

SIKARAN MANTAS REGROUPS FOR MATAW-GURO GATHERING

By: Emmanuel Querubin

In 1958, the Samahan sa Ikauunlad ng Karate sa Pilipinas (SIKAP) was formed and became a member of the Karate (Sikaran) Brotherhood of the Philippines. In 1960, the acronym SIKAP took another meaning. It became Sikaran Pilipinas (SIKAP) after Emmanuel Querubin was introduced to Sikaran, then also called Philippine Karate, by Meliton Geronimo.

Initially, SIKAP had only a handful of students, among them Vic Laxamana, Rene Canlas, Ernesto Pamintuan, Rodrigo Espiritu, Jose Sidlacan, Angeles Sanchez, Precioso Querubin and about another 5 students whose names are lost in space and can no longer be retrieved from the memory bank. When Emmanuel Querubin retired from teaching the martial arts, he had taught (directly under him and indirectly under his students) thousands, now scattered all over the world.

After their promotion to black belt, while still training under Querubin, some of the students formed their own clubs. Vic Laxamana, established the Te-ashi-do Karate Club in Makati. Rene Canlas, Ernesto Pamintuan, and Precioso Querubin decided that teaching martial arts will interfere with family matters. Rodrigo Espiritu formed the Kayumanggi Kapisanan ng Karate (KKK) in Tondo, Manila, while Angeles Sanchez put up the Manila Karate-do Dojo in Quezon City. Jose Sidlacan taught Defensive Tactics at the Philippine College of Criminology and the Philippine National Police Academy in Tagaytay City while teaching at his private club the Tusipaka Karate Dojo.

Vic Laxamana was appointed by Meliton Geronimo as Coordinating Director of the Karate (Sikaran) Brotherhood of the Philippines. Joe Sidlacan was named Director for Educational Institutions while Angeles Sanchez became the Director for Logistics. Emmanuel Querubin on the other hand was appointed Director for Research and Standardization.

Aside from being officers of the association, Vic Laxamana, Rodrigo Espiritu and Angeles Sanchez were active in the tournament circuit. Laxamana won consecutive tournaments in the breaking techniques with his finger thrust going through a watermelon. He finally voluntarily quit after five years. Rodrigo Espiritu was a consistent winner in the Greater Manila and Southern Tagalog regional championships. Angeles Sanchez on the other hand continued to impress the audience with his head-butting demonstrations. He also produced several champions with Ramon Valdenor being the most popular. Ramon Valdenor was also being trained to be an instructor. Valdenor won every tournament he joined and earned the nickname "Bone-crusher" after breaking the arm of an opponent who tried to stop Valdenor's front kick. He also broke an opponent's ribs, despite the use of protective body armor.

While these were all happening, back in the Karate (Sikaran) Brotherhood of the Philippines Central Gym, Andy Sanano and Gloria Rapsing were training under Jimmy Geronimo, who later became the World Sikaran Brotherhood Chief Instructor. Emmanuel Querubin was also a teacher at the gym.

Down south in Zamboanga City, Louelle Lledo was learning from Joe David, Boy Mendoza, and Hermelando "Tata" Bautista who later became the Karate (Sikaran) Brotherhood of the Philippines Coordinator for Mindanao.

In 1967, Emmanuel Querubin was commissioned to be the Senior Foreign Karate Instructor of the Karate Association of Malaysia, where he taught over a thousand students.

Santiago "Sonny" Moya, a member of the Philippine Army Special Forces was embroiled in the unpopular Vietnam war.



Andy Sanano, Ika-8 Antas Sagisag na Itim with Gloria Rapsing-Querubin, Ika-2 Antas Sagisag na Itim.

Andy Sanano migrated to the United States where he continued his training under Dante Alambra, the Sikaran Representative in the United States and Canada. He continued training in Sikaran, Karate and Aikido at the same time developing his family stick-fighting art and what he learned from Pering Cruz. Sanano consequently developed the art he now calls Trece (Labingtatlo) Hampas Sanano Martial Arts. He enlisted in the United States Air Force where he retired. He then joined the Police Department in Rapid City in South Dakota, where he also retired for the second time. Getting tired of shoveling snow he is now moving to the "hurricane corridor and tornado alley" of Georgia.

In 1969, Sikaran Grandmaster Meliton Geronimo asked Emmanuel Querubin and Jimmy Geronimo to put up a team to teach Sikaran to the Presidential Security Command and the Armed Forces of the Philippines Metropolitan Command (METROCOM) North Sector, the first line of defense of Malacanang Palace.

Jimmy Geronimo chose his number one student Serafin Pangilinan. Pangilinan, is a consistent champion in the knockout tournament series of the Sikaran Brotherhood of the Philippines.

For his part, Emmanuel Querubin chose Rodrigo Espiritu and Angeles Sanchez who brought with him his assistant Ramon Valdenor. Vic Laxamana was not available at the time and so was Jose Sidlacan.

Santiago "Sonny" Moya is back from Vietnam and now assigned with the AFP Metropolitan Command (METROCOM) North Sector stationed in Malacanang Palace, which was operationally under the Presidential Security Command. He was named Outstanding Graduate of the Presidential Security Command Sikaran class. A fighter by nature, he won several gold medals in tournaments, both in his weight division and the open weight division.

Louelle Lledo has moved to Manila pursuing higher academic and martial arts education. He met in the boarding house he was staying Flora, who was to be his wife. He also met her father Delfin Bernarte who tutored and bequeathed Louelle the Bernarte Brokil Sistemang Praksiyon.

