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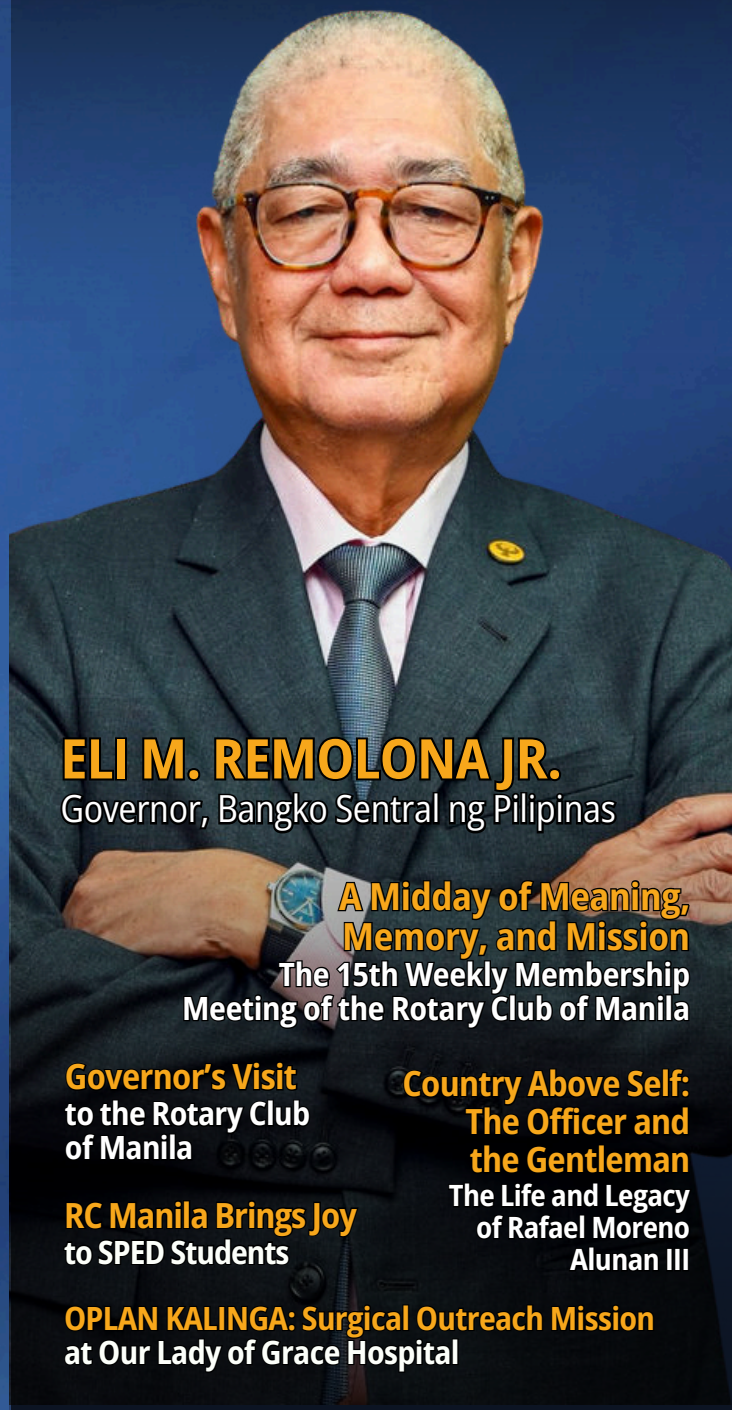
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The Official News Organ of
the Rotary Club of Manila

balita

ISSUE NO. 4074 • JANUARY 8, 2026



ELI M. REMOLONA JR.

Governor, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

**A Midday of Meaning,
Memory, and Mission**

The 15th Weekly Membership
Meeting of the Rotary Club of Manila

**Governor's Visit
to the Rotary Club
of Manila**

**Country Above Self:
The Officer and
the Gentleman**

**RC Manila Brings Joy
to SPED Students**

**The Life and Legacy
of Rafael Moreno
Alunan III**

**OPLAN KALINGA: Surgical Outreach Mission
at Our Lady of Grace Hospital**

CONTENTS



Program	4
Editorial	8
Guest of Honor and Speaker's Profile	14
President's Mid-Year Message	16
A Midday of Meaning, Memory, and Mission The 15th Weekly Membership Meeting of the Rotary Club of Manila	20
Club Administration	42
Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Manila	48
Rotary Club of Manila Brings Joy to SPED Students This Christmas	56
OPLAN KALINGA: Surgical Outreach Mission at Our Lady of Grace Hospital	62
Christmas Gift-Giving in Bulacan	74
Kalinga kay Maria: Women's Health Caravan – Project Update	84
WASH: Saving Communities One Classroom at a Time	86
Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman - The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III	88
Rotating Rotarian	202
Interclub Meetings	203
District Events	206
Christmas Appreciation Lunch for RCM Secretariat	216
Birthday Celebration & Christmas Gift-Giving at Hospicio de San Jose	220
Fellowship	228
Public Image	243
Board of Directors and Executive Officers for RY 2025-2026	246
Editorial Board for RY 2025-2026	247



PROGRAM



ROTARY CLUB OF MANILA 16th Weekly Membership Meeting Rotary Year 2025-2026

Thursday, January 8, 2026, 12:30 PM
Manila Polo Club

a joint meeting with

Rotary Club of Makati West

Moderator: TREAS. PAUL JOSEPH M. "PJ" GARCIA

PART I

11:00 AM Registration

12:30 PM Call to Order

VP RICARDO S.B. "Ricky" GUEVARA

(RC Manila)

PRES. CHRISTOPHER C. "Dino" DUMATOL

(RC Makati West)

Invocation

PP ANTONIO "Dax" CARLOS

(RC Makati West)

Philippine National Anthem | **AVP**

Rotary Club of Manila Hymn

RCM WF Music Chorale

Rotary Club Makati West Hymn

RC Makati West Members

The Four (4) Way Test

RTN. ANTONIO "Tonito" PAYUMO

(RC Makati West)

Acknowledgement of Guests

TREAS. PAUL JOSEPH M. "PJ" GARCIA

Welcome Song | **RCM WF Music Chorale**

Birthday Celebrants:

RC Manila

Jan 3 Rtn. Xavy Zialcita

Jan 7 Rtn. David Lim

Jan 8 PIA Jimmy Laya

RCMakati West

Jan 5 PP Fern Peña

Jan 10 Rtn. Juni Del Rosario

Wedding Anniversaries

Rtn. Lito Mercado & Sps. Chary - Jan 7

Rtn. Jimmy Bautista & Sps. Joji - Jan 9

Maligayang Bati / Happy Birthday Song
RCM WF Chorale

12:50 PM President's Time

VP RICARDO S.B. "Ricky" GUEVARA

(RC Manila)

PRES. CHRISTOPHER C. "Dino" DUMATOL

(RC Makati West)

PROGRAM

PART II

1:00 PM Introduction of the Guest of Honor
and Speaker | **PVP JOEL C. VALDES**

Guest of Honor and Speaker

ELI M. REMOLONA, JR., Ph.D.
*Chairman of the Monetary Board
and Governor
Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas*

1:30 PM Open Forum / Q.A.

1:50 PM Presentation of Certificate of
Appreciation
VP RICARDO S.B. “Ricky” GUEVARA
(RC Manila)

**PRES. CHRISTOPHER C. “Dino”
DUMATOL**
(RC Makati West)

1:55 PM Announcement of the RCMFI Election
of BOT RY 2026-2027

2:00 PM Adjournment
VP RICARDO S.B. “Ricky” GUEVARA
(RC Manila)

**PRES. CHRISTOPHER C. “Dino”
DUMATOL**
(RC Makati West)



THE FIRM OF
CREENCIA CARILLO & VELASCO

RAOUL C. CREENCIA
Managing Partner

EDWIN M. CARILLO
Senior Partner

GLADYS M. CAGADOC-VELASCO
Senior Partner

MARLO V. DESTURA
Junior Partner

JERRY S. UY
Special Counsel

MARIA LEA BERNADETH S. OTICO
Senior Associate

MICHAEL P. PECAYO
Senior Associate

JONA N. PLATEJA
Associate

KRISTINA MARIE S. SAVELLANO
Associate

RENZO NIÑO M. ROSALES
Associate

KEITH MATTHEW R. CAMACHO
Associate

JOAQUIN ANTONIO S. DILLERA
Associate

EDITORIAL

Reginald T. Yu
Editor-in-Chief



AS the Rotary Club of Manila prepares to open another year of inquiry, dialogue, and civic leadership, it does so with a tradition that has quietly become a barometer of national mood: inviting the Governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas as its first speaker of the year.

This year's engagement carries particular weight. The guest is Eli M. Remolona Jr., the 7th Governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, and the moment is unusually consequential. The year ahead —

2026 — will test not only economic fundamentals, but the country's institutional maturity, policy discipline, and capacity to navigate a far more fragmented global order.

This is no longer a post-pandemic recovery conversation. That chapter has closed. What lies ahead is a recalibration — harder, more structural, and more unforgiving of complacency.

Globally, the narrative of “soft landings” and gentle normalization has begun to fray. Interest rates remain structurally higher than the decade-long norms many markets had grown accustomed to. Geopolitical tensions — whether in trade, energy, or security — are no longer episodic disruptions but persistent features of the landscape. Supply chains are being redesigned not for maximum efficiency, but for resilience and strategic alignment.

For emerging economies like the Philippines, this environment presents both opportunity and risk. Capital is more discerning. Investors are no longer chasing yield blindly; they are pricing credibility, policy coherence, and

EDITORIAL

institutional strength. In this context, central banks are not merely custodians of inflation targets—they are anchors of confidence.

It is precisely here that Governor Remolona's perspective becomes critical.

Domestically, the Philippine economy enters 2026 with respectable momentum but unresolved tensions. Growth remains consumption-led, supported by remittances and a young demographic profile. Yet beneath the headline numbers lie structural questions that cannot be deferred indefinitely:

- Can growth be sustained without reigniting inflationary pressures?
- Will fiscal consolidation keep pace with ambitious infrastructure and social spending?
- How resilient is the peso in an era of volatile capital flows and geopolitical shocks?
- And perhaps most importantly: can policy coordination remain credible as political and economic cycles converge?

Governor Remolona inherits a central bank that has earned international respect for its professionalism. But credibility, once earned, must be renewed continuously. The BSP's challenge in 2026 will not simply be to manage inflation—it will be to manage expectations, especially in a society where economic optimism and economic anxiety often coexist.

One of the underappreciated roles of a central bank is its function as a moral authority in economic life. Beyond interest rates and reserve requirements, it signals discipline in a world prone to excess, patience in an age of haste, and long-term thinking in political environments often governed by short horizons.

Governor Remolona's background — as an economist steeped in global finance and institutional reform — suggests a leadership style attuned to complexity rather than slogans. For business leaders, professionals, and civic stewards gathered at the Rotary Club of Manila, his message is expected to be less about reassurance and more about realism.

EDITORIAL

And realism, in 2026, is itself a form of leadership.

That the Rotary Club of Manila has long made it a point to hear from the BSP Governor at the start of the year is no accident. Rotary's constituency — entrepreneurs, executives, professionals, and civic leaders — operates at the intersection of policy and practice. Decisions made in boardrooms, factories, clinics, and communities are shaped, directly or indirectly, by the signals sent from the central bank.

In convening this conversation, the Club affirms its role not merely as a fellowship of service, but as a forum for informed citizenship. Rotary does not wait for certainty; it prepares its members to lead amid uncertainty.

If there is one likely theme that will define the economic prospects of 2026, it is this: less comfort, more clarity.

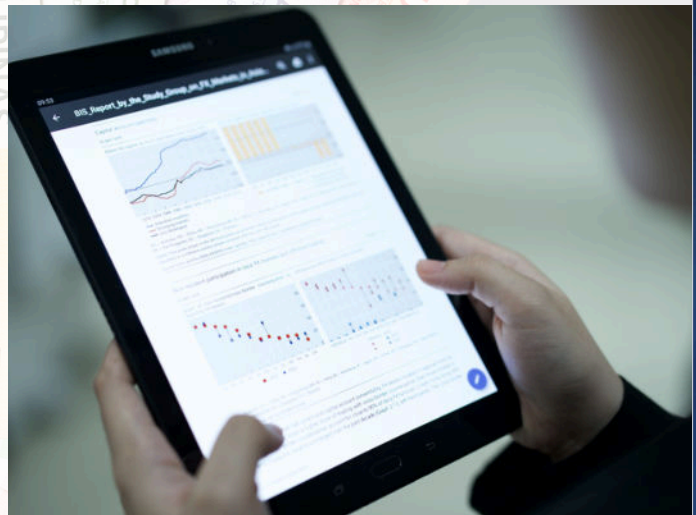
The era of cheap money is behind us. The tolerance for policy drift is narrowing. But for economies that can demonstrate discipline, adaptability, and institutional trust,

the coming years may well reward seriousness over spectacle.

As the Rotary Club of Manila listens to Governor Remolona, it does so not in search of predictions, but of bearings. In a world where noise is abundant, clarity is rare—and therefore invaluable.

The question for 2026 is not whether challenges will arise. They will. The real question is whether the country's institutions — and its leaders — are prepared to meet them with steadiness, credibility, and foresight.

That is why this first speech matters.



GUEST OF HONOR & SPEAKER

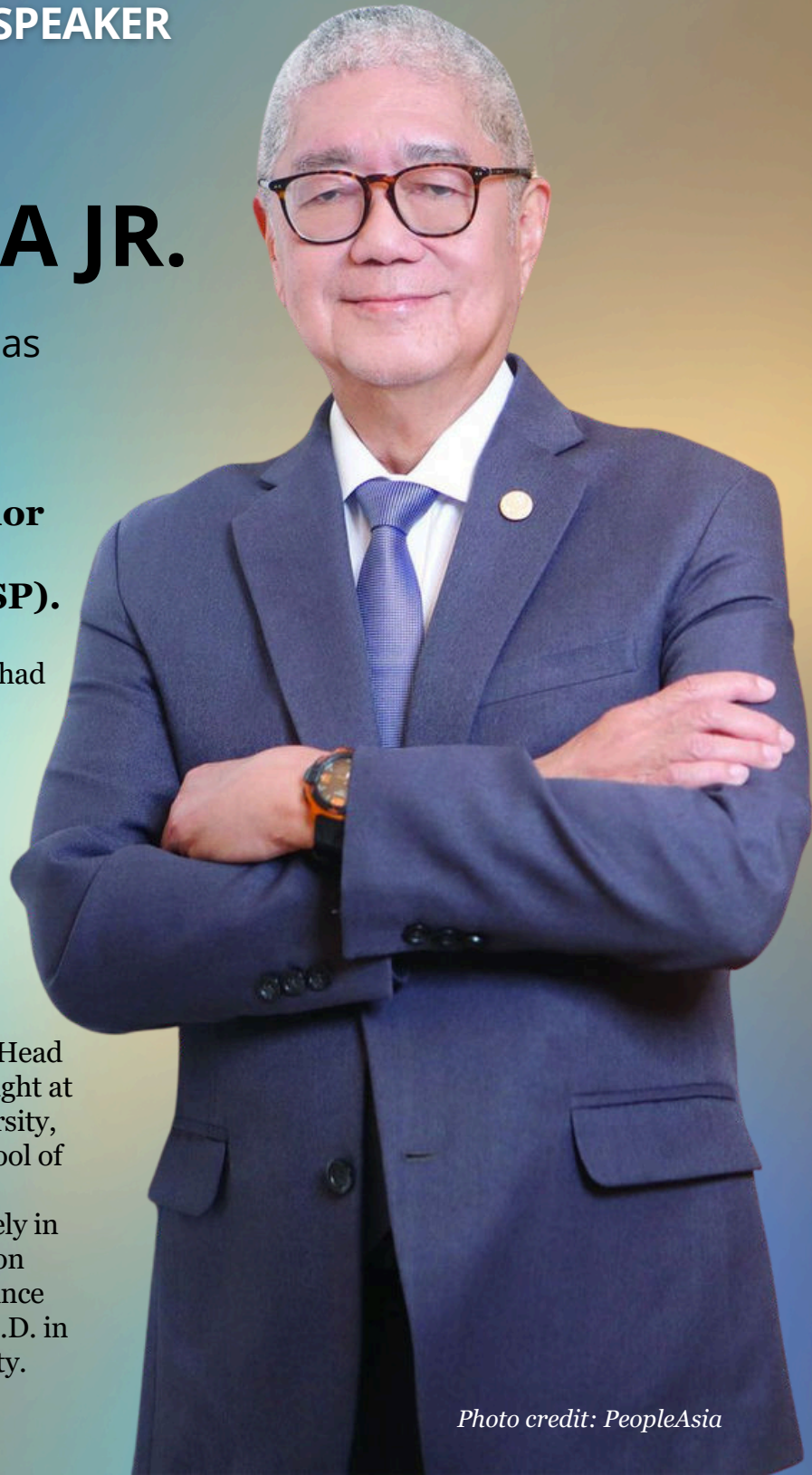
Eli M. REMOLONA JR.

Governor
Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

D R. Eli Remolona Jr. is the Governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

Before joining the BSP, he already had a long career in central banking. Governor Remolona worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York for 14 years and at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) for 19 years. At the BIS in Basel, Switzerland, he was Head of Financial Markets and Editor of the BIS Quarterly Review.

Afterwards, he served as Regional Head for Asia and the Pacific. He has taught at Williams College, Columbia University, New York University, the Asia School of Business and the University of the Philippines. He has published widely in scholarly journals, writing mainly on monetary policy, international finance and financial markets. He has a Ph.D. in economics from Stanford University.



PRESIDENT'S MID-YEAR MESSAGE

As we cross the midpoint of this Rotary Year, the Rotary Club of Manila must pause not merely to take stock of time elapsed, but to reflect with gratitude on the purpose fulfilled, the service rendered, and the collective spirit that has animated our work during the first half of this term.

Indeed, the past six months have affirmed a truth long embedded in the DNA of this venerable Club: that service, when anchored on tradition yet responsive to contemporary needs, remains both relevant and transformative. Guided by Rotary's enduring ideals and strengthened by the experience and commitment of our members, RC Manila has pursued its mission with quiet confidence, purposeful energy, and an unwavering sense of responsibility to the communities we serve.



Raoul C. Creencia
President

Across our various avenues of service, the Club has successfully implemented a wide range of initiatives and programs that reflect both breadth and depth -- programs that are not episodic gestures, but carefully designed interventions aimed at sustainable and measurable impact. Our flagship programs -- LEAP Awards, ARAL Program, and Project RIVER -- as well as our signature projects -- TOWER Awards, Outstanding Ambassador Award, Journalism Award -- have continued to advance education, promote peace, recognize excellence in public service and labor, and uphold the vital role of a free and responsible press. Each initiative bears the imprint of thoughtful planning, strong

PRESIDENT'S MID-YEAR MESSAGE

partnerships, and the shared conviction that service must be meaningful, inclusive, and enduring.

Equally significant has been the Club's continued emphasis on fellowship and institutional strength. The first half of the year has seen active engagement among members, robust participation in meetings and projects, and a reaffirmation of the bonds that unite us as Rotarians and as friends. In a time when voluntary service competes with ever-growing personal and professional demands, the sustained commitment of our members stands as a testament to the enduring appeal of Rotary's call to "Service Above Self."

This midpoint also offers an opportunity for introspection. Leadership in Rotary is not measured by individual visibility, but by the ability to harness collective wisdom, encourage collaboration, and ensure continuity. Any progress achieved thus far is the product of shared leadership – of the Directors and Officers who have discharged their duties with diligence, of Committee Chairs who have translated vision into action, and of each Manila Rotarian who quietly but consistently contributed time, talent, and treasure

that give life to our programs.

As we look toward the second half of the Rotary Year, we do so with both confidence and renewed urgency. There remains much to accomplish, milestones yet to be reached, and initiatives that invite further expansion and refinement. The challenge before us is not simply to sustain momentum, but to deepen impact, that is, to ensure that our projects continue to address real needs, inspire trust, and leave lasting benefits well beyond the confines of this Rotary Year.

At this halfway point, it is worth remembering that while a presidency is finite, the legacy of service is not. Our task, therefore, is to build on the strong foundation already laid, to steward the Club's resources wisely, and to honor the proud heritage of the Rotary Club of Manila by leaving it stronger, more united, and more responsive to the times.

