



## **Souvenir Annual**

39th Annual Scientific Convention and Reunion  
**FEU-DNR School of Medicine Alumni Foundation**  
Caesars Palace and Casino  
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# **Heart to Heart**

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Class '61

## **The Departure Lounge**

The Far Eastern University was established in June 1928 and the FEU Institute of Medicine opened its doors in 1952. Three years later, on October 22, 1955, the FEU Hospital was inaugurated. In 1957, its first batch of physicians graduated, who, today, are in their 80s, our first Diamond Jubilee celebrants at this 2018 reunion.



A contemporary of our first batch, a surgical colleague, UP'57, who was with us at a restaurant for lunch last year, walking with a cane, still with his brilliant mind and a great sense of humor, said in a serious tone of total surrender, "Philip, we are now in the departure lounge, waiting for our number to be called."

I told him much as I loved and respected him as a friend I truly admire, I begged to disagree with the implication and the "final destination" of his thoughts. I said, "if we are in the departure lounge, we are there eagerly waiting for our next flight to tour more exciting places in this wonderful world and enjoy to the hilt whatever time we have left." I continued "I will not sit around waiting for my number and waste God's precious blessing of time, just waiting to die...I still have a lot of plans and want to take full advantage of, and really cherish His generosity."

I love to "bulakbol," since we did not have much time for it in medical school, in our residency training, and during our medical practice. Gallivanting now that I am retired is fantastic. Indeed, life is wonderful! I wish it would go on forever.

There are so many things to do, now that we have time to ourselves. I, for one, enjoy writing, surfing the world wide web of the internet (sans social media), gardening, performing magic illusion, traveling, cruising with family and friends, going on medical missions and doing other humanitarian endeavors just like many of you. Indeed, the bonus time we are blessed with is an added gift from heaven, bestowed, for us to continue to attain joy, a sense of fulfillment, inner satisfaction, and peace. After all, as ancient philosophers had written, human beings are on this good earth to achieve and savor happiness.

These precious fleeting moments we still have in our life's bank account of time ought not to be squandered by sitting around waiting to vanish into oblivion. That will come soon enough. Let us just try our best to delay the inevitable as much as we can by a wiser, more efficient, and more productive management of our remaining time. Also, I suggest that, even at a ripe old age, not taking any calculated risk at all is the greatest risk in itself and that success comes only to those who have wisdom and the courage to fail.

I have always been fascinated by the idea of influencing people for the better, so my fellowmen could live a healthier lifestyle, habits, and behavior. In our new world of information technology, I have decided early on to expand on my health writings which I started at the Arellano (Public) High School and launched my personal campaign for public health education when I arrived in the United States in 1963. This has led me to write a weekly medical column in two newspapers in the Philippines, five publications in the United States, and three websites on the internet, to the present. This obsession has also resulted in the publication of the book, Let's Stop "Killing" Our children, a primer on disease prevention and healthy lifestyle starting from the cellular (DNA-Telomere) level to protect the integrity of the DNA to pre-empt diseases.

I often say that leaving this world after this life is not a tragedy. Dying without significance, without making a difference, without leaving behind a good and lasting legacy, is.

All of us, humbly including myself, are certainly bestowing upon the world a legacy of love, charity, compassion, talent, and service each of us has given during our lifetime. We have also transmitted our good culture, tradition, and values to our children and their children, who could now build on them and endeavor for a better world for mankind.

Whenever asked if I am retired, I always reply "Yes, I am Re-tired...now equipped with a new set of tires to zoom around the racetrack of life another few laps," this time with greater wisdom, clearer vision, and better oriented concerns for the future of our children, grandchildren, and humankind as a whole. After all, we are part and parcel of

the universe, no matter how miniscule we are in the nanoscale of the galaxy.

You may not realize it, but the world is really better of because you happened to be here. Just think of the good children you have raised, the people you have helped, the patients you have cured, the strangers you have ministered to with compassion, and the countless lives your children and grandchildren will make better in the generations to come.

Like in the 1946 American Christmas movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*, starring James Stewart and directed by Frank Capra, based on a poignant 1939 story, *The Greatest Gift*, by Philip Van Doren Stern, think for a moment what it would have meant to the hundreds, thousands, of lives you have touched if you had not been born. Move the hands of time back to that day, and undo all the things associated with you, erase all events and all your contributions to society like you never existed. Just think about it. Only then would you realize that, indeed, you are significant, and that you have really made a difference and will continue to do so. That, in essence, is the legacy you are leaving behind with pride, a sacred legacy of a fulfilled life on this planet.

It is, indeed, a wonderful life. And I truly believe that the greater and more exciting wonders are still to come. Let us continue to take good care of ourselves and be as healthy as we can be, ready for the next chapter in our sojourn on earth. Growing old is a great privilege denied many. Let us relish every second we have left.

So, whenever we feel we are in the departure lounge of our being, let us give thanks to God for all our blessings, celebrate our life, and chart our next course and destination, even without our favorite GPS, to more marvelous journeys and adventures ahead of us, with our loved ones and friends, and savor our time together, on faraway vacations as often as still possible, or even on staycations at our cozy home, creating thousands more fabulous memories to cherish and keep us warm in the winter of our life.

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