

A HISTORY OF TIPON SILLIMAN AND SUAACONA

The dream of Silliman alumni and friends in North America uniting for common cause had been held by many for quite some time long before the first Tipon and the organization of SUAACONA. There were many reasons for such a union. Fellowship was of course uppermost but a strong second consideration was financial. With the continuing decline of the mission support that had been a major source of revenue for nearly a hundred years, something was needed to take its place and it appeared that tapping the resources of the overseas alumni, a very large segment of which was based in North America, was part of the answer. In an article for the United Board newsletter entitled "Looking for Mr. Money Man," the late Dr. Paul Lauby graphically illustrated the positive impact on Silliman's financial health of united Silliman alumni by saying that if each North American Silliman alumnus would give even just \$100 to Silliman, the aggregate sum would help improve Silliman's financial picture dramatically. The question, he posed, was how to rally the Silliman overseas alumni to such a cause and by whom.

Alumni Gathering in San Francisco

Appropriately, Dr. Lauby was invited to be the keynote speaker for the very first international gathering of Silliman alumni that was held in San Francisco in July, 20-22, 1990, under the sponsorship of the Silliman University Alumni Association of Northern California. Highlighting the challenge facing the future, he spoke on the topic "Translating the Boundaries of a New Decade." The conference was attended by about 300 guests coming from New York, New Jersey, Texas, Florida, Vermont, Washington, Michigan, Hawaii, California, and the Philippines. Silliman University was represented by then Acting President Juan Escarda, then Chairman of the Board of Trustees Roman Yap, and several members of the Board. The success of that gathering stimulated a desire for regular and mission-driven gatherings for international Silliman alumni.

Stony Point Conference

Fast forward to 1998. That year, Pres. Agustin Pulido expressed a desire to have conversations with representatives of existing alumni chapters in North America with the purpose of exploring how they can work together to help their Alma Mater. At that time, preparations were starting for the 100th anniversary of the university, which was coming up in 2001 and Dr. Pulido thought it fitting to seek feedback from the overseas alumni. Accordingly, he sought the aid of Nan Hawkins in bringing representatives of the North American alumni associations together for conversations. That gathering took place on the final weekend of June, 1998 at the Presbyterian center at Stony Point, New York. In addressing the group, Dr. Pulido said: "Doris and I have come to be with you to share with you how the University is faring, to listen to your thoughts, comments, and insights and to bring to you the greetings of the Trustees, the Church, and the whole University Community, and to pray with you that God bless all of our endeavors for a great University whose life and mission is dedicated to the Lord." On June 28, 1998, the group signed the Stony Point Agreement, in which they declared: "We, as the North American Silliman University Alumni Associations, have been organized to support the Christian ideals, goals and mission of their Alma Mater, it would be appropriate for them to unite, organize, and join together in expressing their views, concerns, perspectives on certain issues, and/or collective judgments, and convey them to the University, Administration, Board of

Trustees, as well as the Silliman University Foundation. It is hoped that, subsequent to the receipt of such collective judgments by the President, Trustees and Board, same could be evaluated and discussed during deliberations and contribute to the resolution of University problems. Such a union does not, to any extent or degree, impair or diminish the independence and autonomy of each member chapter." The Stony Point group broke up promising to try to convene a gathering of North American alumni in a year or two.

Planning for the Grand Reunion (Tipon Silliman) in North America

In late November, 1999, a number of alumni from New England and the Midwest, decided that it was time to pick up where Stony Point left off and carry out the mandate. They thought it opportune to have a Stateside gathering to coincide with the celebration of the Silliman Centennial which was coming in less than two years. Accordingly, the group's leader and instigator, Rev. Dr. Federico "Ed" Agnir, journeyed to Dumaguete in January 2000 to inform Dr. Pulido about the plans for a North American gathering, to seek his endorsement and ask for a favorable date so he can attend. Dr. Pulido enthusiastically welcomed the idea and asked that the date be set before the beginning of classes in the Philippines so he would be present on campus at the beginning of classes on the Centennial year. Back in the States, the planning leaders agreed that a May date would be chosen and that an initial meeting would be held in April with leaders from the MOK (Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky), Ontario and Chicago chapters invited to attend. The meeting was held on April 29, 2000 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with members and officers of MOK chapter present along with one alumnus leader from Massachusetts and another from Ontario. Participating by conference call from New York was Nan Hawkins, director of alumni affairs of the United Board for Higher Education in Asia. It was decided that the Chicago chapter would be asked to host the May gathering and to make it more attractive to them both MOK and Ontario would offer to co-sponsor the event. A delegation of MOK members composed of Fred Baliad, Rene Querubin and Joaquin Uy was designated to travel to Chicago to meet with officers of that chapter to obtain their consent at hosting the event, promising sponsorship help by MOK and Ontario. The three were able to convince Chicago and the third weekend of May was chosen for the date.

