

Carolina Lapuz Gozon: A Full Life

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I am a namesake of my mother, Carolina 'Arling' Lapuz Gozon. I carry with pride her first name as my own. She is not only my loving mom but also a dedicated mentor who instructed me in the many ways by which to cope with life's challenges. In the course of time, with the patient guidance and mentoring of my mother, I developed an intuitive and sharp sense of business which now serves me in good stead. It is also my good fortune to inherit from her a fondness and appreciation for gardens and plant life.

Even in my childhood days my mother already thrived and moved in a universe of her own, a milieu of beautiful gardens in stunning bloom, an environment which shaped and defined her being. This fondness for plant life was also shared by others in her immediate family. Thus, growing in Malabon during my childhood years, I was surrounded by the beautiful phalaenopsis orchids of my Tia Reb and the lovely ferns of my Lola Mama Trining. On my mother's side, my aunt, Dr. Norberta Lapus Laurea or Tia Entang, grew the biggest American roses in her garden.

Growing up in such environment of beautiful gardens and plant life, I also tried my hand in gardening and in raising plants, but my plants simply withered and dried out. It was at this time that my mother, the quintessential gardener and green thumb model, came to my rescue and taught me the many principles involved in proper and effective gardening. At this time also I admired and absorbed as a timeless lesson in gardening the sight of my mom and my aunts as they tended with loving care to the sangunays, phalaenopsis orchids, ferns, and roses. My mother taught me how to cross-pollinate orchids and this is

now a thing at which I am good at and I apply this knowledge to the cross-pollination of other flowers and not merely limited to orchids.

A meaningful event helped firm up my appreciation and affection for gardening and plant life. This was in the year 2000 when my mother allotted to each of her four children five hectares of land in Anipolo. My share of the 5-hectare property is located in sitio Tanza II in Barangay San Jose in Antipolo. This was originally a very hilly, badly eroded, and rocky patch of land, devoid of greenery and where the only significant plant life was cogon. Notwithstanding the seemingly unfavorable circumstances of this land, I conjured a beautiful vision of a model bambosetum rising out of this parched land.

I then started translating this vision into physical reality. Trucks of compost and loam were hauled to enrich the soil. And then the planting of bamboo commenced. Determined in setting up an ideal bambosetum, I then visited various bamboo garden sites in Los Baños, Baguio, and even abroad. I thought of disseminating information on bamboo growing by bringing a bamboo garden closer to Metro Manila. This is now the Carolina Bamboo Garden, a dream which was helped realized with the technical support of the Ecosystem Research and Development Bureau. I wanted a garden to serve as a showcase for bamboo research and development and to function as information center for those interested in putting up bamboo plantations. I further envisioned an ecologically balanced and green country by propagating and distributing the best quality indigenous bamboo seedlings. In this regard, nurseries are now ready to provide seedlings for planting. In fact this is now a thriving business of the Garden. Now, every time my mom visits Antipolo, she always beams with pride at seeing the land she generously bequeathed to me being put to good use.

The Carolina Bamboo Garden is now raising many varieties of the bamboo plant. I believe that bamboo as an ultimate renewable resource must be promoted and revitalized if the Philippines with its boundless natural resources is to fully realize its potential growth. The Garden now receives orders for bamboo seedlings and plants from landscapers, gardeners, plantation owners, and even corporate offices. Of the many species of bamboo found throughout the world twenty-seven of these are now raised in the Garden. Aside from the indigenous kawayan tinik, the bayog, buho and anos, there are many exotic and imported species found in the bamboo farm.

I find it amusing that one's objective in life often takes a direction other than as intended. In my case, while I earned a masters degree in economics in the Montana State University, I find myself now engrossed in bamboo planting for which I am enjoying a growing reputation as Bamboo Queen, the Carolina Bamboo Garden being a valuable source of bamboo seedlings of various species. All of the factors contributing to the success of the bamboo farm, I owe it to my mother, my mentor.

Carolina G. Jimenez



There is no other person who has played a greater influence in shaping me into who I am right now than my mother, Carolina Lapuz Gozon. The richness of her life is testament to ninety-five years of unwavering faith in God and formidable strength of character.

From childhood, she has demonstrated a sensitive nature, temperamental pride, and strong determination to accomplish her plans and dreams. My mother came from an affluent family and grew up in Malabon with her brothers and sisters sed to the comforts of life. Yet, she gave up such luxuries to marry the man she loved, a man who came from a modest family also from Malabon, my father, Benjamin M. Gozon. As a young wife and mother to four children, she instilled in herself the values of prudence and resourcefulness to augment the income of her husband, who then, as a government employee, was barely earning enough to support our family. She never spent more than what was needed. She did not find it necessary to splurge on fancy clothes and jewelry for herself, preferring only simplicity and comfort. I remember that when we were growing up, my mother used to make for us t-shirts from old mosquito nets. To my mother, nothing should ever be put to waste. It is also a divine blessing to us that my mother has an innate sense of entrepreneurship. When she was in her forties, she established and profitably ran Dalisay Patis. Up to the present, she still oversees a salt mine in Dasol that she put up in her sixties, a mining quarry in Antipolo she started in her eighties, and a coffee seedling nursery that she initiated in her nineties! All these she did without prior business experience.