With gratitude for the journey thus far and optimism for the months ahead, we move forward -- celebrating our Club's Destiny and Legacy -- steadfast in purpose, united in fellowship, and resolute in our commitment to service.



cover story

A Midday of Meaning, Memory, and Mission

*The 15th Weekly
Membership Meeting of
the Rotary Club of
Manila*

by PE Reginald T. Yu

MARY MEI V. RODRIGO
DISTRICT GOVERNOR
ROTARY YEAR 2025-2026

Rotary
District 3810

There are Rotary meetings — and then there are gatherings that quietly affirm why institutions endure.

On a December midday at the venerable Manila Polo Club, the Rotary Club of Manila convened its Fifteenth Weekly Membership Meeting for Rotary Year 2025–2026, the last regular meeting for the year 2025. It was not a meeting defined by clockwork precision or formal sequence alone, but by something deeper: continuity of purpose, fidelity to tradition, and the unmistakable sense that service — when done consistently and without spectacle — becomes history.

As members and guests gathered over a shared meal, the atmosphere carried the familiar cadence of Rotary fellowship. Conversations crossed professions and generations; greetings were warm but unhurried. The room, steeped in decades of civic memory, seemed to understand that what was about to unfold was less a program and more a reaffirmation.



President Raoul C. Creencia called the meeting to order.



DSAA John M. Cutter moderated the meeting.

Sacred Openings and Shared Ideals

The formal program opened not with urgency, but with reverence.

A solemn Doxology, rendered by Teatro Rizalia, gently centered the assembly, reminding everyone present that Rotary's work — however practical — rests upon moral grounding.



Teatro Rizalia rendered a solemn Doxology

This was followed by an Invocation led by Director-elect Carlos G. “Caloy” Serapio, whose prayer framed the gathering as one not merely of minds, but of conscience.



Director-elect Carlos G. “Caloy” Serapio led the invocation.

The national anthems of the United States and the Philippines, performed with dignity, underscored the international character of Rotary and the enduring bonds between peoples who share democratic ideals and a commitment to peace. The Rotary Club of Manila Hymn, sung by the RCM WF Music Chorale, followed — less a song than a collective memory set to music.



Himig Rizalia rendered the Philippine National Anthem.

When the Four-Way Test was recited, led by Past Director Issam Eldebs, it did not sound rehearsed. It sounded lived-in — principles tested and applied daily by men and women who understand that ethics are not slogans, but habits.



Past Director Issam Eldebs led the recitation of the Four-Way Test.

Leadership in Quiet Motion

The acknowledgment of guests, masterfully moderated by DSAA John M. Cutter, set the tone for a meeting that balanced protocol with warmth. A welcome song once again brought the Chorale to the fore, reinforcing the idea that Rotary gatherings are sustained not just by speeches, but by shared participation.

President Raoul C. Creencia, during his President’s Time, spoke not as a figurehead but as a steward—offering reflections that tied recent accomplishments to Rotary’s broader mission. His remarks carried the

confidence of leadership grounded in teamwork, a reminder that progress is seldom the work of one.



President Raoul C. Creencia delivered his messages during the Presidents' Time.

Honoring Service Beyond Borders

A defining moment of the meeting was the presentation of the Rotary Club of Manila Outstanding Ambassador of the Year Award.

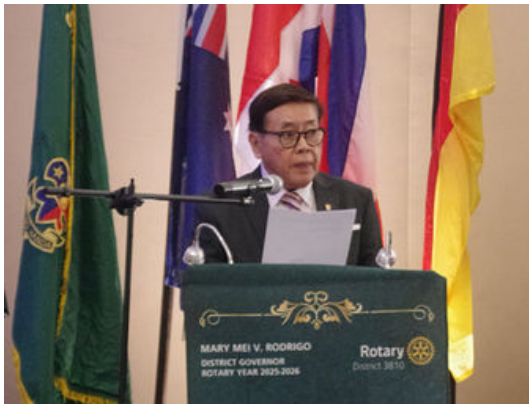
Introduced by Past District Governor Joaquin "Jackie" C. Rodriguez, Sr., Chairman of the Ambassador of the Year Committee, the award was conferred upon Her Excellency MaryKay L. Carlson, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Philippines.



Her Excellency MaryKay L. Carlson, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States to the Philippines, has been honored with the Rotary Club of Manila's Outstanding Ambassador of the Year Award.

The recognition was not ceremonial flattery. It was acknowledgment of a diplomatic presence marked by consistency, respect, and a deep appreciation for people-to-people engagement. The serenade that followed — performed by Himig Rizalia — served as a cultural offering, affirming that gratitude, when sincere, is best expressed through shared heritage.

The Ambassador was formally introduced by Rotarian Victor “Vic” G. Garcia III, after which she addressed the Club. Her speech, received with attentiveness and respect, stood as a testament to enduring alliances and mutual service — but its substance remains purposefully unrecorded here, allowing the moment itself to stand intact.



Rtn. Victor G. “Vic” Garcia III introduced the Guest of Honor and Speaker.

Standing once more within the storied halls of the Manila Polo Club, Her Excellency MaryKay L. Carlson spoke not merely as a diplomat fulfilling protocol, but as a witness to a relationship shaped by time, trial, and trust. Her return to the Rotary Club of Manila—Asia’s first Rotary Club—was framed as both a privilege and a homecoming, underscoring the symbolic weight of place in the long arc of history.

She began by acknowledging what Rotarians know instinctively but rarely articulate aloud: that service, when sustained and sincere, leaves an imprint. The Ambassador’s admiration for the Club’s recent accomplishments was not perfunctory praise. Her remark—that a single month’s report read like a year’s worth of work—was both astonishment and affirmation. It reflected an understanding that Rotary’s impact lies not in isolated events, but in relentless consistency, in showing up again and again for the common good.

Receiving the Outstanding Ambassador Award, Ambassador Carlson responded not with personal triumph, but with collective humility.

She accepted the recognition on behalf of the entire U.S. Embassy team, situating the honor within a broader narrative of partnership between nations. In doing so, she reinforced a central theme of her address: that diplomacy, like Rotary service, is never the work of one individual alone. It is sustained by teams, institutions, and shared purpose.

People-to-People: The Quiet Architecture of Diplomacy

At the heart of her reflections was a

conviction that the strongest alliances are not forged solely through treaties or official statements, but through human connection. Ambassador Carlson emphasized that people-to-people ties form the living architecture of U.S.–Philippine relations.

She highlighted the Philippine-American Educational Foundation (PAEF) — widely known as Fulbright — as a powerful symbol of this bond. Home to the world’s longest-running Fulbright Commission, the program stands as a quiet but enduring engine of mutual understanding. Through scholarships and exchanges, including in advanced fields such as space science and civil nuclear workforce development, generations of Filipinos and Americans have crossed borders not merely to study, but to return home transformed—carrying with them shared values, expertise, and lifelong connections.

With more than 10,000 alumni, these exchanges have created a living bridge between societies, one that renews itself daily through classrooms, laboratories, public service, and innovation. The Ambassador made clear that such investments are not abstract ideals; they are deliberate commitments to a shared future.



Her Excellency MaryKay L. Carlson, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States to the Philippines

Service Rekindled: The Return of the Peace Corps

Ambassador Carlson’s reflections turned next to the Peace Corps, another enduring symbol of grassroots partnership. During her tenure, 170 new volunteers were deployed to the Philippines — joining over 9,000 who have served Filipino communities since 1961.

This achievement carried special resonance. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Peace Corps operations were halted world-wide, restarting the program required not only logistical coordination,

but trust, resilience, and renewed commitment. Bringing Peace Corps back into service was, as the Ambassador noted, no small feat. It stood as proof that shared purpose can outlast even global disruption.

Peace Corps volunteers, she emphasized, embody the very spirit that defines the U.S.–Philippine relationship: partnership rooted in humility, service grounded in respect, and a belief that real change begins at the community level.

Partners in Prosperity: Building the Future Together

Beyond people-to-people ties, Ambassador Carlson articulated a vision of the two nations as partners in prosperity. She pointed to collaborative initiatives such as the Luzon Economic Corridor, where the United States, the Philippines, Japan, and other like-minded partners are accelerating high-impact investments designed to spur growth from Subic Bay across key regions.

She cited concrete examples to illustrate how diplomacy translates into livelihoods. The expansion of the Royal Cold Storage Facility in Bulacan by I Squared Capital, she explained, is not merely an infrastructure project —

*... economic cooperation
becomes an extension
of service: a means
of empowering
communities,
strengthening systems,
and ensuring shared
growth.*

it is an investment in food security, job creation, and regional resilience. The firm's commitment of over two billion U.S. dollars across logistics, energy, and digital infrastructure exemplifies how private-sector engagement can deliver tangible, lasting benefits.

In this framing, economic cooperation becomes an extension of service: a means of empowering communities, strengthening systems, and ensuring shared growth.

Allies in Security, United in Crisis

The Ambassador's address then turned to the enduring strength of the U.S.–Philippine alliance as security

partners. With the upcoming 75th anniversary of the Mutual Defense Treaty, she described the alliance as ironclad — not as rhetoric, but as lived reality.

She referenced the United States' recent announcement of 500 million U.S. dollars in supplemental foreign military financing to support the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and enhance maritime security. Yet, it was her discussion of disaster response that carried particular emotional weight.

In recounting U.S. assistance following Super Typhoon Uwan, Ambassador Carlson emphasized that the 2.5 million dollars cited represented only the value of commodities delivered. It did not include the deployment of U.S. military airlift capabilities or personnel on the ground. This distinction mattered. It underscored a deeper truth: that in moments of crisis, alliances are measured not by statements, but by speed, presence, and solidarity.

Rotary and the Spirit of Shared Purpose

In closing, Ambassador Carlson drew a parallel between the alliance she

represents and the institution before her. The Rotary Club of Manila, she observed, embodies the same spirit that animates strong international partnerships: leadership anchored in service, devotion to the common good, and a quiet refusal to be indifferent.

As the world looks toward 2026 — the 80th anniversary of formal U.S.–Philippine diplomatic relations—her remarks resonated as both reflection and invitation. There is much to celebrate, yes, but also much to steward. The future, she implied, will belong to those who choose cooperation over isolation, service over self-interest, and shared destiny over short-term gain.

In that sense, her address was not merely a speech — it was a reaffirmation of a covenant. One between nations. One between institutions. And one between people who believe that the truest measure of partnership is not power, but purpose.



Ambassador Carlson and PP Chito Zaldarriaga during the Q&A

Fellowship in Celebration

As the program transitioned into celebration, the Rotary Club of Manila did what it has always done best: honor its own.

Birthday celebrants — spanning seasoned past directors to current leaders and active members — were recognized not merely for another year lived, but for years of service given. In Rotary, birthdays are less about age and more about accumulated commitment.

The list was long, the applause sincere. Each name carried with it stories of committee meetings, service projects, and quiet acts of generosity rarely seen but deeply felt.

Welcoming New Stewards of Service

Few moments in Rotary are as quietly powerful as an Induction of New Members.

Introduced by President Creencia and presented by Past President Domingo S.B. “Boy” Guevara together with President-Elect Reginald T. “Reggie” Yu, the induction welcomed professionals from law, real estate, medicine, physical therapy, and commodities trading.



Oath-taking of new members:

RALPH VALENTIN L. KHO
VP/Owner, Sonera Industrial Grp., Inc.
Proposer: PE Reggie T. Yu

ERIC C. KE
President, Sonera Industrial Grp., Inc
Proposers: PP Boy Guevara, DGND Hermie S. Esguerra, and PE Reggie T. Yu

CHRISTOPHER U. LIAO
Owner, Fisio Rehabilitation Clinic
Proposers: DGND Hermie S. Esguerra and PE Reggie T. Yu

WINSTON M. GINEZ
Founding Partner – Quial Ginez Beltran & Yu
Proposer: Pres. Raoul C. Creencia

CHRIS C. TAMESIS
Managing Partner, Sadsad Tamesis Legal and Accountancy Firm (STLAF)
Proposer: PP Boy Guevara

Each new member stood not as an addition to a roster, but as a new custodian of Rotary's ideals. Their Oath of Membership, administered by the President, was more than a formality — it was an entry into a lineage of service that predates them and will, in time, outlast them.

Accountability and the Future in View

Transparency and stewardship took center stage as Past District Governor Alexander P. “Alex” Cureg delivered the RCMFI Accomplishment and Financial Status Report. Numbers were presented not as abstractions, but as reflections of trust — resources entrusted by members to serve causes larger than themselves.

This was followed by the NOMELEC Results, reported by President-Elect Reggie Yu, signaling continuity,



Past District Governor Alexander P. “Alex” Cureg delivered the RCMFI Accomplishment and Financial Status Report.

order, and democratic process within the Club's governance. Leadership, after all, is not only about vision, but about orderly succession.

A Meeting That Echoes Forward

When the meeting adjourned, there was no sense of finality — only momentum.

Members lingered. Conversations resumed. Plans were quietly discussed. The Rotary Club of Manila, Asia's first Rotary Club, once again demonstrated that longevity is not sustained by nostalgia, but by relevance; not by ceremony alone, but by service renewed week after week.

In a world increasingly defined by noise and haste, this meeting offered something rarer: measured purpose, earned tradition, and a shared belief that service — when done faithfully — becomes legacy.



President Raoul Creencia adjourned the meeting.

15th Weekly Membership Meeting Fellowship



RCM Members' Attendance Report
RY 2025-2026



ATTENDANCE REPORT
December 2025

DECEMBER 2025	x	December 11, 2025
	x	THE AMBASSADOR AWARD: US AMBASSADOR H.E. MARYKAY CARLSON
MEMBERS PRESENT	0	42
MEMBERS PRESENT %	0%	19%
MAKE UP ATTENDEES	0	31
EXEMPTED	0	6
ON LEAVE	0	0
Total Active Members	0	73
Total # of Members	214	218
TOTAL %:	0%	33%
ROTARACTORS	0	11
MEDIA	0	5
EMBASSIES / DIPLOMATIC CORPS	0	0
DG, DGE, DGN, PDG	0	0
GOHS / GS	0	1
VISITING ROTARIAN	0	2
Guests of RCM MEMBERS	0	29
TOTAL ATTENDEES	0	85



LIST OF ATTENDEES
December 11, 2025

1	Albaña, Michael Jaey C	23	Macatoman, Abdulgani M.
2	Bartolome III, Arsenio M.	24	Magsaysay, Francisco D.
3	Benedicto, Sixto T.	25	Matschuck, Guenter Gerhard G.
4	Carlos, Vicente J.	26	Mauricio, Antonilo DC
5	Creencia, Raoul C.	27	Nolido, Ramon Alberto B.
6	Cureg, Alexander P.	28	Obrado, Daniel Calzado
7	Cutter, John Michael	29	Preysler, Jr., Fausto R.
8	Del Rosario Sr., Oscar A.	30	Rodriguez Sr., Joaquin C.
9	Egan, Brendan W.L.	31	Schneider, Bernd
10	Eldebs, Issam	32	Serapio, Carlos G.
11	Enriquez III, Eduardo V.	33	Simon, Juanito A.
12	Esguerra, Herminio S.	34	Valdes, Joel C.
13	Garcia, Paul Joseph M.	35	Valdez, Amado D.
14	Garcia,III Victor G.	36	Yu, Reginald Tieng
15	Guevara, Jr., Domingo S.	37	Zaldarriaga, Felix Francisco S.
16	Hallare, Nicolo S.	38	Ginez, Winston M.
17	Hernandez, Edwin H	39	Ke, Eric C.
18	Ibuyan, Benedict Julius F.	40	Tamesis, Chris C.
19	Katigbak, J Alfonso L	41	Liao, Christopher U.
20	Koh, Paul Anthony T	42	Kho, Ralph Valentin L.
21	Locsin, Arsenio Z.		

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

List of Members Who Have Paid Their Annual Dues for RY 2025-2026

As of January 6, 2026

1	ABOY, VALENTINO G.
2	ABRIAM, ARIEL
3	ACOSTA, CRISPINIANO G.
4	AGNES, JERRY A.
5	ALBAÑA, MICHAEL JAHEY
6	ALDAY, ALBERT S.
7	ALINGOG, ALDOUS REX A.
8	ALUNAN, RAFAEL M.
9	ANDAL, AVELINO L.
10	ARAGON, JOSHUA RUEBEN G.
11	ARAMBULO, JOAQUIN JR. L.
12	ARGUELLES, PABLO C.
13	AVENTURA, AVELINO JR. L.
14	BAGATSING, VALENTINO
15	BALANAY, ARIES B.
16	BARTOLOME, ARSENIO III M.
17	BAUTISTA, JOHN JR.
18	BEDIONES, RODOLFO P.
19	BELLA, GERONIMO JR. D.
20	BENEDICTO, BERNARDO III T.
21	BENEDICTO, SIXTO T.
22	BERTELSEN, BERTEL INGMAR
23	BLANCO, MANUEL M.
24	BOGOVICH, JASON M.
25	BRANELEC, JACQUES
26	BUENDIA, CARLOS
27	CABANGON, EDGARD
28	CABUNAG, ROGELIO
29	CAMAT, NATHANIEL
30	CAMPOS, JOSELITO JR. D.
31	CANON, RAUL JR C.
32	CARLOS, VICENTE J.
33	CARRANCEJA, ARVIN ARIK B.
34	CASTRO, KARLO EUGENE JOSEF M.
35	CATALAN, RODILLO
36	CHAHWAN, RAMI
37	CHAN, ROBERT JR.
38	CID, DEAN
39	CO, VAL CONSTANTINE L.
40	COYIUTO, ROBERT JR. G.
41	CREENCIA, RAOUL C.
42	CUREG, ALEXANDER P.
43	CUTTER, JOHN MICHAEL
44	DAYANG, JUAN E.
45	DAVIS, RAYMOND N.

46	DEL ROSARIO, OSCAR
47	DIONISIO, RAFAEL
48	DOMINGO, RICO, V.
49	DOMINGUEZ, CARLOS G.
50	DY, MANUEL
51	EGAN, BRENDAN
52	ELDEBS, ISSAM
53	ENRIQUEZ, EDUARDO III
54	ESGUERRA, HERMINIO S.
55	ESQUIVIAS, JOAQUIN PABLO A.
56	EUGENIO, JOHN EMYL G.
57	EUGENIO, ERIC
58	FAJARDO, BEDA G.
59	FERNANDEZ, ANTONIO JAIME JOSE V.
60	FOLLOSCO, CEFERINO JR. G.
61	GARCIA, HERBERT JOEY
62	GARCIA, PAUL JOSEPH M.
63	GARCIA, THEODORE Q.
64	GARCIA, VICTOR III G.
65	GASPAR, FERNANDO
66	GINEZ, WINSTON M.
67	GO, DANNY C.
68	GO, HENRY S.
69	GONZALES, JONAS R.
70	GONZALES-LA'O, EMIL
71	GUARIN, MICHAEL ARCATOMY
72	GUEVARA, DOMINGO JR.
73	GUEVARA, RICARDO S.B.
74	HALLARE, DELFIN JR.
75	HALLARE, NICOLO
76	HERNANDEZ, EDWIN H.
77	HESSE, UWE
78	IBUYAN, BENEDICT JULIUS F.
79	JUCABAN, JERIC J.
80	KALAW, TEODORO ALEJANDRO IV Y.
81	KANDA, HIROYUSI
82	KATIGBAK J ALFONSO L
83	KHO, RALPH VALENTIN
84	KLEBS, DAVID
85	KOH, PAUL ANTHONY
86	LACAMBACAL, ALVIN
87	LIAMZON, ROMEO THADDEUS M.
88	LIM, RICHARD
89	LAUREL, RICARDO P.
90	LAZARO, JUAN MIGUEL

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

List of Members Who Have Paid Their Annual Dues for RY 2025-2026

As of January 6, 2026

91	LEDDA, JAIME VICTOR B.
92	LEE, RICHARD L.
93	LI, RICHARD JOSEPH C.
94	LIM, DAVID EDUARDO T.
95	LOCSIN, ARSENIO Z.
96	LONZAGA, REINERIO C.
97	LOPEZ, ANTONIO
98	LOPEZ, ARTHUR M.
99	LORENZANA, DELFIN
100	MACAPAGAL, MICHAEL T.
101	MACATOMAN, ABDULGANI M.
102	MAGSAYSAY, FRANCISCO D.
103	MANALAYSAY, CESAR P.
104	MANGALILE, SENEN
105	MARTINEZ, RONALD
106	MATSCHUCK, GUENTER GERHARD G.
107	MAURICIO, ANTONILO DC
108	MAURICIO, FRANCISCO ROBERTO C.
109	MENDOZA, MIGUEL
110	MENDOZA, RAYMUND JOSEPH D.
111	MOMMAERTS, STEVE
112	NOLIDO, RAMON ALBERTO B.
113	NOMURA, KAZUHIRO
114	NONES, ROMEO C.
115	NUÑEZ, JOSE A.
116	OBRADO, DANIEL
117	OCAMPO, TEODORO J.
118	ONG, PHILIP
119	ONG, ROWEL JANSON S.
120	PAGDANGANAN, ROBERTO M.
121	PALACIOS, ALBERT S.
122	PALLASIGUE, JOHN BRIAN C.
123	PANTALEON, OLIVER
124	PASCUAL, ABRAHAM
125	PAYUMO, FELICITO C.
126	PELIÑO, WILFREDO
127	PINEDA, JESUS JR. M.
128	PINEDA, PATRICIO JR. F.
129	PIZARRAS, JORDAN M.
130	PREYSLER, FAUSTO JR. D.R.
131	PUJALTE, JOSE BRITTANIO JR.
132	RA, INGILL
133	RAMOS, CLAVER P.
134	RANKL, PETER
135	RECTO, PHILIP H.