The next planning session was held in Chicago on July 8, 2000 with members of the three sponsoring chapters and the lone representative from New England in attendance. At that meeting, it was decided to call the conference Tipon Silliman 2001. "Tipon" was favored over other Filipino words because it means "assembly or gathering" in several major Filipino languages. As a standing joke among those who attended that historic meeting, the story is told that when suggestions were solicited for a catchy name for the first conference, the first to be offered was "tapok," which is a Cebuano word for gathering. It was overruled when Chair Ed Agnir, who is Ilocano, pointed out that in his native language, "tapok" means "dust"

As the news spread and the spirit caught on, more leaders from all over came in from other parts of the country to form the core planning group, some participating by email and phone. A multi-media communication network was set up to facilitate the promotion of the event. It was decided to send out two mailings, both to be underwritten by the United Board. A web page was also set up by Jonathan Duazo, who was one of the signers of the Stony Point Agreement. Renato "Bong" Sabolboro, a Silliman alumnus from Michigan, set up a listserv on the Internet by soliciting email addresses from the chapters and from existing Silliman alumni lists. The list, called suana-tipon2001@yahoo.groups.com, was the forerunner of what is now Tipon-

Silliman@yahoo.com. The first invitation was mailed to more than 2000 households in July, 2000 and the follow-up invitation in February, 2001. A couple of the leaders set out to prepare the directory of alumni and their addresses and souvenir program, respectively.

In the meantime, events transpired to stimulate a growing interest in Silliman and an awakening of the Silliman spirit among overseas alumni. With the Silliman Centennial looming ahead, individual alumni and their respective chapters were making plans on how best to participate in the celebrations, in many cases finding the opportunity to network for the first time in a long time with friends and colleagues. One of the seminal events in this period was the work of the Campus Choristers who had established an international reputation and were now invited to bring their repertoire to Filipino-American audiences in the United States. Barnstorming in 1999 and then again in 2001, they brought attention to Silliman through a sampling of its wealth of talent. In the words of Dr. Sylvester Almiron, who would later be inspired to become the first SUACONA chairman, the Campus Choristers "brought back Silliman into our consciousness and, helped prepare Sillimianians to embrace SUACONA when it was organized." Many of those who attended the first Tipon were leaders of the chapters and churches that sponsored the two Campus Choristers tours.

Tipon Silliman 2001 - Chicago

Tipon Silliman 2001 was held from May 16 to May 20, 2001, with Chicago's Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel as the convention hall. The convention featured a golf tournament, a welcome party, breakfast meeting with Dr. Pulido and workshops on diverse topics including fundraising, retirement planning, growing up Filipino in America, and investment opportunities in the Philippines. The internationally renowned Silliman Choristers, who were concluding their second tour of the United States, were in town and they concertized during one of the evenings. Time was also spent in strategic planning by chapter representatives and the first set of officers elected to the umbrella organization, which was called SUACONA, an acronym for Silliman University Alumni Council of North America.

On Saturday afternoon, there was a Lake Michigan cruise and a trolley tour of Chicago. The highlight of the conference was held on the evening of Saturday, May 19. That evening, a dinner/dance was held at which President Pulido addressed the convention, the Outstanding Sillimian awardees in attendance were honored, and the newly-elected officers of SUACONA were inducted. The officers inducted were: Chair: Sylvester Almiron, Jr., Vice-chair: Renato Querubin, Secretary: Coleta Campanale, Treasurer: Pacita Flores, PRO: Lawrence Lacuesta, and Auditor: Paul Imperial. The concluding event of the convention was a worship service held on Sunday at the Chicago Filipino Presbyterian Church with Dr. Paul Lauby preaching. After the service, all gathered for a picnic dubbed "salu-salu sa paniudto." Before the convention broke up, the chapter representatives voted that the New York/New Jersey chapter would host the next Tipon scheduled for July 3-6, 2003.

Tipon Silliman 2003 – Teaneck, New Jersey

In the spring of 2003 a pall of gloom swept over preparations for Tipon II. On May 21, Dr. Paul Lauby died and in the words of SUACONA chairman Jun Almiron, a mighty oak had fallen. In more ways than one, Dr. Lauby had been the inspiration behind the birth and growth of Tipon and SUACONA and his loss was deeply felt, more so by Tipon II host New York/New

Jersey chapter for whom Dr. Lauby was a resident retired Silliman dignitary and a frequent visitor and speaker at chapter gatherings. Responding to consensus received from all over, the SUACONA Executive committee decided to dedicate Tipon 2003 to the memory of Dr. Lauby. And in keeping with the chosen theme, “Honoring the Past, Building the Future,” a distinct feature of the convention program was the memorializing of Sillimanians who had died in the intervening period between Tipon I and Tipon II.

Held at the Glenpointe Marriott Hotel in Teaneck, New Jersey, Tipon 2003 exceeded attendance projections, prompting organizers to seek additional housing at nearby hotels. As a measure of Tipon’s growth and increased visibility, several dignitaries from Silliman University came to the convention. President Pulido was joined by Board of Trustees chair Prof. Leonor Briones and trustees Ricardo Balbido, Jr., Antonio Villamor, Julio Sy, Sr. and Noel Tan. Headed by Prof. Briones, who gave the keynote speech, the trustees were on hand as resource persons in the discussions on creative financing. Also on hand was former president Cicero Calderon who presented in behalf of the Silliman University Foundation, Inc. Seminar topics included topics like “Where Will All Your Millions Go,” “This Amazing Thing Called Money,” “Road Map for the Future,” and “Growing Up Filipino in America,” a sequel to the one in Tipon I. One new feature was time given for class reunions. On July 4th, conventioners boarded a Manhattan boat for the annual fireworks, featuring a live band and dinner. The choral group, Ating Pamana (Our Heritage) which succeeded the Silliman Choristers, performed on Saturday afternoon. That evening, the Presidents Ball was held honoring chapter presidents and the Silliman Board of Trustees. Mr. Michael Dadap, internationally renowned concert guitarist, provided the entertainment. The final event, held on Sunday morning, was a communion service in honor of Dr. Paul T. Lauby with Mrs. Edna Lauby and their daughter Jennifer in attendance.

