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OF SEAFARERS returning to FARM ROOTS



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This publication contains articles on the latest technologies, research results, updates, and breakthroughs in agriculture and fisheries R&D based from the studies and researches conducted by the member-institutions of National Research & Development System for Agriculture and Fisheries (NaRDSAF).

BAR R&D Digest welcomes comments and suggestions from readers.

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OF SEAFARERS RETURNING TO

FARM ROOTS

by Dr. Nicomedes P. Eleazar, CESO IV



Back in 2013, in one of the many monthly seminars conducted by the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), it was a bit odd seeing seamen taking their seats among the usual seminar attendees. Not that there was anything wrong about it, but it is not every day that one sees, not just one or two, but a big group of sea-going men come to BAR and listen to what were very much land-based interests.

So, there they were, listening closely to the seminar speakers. They were mostly silent but you could feel the intensity of their personal missions in the air. As we, at BAR, were to find out later, they were then considering a redirection of their lives and their roles as family providers.

It all began earlier that same year under a Narra tree at T.M. Kalaw St. in Luneta, Manila where seamen hang out while waiting for the maritime recruiters' notice of hiring (or, sadly, not hire).

Under the shade of that tree, Ka Jaime had laid out a collection of information materials that he got from BAR and other sources from the Department of Agriculture (DA) offices about tips on farming and other agricultural pursuits for sharing with the seamen. Ka Jaime is a former seaman, a ship captain in fact, who thinks that seamen who cannot board ships anymore due to retirement or disability should have another chance for a decent livelihood. He believes that the big chance can only come from agriculture.

Fast forward to year 2018, the group has a name, the "Seamen in Agriculture" or SIA, with Ka Jaime at the helm, so to speak. Many of the members have shown that they are not gentlemen farmers merely looking for ways to earn on the side, but serious agricultural entrepreneurs. A good number had begun to trade a life at sea to a life on land. Basically, the change is rooted in the wish for a good life for their families once their sailing days are over.

