALS in this program were the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.
His Eminence, Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle; Reverend Father Jose Ramon T. Villarin, President of the Ateneo de Manila University; Reverend Father Joaquin G. Bernas, Dean Emeritus of the Ateneo de Manila School of Law; the other distinguished personalities here on the stage; members of the faculty; graduates of the Class of 2015, their parents, and guests; fellow Ateneans, good afternoon.

I am both honored and humbled to be speaking before you this afternoon. I am not the typical speaker that a graduating law class would normally have. While I have reached the highest court of the land, the road getting there was not an easy one for someone ordinary like me.

But let me start off by laying down the reasons why I am here. I am standing before you now to pay tribute to two persons: the first, our beloved Dean Emeritus Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, and the second, our graduates of today.

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, or Fr. B, as everyone calls him, is not Dean Emeritus for nothing. To me, he is the face of the Ateneo Law School – and as the famous old song put it, “you can’t have one without the other”. I was lucky to have been under his tutelage. My first real lesson on Philippine Constitutional and Political Law was courtesy of Fr. B. Many of us, including myself, struggled under Fr. B. As in any class, about 90% are lesser mortals, while only about 10% answer to the call of being “extraordinary”. I do admit that I belong to the 90% majority, and I am sure many of you can relate to this. It is for us plain and average people that he came out with this book entitled “An Idiot’s Guide to Constitutional Law”. In the early 1970s, with martial law looming in the horizon, this Idiot’s Guide became our bible. And believe it or not, we learned our Constitutional and Political Law!

As a young lawyer, I together with many others, were relieved when he became part of the Constitutional Commission that drafted the 1987 Constitution under which we live in today. It may not be a perfect Constitution, but we are thankful for the likes of Fr. B, who have allowed us lawyers to be able to speak and act more freely than our counterparts in the 1970s. When Mrs. Aquino came into power after the end of martial law, Fr. B would have been the first religious Supreme Court Justice, had he been allowed by his religious calling to accept this position. I would have been prouder to stand here today, as having walked in the shadow of this legal icon.

On a personal note, Fr. B has also touched me, and my family, in so many ways. He was our Dean when we were students in the Ateneo Law School. A few years thereafter, and as President of the University, he would invite my wife Cynthia to become Dean of the Ateneo Law School. He would put faith and trust in a woman in her late 30s to become Dean of the Ateneo Law School, and she would stay there for more than 10 years. This is living proof of Fr. B’s commitment to gender equality, aptly described in a book (I forget now who the author is) that he lent my wife as a student, and it begins with the statement that “woman is not the lesser man”. Thank you Fr. B. for putting faith in a woman. We hope she did not disappoint you and the institution that we call our alma mater.

Fr. B also taught my two children who would become Ateneo lawyers later. And when things got rough for my late daughter and for me too, we sought his counsel. He is not just a lawyer and a constitutionalist, he is also a man of God, a counselor, a teacher, a friend, and a real warm human being. We found comfort and solace in his words and advice, and for this, we are eternally grateful.

When my wife ended her term as Law School Dean, Fr. B did not find it demeaning to take up the Deanship again, following the term of his student. It was duty calling him, and he responded.

Fr. B is also renowned for his sharp tongue and quick wit. During one of his recitations in class, he asked someone about a case. The student didn’t know the answer, so Fr. B retorted with a deadpan look, “No, but you may pass?” He responded.

Another memory of him was back in the 70s when the Ateneo Law School was then in Padre Faura. We students were then on the third floor attending class when we felt a strong earthquake.

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On May 21 to 24, 2015, members of the law school faculty, staff, and their families and friends visited Japan for the 2015 Faculty Development Seminar. After a productive and grueling discussion the night before at the Faculty Development Business Meeting, the group arrived very early at the airport to take the red eye to Kansai International Airport in Osaka, Japan.

It was mid-afternoon when the group arrived at Kansai Airport, where they were greeted by the renowned efficiency of the Japanese. While the immigration line was quite long, you get the sense that things were always moving with no unnecessary delay.

At the parking area outside the terminal, the group was divided into two buses, with one tour guide each. Both guides were soft-spoken ladies in contrast to one of the drivers who sounded angry each time he spoke. (But it seemed that was just his usual demeanor as in the end he thanked and gave a nice parting message to the group.)

The group first headed to Kyoto, a former capital of Japan and famous destination for tourists looking to experience true Japanese scenery, history, and culture. Ironically, dinner for most of the group was at a ramen place where you order food through a vending machine. The ramen was authentic and flavorful, and it showed from the long line at the entrance stretching out into the street.

