

## FIDEL P. BURGOS, MD, MHA (1959-2009)

Jose M. Acuin MD, MSc. and Pio R. Pajarillo, MD

Throughout his relatively brief career, Fides received no education other than from the University of the Philippines. His, therefore, was a long and unadulterated mentoring by a school which shaped him from primary level to medicine (UPCM 1984) to specialty residency (ENT-Head and Neck Surgery at UP-PGH, 1989) and to masteral degree (Masters of Hospital Administration at UP Open University, 2006).

After successfully passing the diplomate examinations in 1990, Fides was invited by Dr. Dominador Almeda to join the Far Eastern University Department of ENT-HNS as the residency training officer. There he taught residents and students, passing on to them his exceptional skills as a head and neck surgeon. His integrity and devotion to duty earned him the trust and respect of Dr. Almeda and the other department consultants.

Fides could have easily trained and practiced abroad with the help of his uncles who were also prominent surgeons. But he chose to stay home. More than that, he chose to settle down and establish his practice in Lucena, Quezon when he was invited by another ENT surgeon, Dr. Pio Pajarillo, at the Nañagas EENT Clinic. His practice rapidly grew, attracting a large following of patients who appreciated his brand of expert and compassionate care. Fides never looked back. Something about the simplicity and candor of rural folk appealed to him who always spoke plainly and sincerely. There, in Lucena, Fides poured out all his wondrous skills in treating his patients, seeing them through their illnesses and welcoming them, now made whole again, back to his clinics. There, in Lucena, he fell in love with Alet, whom he married in 1995 and with whom he had two children, Juan Gabriel and Kyla Isabel.

But Fides proved too big and too gifted to remain a provincial ENT doctor, although he would always be the first to tell you that there was nothing more rewarding to him than seeing his patients in his clinic. Local physicians took notice of this straight-talking, honest and dependable physician who somehow appeared to understand that hospitals are about people who must be guided and nurtured to become the best they can possibly be. He became a shoulder to those who felt weighed down by their daily grind, an ear to those who needed to simply open up. He had the knack for seeing through people and divining their intentions. He also understood the complexity of hospital systems. He was persuaded by the local physicians to accept the position of medical director for Lucena United Doctors Hospital, but not without first capping a master of hospital administration from the UP Open University in 2006, graduating *cum laude*.

Fides led the Lucena United Doctors Hospital up to the time he died, whipping the organization into shape and instilling discipline among doctors, nurses and the rest of the staff. He carried a big stick. He expected nothing less than the best from his people and gave nothing but the best of himself as an example. He sought out ways for doing the right things better and systematically pruned the inefficiencies that got in the way. He could not be swayed. People who sought to influence his decisions ran smack into a brick wall. He mentored his management staff, seeing them through difficult tasks and building their confidence. He steered the hospital through tangled webs of regulations and corporate issues. All this did not go unnoticed. In December 1, 2008, the PSO-HNS awarded him a plaque of recognition for being an Outstanding Administrator in his hospital.

Fides was different though, once he was with trusted friends, slipping back to his quiet and laid back manner. The quickness of his laughter to the corniest jokes, the way he opened himself up to speak amid contentious talk belied his easy confidence. He knew he did not have to prove anything anymore.

The day Fides died was like any other. He played badminton but did not come back. Those of us who love and miss him will find it hard indeed to understand why he left. Did God call him as his sum measure fulfilled and even surpassed all His expectations? Was a quick and uneventful bowing out part of the deal for playing well whatever hand God dealt him? We will never know. But for those of us who will find it hard to forget him will probably do well to memorialize him by seizing every swift hour of our lives and throwing ourselves wholly to whatever enterprise we find ourselves in. The way Fides did.

