By the time I took on operating responsibilities in the PHINMA Group, Ramon V. del Rosario, my father, had retired from active management. My professional interaction with him therefore took place mostly in strategy conferences, board and executive committee meetings, and executive caucuses. For guidance and advice on business policies, issues, and opportunities and problems, I tended to consult Mr. Oscar J. Hilado, who took over from my father as PHINMA CEO and Chairman.

But this is not to say that RVR was not my mentor. In terms of my basic values and principles, and in setting the priorities of my life, there is no doubt in my mind that it was my father who was of greatest influence.

I myself have now reached retirement age. Although I have no immediate plans of retirement, I can look back at a career that has spanned forty years from which some valuable lessons have been learned. And these lessons I do not hesitate to share, especially with young audiences I have the privilege to address.

I have been blessed with what most would describe as a successful career. As I look back, it is clear that I derive the greatest satisfaction from two major “accomplishments”:

- That I have conducted my career always with honor, integrity and professionalism, and am now able to pass on an honorable and respected name as my greatest legacy to my family, and
- That I have managed to put together a highly satisfactory professional career while at the same time building a very
successful marriage of forty-one years and a wonderful family of four daughters and five grandchildren, with at least three more coming in 2010! I find that nothing gives me greater comfort and satisfaction than the company of my loving family, and my growing brood of grandchildren brings me a fresh outlook on the rest of my life as a doting and thoroughly amused grandfather!

It is for these two major accomplishments in my life that I owe my parents my greatest gratitude. My father never placed wealth or power above honor among his life’s priorities, and it is my great fortune to have inherited his passion for honor and integrity. And my father also never waivered in his determination to build a strong and loving family even as his career often demanded almost all of his time. He managed to find a balance, and always succeeded in showing all of us how much he cared for and loved us. At his funeral mass last year, many of us recalled how his major obsession in life was to always make our mother happy! He taught us our most valuable lessons by living his life as he did.

It is for these and much more that I thank my father for being my life’s greatest mentor.

Ramon R. del Rosario, Jr.

Not many people can claim to have worked for only one boss uninterruptedlly for forty-four years. From day one, when I was hired with that rather disarming title, Assistant to the President, I was to have only one boss, only one person to whom I would report and to be accountable to for all of my professional life.

Looking back, working for RVR was like going back to business school—just two years after completing business school! With a difference, Harvard Business School was done in two years. With RVR, business school was for a lifetime.

From day one, he began to pass on to me his beliefs and values that were at the center of his personality as an individual and as a
businessman, and which were to become the guideposts of my own professional life. In one way or another, in not very subtle ways, he taught me that it was important to work hard and to work smart. By example, he showed that there never was such a thing as a “free lunch.”

Working with RVR was never easy. We seemed to work with different clocks. Mine said that there were twenty-four hours in one day—and that included eight hours of sleep. His clock seemed to have thirty-six hours, and sleep was occasionally forgotten!

RVR was a consummate entrepreneur. He was constantly looking to do things he did not fully know but that his business sense, foresight, or maybe, just his sense of adventure, told him he should pursue. He never tired of sailing into uncharted waters; he was forever pioneering in one thing or another, one thing after another. He would take me over the years through adventure after adventure—in steel, paper and packaging, oil exploration, power generation, sugar, coconuts, and low cost housing. These during a period of Philippine history when the word “entrepreneurship” was not yet the buzzword it is today. He made me enjoy my work, showed me the joy of risk-taking, and made business an adventure. With RVR, there was never a dull moment.

It was one challenge after another. He was constantly challenging my mind or my endurance! And he had this knack of giving you more credit than you deserved and rewarding you well. Most of all, he showed me what leadership was all about – the quality to inspire people to outdo themselves.

Finally, RVR left us one more lesson to learn, a legacy for all time: that life is not completely meaningful until you have shared your good blessings and fortunes with those that have less in life. He walked the talk.

