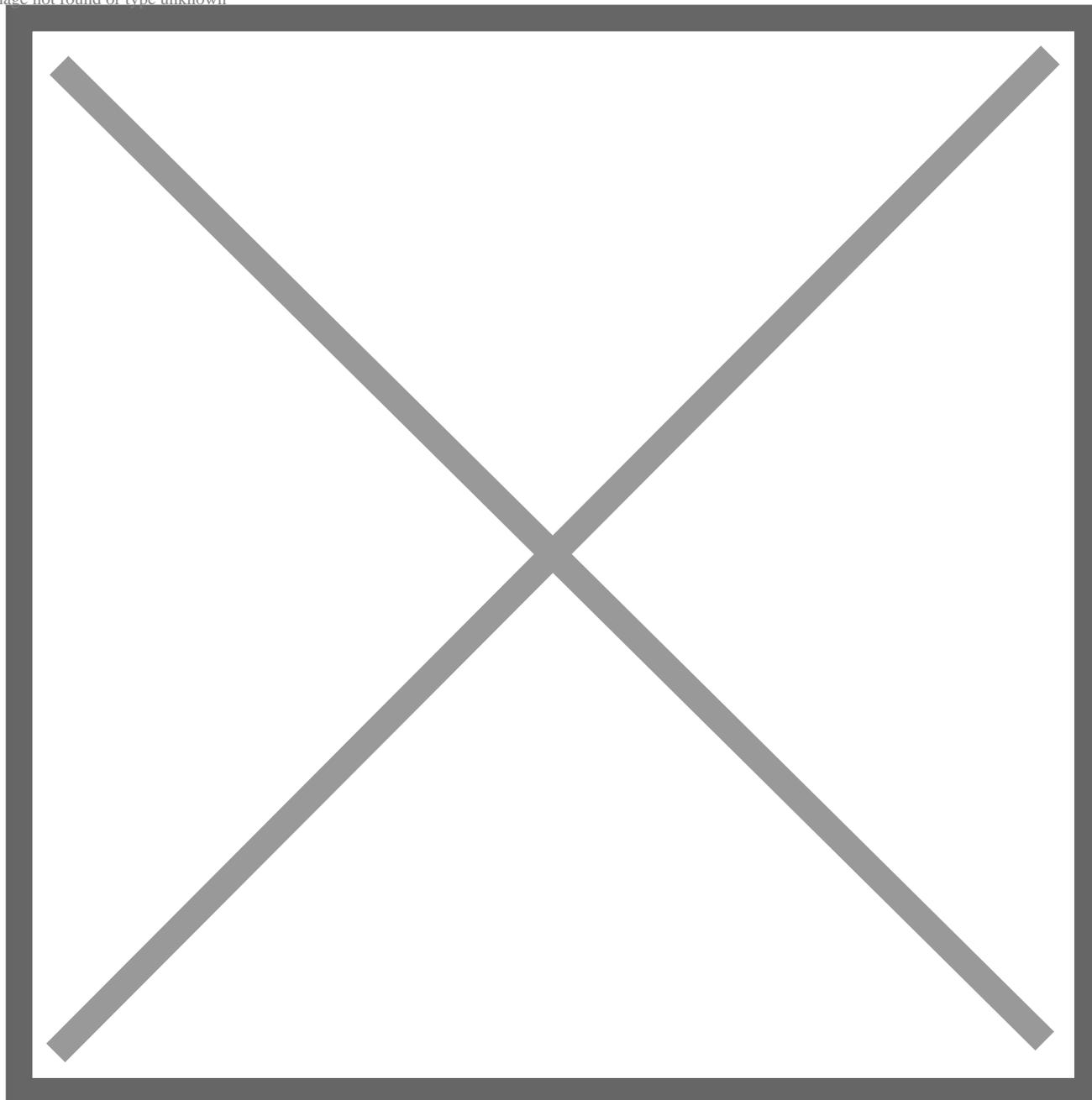


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Barizo, Teofilo V. (1924–1987)

AZER ALONO BOSITO, AND MARY GRACE LADION-DE GUZMAN

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Mary Grace Ladion-De Guzman taught at Lipa Adventist Academy for eleven years, the first established academy within the territory of South Central Luzon Conference. She is a licensed science teacher and holds master's degree in science education. She is particularly interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and staff development. Her husband, Marlon De Guzman, is a senior auditor for the South Central Luzon Conference. They have two children. Guzman

Teofilo Venida Barizo was a teacher, evangelist, and administrator from the Philippines.