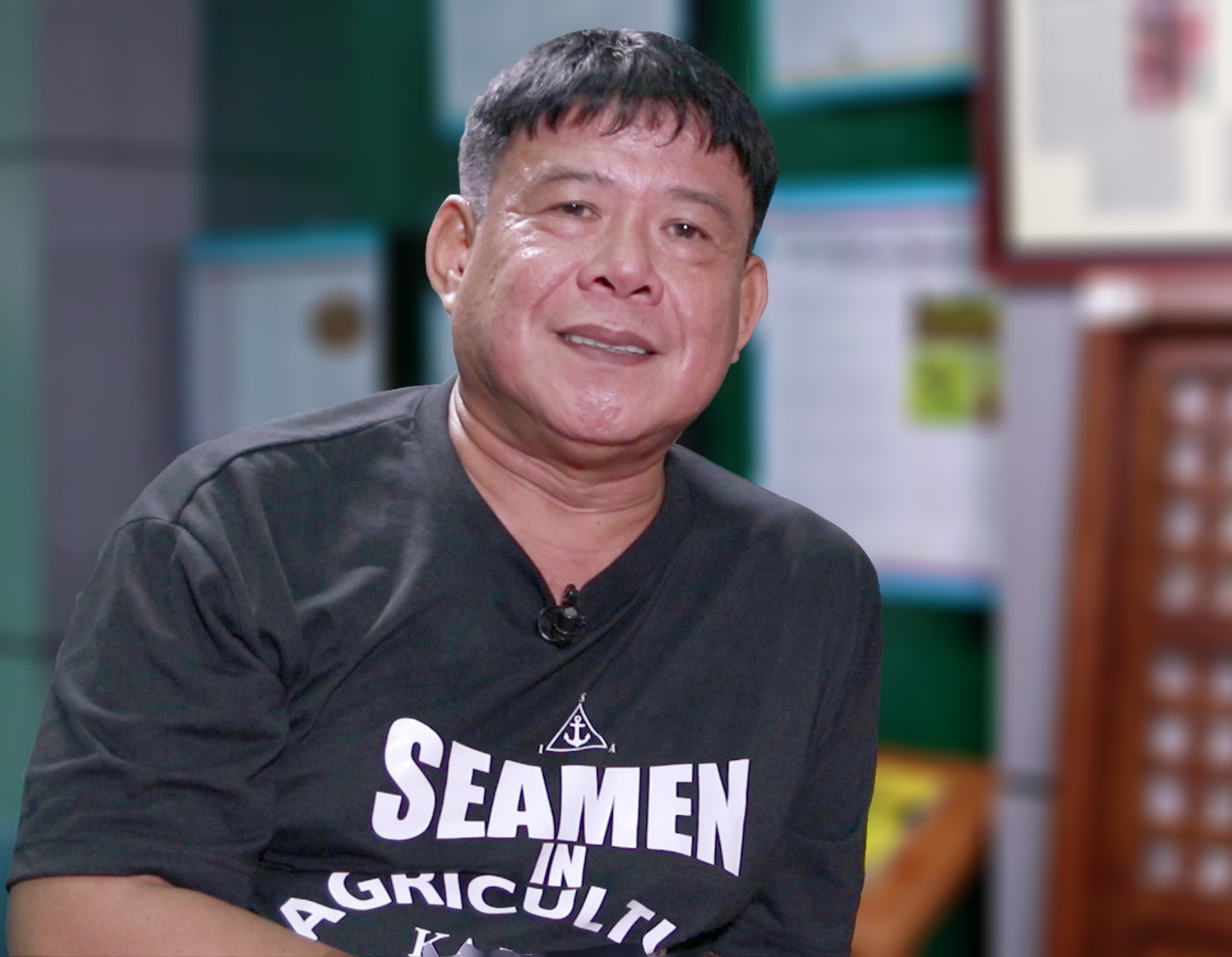
It is quite ordinary to see people such as office workers getting interested in agriculture. To BAR, the members of SIA are a different category. They are a group that bears watching as earnest recipients of technology and other information from agricultural research and development (R&D). Their big advantage is that being seamen has afforded them the means to generate the capital that would be useful for future ventures that could include farming.

They are not really coming in from the outside as all have early connections to farming but had, by necessity or other reasons, become sea goers. Some even own farmlands. What is interesting is not only their transition back to the farm and how they are managing it, but how they are optimizing the use of the products from agriculture and fisheries R&D and their adoption of good agricultural practices in the process.

The third quarter issue of the *BAR R&D Digest* is about the journeys back to agriculture of some of these hardy individuals and the help of BAR and other agencies of the DA to these movement. May this group of seafarers inspire others to pursue the same path. ###

It is quite ordinary to see people such as office workers getting interested in agriculture. To BAR, the members of SIA are a different category. They are a group that bears watching as earnest recipients of technology and other information from agricultural research and development (R&D).





Ka Jaime: The force behind Seamen in Agriculture

by Rita T. dela Cruz

Every quest has a starting point. And every good story has to start somewhere, even in the most unlikely place. For this group of men whose lifeblood is seafaring, their starting point started with the Narra tree along T.M. Kalaw Street in Manila.

“Nagbuo ako ng samahan sa ilalim ng isang puno na walang opisina. Ang

unang pumasok sa isip ko, maraming istambay sa Kalaw na hindi makasakay. Gusto kong makatulong,” recalled Jaime Credo or more known to his peers simply as Ka Jaime, a retired seaman.

Armed with an advocacy to provide business and livelihood ideas to his fellow seaman so that they have

something to do while waiting for maritime companies to employ them, Ka Jaime collected and laid down all the information materials he got from the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), under the Narra tree. *“May mga lumalapit na-curious, hinihiram po yung pamphlets, yung iba xine-xerox, yung iba hindi na binalik. Pag di na binalik, pupunta na*

naman ako sa BAR, para humingi uli. Ganoon po ang sistema ko noon,” said Ka Jaime.