During the meeting of the SUACONA Board of Directors, composed of all chapter presidents and/or representatives in attendance, the SU administration presented a plan to erect the Twin Portals Buildings in the Dumaguete campus, two identical commercial buildings which will be rented out to businesses, the income of which will be plowed back entirely to the programs of the university. This was viewed as a novel way of investing for an endowment fund. The SU administration proposed for SUACONA to help raise funds for the first building (Portal West), which will cost approximately \$700,000. By unanimous vote, the SUACONA Board of Directors agreed to undertake this fundraising, which would be its flagship for the ensuing years.

During the meeting of the SUACONA Board of Directors on Saturday, the officers for the next two years were elected. The new slate consisted of the following: Chair: Sylvester Almiron, Jr. (reelected), Vice-chair: Renato Querubin (reelected), Secretary: Gideon Alegado, Treasurer: Zenaida Duran-Bennett, PRO: Joel Pal, and Auditor: Paul Imperial (reelected). Two positions were added to the set of officers, namely Nan Hawkins, advisor for the UBCHEA and Federico Agnir, advisor on communications.

Also at the same meeting, Southern California was asked to be the site for the next Tipon in 2005. A few weeks later, the glad news reached the SUACONA leadership that Southern California had accepted.

Tipon Silliman 2005 – Anaheim, California

Tipon Silliman 2005 was held on May 5-8, 2005 at the Orange County Hyatt Regency Hotel in Garden Grove, California. The convention turned out to be the biggest assemblage yet of Sillimanians outside Dumaguete.

The 'great togetherness' was graced by the presence of several dignitaries from Silliman University. President & Mrs. Agustin Pulido came with several members of the SU Board of Trustees: Chairperson Prof. Leonor Briones, Vice Chair Noel Tan, Trustee Antonio Villamor and Trustee Roselyn Grino-Delloso. College of Nursing & Allied Health Sciences Dean Dr. Teresita Sinda also came, much to the delight of her former classmates and students. Also present in a very important role were officers from the SAAI (Silliman Alumni Association, Inc.): Judge Candelario Gonzalez, president; Judge Crescencio Tan, Jr., vice president; and Yolanda Valente-Maxino, executive director. Almost all of the alumni chapters in North America were represented, including the newest chapter, Alaska. This brought the total chapters under SUACONA to 21.

Reunioning classes made up the bulk of the attendees: SUCN alumni, Divinity School alumni, SUHS Class 1970 and others. There was also a reunion of dormitory residents. Former residents of Sampaguita Cottage and Occidental Hall came to meet up with their dorm mates, some of the latter coming all the way from Germany.

In their presentations during the plenary session, President Pulido, BOT Chair Briones and the rest of the SU delegation updated the attendees on recent developments in the University, and challenged everyone to be an active participant in pursuing Silliman University's vision. Nan Hawkins of the United Board also spoke about her agency's programs and how it helps SU and its alumni.

Tipon 2005 continued the practice started in Tipon 2003 of having daily morning devotionals, each of which had their own emphasis. The Friday service was a tribute to mothers. On Saturday, there were poignant moments when everyone paused to honor those alumni who died in the last two years. A candle was lit for every departed alumnus in the morning devotion on May 7. The following day, May 8, the Sunday Worship Service that culminated Tipon Silliman 2005 was held in honor of Dr. Cicero D. Calderon. A new convention feature was the setting up by Ruby Ordinario Agnir of the Tipon Chorale, composed of conferees organized just for the event. While the choir's main function was to sing at devotionals, they also presented a mini-concert on Thursday night. This started a tradition that continued at succeeding Tipons.

A new and distinct feature introduced at Tipon Silliman 2005 was a number of performances by local talent drawn from the membership of the host chapter. Several Southern California residents who were alumni of the Silliman Men's Glee Club formed the core of a men's chorus that performed at the welcoming reception as well as at the Saturday night gala. A stellar performance called "Shall We Dance" was given by the SUAASC dancing troupe that was organized just for the event.

Aside from the fellowship, Tipon Silliman was an opportunity to talk about SUACONA's business. A new set of officers were elected on May 7 and were inducted into office during the Gala Dinner-Dance: Dr. Renato Querubin, chairperson; Dr. Gideon Alegado, vice chairperson; Dr. Aurora P. Montano, secretary; Jocelyn Gerenia-Pajares, treasurer; Zenaida Duran-Bennett, auditor; Joel Pal, public relations officer. Advisers are Nan Hawkins and Dr. Sylvester Almiron Jr. A new position of executive director was created, and appointed to fill this post was Dr. Federico Agnir. Also at the Saturday business meeting Ontario chapter in Canada was chosen to host the next Tipon in 2007.

