

RENATO "Tato" Dantes, MD, MSc, FPCCP (1955-2008)

Renato Dantes, "Tato" to most of his colleagues, was given a posthumous award in March 2009 as outstanding researcher by the Philippine College of Chest Physicians (PCCP) of which he was past president 2006-2007. A part of his citation reads, "in recognition of his innovativeness, enthusiasm, vigor, selflessness to the end that they will be a testament to what the best of the human mind can accomplish in the field of research, for the restless, ever-seeking spirit that moves and inspires colleagues and subordinates alike to greater heights in scientific studies and research". The UP Manila Department of Clinical Epidemiology has renamed their Health Policy Course in honor of Dr. Dantes and the research Awards in PCCP are now called by the acronym TATO. These are just but some examples of how even in death, Tato continues to move and inspire others.



A part of the first wave of clinical epidemiologists that trained abroad, Tato learned his clinical epidemiology in McMaster University and returned to the country to become the Director of the UP Clinical Epidemiology Unit from 1990-1993. He would eventually influence a host of next generation leaders in the field through his teaching and example.

As a member and leader of professional societies such as the PCCP, PhilCAT (Philippine Coalition against Tuberculosis), The PCP (Philippine College of Physicians) and, likewise, as medical director of Boehringer Ingelheim and chair of the Boehringer Foundation, he endeavored to get his peers and the local pharmaceutical industry to support research and evidence-based medicine.

His heart was always for the poor and downtrodden hence his passion for social action projects and his involvement in TB. It is noteworthy that during his wake, in lieu of flowers, the family asked that donations be made to PhilCAT where he was a passionate champion of public-private collaboration for TB control.

Tato was the epitome of the quiet leader, the peacemaker. He was simple in his ways, never putting on airs, but was highly respected and followed by everyone, from the highest to the lowest levels. He exuded the quiet confidence of someone who knew what he was doing. He was the complete family man and was my idol and role model in this and many other respects including being a TB champion.

During my term as PCP President I realized that many of my ideas and values have evolved from being a long-time friend of Tato. He was our "kuya", in personal and professional matters.

He helped in professionalizing 3 societies, PhilCAT, PCCP and ultimately PCP. Many of the organizational development ideas we now use came from him and his decades of experience in corporate matters.

Tato, you will be sorely missed. On the afternoon of his death many of us, his friends and colleagues, walked about in a daze, feeling empty. How could one so kind have died so young? The TB work is yet unfinished. He had so many plans. He traveled extensively for the landmark Burden of Obstructive Lung Disease/ Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (BOLD/COPD) study. He was to have been Scientific Research chair for the APSR (Asian Pacific Society for Respiriology) convention in Manila in 2010. We are now orphans. Tato, we know we will all go someday. Please pray we may be as cool and as kind, as family-oriented, as pure as you were.

During Tato's wake and subsequent cremation, all of us who knew him soon realized we indeed did not know enough of the full human being, "Mr. Cool" was also an Ateneo high school alumnus who had immersed himself in social work and even just before his death was thinking of more programs for the poor. His TB work which I knew intimately was only one of many other facets of the jewel that was Tato. Even his eldest son Mark confessed that they did not know many of the things shared during his eulogies. That was true Tato, always humble even of his great achievements.

I think one of his greatest traits was his ability to see the good in everyone, going beyond our pettiness. Coming from La Salle but being a close friend of the true blue-blooded Atenean that was Tato, we enjoyed kidding around with Ateneo vs La Salle jokes. But the reason Tato was the great peacemaker and team-builder is that to him you were not from La Salle or Ateneo, UP or UST (University of Santo Tomas), pulmo or cardio, PCP or PAFP (Philippine Academy of Family Physicians), PCCP or PSMID (Philippine Society of Microbiology & Infectious Diseases), private or public sector. That is why he easily related to the Public-Private Mix (PPM) advocacies of TB that involves the cooperation and collaboration of all sectors. Tato stood above the differences and

pettiness of those who never seem able to bring themselves to work with one another.

We found a common passion in TB and Research and Clinical Epidemiology. Mr. Rex Lores, Philippine Tuberculosis Society Inc. (PTSI) executive director, revealed how Tato had given them a roadmap for many years to come (similar to the work he has done for PhilCAT, PCCP and in a way PCP). He was principal author of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) best research for the TB guidelines. His work will indeed live on as well

as his memory. The quiet leader, worker and achiever will forever live in the hearts of his family, colleagues, friends and everyone he touched. Indeed Mayet, his wife, is right. We need to move on. That is what he would have wanted. We are all the richer and better because of this one life, which has touched us all. Salamat, Tato.

– Charles Y. Yu, MD, MSc, Vice-Chancellor for La Sallian Mission and Linkages, and PCP President 2008



Guiding Legacy

“Know what you want. Know how to get there. Do it.” My father left a lot of legacies, and this is the one which is planted deepest in my heart and mind. This is where my principles revolve around. This is what keeps me going in the right direction. This is how I live my life.

Life is full of expectations – maintaining a certain grade in my subjects, organizing a number of events that the audience will appreciate, and fulfilling my various responsibilities well. Given a very long to-do list, there are times when I wish that I could just throw it away and forget about everything. Fortunately, I have my father’s legacy to guide me. Knowing what I want to achieve keeps me in perspective. I have become a goal-oriented person.

By knowing how to achieve my goals, I have learned how to be organized and to take things one step at a time. This knowing about what to do, however, does not only involve myself. It involves the people around me. Through this legacy, I have also

learned how to identify my weaknesses and acknowledge the fact that I am no superwoman – I cannot do everything alone. I have incorporated the virtue of humility and the value of showing my appreciation for others.

Knowing alone is not enough. Action must go with it. Wanting to attain a goal will have no significance if I do not work for it. Planning out a strategy will be useless if I do not perform it. Because of this legacy, I have learned how to go beyond the “*pwede na ‘yan* attitude”, how to be better than mediocre.

Life is full of challenges and expectations, but in whatever situation I may find myself in, there is only one recipe for a well-lived life: knowing what I want to achieve, knowing how I will reach it, and doing it.

Anna Theresa B. Dantes
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