

## ALEJANDRINO Q. PEREZ (1937-1984)

Alejandrino Q. Perez, 47,

- Founder-President of two major language associations: the PSLP (Pambansang Samahan sa Linggwistikang Pilipino, Inggkorporada) and the ASANAL (Association of Asian National Languages);
- Chairman, Language and Literature Masteral Specialization, Philippine Normal College (PNC);
- Vice-Chairman, Linguistics and Literature Doctoral Specialization, PNC;
- Director, PNC Press;
- Vice-President, LEDCO (Language Education Council) of the Philippines;
- Writer, poet, educator, leader

calmly requested his colleague and friend when he was about to be wheeled off to the operating room that afternoon of May 5, 1984 to relay to his students and friends at Philippine Normal College that he would be back to school – after a semester at most – after his operation on what appeared to be an ordinary slipped disk. Unfortunately, it turned out, when he was opened up, that it was a malignant cancer of the bone in the spinal column. He finally lost his bout with the dreaded disease on August 25, three months and twenty days after his operation.

Al Q was born on February 9, 1937 in Concepcion, Tarlac, where he finished his elementary and secondary education. He then enrolled at Philippine Normal College where he finished his BSEE degree in 1960. The following years, while teaching – first in his hometown (1960-61), then at San Beda College (1961-63), and later on at Far Eastern University (1963-64) – he continued studying and finished his MA in 1964 also at Philippine Normal College with his thesis titled 'Pilipino and Pampango Cognates: Sound and Spelling Relationships'. He then transferred to his Alma Mater where he decided to stay for keeps. Obsessed with finishing his doctorate degree, while teaching, he enrolled at the University of Santo Tomas where he obtained his doctor of philosophy degree in 1969 with his dissertation titled 'A Factor Analysis of the Bilingual (Pilipino and English) Skills of Tagalog and Non-Tagalog Freshman Students of the Philippine Normal College'.

In 1971, when the Institute of National Language Board was reorganized through Exec. Order # 304, Al Q was appointed to the Board by the President of the Philippines to represent the Pampango language. But although Al Q was a non-Tagalog, he had accomplished much for the national language, even more than most of its native speakers of his time. In fact, he could have done more for Pilipino had death not come too soon for him. He had either authored, co-authored or edited around 25 books, the last of which are as follows: *Ang Sining ng Pagbigkas ng Tula – Isahan at Sabayan*, PNC, 1982; *Papers from the Conference on the Standardization of Asian Languages*, (co-edited with Nguyen Dan Liem and Alfonso O. Santiago), Australian National University, 1978; *Mga Babasahin sa Bilanggwalismo*, (co-edited with Alfonso O. Santiago), REX, 1977. Recently, his textbook series (co-authored with Lalunio and Llaneza) titled *Ang Aming Kalinangan* for the elementary grades was approved by the Textbook Board of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports as basic textbooks for Civics and Culture. They had already finished Grades I and II and were halfway through with Grade III when Al Q died. In fact, he had left unfinished several textbook projects with REX Printing, one of which was *Ang Pambansang Panitikang Pilipino*.

Several of the honors and awards Al Q received were not only from the Philippines but also from other countries of the Asian region, such as the following: Certificate of Appreciation, bestowed by the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Ministry of Education and Culture, Malaysia; Plaque of Appreciation, given by the National Center for Language Development, Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia; Citation (in Chinese calligraphy), awarded by Tunghai University, Taiwan; Plaque of Appreciation, given by Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature Committee; Citation, awarded by KAKAMPI (Kapisanan ng mga Kawal na Manunulat sa Pilipino); Plaque of Recognition, awarded by the Institute of National Language; Sagisag Balagtas, awarded by the PASATAP (Pambansang Samahan ng mga Tagamasid sa Pilipino); Presidential Award, given by the Angeles University Foundation.

Al Q's published articles are too many to be enumerated here. But his main contribution to language was most felt in his leadership of the two language associations which he co-founded – the Pambansang Samahan sa Linggwistikang Pilipino (PSLP) and the Association of Asian National Languages (ASANAL). He became and remained president of these associations up to his untimely demise. As President of PSLP, he organized and directed language seminars in almost all provinces and cities of the country. The proceeds derived from those language forums were then used in varied projects of PSLP, the most significant of which was the holding of the first Asian Language Conference in Manila in 1972. As an offshoot of the conference, ASANAL was born. Through his leadership as President, ASANAL was able to hold six successful Asian conferences – two in Manila, two in Malaysia, and two in Indonesia – focusing on different language problems plaguing Third World countries in the Asian region.

Al Q was starting to plan for the 1985 7th ASANAL Conference, which the Philippines would host, when death intervened. Saddened by the news, his colleague from Malaysia, Professor Asmah Haji Omar, wrote Al Q's wife to express her condolence. A part of her letter reads: 'Al's death is a great loss to the academic world and in particular to the academic circle involved in elevating their national languages. He was the primemover and the backbone of the ASANAL. In fact, Al Q Perez was ASANAL itself. The Association has suffered a great loss, but we who remain will continue to nurture it, and in that way honour the memory of its founder'.