SUACONA started in 2001 with the 17 alumni chapters that came together to form the organization. As more Silliman alumni and friends dispersed to different parts of North America, they formed enclaves which soon gave rise to new chapters. By 2005, chapters had formed in the Pacific Northwest, Las Vegas, Alaska and Louisiana. In Canada, SUACONA moved westward as

a chapter emerged in Alberta. Others were starting to form in Central Texas, Delaware and other places. To respond to such rapid growth, leadership training programs were set up at the instigation of Chairman Querubin with the first one taking place in May 2006 in Cleveland with hosting and resources provided by the United Church of Christ. Leadership training was also planned as a feature of the forthcoming Tipon in Toronto.

It was at this time that SUACONA ceased to be just a biennial convention as it engaged in activities year round. One catalyst was the start of the construction of the Portal West building, the first of two planned commercial establishments. Seeking to make good on its promise to help raise the construction cost, it declared the funding of the building as the organization's flagship project. It then formed a committee which coordinated the fund drive by recognizing donations through two Trees of Life located at the building's lobby. Appropriately named the Tree of Life Committee, it started with six members in 2003 and eventually grew to 17. Meeting almost every month, they raised half of the original target amount of \$700,000, oversaw the inauguration of the Tree of Life and its companion Interactive Screen and laid down, in cooperation with Silliman, policies and procedures to guarantee the building's continuation as a symbol of the generosity and loyalty of Silliman's alumni and friends. While most of those who bought the leaves, rocks and trunks that formed the Trees of Life were individuals and chapters in North America, a few alumni and friends residing in the Philippines chipped in. In July 2009, partly to shift to new funding priorities and partly to encourage more local participation in the Portal West project, SUACONA turned over the management of the Tree of Life fund drive to Silliman.

Tipon Silliman 2007 - Toronto, Canada

All roads led to Toronto for Tipon Silliman 2007, which was held from June 28 to July 1 at the Marriott Hotel in Downton Toronto. This was hosted by the Ontario Silliman University Alumni Association (ONSUAA).

There was renewed excitement in this gathering, largely due to the presence of the new President of Silliman University, Dr. Ben S. Malayang III, who assumed office a year earlier. He came with his wife, Mrs. Gladys Rio-Malayang. Among the delegation from Silliman University were: Prof. Leonor Magtolis-Briones, Chairperson of the SU Board of Trustees; and Prof. Jocelyn Somoza-dela Cruz, Director of Alumni and External Affairs. The Silliman Alumni Association, Inc. (SAAI) was also ably represented by Judge Candelario Gonzalez, President; Judge Cresencio Tan, Vice President; Yolanda Valente-Maxino, Executive Director; and Atty. Mikhail Maxino, Board Member. A breakfast meeting was held between the SU administration, SAAI, and SUACONA Executive Committee, mainly to discuss our common concerns particularly in the areas of communication and our relationships with one another.

Tipon activities officially kicked off on Thursday evening with the Welcome Night. The host chapter treated the attendees with a new experience, Canadian-style, complete with a bagpipe band and a town crier announcing and welcoming our dignitaries and guests. Several chapters gave cultural presentations, displaying the talents of our alumni and friends, adding color and fun to the festivities.

Friday was Tipon's big day, set aside for the presentations of the SU President, SU Board of Trustees, SUACONA Chairman, SU Alumni Director, and SAAI. The presence of the new President of United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, Dr. Patricia Stranahan, was most welcome as she presented updates on UBCHEA vis-à-vis its relations with SU and

SUACONA. All of the day's presentations were followed by a lively and informative open forum.

Friday evening was a night out at a nearby Italian restaurant. The dinner was a tribute to Dr. Agustin Pulido, the immediate past President of Silliman University, for all that he has done for the university as well as for shepherding and encouraging SUACONA's development from inception. He was showered with tributes from his friends and family, personally for those who were present and by video for those who could not be there. He was also serenaded by guitar virtuoso Michael Dadap, who organized a mini-concert in honor of Dr. Pulido.

Saturday was set aside for sightseeing. The hosts organized a trip to nearby Niagara Falls. Others opted to explore the landmarks and cultural places of Toronto. While enjoying the trips enormously, everyone was also consciously aware that they had to be back to the Marriott Hotel for the Gala Night which would start at 7 p.m.

The Gala Night, as expected, was the biggest gathering of alumni and friends during the four-day Tipon. As guests were seated for dinner, we were all treated with video presentations featuring scenes and personalities from Silliman University. In between the dining, dancing and cultural presentations, there were also award presentations and speeches from dignitaries. SU President Ben S. Malayang III highlighted the evening with his installation of the new set of SUACONA officers (2007-2009): Joel V. Pal, Chairman; Zenaida Duran-Bennett, Vice Chair; Betsy Aya-ay-Jackson, Secretary; Jocelyn Gerenia-Pajares, Treasurer; Gideon Z. Alegado, Auditor; Judith Chan-Guarin, Information Officer; Renato Querubin and Sylvester Almiron, Jr., Advisers.

It was also announced that the next gathering, Tipon Silliman 2009, will be held in Orlando, Florida, sponsored by the Southern Florida Chapter.

Tipon Silliman 2009 – Orlando, Florida

Building on the reputation of past Tipons, the gathering in Orlando, Florida on July 8-12, 2009 was a much-anticipated event. Hosted by the Silliman Alumni of South Florida (SASF), the theme of Tipon Silliman 2009 was: "Leaving Our Imprint for Tomorrow: Raising the Bar of Excellence."