Early Life

Teofilo Venida Barizo was born on November 3, 1924, in Daet Camarines Norte, the southeastern part of Luzon peninsula.¹ He was the eldest of the eleven children of Dalmacio Barizo and Marcela Venida. His father was a skilled carpenter and his mother was a businesswoman. Shortly, after Teofilo was born, the Adventist message was introduced to his parents by itinerant colporteurs. They accepted the faith and were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When Teofilo was about a year old, he was stricken with a severe sickness. He had a high fever and he refused to eat. He was on the brink of death. This trying moment tested the Barizo family's faith in God. Having been newly baptized into the Adventist faith, Marcela prayed earnestly to God and made a vow that if her son would recover, she would dedicate him to God's service. Right there and then, Teofilo vomited violently, but after a while, he was relieved of his fever. Eventually, he fully recovered.²

Education and Marriage

Teofilo attended Daet Elementary Public School, in Camarines Norte since there was no Adventist school yet in their place. When he finished his elementary education in 1938, he pursued his high school education at the Philippine Union College Academy, Baesa, Caloocan City, Manila from 1939 to 1941.³ However, his education journey was interrupted by World War II, when the Japanese army invaded the Philippines in 1941. He only finished his third year of high school when war broke out and he needed to go back home. Life was hard during the war years. The family had to hide from one place to another to avoid being captured by the Japanese soldiers. At times, they fled to the hills. One night, Teofilo decided to gather scrap metal at the dump yard to sell it to make money. He did not think that disaster would come in his life. While rummaging in the dump area, a convoy of Japanese soldiers arrived and arrested him on suspicion of being an American spy. For three days and three nights, he experienced severe beatings. He was water-boarded and hog-tied in a dark chamber. It was at this low point in his life that he vowed to God that if he survived the ordeal, he would devote his life to Christ's service.⁴

On the fourth day of his captivity, a high-ranking Japanese official arrived in the camp. In honor of the visiting official, a banquet was held. While the party was going on, Teofilo was hauled out of prison and ordered to wash the dishes a few meters away from the main hall. He was weak and in terrible pain, but he complied. While scrubbing the dirty dishes, he noticed that the guards were preoccupied with the party and were not watching. He had the opportunity to escape under the cover of darkness, and he fled running as fast as his feet could carry him. The next day, he arrived at his parent's hide-out.⁵

When the war subsided, classes were resumed in 1945, he was able to finish his high school education in Camarines Norte High School. When war finally ended, he enrolled at the Philippine Union College in Manila to take the ministerial course from 1946 to 1949. Since his parents were very poor and could not afford to pay for his college education, he worked as a student security guard. As a student, he displayed extraordinary leadership skills and was appointed commandant of the Reserve Officer's Training Corps. Towards his senior year, he met a young, beautiful education major, Amalia San Juan. Teofilo saw in her qualities that would make her an ideal minister's wife so he courted her. In 1949, Teofilo graduated and obtained a degree in Bachelor of Arts in Religion. He and Amalia were married on April 26, 1950. Teofilo continued his education and attended graduate school at the Philippine Union College from November 1951 to May 1952 where he also took Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE) for one semester and one summer.⁶

The couple was blessed with four children: Daniel, Raymund, Myjelaa, and Teofilo Jr.⁷

Ministry

Teofilo and Amalia's first assignment was on the island of Burias from 1949 to 1951. This is in Southern Luzon Mission, Bicol region where Catholicism was the predominant religion. During Teofilo's conducted evangelistic meetings, the people were initially antagonistic. During many nights, rocks would rain down on the roof of the building where the meetings were held. One day, the couple decided to pay a visit to the town mayor whose daughter was ill. The limited

medical knowledge he learned from school was used because he gave the mayor some medical advice, and gave the girl some pills to take. The girl got well and from then on, at the order of the mayor, people stopped hurling stones at the meeting place. After serving as a district pastor in different areas in the Bicol region, Teofilo was ordained to the gospel ministry on December 1, 1949.⁸