He narrated that after the seamen lounged under the Narra tree, many got curious. The topics of the group shifted from being a seaman to a farmer. On 20 September 2013, dubbed as “Seaman Day” officially, the Seaman in Agriculture (SIA) was established. “Ang unang members ko ay lima, mostly may edad na, mga retirado na mahihirapan ng sumakay ng barko,” said Ka Jaime.

Agriculture and Seafaring: A Great Connection

As a child, Ka Jaime dreamt of becoming an engineer but because his parents could not afford, he decided to study seafaring at the Philippine Maritime Institute in Sta. Cruz, Manila. He got his first ship ride at the age of 18. He admitted that, although money comes easy, being a seaman entails a lot of stress. Another downside, according to him, is sacrificing your quality time with the family and being exposed to health problems due to abrupt change in climate. “Mahirap po kase ngayong araw na ito maaraw

tapos ilang oras bagyo na, tapos pabagu-bago ng klima, maya maya nag-isnow na. Pagdating ng Africa sobra naman ang init, kaya marami kang makukuhang sakit lalo na sa respiratory,” he explained.

“Kaya nag-isip ako ng isang bagay na puwedeng pagkakitaan, yung after 20 years titigil na ako sa pagbabarko. Naisip ko ang agriculture. Kikita ka na, tanggal pa ang stress ko,” said Ka Jaime. He added that, “maliit pa ako, kapag ako kingagalitan ako ng nanay ko kase makulit ako, nagtatanim ako nang nagtatanim sa bakanteng lupa namin. Tanim lang po ako nang tanim kaya nasabi ko sa sarili ko na okay ito pangtanggal ng stress. Di ko akalain na may pera pala sa agrikultura.”

He has thought of agriculture even before he became a seaman. He thought of cultivating crops, raising livestock or go into aqua farming. He likes the fulfillment he gets from growing crops or raising animals out of his own hands and eventually earning from them. “Kapag ikaw ay pumasok sa pagsasaka, wala kang gutom. May pera ka, wala kang stress, masaya ka!” Ka Jaime said.

From bar to BAR

There is a funny phrase that the group of Ka Jaime would like to tell every time they are being asked how they learned about the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) and the technologies that they know now. He explained that “*dati ang alam ko lang talaga ay yung bar. Alam n’yo naman po ang buhay ng seaman, lagi kami sa bar. Ngayon binago ko po yung notion namin na yun, ginawa kong BAR na pagkakaperahan. Kaya imagine mo ang seaman, tapos ang agriculture, paano napagdikit yan, sa pamamagitan ng BAR. Kaya “from bar to BAR!”*”

Ka Jaime learned about BAR through one of its staff from the Applied Communication Division, which is in-charge of disseminating information to the public. It was from here that he learned about the free seminars that the bureau conducts every month. Every time BAR conducts free seminar, Ka Jaime was sure to attend taking with him all the information materials that were provided. “Ang unang topic na na-na-attendan ko noong 2013 ay tungkol sa native chicken production,” he recalled.

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“Nagbuo ako ng samahan sa ilalim ng isang puno na walang opisina. Ang unang pumasok sa isip ko, maraming istambay sa Kalaw na hindi makasakay. Gusto kong makatulong.” - Ka Jaime



“Nahikayat akong umattend ng mga libreng seminar ng BAR kase sa dami ng mga binabasa ko, dito ko lang naintindihan talaga kase may powerpoint. Kaya mas naiintindihan ko kung paano mag-alaga ng mga hayop at halaman. Hindi po kagaya noon na sabog, dito po, isa-isa nila itinuturo yung mga topics kaya talagang na-engganyo ako na umattend nang umattend tapos ay hinikayat ko din ang mga kapwa ko seaman,” Ka Jaime said.

