

Tabo, Levy Baloyo (1933–1989)

NOWER A. GOMEZ

Nower A. Gomez, B.A. in theology (Mountain View College), M.Min. (the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies [AIAS]), is working on his Doctor of Ministry degree at AIAS. Presently, he is the Ministerial secretary of Southern Mindanao Mission. He is married to Belle Tolentino Gomez.

Early Life

Levy Baloyo Tabo was born in Dayhagan, Ilog, Negros Occidental, Philippines on April 10, 1933.¹ He was the fourth of seven children of Pedro Engojo Tabo, an industrious fisherman in Negros Occidental, and his wife Leona Hero, a businesswoman and a caring mother to the children. Both parents were Seventh-day Adventists. The children, from the oldest to the youngest, Awee Jerusa, married Diego Sabrine, who was president of West Visayan and Western Mindanao Missions;² Jose, married to Arlene Flores; Phoebe; Levy, married to Perla L. Sienes; Emilia, married to James Wong; Ismael; and Romulo, married to Arlie Caballero.³

Education and Marriage

Levy had his elementary education in an Seventh-day Adventist primary school at Vista Alegre, and high school in a private academy at Ilog, Negros Occidental.⁴ After his high school graduation, he decided to go to Bukidnon province in Mindanao, to attend Mountain View College. He was a working student who labored hard night and day to earn money to support his schooling. He worked in the college farm during the day, and as a security guard by night. In the summer he worked as a student canvasser. Through diligence and perseverance, he was able to finish with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, and a minor in History, on March 19, 1961.⁵ Despite the hardships of being a working student, he graduated magna cum laude. He married his sweetheart, Perla Sienes on December 30, 1965. They had four children: Grace, Cleveland, Jacqueline, and Elizabeth.⁶

Through his life's example, Tabo's children were inspired to do their best in their studies. Grace became a registered nurse and married engineer Jose Tecson, Jr.; they have one child, Sushene, who is also a registered nurse. They now live in General Santos City. Cleveland Tabo II is also a registered nurse, married to Lea Manaban; they have two children and reside in Dublin, Ireland. Jacqueline, also a registered nurse, married Ricardo Godoy, and has one child, Kaytrell Mayumi. She lives in California, United States. Elizabeth, who also became a registered nurse, married Francis Lucas,⁷ and has two children, Ciara Lane, and Steven. She lives in California together with her family.⁸

Ministry

Levy B. Tabo graduated from Mountain View College on March 19, 1961.⁹ He was called to serve as a ministerial licensed worker at Southern Mindanao Mission, in the area that is now part of Davao Mission, in 1962!¹⁰ He was then called to greater responsibilities. First, as Sabbath School Director of the South Philippine Union Mission (now South Philippine Union Conference) 1986–1987;¹¹ executive committee member South Philippine Union Mission, 1987-1988;¹² Sabbath School and Lay Activities director 1984–1985 at Davao City;¹³ and as president of the Southern Mindanao Mission, General Santos City, from 1987 to 1989.¹⁴ During his leadership of the Southern Mindanao Mission he was known for his passion for the people he served. He loved to visit the tribal communities, the Blaan. That passion for being with the tribe led him to organize Adventist Tribal Laymen, a group comprised of members from the Blaan, Tboli, and Manobo tribes. Under Pastor Tabo's leadership, Southern Mindanao Mission became very active and productive in soul-winning. Tabo motivated people to work according to the gifts and talents God gave them.

