

A Timeless Pearl

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Professor Perla Dizon Santos-Ocampo graduated in third place as a Doctor of Medicine from the University of the Philippines (UP) and ranked sixth in the physician licensure exam. Her life work began at the Philippine General Hospital as chief resident of the Department of Pediatrics followed by a fellowship in Child Development at the Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1961, she returned to the Philippines and this was the start of her brilliant and prolific career as academician, institution builder and researcher. She has spent more than 50 years at UP, presently holding the highest professorial rank of University Professor Emeritus.

As an educator and mentor, PDSO or PSO as she is fondly called, had the vision of developing pediatric subspecialties in the country by networking with prominent centers internationally in order to send physicians for further training. She was responsible for sending to different prestigious institutions abroad more than a dozen young Pediatricians from UP-PGH, representing the different Pediatric subspecialties. These subspecialists upon their return from abroad have all formed the core of trainors who are currently training the bulk of specialists in the country.

Her term as a Chancellor from 1993-1999 was considered the 'golden age' of UP Manila with solid achievements in terms of academic programs, research, infrastructures and faculty, staff and student development. She spearheaded the establishment of the National Institutes of Health, the National Graduate School for the Health Sciences (with the development of new graduate programs), National Telehealth Center and the Creche and Child Center.

PSO's dynamic leadership, outstanding charisma and caring personality had garnered for her numerous prestigious national and international positions and awards.¹ To name a few, she was the past President of the Philippine Pediatric Society (1978-1980), Philippine Medical Association (1981-1982) and International Pediatric Association (1989-1992); and honorary President of Asian Pacific Pediatric Association (2000) and International Society of Tropical Pediatrics (2002). She is a recipient of the Outstanding Woman in the Nation's Service award (1974); WHO Child Health Foundation medal (1985), in recognition of her membership to WHO Expert Advisory Panel of Maternal and Child Health and WHO Technical Advisory Group for the control of diarrheal diseases program; Outstanding Pediatrician of Asia (1988); IBM DOST Science and Technology Award (1991); Ihsan Dogramaci Medal for Pediatric Education (1995), an honor bestowed on her by Dogramaci Foundation; Robert and Edna Langholz International Nutrition Award from the American Dietetic Foundation (1995); and the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award (2005) from the UP College of Medicine.

As an erudite scholar, she has written over 200 papers and chapters and several books on almost every area of child health. In recognition of her contribution to literatures in pediatrics and child health both here and abroad, PSO was elected to the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) in 1994 and subsequently became the first woman President of NAST in 1999. In her six years stint with NAST, she initiated the creation of new scientific awards, functions and policies. Existing

linkages were nurtured and new scientific networks with other local and international institutions were established to make them more relevant to the needs and concerns of the local scientific community. From the Academy's highly selected elite members, Professor Perla Santos-Ocampo was recommended and conferred the award of a National Scientist, the highest honor the Philippine government can bestow on a Filipino for outstanding contribution to science and technology.

But on top of all her fame and glory, who is really PSO? To us who were fortunate enough to know and interact with her, she is Mama Perla who has exceptional qualities that are worth emulating as a person. First, the Lord is always above her. She thanks the Lord always for all her awards and God-given talents. Her perseverance

to work and do more, even when she was already retired, is because of her firm belief that whatever talent the Lord has given, she should use it for others. She would tirelessly advise young colleagues and endlessly shares her numerous experiences and resources. Second, her unconditional love for UP, considered as her second family. She is the shining example of a graduate who has lived up to every lyrics of her alma mater's song, 'UP Naming Mahal'. Her passion and dedication for work was always for the greater glory of the University and better health for the Filipino people. And third, PSO has the extraordinary ability to deal and work with anyone, especially those who are less superior than her. She has a persuasive skill, leads by example, builds healthy and harmonious relationships and creates a work environment that motivates and mobilizes everyone to achieve the institution's goals. PSO will definitely be a constant source of inspiration for many generations to come, *a timeless pearl*. To ensure that her legacy lives on, she has been honoured with two UP Centennial Professorial Chairs: Perla D. Santos-Ocampo Centennial Professorial Chair in Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition; and Perla D. Santos-Ocampo Centennial Professorial Chair for Research.

¹ Aquino BA and Clavel L, eds. For Love of Children Perla D. Santos-Ocampo as Scientist and Humanist 2008. University of the Philippines Manila Centennial Publication.



Professor Perla D. Santos-Ocampo during conferment as a National Scientist on June 25, 2010 in Malacañang Palace, Manila.