136	REYNOLDS, DAVID
137	RODRIGUEZ, JOAQUIN ANTHONY JR. H.
138	RODRIGUEZ, JOAQUIN SR. C.
139	ROMUALDEZ, FERDINAND MARTIN G.
140	ROXAS, MICHAEL D.
141	SARMIENTO, RICARDO MANUEL M.
142	SCHMITZ, STEFAN
143	SCHNEIDER, BERND
144	SERAPIO, CARLOS G.
145	SEVILLA, LUIS ANGELO L.
146	SHIMODA, SHIGERU
147	SIBAYAN, JOSELITO H.
148	SIMON, JUANITO AYSON
149	SO, WARREN
150	SOBREPEÑA, ROBERT JOHN
151	STRANATHAN, IKE EDWARD
152	SYJUCO, JOSE, JR. A.
153	TAGAYSAY, HECTOR O.
154	TALAMPAS, JOSE ANGEL L.
155	TALUSAN, FERDINAND E.
156	TAMANO, SHALIMAR H.
157	TAMAYO, VICTOR L.
158	TAMESIS, CHRIS
159	TAN, EUSEBIO V.
160	TAN, JOHN G.
161	TAN, LAWRENCE L.
162	TEE, TEDDY JR. B.
163	TEJUMAL, MICHAEL
164	TILLMAN, HANSEL JOSEPH MICHAEL L.
165	VALDES, JOELC.
166	VALDEZ, AMADO
167	VALDEZ, JASON ROLAND N.
168	VALDERRAMA, JASON ROMEO
169	VALENCIA, JOHN NICO P.
170	VALENCIA, RODOLFO G.
171	VAZQUEZ, EVARISTO JR.
172	VILLARICA, HENRY R.
173	YAP, ENRIQUE JR.
174	YORDANOV, STEFAN
176	YU, GEOFFREY C.
177	YU, REGINALD T.
178	ZALDARRIAGA, FELIX FRANCISCO S.
179	ZEITOUNI, NAGI
180	ZIALCITA, XAVIER Y.
181	ZIMMER, CHRISTOPHER

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Manila



THE Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Manila was held on December 15, 2025 at SMX MOA's Meeting Room 7.



Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Manila

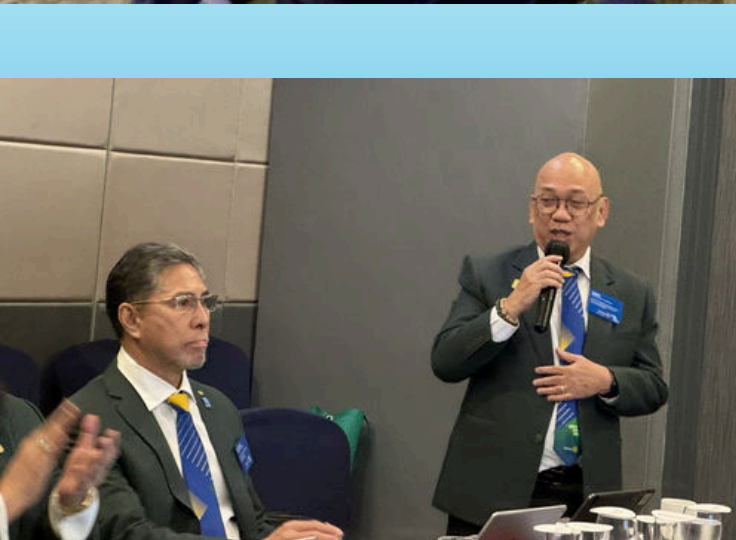


Joining District Governor Mary Mei Rodrigo from the RIDistrict 3810 team were District Secretary General and DGND Hermie Esguerra, District Executive Secretary Eric Candidato, Chief of Staff George Ng, District Treasurer Cristy Esquiban, and District TRF Chair James Tan.

With President Raoul Creencia were PE Reggie Yu (rendered the invocation), Assistant Internal Auditor /Director-elect Mike Roxas (led the recitation of The Rotarian Pledge), Director Warren So (led the recitation

of the 4-Way Test), Director Edwin Hernandez (presented the RCM Board of Directors, Officers and Project Chair), Secretary Anton Mauricio (presented the Board of Directors and Officers), Assistant Secretary Paco Magsaysay, Vice President-elect/Assistant Treasurer Karlo Castro, Internal Auditor Nick Locsin, Director-elect/Board Legal Adviser Caloy Serapio, Director-elect/LEAP Chair Teddy Kalaw, Program Chair/Director-elect Del Lorenzana, and Oral Health Chair/ DSAA John Cutter.

Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Manila



District Executive Secretary Eric Candidato commenting on the Rotary Club of Manila's report.

PEACEBUILDING AND
CONFLICT PREVENTION



PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION



DISEASE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT



WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE



MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY

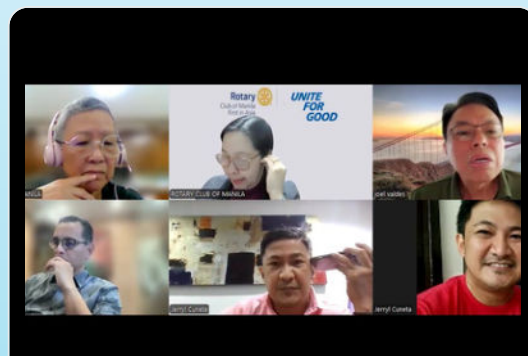


COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



ENVIRONMENT

RC Manila and Operation Smile Philippines Meet for Updates on the Project Global Grant for Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery



THE Rotary Club of Manila met with Jerryl Cuneta of Operation Smile Philippines on December 12, 2025. The meeting, which was attended by President Raoul Creencia, Past Vice President Joel Valdes, Consultant Anna Kun-Toledo, and ES Lhea Lozano, covered key updates on the Project Global Grant for Cleft Lip and Palate Surgery and marked the conclusion of its second successful mission.



ON December 10, 2025, the Ynares Event Center in Antipolo City came alive with laughter, joy, and the spirit of giving as the Rotary Club of Manila hosted its annual SPED Family Fun Day. This heartwarming event brought together special education (SPED) students and their families for a day filled with meaningful connections, holiday cheer, and acts of kindness.



Rotary Club of Manila Brings Joy to SPED Students This Christmas



Guided by the Rotary motto, *Service Above Self*, the event celebrated the resilience and vibrant spirit of these remarkable young learners. Through thoughtful gift-giving, engaging activities, and shared moments of joy, the Rotary Club reaffirmed its commitment to fostering inclusion, dignity, and equal opportunities for all.



2025
**SPED
FAMILY
FUN DAY**

DECEMBER 10 | YNARES EVENT CENTER

PLDFT Smart FOUNDATION

Rotary Club of Manila
RCMANILA FOUNDATION, INC.

IVAN THE SE LFIE

Pino's For Our Charter

Healthy PURE

PERMEX

A collage of several photos showing people at the event. Some photos show groups of people posing, while others show individuals. The photos are arranged in a circular pattern around the central text.

Rotary Club of Manila Brings Joy to SPED Students This Christmas





DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT

OPLAN KALINGA: Surgical Outreach Mission at Our Lady of Grace Hospital



OUR Lady of Grace Hospital in San Dionisio, Parañaque became a place of healing and compassion as the Rotary Club of Manila, RC Manila Foundation, Inc., and the World Surgical Foundation Philippines joined forces for OPLAN KALINGA.

Held on December 11-12, 2025, this surgical outreach mission provided free, essential surgeries to patients who had long awaited care they could not afford.

Volunteer surgeons, nurses, and medical staff worked with precision and heart, ensuring that each patient left not only with improved health but also with renewed hope for the future.



DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT

OPLAN KALINGA: Surgical Outreach Mission at Our Lady of Grace Hospital



President Raoul Creencia attended the event, alongside Project Chair Dr. Paul Koh, Co-Chair Dr. Jun Aventura, and Secretary Anton Mauricio. The World Surgical Foundation Philippines team was led by its President, Dr. Suntay.





DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT

OPLAN KALINGA: Surgical Outreach Mission at Our Lady of Grace Hospital



For many, these procedures were life-changing, offering relief from pain and the chance to reclaim their daily lives.



OPLAN KALINGA reflects the Rotary's unwavering dedication to action-driven service. It's about more than medical care—it's about showing up for those who need it most and proving that compassion, when paired with action, can truly transform lives.



OLPH SURGICAL OUTREACH PROGRAM PROJECT REPORT

WORLD SURGICAL
FOUNDATION PHILIPPINES

x



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Surgeries Accessible to the Vulnerable (SAVE) Program is made to bridge the gap on accessibility of surgeries to the marginalized group. The program, which aims to reach far-flung areas in the country and to provide indigent patients access to free and quality surgical services, has helped more than 9,000 indigent surgical patients in 71 locations nationwide.

BACKGROUND / HIGHLIGHTS

People say that Metro Manila is a place where the rich and poor coexist. With nearly 14.9 million residents, Metro Manila is also home to a significant urban poor population. According to Urban Displacement Project, an estimated 37% of Metro Manila's residents live in slum areas with rudimentary living conditions—lack of access to safe and proper housing, utilities, and public services.

Health disparities are stark in urban poor communities as residents face disproportionate rates of respiratory illnesses, diarrhea, and other preventable diseases due to poor sanitation and hygiene.

58% of government surgical-capable hospitals are concentrated in Metro Manila. Furthermore, according to the 2020 Philippine College of Surgeons Manpower Study, 50.6% of surgeons and 43.4% of anesthesiologists nationwide are concentrated in Metro Manila. Even with these numbers, a recent global review of barriers to surgical care in low-income and middle-income countries highlight other factors such as cultural hesitance, and insufficient funds for indirect costs (transport, lost income, lodging).

Taking these circumstances into account, World Surgical Foundation Philippines, in partnership with the Rotary Club of Manila, SunLife Foundation, Rotary Club of Makati Central, and Our Lady of Peace Hospital, conducted the OLPH Surgical Outreach last December 11-12, 2025. In two OR days, a total of 36 major procedures were successfully conducted directly benefitting patients suffering from neglected surgical conditions. These cases include 18 cases of open cholecystectomy, 6 cases of major mass excision, 5 cases of hemorrhoidectomy, 3 cases of total thyroidectomy, 2 cases of hernioplasty, 1 case of parotidectomy, and 1 case of total mastectomy.

ECONOMIC VALUE IMPACT

EST. SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Monetary Equivalent of Major Surgical Procedures Conducted
Income of Beneficiaries During Productive Years

PHP 3,678,000.00
PHP 6,5005,200.00

Total

PHP 10,183,200.00

PATIENT STORY: CHRISTINE CONGE



Christine, a 33-year-old mother from Malabon City, has lived with a growing neck lump since she was a child. Although she first sought medical advice at age seven and again in college,, financial constraints and life priorities prevented her from pursuing treatment. After giving birth to her first child in 2023, the lump grew more aggressively, becoming painful and burdensome in her daily life.

She lives with her partner of nine years and their two-year-old child. While working as an office staff and serving as her family's breadwinner, Christine also supports the therapy of her sibling who has special needs. The lump affected her work, her confidence, and even forced her to stop singing in her church choir due to pain and discomfort. She also mentioned having to wear closed neck-dresses to hide her lump. At work, she finds it very difficult to lift heavy things and do physically straining tasks.

Christine is very grateful that she was chosen to be a beneficiary of the surgical mission. Last December 11, she got her long overdue treatment which transformed her life—relieving her pain, improving her sleep, restoring her confidence. Most of all, it gave her renewed hope to care for her family without sacrificing her own health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

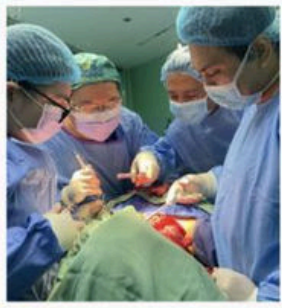
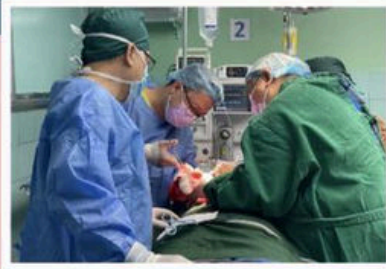
With immense gratitude and heartfelt appreciation, we at WSFP extend our sincerest thanks to our partners' unwavering support and invaluable contributions to the success of the 2-day OLPH Surgical Outreach.

Our appreciation goes to Rotary Club of Manila for their partnership in making this project a reality. This partnership has transformed the lives of numerous underprivileged patients, offering them a chance for a brighter and healthier future.

We also extend our gratitude to our steadfast partners, SunLife Foundation, and Rotary Club of Makati Central, and Our Lady of Peace Hospital White Coat Manila, Calmoseptine and 8990 Holdings, Inc. Your contributions have made significant impact in the lives of our indigent patients and their families.

Lastly, we extend our deepest appreciation to the Philippine College of Surgeons - SURE Commission, Philippine Society of Anesthesiologists, and periOperative Registered Nurses Association of the Philippines, whose support has been instrumental for the success of the project. Your commitment to service and welfare has been pivotal in making this initiative a reality. Your participation has created ripples of hope and healing.

Together, our collective efforts have brought hope, healing, and transformed futures for these deserving children and their families. Your support has been instrumental in making a profound difference in their lives.





CHRISTMAS GIFT-GIVING

Brings Hope to Bulacan Communities

THE Rotary Club of Manila, in partnership with the Dangal ng Bulacan Foundation, Inc., brought much-needed relief and holiday cheer to four barangays across Bulacan.

These communities, still recovering from severe flooding, were reminded that they are not alone this Christmas. The gift-giving activity held on December 20, 2025 was more than just distributing presents—it was about showing solidarity and offering a sense of hope during difficult times.

Christmas Gift-Giving in Bulacan



RCM Members met for breakfast at Hiyas ng Bulacan Convention Center.



At Barangay Bulihan, Malolos, Bulacan distribution site



RCM is represented by President Raoul and Spouse Myls Creencia, DGND Hermie Esguerra, PDG Obet Pagdanganan, IPP Jujut Enriquez, Dir Mike Albaña, Sec. Anton Mauricio, DE/BLA Caloy Serapio, PD Oscar del Rosario, and staff Jonathan Lagarto.



Christmas Gift-Giving in Bulacan



Rotarians and volunteers worked hand in hand to deliver not only gifts but also a message of care and support. The event highlighted the power of partnerships and the importance of reaching out to those in need.

For the families in Bulacan, it was a moment of joy amidst challenges, and for those who participated, it was a meaningful way to live out the true spirit of the season.



Christmas Gift-Giving in Bulacan



PDG Obet Pagdanganan shared an inspiring message for his fellow Bulakeños.



DGND Hernie Esguerra, also member of the Board of Dangal Ng Bulacan Foundation, delivered his message.



President Raoul Creencia delivered his Christmas message.



Christmas Gift-Giving in Bulacan



Christmas greetings from the Rotary Club of Manila and Dangal Ng Bulacan Foundation, Inc.



Lunch at Mesa Alta & Events Venue, Malolos, Bulacan hosted Ms. Cristina Tuzon, VP-Dangal Foundation, and Regional Director of PCCI and owner of Mesa Alta & Events Venue.



MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH

PROJECT UPDATE

Kalinga kay Maria: Women's Health Caravan

89 Patients

5 OB Ultrasounds
& Prenatal
Consultations

89 Breast
exams

84 Gyne
Ultrasounds &
Consultations

73 VIAs

1 Thermal
Coagulation

1 Cervical
Polypectomy

11 Breast
Ultrasounds

KnKPinC-Rotary District 3810 OB-Gyn Medical Mission



Ground Flr, Champ Bldg, Anda Circle Bonifacio Drive, Port Area Manila-Dec. 8, 2025



WATER, SANITATION,
AND HYGIENE



WASH-Ed (WASH Education Pty Ltd) is an organization that delivers engaging WASH education curricula and supports schools and communities across the Asia-Pacific region with digital resources and training for educators. Through its partners, it brings quality WASH education to various communities, including the Philippines.

The partnership between WASH-Ed and the Rotary Club of Manila focuses on:

- **WASH education outreach** — delivering hygiene lessons and skill building to students and communities.
- **Community engagement projects** — Rotary and Rotaract mobilizing volunteers and resources to support WASH learning and facilities.

Our priorities

Together with our sponsors and partnering schools, we deliver tangible impact that realizes the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	4 QUALITY EDUCATION
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

WASH Education [WASH-Ed] provides an innovative Learning Curriculum that tackles the WASH literacy gap across the Asia-Pacific region

wash-ed.org

150,000+
STUDENTS POSITIVELY IMPACTED

CONTENT IN **7**
LANGUAGES WITH MORE UNDERWAY

[Learn More About Wash-Ed](#)

OUR KEY PARTNERS IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Trusted by Government, Corporates, and Not-For-Profit Organizations

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Masy Consultants (WASH-Ed) is honored to be part of the distinguished cohort chosen for the Duke-UNICEF Innovation Accelerator, a p wash-ed.org d to support

PEOPLE

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

By PE Reginald T. Yu



Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Editor's Note: Writing about Rafael M. Alunan III is less the task of biography than of bearing witness. His story is not simply one of power attained or history shaped; it is a meditation on what it means to remain good in a world that rewards everything but goodness. He belongs to that rare generation who believed that public service is a sacred trust — who measured progress not by applause but by conscience. His moral clarity came not from privilege but from pilgrimage: from the crucible of duty, the classroom of faith, and the quiet courage of love.

This piece closes not with finality but with continuity — because his mission, like the Republic's, remains unfinished. Somewhere, perhaps even now, he is drafting another column, delivering another lecture, consoling another widow of a soldier, or advising a young mayor tempted by shortcuts. And when he speaks, the cadence is unchanged: calm, precise, resolute — a man who has mastered not only command, but compassion.

In the end, Raffy Alunan's life reminds us that greatness is not the absence of failure, but the refusal to surrender virtue in its aftermath. His journey affirms that faith and reason, leadership and humility, courage and tenderness — all can coexist in one heart devoted wholly to God and country. May this work stand not as monument but as mirror — reflecting the best of what we can still become if we, too, choose to serve above self.

THE gunfire began long before dawn. In the cold stillness of December 1989, as rebel forces rushed the financial heart of Makati and armed factions clashed across the nation's capital, Raffy Alunan found himself standing once again in the uncertain space between order and collapse.

Earlier that day, as part of a SAF company deployed to capture an NPA base camp, he had flown under the radar — literally — to make it home in time for his daughter's birthday. But celebrations would soon be overtaken by the growing specter of political fracture. By nightfall, Manila was under siege.

Rebel troops had overrun the business district. Civilians and foreign guests were trapped inside Makati's hotels. The city's lifeline was suspended between panic and paralysis. And into that crucible, Raffy Alunan — then serving as a key member of the Aquino administration — was tasked with a mission that would become emblematic of his entire public career: **Negotiate the safe release of innocent lives in the middle of an armed rebellion.**

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

He moved quickly. He sought the cooperation of the Scout Rangers, appealed to their instincts as protectors, and asked for one thing: “Let us retrieve the civilians before the shooting consumes them.” In the face-to-face talks at the Manila Intercontinental Hotel, he worked with PMA Superintendent Major-General **Arturo Enrile** and coordinated the delicate exchanges that allowed government teams to extract trapped tourists and Filipinos from active conflict zones.

It was a moment that distilled the essence of the path he had chosen — or perhaps, the path that had chosen him.

Not power.

Not politics.

But stewardship.

Crisis management.

And the unyielding conviction that in moments of national fracture, one must stand where the lives are most at risk.