The convention was held at the Royal Plaza Hotel, and one of the attractions to this Tipon was that the venue was inside the Walt Disney Resort area in Lake Buena Vista. The attendees relished in the double treat of a) meeting fellow Sillimianians, and b) enjoying Disney World in between the convention sessions.

As in past Tipons, a delegation from Silliman University came to grace the occasion. This was led by President Ben Malayang III and his wife Gladys. In attendance were: Prof. Jocelyn Somoza-dela Cruz, Director of Alumni Affairs; Dr. Nichol R. Elman, Director of Extension; Atty. Dorothy Sandalo-Cajayon, President of SAAI; Mrs. Yolanda Valente-Maxino, SAAI Executive Secretary. Atty. Candelario Gonzalez, Vice-Chair of the SU Board of Trustees, was also there, together with several Trustees: Ambassador Antonio Villamor, Atty. Reinaldo Nollido and Atty. Grace Sumalpong.

For the first time, after several attempts in the past, Tipon Silliman 2009 held a Continuing Education Seminar for nurses. This was in utter recognition of the availability of many nurse-educators in the area and their experience in holding such seminars. The lecture room was packed for this half-day seminar, which afforded the attendees the opportunity earn credits towards advancing their respective nursing careers, in addition to listening to the lectures and

slide presentations by eminent Sillimanians now working in the education and nursing management fields.

The opening night, usually the first big event of Tipon, had a noticeably improved format. The SU Men's Glee Club Alumni sang the national anthems, and the Tipon Silliman Chorale performed a mini-concert. But what was new this time was the chapter presentations, which followed a dance format prescribed by the Tipon Committee and the Host (SASF) Chapter. Dubbed as "Blast from the Past," the participating chapters each performed a dance depicting the past decades. They all came prepared with costumes and exquisite choreography.

The plenary session was a long day of lively and informative discussions. The leaders of SUACONA and Silliman University presented their reports to the general assembly, after which interesting discussions ensued. There was immense interest in the University updates of President Ben Malayang III, who expounded on the recent developments on the campus. He also laid out the long-term vision that the Board of Trustees has approved, which would guide the university's direction into the future.

The Gala Night was a phenomenal evening of dancing, cultural presentations and award ceremonies. The university administration conferred the Order of Horace Silliman on Dr. and Mrs. Victor Rich for donating a substantial amount for university programs, on Dr. and Mrs. Enrico Sobong for a significant donation to the Tree of Life Project, and on SUACONA for spearheading the campaign to raise funds for the Portal West Building. The Order of Horace B. Silliman is a prestigious recognition conferred upon individuals, families and organizations whose gifts and donations with a value of at least P1 million continue to help realize the University's mission of providing better opportunities to its students and the members of both Silliman and the larger community of Dumaguete toward building competence, character and faith.

Attended by the most sizeable Tipon crowd ever, the Gala Night was capped with the installation of the new set of SUACONA officers (2009-2011): Zenaida Duran-Bennett, Chairperson; Betsy Aya-ay-Jackson, Vice Chair; Joji Juele-Jalandoni, Secretary; Gideon Z. Alegado, Treasurer; Flor Manigsaca-Bayawa, Auditor; Betsy Merto-Engle, Information Officer, Joel V. Pal; Renato D. Querubin and Sylvester B. Almiron, Jr., Advisers. To help the officers with the colossal tasks that lie ahead, the SUACONA Executive Committee appointed Faith Manigsaca-Duran as Assistant Secretary and Jocelyn Gerenia-Pajares as Assistant Treasurer.

It was also announced that the next gathering, Tipon Silliman 2011 will be held in Fairbanks, Alaska, sponsored by the Silliman University Alumni Chapter of Alaska.

Tipon Silliman 2011 – Fairbanks, Alaska

Tipon Silliman 2011` will forever conjure up memories of Johnny Horton's greatest hit - North to Alaska; wearing sun glasses and tee shirts when dancing under the midnight sun; plying the Tanana River on a sternwheeler; soaking in the hot! hot! spring mineral waters; and mmm mmm mmm – all you can eat Alaskan King Crab and deep fried Hooligan with the heads on!

SUACONA spanned the American continent when they chose to host Tipon Silliman in Fairbanks Alaska. Our fellow alumni came to Fairbanks from all parts of the world. And best of all, some of our alumni and dignitaries all the way from the Philippines showed up with a wonderful entourage of talent from the Campus By The Sea. We came to Alaska to not only fellowship but also to take stock of our beloved university and to find out how we can best give

back of ourselves for its welfare. Also, this gathering was a milestone in SUACONA's history. We were celebrating our organization's 10th year of existence. Thus, the chosen theme of Tipon Silliman 2011 was "Celebrating A Decade of Growth and Christian Stewardship."

After spending Friday, June 17, traveling and resting up, we woke up, well after sunrise early Saturday morning ready to get to work. We spent the morning with Doctors Eusebio Kho and Jean Yan learning more about the outstanding medical education Silliman students receive and how our graduates are sought out by the global community for their outstanding skills and competency in the medical fields.

Saturday's luncheon was a SUACONA Board of Directors meeting with Silliman University President Dr. Ben S. Malayang III, SU Board of Trustees, SAAI Officers, and the Director of Alumni & External Affairs. The informative and productive session lasted well into the afternoon. And afterwards all retired to get ready for feasting and dancing at the Grand Welcome Dinner & Dance. We were entertained by Jenny Lind Aldecoa who came all the way from the Philippines to share her talents with her fellow Sillimanians.

