PHILIPPINE JOURNAL OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY-HEAD AND NECK SURGERY VOL. 41 NO. 2 JULY – DECEMBER 2026

Romeo Raul C. Valles, MD
1957-2026

Cesar Anthony P. Yabut, MD



Raul graduated from the Cebu Doctors College of Medicine and was accepted into the University of the Philippines - Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH) Department of Otolaryngology in 1985. In the department he was fondly called Shale, a nickname he got from playing a game of Boggle while on duty with his seniors. At the outset, he had already endeared himself to his co-residents because of his funny and affable ways.

I met Raul when I entered the same department in 1987 as a first-year resident while he was on his third year of residency training. Since then, he had been a friend and mentor by sharing insights not only on ENT matters but about life in general.

As most of you know, Raul had a very interesting and pragmatic philosophy of life. He was neither flamboyant nor flashy, just practical with a no-nonsense approach to whatever challenges faced him. As my senior resident, I witnessed how he developed into a fearless and fantastic surgeon while selflessly teaching me and the younger residents the rudiments of ENT surgery.

He is best remembered during residency as the feisty fellow -- which at that time meant that he, like many of us then, did not draw a salary. This was in contradistinction to residents who had salaried items. He strongly felt the lack of fairness in having the same duties and responsibilities but without the just compensation. Hence, we worked hard together to eliminate this inequity. We entered the unfamiliar territory of Congress to lobby for equal pay for all residents. We received a lot of push back from the PGH leadership who even threatened us with expulsion for upsetting the status quo in the institution. In the end we triumphed and, as I understand, all residents now receive a salary. The biggest irony of it all was that Raul never benefitted from this as by the time the policy came into effect, he had already graduated from the program. He was fully aware of this, but it did not stop him in any way.

The next time we crossed paths was after I finished my residency and moved to General Santos City to embark on my journey of private practice in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery. By this time the ENT department of Davao Medical Center, now the Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC), started the process of applying for board accreditation for their residency training program. Raul was one of only two board-certified ENT specialists in Davao City at that time.

Together with the late Dr Manny Tan, Raul wanted to set up a residency training program in their hospital, but they needed more fellows to complete the roster required by the Philippine Board of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery. Raul invited me, Dr. Bob Santos and Dr. Ben Pajaro to join the team.

Having done so, we travelled regularly to Davao to fulfill our responsibilities as consultants. It was then that I had the great privilege of again working with Raul. He showcased his brilliant skills with the scalpel that he carried well into private practice and unselfishly imparted to the residents of SPMC who were fortunate enough to train under him.

During this time, Raul also told me about the life he had in Davao especially his various businesses. One particular venture he got me interested in was the poultry business. He taught me the ins and outs of this industry by taking me to his farm when schedules permitted.

Raul frequently hosted us together with his beloved Joy in his beautiful home in the city as well as one time in his hotel in Mati. He regaled everyone with his endless jokes and ribbing. Who can forget him with his snake around his neck during the mid-year convention held in Davao? It is not an understatement to say that he was a riot!

Many of us were surprised and saddened that he decided to migrate to Canada in search of a better life for himself and his family. But then on the numerous times I was able to visit Raul in Vancouver, I understood his reasons. He had a good life there, having the chance to be fully involved with his family and enjoying his passion for the outdoors. He immensely enjoyed hosting old friends and colleagues who visited him.

He kept in touch all the time as we would be on seemingly endless Viber conversations, the last of which was a video call where he bragged about his beautiful grandchild. This brings me now to express my deep sadness in losing a very good friend. I was shocked, to say the least, when I heard about his sudden passing. Raul lived life to the fullest, with passion, unselfishness and lots of laughter from endless jokes. Raul, my friend, you are missed dearly.