1986 to 1989 were considered years of evangelism. The number of baptisms increased, new churches were built, and more lay workers were hired for evangelistic work. There was an increased effort in evangelizing the highlands, where many pastors of different denominations were baptized and became preachers of the word of God to their tribes. In 1989 Quiet Hour Ministries came to Southern Mindanao Mission to hold an evangelistic series with Pastor Laverne Tucker as the speaker. 3,000 people were baptized throughout the mission territory.¹⁵

During that time, there were 164 organized churches, 230 companies, 47,871 church members, 19 ordained ministers, 12 licensed ministers, 33 credentialed missionaries, and 240 credentialed and licensed literature evangelists in the Southern Mindanao Mission. 6,894 were baptized in 1989. The 42-hectare Onica Farm, which had laid idle, was cultivated, and gave a good harvest of corn which augmented the financial income of the mission. During Tabo's tenure a small cafeteria was constructed to host the workers' meeting, and was later turned into a sleeping quarters. An amateur radio was started to be used as a communication tool to facilitate efficient work in the mission field.¹⁶ Those years of progress and unity now became a great memory of a man who gave his all for God. Levy Baloyo Tabo's ministry was cut short due to a sudden illness in 1989.¹⁷

Later Life

In 1989, Tabo was diagnosed with Periampullary Carcinoma, a cancer that forms near the ampulla of Vater, an enlargement of the ducts from the liver and pancreas where they join and enter the small intestine.¹⁸ He died October 13, 1989, and was laid to rest October 22, 1989.¹⁹ As a recognition of his legacy, the L. B. Tabo Memorial Church was dedicated in his memory.²⁰

Contribution

Tabo's love for evangelism and concern for the indigenous groups led him to labor with them. His work led to the conversion of the family of Arsenio Yata, who became Tabo's lay worker. Arsenio Yata has served as a lay worker in the Southern Mindanao Mission since 1985. The living testimony of Tabo's love for the tribe includes motivating the educational sponsorship of Arsenio's son Enrile, sending him to Adventist institutions, from high school at Matutum View Academy, through college at Mountain View in Valencia City, Bukidnon, where he studied theology. His contribution to these people was always remembered. Pastor Enrile Yata is now serving in the Health, Communication, and Public Affairs & Religious Liberty Department and leads the Adventist Tribal Ministry of Southern Mindanao Mission.²¹ Onica Farm today is already full of rubber trees and palm oil. What started as amateur radio is today the Adventist Convention and Media Center of Hope Radio 95.30 FM.

SOURCES

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Workers Record of Diego C. Sabrine. Central Philippine Union Conference Archives, Cebu City, Philippines.

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NOTES

1. Worker's Record of Levy B. Tabo, Southern Mindanao Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, General Santos City, Philippines, SMM Archives.
2. Personal Service Record of Diego C. Sabrine. Central Philippine Union Conference Archives.
3. Interview with Grace T. Tecson, August 2, 2018.
4. Worker's Record of Levy Tabo.

5. Based on the record of the registrar, Mountain View College, College Heights, Mt. Nebo, 8709 Valencia City, Philippines
<http://www.mvc.edu.ph>.
6. Interview with Grace T. Tecson, August 2, 2018.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Based on the record of the registrar's office, Mountain View College, College Heights, Mt. Nebo, 8709 Valencia City, Philippines
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10. "Southern Mindanao Mission," Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962, 118.
Retrieved from www.adventistyearbook.org. <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1962.pdf>.
11. Ibid., 131.
12. Ibid., 133.
13. Ibid., 153.
14. Ibid., 136.
15. Souvenir Program of Southern Mindanao Mission, 50th Years from 1965 – 2015, "Celebrating God's Goodness with Thanksgiving," 20.
16. Ibid.
17. Worker's Record of Levy Tabo, Southern Mindanao Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, General Santos City, Philippines.
18. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periampullary_cancer.
19. Worker's Record of Levy Tabo, Southern Mindanao Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, General Santos City, Philippines.
20. Taken from the Souvenir Program of Southern Mindanao Mission, 50th years from 1965 – 2015, "Celebrating God's Goodness with Thanksgiving," souvenir program of SMM p. 20 kept in the archives.
21. Interview with Pastor Enrile Yata, August 6, 2018, at Southern Mindanao Mission headquarters.

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