

Wilmer G. Heceta, M.D. (of pioneer class 1961) is one of 4 'elder' alumni whom I greatly admire for their loyalty, dedication, and untiring efforts to advance the worthy causes of our Medical Center; the other 3 are- Benjie Rigor '62, Romy Divinagracia '63, and El B. Castro '63. Their endless efforts inspire me to come out of retirement and offer my humble services to the Foundation for the betterment of our Alma Mater.

My association with Kuya Wilmer went beyond my distant admiration of him to a more personal connection in later years. I first knew about him when he spoke to our class of 1966 when he was still in the UERM campus; he reminded us of how lucky and special we were as medical students of UERMMMCM (indeed, it was an inspirational talk). I knew then how passionate he was about our medical school. (Footnote: He was a Belman scholar and graduated cum laude along with his classmate and wife, Estherbelle Aguilar, with grade-point average of 1.5 or better.)

My first close and personal encounter with Kuya Wilmer occurred in the early 1980's. I approached him and Ate Belle at the tarmac of Washington, D.C. airport on our way to the UERM convention/reunion and introduced myself as a graduate of 1966. We were proud to declare that- We Are UERM Graduates. He was eager to talk to me and to reminisce about our student days at UERM. Since then, each time we saw each other in subsequent years, he always reminded me how we first met at that airport.

The next important connection with him was in 1994 when I served as host-chairman of the only New Orleans alumni convention/reunion held at the Hilton Riverside and Towers. He was formally honored (with a plaque) as Chairman Emeritus of the UERMMMCM Alumni Foundation USA, Inc. (AFUSA) after serving exceptionally well for over 12 years. My wife and I were privileged to sit with then Dean Jose Ramirez, Jr. along with Kuya Wilmer and Ate Belle and then alumni president Bayani Elma and his wife, Marie. Indeed, it was a grand reunion. The only damper, I was told later, was that Kuya Wilmer suffered a 'slight stroke' shortly after he got home. I felt guilty and blamed it on the hustle and bustle of the reunion and on the richness of New Orleans' French/Creole/Cajun dishes. (Attendees still remember the \$25 Sunday Jazz Brunch with all-you-can-eat New Orleans seafood and meat and unlimited champagne. That reunion was considered one of the most cost-effective gathering because there was no host-chapter to share with the revenues; all the profits were donated to the Foundation, courtesy of the alumni association.

My next significant communication with Kuya Wilmer was in 2009 when I asked his permission to rename his 333 Fund to Dr. Wilmer G. Heceta 333 Endowment Fund. The Board of Trustees of the Foundation unanimously voted for the resolution. Needless to say, he was very grateful and appreciative of the honor. He recalled those important years he spent as chairman. He also loved to talk about his family life, particularly about his 3 children and 5 grandchildren.

Yes! Dr. Wilmer G. Heceta was a pioneer and a trailblazer, a mentor and a role model in matters related to loyalty, dedication, and gratitude to our Alma Mater. He always

reminded us to give something back to our Medical Center. He was a brilliant man, yet grounded in humility, compassion, generosity, and love of God.

The following quote applies appropriately to this gentleman:

“The measure of a man is--- NOT--'how did he die?' BUT--'how did he live?' NOT--'what did he gain?' BUT--'what did he give?' These are the units to measure the worth of a man, as a man, not his birth.” *Anonymous*

Farewell my dear hero! May you rest in peace, embraced by our loving Lord.

Your humble friend and admirer,

F.J. "Ned" Valen, M.D. '66
freshned42@yahoo.com
January 26, 2012

From: tan <benching123@yahoo.com>
To:
Sent: Thursday, January 26, 2012 4:06 AM
Subject: pArT 3: The Passing of Dr Wilmer Heceta

It is a sad event in the life of my family that the Lord has taken Wilmer to be with him.

We were behind their class and we saw how Dean Cuyegkeng loved the pioneer class..

We were together at St. Joseph Hospital in Manapla in Negros Occidental in 1968 to 71.

Our children were playmates.

We will surely miss him.

Gil N. Octaviano Jr.
Class 1962

We lost a great leader and to me the icon of the UERMMMC medical community.

He was a true friend, always warm and jovial. He will be more than missed, he will always be in my memory for as long as I live.

Al Lopez '63

Our sincere condolences to the Heceta Family.

He and Estherbelle showed greatness but yet very humble.

During our time in UERMMMC, we were few so that we were able to know the rest of the students from Class 1961-1966.

In the USA, I had seen and talked to Wilmer and Estherbelle whenever I attended the UERM conferences and was in the conference when he promoted the 333 FUND Drive.

May he rest in peace and our prayers for God's comfort to those he left behind.

He was indeed a dedicated and faithful servant!

It was fun singing with you in our UERMMMC Medical Glee Club!

John L. Alipit (Class '64)

I am deeply saddened by the passing of Wilmer.

I remember him as a very intelligent person with a good sense of humor.

He was deeply dedicated and committed to UERMMC.

I will remember him and his family in my prayers.

Nely Saturno Recano-class 64