The first destination the following day was Kyomizu-Dera, a Buddhist temple located at Mt. Otowa. Within the temple grounds is the Kyomizu Stage, a 12-meter high veranda overlooking a precipice. Its wooden pillars were assembled without using a single nail. They say that if one were to survive jumping from this terrace, one’s wish would be granted. None of the professors risked life and limb for the sake of a wish.

Right below the Stage is the Otowa Waterfall, where the flowing water was divided into three streams tourists can drink from. Each stream is believed to respectively bring success, love, or longevity. One of the tour guides cautioned the group, however, not to drink from all three streams as this could be seen as being greedy. Some members of the group cheerily lined up to have a drink from their chosen streams.

The ALS in Japan: Endless Discovery of Old and New

By OSCAR CARLO F. CAJUCOM

Photos by MARIA PATRICIA R. CERVANTES-POCO, KLARISE ANNE C. ESTORNINOS, and ROWENA L. SORIANO-DIONISIO
The group then went to the historic Heian Jingu Shrine. Behind it is a beautiful garden where tourists walked around taking pictures and feeding the fish in the pond.

After having a sumptuous hotpot lunch, the group took the bus to Nara, the first permanent capital of Japan, to visit the Todaiji Temple and the nearby Nara Deer Park. The Todaiji is an imposing Buddhist temple whose main hall — one of the world’s largest wooden buildings — houses a giant-sized bronze statue of Buddha. Also inside the main hall is a pillar with a rectangular hole near its base, about 2-feet tall and 1-foot wide. It is said to be as big as one of the giant Buddha’s nostrils. The belief is that anyone who manages to squeeze through the hole will achieve enlightenment in the next life. Atty. George Carmona, all 6 feet or so of him, took the challenge. While he was struggling halfway through the post, some of the spectators probably wondered which of the two would be chopped off if he got stuck — the pillar or his torso! But that remained to be a mystery, thankfully, as Atty. Carmona successfully wriggled out in one piece. Another faculty member followed suit inspired by Atty. Carmona’s success and the promise of enlightenment. He went in the hole as Atty. Tonyray Ortiguera; and soon after coming out of it, he emerged as Judge Ortiguera — enlightenment, indeed!

Meanwhile, at the park fronting the temple, the group interacted and took pictures with the friendly, free-roaming deer. The group had dinner at the Nara Nagomikan then shopped for treats at the store located conveniently below the restaurant. After a long day of touring, the group went back to Kyoto, where most went out to explore or shop before the nearby stores closed. Some capped the night with fine Japanese whisky.

The next day, the group’s first stop was the Kinkakuji or Golden Pavilion, a Zen temple partially covered in gold leaf and overlooking a pond. The temple had been burned down several times, the latest in 1950 by a fanatic monk supposedly because the pavilion was too beautiful.

Next, the group went to another Zen temple, the Ryoanji Temple, which features the famous rock garden — a rectangular space of white pebbles with 15 rocks artistically placed at different spots.

After lunch, the group went to Arashiyama, where they marveled at the tall bamboo stalks that lined up the pathway. The group then went back early to the city to have some time for shopping. After another enjoyable dinner, they attended mass celebrated separately by Fr. Artemio Ferrer, S.J. and Fr. Luis David, S.J. in two hotel rooms. Then, most of the group got some rest or a bit of work done while others sneaked out to enjoy Kyoto’s Saturday night lures.

On the last day, the party went straight to Osaka Castle, a tower with modern facilities and a museum inside. The castle was surrounded outside by old citadels, stone walls, and moats. The group had sukiyaki for lunch then had time to do last minute shopping in downtown Osaka.

After a short trip, the group was back at Kansai Airport for the first leg of their flight home. The sun was still shining and just about to set when the plane took off. Out the window, the Osaka Bay Area fronted the sprawling city and the scenic mountainside from afar — a fitting last view to recap a weekend of sensational blending of historic treasures and modern spectacles.
The Reinventing Us Project

By CYNDY P. DELA CRUZ

In 2013, Kyushu University launched “The Reinventing Japan Project”, a short-term student exchange program in partnership with the Ateneo Law School (ALS) and other universities in the region. The aim of the project is to foster greater interaction among the Japanese and the ASEAN students. This year’s theme was Cultural Heritage where the participants were made to experience traditional culture and learn about cultural preservation from a legal perspective.

I was privileged to be part of this year’s delegates from ALS together with Julian Elizar D. Torcuator, Harvey A. Bilang, and Isa Marie N. Avanceña.

