

Pablo Valdez

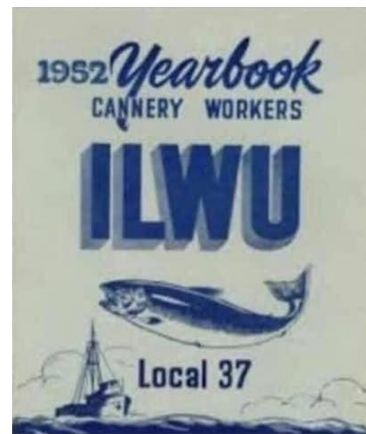
By Pelagio Valdez (son)

This past March 2nd, 2021, my Family celebrated the 112nd Heavenly Birthday of my Dad!!!

“UNION STRENGTH ALL HIS LIFE!”

“LEAD FIRST OR GET THE HELLA OUTTA THE WAY!!!”

My Dad, Mr. Pablo S. Valdez and his Family originated from the town of Lapog, Ilocos Sur, Philippines. Within time, they soon relocated to Buguey, Cagayan Valley in Northern Luzon. At this seaside village next to the Philippine Sea, he was born on March 2nd, 1909. Of course wanting to seek "new horizons" like all young men, he left the Philippines by ship at the age of 18 in 1928 and arrived in San Francisco, California. His first job was picking tomatoes in the Delta Region town of Isleton.



It was during the “Great Depression” years that "Pinoys" survived by lining up to eat in the bread and soup lines. But by the Grace of God, they were fortunate to seek employment in the agricultural fields of California as well as in the salmon canneries of Alaska. My Dad soon became active in organizing labor strikes for better working conditions and increased pay in the Stockton, Salinas and San Joaquin Valley area during the 1930's. World War II soon turned the tide for these hard working Filipino men.



Pablo S. Valdez
Past Branch Agent,
Stockton, Calif.

Good member of Local 5, CIO, San Francisco, from 1927 to 1941. Wartime experience, 1942 to 1945. Local 5, CIO, Business Agent, 1946 to 1947. Local 7, FTA, Stockton Branch Business Agent, 1947 to 1950. Leader of the big asparagus strike in San Joaquin Valley, 1950. Dispatching officer for Local 7, CIO, Local 7-C and Local 37, ILWU, Seattle, 1950 to 1952. A militant labor leader.



After April 1st, 1942, the U.S. Army's 1st Filipino Battalion was formed at Camp San Luis Obispo, California. He was inducted in July and began rigorous infantry training throughout California. This took place at the Salinas Rodeo Grounds, Fort Ord,

Camps Roberts, Beale, Cooke and the Hunter Liggett Military Reservation. By 1943, the U.S. Army's 1st & 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments eventually grew to over 7,000 men in record time. The men who served in these units were in their early to late 30's and were definitely older than the average recruit of 26. Their previous work made them wiser, more effective and efficient and definitely stronger as oxen. On February 20th, 1943, U.S. Army history was made when the 1st Regiment which relocated to Camp Beale, conducted a mass citizenship ceremony in which over 1,200 Filipinos were naturalized and became American citizens.

Because of his previous leadership and his experience in dealing with these "new" Filipino American soldiers, he was assigned as a Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) to the Detached Enlisted Men's List (DEML) with the 2nd Regiment. His responsibility^[OBJ] was to organize the men accordingly. Unfortunately, he did not deploy with his cohorts and his brief service lasted only 15 months. Honorably discharged at the rank of Staff Sergeant in October 1943 at Camp Cooke, he resumed work with his respective labor unions.

After his wartime service, he used his G.I. Bill for education to study TV and radio repair. This would indeed become a "back-up" profession if ever needed. Although it was a brief course, he managed to utilize it as a side business with a U.S. Navy veteran. His customers and clients were all veterans who served with the Filipino Regiments as well as others in the American Legion's Bataan Post # 600 in San Francisco.

My Dad was considered a militant labor leader while working for Local 7 and 37, the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Unions



(ILWU). He traveled to the cities of Seattle, Washington, Juneau, Alaska and San Francisco to conduct his work. During the 1950's, this was the McCarthy Era and many Filipinos were branded as Communists. Some of them were later deported for their subversive actions against the Government. During this time, he worked with prominent Filipino pioneers like Carlos Bulosan, Trinidad Rojo, Philip Vera Cruz, Larry Itliong, Ernesto

Mangaoang, Chris Mensalves, Leo Lorenzo and many others within the labor movement.

The goals of reaching equality in pay, work and living conditions needed to be resolved. It was long overdue that the "Manongs" needed representation with a systematic, strong and dedicated leadership. Despite the fact that all workers needed reform, he still wanted to maintain his allegiance to the U.S. Government by not jeopardizing it because of his honorable service with the U.S. Army.

In 1958, my Mom's best friend, Mrs. Tomasita P. Purganan (who later became my Godmother — "Ninang") introduced my Dad to my Mom, the



former Faith Molina Agustin (who was 20 years younger) and they became "pen-pals." My Mom and Ninang had known and worked together as co-teachers in the Philippines. After they were married on July 11th, 1958, an FBI investigator had a "careful eye" on my Mom and it took a little bit longer for her to obtain her citizenship. Even after giving birth to me and my sister, she worked night jobs before obtaining her teaching credentials and Masters Degree in Special Education from San Francisco State College.

She was soon employed in 1965 in San Jose.

During the early 1960's, my Dad's best *compadres*, Larry Itliong, Philip Vera Cruz and Chris Mensalves paid occasional visits to our home in Daly City, California. They would have all night "pow-wows" while baking ensaimada (Filipino sweet bread). Their intense discussions were how to help Cesar Chavez and his UFW movement in Delano.

My Dad continued to work as a business agent for Local 2 - Hotel and Bartenders Employees (AFL-CIO) which was the biggest miscellaneous culinary union in San Francisco. He was then promoted to Vice President

and later retired as the President in 1976. My Dad had come a very long way in more than 45 years. He managed to gain the knowledge, experience, respect and leadership in organizing men within their different fields of endeavors.

During his retirement, he often lectured for Asian American Studies classes at San Francisco State University and was the advisor for other Filipino American groups like the Union of Democratic Filipinos (KDP). There were times when I accompanied him to the Pilipino Far West Conventions in Los Angeles and Seattle. Wrapping up this story, it was very unfortunate that these “MANONGS” came to America to endure the hardships and extreme discrimination. Yet with their will to survive, they were able to bring up our Families in this "Land of Milk and Honey." They had indeed come a long way since then!!!

“ISUDA TI IMMUNA” (THEY WHO WERE FIRST)



*** This PICLAB collage was created by my Daughter, Pauline Valdez who graduated from Clovis High School last May 2020. She is currently attending online college courses.