He won the Gold Medal in the Black Belt National Championship of the Karate Association of the Philippines. When he was selected to be a tournament official of the Philippine Karate Association (PKA) he relinquished his loyalty to his mother association. He became the Chief International Referee during the First International Invitational Karate Championships held in the Philippines.

In 1972, the group of Querubin, Laxamana, Espiritu, Sanchez, Valdenor, Lledo, Sidlacan and Moya went their separate ways. Emmanuel Querubin, a non-commissioned officer in the Philippine Air Force Reserves was appointed Agent-in-charge in the Civil Intelligence and Security Unit of the City of Manila. Vic Laxamana, a Textile Engineer started a family and decided to look for a more stable job to supplement his meager income teaching the martial arts. Rodrigo Espiritu enlisted in the Philippine Navy. Angeles Sanchez went to Baguio City to teach martial arts at the Philippine Military Academy. Ramon Valdenor, now a Second Lieutenant in the Philippine Army Reserves joined Querubin as a Civil Intelligence and Security Agent for the City of Manila. Louelle Lledo finished his degree as a Medical Technologist and became a reserve officer in the Philippine Air Force. Jose Sidlacan finished his Master's Degree in Criminology and continued to teach Defensive Tactics and Criminology both at the Philippine College of Criminology and the Philippine National Police Academy in Tagaytay City. Santiago Moya, now a Sergeant is assigned as an Intelligence Officer and continued to train but gave up competition.

After teaching at Malacanang, Jimmy Geronimo became the personal bodyguard of Philippine Air Force General Singson and his family. He later became a Police Officer and retired as a SWAT Officer. He is now the Chief Instructor of the World Sikaran Brotherhood. His student Serafin Pangilinan also became a Police Officer but later succumbed to intestinal problems.

In 1975, Emmanuel Querubin migrated to the United States and the group were further scattered by the winds of necessity. Vic Laxamana continued teaching martial arts while raising a family. Rodrigo Espiritu became the Team Leader of the Philippine Navy Sikaran Group at the same time graduating with honors from the Naval Intelligence Academy. Angeles Sanchez continued teaching at the Philippine Military Academy. Ramon Valdenor became the personal assistant of Press Secretary Francisco Tatad who later became a Senator. Louelle Lledo went to the United States with Querubin to attend the Third World Karate Championships. From the States he went to Japan to renew friendship with Goju-ryu Karate Grandmaster Gogen "The Cat" Yamaguchi. When he came back to the Philippines, he was commissioned as a Captain in the Philippine Air Force Reserves and was offered the position vacated by Emmanuel Querubin. Lledo became the Agent-in-charge of the Civil Intelligence and Security Unit of the City of Manila. When he left City Hall, he graduated from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Academy and became a Field Agent at the same time Martial Arts Instructor. Sgt. Santiago Moya was assigned in Cebu City to monitor the operations of the various casinos in the City.

In 2011, the group met but this time with different stories. Louelle Lledo is now based in New Jersey, USA and has founded his own art he calls Amara Arkanis Filipino Martial Arts Education. Rodrigo Espiritu retired from the Philippine Navy with the rank of Chief Petty Officer. Espiritu and his son Rodrigo, Jr. are teaching martial arts at the Taguig University. Ramon Valdneor is now an entrepreneur. He assists his wife run a very successful business

catering to the Senate of the Philippines. Santiago Moya took an early retirement as a Staff Sergeant, and is now running a family business with his wife and children manufacturing and distributing cleaning supplies and materials. Jose Sidlacan is retired and tends his small backyard garden in Dasmarinas, Cavite. Emmanuel Querubin who retired from the Oakland Police Department is recuperating after an uphill bout with some health concerns.



Unfortunately, Vic Laxamana is still recuperating from the effects of a stroke he suffered in 2009. He is represented here by his son Donvic (extreme right) who is also now a martial arts teacher.

Although Emmanuel Querubin has since been back to the Philippines several times and has communicated with some members of the group individually, this is the first time after 36 years that they all got together to renew old friendship and enjoy each other's company over meal or over a cup of coffee. It took the Mataw-guro Gathering to make it happen. Unfortunately, Angeles Sanchez passed away due to heart disease several years ago. Vic Laxamana is still indisposed after a stroke he suffered in 2009. However, he was ably represented by his son Donvic who is now teaching martial arts himself.



Clockwise: Louelle Lledo, Santiago Moya, Emmanuel Querubin, Perry Mallari. Ramon, Jr. Ramon Valdenor, Rodrigo Espiritu, Peachie Saguin, Rebecca Espiritu (Rodrigo's wife), Gloria Querubin (Emmanuel's wife) and Jocey Valdenor (Ramon's wife)

It took more than 30 years for it to happen, but it did. On the 2011 Mataw-guro Gathering, Sikaran Pilipinas students and teacher got together for a reunion. Although everybody in the group learned and trained in Arnis de Mano only four qualified to be a Mataw-guro, Louelle Lledo, Andy Sanano, Jose Sidlacan and Emmanuel Querubin.



Sikaran old fogies with two new young friends. From left, Peachie Saguin, Perry Gil Mallari, Emmanuel Querubin, Ika-9 Antas Sagisag na Itim, Sonny Moya, Ika-5 Antas Sagisag na Itim, Louelle Lledo, Ika-8 Antas Sagisag na Itim, Rodrigo Espiritu, Ika-8 Antas Sagisag na Itim, and Ramon Valdenor Ika-8 Antas Sagisag na Itim.



Jose N. Sidlacan, Ika-8 Antas Sagisag na Itim



Brothers in the martial arts, from left: Walter Crisostomo, Perry Mallari, Andy Sanano (partly hidden) Jose Sidlacan, Wesley Crisostomo, Louelle Lledo and Emmanuel Querubin.