Among the free seminars that Ka Jaime attended at BAR were on the production of cacao, native chicken/free-range, upgraded goat, native pig, soybeans, seaweeds, aquaculture, and postharvest technologies.

Whatever he learned from the seminars, he would re-echo them to his fellow seaman and show them the information materials he got from BAR. From then on, he would put an announcement under the Narra tree in T.M. Kalaw for the others to see, indicating the free seminar topic, date, and venue. The group would gather in one venue through text brigade and they would all go to BAR to attend the seminar as a group. *“Dahil sa mga libreng seminars na ito, umunlad ang*

aming kaalaman at nagkaroon kami ng iba pang pagkakakitaan,” said Ka Jaime.

Through attending BAR seminars, the group of Ka Jaime was also able to connect with other researchers from other agencies of the Department of Agriculture (DA) including the Quezon Agricultural Research Experiment Station (QARES) wherein they learned how to make fruit wine; and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) wherein they were able to further their knowledge on seaweeds farming. Sometimes they will request a seminar according to the needs of the group. *“Kase kung aantayin mo pa namin yung seminar, halimbawa sa December pa yung schedule tapos January pa lang ngayon, nakikiusap na ako sa ahensiya. Tapos pupunta kami doon depende sa pangangailangan.”*

Forming Seamen in Agriculture

Ka Jaime’s advocacy to help his fellow seaman went beyond what was initially expected. He had no intention of actually forming a group but through the encouragement

of his friends, he heeded the call. *“Sa totoo lang, mabigat na responsibilidad ang gumawa ng grupo. Nakita ko yung ibang mga kasama ko na hiram na talagang sumakay, sabi ko, sige gawin natin. Sabihin na nating, nagsimula lang sa katuwaan tapos dumami na kami nang dumami,”* he said.

From then on, almost every day, someone was sending him a biodata interested to be a member of their group. *“Ang unang tiningnan ko ay ang trabaho ng mga magulang nila sa biodata. Nakikita ko panay farmers. Sabi ko, sigurado to! Kung ano ang pinapag-aral sa’yo ng mga magulang mo, babalikan mo yun, hindi puwedeng hindi,”* Ka Jaime added.

From the initial five, the group reached to 4,000 members from all over the Philippines, mostly from Visayas and Mindanao.

When asked how they came up with the name of the group, Ka Jaime was quick to give a wry sense of humor. *“Dati, ang pangalan talaga ng grupo namin ay ‘Seaman in Agriculture’. Minsan binibiro kami ng isang dating Agriculture Secretary, medyo may dating daw yung salitang ‘seamen’ kaya po yung ‘seaman’ ay naging ‘seamen’.*

Although the group bears the name of the seafaring industry, Ka Jaime explained that their membership is not limited to seaman and to men only. *“Kung ikaw naman ay makakatulong sa seaman, sinasama na rin sila sa grupo. Mahirap po kaseng magsabi na seaman lang ang puwedeng maging miyembro, paano naman yung iba na gustong kumita rin, asawa o mga kamag-anak ng seaman, so tinatanggap ko rin po,”* he added.





The group is now in their fifth year and according to Ka Jaime, among the many technologies that they have learned from BAR and other agencies of DA, the members are most likely to invest in seaweed farming. “Kase most of our members are from Visayas and Mindanao so *nakikita nila maraming seaweeds. Ang problema na lang nila ay yung market. Yun naman ang tinarabaho ko,*” Ka Jaime said.

One of the services that SIA provides to its members is market linkage. Ka Jaime usually links them to potential buyers. “*Bilang chair or president, sanay naman ako sa pagdededisyon. Yung iba nawawalan na ng gana. Ang ginagawa ko, pinupush ko sila, sinasabi ko, ang*

agrikultura ay makakatulong sa atin. Dito pwede mong suportahan ang pamilya mo,” he said.

Keeping the vision and the passion

According to Ka Jaime, since most of the members are in a ship and out of the country, they don’t have a regular meeting like most organized group. They communicate through Social Media and only meet when some of the members return to the country.