By the time the coup attempt was quelled, dozens of civilians had been pulled to safety. The Republic had survived another tremor in its fragile democratic rebuilding. And Raffy Alunan



At the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne) jump tower in Fort Magsaysay, Raffy Alunan is seen with two former Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, General Lisandro Abadia and General Nick Enrile. The visit reflects Alunan’s long-standing engagement with the military and his deep respect for the elite airborne and special operations units whose courage and discipline he has consistently supported throughout his public service career.

had cemented a reputation he never sought but consistently proved worthy of — **the steady hand in chaos, the quiet soldier-statesman whose duty was always to save, not to shine.**

This was but one episode in a long arc of service marked by danger, discipline, and moral resolve.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

But it captures, in a single frame, the truth of the man:

When the Republic was threatened, he stepped forward.

When lives hung in the balance, he negotiated for peace.

When crisis erupted, he moved toward the fire — never away.

This is the story of **Rafael Moreno Alunan III**.

Not as myth.

Not as crafted legend.

But as he lived it — a life of stewardship, service, and fidelity to the moral values he believed could build a better Philippines.

The Boy from Bacolod

Long before Raffy would find himself negotiating with rebels in a besieged Manila hotel, or working beside presidents during some of the nation's most precarious years, his story had already been set in motion by the weight — and quiet dignity — of a name he inherited.



A rare portrait of Rafael Rivas Alunan Sr., grandfather of Raffy Alunan. He served the nation with distinction as Congressman representing the 2nd District of Negros Occidental and later as Secretary of Agriculture during the administration of President Manuel L. Quezon. His leadership in both legislative and executive roles helped shape early agricultural policy and contributed to the strengthening of the Commonwealth government's development agenda. This dignified portrait reflects a statesman whose dedication to public service left a legacy carried forward by future generations of the Alunan family.

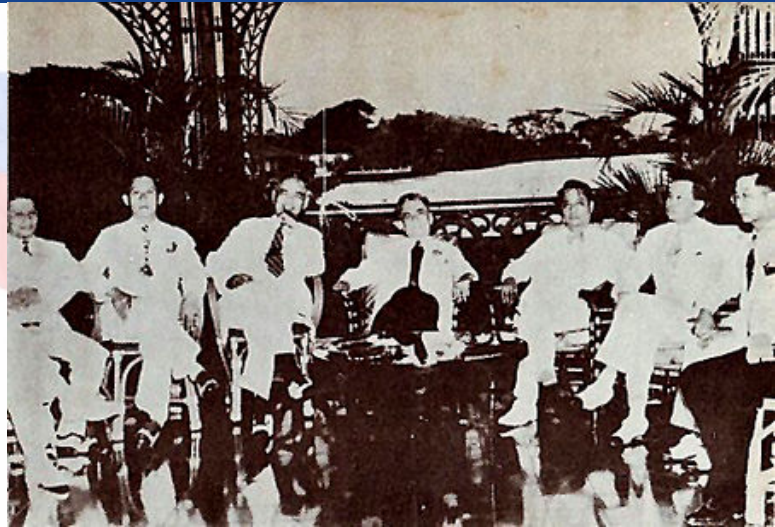
Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

That name belonged first to **Rafael Rivas Alunan Sr.**, a man born in 1885 in Talisay, Negros Occidental, who came of age in the uncertain dawn between Spanish rule and the burgeoning American administration. The elder Alunan was a scholar of the old mold — educated at the Colegio de Bacolod de los Recoletos, then at the Ateneo de Manila, graduating in business at seventeen and later reading law. He was not simply a participant in the nation-in-the-making; he was one of its architects.

As a young legislator representing Negros Occidental's 2nd District, he would serve three consecutive terms in the Philippine Assembly beginning in 1912, later becoming floor leader of the House. He would go on to hold posts that placed him at the crossroads of the country's economic transformation — Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Secretary of Finance, Acting Secretary of Public Works, and, at the onset of the Pacific War, Secretary of the Interior. He was a prominent force in the sugar industry, heading the Bacolod-Murcia Milling Company and the Philippine Sugar Association at a time when sugar was one of the pillars of Philippine economic power.

History, however, had harsher tests in store.



Rafael Alunan Sr. serving as a member of President Manuel L. Quezon's Cabinet during the Commonwealth era. As part of Quezon's trusted circle of senior officials, he played a significant role in shaping early national policy and strengthening the administrative foundations of the soon-to-be independent Republic. His service during this formative period reflected both his competence and his deep commitment to public welfare — an ethos that would later influence his grandson, Raffy Alunan, in his own path of leadership and national service.

When Japanese forces occupied the Philippines, Alunan Sr. held cabinet posts under duress. After the liberation, many officials of the wartime Philippine Republic faced accusations of treason. In February 1947, after a long legal ordeal, the charges against him were dismissed — there was no evidence that he had cooperated with the enemy beyond performing the duties required of him under occupation. He died that same year, his name cleared, leaving behind seven children and a legacy marked by service,

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

controversy, vindication, and public purpose.

It was into this lineage that **Rafael de la Rama Alunan Jr.** and **Rosario Moreno** welcomed their son on May 17, 1948. The boy would grow up hearing stories of his grandfather's courage and trials, his devotion to duty, and the burden of public office in the hardest years of the nation. Though Raffy was too young to know him, he grew up under the shadow of what his grandfather represented — a reminder that service to one's country was never abstract, never easy, and never without cost.

But the greatest influence on the young Raffy was not the public servant etched into political history books. It was the quiet, everyday presence of the two people he would later describe as the most influential in his life: **his parents.**

His father, Rafael Jr., carried his own brand of prudence and circumspection — values he passed on not through speeches, but through the example of how he carried himself through success, difficulty, and the long rhythms of family life. His mother, Rosario, shaped him with a firmness wrapped in gentleness. She introduced him to a spiritual and moral compass that would stay with him through decades of service, adversity, and public pressure.

If the grandfather provided the name, it was the parents who gave the meaning.

Raffy spent his childhood in **Bacolod**, surrounded by kin whose histories formed a tapestry of Philippine society through the decades: the Alunans, the Morenos, the Jalbuena, Lizares, Ramas, and other families whose ties stretched from Negros to Pampanga, from Baguio to Manila, and even — through the Puigs — to Catalonia in Spain. His was a lineage shaped by teachers, politicians, planters, and public servants. But within the family, the message was simple: *heritage was never a medal; it was an obligation to live well and serve honorably.*



President Manuel L. Quezon inspecting and lifting a bundle of freshly harvested palay, symbolizing the nation's commitment to agricultural progress during the Commonwealth era. Standing at his right is Raffy Alunan's grandfather, who was serving as Secretary of Agriculture at the time. The photograph captures a historic moment that reflects both national pride in the country's agrarian roots and the pivotal role played by Alunan's grandfather in shaping early agricultural policy and rural development in the Philippines.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Raffy Alunan on the occasion of his First Communion, held on December 8, 1955, at La Salle College in Bacolod. The milestone marked an important moment in his early spiritual formation, reflecting the strong Catholic upbringing that would continue to guide his values and principles throughout his life.

He studied at La Salle College–Bacolod until age sixteen. His youth was spent in the way many boys of his generation grew up: walking the streets with friends, watching movies, playing in the rain, and getting into harmless scrapes and fistfights that marked the rites of adolescence. They had little money but much camaraderie. Their bonds were forged in sports, long conversations, and shared adventures that filled the in-between hours of study and growing up.

Vacations alternated between Bacolod, Manila, and Baguio — the latter a place Raffy would remember vividly for its cool air, pine-lined roads, and the fact that it was where his mother spent much of her youth. These were the years that shaped his sense of belonging to a family anchored in love and guided by strong values.



Raffy Alunan is positioned at the center of the top row, directly behind the La Salle Brother seated in the first row. The photograph captures a moment from his early formation years, reflecting the disciplined environment and strong values imparted by the La Salle educational tradition — foundations that would later influence his leadership, service, and public life.

His mother, **Rosario**, had a way of teaching that stayed with him long after childhood. She did not believe in boasting or drawing attention to achievements. She urged him to lead quietly, to act without fanfare, to be consistent and magnanimous. She emphasized thinking before speaking, choosing peace over conflict when possible, and standing firm when duty required it. These weren't mere instructions — they became lifelong habits.

By his teens, the world around him had grown larger, more complex. Manila — where he transferred at age sixteen — beckoned with its promise of opportunity and its storms of political change. But even then, Raffy already carried within him a compass his grandfather and parents had collectively forged: a belief in service, a respect for discipline, and a

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

sense of duty that would one day define the man.

But Raffy's teenage years would also collide with the geopolitical currents of the 1960s. Southeast Asia was deep in the throes of the Cold War, and the Vietnam conflict was escalating. He found himself drawn to the discipline of the military early — from Boy Scouts in grade school to PMT in high school, then ROTC in college. The capture of the Philippine Military Academy's imagination by U.S. Special Forces, the Green Berets, and PHILCAG's missions abroad left a lasting impression. He seriously considered West Point or the PMA, even mulling over the idea as early as his high school years. Fate charted a different course, but the longing for structured service, for uniformed duty, remained quietly intact.

Those youthful dreams did not fade but evolved, taking root in a deeper truth: that defending the country was not merely about the battlefield, but about moral courage — the courage to lead, to reform, to protect civilians, to uphold the law even when the law was unpopular.

This moral framework — learned from Christian Brothers, reinforced by his parents, and inspired by the legacy of his grandfather — formed a conscience that would later guide him under fire, whether negotiating during a coup or dismantling private armies under *Oplan Paglalansag*.

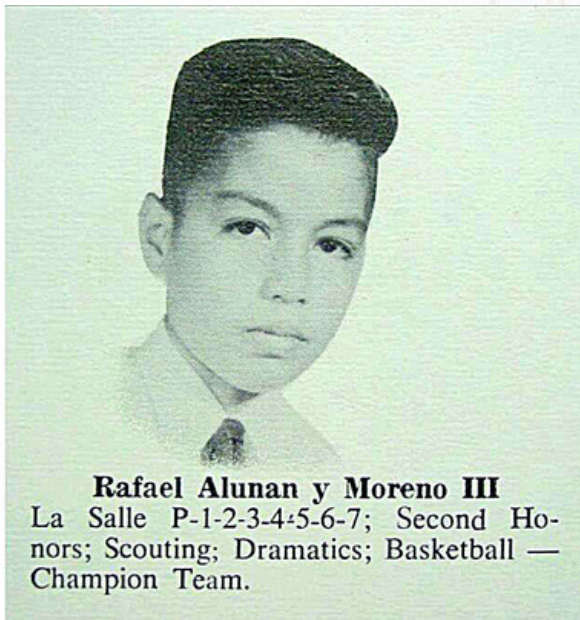


Basketball champions of the La Salle Grade School Typhoon League, the young team displays the discipline, teamwork, and competitive spirit nurtured during their formative years. Their victory reflects not only athletic skill, but the early development of character and camaraderie that La Salle continues to instill in its students.

Even as a student, he gravitated toward ideas of stewardship. His degrees in **Political Science, History, and Business Administration** at De La Salle University were not accidents of convenience; they reflected a mind keenly attuned to understanding power, the human condition, and the forces that shape nations.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Rafael Alunan y Moreno III

La Salle P-1-2-3-4-5-6-7; Second Honors; Scouting; Dramatics; Basketball — Champion Team.

A youthful portrait of Raffy Alunan from his La Salle yearbook, listed under his full name, Rafael Alunan y Moreno III. The entry reflects his early achievements as a well-rounded student: consistent Second Honors, active participation in Scouting and Dramatics, and membership in the Basketball Champion Team. Even in his formative years, the foundations of discipline, leadership, and versatility — traits that would later define his public service and national contributions — were already clearly evident.

It is from this crucible of childhood joys, parental wisdom, La Sallian discipline, and the looming silhouette of national vulnerability that Raffy Alunan III emerged — a young man ready to walk into decades of service he did not seek, but which the times would demand of him.



A spirited gathering of La Salle High School classmates circa 1965, capturing the youthful camaraderie and lighthearted celebrations characteristic of their formative years. Amid the laughter, music, and shared stories, these moments strengthened bonds that would endure well beyond graduation. For Raffy Alunan and his peers, such gatherings were more than social occasions — they were the early threads of lifelong friendship woven in an era of innocence, optimism, and enduring school pride.

Roots of Faith and Formation

History has a way of calling certain people forward long before they realize they are being summoned. For Raffy, the calling did not arrive as a single dramatic moment, but through a series of quiet awakenings — small realizations accumulated across youth, education, and early adulthood that would prepare him for crises he had not yet imagined.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

He did not grow up dreaming of cabinet posts or political prominence. The life he envisioned was more private, grounded in the domestic hopes of a young man who wanted to marry early, build a family, and carve out a modest but meaningful path. Yet the world he inherited was not a quiet one, and the country he loved demanded more than private aspirations.

The year was 1965, and the boy from Bacolod stepped off the ship in Manila with the wide-eyed certainty of youth and the silent discipline of his parents' teaching. The capital smelled of gasoline, rain, and ambition. Jeepneys roared past vendors calling out the price of roasted corn; students in barong and mini-skirts swarmed the sidewalks of Taft Avenue. In this new rhythm, Raffy felt both small and boundless. He had come to **De La Salle College**, carrying a suitcase, a scholarship, and the invisible weight of a name already etched in public service.

La Salle, then a bastion of Catholic rigor, believed that education was the art of forming conscience. Morning prayers blended with lectures on economics; Latin mottos on marble walls reminded the students that intellect without virtue was arrogance in uniform. Raffy thrived. He studied Political Science and Business Administration, believing that good governance demanded both



Raffy Alunan with his high school classmate Harry Rodriguez to his right, photographed at Paglaum Stadium in Bacolod City — fondly referred to in their youth as the “Tikalon Republic.” Joined by fellow La Salle classmates, the moment captures a slice of their formative years: carefree days of friendship, school spirit, and youthful exuberance in a place that shaped many of their earliest memories. The image reflects the enduring bonds forged in adolescence — connections that would accompany them well into adulthood.

morality and management. “They taught us to think in systems and to act in faith,” he would later write, “to balance heart and head, reason and compassion.”

But the classroom was only half his teacher. Manila itself — uneasy under Marcos’s rising power, simmering with protest and poverty — became his moral proving ground. On weekends he visited slum areas with his classmates, bringing food and conversation rather than

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

charity. The sight of barefoot children memorizing prayers beside open drains disturbed him far more than any textbook on social theory. *“I began to understand that leadership was not about command,”* he recalled. *“It was about stewardship — about standing guard over the dignity of others.”*

Faith and the Forging of Conscience

The Christian Brothers at La Salle hammered discipline into him: punctuality, precision, personal accountability. When he later pursued the **MBA Senior Executive Program** at the **Ateneo Graduate School of Business**, the Jesuits added something subtler — the art of discernment. They urged reflection before decision, conscience before convenience. *“Faith and reason are not adversaries,”* one professor told him. *“They are the two wings of leadership.”*

Those dual influences fused into his personal creed. *“Faith must translate into work; work must uplift others,”* Raffy would summarize decades later. He learned that success unattached to service was spiritual bankruptcy.

In college, Raffy stood at the crossroads of history and identity. The Cold War’s



Iñaki Ysasi, Nico Alonso, Harry Rodriguez, Eduardo Bonnin, Jong Revilla, Raffy Alunan, and Willy Racaza of La Salle Bacolod High School Class of 1965. The photograph reflects a formative era when the Christian Brothers played a pivotal role in shaping young boys into responsible, disciplined, and values-driven men. Their guidance left an enduring imprint on the class — instilling character, faith, and purpose that would influence their futures in public service, business, and community leadership.

shadows had lengthened across Southeast Asia, and as the Vietnam conflict escalated, the question of national defense — how a small archipelagic nation could protect itself — weighed heavily on the minds of many young Filipinos. Raffy felt this weight personally.

If he ever imagined a future in uniform, it was framed not by ambition but by the desire to help secure a country increasingly buffeted by external pressures and internal unrest. But another force was shaping him in equal measure — **love**.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Love Enters the Frame

One evening in 1967, a classmate invited him to a debut at the **Vera-Perez** mansion in Quezon City. The chandeliers glowed; the orchestra played Sinatra; and across the room stood a young woman whose poise quieted the noise around her. **Elizabeth Jalbuena** — Assumption College student, reserved yet radiant. *“It was love at first sight,”* Raffy said. *“She had an elegance that disarmed me and a shyness that made me want to protect her.”*

He was eighteen; she was seventeen. He courted her the old-fashioned way: handwritten letters, long drives in a weather-beaten car that she treated like a Rolls-Royce, gentle humor to break her guarded silence. *“When we first held hands,”* she later told friends, *“life was never the same again.”*

After two and a half years, he proposed — but only after securing employment. When he asked her father, the dignified Louie P. Jalbuena, for her hand, the older man studied him with the calm severity of a patriarch. *“Do you have work?”* he asked. Raffy answered yes. *“Then take care of her,”* Louie said, his tone half-blessing, half-command.



Raffy Alunan at his high school graduation ball with Elizabeth, his steadfast companion and the only love of his life. Their enduring partnership — rooted in friendship, loyalty, and deep affection — began in youth and blossomed into a lifelong bond that shaped his personal journey. This photograph captures not only a milestone celebration, but also the early chapters of a love story that remained central to Alunan’s life, providing strength, grounding, and unwavering support through every season of his public and private endeavors.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

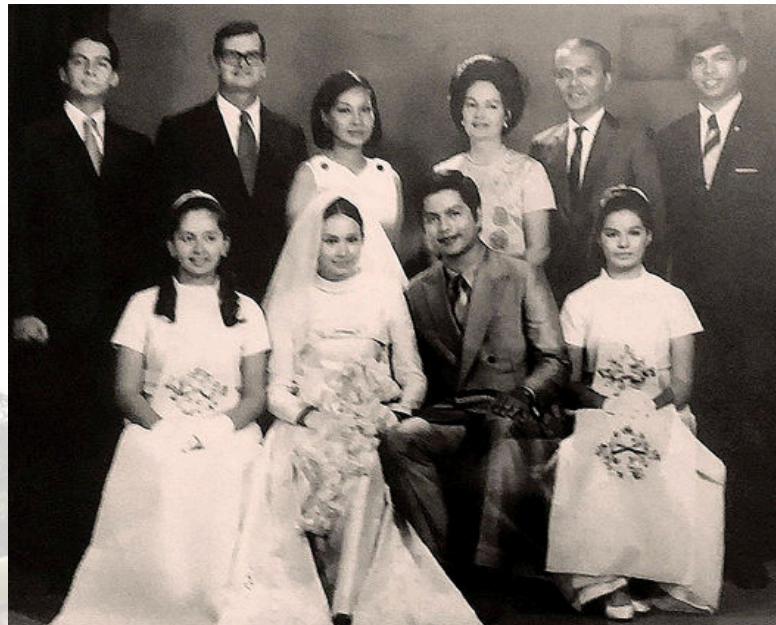


A lively gathering of friends featuring Jerry Kilayko, Tina del Castillo, Elizabeth Jalbuena, Digoy Fernandez, and Rupert Suarez seated in front; with Candy Jalbuena, Carina Pelayo, Becka Favis, and Raffy Alunan standing behind them. The photograph captures the spirited camaraderie between La Sallites and Assumptionistas — two well-known academic communities whose alumni often found themselves together in the same social circles. The scene reflects an era of youthful fellowship, shared friendships, and memorable celebrations that helped shape enduring bonds across schools and generations.



Raffy Alunan (left), a La Sallite, and Ting Singson (right), an Atenean, share a light yet thoughtful exchange on courtship and music. During this period, Mr. Alunan was courting Elizabeth and sought Mr. Singson's counsel, reflecting the camaraderie and mutual respect that marked their friendship.

They were married on **May 16, 1970**, at **St. Andrew's Church**, a day before Raffy's twenty-first birthday. The newlyweds laughed when Louie quipped, *"The first fifty years are the hardest."* Time would prove him right.



