

**Salu-Salo sa San Francisco**

*9 July 2016, Upsilon Sigma Phi North America*

**A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT FRATERNITY AND ITS NOBLE TRADITIONS**

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Brothers in Upsilon Sigma Phi, Sisters in Sigma Delta Phi,  
Spouses and Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

“I am an Upsilonian and proud of it.”

I am proud to have been initiated into a great fraternity that harnessed my talents, enhanced my leadership skills, provided valuable support to my endeavors, and most important of all, polished my persona.

And what Upsilon did for me, it did for a cause far greater than myself. Upsilon built me up, as it has built up other brods, so we can be of greater service to others—to our University, our country, and the world. Who cannot be proud of belonging to a fraternity such as ours?

We are here in this Salu-Salo sa San Francisco to reconnect with each other and regenerate our bonds. We are here to celebrate the unique fellowship that is Upsilon Sigma Phi.

Upsilon is truly distinct for so many reasons. Let me just enumerate three: (1) Upsilon has a rich history; (2) Upsilon is exclusive yet diverse; and (3) Upsilon is prestigious but not elitist. Let me explain.

***First, Upsilon has a rich history.*** Our fraternity is the oldest Greek-lettered society in Asia. When our founding members began meeting in 1918, UP was only a decade old. The University’s character and direction were initially set by UP’s first president, Murray Bartlett. He envisioned UP as a “University for the Filipino” that would not “breed aristocrats but unselfish workers for the common good.” (*University of the Philippines: The First 75 Years*)

This was expanded by UP's second president, Ignacio Villamor. As the University was designed to meet the needs of the country, he said, its imperative goals were to "extend the field of scientific knowledge" and "to mold character by promoting among the students the sense of justice and responsibility, honor and dignity, good fellowship and self-help, perseverance in their work, compliance with their duties, and love of the Alma Mater." (*University of the Philippines: The First 75 Years*)

These goals set for the University by its first two presidents defined the prevailing mindset at the time Upsilon was being conceived.

So we see the thoughts of Bartlett and Villamor reflected in specific phrases in our credo: "faith and loyalty to the ideals of my alma mater," "the spirit of self-negation for the greater good," and "mutual aid and affection." We see these in our imperatives of brotherhood: integrity, excellence, leadership, and service.

As UP was established to serve the country, so was Upsilon established to serve the University, the Filipino nation, and the world. We are inextricably linked with UP as much as UP is inextricable from Philippine society.

We only need to look at Upsilon's 98-year history to know the leaders we have produced in many fields and in many places.

***Second, Upsilon is exclusive yet diverse.*** Our exclusivity lies in how our members are chosen. We gather light that we know can shine even brighter, so that when the light is scattered, it casts a wider circle of radiance.

Our diversity is evident in the variety of fields we belong to and excel in—Arts and Culture, Banking and Finance, Business, Communications and Media, Economics, Education, Engineering, Governance, Law, Medical and Health Sciences, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, among many others.

Not only that, Upsilon allows us to discover talents and skills that we did not even know we have. The Cavalcades of the 1950s and the 1960s were testament to this. Another example is my participation during my first year in the fraternity as a cast member in the stage play, *12 Angry Men*, which was performed in Diliman and at least two other locations outside the campus.

We also see diversity in our beliefs and ideologies. We are not of one religious belief. We are certainly not of one political ideology. We are not like horses with blinkers that only have one view.

We have had numerous brods in government but also some brods in the Left. In fact, two of them—my ka-batch Melito Glor, whom we fondly called “Spooks,” and Merardo Arce—were martyred heroes of the NPA and had rebel commands named after them.

And of course, we cannot deny the prominent clash between Upsilonians Ferdinand Marcos and Ninoy Aquino.

But even when our differences turn into conflict, when we are thrown toward different sides, nothing has ever broken our bond of brotherhood. We are a classic case of unity in diversity.

Ours is a fellowship defined by genuine camaraderie, not only within our respective batches, but across generations of Upsilonians. Truly, “the years cannot break us.”

My ka-batch Alfie Kwong once said, “Fellowship is the stream of water that nurtures our sense of self-growth. Thus, one cannot be a tried and true Upsilonian without the benefit of fellowship—and oodles of it...”

With social networking online, brods can keep in touch electronically. But this cannot replace the get-together like what we are having now and what we have regularly. We need physical presence to feel the warmth and stoke the fire of our fellowship.

We gather light from as many sources as we can, so we may scatter light that burns brightly and illuminates as many areas as it could. We are molded by Upsilon, but it does not use one and the same mold. If I may compare us to Lego bricks—different in shapes and sizes but when put together make a single, compact whole.

***Third, Upsilon is prestigious but not elitist.*** We have a reputation for being an illustrious organization. But contrary to what outsiders believe, our prestige does not lie in the socioeconomic status of our members. It is certainly a misconception that Upsilon is a fraternity for the rich. *Kailangan ang*

*applicant sa Upsilon ay marunong at mayroong talento. Kung minsan, puwede na rin kung magandang lalaki, 'di ba?*

Of course, we know that our neophytes are chosen because of their potential to be leaders and achievers. Because we see in them flickers of light that only need to be nurtured by able hands to become strong, steady beacons for others.

These are just three of the reasons that make Upsilon distinct.

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Upsilon has had its highs and lows. Nonetheless, Upsilon remains firm and strong. Upsilon continues to attract bright and promising UP students into the fold of the fellowship. Each time we induct a new batch of worthy neophytes, our fraternity is renewed and its glorious existence, assured.

Guided by the Upsilon credo, our fraternity remains true to its reason for being: to prepare the aspiring and purposeful young man for the responsible leadership in his community, the nation, and the world.

For myself, the Upsilon credo has been a guiding light since the time I joined the fraternity in 1967. But when I became UP President in 2011, our credo has taken on a more profound meaning. My position as head of the country's lone national university has given me a deeper understanding of the dictum, "Its abiding faith and loyalty to the ideals of my alma mater and my country suffuse me with courage." This has been the source of my boldness in the pursuit strategic initiatives and reform measures that I believe are necessary to remake UP as a great university.

My 6-year presidency will soon be concluded by early next year. During the past five-and-a-half years of my efforts to "create a climate conducive to learning and progress in the University of the Philippines," I hope that I have done our fraternity proud, that I have rendered great service to our university and our country, and that I have proven to be "a tried and true Upsilonian."

*Mabuhay ang Upsilon! Thank you.*