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Born: March 17, 1928
Bamban, Tarlac

I was asked to write about my life story as a deaconess. I graduated from Harris Memorial School) in 1952, and at this time of writing (July 2019) I am 91 years old and my memory is not as sharp as it used to be. Looking back, however, what really comes to mind was my work in music.

Music Ministry

God has given me a beautiful gift of a singing voice, together with my music training at Harris Memorial School in organ and choral conducting, I was well prepared to take on church music in my appointments. In the first eight years of my ministry, in five different church appointments in Pampanga and Tarlac, I was the organist, choir director, soloist. We held concerts and sung on special occasions by invitation.

Sometime ago, I heard a comment from one of my former young people at a church saying, “Lila did not just let us sing just to sing; she taught us **how to sing!**” There are techniques in singing: the right use of the diaphragm, the mouth, the throat, the shoulders, the whole body, and the proper breathing. Yes, that beautiful singing did not just happen. I gave basic music theory, taught the choir different parts (SATB), and how to read music sheets (as necessary).

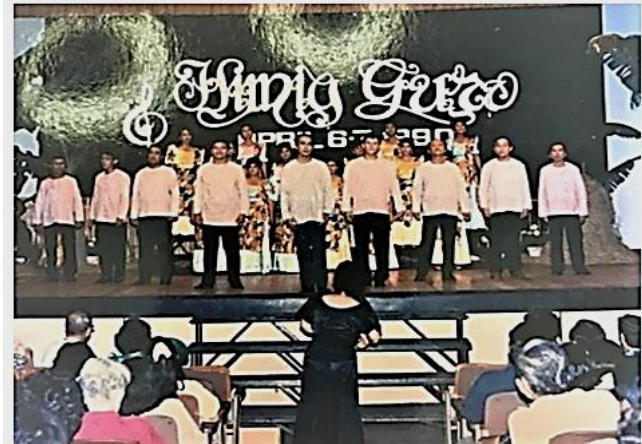
In between my church assignments, in 1958-1960, the Women’s Division of the Philippines gave me a scholarship to further my music studies at the University of the Philippines (UP) Conservatory of Music, major in Voice and minor in Piano. That was totally an enriching experience in my life! I was involved in a Classic Opera, and other mega musical productions at UP and in Manila. I was in heaven!



With this advanced education in music, I went back to church work. I taught my choirs better techniques in singing, harmonizing, and better quality in tones. Eventually we were doing concerts in church and other venues. It was a glorious and enriching time. Praise be to God!



Years later, I became a school teacher. First, I was a Grade 1 teacher, then when I had the Grade 6 class, I organized them into a choir. Eventually, I became the Music Division Supervisor for the Angeles City School District. I can only praise and thank God for the gift of music!



Becoming a Deaconess



I grew up in church. My father's side of the family was Catholic, but my mother's side were all Methodists and we lived close to the church. As kids we were active in Sunday school, Daily Vacation Bible School, and District Rallies. I was always fascinated by the deaconesses, how sweet and talented they were, good in music and preaching, and to hang out with.

However, our lives and church activities were interrupted by the invasion of the Japanese in 1942-1945. We hid out in the mountains of Bamban and further up where my grandparents had a farm; it was such a horribly scary time! We eventually held services there with Pastor Diwa leading us. Surprisingly, some of the Japanese in the area joined our services/prayer meetings. At the American liberation, when the Japanese were leaving, they even said "God be with you, until we meet again."

After the war, I attended high school while hosted by the family of Pastor Ricardo del Rosario. I was so excited to go back to school! After a year, I transferred to Edna Thomas Hall in San Fernando, Pampanga. Ms. Marion Walker, an American missionary, and a number of church workers were residents there. The time with the Del Rosarios and Edna Thomas residents was filled with religious activities and I loved it all! So, after high school graduation, I decided to become a deaconess. I enrolled at Harris Memorial School in 1949 and graduated in 1952 with a major in Christian Education.

Church Appointments

As a deaconess, I worked in churches of San Simon and Apalit in Pampanga. This was in 1952-1954. San Fernando, Pampanga was next in 1955. Angeles City in 1956. Back to San Fernando (1957). Tarlac in 1958 and back to San Fernando in 1961. Finally, I was back to Angeles City where I retired in 1962.



Our main purpose in church work was to nurture the Christian life of all: children, youth and adults. That involved teaching in Sunday School, DBCS, IDEI, organizing choirs for the UMM and WSCS, and Gospel Teams (organized by Leila Dingle in 1949). I also assisted the pastor in evangelistic services, weddings, and Holy Week services.

It was and is a wide practice that deaconesses are provided free board and lodging at one of the members' houses. What made this successful for me was that I embraced the new family at the new assignment, helping with the chores, eat, played, and prayed with them. I always felt loved and very secure and safe within the families. I thank the Pangans in San Simon, Quiwas in San Fernando, the Tumambos in Angeles, and the Castros in Tarlac.

It inspires me to know that to some young people in different churches I served I was somewhat of an idol to them; a number of them went into the ministry; to mention a couple: Roger Meneses became a District Superintendent in Tarlac, and Narcisa Quizon Halili became a District Deaconess and pioneered the Kinder school in Tarlac. I praise God for them!

Moving-on With My Life

I went back to school and completed my Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Education. I taught 'Education' courses at the Republic Central College in Angeles City and 'Music' at Angeles University.

I have lived in San Diego, CA, with my husband, Pedro Lusung, Jr. and only son, Jayvee and his family. We have 2 beautiful daughters: Melody and Joy. I helped raise my grandchildren while my kids are busy making a living.



Conclusion

I praise God Almighty for the gift of music and for all the opportunities that developed in churches where God's message of Love was proclaimed through music. I thank the Methodists Women of the Philippines for the music scholarship, I am grateful to the numerous pastors and deaconesses who nurtured me along the way. For the church people who accepted and loved me, which made work easier to accomplish. For Harris Memorial School for the training that equipped me for church work. I love our Southern California Deaconess Association as we gather for fellowship, prayers, and projects.

Thank you, God, for being my rock and my salvation! Amen!