The Apprenticeship of Marriage

Those early years were a laboratory of humility. Manila was expensive, salaries modest, dreams large. Elizabeth, whom he affectionately called *Sweetheart* or *Mama*, managed the household with precision. *"She ran the house like a corporation — with kindness as capital and patience as profit,"* Raffy liked to joke.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

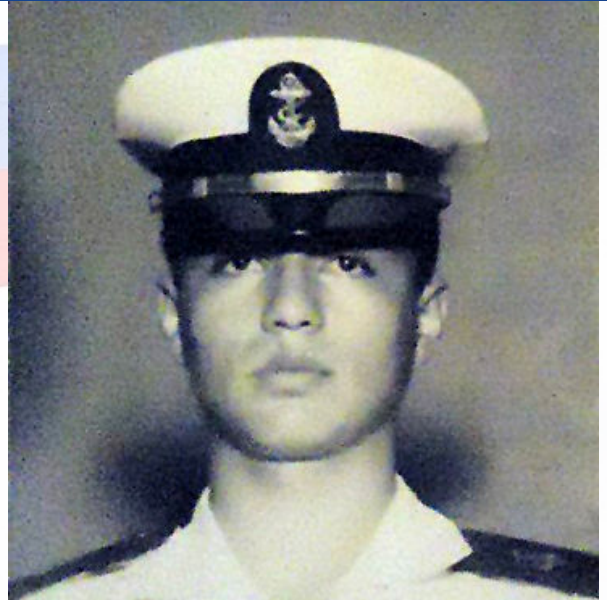
The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

He worked in executive positions for large corporations, absorbing the discipline of numbers and the politics of people. Boardrooms taught him about ambition; Elizabeth reminded him about compassion. *“Each time I came home full of self-importance,”* he admitted, *“she’d hand me the baby and say, ‘Here’s your real work.’”*

They were blessed with **five children** — Katrina, Barni, Rafa, Christina, and Alexi — and later **twelve grandchildren**. Each name represented a chapter in his moral education. Dinner was sacred: everyone at the table, no gadgets, grace before meals. Stories flowed more than lectures. *“Storytelling was my way of shaping conscience,”* he said. *“I’d tell them about courage under fire, about honesty when nobody’s watching, about helping a stranger without asking why.”*

The 1970s: Awakening

The martial-law years darkened the nation but illuminated Raffy’s convictions. The decade that followed his graduation was tumultuous. The First Quarter Storm exploded, martial law followed, insurgencies grew, and political repression deepened. The Philippines had entered one of its most perilous eras. He watched classmates seek comfort in complicity while others disappeared into detention. *“Fear is contagious,”* he reflected, *“but so is courage.”* He kept his head down professionally yet lent quiet



Raffy Alunan during his formative years in the De La Salle College Naval Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (NROTC), circa 1966–1967. These early days in military training helped instill in him the values of discipline, leadership, and patriotism that would later define his service in national security and public life.

support to reformists and academics who spoke for justice. That moral tension — between safety and service — would define his choices later when the country regained its freedom.

During these years, Raffy built a civilian career in the private sector. He worked for multinational companies, became exposed to management frameworks and corporate discipline, and learned the mechanics of organizational leadership — skills that would later serve him in unexpected, high-pressure roles in government.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

But while he was working in the private sphere, the country around him was unraveling.

Rebellions simmered. Crime and corruption metastasized. Institutions weakened. The military strained under heavy expectations while the nation teetered between repression and upheaval. For someone like Raffy Alunan — whose conscience was molded by Christian Brothers, whose lineage carried the weight of public duty, and whose instincts leaned toward service — it was impossible not to feel the pull of a greater responsibility.

At work, he began to see how institutions mirrored the people who ran them. Corruption in business, like in government, thrived on silence. He learned to speak up diplomatically, to correct without humiliating, to insist on transparency even when it slowed profit. *“That period was my moral apprenticeship,”* he said. *“I was learning how to fight wrong without losing grace.”*

Faith at the Center

Despite the political gloom, faith remained his compass. Sunday Mass was non-negotiable; so were nightly prayers with Elizabeth and the children. He joined community groups that bridged business with civic duty. One Jesuit retreat left an indelible mark: *“If you want peace, work for justice.”* Those words would echo when he later faced

insurgents and terrorists as Interior Secretary.

He also deepened his ties with the military reserve program, undergoing ROTC and later training with the PC-Special Action Force, finding in discipline a spiritual metaphor. “Drill and prayer are cousins,” he mused. “Both are about surrendering ego to a higher order.”



Raffy Alunan, then serving as Commanding Officer of the 9th Infantry Division Ready Reserve (9IDRR) of the Philippine Army, photographed at Camp Tecson during his induction into the elite First Scout Ranger Regiment. The moment marked a significant milestone in his long-standing commitment to national defense and reserve force development, underscoring his deep respect for the discipline, valor, and storied traditions of the Scout Rangers — one of the most formidable special operations units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Elizabeth, the Quiet General

As the family grew, Elizabeth became his steadfast partner in leadership. She instilled manners, routine, and compassion in their children, ran earthquake drills, taught first aid, and managed household crises with calm authority. Raffy often said, half in jest, “I was the speaker of the house; she was the loudspeaker.”

When disagreements flared, forgiveness became their diplomacy. *“Forgiveness is essential,”* he wrote. *“Forgetting takes longer — but love is the memory that outlasts the quarrel.”*

Their marriage was more than companionship; it was his moral gymnasium. Through her, he learned patience in frustration, humor in exhaustion, tenderness in command. *“Elizabeth reminded me that leadership begins at home,”* he said. *“If you cannot lead a family with empathy, you cannot lead a nation with justice.”*



A vintage Boracay scene, captured during Elizabeth’s 60th birthday celebration at a charming al fresco Spanish restaurant along the island’s shoreline. Bathed in the warm glow of sunset and the island’s old-world serenity — before the rise of modern developments — the moment reflects a joyful milestone marked by family, love, and the timeless beauty of Boracay. For Raffy Alunan and Elizabeth, it remains one of their most cherished memories on the island they both held dear.



This photograph was taken in Shanghai while Raffy Alunan and wife Elizabeth were attending a wedding. Set against the vibrant backdrop of one of Asia’s most dynamic cities, the occasion brought together friends and families in celebration, offering a brief but memorable moment of joy and fellowship during his travels abroad.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

The Birth of a Philosophy

By the early 1980s, Raffy had become a seasoned executive with a growing unease about complacency. The Philippines, still under dictatorship, suffered brain drain, cronyism, and cynicism. He began writing essays and giving talks about ethical leadership, arguing that development without discipline was decay in disguise.

He would later condense his worldview into a triad: God, Country, Family — in that order. *“That hierarchy keeps me upright,”* he explained. *“It prevents idolatry of wealth or power. If I ever reverse it, I lose my soul.”*

Friends recall how he could shift from corporate language to moral reasoning effortlessly. Over lunch he might discuss market share; by dessert he’d quote Scripture on stewardship. He spoke softly, but his conviction carried weight. Those who dismissed him as idealistic learned that he was, in fact, relentless.

The Unexpected Turn

He did not seek government. Government sought him. His moral restlessness soon found purpose.

In the mid-1980s, as the Marcos regime weakened and the opposition gained

momentum, Raffy found himself increasingly connected with civic groups calling for democratic change. He became a trustee of **Manindigan**, an organization of professionals, entrepreneurs, and academics who openly opposed dictatorship and advocated for a return to democratic governance.



Raffy Alunan with Special Action Force Commanding Officer, General Egay Aglipay, and PIO Chief, General Wykes Wycoco, during a field inspection of SAF units. The visit underscored the leadership’s commitment to ensuring that frontline troopers were fully supported — both operationally and logistically. Alunan personally helped oversee the distribution of essential equipment and supplies, reinforcing the administration’s focus on readiness, morale, and the welfare of elite police units tasked with the nation’s most demanding and high-risk operations.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

At this time, Raffy stood at the crossroads between comfort and calling. He had already built a solid career in the corporate world — an executive in large firms, respected for his discipline and strategic mind. Yet something inside him felt unquiet. *“I was earning well, but I wasn’t serving enough,”* he would later admit. *“The country was unraveling, and I could no longer stand watching from the sidelines.”*

The Marcos dictatorship was in its twilight. The air was thick with dissent, fear, and fatigue. Reformists, intellectuals, and professionals were beginning to converge under one banner: *Manindigan* — a movement whose name literally meant “to stand one’s ground.” It was a brotherhood of conscience, gathering lawyers, professors, entrepreneurs, priests, and journalists who believed that silence had become complicity. Raffy joined as a trustee. Inside candle-lit rooms in Quezon City, he and his peers debated freedom, ethics, and the price of integrity. Some were later jailed; others, exiled. For Raffy, the risk was personal. He had five young children and a wife whose steady faith never wavered.

When the People Power Revolution unfolded in 1986, many of *Manindigan*’s members — and the broader middle-class movement it represented — transitioned

into the rebuilding effort under President **Corazon C. Aquino**, the widow who became the nation’s moral compass. It was in this atmosphere of national renewal that Raffy Alunan was invited to join the government. For Raffy, it felt like destiny knocking.



“Walk for Peace” — A historic moment in September 1992, as Interior and Local Government Secretary Raffy Alunan leads a broad coalition of local officials, community leaders, military officers, and police commanders through the streets of Jolo, Sulu. The solidarity march, joined by Governor Tupay Loong, Representative Bin Sudi Tulawe, Asani Tammang, and all 18 municipal mayors of Sulu, signaled a united resolve to end armed conflict and advance development in the region. This public demonstration preceded a series of ‘Sulu Arms Limitation Talks,’ coordinated by Secretary Alunan and Senator Santanina Rasul, aimed at reducing the proliferation of weapons, strengthening peace efforts, and fostering stability in Muslim Mindanao. Supporting the initiative were Brig. Gen. Antonio Villamor of the 3rd Marine Brigade and PNP Provincial Director Rolando Hermosa — partners in a collective effort toward lasting peace and progress.”

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

He did not see this as personal elevation. In his own account, public service — when done right — was nothing more than stewardship. In the face of crises, it meant stepping into spaces where one could help save lives, protect civilians, or restore order. It was **never** about power, and certainly not about fame. It was about responsibility.

And so, after much discernment, Raffy accepted what he believed was a summons to serve the times.

The Making of a Statesman

In early 1991, President Aquino invited him to serve as **Secretary of Tourism**. The country was still healing from years of repression and chaos. Tourism had collapsed; infrastructure lay in ruins; and the nation's image abroad was tainted by coups, kidnappings, and political instability.

The role of Tourism Secretary was not one he imagined for himself. He inherited corruption in the ranks, decaying public assets, threats against tourists, and challenges that required firmness and moral clarity. Yet the moment he entered office, he realized how deeply its responsibilities were tied to safety, good governance, and national image. He brought with him a corporate manager's precision and a public servant's passion. His first order of business was to rebuild the industry's credibility — both

domestically and internationally. He met with airline executives, hotel owners, and travel associations, often working late into the night crafting policy that emphasized safety, sustainability, and service.

He removed **Pagsanjan Falls** from the preferred destination list due to rampant moral decadence and crime against visitors — a bold move that sent a clear message: *public safety and moral decency were non-negotiable*. He oversaw Camp John Hay, helped preserve its natural state, and completed the reconstruction of **Corregidor**, transforming it into a national shrine of wartime heroism.



DILG Secretary Raffy Alunan providing assistance to victims who had been held captive by Abu Sayyaf terrorists, the team works to ensure their safety, facilitate their recovery, and support their reintegration following a period of immense hardship.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

But more critical were the emergencies. During the devastating **1989 earthquake**, he organized search-and-rescue operations in Baguio. During the coup attempt that same year, rebel forces occupied Makati's financial district, trapping civilians and foreign tourists in its hotels. Raffy was tasked to negotiate for their safe release — which he accomplished by working with Scout Rangers to protect lives and avoid further bloodshed.

This coup-night episode — later recounted in vivid detail in his own writing — would become one of the defining moments of his early service.

It was here, under overwhelming uncertainty, that Raffy Alunan began earning a reputation that followed him throughout his public life:

A calm mind in chaos.

A steward of lives.

A servant of the Republic at its most fragile moments.

He launched the “**Rediscover the Philippines**” campaign, not as a mere slogan but as a movement of national renewal. He believed that tourism could become a mirror of the nation's soul. Under his leadership, the DOT began restoring heritage sites, training local guides, and promoting lesser-known



At the Cotabato Airport, Secretary Raffy Alunan is welcomed by ARMM Governor Zac Candao, marking the start of an important engagement in the region. Accompanying him is Bong Lacson. The arrival underscores ongoing efforts to strengthen coordination and dialogue with local leaders in Mindanao.

regions to disperse economic growth beyond Metro Manila.

But more than marketing, Raffy focused on ethics. He insisted that tourism projects uphold environmental responsibility and community inclusion — principles rare at the time.

The Moral Machinery of Governance

Inside Malacañang, he earned a reputation for integrity. Staffers noted his punctuality, his refusal to cut corners, and his ability to balance firmness with courtesy. “*He didn’t raise his voice,*” one aide said. “*He raised standards.*”

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

President Aquino valued his independence of mind. During Cabinet meetings, when debates grew heated, she would sometimes turn to him and ask, *“What do you think, Raffy?”* He would answer with disarming calm: *“Madam President, I think the right thing is rarely the easiest thing.”* That line would become a quiet mantra of his governance style.

He approached bureaucracy as both system and soul. He streamlined processes, championed decentralization, and mentored young civil servants to think beyond compliance. *“Rules are useless if they don’t uplift lives,”* he told them. *“We are not paper-pushers — we are nation-builders.”*

Yet, reform always provokes resistance. Entrenched interests fought him subtly — through bureaucratic delay, whisper campaigns, and political sabotage. *“I learned early that corruption doesn’t always wear a villain’s face,”* he wrote. *“Sometimes it smiles, shakes your hand, and invites you to lunch.”*

Through every trial, his moral compass pointed unwaveringly to service. *“I entered government with clean hands and intended to leave the same way,”* he told colleagues. *“No title is worth my soul.”*

A New Chapter of Duty

Raffy’s performance under the Aquino administration did not go unnoticed.



At an MNLF camp just outside Jolo, Sulu, Secretary Raffy Alunan conducts an impromptu visit to initiate dialogue and explore avenues for peace. Seated to his right is Sulu Governor Sakur Tan, alongside the MNLF camp commander. Also present is Gen. Tam Manjoorsa of the MNLF Executive Committee, identifiable by his cap. The meeting reflects a critical effort to foster communication and build trust amid longstanding conflict in the region.

When Fidel V. Ramos — a soldier-statesman and fellow believer in disciplined, values-driven governance — became president in 1992, he looked to Raffy Alunan to join his Cabinet.

This would become the longest, most intense, and most consequential chapter of his public service.

It was here that Raffy stepped not only into crisis after crisis, but into roles that demanded moral courage, strategic clarity, and an unshakeable commitment to what he later described as the essence of his service: **“A life of stewardship**

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

and service characterized by crisis management, saving lives, and fidelity to our moral values for a better Philippines.”

This was no longer the young man dreaming of West Point.

Nor the corporate executive.

Nor the newly married father hoping to build a quiet life.

This was Raffy Alunan — called into the center of a nation in upheaval, becoming the man the times required.

A Nation at the Brink

Leadership, when stripped of ceremony and rhetoric, is measured not by speeches or symbols but by what one chooses to confront. When Raffy accepted President Ramos’ invitation to lead the **Department of the Interior and Local Government**, he was not stepping into an office — he was stepping into the Republic’s crucible.

The early 1990s were dangerous years.

The Cold War had just ended, leaving behind scattered insurgencies, banditry, radicalized factions, and heavily armed political clans. Ethnic tensions flared in the south. Kidnapping syndicates grew bold. The wounds left by Marcos-era authoritarianism had not yet healed, and

institutions were fragile. It was during this precarious period that Ramos called. “Raffy,” he said, “I need you at the Department of the Interior and Local Government.” The offer was not a promotion; it was a crucible. The DILG was a labyrinth of politics, policing, and local governance — a post where idealists often burned out or broke down.



INTERIOR Secretary Rafael Alunan and National Police chief Recaredo Sarmiento present to the press the six suspected international terrorists arrested in Kalookan City (from left): Hadi Yousef Aghoul, Isam Mohammed Abdul Hadi, Ashram Yazouri, Habib Nasser Al-Riya, Mohammed Ismael Abu-shendi and Wail Rached El-Kaafib.

As Secretary of the Interior and Local Government, Raffy Alunan concurrently served as chair of the National Anti-Crime and Anti-Hijacking Task Force (NACAHT), the government’s principal inter-agency body for counterterrorism during the early 1990s. The role placed him at the forefront of emerging terror threats, including the activities of Al-Qaeda operatives already penetrating Southeast Asia at the time. Under his leadership, the task force undertook intensive coordination with military, police, intelligence, and international partners — laying early groundwork for the Philippines’ counterterrorism architecture long before global attention turned to transnational extremism.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Raffy hesitated. His family had already endured years of his long absences and constant stress. Elizabeth worried quietly but never protested.

He brought no fanfare.

No political machinery.

No personal army of patronage.

Just the values learned from Christian Brothers, sharpened by corporate discipline, and anchored by a lifelong belief that public office is not a prize, but a **stewardship**. And stewardship during crisis meant confronting the darkest corners of power.

The Alunan Doctrine

When he assumed the DILG portfolio in July 1992, he brought with him not just credentials but conviction. His reputation as an incorruptible manager preceded him. Soldiers, mayors, and governors soon learned that he was both compassionate and uncompromising. He demanded efficiency, transparency, and loyalty — not to him, but to the Republic.

The first crisis confronting him was one the public had long feared but few had dared to address: **the proliferation of warlordism and private armies across the country**. These armed groups — funded by political clans, criminal networks, and extremist



Special Action Force Anniversary rites in 1993, attended by key national security leaders including Generals Timmy Imperial, Recaredo Sarmiento, Dictador Alqueza, and Avelino Razon, with Raffy Alunan joining the commemoration. The event honored the bravery, discipline, and sacrifice of the SAF troopers — elite law-enforcement professionals at the forefront of counterterrorism and high-risk operations. The gathering underscored the government's commitment to strengthening the SAF's capabilities during a period marked by complex internal security challenges, as well as Alunan's steadfast support for the unit's mission and its men and women in uniform.

elements — were destabilizing communities, terrorizing civilians, and weakening the rule of law.

Alunan's response was direct, disciplined, and historic.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

He launched **Oplan Paglalansag**, a nationwide effort to dismantle private armed groups through coordinated police and military operations combined with clear legal parameters. It was the first major campaign in the post-dictatorship era to draw a firm line between legitimate security and political violence.

A key policy emerged from this campaign — one that would later bear his name: **The Alunan Doctrine**: Any elected official keeping **more than two** armed bodyguards would be presumed to maintain a private army — and the group could be disbanded under law.

It was a simple rule, but its message was thunderous:

Political power must never be protected by private firepower. The Republic has only one legitimate armed force. And it must serve only the people.

Thousands of unauthorized weapons were seized. Private armies were dismantled. Local warlords were stripped of their monopoly on violence. It was a reform both bold and dangerous. The threats were real. Some were overt, others whispered. But for Raffy Alunan, stewardship required moral clarity — and moral courage.



Raffy Alunan receiving the Outstanding Achievement Medal (OAM) from President-elect Fidel V. Ramos — himself the first Commanding Officer of the Special Forces — and Brigadier General Leo Alvez, Commanding Officer of the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne), during the regiment's anniversary celebration. The honor recognized Alunan's exceptional contributions to national security, his steadfast support for the Armed Forces, and his deep engagement with the elite Special Forces community. The ceremony stands as a testament to his enduring commitment to country, service, and the men and women who safeguard the Republic with courage and distinction.

Local Governance and National Stability

Beyond armed groups, the DILG is responsible for local government supervision — a complex ecosystem of governors, mayors, barangay officials, and local councils, each with distinct challenges and political dynamics. Under Alunan, this labyrinth was transformed through

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

a combination of discipline, capacity-building, and values-based leadership.

He championed programs that strengthened local autonomy while ensuring accountability. He helped professionalize LGUs and supported initiatives that encouraged transparency, disaster preparedness, coordinated law enforcement, and social development.

He believed deeply that peace was not merely the absence of conflict —

it was the presence of functional, honest governance.

That sustainable development required order. That public safety was the ground zero of social progress. This framework — peace leading to development, development reinforcing peace — would guide his entire DILG tenure.

The Burden of Order

The early Ramos years were defined by crisis. And crisis did not arrive as isolated events; it came in waves.

Bombings.

Kidnappings.

Communist and separatist insurgencies.

Localized armed conflicts.

Warlord politics.

In every case, Raffy stepped into the fray not as a politician, but as a crisis manager whose primary mission was, as he would later summarize his entire career:

“Saving lives and remaining faithful to our moral values for a better Philippines.”

He worked closely with the **Philippine National Police**, the military, and local government officials, often placing himself at the heart of volatile situations



With Philippine National Police Chief, Director General Timmy Imperial, and members of the PNP General Staff at Camp Crame, circa January 1993. Raffy Alunan met with the police leadership during a pivotal period of institutional reform and intensified national security challenges. The gathering reflects the close coordination among top security officials as they worked to strengthen law enforcement capabilities, enhance public safety, and reinforce the PNP's role in upholding peace and order throughout the country.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

where a single misstep could cost lives. In those moments, he negotiated tense stand-offs, defused explosive confrontations, and held firm to the principle that protecting civilians was not merely a priority but a moral obligation. Task forces were formed under his direction, rescue operations were coordinated with precision, and every action taken was guided by the belief that human life must remain paramount.

