

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

By Primo Andres, MD’72



With the USTMAAA now safely entrenched after the deft planning by the founding members, most notably Dr. Jose L. Evangelista, Founding Father of the Association, plans for more sustainable existence through long term investment to support projects in perpetuity was underway. The first \$5000 was collected and given to the UST Medical Library as a project that was called “Pathway to Knowledge”. It was then the customary way of rendering help to UST where funds were raised by groups and given directly to UST to benefit a named project. While it was good, it was realized that it might not be sustainable.

It was from the fertile mind of a debonair and charismatic and energetic leader that the idea of establishing a foundation was conceptualized. Dr. Jose

G. Vjungco was the champion who began campaigning from the outset. It was while doing a cerebral angiogram that he was advised by a Neurosurgeon who was the President of the University of Missouri Medical Alumni Foundation to ask for \$5000 instead of only \$100. He was shown the “Wall of Honor” at the Learning Resource Center of St. Louis University. And the hard work of convincing other Thomasian medical alumni for support began.

Drs. Jose and Stella Evangelista did not need much convincing and so were Drs. Dionisio and Zita Yorro who were sold with the idea of having a common vehicle to channel donations to UST and the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery and the Hospital in order to support bigger and more meaningful projects. It appeared that convincing other alumni would be an uphill battle and there was strong opposition from notable leaders who were content with the old ways of giving.

USTMAA Midwest was the largest gathering of Thomasian Medical Alumni and it was felt that it was of paramount importance that its support be obtained. With the help of the Evangelistas and Yorros and the unselfish leadership of Dr. Jose Vjungco, they were able to convince Dr. Gregorio Tolentino, the incoming USTMAAM President, to support the fledgling Foundation risking his own credibility and standing in the Midwest medical community. For all his sacrifices and risks, he was made the first President of the USTMAAA Foundation with the blessing of the President of USTMAAA, Dr. Nancianceno Largoza.

While the groundwork was set, there was still a lot of reticence and skepticism and Dr. Vjungco spent long nights writing 10-12 letters a night to Thomasians, but to no avail. He then resorted to calling people personally (this was before the age of Internet or facsimile machines or cellphones), racking up “phone bills that were bigger than my mortgage”. Through his exhaustive cajoling and unparalleled effort, he was able to convince 43 people to either donate or pledge and come up with \$25,000, enough to finally register USTMAAA Foundation as a Non-profit Corporation in the State of Missouri on November 5, 1990.

The following strategy was adopted :

- Officers should be donors, first to register in any USTMAAA Convention, must shoulder overhead expenses, and observe “Transparency”
- There would be belt tightening and no distribution would be made until \$500,000 was accumulated. The Dean and UST Administration were initially not receptive because UST had projects that needed to be funded, but they eventually understood.
- USTMAAA would be the fund raising arm and all convention profits would be channeled to the USTMAAA Foundation.
- Campaign for \$5000 payable in five years: \$1,000/year, \$250/3 Months , \$83.33/month or \$2.78/day

Finally, the USTMAAA Foundation was launched during the 1990 APPA convention in Washington DC with

a slide presentation discussing the goal of raising \$1million with the first project being a cardiac catheterization laboratory in the UST Hospital. Appeal cards were distributed.

Those who saw the dream and invested early in the future of the USTMAAA Foundation are the following:

Vijungco, Jose/Herminia	\$5000	Maglinte, Dean	\$2000	Villamar, Elizabeth	\$1000
Evangelista, Jose/Stella	5000	Cueto, Alex	2000	Bofill, Rano	1000
Ronquillo, Ron/Tessie	5000	Rodrigo, Raulie	1500	Yorro, Oni/Zita	750
Vicente, Nina - Wisconsin	5000	Gotanco, Rey/Rachel	1000	Feliciano, Leonor Testa	750
Pantig, Liberata	3000	Andaya, Dodie/Evalinda	1000	Quizon, Bert	500
Villarama, Tony/Lilia	3000	Bouffard, Chat	1000	Capati, Danilo	500
Tolentino, Greg	3000	Dy, Mariano/Flora	1000	Rafer-Benig, Cora	500
Largoza, Nen	3000	Rodrigo, Tarcila	1000	Siroy, Edwin	500
Kairuz, Bart	3000	Atienza, Ranulfo	1000	Mendoza, Norma	500
Diloy Puray, Mila	2200	Arellano, Bobby	1000	Arcilla, Rene	300
Figueroa, Eli	2000	Dingcong, Angelita	1000	Fojas, Augusto	250
Torres, Crisanto	2000	Balagtas, Rolly/Naty	1000	Pascual, Generoso	250
Smith, Robert MD	2000	Arville, John	1000	Caragay, Freddie	250
Carranza, Mauro	2000	Martin, Len	1000	1991 convention	12000

The USTMAA Midwest Chicago convention generated \$12,000 and the Missouri convention raised \$75,000 the following year. There was \$265,000 in the coffers at the end of Dr. Vjungco’s term as President of the Foundation in 1992 and the first \$10,000 deposit for the USTH cardiac catheterization laboratory was given and another \$5,000 for an operating microscope was donated to the Department of Ophthalmology.

It was not until the term of Dr. Jose Evangelista as President of both the Association and Foundation in 1992-1994 that both were accorded their corporation status and the Foundation received its tax favorable IRS 501(c) (3) status in May 1994. The organization achieved its exponential growth at this time with Dr. Stella Evangelista taking over the day to day operations as the Executive Director of both corporations. The first Grand Reunion and Medical Convention was held at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Dearborn, Michigan in May 1992. The Constitution and Bylaws was formed. Charter membership was established and Chapters from different regions of the United States were invited to join. Through the incessant solicitation of “Joe” and the untiring efforts of Dr. Zita Yorro in collecting, the initial goal of \$1 million was easily within sight and that was when Dr. Jose Evangelista raised the bar by challenging the organization to shoot for \$2 million, then \$3 million and beyond. The concept of an Endowment Fund was introduced where the fund was invested and only the earnings would be used to support the various projects of the organization. With over \$5 million currently in the Endowment Fund, the USTMAAA Foundation has been disbursing over \$100,000 a year. Since the inception, the Foundation has provided over \$10 million to its beneficiaries, the USTH and the indigent patients that it serves, the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery and the medical students that it educates and the less privileged Filipinos through its various outreach programs. The Foundation was instrumental in making the building of the Thomasian Alumni Center (TAC) a reality by raising over \$1.6 million that was the seed money that catalyzed the construction.

What is in the future for USTMAAA and its Foundation? The future is limitless and it can go as far as the imagination can foresee. Thanks to the vision and perseverance of the pioneers who made it all happen. Special thanks to Dr. Jose Vjungco, the Father of the USTMAAA Foundation, whose boundless energy fueled the Foundation, to Dr. Jose Evangelista whose unparalleled leadership paved the way to its growth, to Dr. Gregorio Tolentino, whose selfless sacrifice cleared the fertile ground upon which the Foundation could grow, and to the triumvirate of Dr. Stella Evangelista, the only Executive Director that the Foundation has ever known, and the dynamo of a couple, Drs. Dionisio and Zita Yorro, whose selfless dedication and enduring efforts were the driving force that brought the Foundation to where it is today. To them all we owe a debt of gratitude and we make this Silver Anniversary an opportunity to acknowledge all their efforts in getting us to where we are. *Maraming maraming salamat po!*