On June 1, 1952, he was appointed as the education secretary of the Southern Luzon Mission (SLM)⁹ and served in that capacity until December 1957.¹⁰ His wife, Amalia, was asked to teach at Legaspi Adventist Elementary School. Since the nearest high school and college were in the far North or at the Ilocos region and Manila, Barizo realized that there is a need to establish a secondary school where Adventist youth in the Bicol region could pursue their high

school education. The Mission Board, together with the Board of the North Philippine Union Mission (NPUM), decided to appoint Neri Alcantara to look for a suitable site for the school. Alcantara found a site located in the slopes of a dormant volcano, which was strategically located in the central part of the region. This site would eventually be the location of what would be Naga View Academy (now the Naga View Adventist College).¹¹

After serving the Bicol region for several years, Barizo was appointed as the education

superintendent of South-Central Luzon Mission (SCLM) from January 1958 to December 1963.¹² Among the activities that he was actively involved with while serving SCLM was the training of missionaries through senior youth camp¹³ and Pathfinder Club camp.¹⁴ He served in that capacity for six years, then was appointed as the Education and Sabbath School Secretary of the Central Luzon Mission (CLM),¹⁵ which is located in a suburb of Manila from January 1, 1964, to December 1965. However, he traveled from time to time to the Bicol region especially in supporting Naga View Academy for its week of prayer sessions.¹⁶ He served the church faithfully wherever he was assigned. However, he had a strong burden for the work of the gospel in his hometown, the Bicolandia. Thus, when the office of the president of the SLM became vacant in 1966, he gladly accepted the invitation to become the first Bicolano mission president.¹⁷ He led the mission until 1969.¹⁸ His wife, constantly by his side, also served as the Child Evangelism director and associate secretary of Education.¹⁹ The dedication for the education ministry can be seen in the efforts of Teofilo and his wife, Amalia. Mrs. Barizo donated a piece of land to accommodate the Smart Memorial Aeta Mission School in Tigbinan, Labo, Camarines Norte.²⁰ Both believed the importance of giving education to the Aetas, a Filipino ethnic group living in the area.

His varied experiences in the ministry and leadership equipped him to be trusted with one of the most important offices in the NPUC, the stewardship department. In 1970, he responded to a call to serve as the stewardship director until 1979. Aside from leading the stewardship department during these years, he also led the Sabbath school department²¹ for a year and then the education department.²² In 1980, he was called to be the secretary of NPUM²³ and held this office until 1987.²⁴ As the secretary of the union, his job took him to different local missions of the island of Luzon, attending meetings, preaching sermons, baptizing,²⁵ and sharing the Adventist message to others.²⁶

Demise

Teofilo Barizo died in a traffic accident on April 9, 1987. That day a nine-man delegation were on board a vehicle of NPUM, after attending the biennial session held at Philippine Union College, North East Luzon Academy campus in Isabela. Fifteen minutes into the trip, a truck rammed the Union vehicle hitting the driver's side. Nestor R. Arit, the NPUM president, and Teofilo Barizo died on the spot while the driver expired inside the emergency room. Other passengers, including Amalia Barizo, sustained multiple injuries but survived. The accident was considered by many to be Satan's handiwork to put a stop to the fast-growing mission work in the northern part of the Philippines. The loss brought sadness to the Adventist church members in the Philippines and other parts of the world.²⁷

Contribution

Barizo is known to be a hard-working, visionary administrator. During his leadership, Lucena Adventist Elementary School in Lucena City, Quezon was established. It was during his presidency that the construction of the buildings at Naga View Academy, which has now become Naga Adventist College, started. The school started its operation in 1966 with a handful of students and a few dedicated faculty. Pastor Barizo served as the first Chairman of the Board of the academy. He rendered service to the church for 37 years as a mission worker and leader.

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NOTES

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