

Romulo, Potenciano Hilario (1905–1989)

MARY GRACE LADION-DE GUZMAN

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 a 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 is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Education with a specialization in Curriculum and Instruction from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies.

Potenciano H. Romulo was an evangelist, educator, and leader from the Philippines.

Early Years, Education and Marriage

Potenciano H. Romulo was born on November 19, 1905, to Juan Romulo and Josefa Hilario in Malate, Manila, Philippines. Juan was a contractor while Josefa was a housewife. He was baptized in February 1925 at Pasay City, Manila, by Elder L. C. Warren.¹

Romulo attended Paco Intermediate School, Manila, where he finished his elementary education. One of his years in high school was spent in Manila High School; then the remaining three years were at Philippine Junior College where he got his high school diploma in 1929. He also studied at the Philippine School of Commerce for a year and another two years in Philippine Union College where he obtained his diploma in 1940.²

On February 23, 1931, Potenciano married Eloida P. Gonzales. Eloida was born on December 28, 1915, in Tondo, Manila. She worked as an office secretary at the Manila Sanitarium and Hospital, Pasay, Philippines. Their union was blessed with three children: Erlinda Amor, Samuel Reynaldo, and Arthur Roy Romulo.³

Ministry

Romulo started his career in the denomination as an evangelist under Central Luzon Mission (CLM) from April 1927 to June 1927 during the summer vacation while still a student. He had been active in various evangelistic efforts. Upon graduation in 1929, he was absorbed by the CLM to work as an evangelist from March 1929 to December 1930. In January 1931 he was called to serve South-Central Luzon Mission (SCLM) as an evangelist until June 1932. His stay in SCLM didn't last long because he was given a greater responsibility as the secretary-treasurer of CLM⁴ starting July 1932 until July 1938. He was seen to have leadership potential in the ministry, and so he served in that capacity for six years.

In 1935 Romulo lost his father.⁵ Three years later, in August 1938, he answered a new call as the secretary and head teacher of the Home Study Institute where he served for four years until April 1942. Then his services were

required by the Philippine Union Mission (PUM) in the same year until May 1945. He served PUM as the executive secretary amid the crisis of World War II in the Philippines when the Japanese troops attacked the island's serenity on December 9, 1941, a few hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The war went on until August 15, 1945, when the Japanese troops surrendered. This is also the year that Romulo lost his mother.⁶

In June 1945 a few months before the war ended in the Philippine archipelago, he was appointed as the secretary of the Missionary Volunteer (MV) Department⁷ at the same time as the assistant corporate secretary.⁸ He served the young people and volunteers of PUM in this capacity for two years until he was called to serve the Philippine Union College as a language instructor in June 1947.⁹ Aside from being an instructor, as an evangelist, he also assisted the Pathfinder Club and the investiture program of the academy and college students. But he only stayed in PUC until August 1948 as his service was needed in the Philippine Union Mission to assume again the role of the MV Department secretary.¹⁰ So, from September 1948 to January 1963, he worked as the MV secretary¹¹ and as assistant executive secretary.¹² He remained as an MV secretary and was relieved as the assistant executive secretary in 1950; however, the Temperance Department was given to him instead. For 15 long years, he served PUM in this capacity.

Here are some of the events and activities during his services as MV secretary that include youth leadership. Among the highlights of his ministry were the youth camps. Under his leadership the first youth camp in the Bicol area of the Southern Luzon Mission (SLM) in 1950 brought 10 campers at the feet of Jesus and 13 more souls from the neighboring churches. This nine-day camp was attended by 16 girls and 24 boys who enjoyed several activities such as "classes in first aid and artificial respiration, hiking, swimming, lifesaving, tracking and trailing, campfire storytelling, nature and Bible study, flag ceremony, and many others." Passersby and visitors came to witness the interesting activities. The town "mayor, the owner of the campsite, and an educator"¹³ received a good report of the camp and visited the campsite to witness the activities of the day such as basic life support and first aid. They were so happy and appreciative of the Adventist training to the young people. Around three hundred people came from the neighboring churches with their packed lunches and attended the Sabbath worship. Other denominational groups were also there to witness the baptism in the clear flowing river within the campsite. With the camp's success, Romulo was requested by Brother Aristorenas, MV secretary of SLM, to conduct a similar youth camp the next year.

In the same year, CLM conducted two youth camps under Romulo's leadership and the mission MV secretary.¹⁴ On one occasion, he accompanied Elders E. Dunbar and Willis E. Hackett to the office of the Philippine president, His Excellency Ramon Magsaysay, to invite him to speak for the first meeting of the upcoming Union Youth Congress. Without hesitation, the latter gladly accepted the invitation.¹⁵

During the Biennial Session, Romulo reported the flourishing work of the Mission Volunteer Department that includes the youth distribution of literature tracts, Pathfinder investitures, district association meetings or

rallies, volunteerisms (medical cadet corps), and baptisms.¹⁶ A similar report of progress can be witnessed in the Temperance Department, which was under his care.¹⁷

On April 8--13, 1957, the second Youth Congress was held at the gymnasium of Philippine Union College, Baesa, Caloocan City, Philippines. This was attended by "4,000 young people and brethren from the five missions comprising the North Philippine Union Mission" (NPUM).¹⁸ Romulo led the activity with his constituents from the Far Eastern Division and Union – F. A. Mote, C. D. Martin, W. J. Hackett, and R. S. Moore. The local conference leaders and the Philippine publishing manager also joined the activity. The number expanded to 7,000 attendees during the Sabbath culmination. The camp activities include morning and evening worships; outpost evangelisms—public evangelism, personal evangelism, and literature evangelism; Manila tour; Pathfinder parade, drills, and craft exhibitions; investiture; and lectures on choosing a life partner and career.

Another remarkable and unforgettable activity of the MV Department is the senior youth camp¹⁹ held in Los Banos, Laguna, on April 5-12, 1959. Around two hundred twenty campers plus staff joined from five missions and had 400 attendees during the Sabbath worship. Romulo created a valuable program that included morning worships and prayer bands, hiking, swimming, photography, and craft-making. The highlight of the camp was the Leadercraft Course. Such an event was cherished not only by the campers but also by the people around the area who witnessed the activity. The camp was a joint effort of the MV Department from the local conferences/missions to the NPUM. The effort was blessed by the mighty hand of God and was a success. The campers received their certificates for the completion of the course at the culmination of the camp meeting.

In February 1963 Romulo accepted the call to lead Central Luzon Mission as president.²⁰ He became the seventh president of CLM.²¹ He retired from denominational service in December 1965. He served the church for a total of 40 years.²²

Demise and Contribution

Romulo fulfilled his duty as an evangelist and father of the church and his family before his death on April 10, 1989.²³ He encouraged the church and the community where he belonged constantly.

Romulo was described as "a true and loyal worker in the cause of God and had led out in a strong way both in the departmental work in the Union as well as in the administrative work"²⁴ as mission president. He was a dynamic youth leader who implemented various activities to train the youth for service to God and men. His camp rallies inspire many young people to volunteer for God's service in many ways such as in literature, health, and youth ministries.

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NOTES

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