



Mariano B. Caparas, MD (1932 - 2017)

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It is very difficult to write about a man who is bigger than life. And such was Dr. Mariano B. Caparas, Professor and former Chairman, Department of Otorhinolaryngology, College of Medicine - Philippine General Hospital, University of the Philippines Manila.

A native of Balagtas, Bulacan, his first love was to be an artist (a painter) but his parents dissuaded him from doing so and asked him to take up medicine instead. He entered the University of the Philippines College of Medicine (UPCM) and graduated in 1958. He went on to train in the then Department of Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat (EENT) in UP-Philippine General Hospital (PGH). Two years in training, Ophthalmology separated from Otolaryngology. He chose Otolaryngology, graduating in 1961. He went on to do further training in the Princess Margaret Hospital in Canada specializing in maxillofacial prosthesis.

My first encounter with Dr. Caparas was when, as a first year student in the UPCM, we had an immersion program in Bay, Laguna. He was one of our facilitators who stayed with us in the barrio for one week. He taught us how to be true and caring physicians and at the same time, instilled in us the true spirit of nationalism.

Dr. Cap as he is fondly called was the fiery consultant with a lot of vision, patriotism, and a very strong desire to improve Otorhinolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery in the country. The early part of his term as Chair from 1978-1987 was a time of unrest and national strife. We had limited resources then, so he taught us to be self-reliant. He started the development of instruments, from scraps or rundown machines that were practical and easy to use, like suction dissectors, headlights, myringotomy sets and otoscopes. This started

the era of innovation in the department.

As a teacher, he would not just give you facts but rather teach you the hows and whys of things. He challenged you to think out of the box. As a surgeon, he was highly skilled and did a lot of innovative techniques. We had flaps which were fondly called Cap flaps. He was bold enough to attempt unconventional techniques.

He was also co-founder of the Asean Otorhinolaryngological Head and Neck Federation in 1980. It was organized to present and discuss common ORL problems in our region. He always believed in ASEAN first.

He was a true nationalist. During the Marcos era, he led us to fight for freedom. He was at the forefront in the fight against corruption, imperialism and militarism. As one of the prime movers of the then Doctors for Cory, he risked his life for democracy.

Apart from his being a nationalist and a great doctor, he was also an artist and a great painter. We marvel at how he would go up to the board and draw the anatomy of the ear or the neck. He had a gallery of paintings which he gave out to his friends and residents.

On the lighter side, he was an avid golfer. He taught us to learn the sport. When he was getting old and weak, golf kept him going.

When he got sick two years ago of prostate cancer, he did not want any further treatment but we, his ORL family convinced him to fight the big C. He agreed and allowed us to support him in his battle (and thank all who helped him).

We will miss you Dr. Caparas. But I know that you live in each one of us you trained. You have touch the lives of so many Filipinos. Your legacy will live on. Goodbye sir and may you rest in peace.