Our first stop was at the Kyushu University for an introduction to the study trip. We watched the anime movie, “Princess Mononoke”. The setting of this movie is the very island that we visited the next day, the Yakushima Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site for Natural Resources.

We left early for our morning flight to Yakushima Island. The view of the island from the plane is a thing of pure beauty - nature at its finest. The whole stretch of the island is covered with luscious forests and spectacular landscapes. Upon arriving, we went straight to the Yakushima Island Environmental and Cultural Village Center where we attended a lecture on the present ecological situation and legal issues concerning the island. Several issues like the increasing deer population, which is a threat to the preservation of the forests, and the implementation of regulations concerning deer hunting were discussed.

The next day, we went to the deer shop where we actually witnessed how deer are butchered. The deer hunting activity is encouraged in order to answer for the increasing deer population in the island.

After the gruesome encounter, we were all set for our 150-minute trek in the forest. It was a rainy trek but we were equipped with our raincoats and trekking shoes. Trekking was actually a first for all five of us but we braved the challenging trails with this end in mind: to take picturesque photos and post it in Instagram!

Tired is an understatement after 150 minutes of trekking. After the trek, we all got a taste,
quite literally, of the deer situation in Yakushima. Dinner was a scrumptious meal of deer meat. Oh deer!

On our last day in the island, we attended two more lectures: an in-depth discussion of the issues in Yakushima Island, including the problems of tourism, and a discussion on the selection process made by UNESCO. To cap off our trip, we visited the Senpiro Falls for a photo op.

The next few days, we set-off to Kyushu University for a lecture on the appreciation of Japanese Architecture. We also went to the Warabino Rice Terraces for an appreciation of the beauty and the genius behind the Japanese rice paddies. Issues such as the balance between preservation of culture and the need for change in order to pave the way for preservation were discussed.

After two days of study trips and lectures, we visited the new campus of Kyushu University. Kyushu University is known for its efforts to preserve nature and culture, and the construction of its new campus in Ito, Fukuoka is a great example of such effort. Kyushu University made it a point to reinvent the campus and at the same time, preserve the way of life of the community where the campus stands.

The last few days were devoted to a synthesis of the study trip. We were tasked to make two presentations: a country presentation for the Japanese high school students and a mixed-group university-level presentation about everything we learned from the trip. We are proud to report that we gave the best country presentation (at least that was what the Japanese students said). We reinvented the usual boring presentation into an interactive appreciation of the Philippines. We devised different games, all having a symbolic meaning and representation of the Philippine perspective.

Our 10-day Fukuoka experience was really something we ticked off from our bucket list: “go somewhere life-changing”. Not only did we learn from the Japanese perspective on proposing solutions to the many issues on natural and cultural heritage, we also learned to appreciate our own country’s beauty and culture more. As a bonus, we met the most wonderful friends from Japan, Singapore, and Thailand. Our trip was not just about reinventing Japan; more importantly, it definitely reinvented us.
that rocked the building, so we all chaotically ran out. We then ran into Fr. B who just came out of his office blurting, “Who wants to confess?!? Who wants to confess?!?”

I am sure you all have your own stories to tell about this living legend, the quintessential teacher, lawyer, counselor and constitutionalist, affectionately known to many of us as Fr. B. To the parents and family of our graduates and our guests here who are not familiar with him, (although I am sure that there are very few of you who don’t know him), join us as we honor this man who has touched the lives of thousands of Ateneo lawyers and students. If you can, please rise to give him a big round of applause.

Fr. B, thank you for everything you have done for us, and the Ateneo Law School. It has been a great privilege and we will eternally be grateful.

To the Graduates, you are lucky to have been taught by a teacher like Fr. B. The future generations who will not have this privilege will look upon you with envy.

As we thank Fr. B, also give thanks to your parents, your family, and your loved ones. They stood by you during your four years in law school. But you are here because of you, and not because of anyone else. While we give tribute to your parents, this day would not have come if you did not WANT this, and worked hard to get to where you are now. Any lawyer knows what I speak of: a law student’s life is like being trapped in a boiling teapot – ready to burst anytime.

On this occasion, as you join the world out there, it will perhaps be right and fitting for me to assure you that first, ordinary people are capable of achieving extraordinary feats; and second, that there is nothing to be ashamed of by being ordinary. I was, and still am, ordinary. I was part of the 90% ordinary people in my class. I worked really, really hard knowing that I was ordinary. If there is any disadvantage with being ordinary, it is just that you have to work harder than the extraordinary people. But when you achieve what extraordinary people achieve, there is greater satisfaction, greater pride, and greater glory in what you have accomplished. So with the indulgence of the 10% extraordinary people of this graduating class, let me address the ordinary people of this graduating class.