To her children, she was a strict disciplinarian but also a loving one. Although she finished her schooling at the University of the

Philippines with a degree in Pharmacy, she chose to have a home-based business so that whenever we needed anything, she was there for us. She stressed to us the value of a good education. My mother worked very hard to give us the best education that we could possibly have. After graduating from the University of the Philippines, she paved the way for us to pursue graduate studies abroad. I think that this played an instrumental role in enabling us, her children, to eventually excel in our chosen professions.

Nevertheless, the value that defines my mother the most is her complete faith and trust in the Lord. She has led her life with God at the helm. All the days of her ninety-five years has been spent in prayer. This is the most valuable legacy that she has handed down to us. Needless to say, she was the driving force behind her husband's successful career in government, and at present, although now confined to a wheelchair, she still serves as inspiration and motivation to all her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Felipe "Henry" Gozon



There is no family I know that every now and then, upon the arrival of a baby, or the announcement of a job promotion, does not preen itself on its share of brains and good looks; but whenever the subject comes up with Lola around, she is quick to interject: "Kaya ko pinili ang lolo ninyo dahil gwapo at may "ganito" [pointing to her head]. So when Tita Flor [Tariela] broached the idea of a book on Lola, I did not think she was serious. Somehow a person who does not think herself special would make a poor subject for a book, and, indeed, when Lola got wind of the plan, she summed up her total disapproval in the words: "Bakit kailangan isulat ang istorya ko?"

Bakit nga ba?

Born of parents as simple and ordinary as she, she blossomed under their loving gaze and protection until the day she was given away in marriage to someone equally good to her, although not all that exceptional either. Yet I daresay it is the very "ordinariness" of Lola's

life, the fact that none of her most important accomplishments would make for newspaper headlines, that has provided the raw material for transformation by sheer serendipity into amazing outcomes for those who, like myself, sprang up around her, like so many saplings in the shade of the mother tree following a rainstorm whipped up by the chance confluence of innumerable elements.

Derived from “Serendib,” which is the old Persian name for Sri Lanka, the word, “serendipity,” recalls to mind the old Persian fairy tale about three princes who, from their point of origin in Persia traveled to the distant shore of Serendib, not by plotting a mathematically accurate course for getting there, but by setting out in good faith for elsewhere, becoming confused in the course of their journeying over their system of directions, yet stumbling upon Serendib all the same – serendipitously – because even as they coursed along, they did so disposed to discovering in many of the most apparently irrelevant details of their everyday travel a connection to many important outcomes that brought them good fortune.

To be sure, Lola would never think to establish a connection between the story of her life and a tale of imaginary princesses. She would not be inclined to exaggerate the importance to her life of cleverness, sagacity, and good fortune. What she would own up to is an abundance of faith in God and the practice of persistent prayer. They were important because raising a family, under circumstances that were not always easy (including difficulties brought on by the post-war era), required an expenditure of energy – plenty of it – such as only faith and prayer could supply. Lola’s faith and her prayer were surely what transformed her ordinary life, serendipitously, into extraordinary grace. What are faith and prayer, after all, if not living in the shadow of not knowing, but of trusting anyway – trusting there is One who notices we do not ever manage on our own, and consequently shows us the way.

But because this One does not stage manage our lives, but only shows us the way, we have still got a lot of doing, a lot of discerning, a lot of choosing between alternatives, a lot of extrapolating from the meager signs available, to do. Lola, in that sense, as prayerful as she is, and precisely on account of her prayerful-ness, has always been a doing person, like the Princes of Serendib.

Which brings me back to the book, Arling (Lola as she is fondly

called), adverted to at the onset of this little tribute to her. Its most interesting feature is it has no single author. In the truest sense of the word, it is a collaborative work, bringing together a great number of those who learned the art of life navigation from simply observing how Lola did it. Their stories about themselves in relation to Lola are told from a variety of perspectives, but they converge upon the single common point that when the journey you embark upon is not fictional but real, life may vigorously and mercilessly appear to be shaking you down, but always there will be an abundance of handles for you to get a grip on it, lighted up for you by faith, so you can see, smoothed out for you by prayer, so you can hold.

No better model to emulate in my own living could I ask for than my own Lola.

Belinda Madrid



Carolina Lapuz Gozon



*Kay with Mom Arling
in her Antipolo Farm*

Carolina G. Jimenez is known as the Bamboo Queen with the largest collection of bamboo species in her family farm in Antipolo where a bamboo house stands as a testament to the “Plant your House” concept of solving the housing needs of Filipinos. She was recipient of the 2009 U.P. Lifetime Awardee.



*Felipe Gozon with
Mom Arling*

Felipe Gozon is the chief executive and chair of GMA Network Inc., one of the largest media networks in the Philippines. A lawyer by profession, the Yale-educated Gozon is seen as the network executive who has successfully turned GMA into a leading television network.



Bee's family with Lola Arling

Belinda G. Madrid – or “Bee”, as she is fondly called by her Lola, holds a Bachelors degree in Psychology from the University of the Philippines. Like her Lola Arling, she chose to begin a career in Banking, outside her educational specialty. Bee married Jack Madrid in 1991, and has three boys, Jacob, Gabriel and Ramon.