Tipon 2011 went into full work mode followings Sunday's church service. The morning session focused on introductions and SUACONA Chapters' reports, followed by an appreciative message from the Silliman University Board of Trustees. Afterwards, SUACONA chair Zenaida Duran-Bennett presented SUACONA's report. After the business meeting recessed, the assembly gathered for the celebration of two historic milestones, Silliman University's 110th anniversary and SUACONA's tenth anniversary. The celebration consisted of a candle-lighting ceremony. A large candle was placed at the center symbolizing the university. Around it, arranged in a semicircle, were ten candles representing SUACONA'S ten years. President Malayang lit the Silliman candle, after which a ritual of candle-lighting followed. A script, written specially for the occasion, narrated the story of SUACONA from its beginnings, using ten sub-themes. As each part was read, someone who best represented that part of the story lit a candle. After all the candles were lit, a huge birthday cake prepared by host Alaska chapter was unveiled, cut up and shared by all.

At the luncheon, a musical program was given by the Silliman University Gratitude & Goodwill Ambassadors (SUGGA). The presence of SUGGA in Alaska was made possible because of the earnest efforts of Dean of the College of Performing and Visual Arts Dr. Susan Elizabeth Suarez with vital support from President Malayang; members of the university's Executive Committee, particularly Mr. Jose Antonio and Mr. Mark Garcia; the Board of Trustees; and an alumnus in Dumaguete. SUGGA's performance was superbly executed and enjoyed by all.

The work session continued after lunch and we heard from keynote speaker Dr. Ben Malayang who shared the University's current activities and plans. His presentation was followed by a report by Silliman Alumni Association, Inc. President Judge Rafael Cresencio Tan, Jr. Sunday ended with an encore SUGGA concert that drew a standing ovation.

The morning of the following day, Monday, June 20, was spent in a wrap-up session moderated by Joel V. Pal. Past SUACONA Chair. A key feature was his progress report on the conversion of Oriental Hall to the Student Center, which was SUACONA's new flagship fundraising project. We received an informative update from Dr. Betty Cernol-McCann, Vice President for Programs of the United Board. Other SUACONA business carried out included election of new SUACONA officers and bidding for the next Tipon Silliman venue. Chosen as the new officers for the 2011-2013 biennium were Gideon Z. Alegado, chair; Betsy A. Jackson, vice-chair; Faith Manigsaca Duran, secretary; Dely Po-Go, treasurer; Evangeline Bravo-

Manjares, PRO and Frank Somera, auditor; and Zenaida Duran-Bennett, immediate past Chair. Past Chairs Sylvester Almiron, Jr., Renato Querubin and Joel Pal were elected advisers. After the elected officers were installed, Chairman Alegado asked Federico Agnir to serve as additional adviser, which he accepted. At the bidding for the Tipon Silliman 2013 venue, the “Campus by the Sea” won!

The afternoon of the 20th had been set aside for group and individual sightseeing activities. Many took the Riverboat Discovery down the Chena and Tanana Rivers; others panned for gold; went soaking in the Chena hot springs; and some even snuck off to see Santa Claus in North Pole. And then we all came back for the SUACONA Tenth Anniversary Gala Dinner & Ball and ate and danced, and danced, until the midnight finally gave up and slipped behind the hills to the north to take a breather.

After breakfast the following day, Tuesday June 21, SUACONA took up the somber mission of honoring our members who passed on since the 2009 Tipon. And then it was off to Pioneer Park for the feast everyone was waiting for! THE GREAT ALASKAN SEAFOOD FEAST PICNIC (all the Alaskan king Crab, salmon and deep fried whole Hooligan that you can eat!) sponsored by the SUAA Alaska Chapter – complete with lechon and live music to dance to – the Alaska chapter’s way of saying thanks to all who came to Fairbanks, Alaska for Tipon Silliman 2011!

Tipon Silliman 2013 – Dumaguete, Philippines

The idea of holding a SUACONA TIPON at the campus by the sea had been floating for quite some time. It finally got solidified when President Ben S. Malayang, III was the only bidder for Tipon Silliman 2013 during the Tipon 2011 in Fairbanks, Alaska. Preparations for the event were very challenging because this was the first time it would be held outside North America.

Teleconferences to keep abreast of the planning and preparation between committee members spanned three continents and six time zones. While most past Tipons had their gatherings and activities in one venue, Tipon 2013 took place in different venues on the Campus by the Sea: Silliman Hall, Silliman Church, Udarbe Chapel, SUACONA Student Center a.k.a. Oriental Hall, in addition to other locations in Dumaguete City and neighboring municipality. Betsy Merto Engle, President of the SUAA, Alaska Chapter and Chairperson for Tipon 2011 and Dr. Betsy Joy B. Tan, VP for Academic Affairs co-chaired Tipon 2013. It was agreed that the events should be held August 21-25 to allow SUACONA attendees to join the 112th SU Founders Day celebrations. The theme for this event was: “ONE GOD, ONE WORLD, ONE SILLIMAN”

The Silliman University Band was at the airport to meet arriving alumni and guests on August 20 and 21, 2013. SUACONA Student Center/Oriental Hall, renovated in 2012 with SUACONA funds, was the center of most of the early activities as well as the TIPON 2013 Office and Registration location. For the “early birds”, activities like Memory Moments and campus tours were offered.