Based on my own experience as a working student, as someone without pedigree and birth right, and as someone who rose from the ranks, let me share with you a few life lessons:

First lesson: The possibilities are limitless.

Armed with a law school diploma from the Ateneo Law School, you can choose to be anyone, because you have learned “transferable skills” from this venerable institution.

You have been chiseled into a fine work of art, having gone, as they say, through the eye of a needle. The Ateneo has honed you into scholars, researchers, thinkers, speakers, and writers and has strengthened your character. It has taught you to be God-fearing and I am sure you have called upon God many times during recitations and exams! It is all right to call on God during these difficult times provided that you have done your best. And when you have done everything within your means, you can leave the rest to God.

You may decide to become business and commercial lawyers, trial lawyers, join government, or like me, join the judiciary. If you have the calling, you may pursue alternative lawyering or work with NGOs, or it may even happen that some of you may not end up in legal practice, as you may then choose to be in other non-legal careers. But whatever you do after becoming lawyers, do it with passion, with dignity and with honor. Only then can you claim that you have put your Ateneo legal education into good use, and still claim success.

Apply the law and justice in your chosen calling and in your daily lives. If you end up as full-fledged housewives or
Second Lesson: Prepare for disillusionment, as many will come your way.

Nevertheless you have to do your job, and do what is right. You will encounter the real lawyer’s world out there. The physical conveniences you’ve enjoyed in your alma mater will not be offered outside. You will appear, or perhaps work, in dilapidated government agencies or courthouses, no elevators, no air conditioners, no computers, no internet, no lex libris, no Wi-Fi. You will see the pathetic conditions of detention centers, of jails, and of the prisoners. This is the real world out there, and you have to be prepared for it. And even while the physical conveniences are there, there are real, hard, and difficult choices to be made. There are a lot of conflicts and crossroads, and you may have to choose between law and justice. Many times you will face disappointments and failures – but you have to carry on because you have a duty to perform, whether as a member of the bar or of the bench.

I joined the judiciary from the very bottom. I started as an MTC judge in an obscure place in San Mateo, Rizal. I wanted to be in the judiciary, but without a pedigree, sponsorship, or birthright, sponsors, or padrinos, I had to start from the very bottom. I had only my small chambers that I also used as my courtroom as none was assigned to me. The common comfort room that I used down the hallway was without regular supply of water. When I displeased a politician, the only air conditioning unit in my chambers was hastily pulled out making my office oven hot particularly during summer. That would have broken my spirit and made me run back to private practice, but I persevered.

I worked my way up and was later promoted to Regional Trial Court judge in Pampanga. One time I issued a warrant of arrest against a politician’s relative, and soon enough, I was stripped of the regular monthly allowance given by local governments to judges. It was a difficult life, as I had to drive close to a hundred kilometers each day to report to my station in Pampanga. My children were growing up at that time, but again, I persevered. There were times when I got so tired and had to spend the night in my chambers, as I would fall asleep drafting decisions. Nighttime and weekends are the only time for writing decisions as judges are supposed to hear cases morning and afternoon, Monday to Friday.

After a few years, I was transferred to the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City. While this brought me closer to home and my family, the bigger city was a haven for more crimes, more vices, and more life-threatening conflicts. It was here that I faced threats on my life and my family’s lives. I had to combat fear, and God knows how much I prayed for guidance. The offer of bribes and other material benefits was easy to say NO to, as my wife, lucky me, made more than enough to support our family. But danger to the people closest and dearest to you would have broken anyone’s back, I do not know how I survived through this, but I kept my faith and did not waiver.

I went through eight years in the Court of Appeals, working hard and finally achieving zero backlog in my caseload in my third year. No case was big or small, and each time that I finished a case, I felt that somehow, I have given justice to someone. Now I am in the Supreme Court, and I would like to believe that I am here because I worked really hard and did not succumb to pressures to thwart the ends of justice through corruption or threats.

I do not profess to be infallible as I am human, and have my limitations. I am ordinary and average like most of you. So if I can do it, so can you.

Third Lesson: Keep your nose to the grindstone.

As Babe Ruth once said, “You just can’t beat the person who never gives up.” If you have made a decision to make law a part of your life, give it your best, and stand up whenever you fail – and that includes the bar examinations. Let’s face it. This year’s bar result was unexpected. But we should all learn to rise above our failures, and to strive even harder. And so, it may help that you familiarize yourselves with cases of the Supreme Court in the last three to five years particularly landmark cases with doctrinal value. You have enough time, so start planning your schedule and balance study and play. There is no substitute for hard work and perseverance.