His approach to crisis management was both disciplined and deliberate. He began by gathering intelligence to fully understand the situation on the ground. He ensured seamless coordination among agencies, believing that unity of effort was essential to effectiveness. He moved quickly but never recklessly, balancing urgency with careful judgment. Communication lines were kept open to avoid confusion and prevent escalation. And always, his goal was clear: to restore order without resorting to unnecessary force.

He never viewed a crisis as an arena for displaying authority. Instead, he saw it as a solemn responsibility to protect the public — to keep the peace, save lives, and uphold the values of a nation that depended on leaders who could stay steady in the face of danger.

A Soldier's Heart, A Statesman's Hand

Though a civilian by background, Raffy

carried the spirit of a soldier — a calling that had first gripped him in childhood and matured through years in the Army Reserve. During his DILG years, this inclination deepened.

He trained with the **Special Action Force**, the **First Scout Ranger Regiment**, and the **Special Forces Regiment (Airborne)**.

He would go on to earn the rank of **Colonel in the AFP Reserve Command**, eventually commanding entire Infantry Reserve Divisions.



Col. Raffy Alunan, Commanding Officer of the 9th Infantry Division Disaster Response Regiment (PA), stands with Cabanatuan Mayor Julius Vergara, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Dionisio Santiago, and Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes at the Commemorative Marker of the Battle of Cabu Bridge. The gathering pays tribute to the heroism and sacrifice of the soldiers who fought in this historic World War II engagement, honoring their legacy of courage and service to the nation.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

In many ways, his dual identity — soldier and public administrator — allowed him to serve at DILG with a unique blend of courage and prudence. He understood the language of field commanders, the urgency of tactical decisions, and the delicate balance between force and negotiation.

President Ramos — himself a military man and democratic reformer — saw in Raffy a fellow steward, a leader who could uphold discipline without sacrificing conscience.

Together, they forged a period of relative stability during a time when the nation desperately needed anchors.



Former DILG Secretary Raffy Alunan with President Fidel V. Ramos at the premiere of the documentary *Tagaligtas*, held on May 16, 2012. The film honored the valor and sacrifices of the Philippine Constabulary–Special Action Force (PC–SAF), whose legacy of courage both leaders deeply championed during their years of public service.

The Philosophy of Security

For Raffy, national security was not just about borders and bullets. It was about people — about human and ecological safety, social justice, and moral order. “*Security*,” he wrote, “*is freedom from fear and want — and both require good governance.*”

He visited conflict areas not as a spectator but as a messenger of peace: Basilan, Cotabato, Samar, the Cordilleras. Often, he went without cameras, speaking to rebels, priests, and farmers alike. He



Maj. Gen. Alan Cabalquinto, Commander of the Army Special Forces (Airborne) Group, is positioned to the left of the principal subject. Standing fourth from the right is Capt. Sharon Reyes, while MSgt. Henry Hernia is seen kneeling fifth from the right. The photograph captures members of the elite Special Forces unit during a moment of camaraderie and professionalism.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

believed that listening was the first act of leadership.

He survived near-crashes in military aircraft, sea mishaps in Mindanao, and threats from groups that saw reform as ruin. *“You don’t measure courage by the absence of fear,”* he said. *“You measure it by walking anyway.”*

His military background deepened during this period. As a **Colonel in the AFP Reserve**, and an adopted member of the **PMA Marangal Class of 1974**, he



Raffy Alunan in his capacity as a Colonel of the Reserve Forces of the Philippine Army. His rank reflects years of committed service to national defense, active engagement in readiness and mobilization programs, and his unwavering support for the Armed Forces of the Philippines. As a reservist officer, he contributed to strengthening civilian–military cooperation, disaster response capabilities, and homeland security efforts — demonstrating his belief that national service extends beyond government office and into the broader duty of safeguarding the Republic.

commanded two infantry reserve divisions — the 131st and later the 9th. These experiences convinced him that citizen-soldiers and public officials share the same oath: to defend not power, but principle.

The President and the Public Servant

Those who witnessed the Ramos-Alunan partnership remember their chemistry. Ramos, ever the tactician, valued data and deadlines; Alunan valued discipline and decency.



During the launch of the coffee-table book *Silver Linings*, former DILG Secretary Rafael “Raffy” Alunan III shares a moment with President Fidel V. Ramos. The event celebrated stories of resilience, leadership, and hope — values that both men embodied throughout their years of service to the nation.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Cabinet meetings often began with FVR's brisk *"Let's do it!"* and ended with Raffy's measured reminders about ethics. They balanced each other — one the engineer, the other the conscience.

Ramos once told him privately, *"You're one of the few who tell me what I need to hear, not what I want to hear."* Raffy took that as the highest compliment. *"FVR had moral courage,"* he said. *"He knew that loyalty is not silence; it's honesty delivered with respect."*

Under their watch, the DILG became an incubator of reform. Local autonomy was strengthened; barangay justice systems were modernized; police professionalism was revived through merit-based promotions. Raffy's motto was simple: *"Unity, Sincerity, Cooperation, Collaboration."* He repeated it so often that subordinates called it "the four-fold creed."

He explained it plainly: *"Unity for purpose, sincerity in intention, cooperation in effort, and collaboration in execution — that's how nations rise."*

The Man Within the Mission

Behind the authority, Raffy remained introspective. He still attended Mass whenever possible, sometimes in makeshift chapels inside army camps. He carried a small Bible in his briefcase — a habit he kept for decades.



Raffy Alunan is seen with officials and responders from the CAMANAVA Inter-Agency Rescue and Response unit and the 9th Infantry Division Disaster Response Regiment (9IDRR). The gathering highlights ongoing efforts to strengthen coordinated disaster preparedness and emergency operations in the CAMANAVA area.



At Nur Misuari's camp in Sarangani, in the dead of night, Secretary Raffy Alunan participates in a sensitive back-channel mission to assess and advance emerging peace overtures. Seated to Misuari's right is his former University of the Philippines classmate, Executive Secretary Ruben Torres. The encounter reflects a critical moment in the government's quiet efforts to pursue dialogue amid conflict.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

At home, Elizabeth remained his emotional anchor. Their long phone calls became nightly rituals, her voice grounding him after days of policy battles. *“When you’re surrounded by power,”* she told him, *“never forget who you are when you come home.”*

There were nights when exhaustion turned to doubt. *“I asked God why public*

service demanded so much pain,” he later confessed. *“The answer came softly: because love is proven by sacrifice.”*

He lost friends to violence, witnessed betrayal within institutions he had trusted, and felt the loneliness of moral consistency in a field addicted to compromise. Yet he refused cynicism. *“You cannot lead if you stop believing that people can change,”* he wrote in his journal. *“You must keep faith even when faith hurts.”*

The Cost of Service

Behind the achievements, however, lay a cost the public rarely saw. Government service consumed him in ways that left little space for rest or family. The hours were unforgiving, the dangers constant, the scrutiny unrelenting. Weekends and holidays faded into a blur of briefings, field operations, emergency travel, and late-night decisions that could not wait for sunrise. His family saw him less and less as the demands of national security grew heavier.

Through all this, his wife Elizabeth — unwavering in loyalty and quiet strength — carried the burden of raising their children with grace and courage. While he confronted crises that often placed him in harm’s way, she kept their home intact, steadying the family he longed to protect but could seldom be present for.



Photograph taken in January 1995 following the successful security operations that safeguarded Pope John Paul II during his visit to the Philippines — an event later revealed to have been targeted for assassination by Al-Qaeda operatives under the notorious Bojinka plot. Raffy Alunan stands at the center of the image, flanked on his right by Foreign Affairs Secretary Bobby Romulo and, partly obscured to his left, Defense Secretary Renato de Villa. The moment captures the gravity of a national security triumph achieved through swift coordination among government agencies, intelligence networks, and security forces, underscoring the high-stakes environment in which Alunan and the country’s top officials operated during one of the most consequential threats to Philippine and global security in the 1990s.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

He never glorified these sacrifices. In fact, he spoke of them with humility, even with a measure of regret, fully aware that public service, for all its nobility, can strain the very relationships one seeks to honor. It is here, in this tension between duty and home, that the most human side of his DILG years comes into sharpest relief.

He did not pursue recognition. He did not chase power. What he sought was far simpler and far more difficult: to do what was right, even when it came at personal cost. That fidelity to moral values — steady, uncompromising, and sincere — became the enduring trademark of his public life.

Leaving Office, Keeping the Mission

By 1996, after nearly four years in office, the cost of service had become visible. His hair had grayed; his children were growing up without him. He decided to step down, not in defeat but in peace.

He left the DILG poorer in possessions but richer in conviction. Upon his farewell, President Ramos said, *“You served with integrity, and that’s the rarest currency in government.”*

The press hailed him as *“the Cabinet’s moral compass.”* His colleagues called him *“the Man who Walked the Talk.”*



At the forward-most Philippine Marines outpost in Patikul, Sulu, Secretary Raffy Alunan stands with Vice President Joseph “Erap” Estrada and recently released Abu Sayyaf hostage Charles Walton, positioned between them. To Vice President Estrada’s left is Libyan Ambassador Rajab Azzarouq, whose diplomatic intervention was instrumental in securing Walton’s release. The moment captures a significant humanitarian milestone amid ongoing security challenges in the region.



In Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 1993, Raffy Alunan meets with members of the Philippine United Nations peacekeeping contingent during one of the most pivotal moments in the country’s post-conflict reconstruction. The Philippine forces were deployed as part of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), tasked with helping stabilize the nation after years of civil war.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Back in private life, he returned to business and civic engagements, but the public still sought his voice on matters of governance and national security. He chaired the **Philippine Council for Foreign Relations**, lectured at universities, and wrote columns dissecting the moral anatomy of statecraft. Yet he never glamorized his

years in power. *“Government didn’t make me important,”* he said. *“It made me accountable.”*

Harvard and the Renewal of Vision

For the first time in many years, Raffy Alunan awoke to a day without an urgent briefing to study, a crisis demanding his presence, or a convoy idling at the gate. The quiet was almost unsettling, a sharp contrast to the relentless cadence that had defined his life for so long. After years at the helm of the Department of the Interior and Local Government — years spent confronting private armies, insurgency, political violence, crime syndicates, and the slow erosion of institutions — he stepped into a setting that seemed impossibly distant from the intensity of Philippine public life: the serene, tree-lined avenues of **Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government**.

It was 1996.

He was fifty years old.

And though he could not yet see it, this single year — set between duty and rest, between service and self — would become the hinge on which his inner and outer worlds would turn.



Raffy Alunan with the Board of Trustees of the Philippine Council for Foreign Relations (PCFR), an organization composed of former diplomats, military officers, scholars, and seasoned practitioners in international affairs. The gathering reflects the council’s ongoing efforts to provide informed perspectives on foreign policy and national security, strengthen public understanding of global developments, and contribute to shaping the Philippines’ strategic direction in an increasingly complex international landscape. Alunan’s presence underscores his active engagement in dialogues that advance the country’s diplomatic and geopolitical interests.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Raffy Alunan and his Harvard classmates pose before the iconic statue of John Harvard at the university's historic Yard. The famed bronze work, sculpted by Daniel Chester French — with Sherman Hoar serving as the model — remains one of the most recognizable symbols of Harvard University. The photograph captures a moment of camaraderie among classmates set against the storied backdrop of one of the world's premier academic institutions.

Arrival in Cambridge

When he and his family arrived in Boston that autumn, the air carried the crisp scent of new beginnings. The redbrick buildings of Harvard Yard glowed in the afternoon light, their Georgian symmetry suggesting permanence, order, and legacy — things Raffy had tried to build back home. The Alunans rented a modest apartment near campus. For the first time in years, Raffy was a student again, not a Cabinet Secretary. He walked to class with a



Graduation day at the Harvard Kennedy School, where Raffy Alunan completed his Master in Public Administration in 1997. He studied at the John F. Kennedy School of Government during the 1996–1997 academic year under the guidance of distinguished faculty members, including John W. Thomas — Lecturer in Public Policy, Faculty Chair of the Singapore Program, and co-chair of the Leaders in Development Program — and Matt Andrews, the Edward S. Mason Senior Lecturer in International Development. This moment marked the culmination of Alunan's intensive training in public leadership, governance, and international development, further equipping him for the high-level responsibilities he would later undertake in government and public service.

backpack instead of a briefcase, his notes in one hand, coffee in the other. “*Harvard stripped me of titles,*” he wrote in his

journal. “*Here I was not Secretary Alunan. I was simply Raffy from the Philippines, learning again how to listen.*”

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

His classmates were a mosaic of global experience: young diplomats from Africa, NGO leaders from Latin America, civil servants from Eastern Europe. In seminars, he often found himself debating development policy with people half his age — but always with humility and humor. *“Experience teaches you patterns,”* he told one student who asked for advice. *“But wisdom teaches you when to break them.”*

Courses on governance, economics, and leadership challenged his assumptions. He absorbed new theories but weighed them against lived experience — against nights in Camp Crame, trips to conflict zones, the smell of gun oil and fear. *“The classroom taught frameworks; the Philippines had taught reality,”* he would later reflect. *“Combining the two, I began to see governance not as command and control, but as community and conscience.”*

A Year of Healing and Rediscovery

For Raffy, Harvard was more than an academic pilgrimage; it was a season of healing. The years in government had left scars — disappointments with politics, betrayals by allies, exhaustion from endless firefights both literal and bureaucratic. In Cambridge’s quiet libraries, he found space to think again, to pray again, to breathe.



Raffy Alunan at the historic Malkin Athletic Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts — the iconic Harvard gym where he often played basketball during his graduate school years. The court became a familiar gathering place for him, his son Rafa, his classmate Ato Salud, and other students and athletes who happened to be there. These informal games offered moments of camaraderie, father-and-son bonding, and welcome relief from the intensity of academic life at Harvard Kennedy School. In this setting, Alunan found a blend of discipline, fellowship, and simple joy that remains one of his fondest memories from his time in Cambridge.

He often attended Mass at St. Paul’s Parish in Harvard Square, sometimes bringing his children. *“It was there I realized that peace is not the absence of conflict,”* he wrote to a friend. *“It’s the presence of purpose.”*

The family flourished in that year abroad. They did housework and homework together, explored museums, and walked

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

the cobblestone streets of Boston. On weekends, they shared clam chowder and laughter at Quincy Market. *“We rediscovered ourselves as a family,”* he said. *“It was the happiest year of our lives.”*

He also forged friendships with professors who would become lifelong mentors. One of them, a former diplomat, once told him, *“You have the heart of a soldier and the mind of a statesman. But remember — every statesman must learn to rest, or*



Raffy Alunan with his Harvard classmates during an intensive group discussion at the Kennedy School. The session reflects the collaborative, globally diverse, and intellectually rigorous environment that defined his graduate studies. Surrounded by peers from various countries and professional backgrounds, Alunan engaged in debates, case analyses, and policy exercises that sharpened his strategic thinking and broadened his understanding of governance and international development. These moments of shared inquiry and critical dialogue became foundational to his later leadership in public service.

he becomes a machine.” Raffy took the advice to heart. For the first time in decades, he learned to be still without feeling unproductive.

For nearly a year, the Alunan family lived in a modest apartment. Gone were the flashing police lights, the stream of meetings, the adrenaline of crisis. In their place: shared breakfasts, walks to the park, long discussions over homework, quiet nights, and the gentle rhythm of a family rediscovering one another.

He would later describe this year as **“the most idyllic of our lives.”**

They traveled together, learned together, laughed together. He washed dishes with his children, carried groceries, shoveled snow, did the housework that fame or office often steals from a man. In the simplicity of these routines, he found a joy that no title could equal.

The man who once negotiated with rebels and commanded security forces now learned to navigate Boston winters, work an American washing machine, and attend school events as simply “Dad.”

The Republic had its turn.

Now, his family did.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



The inaugural Belle-lettrists' Banquet & Awards, a joint endeavor of The Manila Times and the Harvard Kennedy Alumni Association of the Philippines, Inc., celebrating excellence in writing, commentary, and thought leadership. The event gathered distinguished authors, public intellectuals, and policy professionals in a night honoring the power of the written word to inform, inspire, and shape national discourse. It marked a meaningful collaboration between two institutions dedicated to elevating public conversation and recognizing literary contributions that strengthen democratic society.

The Global Lens

At the Kennedy School, Raffy Alunan was hardly a novice. His years navigating crisis management, national security, governance, and institutional reform had given him a lived understanding of statecraft that no textbook could fully capture. Yet he arrived with characteristic humility, fully aware that learning is a lifelong discipline and that leadership must constantly evolve.

In Cambridge, he immersed himself in

subjects that spoke directly to the challenges he had grappled with back home — governance and public administration, national security strategy, development policy, institutional reform, crisis leadership, and the ethics of public office. Each lecture, each case study, and every spirited exchange with classmates from across the world reinforced a truth he had long sensed on the ground: the problems confronting the Philippines were not unique, but the moral courage required to confront them was indispensable.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

His professors quickly recognized the depth he brought to the classroom. His peers gravitated toward him, drawn not by title but by the authority of someone who had lived on the frontlines of governance, who had seen how institutions break and how societies heal.

And beneath the academic rigor, something more profound was taking place within him. The year became a season of reawakening — an opportunity to step back, to see his country from a wider lens, to measure what had been done and what remained unfinished. It reframed his life's mission, deepened his understanding of the nation's vulnerabilities, and strengthened his resolve to return home not to withdraw but to serve with renewed clarity and purpose.

Commencement and Homecoming

In June 1997, Raffy Alunan walked across the stage at Harvard Yard to receive his master's degree. The setting was iconic, but what mattered more was the sight of Elizabeth and their children in the audience, waving proudly as his name was called. For a man who had spent so many years away from home in the service of the nation, this moment — simple, unadorned, familial — held a quiet, incomparable weight.



A televised interview conducted by ANC's Melissa Gecolea (in red) with the trustees of the Spirit of EDSA Foundation. Seated from left to right are Raffy Alunan, Joe Concepcion, Ramon Z. Carrion, Chris Carrion, and Rose Yenko. The discussion highlighted the Foundation's continuing commitment to preserving the lessons, values, and democratic spirit of the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution.

When he returned to the Philippines, it was without the trappings of public office, without the security escorts or the relentless pressure of a cabinet post. What he carried instead was far more enduring: a sharpened moral compass, a clarified worldview, and a renewed sense of purpose. Harvard had given him distance — not to detach from the Philippines, but to see it more clearly. And in that clarity, he rediscovered the depth of his commitment to the country he had long served.

From this point forward, his service would assume new forms. He would lend his voice to national security advocacy,

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

guide institutions through corporate governance, lead in the military reserve force, engage more deeply in civic life, and eventually, find another arena of stewardship in Rotary. The cabinet title was gone, yet in its place emerged something rarer: the authority that comes from a life tested by crisis, tempered by discipline, and examined with honesty.

Harvard did not transform him into a different man.

It allowed him to become more fully the man he was meant to be.

A Citizen at Large

Most people leave government and close the chapter with finality, drawing a line between what came before and what will come after. For Raffy, leaving the Cabinet was not an ending but an inflection point. He returned to a Philippines still wrestling with the same forces he had confronted in office — political frailty, institutional gaps, national security concerns, and the persistent need for moral leadership. The tools he would use were different now. But the mission, in its essence, remained unchanged.

When he stepped back into private life after Harvard, he carried no official authority, yet the gravitas of his experience followed him. Years of crisis management, institution-building, and dangerous negotiations had given him an unusual vantage point from which to understand national fragility. The Harvard year had only sharpened that lens. He came home with a deeper appreciation for interdependence, for the global currents affecting Philippine stability, and for the ways strong institutions could lift or undermine a nation.

In the corporate world, he entered an environment that required a different kind of discipline. He served on the boards of major companies: At **Pepsi-Cola Products Philippines, Inc.**, he served first as **Independent Director**,



After successfully reaching the summit of Mt. Kinabalu, Raffy Alunan begins the arduous descent by rope amid freezing rain. As the heavens opened, sudden torrents cascaded down the mountain's granite slopes, turning narrow paths into perilous waterfalls. The scene captures both the danger and the determination of a climber navigating nature's raw power at one of Southeast Asia's most formidable peaks.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

later as **Chairman of the Audit Committee**, insisting that transparency and consumer responsibility were not slogans but standards. He joined **Sun Life of Canada (Philippines)**, where he helped modernize compliance and ethics systems. He advised the **Sangley Airport Infrastructure Group**, advocating local innovation and environmental responsibility long before “green logistics” became fashionable.