August 22 started with a Morning Devotion at the Udarbe Memory Chapel with Dr. Jose Jacinto as the Guest Speaker. All-day registration was held with brunch sponsored by the Alaska Chapter. It included sautéed red salmon flown all the way from Fairbanks, Alaska and was served on the second floor of the SUACONA Student Center. It was a sight to see alumni and friends who had not been together for years greeting and hugging each other, a practice that

continued throughout the weeklong TIPON 2013 celebration. The SUACONA BOD also held their luncheon meeting in one of the rooms of the SUACONA Student Center.

Nestled on the slopes of Palinpinon in Valencia, Negros Oriental is the new Tierra Alta Residential Resort, the venue for the August 22 Welcome activities. Guests were encouraged to come early to take a dip in the pool, for the courageous ones to ride the zip line, take a walk, have a massage if desired or just enjoy the astounding panoramic view of the sea and neighboring islands. The Welcome Evening activities was a night to remember with the highest attendance ever, a sumptuous dinner that included smoked Alaskan salmon with cream cheese for appetizer, red and white wines donated by Betsy and Greg Jackson, 6 lechons (2 donated by the NY /New Jersey Chapter) and one lechon baka all roasted on the site, a very lively program emceed by Faith & Mario Duran, Chapter presentations, Thai lantern lighting, fireworks and dancing that lasted till the wee hours. Music was provided by the 25-member SU Jazz Band conducted by Professor Joseph Basa. The atmosphere was so inviting everyone joined in the fun. This was also the evening that the SUACONA song written and composed by Ruby and Federico Aguir was first introduced to the attendees by the Tipon Chorale.

Opening Ceremony and General Assembly was held the following Day at the Silliman Hall. It started with a Morning Devotion with Dr. Richard Elphick as the guest speaker. A very delicious lunch sponsored by several alumni members was served with entertainment provided by Susan Vista-Suarez and Michael Dadap. This was followed with updates by the SU President, Atty. Grace Sumalpong from the Office of the Alumni & External Relations and Silliman Alumni Association, Inc., State of SUACONA Report by Dr. Gideon Z. Alegado, outgoing SUACONA Chair. Keynote address "One God, One World, One Silliman" was delivered by Prof. Leonor Magtolis-Briones, Board of Trustees Chair.

The "In Memoriam" service at the Silliman Church was held the following morning, a very touching service remembering alumni and friends who passed away in the previous two years. Breakfast was served at the Student Center where Dr. Betty Cernol-McCann, Vice President for Programs of the United Board, gave the group updates of UBCHEA. Election of the following SUACONA officers for the 2013-2015 biennium was held, namely; Dr. Francisco Somera, Chair; Betsy Engle, Vice Chair; Julie Jacinto, Treasurer; Faith Manigsaca-Duran, Auditor; Dr. Evangeline Bravo-Manjares, Public Information Officer. Ratification of the SUACONA Constitution & By-Laws was also held on this day, and so was the bidding for Tipon 2015, which the Association of Central Texas Sillimanians (ACTS) won.

Gala Dinner & Ball Night was held in the evening of Saturday, August 24 at the Negros Oriental Convention Center. Everyone looked very grand as they participated in the buffet dinner and danced the night away. There was the usual program of musical presentations and inspirational messages followed by the induction of the newly elected SUACONA officers by SU President Dr. Ben S. Malayang, III.

Tipon participants were invited to attend the Sunday Morning Worship at the Silliman Church with fellowship after the service. In the afternoon, attendees were treated to "Handulantaw", a concert specifically dedicated to TIPON attendees held at Luce Auditorium showcasing the various talents of the University, under the direction of Dr. Susan Vista-Suarez.

"Kumbira sa Boulevard" sponsored by the City of Dumaguete was held on the evening of the 25th. Officials of the Province of Negros Oriental and the City of Dumaguete contributed a lot to the success of TIPON 2013. TIPON 2013 will be remembered in history as a memorable event not only for Silliman University and SUACONA attendees but also for the Province of Negros Oriental and the City of Dumaguete.

TIPON SILLIMAN 2015 – SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

The 8th *Tipon Silliman* was held in San Antonio, Texas – 7th most-populated city in the United States - on June 17-21, 2015. Hosted by the **Association of Central Texas Sillimanians (ACTS)**, the event was the largest gathering of Silliman University alumni in the Southwest. The hotel venue was **La Quinta Hotel and Suites** located close to the famed San Antonio Riverwalk.

Day 1 started with several uniquely Texan-flavored events. Silliman alumni were greeted with a Texas-sized welcome, serenaded with a *mariachi* band, and treated with a Texas native dance performances. We even saw some alumni in Western attire – with boots and cowboy hats! The scheduled photoshoot with the historical Alamo in the background, however, was cancelled because of the weather. Instead, alumni groups took turns posing for posterity with the makeshift Silliman booth as the backdrop.

It rained heavily on the morning of the first day but it dissipated by noon time - thus, the SUACONA Cowboy Picnic, which was the highlight of the Tipon Silliman 2015, went on as scheduled. Alumni and guests were bused to the world-famous Enchanted Springs Ranch located in Boerne (about 40 miles south of San Antonio), Texas. At the venue, SU alumni and friends were greeted and entertained by Old West charm and southern hospitality, tinged with Texas-style BBQ and, of course, the Texas two-steps line dancing, a performance by the famous Pistol Paula, a roaming Trick Roper, Six-gun fast draw, and a Wild West Show! Where else – but in Texas!