For those with high academic grades, you have earned it and you come with a great advantage. Use this advantage to the utmost. For those who have managed to finish with “ordinary” grades, all is not lost. We all have our God-given gifts, and some, as they say, may be smarter than others. But life experiences have shown that being smarter than others does not necessarily mean being better than others, or that the smarter ones will succeed and the others will not. Today, as you graduate, view yourselves as equals. All of you have displayed strength and tenacity by refusing to quit the Ateneo schooling despite its intensity. Use this as your tool, and the playing field will be even.

Fourth Lesson: Treat people well.

Becoming a lawyer is no license to become supercilious. You have to interact with all kinds of people. Mingle well and don’t discriminate. Each man is made in God’s image. Be kind but firm. You may know things that they don’t. But they know things that you don’t. Please display humility by acknowledging that you do not know everything. When you take praise, share the credit with the people who worked with you.

Regardless of the field you will be in, I appeal to your sense of humanity. I ask you to unconditionally make a difference in your own little way. I encourage you to give back. You can work pro bono, or use your talents, and devote your time and your financial resources to noble causes. Men will respect and remember you not because you are affluent, famous, powerful, and influential or an intellectual, but they will remember you because you lightened their load and delivered them justice that they deserved.

Fifth and last lesson: Be ethical professionals.

As Benjamin Franklin once said, “It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it.”

I will not lecture you on ethics today, as I am confident that the Ateneo Law School has given you all the goods to be able to distinguish between ethical and unethical practice. It does not take a wise man to understand the Code of Professional Responsibility. Let this be your bible and your daily reading. You can be ordinary and at the same time be ethical.

If I can bargain for a last request: consider joining the Judiciary.

Many times, we complain about corruption in the Judiciary. While there are many men and women now in the Judiciary who are morally and ethically upright (as we now have a leadership in the High Court that is committed to reforming the judiciary and making it the model for the entire government bureaucracy), we need you, the young Jesuit-trained lawyers to help us clean the ranks. If you live by example and in accordance with what you have been taught, you are “ordinary” no more, and we, the more senior ones, will take the cue. You are more technically and technologically equipped to do this, so please not only join us, but also lead us. Show us the way. After all, this is your world now. Your children will be born, and will grow up, in this world.

Congratulations to the Class of 2015. The stage has been set for you. Claim that stage and shine there… and let this be your ONE BIG FIGHT!
Keeping the Spirit of Volunteerism Alive: Bar Operations 2015

By CLARISSA S. VILLANUEVA

Why volunteer for Bar Operations (Bar Ops) if it gets in the way of your studies and prevents you from being able to do the things you really need to attend to?

Geelo Arayata, Administration Head, shared that his volunteering informally started when a friend invited him to join. Not even knowing what it is about, he just joined the group as a favor to that friend. Three years in the Bar Ops, Geelo, however, learned to enjoy the work and is now one of the more devoted heads actively recruiting members and meticulously ensuring that the materials are printed and delivered on time, among his other work.

Paolo Fondevilla, Subject Head for Criminal Law said he initially volunteered for Bar Ops because he wanted to improve his knowledge in Criminal Law and thought that Bar Ops was a good way of doing it. Diego Santiago, Legal Ethics Subject Head, said he was first approached by the previous Subject Heads, two upperclassmen (Junsi Agas and Carlo Sanchez), whom he looked up to in the law school. “Their dedication to the bar operations, as well as their faith in me as a potential understudy, encouraged me to join and commit. It also helped that the faculty head of Ethics at that time, Atty. Jess Lopez, was known to me as one of the best professors in the law school.”

Still another, Er Burgos, Subject Head for Civil Law, admitted that he originally wanted to build his credentials. As he would frankly put it, “pampaganda ng resume”. But when he got in, he realized that the engagement actually has more responsibilities than perks or privileges. Yet, he carries on because he knows that the job is important. “I know that there are a lot of improvements to make. It is a very crucial role we need to play well because the barristers are relying on the materials we will make and it may mean for them the difference between passing or failing the Bar”, he said.

Contrary to what many would expect, Bar Ops volunteers do not really get much in return. No bonus points for classes, no free passes, no monetary incentives or what have you. Yet, we have volunteers, no matter how small the population may be, who are willing to sacrifice their precious time and energy to help bar candidates in their crusade.

So what keeps the spirit of volunteerism alive?