Oscar J. Hilado

I must have been 27 years old when I first heard the Ambassador deliver a speech. It would have been at a budget conference of the PHINMA cement group, a semi-annual ritual of rigorously reviewing the performance of five cement plants. Much of what was discussed
didn’t make much sense to me then, as it was mainly conducted in what to me was the foreign language of cement-speak. Finally, at the close of the sessions, the Ambassador strode to the front and spoke. It was a rousing message to rally the troops. “Let’s run our plants well... hindi pwede ang pwede na! (Just enough is not enough!) We must at all times conduct our businesses according to the highest standards of excellence, integrity, and professionalism...” Big words spoken by a big man, and yet they resonated very well in the ears of a neophyte 27-year-old. His were the kind of speeches that were tailor-made to end a conference on a high note and to impart memorable nuggets of wisdom.

Many, many years later, I had the privilege of working more closely with him. I assumed the role of executive director of the PHINMA Foundation, and the Ambassador was its chairman. By then, he had relinquished much of the day-to-day business operations of The PHINMA Group to Oscar Hilado and Magdaleno Albarracin. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) was an idea that was coming of age. PHINMA and its senior-most officers were at the forefront, visibly taking the lead in recognizing and engaging stakeholders beyond just the “usual suspects” of customers, creditors, and suppliers. The Ambassador took a great deal of interest in the community relations programs of the plants for their host communities. And through the PHINMA Foundation, he embraced a much larger constituency to promote CSR in the focus areas of education, environment, medical services, culture, and seminarian education for Filipinos living on the margin of society.

I had the opportunity to tag along during field trips organized by Caritas Manila for the Ambassador. He spearheaded the Prison Ministry Program for Caritas, and we visited the city jails of Caloocan, Makati, Manila, and Parañaque. I had read about the decrepit condition of the jails, but that did not prepare me fully for the assault of a disturbing reality. It struck me how big — no, immense — it was of the Ambassador to take up this cause. As with many others whose stage in life now allowed them to give back to society, he could have picked the easy ones — an orphanage, a religious community, a school to support. He did all that, and much more.

I consider myself extremely blessed to have been given the opportunity to enter PHINMA’s doors at the outset of my professional
career. I stayed on for the next eighteen years, during which time I had my values molded, my work ethic hardwired. Unwavering integrity, the delivery of results to the highest standards of work quality, respect for all colleagues in the workplace and beyond, a strong sense of responsibility, the desire to contribute meaningfully towards improving the lives of the less fortunate—these seeds were sown early in my formative years and then watered extensively through contact with such role models as Ambassador del Rosario.

I have since moved on to assume a senior executive role for a Swiss multinational company in the Philippines. The values that this company holds paramount, such as strength, performance, and passion, could have been authored by the Ambassador, himself. What I learned from him has indeed served me very well.

Jocelyn Perez

Former Amb. Ramon V. del Rosario Sr.
Ramon R. del Rosario Jr. is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Philippine Investment Management, Inc. (PHINMA). He holds degrees in B.S.C. Accounting and Commerce and A.B. Social Sciences (Magna cum Laude) from De La Salle University-Manila, and an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School. He is Management Association of the Philippines's (MAP) Management Man of the Year 2010.

Aside from being PHINMA's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Philippine Investment Management, Oscar J. Hilado is also the President of Union Cement Corp. and Atlas Cement Corp.; Chair of the Board, Bacnotan Consolidated Industries, Inc., Union Cement Corp., and Microtel Development Corp., among others; and Vice-Chairman of Trans Asia Oil & Energy Development Corp., Trans Asia Power Generation Corp., Bacnotan Steel Industries, Inc. and Bacnotan Industrial Park Corp.

Jocelyn Perez is Head, Business Development of Holcim Philippines, Inc. She joined PHINMA upon graduation from the Ateneo de Manila University, and stayed with the company until the cement business was sold to the Swiss company, Holcim.