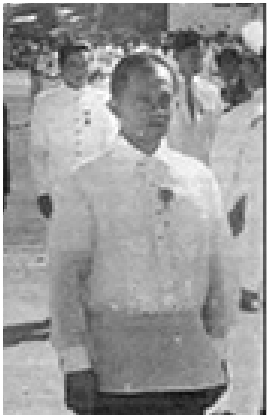


# Fruto “Bing” Bingcang : Buildings Can Disappear But Not His Memories of Colleagues



On a sunny morning in November 8, 1965 , on the parade grounds of the That Luang shrine in Vientiane, 39 persons were lined up. The Lao women were resplendent in their shimmering sinhs, the men in their lustrous sampots. Among them were six Filipinos, standing together, the men in their “Barong Tagalog” formal attire.

Days earlier, they were summoned by the Office of the Prime Minister of the Royal Lao Government to assemble at “7 heures 30 pour vous tenir prêts a etre decorees par sa Majeste le Roi” -- to be honored by His Majesty King Sri Savang Vatthana for their services to the Kingdom. Four of the Filipino men would receive the Order of the Million Elephants and of the White Parasol with the rank of Chevalier. The two Filipinas would receive the Bronze Medal of the Order of the Kingdom of Laos.

Among the male awardees was Fruto “Bing” Bingcang (photo left) . The citation described him for his “exceptionnel” service as “Administrateur-Adjoint pour le Service General” – Deputy Administrator for General Services for Operation Brotherhood Laos, where his actual title is Executive Assistant For General Services. During the 18 years that OB served in the Kingdom, from 1957 to 1975, some 36 persons served in various capacities as General Services technicians out of about 598 employees. They were mostly maintenance engineers – mechanical, electrical, radio, logistics and the like. Bing , together with fellow architects Isagani Bautista and Carlos Peralta, built OB clinics, housing and hospitals. Their most distinctive work was the two-story Administration Building beside the OB Vientiane Hospital. It featured a second floor balcony that overlooked a spacious , high ceiling floor of open – style offices, a pond and its greenery.

Bing and his associates had the convenience of drawing on experienced local Vientiane carpenters and masons to erect the building (and through the years to expand the 60-bed hospital into a 100-bed full service structure). But not so when he and former OB project manager Vito Naranjo arrived in Laos in 1956 . Invited by the Jaycees of Laos to transfer OB Vietnam’s operations to Laos, they were tasked to look for the locations to set up the field operations. That meant surveying remote regions of the Kingdom where it can be said they were perhaps the first Filipinos to set foot on. What quarters to shelter the first volunteers ? What clinics to fabricate? What are the building materials available and the builders ? What basic health facilities were existing that could be renovated ?he job called for a make-do outlook and a creative spirit in the face of scarce resources.

Bing rose to the challenge through all of his Laos years. Indeed, he is one of the few veterans who transitioned from OB Vietnam to the final years of OB Laos. And if one were to recall historical memories, lest it disappear as the Vientiane hospital and Administration building did in 2002 ( as well as all of OB’s files) Bing took it upon himself to record the names in 2002 of all his OB colleagues.

His tally came to 424 names (plus their nicknames) – every nurse, physician, agriculturist, social worker, engineer, secretary, etc. – 16 job titles in all – handwritten on yellow legal-sized paper. This became the basis for an updated (in 2018) list that totaled 598 names, thanks to additions from other personnel who remember missing names. Ok, so he was 174 persons short, but his original database, compiled from a man’s more than 80-yr old memory, should be considered an awesome feat by itself. See full list in the May 2018 issue of Mekong Circle Newsletter from our website [www.mekongcircle.org](http://www.mekongcircle.org).

On June 1, 2013 at a party to celebrate his birthdate at his residence in San Juan, Manila, Bing was asked by Manding Datu how he managed to reach the 90s. He replied that each birthday anniversary he asked the Lord for a life extension of another year. Why one year ? He laughed and left it at that. Bing passed away at the age of 94 on January 16, 2019.

Messages can be sent to his wife Nita at 293 Re Raon, San Juan, M. Manila, Philippines. Telephone 011 632 721 9495.