“Tribulations aside, it has been an absolute joy working with my hardworking and diligent understudies, team members, and faculty adviser. They have all contributed to making the overall load easier, especially when we started the editing and the extra research work. Of course, knowing that our efforts will help the bar takers inspires us to continue working hard”, said Diego.

Paolo also mentioned, “Seeing your team satisfied after a long day’s work and getting feedback that the materials you made are good makes it all worth our while.”

Needless to say, the volunteers may have different motivations for joining Bar Ops at the start but eventually, they all learn how to love the role, knowing how their work can impact the lives of the bar reviewees and the reputation of Ateneo as an institution.

It is not an undisclosed fact that Ateneo has not been performing well in the Bar lately. Almost every one expressed their concern, some even their dismay – from faculty members, alumni, residents, and even outsiders. I’m personally not a fan of people who babble a lot about something but are not willing to work in order to improve the situation. Cliché as it may sound, but if all will help, in whatever capacity we may have, we will be able to recover from the situation. Bar Ops is definitely one avenue where we can all contribute to regain what was lost and, eventually, bring back the glory days of Ateneo Law School.

Ateneo Law 100%! Fight!
ATTY. ROMMEL A. ABITRIA

Atty. Rommel “Ab” Abitria is the Executive Director of the Humanitarian Legal Assistance Foundation. He obtained his LL.M. in Criminal Justice in 2014, with distinction from the University of Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom. His dissertation entitled “Imprisonment and Human Rights: A Comparative Study on the Development and Concept of Imprisonment (with special focus on the Philippines)” was published in 2015.

Atty. Abitria teaches Special Penal Laws at ALS. He is also a regular resource person for the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, and has been a member of the Topical Working Groups for the National Conference for the Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Intellectual Property Rights Cases.

JUSTICE RAMON PAUL L.
HERNANDO

Justice Ramon Hernando has been an Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals (CA) since 2010. Prior to his appointment to the CA, Justice Hernando was a Regional Trial Court (RTC) Judge for seven (7) years. He started in 2003 as the Acting Judge for RTC Branch 30, a Family Court in San Pablo, Laguna. He was subsequently appointed as the Executive Judge for RTC San Pablo, Laguna where he served until May 2006. Thereafter, he was appointed as Presiding Judge of RTC Branch 93, a Commercial Court in Quezon City until February 2010. Before joining the judiciary, he was a State Prosecutor at the Department of Justice from 1998 to 2003.

Justice Hernando has been a regular resource person cum lecturer in Commercial Law, Civil Law, and Remedial Law sought after by various law schools and MCLE lecture providers all over the country, including the Philippine Judicial Academy. He was the Bar Examiner for Commercial Law during the 2011 and 2009 Bar Examinations.

Justice Hernando co-authored the book “Notes and Cases on the Law on Transportation and Public Utilities.” He was the recipient of study grants and training courses from the University of Strasbourg in France; National University of Singapore; World Intellectual Property Academy in Geneva, Switzerland; and Global Intellectual Property Academy in Washington, D.C., to mention a few. In 2006, he was a delegate sent by the Supreme Court to Sydney, Australia upon the invitation of the Australian Government to study management for court administrators.

Justice Hernando holds a degree in Bachelor of Arts in Literature from the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila where he graduated in 1986. He obtained his Bachelor of Laws degree from San Beda College of Law in 1990 and was admitted to the Philippine Bar in 1991.

Justice Hernando teaches Civil Law Review I at the ALS.

ATTY. ARACELI B. HABARADAS

Atty. Ma. Araceli “Aras” Habaradas is an experienced mediator/conflict management advisor, and is currently connected with possibilitesh at De La Salle University. She is an associate mediator at the Singapore Mediation Centre since 2012. She is also a member of LEADR-Association of Dispute Resolvers since 2013. She worked as a legal consultant for nine years to various development and government organizations and as corporate counsel of ENK, Rusina Group of Companies, for five years.

Atty. Habaradas obtained her Masters Degree in Dispute Resolution from the University of New South Wales in 2013. She earned her J.D. from the Ateneo de Manila University in 1999 and was admitted to the Philippine Bar in 2000.

Atty. Habaradas teaches an elective, Mediation, at the ALS. She is also teaches at De La Salle University.

