

## TILL WE MEET AGAIN

I knew Wilmer Heceta for several decades and I am happy to recollect the memories of those years. I met Wilmer 51 years ago, when we were young students at the University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center College of Medicine in Quezon City. He was two years ahead of me and like any lower classman; I was somewhat timid to interact with him. His tall physical built, good looks and aura of confidence when he spoke did not help me much to have the courage to approach him. When I learned that he was dating Estherbelle Aguilar, the pretty and smartest lady of their class, I told myself that Wilmer is truly blessed. After a couple of years, I found out that Wilmer is approachable and a truly friendly and caring person. He was always the top student of their class and graduated *Cum Laude* of Class '61, the first graduates of our school. With all those qualifications, I would say that I have always looked up at him and dreamed that someday, if God would bless me, I might be like Wilmer Heceta.

Our paths crossed again during annual reunions. We were both concerned alumni committed to helping our Alma Mater. Wilmer was elected as the second Chairman of the Board of the UERMMM Alumni Foundation, U.S.A., Inc. in 1984. He was the first alumnus to hold the position. When he took the chairmanship, the Foundation was unsettled, the mission and objectives were drafted but most of us lacked the knowledge to implement them. The Alumni Foundation was incorporated as a non-profit organization but did not have the tax-exempt status yet. Dr. Heceta worked hard with the other officers and the Foundation was granted a 501(C) 3 tax –exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service of the United States of America.

For 13 years, Wilmer held the position and had tremendous accomplishments during his term of office. A summary would include the following:” *Improvement of the internal and external activities of the Alumni Foundation* - He started by strengthening the leadership by adding more board members and hiring bookkeeper and accountant to help the administration. With the approval of the Board, he saw to it that the Foundation had the current technology such as a computer for the treasurer, printer and tape recorder for the secretary. The constitution and by laws was amended to meet the changing needs of the Foundation. Funding the expenses of the Dean of the College of Medicine to attend the annual convention/reunion was started. *Support the improvement of Medical Education and Research in the Philippines focusing at the UERMMC* - He encouraged donors for the Tuition Fee and Book Scholarships and Professorial Chair programs. Faculties of the university were the recipients of the award of approximately \$42,000, which is a good amount when converted to pesos. *Faculty Development* - Under Dr. Heceta’s chairmanship, the Foundation funded several faculties who attended Continuing Education Programs in the Philippines and abroad. *Memorial Lectures* - The Foundation sponsored and co-sponsored several Memorial Lectures at the UERMMC. The Dean Jose Cuyegkeng Memorial Lecture held annually during the Alumni Reunions started during Dr. Heceta’s term.” *333 Fund* - Dr. Heceta initiated the fund on December 1995 as an Endowment Fund and continued when I took over the Chairmanship of Board. The donations are deposited in the unrestricted fund of the Foundation and is allotted to supplement projects that needs additional funding and for administrative expense as well.

The goal then was to raise \$100,000; *Physical Improvement and Purchase of Equipment for UERMMMMC* - The projects included the renovation of various departments such as Anatomy, Biochemistry, Preventive and Community Medicine, Physiology, Pharmacology, Pathology, Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Clinical Conference Hall. The equipment purchase included Audiovisual Equipment, Kodak Ektachrome, Analyzer, Two Head and three head microscopes, 25 volume set of Pathology books and miscellaneous surgical instruments.

The total expenses for these projects was around \$120,000.00 When I took over the Chairmanship of the Board of the UERMMMMC Alumni Foundation in March, 1997, Dr. Wilmer Heceta endorsed a total of \$233,269.43 in the Treasury plus a wealth of knowledge in the dynamics of managing the Foundation and the courage to take the responsibility. When the officers of the original UERMMMMC Medical Alumni Association of America ( incorporated in the State of Maryland and granted a 501 (c) 6 Tax Exempt Status by the IRS) presented the concept of using a life insurance policy as a form of donation to the Alumni Foundation, they mentioned that it would be implemented for the first time. I proudly reminded them that Dr. Wilmer Heceta was the first alumnus to do so.

Wilmer's passing is a great loss for us but his legacy will stay forever. So long my mentor, role model and friend. I hope to meet you again when it is my time to be called by our Lord Almighty and Creator.

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Chairman Emeritus  
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