

Isagani Bautista: Pioneering Architect



Isagani “Gani” Bautista, a former administrator with Operation Brotherhood, died September 9, 2005 at the Philippine General Hospital in Manila. He was 84 years old.

His wife Irene said Gani died from heart failure during his sleep.

Among the pioneers in setting up OB Laos, Gani arrived there in 1958, a year after the first volunteers set up a clinic in Vientiane.

With his military-style crew cut and chunky chest, he moved with cool confidence. During that period, 12 rural stations were established outside the capital. Gani’s first assignment was to head the Paksong station in the southern province of Champassak. From here, Gani scouted surrounding villages which medical teams could visit. His survey reports “are a pleasure to read,” wrote Fr. Miguel Bernad, in his book *Filipinos in Laos*, “because he has an eye for topography and a knack for vivid description.” Add sharp insights as evidenced by his book reviews and essays for “The Volunteer” the OB newsletter. That same year in 1958, the King of Laos awarded him the rank of Chevalier of the Order of a Million Elephants and the White Parasol for exemplary service to the country.

Trained as an architect (he topped the Philippine Architect Licensure Examinations in 1955 after earning his degree from the Mapua Institute of Technology), he built the hospital facilities in Sayaboury and Vientiane, including the OB Administration Building. The building, located beside the hospital, featured in its dramatic airy lobby a garden pool and a curving mezzanine balcony overhang. The design contrasted sharply to the boxy, claustrophobic confines of Vientiane’s office interiors. (The building was razed in 2002 together with the hospital).

Before arriving in Laos, Gani worked for the architectural firm of Oscar Arellano, himself an architect, who later launched OB. (The firm’s other architects were Carlos Peralta and Fruto Bingcang, both of whom were later hired by Oscar to work full-time for OB – Carling as an administrator and Bing as General Services Officer). The three of them designed the infrastructures that percolated from Oscar’s boundless concepts for low-cost housing, piggery

farms and city beautification campaigns. Many of these took shape in OB projects in Tawi-Tawi, Sapang Palay and Nasugbu, Batangas.

In Laos, where Gani was moved to Vientiane as Executive Assistant for Administration, his architectural skills were tapped by the Jaycees of Laos in building the city's first children's playground located across from the Lane Xang Hotel. As a Jaycee officer himself, he represented Laos in regional Asian conferences. In 1973 he was elected president of the Filipino Association of Laos. Back in the Philippines in 1975, he resumed work as an architect and took up a painting hobby. His oil paintings reproduce the works of Filipino national artists.

He and Irene have five children, 12 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. Three of them – Roland, Flordeliza and Isagani, Jr. live in San Francisco, California; Lynn resides in Honolulu; Maria Teresa is in the Philippines. Born on February 16 1921 in Wawa, Navotas, Rizal, Gani is the eldest of six children of Pio, a fishpond and fishing boat operator and his wife Marciana.

Cards and messages can be sent in care of Irene at 18 Estrella St., Navotas West, Navotas, Manila (telephone 02 283 7311). Internment will be on September 18, 2005 at Immaculate Garden in Bagong Silang, San Jose, Navotas after a mass in San Ildefonso Church.

The night Gani died, he advised Irene at the hospital: "Matulog ka na. Uuwi na tayo bukas." (Go to sleep, We'll go home tomorrow). Gani has gone home for a well-deserved rest.

By Pete Fuentecilla