JUDGE MARIA ROWENA
MODESTO-SAN PEDRO

Judge Maria Rowena “Rhona” Modesto-San Pedro is the Presiding Judge of an unusual mix of Commercial Court for the Cities of Pasig, San Juan, and Pateros; and Family Court for Pasig City. She has served at all four levels of the judiciary, having previously worked as Court Attorney in both the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, and as a Metropolitan Trial Court Judge in Pasig City for over three years. In 2011, she was honored by the Supreme Court, in cooperation with the Society for Judicial Excellence, as a Judicial Excellence Awardee and one of three outstanding judges for that year. She recently sat as a member of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure for Intellectual Property Rights Cases, and is presently a member of the Topical Working Groups for the National Conference for the Revision of the Rules of Civil Procedure and Continuous Trial. She was tapped by the USAID and American Bar Association to write a Manual on the FRIA and on the Highlights of the New Rules of Procedure for Intellectual Property Rights Cases. Currently, she is co-writing a Helpbook on Trafficking in Persons with the US DOJ as sponsor.

Judge Modesto-San Pedro is a Professorial Lecturer and member of the Commercial Law Department of the Philippine Judicial Academy as well as its Committee on Curriculum Review. Her work in Judicial Education finds roots in her being a Fellow of the Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute in Canada. She has also attended the IP Summer Institute of the Center for Advanced Research & Study on Intellectual Property (CASIRIP) at the University of Washington School of Law in Seattle, Washington. She graduated cum laude with a degree of BA Communications from the College of Mass Communications, University of the Philippines and belonged to the top 20 of her batch in the UP College of Law. She ranked No. 1 in the Pre-Judicature Program given by the Philippine Judicial Academy.

Judge Modesto-San Pedro teaches Practice Court I at the ALS.

ATTY. CHRISTINE JOY K. TAN

Atty. Christine “CJ” Tan is a Manager at the BDO Unibank, Inc. – Legal Services Group where she addresses legal concerns of the subsidiaries and affiliates of the BDO Unibank, Inc. She also handles its special projects relating to the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act including the issuances of its Foreign Assets Control Office.

Atty. Tan was admitted to the Philippine Bar in 2008, garnering the top 8th place. She obtained her J.D. with honors in 2008 and her Bachelor of Arts, Major in Political Science in 2002 from the Ateneo de Manila University. She received her Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management from De La Salle University – Graduate School of Business in 2005.

Atty. Tan teaches Credit Transactions at the ALS.

ATTY. JOYCE MELCAR T. TAN

Atty. Joyce Tan obtained her MSc in Environment and Development in 2014 from The University of Edinburgh as a Chevening Scholar. She earned her J.D. in 2009, graduating with honors, from the Ateneo de Manila University where she also took her AB European Business Studies, Minor in Hispanic Studies in 2004. In 2002-2003, she spent her junior undergraduate year at Saint Louis University Madrid, Spain, as a visiting student.

Atty. Tan was an Associate at the Scipio Salazar Hernandez Gatmaitan Law Offices from 2010 to 2013. She went on-leave to pursue her Masters Degree. She was admitted to the Philippine Bar in 2010 and to the New York Bar in 2014.

Atty. Tan teaches the elective Climate Change and the Law at the ALS. She also teaches Public International Law at Arellano Law School.
Looking Back & Moving Forward

Kyushu University and Ateneo law students have facilitated cultural exchanges with lasting memories and impact on their worldview. Avenues for research have also been pursued by our faculty and students through the extension of at least fourteen grants in the past two years. We also experienced a more energized system of bar review through the development of review materials under the close supervision of the Bar Review Committee. Our bar operations had attracted a team of dedicated volunteers who have exhibited servant leadership among kindred spirits. This intensified interest has also been triggered by the declining passing percentages in the national bar examinations for the past three years when adjustments in the type of examinations were instituted by the different Bar Chairpersons. ALS vows to bounce back with renewed confidence among our bar candidates.

On infrastructure and systems development, the Ateneo Law Alumni Association, Inc. (ALAAI), through Class ‘89, sponsored the project on digitization of school records which now allows quick and convenient access to personal academic files of resident students and alumni. The reorganization of the Office of the APS Registrar has reinforced the move to enhance the J.D. curriculum through a more efficient process of tracking courses for students upon reaching junior year. A series of renovations had been undertaken covering the Thesis Center, student organization rooms, Legal Services Center, faculty work stations, faculty and staff lounges, and the Bernas Center. A classroom had been dedicated in honor of the late Judge Voltaire Rosales.

The move to a new academic calendar beginning August 2015 places us in sync with the leading universities in North America, Europe, and Asia. ALS utilized the transition months for a deeper stock-taking through an administrators’ strategic planning exercise. Our vision of an Ateneo law graduate is anchored upon four pillars: (a) spiritually developed, (b) academically excellent and competent, (c) culturally rooted, and (d) a global citizen.