His roles spanned industries that were, in different ways, tied to national stability — consumer goods, insurance, defense manufacturing, energy, and infrastructure — industries ranging from beverage manufacturing to insurance, energy, defense production, and transport infrastructure. He moved through these boardrooms with the steady, reflective presence of someone who had seen institutions under stress and understood their long-term stakes. Decisions were never merely operational for him. They were tied to national resilience, workforce dignity, and ethical stewardship. His training in governance and his experience in government informed his approach. He favored long arcs over short-term wins, and institutional strengthening over expediency.

But his post-Cabinet life did not revolve solely around corporate responsibilities. His interest in national security — shaped by early aspirations of military service, tempered during his DILG years, and

refined at Harvard — continued to grow. He became increasingly involved in foreign relations and strategic studies.

As chairman of the **Philippine Council for Foreign Relations**, he became an interlocutor between diplomats, military leaders, business executives, and academics. He assessed geopolitical developments with a steady hand, emphasizing credible deterrence, rule of law, and the need for cohesive national direction. His membership in institutions



Pandemic-weary alumni of the Harvard Kennedy School gathered at The Peninsula Manila for the 2022 Bureaucrats' Ball, marking one of the first major in-person reunions after years of global disruption. The occasion brought together public servants, policy professionals, and development leaders eager to reconnect, exchange insights, and reaffirm a shared commitment to governance and nation-building. The event served as a symbolic return to fellowship and civic purpose, reflecting the resilience and enduring camaraderie of the HKS community in the Philippines.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

devoted to defense and maritime security expanded his understanding of how the Philippines fit into an increasingly contested regional order.

His military involvement deepened as well. Holding the rank of **Colonel in the Reserve Forces**, he commanded infantry divisions and was welcomed by elite units of both the AFP and the PNP. His bond with the uniformed services was not symbolic. It reflected a genuine alignment of values — discipline, moral courage, and preparedness. For him, national defense was not merely about weapons and formations; it was about character, leadership, and institutional integrity. Strength, he believed, was not performative. It was built quietly, consistently, and with purpose.

In the civic sphere, his service expanded further. He worked with organizations that promoted democratic values, institutional reform, youth development, athletic discipline, ethical leadership, and the spirit of EDSA. His influence in these circles was not anchored in charisma but in the steadiness of his moral compass. He became a mentor to emerging leaders and a resource person to policymakers navigating difficult terrain. Journalists often sought him for his sober assessments; his commentary never sensationalized issues but dissected them with clarity, experience, and an eye toward institutional upliftment.



At the “Tapatan” public affairs forum hosted by Melo Acuña, Secretary Raffy Alunan engages in a substantive discussion alongside Rex Robles and Atty. Anna Basman. The panel examined the final draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law, which was then under detailed scrutiny in Congress. The dialogue offered critical insights into the law’s implications for governance, peace, and regional autonomy in Mindanao.

His involvement in the **International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)** and the **Maritime League** expanded his network and deepened his understanding of maritime security, critical technologies, and regional defense architecture.

He also found a voice as a public intellectual. Through essays and columns, he articulated a vision of the Philippines grounded in cohesion, discipline, and values-based governance. His co-authored book *Silver Linings* and his documentary *“Tagaligtas”* highlighted stories of service and resilience —

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

narratives that reflected his belief that the nation's strength lies not only in its institutions but in the character of its people. For him, the moral trajectory of a nation depended on its ability to cultivate virtues across sectors and generations.

Politics remained within his orbit, though he approached it differently now. Instead of seeking office, he founded a party list focused on good governance and national

renewal. His political views were rooted less in partisanship than in his conviction that the country needed leaders grounded in integrity and accountability. He spoke not as a critic from the sidelines but as someone who had walked into crises and understood the price of fragility.

There was no retirement in the traditional sense. Instead, there was a widening of fields in which he could contribute. His schedule remained full: corporate meetings, national security forums, civic engagements, military activities, public lectures, and advisory roles. He carried no trappings of power, yet he moved within circles of influence by virtue of the reputation he had earned — measured, sober, disciplined, principled, and unafraid to speak the truth.

The most compelling figures navigate life with an internal gyroscope — a mechanism that stabilizes them regardless of external turbulence. In Raffy, that gyroscope was formed from a blend of family, faith, heritage, and experience. The boy from Bacolod, shaped by Christian Brothers, guided by his mother's humility, and matured through the crucibles of governance and crisis, faced this new era with composure and clarity.

He also became **President and Trustee of the Harvard Kennedy School Alumni Association of the Philippines**, organizing forums that bridged technocrats and public servants.



Forum on the South China Sea issue held at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), where Raffy Alunan joined a distinguished panel that included former Philippine Ambassador to China Chito Sta. Romana, Senator Letty Ramos-Shahani, international trade law expert Tony Abad, DFA Assistant Secretary Henry Bensurto, and education advocate Mike Luz. The discussion brought together leading voices in diplomacy, governance, and national strategy to examine geopolitical developments, maritime rights, and the policy challenges facing the Philippines in the region.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

His message was consistent: competence without conscience is chaos.

Raffy no longer held a Cabinet seat, but his relevance had grown broader. In the scattering of roles he took on — corporate steward, military colonel, educator, strategist, civic leader — one could trace a consistent through-line. Service, to him, was not confined to a position. It was a lifelong posture.

He had returned from Harvard not to rest but to resume the mission by other means. And in these years, his influence, though less public, became more enduring. Because the work was no longer tied to an office. It was tied to the man himself.

Indeed, great lives move in arcs rather than straight lines. The next arc of Raffy's life would be less visible to the public, but no less significant. It was the period in which he transformed from a government official into a **national resource** — an adviser, strategist, thought leader, and custodian of institutional memory.

The Servant Among Soldiers

Though now a civilian, he remained active in the reserve forces of the **Armed Forces of the Philippines**. As **Colonel** of both the **131st** and later **9th Infantry Division (Ready Reserve)**, he trained alongside younger officers who had grown up reading about him. He insisted on

discipline, physical fitness, and moral example. *“The uniform is borrowed authority,”* he told them. *“The moment you forget that, you become a bully instead of a protector.”*

He was adopted by elite units — the **PMA Marangal Class of 1974**, the **Special Action Force**, the **Special Forces Regiment (Airborne)**, and the **First Scout Ranger Regiment** — not for ceremonial reasons but because he lived their creed. His speeches before troops were simple yet stirring: *“The fight for the Philippines is fought daily — in offices, in classrooms, in families. Keep your integrity clean; it’s the only armor that doesn’t rust.”*



Raffy Alunan with the world-renowned Kukkiwon Taekwondo Demonstration Team, celebrated globally for their exceptional athleticism, discipline, and artistry in martial arts performance. The encounter reflects Alunan's support for cultural exchange, youth development, and the promotion of sports as a bridge between nations. The team's visit showcased the spirit of Korean martial tradition while highlighting shared values of perseverance, respect, and excellence — principles that resonate strongly with Alunan's own advocacy for character-building and national pride.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Golden anniversary dinner of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1974 held at Camp John Hay in February 2024. Raffy Alunan joined the distinguished alumni as they marked fifty years since graduation — a milestone for a class that served during one of the most turbulent and defining chapters in modern Philippine history. Their collective experiences, forged in an era of political transition and national challenge, continue to resonate in the country's security and governance landscape.

The Civic Visionary

Beyond the barracks and the boardroom, Raffy extended his reach into youth and sports development. As **President** of the **Philippine Taekwondo Foundation**, he championed martial discipline as moral formation. *“Taekwondo teaches control — of body, of temper, of ego,”* he said. *“That’s the kind of defense every nation needs most.”*

He served as **Eminent Fellow** of the **Development Academy of the Philippines**, **Fellow** of the **Institute**

for Corporate Directors and **Institute for Solidarity in Asia**, organizations that trained thousands in ethical governance. To each new batch of executives, he delivered the same challenge: *“Governance is character in operation. Systems will fail if the souls that run them are weak.”*

In forums he could shift from economics to ethics with seamless logic. Asked once what single reform the Philippines most needed, he replied, *“The reform of the Filipino conscience.”* Silence followed — then applause.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Raffy Alunan speaking at the Bacolod City Plaza during his Senate campaign in 2016, addressing the crowd with clarity and conviction on issues central to governance, national security, and responsible citizenship. Returning to his home province, he spoke before Negrenses not only as a public servant but as a proud son of Bacolod, reaffirming his long-standing commitment to the welfare, dignity, and progress of the Filipino people. The event reflected both his deep roots and his continuing dedication to public service on the national stage.



A campaign sortie during Raffy Alunan's senatorial bid in 2016, capturing his engagement with communities across the country as he presented his platform of good governance, national security, and public service. The scene reflects the energy, resolve, and grassroots connection that characterized his efforts to bring his message directly to the Filipino people.



A campaign poster from Raffy Alunan's 2016 senatorial bid, capturing the themes of leadership, security, and public service that defined his platform. The imagery and messaging reflect his decades-long record in government, national security, and civic engagement, presenting him as a steady and principled voice advocating for reform, strong institutions, and the protection of Filipino communities. The poster stands as a visual testament to his continued commitment to national service and his aspiration to contribute further to the country's progress through legislative work.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



The incoming Directors and Officers of the Rotary Club of Manila for Rotary Year 2023–2024, with Raffy Alunan serving as President. The photograph marks the beginning of a new term of leadership for Asia's first and oldest Rotary club — an organization renowned for its enduring legacy of service, fellowship, and civic engagement. Under Alunan's stewardship, the board embraced a renewed commitment to advancing humanitarian initiatives, strengthening community partnerships, and upholding the Rotary ideals of integrity, compassion, and service above self.

Rotary, Faith, and the Final Mission

By 2023, Raffy had lived many lives: soldier, secretary, scholar, and citizen. Now, at seventy-five, he was called once more to serve — this time not by a President, but by the oldest Rotary club in Asia. The **Rotary Club of Manila** was entering its 105th year, and its members sought a leader of moral weight to steady

its course. He had not campaigned for the office. In fact, he had tried to decline. But service has its own way of summoning those who have already served.

“I was content just to help quietly,” he would say later. “But Rotary is a family, and when family calls, you answer.”

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

The Unexpected Mandate

On July 6, 2023, beneath the chandeliers of the City of Dreams in Parañaque, Supreme Court Associate Justice **Jose Midas Marquez** administered his oath. The ballroom was filled with Rotarians in barong, their pins glinting like medals of faith. As he took the podium, Raffy Alunan looked out at the gathered faces and felt the old familiar mixture of duty and destiny.

“Service above self,” he said, “is not a slogan. It is an examination we take every day — and one we must keep passing even when no one is watching.”

He called for a culture anchored on **unity, sincerity, cooperation, and collaboration** — principles he had learned on battlefields and boardrooms alike. *“Without them,” he warned, “any organization rots from within, no matter how grand its past.”*



The Rotary Club of Manila had the honor of hosting Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, General Carlito Galvez Jr., who delivered an insightful address to the membership. Speaking with clarity and conviction, Gen. Galvez offered a comprehensive overview of the AFP's strategic vision for 2018 — encompassing modernization efforts, enhanced territorial defense, internal security reforms, and the strengthening of partnerships with civilian institutions. His presentation provided Rotarians with a deeper understanding of the military's evolving role in safeguarding national sovereignty and promoting lasting peace and development across the country.

Storm Inside the Sanctuary

The year that followed would test those principles to the edge. Behind Rotary's decorum lurked the same frailties he had encountered in government — ego, indifference, factionalism. He found himself presiding over disputes that seemed beneath men of their stature. *“It pained me,” he admitted, “to see leaders forget that true elitism is measured by character, not comfort.”*

He responded as he always had — with discipline tempered by empathy. He convened assemblies to air grievances openly, initiated a **Health Check Survey** to diagnose behavioral fault lines, and insisted that Rotary could not preach ethics without living them. When criticism came, he absorbed it silently. *“Leadership,” he said, “is the art of keeping faith when others lose temper.”*

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Through the turbulence, he continued to celebrate what worked — the community projects, the mentorship of Rotaractors, the district awards that validated the club's service. When District 3810 recognized RC Manila as **Outstanding Club of the Year**, he stood at the ceremony and smiled without bitterness. *"The real elite,"* he told his members, *"are those who refuse to quit on each other."*

The Private Battle

Public figures are often remembered for their titles, decisions, and the crises they navigate. But the truest measure of a leader often resides not in how he performs under the lights, but in the life he builds when no one is watching. For Raffy, the most defining presence in that private realm was his wife, **Elizabeth**. Their marriage, built quietly and steadily over decades, formed the emotional ballast that allowed him to withstand the turbulence of public service.

Long before he became a Cabinet member, before the motorcades and crisis briefings and midnight calls, Raffy was a young man learning the contours of responsibility — not yet to a nation, but to a partner. Elizabeth entered his life not as a dramatic turning point but as a stabilizing force, someone whose gentleness softened the sharp edges of his discipline. She offered what few in public life ever find: an anchor that did not demand to be seen.



Raffy Alunan and his wife, Elizabeth, were inseparable companions throughout their marriage, sharing countless journeys across the globe. Whether traveling for official engagements, personal milestones, or moments of quiet respite, they approached every trip as partners — united in curiosity, purpose, and affection. Their travels abroad became a tapestry of shared memories, reflecting a bond strengthened by adventure, mutual support, and a deep, enduring love that accompanied them wherever they went.

During his government years, the pressures were relentless. Crises do not adhere to office hours, nor do security briefings wait for family dinners to end. Raffy was often away — physically, mentally, emotionally — caught in the

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



The family of Raffy Alunan gathered at the wake of Elizabeth Jalbuena Alunan in March 2024. Surrounded by children, grandchildren, and loved ones, the moment reflects the profound bonds of family, shared grief, and enduring remembrance for a wife, mother, and matriarch whose life left a lasting imprint on all who knew her.

machinery of state, navigating threats that could not be deferred. While he served the Republic, Elizabeth served their home. She raised the children, managed the rhythms of daily life, and carried the unseen weight of worry that accompanies loving someone whose work inhabits danger.

It is easy to overlook this kind of labor because it is quiet. But the quietest influences are sometimes the most foundational. Behind the calm, steady posture Raffy showed the world was a partner who absorbed the anxieties he

could not afford to display. She created the space where he could rest his defenses, where the world's demands were momentarily suspended, where he was not a secretary or strategist or crisis manager, but simply a husband and father.

But life, in its unpredictable rhythm, would soon demand of him a courage different from the kind he had exercised in government. On March 13, 2024, **Elizabeth passed away.** Her loss marked a rupture in the narrative of his life — a point after which everything

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

would be measured differently. For a man accustomed to confronting armed threats and political crises, grief was a battlefield without a map. There were no protocols for this kind of pain, no briefings to prepare him, no contingency plan to execute. The loss was intimate, irreversible, and profoundly human.

He returned to work because he had to, but he returned diminished, walking through familiar responsibilities with an unfamiliar hollowing in the chest. The country had taken much from him already — time, safety, peace of mind — but this was the price that cut deepest. Public service had always demanded sacrifice; what he did not foresee was that the cost would one day be measured in the currency of absence.

Yet Elizabeth's influence did not end with her passing. Her memory became his compass. In the interviews and writings — he would later share, a pattern emerged — not in statements of grief, but in the moral clarity he carried forward. The humility he showed, the discipline he practiced, the steadfastness he embodied were reflections of a man shaped not only by the crises he faced, but by the love that had steadied him. Her grace lived on in his restraint; her patience echoed in his deliberation; her quiet faith mirrored in the maturity of his convictions.

Their children, now grown, carried her warmth even as they inherited their

father's resolve. Family gatherings held a different timbre after 2005 — muted at times, but suffused with a tenderness that reflected their shared loss. Raffy learned to navigate a new landscape of fatherhood, one without the partner who had once held the center. But he did not retreat. He adapted, as he always had, drawing strength from faith, memory, and the knowledge that his wife's legacy lived through the very family she had held together.

In the years that followed, he would take on roles across institutions — corporate, civic, military, diplomatic — yet those who knew him well could sense the quiet transformation. His service, always anchored in moral values, became even deeper, even more marked by a kind of inward stillness. It was as if grief had stripped away whatever remnants of vanity or ambition might have lingered, leaving only the essential: stewardship, duty, integrity, and the conviction that one's life must mean something beyond self.

Elizabeth had been his sanctuary, and losing her forced him to build one within himself.

The public sees the statesman, the strategist, the soldier, the board director, the commentator.

But those who look closer — those who read the whole arc of his life — will see

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

something more enduring: a man who learned to lead with discipline, but to live with grace; who confronted crises with courage, but faced love and loss with an even greater form of strength; who served his nation faithfully, while carrying within him the quiet legacy of the woman who helped build the man.

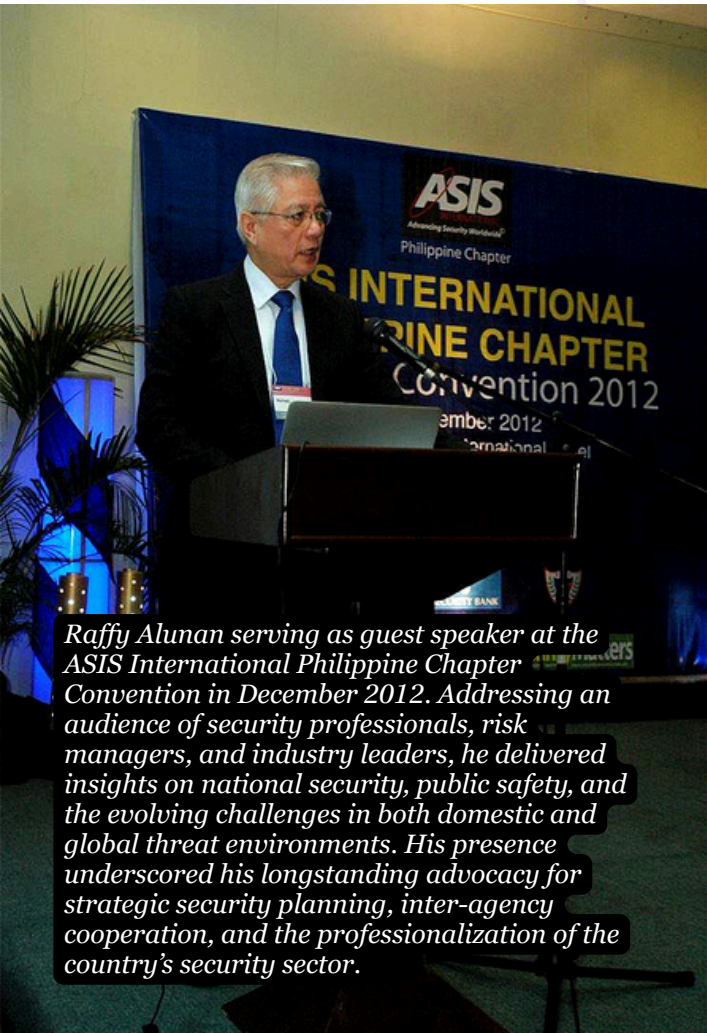
The Burden of Stewardship

In the months that followed, he threw himself into work with renewed purpose. He spoke often about unity, not as a slogan but as a discipline. He taught that sincerity is the bedrock of trust, that cooperation is the bridge between intent and impact, and that collaboration is how ordinary men achieve extraordinary things. His final addresses read like poems of faith:

“Uniting for a common purpose requires maturity and selflessness. It is in unity that we find the courage to face challenges, the compassion to support one another, and the wisdom to build a brighter future.”

He refused to be embittered by conflict. Instead, he used it as parable. “True leaders,” he said, “don’t win arguments; they win people back.”

When his term as President of the Rotary Club of Manila ended on June 30, 2024, he stood before his members for the last time. The Manila Polo Club Turf Room was hushed as he spoke, his voice measured but clear. He thanked those who had labored faithfully, acknowledged the errors that had wounded unity, and closed with grace: “A club is only as good as its members want it to be. May we always want it to be good.”



Raffy Alunan serving as guest speaker at the ASIS International Philippine Chapter Convention in December 2012. Addressing an audience of security professionals, risk managers, and industry leaders, he delivered insights on national security, public safety, and the evolving challenges in both domestic and global threat environments. His presence underscored his longstanding advocacy for strategic security planning, inter-agency cooperation, and the professionalization of the country's security sector.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Then he added softly, almost to himself, *“I dedicate this year to God, who kept me whole, and to Elizabeth, who waited for me without complaint.”*

After stepping down, he announced a temporary disengagement from official duties. *“I need to pick up the pieces of my shattered life,”* he told friends honestly. He spent quiet months settling family matters, writing, and reconnecting with his children and grandchildren. He also returned to the forums that had long been

his ministry — speaking on national security, ethics, and faith as the country faced new geopolitical storms.