The memorable and impressive first day of Texas-flavored showcases paved way to traditional SUACONA business matters. Unbelievably, the scheduled plenary sessions were well-attended. The highlights included presentations by Silliman University dignitaries including Prof Leonor Magtolis Briones, Chair of the SU Board of Trustees; SU President Dr. Ben Malayang III; Ruben Bokingo, Director of SU Alumni and External Affairs; and Judge Candelario Gonzales, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees. It was also an opportunity for the current Chair of SUACONA, the Rev. Dr. Frank Somera Jr, to deliver his State of SUACONA Report to the assembly.

The lighting of SUACONA candles has been a traditional ceremony in every Tipon assembly to commemorate the anniversary of the founding of the umbrella organization of all Silliman University alumni residing in North America. This year marked the 14th Anniversary of the existence of SUACONA since its inception in Chicago in 2001. An Appreciation Luncheon highlighted the ceremony.

Organizers of every Tipon always plan a Fellowship Night on their menu of events. Tipon Silliman 2015 was no different. The night event was also billed *Got Talent Night*, where several alumni chapters as well as members of reunioneing groups and classes had the opportunity to display their – what else – talents. This year's Fellowship Night was a little bit raucous. SUGAR chapter members warmed up the night with their dance setup. Members of ACTS and Southern California did a song number while the NY/NJ alums went with their usual *a la Broadway* rendition! Dancing with Silliman stars capped the night.

Memorial Service has been a long-honored tradition in every Tipon event. We memorialized Silliman University alumni who passed away between the period 2013 and 2015 Tipon events.

Plenary session continued during the third day of Tipon with Dr. Adlai Amor's keynote address on the Tipon 2015 theme (*Moving Forward with the Silliman Spirit*). A trio of speakers

followed up addressing the crowd on the *Culture of Giving*. They included Prof Priscilla L Kelso, and Dr. Richard Elphick, both representing the New England Chapter; and Ms Trudy Loo, from the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia.

The following transpired during the early part of the Gala Night:

“OMG - huge crowd! We did not anticipate this!” “Hey -- she wanted to move to Table 12 – can she do that?” “They did not register -- can they get in?”

It was that kind of a night. Poor hosts! Whatever they did --- they did their best to accommodate every one. Nonetheless – the night went well! Food, choral performances, speeches, inauguration, and dancing filled the rest of the night. The Grand Gala and Ball was highlighted by ‘SUACONA TIPON CHORALE CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY IN SONG’, led by its founder, Mrs. Ruby Ordinario Agnir. And, oh - the CRUSH band! Their beat ‘crushed’ the crowd into dancing – and that was the best part of the night!

The Board of Directors (composed of the SUACONA officers and representatives of alumni chapters located in North America) went into their business mode to choose the new set of officers for the 2015-2017 term. They elected: **Beatriz Aya-ay Jackson** (Ontario Canada chapter) as the next Chairperson; **Betsy Merto Engle** (Alaska chapter) as the Vice Chairperson; **Dinah Penafiorida** (San Diego chapter) as the Secretary; **Samuel de la Pena** (Hawaii) as the Treasurer; **Daisy Siao Schmookler** (Chicago) as Auditor; and **Eric F. Sardual** (ACTS-Central Texas/Washington State) as the PIO.

Morning Devotions were held regularly. Speakers included Rev. Cirilo Del Carmen and Rev. Bart Kelso. Dr. Richard Elphick capped the week as the speaker for the Sunday Dedication and Communion Service.

A 5K Inaugural Walk Fun Run was held for the first time in a Tipon event. Those who joined were given souvenir medals.

The members of the Association of Central Texas Sillimanians (ACTS) are proud to have hosted the largest gathering of Silliman University alumni in the Southwest in June of 2015. With only a couple of our members having limited experience attending a Siliman Tipon event, we knew from the start that this would be no picnic.

We started everything from scratch but guided by faith, hope and love. We set goals and expectations. The planning was simple and basic yet effective. We gradually filled-in the WHAT, WHO, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW question marks as we progressed. We DOCUMENTED everything we did. Importantly, our MEMBERS were our chapter’s assets. ACTS is so blessed with members who are so goal-driven (and not ego-centric) and fun to work with.

Tipon Silliman 2017 will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii to be hosted by SUACOH - Silliman University Alumni Chapter of Hawaii, the sole bidder.

Reported by: Celan J. Alo, MD MPH

On behalf of the members of the Association of Central Texas Sillimanians

ATTRIBUTION

This whole narrative is a collaborative work of SUACONA officers.

SUACONA Founder and Past Executive Director Federico I. Agnir wrote the first part up until Tipon 2003. Past SUACONA Chairman Joel V. Pal wrote the part from Tipon 2005 to

Tipon 2009. Betsy Merton- Engle, President of host chapter Alaska, wrote the part about Tipon 2011 and collaborated with erstwhile SU Alumni and External Affairs director Jocelyn Somoza-de la Cruz in writing the part about Tipon 2013. Celan J. Alo, Past President of ACTS and Chair of the Tipon Silliman 2015 Committee, wrote the part about Tipon 2015.