It is our hope that with the formal launch of the Enhanced J.D./LL.M. Curriculum the bar of excellence in legal education would once again be raised as we did twenty-five years ago when we shifted from LL.B. to J.D. We are fully aware of the challenges confronting our “Phillennial” law students as one resource person shared during our Jesuit Higher Education Conference recently. But we are consoled by the guiding words of the Jesuit Provincial when he invited Jesuit universities to be “apostolic, responsive, and creative” in our mission. These are our instruments towards discovering new energies in our pursuit of higher education today.

Happy birthday to our faculty and staff!

SEPTEMBER
Atty. Oscar Carlo F. Cajocam .......... Sept. 3
Atty. Poncevic M. Ceballos .......... Sept. 6
Atty. Aileen Sarah T. Tolosa-Lerm .......... Sept. 6
Atty. Ryan Jeremiah D. Quan .......... Sept. 8
Atty. Jose U. Cochingyang III .......... Sept. 10
Atty. Evelyn O. Kho-Sy .......... Sept. 11
Atty. Ferdinand M. Negre .......... Sept. 14
Atty. Louie T. Olgosier .......... Sept. 20
Atty. Claro F. Cerete .......... Sept. 26
Atty. Maria Patricia R. Cervantes – Poco .......... Sept. 28
Mr. Roy L. Madamba, Jr. .......... Sept. 20

NOVEMBER
Atty. Dorothy U. Nava .......... Nov. 2
Atty. Rene K. Linsaco .......... Nov. 3
Atty. Gabriel R. Meneses .......... Nov. 3
Atty. Gilbert V. Sembrano .......... Nov. 3
Atty. Connie G. Chu .......... Nov. 4
Atty. Ferdinand M. Casia .......... Nov. 5
Fr. Filoteo Mangulabnan, S.J. .......... Nov. 5
Judge Princess Bustos-Ongko .......... Nov. 6
Atty. Alexander G. Gesmundo .......... Nov. 6
Atty. Filemon R. Javier .......... Nov. 6
Atty. Ronald C. Chua .......... Nov. 10
Assoc. Dean Giovanni F. Vallente .......... Nov. 13
Atty. Edwin R. Enrile .......... Nov. 14
Atty. Antonio H. Abad .......... Nov. 15
Atty. Jill Marie B. Lopez .......... Nov. 17
Ms. Elizabeth S. San Pedro .......... Nov. 19
Atty. Floresto P. Arizala, Jr. .......... Nov. 25
Atty. Christine Joy K. Tan .......... Nov. 21
Atty. Roy Joseph M. Rafols .......... Nov. 28
Atty. Joyce Melcar T. Tan .......... Nov. 29
Atty. Maribeth A. Lipardo .......... Nov. 30

OCTOBER
Ms. Minda A. Laurente .......... Oct. 1
Atty. Teodoro Alejandro Y. Kalaw IV .......... Oct. 2
Atty. Agustin Bonifacio Eduredo .......... Oct. 10
Montilla IV .......... Oct. 12
Gesmundo Alcancia .......... Oct. 14
Dean Cynthia R. Del Castillo .......... Oct. 14
Justice Lucas Bersamin .......... Oct. 18
Atty. Lourdes De La Pea .......... Oct. 19
Fr. Artemio N. Ferrer, S.J. .......... Oct. 20
Atty. Francisco V.B. Gonzalez .......... Oct. 20
Justice Hilario L. Aquino (ret.) .......... Oct. 21
Dean Antonio Gabriel M. Lu Villa .......... Oct. 22
Atty. Rommel A. Abitaria .......... Oct. 31
Atty. Cecille L. Mejia .......... Oct. 31
Atty. Amy S. Sta. Maria .......... Oct. 31

DECEMBER
Atty. Erwin P. Erfe .......... Dec. 1
Atty. Noel R. Ostrea .......... Dec. 2
Assoc. Dean Lily K. Grubba .......... Dec. 3
Atty. Laurence Hector B. Arroyo .......... Dec. 4
Atty. Erdelyne C. Go .......... Dec. 4
Atty. Jose Arturo C. De Castro .......... Dec. 7
Atty. Aris L. Gulapa .......... Dec. 9
Atty. Anthony A. Abad .......... Dec. 17
Atty. Howard M. Caleja .......... Dec. 21
Justice Rodolfo A. Ponferrada .......... Dec. 26
Justice Hector L. Hofilena .......... Dec. 30
Atty. Edsyl G. Magante .......... Dec. 30