He remained convinced that the Philippines could still fulfill its promise if its citizens learned to place “country above self.” He spoke of it not as slogan but as sacrifice. *“To love the nation,”* he said, *“is to surrender our comfort for its growth. We are all stewards of a dream too precious to abandon.”*



Raffy Alunan renders a final salute to former President Fidel V. Ramos as the nation bids him farewell, honoring a leader who dedicated his life to country, service, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. In this solemn moment, Alunan stands among those paying tribute as FVR is ceremonially welcomed into eternity — “arrival honors” befitting a soldier-statesman whose legacy continues to inspire generations of Filipinos.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Raffy Alunan presents a commemorative memento to Vice President Leni Robredo on behalf of President Tony Abad and the assembled members of the Board of Directors during the inaugural Harvard Kennedy School Bureaucrats' Ball. The event gathered public servants and policy professionals in a celebration of leadership, service, and good governance. Alunan's gesture symbolized the collective appreciation of the organization for the Vice President's commitment to transparency, accountability, and the welfare of the Filipino people.



Left photo: Raffy Alunan joins members of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC), anti-drug advocates, netizens, and citizen-soldiers in a peaceful march along Buendia Avenue toward the Chinese Consulate. The demonstration called attention to China's unlawful incursions and continued occupation of areas within the West Philippine Sea. The unified presence of civic groups, security reform advocates, and concerned citizens underscored a collective demand for respect for Philippine sovereignty, adherence to international law, and the defense of the nation's maritime rights.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

Love as Legacy

When Mother's Day arrived in 2024, he published a heart-rending tribute titled *"What is Love Like for Fifty-Five Years."* It was both eulogy and love letter. He recounted their courtship at Assumption and La Salle, their family life filled with humor and humility, and the years of caregiving that tested and transfigured him. He ended with these words:

"I'll miss our walks, our Holy Week retreats, our shared music. I'll now only imagine her in others, in the places we've been, in every corner of our home. Until we meet again somewhere in time."

Readers wept; Rotarians shared the piece across social media; friends saw in it the final proof that strength and tenderness can coexist. *"Even in loss,"* one colleague said, *"he was teaching us how to love well."*

The Continuing Call

Today, Raffy Alunan sits on corporate and civic boards, mentoring leaders who call him simply "Sir Raffy." His days are quieter now, but his purpose remains unyielding. He still writes, still lectures, still prays for a country he has spent a lifetime trying to heal.



Raffy Alunan delivering the overview at the 3rd Forum on the West Philippine Sea, titled "Understanding 21st Century China: All Under Heaven," held at the Asian Institute of Management on April 2, 2014. In his remarks, Alunan framed the geopolitical, historical, and strategic dimensions of China's rise, setting the tone for a substantive discourse on regional security, maritime rights, and the shifting balance of power in the Asia-Pacific.

He often quotes his favorite passage from St. Paul (2 Timothy 4:7): "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." To friends who ask what keeps him going, he answers without hesitation: "Because the race is not done. My generation must pass the torch brighter than we received it."

When he speaks to young leaders, his voice remains steady, his eyes alight with

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Raffy Alunan takes his oath of office as President of the Harvard Club of the Philippines in 2014, with former President Fidel V. Ramos serving as the inducting officer. The ceremony marked a significant moment of leadership within the Harvard alumni community, reflecting Alunan's commitment to fostering dialogue, scholarship, and public service among graduates of the university. With FVR — himself a renowned statesman and Harvard alumnus — administering the oath, the occasion symbolized the continuity of leadership, mentorship, and civic engagement across generations.

the same resolve that once lit Malacañang's crisis rooms. *"Serve freely,"* he tells them. *"Don't count the hours. Walk your talk. Live your values."*

And when he pauses, as he often does, he looks heavenward before adding softly:

"If I've learned anything in this life, it's that service is love made visible. And love — real love — never ends."

Epilogue: The Quiet Strength that Remains

In the end, the story of **Rafael Moreno**

Alunan III is not the story of a man who sought greatness. It is the story of a man who sought goodness — and in doing so, became great.

He did not chase the spotlight. It found him only because he stood where duty required him to stand: in disaster zones, in conflict areas, in policy rooms where the fate of the Republic hung in the balance, in communities long abandoned by the state, in the quiet hours of caregiving, in the moral crossroads of public life. Wherever he was needed, he appeared not with fanfare but with fidelity.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Raffy Alunan serving as a member of the Board of Governors of the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), one of the country's most influential business and management organizations. In this capacity, he collaborated with industry leaders, policymakers, and senior executives to advance good governance, professional excellence, and responsible corporate citizenship. His involvement in MAP underscores his longstanding commitment to nation-building through ethical leadership, strategic thinking, and the strengthening of institutions that shape the country's economic and managerial landscape.

Across the long sweep of his life, one principle held him steady: **A Filipino must stand for the Philippines.**

Not as slogan, not as posture, but as a lived truth.

He lived this truth through crises survived, reforms enacted, dangers faced, and values upheld. He lived it through friendships forged in service, through brothers-in-arms who claimed him as one of their own, through the communities that trusted him with their stories, their fears, their hopes. He lived it through years of

quiet work — writing, teaching, advising, serving — long after the stage lights of government had dimmed.

Most of all, he lived it through love.

Elizabeth had been his first home, the steady heart of his youth, the companion through every season of his journey. Her strength became his mirror. Her dignity softened him. Her suffering refined him. Her loss reshaped him. And in the silence that followed her passing, he came to understand service in its most intimate form: the courage to begin again when half one's world is gone.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman

The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III

It was then, in grief's long shadow, that he discovered a clearer, deeper mission — to speak not only as a former cabinet secretary or soldier, but as an elder of the Republic. To warn without bitterness. To teach without condescension. To uplift without illusion. To remind his countrymen that patriotism is neither grand nor abstract; it is the sum of daily acts rooted in integrity.

He served because he believed the Philippines could be better.

He served because he believed Filipinos deserved more.

He served because the alternative — apathy, cynicism, surrender — was unacceptable to a man who had seen how fragile freedom is.

His legacy, therefore, is not simply the reforms he championed or the institutions he strengthened, but the conscience he carried into every corner of the nation. A conscience shaped by memory, disciplined by danger, deepened by loss, and tempered by faith.

In the closing chapters of his life, he stands not as a hero carved from marble but as something far more human and therefore more enduring — **a man who**



Former DILG Secretary Raffy enjoys a round of golf with friends at the Escombro Golf Club. The gathering offered a welcome moment of camaraderie and relaxation, reflecting the enduring friendships and shared leisure pursuits that balance the demands of public service and civic leadership.

did his best, who kept his word, who stayed the course even when it cost him, who loved his country without condition, and who walked steadily toward the horizon with hope still in his hands.

The Republic he defended will continue to face storms — political, moral, economic, geopolitical. Yet it is stronger because men like him carried its weight for as long as they could.

And so the story ends not with a farewell, but with continuity.

Country Above Self: The Officer and the Gentleman The Life and Legacy of Rafael Moreno Alunan III



Barangay Alunan — Raffy Alunan and his wife Elizabeth are pictured with their children and grandchildren, reflecting the close-knit family bonds and multigenerational unity that remain at the heart of their lives. The photograph captures not only a family gathering, but the enduring values of love, continuity, and shared legacy that define the Alunan household.

For as long as the Philippines produces stewards who place country above self, as long as its young draw wisdom from those who served before them, as long as truth remains alive in those who choose principle over convenience — the flame he carried will continue to burn.

Quietly.
Steadily.
Faithfully.

A life examined becomes a life shared. A life shared becomes a legacy.

And a legacy rooted in service becomes a nation's inheritance.

This is the gift he leaves behind.

A Philippines he never stopped believing in.

A mission he never stopped pursuing.

A devotion that outlived every title and outlasted every storm.

In the heart of the Republic, his footsteps remain.

ROTATING ROTARIAN

Asst. Secretary Paco Magsaysay Attends Rotary Club of Pasig Meeting



Assistant Secretary Paco Magsaysay attended the Rotary Club of Pasig's meeting on December 11, 2025.



With Assistant Secretary Paco Magsaysay is Past RI Director Raffy Garcia

INTERCLUB MEETING

Coordination Meeting with Rotary Club of Makati West for Upcoming Joint Projects



President Raoul Creencia and Director Mike Albaña met with the Rotary Club of Makati West at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Bonifacio Global City, on December 22, 2025, to discuss upcoming joint projects.

INTERCLUB MEETING

President Raoul Creencia Attends RC Winnipeg Assiniboine Meeting



President Raoul Creencia presented the RCM Bannerette to RI District 5550 DGE and PP of the Rotary Club of Winnipeg Assiniboine Walter Thompson.



President Raoul Creencia presented the projects and activities of the Rotary Club of Manila.



While in Winnipeg, President Raoul went ice-skating on the Assiniboine River, the world's longest naturally frozen skating trail.

DISTRICT EVENTS

Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Ermita Manila



DGND/DSG Herminio Hermie Esguerra and Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday attended and participated in the Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Ermita Manila last December 17, 2025 at the Hotel Kimberly Manila in Manila.

Rotary Club of Ermita Manila's 34th Handover and 35th Induction Ceremonies



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra delivered an Inspirational Message during the 34th Handover and 35th Induction Ceremonies of the Rotary Club of Ermita Manila last December 17, 2025 at the Hotel Kimberly Manila in Manila.

DISTRICT EVENTS

Rotary Club of Ermita Manila's 34th Handover and 35th Induction Ceremonies



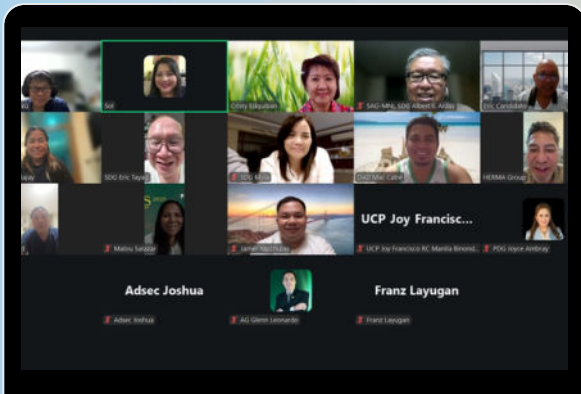
DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra conducted the Charging of Officers of the Rotary Club of Ermita Manila during its 34th Handover and Induction Ceremonies.

DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra and Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday attended the 34th Handover and 35th Induction Ceremonies of the Rotary Club of Ermita Manila.



DISTRICT EVENTS

Executive Committee (EXECOM) Meeting of Rotary District 3810 for the Month of January



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra and Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday attended the Executive Committee (EXECOM) Meeting of Rotary District 3810 for the month of January last January 5, 2026 via Zoom virtual platform.

Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Manila Fort Santiago



Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday attended the Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Manila Fort Santiago last January 6, 2026 at the Hall-In-One Room, Philippine Navy Golf Clubhouse, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.



Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday as part of the group picture at the end of the Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Manila Fort Santiago

DISTRICT EVENTS

9th Handover and 10th Induction Ceremonies of the Rotary Club of Manila Fort Santiago



Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday attended the 9th Handover and 10th Induction Ceremonies of the Rotary Club of Manila Fort Santiago last January 6, 2026 at the Philippine Navy Golf Clubhouse, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

RI District 3810 Chinese New Year Celebration



Rotary International President's Message January 2026



Francesco Arezzo
President 2025-2026

In a garage outside Salinas, California, young people who are learning to restore classic cars are doing more than developing a skill — they are reclaiming their futures. This training program provides mentorship and, for some, a path away from gang involvement toward meaningful employment. Graduates leave with certifications, practical experience, and hope.



This is what Rotary's Vocational Service Month celebrates each January — the power of bringing together people with unique skills to do good in the world. It reminds us that integrity isn't just about our actions matching our words. Integrity is in everything we do.

The California automotive program has been such a success because it was built on integrity. Members of the Rotary Club of Carmel-by-the-Sea didn't assume they knew what the community needed. They listened. They learned there was a shortage of skilled mechanics as well as a large number of young people lacking job training. They recognized that technical skills alone wouldn't be enough, so they partnered with Rancho Cielo, a nonprofit offering counseling and support services alongside vocational training.

That is The Four-Way Test in action. Those four simple questions help us not judge others but guide us toward genuine, effective service.

Consider our commitment to ending polio. For nearly 40 years, we have promised the world's children we will eliminate this disease. Despite obstacles, we persist, and today we are closer to defeating the virus. Keeping this promise is the very definition of integrity.

The same integrity must drive our vocational service. With 1.2 billion young people in emerging economies reaching working age in the next decade and only 420 million jobs projected, we face a critical gap. Communities long excluded from economic opportunities need our support.

But support doesn't mean imposing our will. It means listening to local needs, building partnerships, and designing projects that communities can sustain themselves.

You have knowledge that can transform lives. Whatever your profession, your expertise combined with Rotary's values creates lasting change. The question isn't whether you have something to offer, it's how you'll use your skills to serve.

This January, I encourage you to ask how your club can address vocational needs in your community. What skills do your members have that could change someone's life? How can your networks open doors for young people? What partnerships can create sustainable jobs?

Let integrity guide you. Let The Four-Way Test light your path. And let the young people in California and the multitudes worldwide who need job skills remind you why vocational service matters.

Let us celebrate putting our professional skills to work for humanity with integrity at the heart of everything we do.



Christmas Appreciation Lunch for RCM Secretariat



Former member and Past Director Edgar L. Lee sponsored a Christmas lunch for the RCM Secretariat last Friday, December 12, 2025. The lunch was held at Yuelai Seafood and Hotpot Restaurant.



President Raoul Creencia and President-elect Reggie Yu hosted a Christmas lunch on December 19, 2025, for the RCM secretariat team. They were joined by First Lady Myls Creencia and Board Legal Adviser/Director-elect Caloy Serapio.



IN THE NEWS

GMA Integrated News Publishes PD Amading Valdez's Views on Term Limits for Elective Posts

“
Human nature will
always want to cling to
power. Without term
limits, a public official
will remain in office
until he or she
destroys himself or
herself.

That three-consecutive
three-year term limit
must be removed. As it is,
officials simply prepare
their relatives for
succession

Without term limits, there
is no need to prepare for
succession. Children will
have to pursue their own
careers.

Amado Valdez Former dean of the University of the East College of Law

Arguing that removing constitutional term limits for elective
posts is the best way to curb political dynasties, and that an
unchecked hunger for power is ultimately self-destructive.

Published: Dec. 15, 2025

FILE PHOTO: GMA NEWS ONLINE

GMA
INTEGRATED
NEWS

Association of District Secretariat Christmas Fellowship



Ricardo Lagandaon, a part-time team
member of the RCM Secretariat,
attended the Association of District
Secretariat Christmas Fellowship
held on December 20, 2025.



Birthday Celebration & Christmas Gift-Giving at Hospicio de San Jose



PRESIDENT Raoul Creencia and Past Director Phillip Ong celebrated their birthdays in the spirit of generosity with a heartwarming Christmas gift-giving event on December 16, 2025 at Hospicio de San Jose.



The birthday celebrators, Pres. Raoul Creencia and PD Phillip Ong with the Hospicio de San Jose community.

Birthday Celebration & Christmas Gift-Giving at Hospicio de San Jose



The celebration was made even more memorable by the enchanting performance of the Santiago Trillana Academy (STA) Concert Chorus from Hagonoy, Bulacan. Their soulful renditions of Filipino and Christmas classics brought joy to the Hospicio community, guests, and members of the Rotary Club of Manila.

It was a day filled with music, giving, and the true essence of the holiday season.



Birthday Celebration & Christmas Gift-Giving at Hospicio de San Jose



From left: Pres. Raoul Creencia, Rtn. Ingill Ra, Dir. Mike Albaña, and Dir. Edwin Hernandez



From left: PDG Alex Cureg (Chairman, RCManila Foundation, Inc.), IPP Jujut Enriquez (President, RCManila Foundation, Inc.), and President Raoul Creencia (Rotary Club of Manila)



From left: Dir. Mike Albaña, Pres. Raoul Creencia, PD Phillip Ong, Director-elect/Board Legal Adviser Caloy Serapio, Internal Auditor Nick Locsin, Dir. Edwin Hernandez, Rtn. Ingill Ra and spouse Angie Ra

Birthday Celebration & Christmas Gift-Giving at Hospicio de San Jose



Appreciation Message from Sr. Martha and Sr. Bing of Hospicio de San Jose

—”
**THANK
YOU**
—”



DC Sr. Martha Abejero Ga... 11:28 AM
To: Raoul Creencia >

Thank You

Dear Sir Raoul, A blessed morning to you and the Rotarians of Manila. Thank you once again for the unwavering support of Rotary Club Manila to Hospicio de San Jose. I tried to catch up but the traffic was so heavy. I saw your cars leaving Hospicio, about to make a right turn. I was in the taxi... God bless you and all Rotarians and your family all the more. May you continue sharing your blessings with others. With all our prayers. Sr. Martha, Sr. Bing and Hospicio de San Jose.

PP Boy Guevara's 85th Birthday Celebration



Manila Rotarians joined the celebration of Past President Boy Guevara's 85th birthday at the picturesque Ponderosa Leisure Farms in Silang, Cavite, on December 27, 2025.



PP Boy Guevara's 85th Birthday Celebration



PP Boy Guevara's 85th Birthday Celebration



50th Wedding Anniversary of Ambassador Vic and Lady Connie Garcia

December 19, 2025 • Manila Hotel



Aleco Christmas Dinner Fellowship



THE ALECO Christmas Dinner Fellowship was held on December 11, 2025, graciously hosted by PD Ner Lonzaga and his spouse, Femy Lonzaga, at their residence in Parañaque.



Aleco Christmas Dinner Fellowship



In attendance were Rtn. Romy Nones, PE Reggie Yu, IA Nick Locsin, DSAA Dave Reynolds, PP Ebot Tan, PP Archit Bartolome, PD Sam Eldebs, PDG Jackie Rodriguez, former members Jorge Salazar and Raoul Villegas, PD Jun Hallare, DE Caloy Serapio, PD Amading Valdez, Rtn. Cris Acosta, Sec. Anton Mauricio, PD Beda Fajardo, PD Abe Pascual, PD Ner Lonzaga, together with their spouses.



Aleco Christmas Get-together

December 16 • Manila Polo Club



Aleco Christmas Get-together



FELLOWSHIP

Aleco Monday Breakfast Fellowship



Aleco Monday Breakfast Fellowship on January 5, 2026, hosted by VP Ricky Guevara.

Present were IA Nick Locsin, PD Rod Valencia, PD Beda Fajardo, VP Ricky Guevara, PD Tony Lopez, DE/BLA Caloy Serapio, PD Abe Pascual, Rtn. Cris Acosta, Sec. Anton Mauricio, DSAA Dave Reynolds, DSAA John Cutter, former member(s) Jorge Salazar, Eric Severino, Raoul Villegas, PDG Jackie Rodriguez, PP Archit Bartolome, PT Chito Tagaysay, PVP Joel Valdez, Rtn. Willie Peliño, former member Tony Montinola, and PD Jun Hallare.

PUBLIC IMAGE

Rotary Club of Manila's 7th Four-Way Test Marker Installed at the Colegio de Calumpit



PD Oscar del Rosario
at the Colegio de Calumpit

PUBLIC IMAGE

Rotary Club of Manila Honors Her Excellency MaryKay Carlson, the United States Ambassador to the Philippines



US AMBASSADOR PINARANGALAN NG ROTARY CLUB OF MANILA

December 12, 2025 PILIPINO Mirror



Ginawaran ng parangal ng Rotary Club of Manila si United States Ambassador to the Philippine MaryKay Carlson kahapon sa Manila Polo Club sa Makati City.

Si Ambassador Carlson ay ginawaran ng The Outstanding Ambassador Award ng Manila Rotary Club sa pamumuno ng Pangulo nitong si Raoul Creencio bilang pagkilala sa mga pagsisikap nito na mas mapaganda ang relasyon ng Amerika at ng Pilipinas.

At pagsusulong na higit pang mapalakas ang military and economic alliance ng dalawang bansa.

Naging tampok ang awarding ceremony sa ginanap na The Rotary Club of Manila 15th Weekly meeting at introduction ng mga bagong miyembro.

Pinasalamatan naman ni Carlson ang nasabing civic organization sa ginawad na pagkilala.

Kasabay ng pahayag na sa loob ng kanyang 44 taon sa diplomatic service ay ang Pilipinas umano ang siyang pinakamaganda niya assignment.

At hindi rin umano maaring makalimutan ang mga magagandang lugar sa bansa at ang pagiging hospitable ng mga tao.

Kaugnay nito kinumpirma ni Carlson na fake news at malisysyong naratibo ang pinapakalat na pinuwera ng US ang Pilipinas para ibasura ang sanay planong pagbili ng Department of National Defense ng military choppers sa Russia.

VERLIN RUIZ



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