



## Jacob S. Matubis, MD (1950-2022)

*Josefino G. Hernandez, MD*

### “Bye, Jake!”

Those words reverberate in our minds as we remember how Dr. Nati Almazan, president of the Philippine Board of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, bid Jake goodbye on many occasions, also being a member of the board.

Dr. Jacob Sadang Matubis, a colleague, a brother in the Mu Sigma Phi fraternity, and a batchmate during our residency in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital from 1981 to 1984, was a friend to many of us. Jake, as we fondly called him, was a member of the UP Medicine Class of 1977, 2 years ahead of my batch, the Class of 1979.

During our days at the UP College of Medicine, we joined the UP Medicine football team and competed with the other teams from the different colleges of the University of the Philippines. I played the left-out forward position, now called a striker and Jake was a half-back, now called a midfielder. During our time, we were champions on two occasions, boasting of players who played the game during high school in La Salle Greenhills and Ateneo, as well as having one burly American studying Medicine in UP at that time, playing the defender position. Being champions will always remain happy memories.

Jake joined the Mu Sigma Phi fraternity in the summer of 1973. His baritone voice was his ticket to become a member of the Mu Sounds, a singing group of fraternity brothers, together with Dr. Alfee Pontejos, another brother and colleague. They performed in many venues and occasions especially during our fraternity anniversaries and college activities.

I would say that Jake was one of the most determined to be an Otorhinolaryngologist-Head and Neck Surgeon, having applied to our department for 3 consecutive years. It didn't mean that he was not good. It was just unfortunate that when our secretary at that time, Raquel, called their house regarding his application, his mom told her that Jake was going to try to make it in the United States. Upon learning this, Dr. Mariano Caparas, the chair of the department at the time—who was also a pillar of our society and a staunch nationalist—immediately removed Jake from the list of applicants. It took Jake three attempts to convince Dr. Caparas that he was not leaving for the US and that it was his intention to stay in the Philippines and continue to serve the Filipino people—his commitment ever since his UP Diliman days. It was January of 1981 when he started his residency.

How Jake ended up as my batchmate during residency was like destiny. Being batchmates, we practically lived together day-in and day-out for 4 years learning surgeries, discussing our patients, spending



long days, and sleeping in the call room even during off-duty days, effectively sealing our friendship forever. Back then, we were carefree and we talked a lot about our future. We were fond of playing poker during our downtime. Jake's favorite game was called “Indian”. Each player would place a card on his forehead without seeing it. You would know the rank of the cards of the other players except yours. You would start giving a bet hoping that the rank of your card is higher compared to the rest. Imagine, if you were betting high while holding in front of your forehead the card 2 of clubs. Everyone would always enjoy laughing at you. You will then realize that you made a wrong bet. We also would always be on guard for Dr. Caparas' footsteps coming up to our call room. We would immediately hide the cards, clear the table, and scramble to hold a book to make it appear as if we were studying.

Dr. Gil Vicente (from one batch after ours), Dr. Jake Matubis, and I were the “barkada”

during residency. Aside from being good friends, we also worked well together. On our senior year in 1984, we won the first and the third prizes for the interesting case contest of the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery with papers entitled “Tears from the Parotid” and “Ameloblastoma Arising from a Dentigerous Cyst”. Little did we know that we would also eventually become presidents of the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery one after the other from 2008 to 2010.

I would say that Jake was a mild-mannered, level-headed, and serious individual, although at times he would start cracking jokes. But the way he attempted to crack these jokes were the real reasons why we would also laugh. He appeared contented with what he had and where he was, especially when he started joining his Christian group. This was the path he took, occasionally addressed by us as “Pastor Jake”, and not hesitating to lead a prayer at the start of our meetings. He joined the Department of Anatomy after finishing residency and eventually became its chair. He became our eternal lecturer for the anatomy of the nose and paranasal sinuses in our yearly post-graduate course in Rhinology since 1992. With him gone, his replacement will have big shoes to fill.

Today, people would probably describe Jake as a “chill” guy. He knew his place under the sun. His four children are lucky to have had him as their dad, especially since I have not ever seen him get angry.

Thank you, Jake, for the friendship and for touching our lives. Your cool demeanor will always be remembered and emulated. Bye, Jake! See you again my friend, but hopefully not too soon.