To ensure the sustainability of the group, Ka Jaime mentioned a book that he read about having a vision and a flared passion. “*Lagi ko sinasabi sa mga seaman, unahin n’yo passion, vision sigurado mag-eexcel ka. Kapag wala kang hilig*

at ginawa mo lang, hindi mangyayri yan. Ang vision ko talaga ay makilala ang mga seaman na hindi lang kami pandagat, pwede din kami sa larangan ng agrikultura!” Ka Jaime expounded.

In the recently concluded 14th Agriculture and Fisheries Technology Forum and Product Exhibition held on August 30-September 2, 2018 at SM Megamall, the group participated as one of the exhibitors. The group showcased some of their produced products out of their learnings from the free seminars that they have attended. Some of the members engaged into agribusiness and developed products including wine with Tongkat Ali, dried fish, shrimp paste, and other postharvest technologies turned into business opportunities. ###



Jennifer Lagrada: REIGNITING THE LONG LOST PASSION FOR AGRICULTURE

by Daryl Lou A. Battad

A well-known French-born American cellist, Yo-Yo Ma once said, “Passion is one great force that unleashes creativity, because if you’re passionate about something, then you’re more willing to take risks.” This embodies the life of Jennifer Lyn Lagrada, a woman who, after years of setting aside her passion for farming, has finally found a way back to her first real love.

Jennifer is a nurse by profession, but admittedly, her heart was not in it. “*Hindi ko talaga pangarap ang nursing. Yung totoo, gusto kong maging agriculturist. Pero dahil ang mga kuya ko ang magfi-finance ng pag-aaral ko, ayaw nila na agriculture ang course ko kasi darating ang araw na hindi naman daw magiging in demand ang trabaho doon. Gusto nila nursing,*

kaya kahit ayaw ko, napilitan talaga ako,” she shared.

Despite the odds, Jennifer went through with her career as a nurse, having been employed at a local dental clinic in Manila. “*After kong kinasal noong October 14, 2014, pumunta ako sa Maynila para magtrabaho. Isa po akong assistant nurse sa isang dental clinic,”* Jennifer said.

While working as an assistant nurse, Jennifer and her husband, Ronnel, also owns a small business in Kalaw, Manila. It was a uniform shop dedicated for seamen, a budding business at that time. Little did she know that her circumstances were slowly leading her to that long lost dream.

Sweet, Unexpected Surprise

Right in front of their uniform store, Jennifer and Ronnel noticed a group of seaman who regularly gather under the Narra tree. It was then that they met Ka Jaime, and introduced them to the association's agriculture ventures.

"Na-curious po si Ronnel, kasi laging may meeting ang isang grupo doon sa ilalim ng puno. Araw-araw may tumatambay doon na mga seaman. Yung lagi nilang pinag-uusapan, tungkol sa agriculture, kaya nagka-interes rin po ako. Parang nabuhay ulit ang passion ko sa agriculture," Jennifer shared.

Call it a divine intervention when Jennifer, at 30, was steered to finally fulfilling her "agriculture dreams."

Passion Becoming a Reality

Ka Jaime, who was then regularly attending the seminars at the Bureau of Agricultural Research's (BAR) in Quezon City, introduced Jennifer to the bureau's research and development (R&D) initiatives on agriculture and fisheries. *"Kay Ka Jaime ko talaga unang narinig ang BAR. Doon ko nalaman lahat ng bagay sa agriculture; sa pagtanim at pangangisda. Tapos ininvite niya ako sa isang winemaking seminar sa Department of Agriculture – Quezon Agricultural Experiment Station (DA-QARES),"* she said.

Mr. Dennis Bihis, a researcher from DA-QARES happened to conduct a free seminar on winemaking at the station in Lagalag, Tiaong, Quezon. Ka Jaime then passed on the invitation to the members of the Seamen in Agriculture (SIA). Jennifer, without hesitation, heeded the invitation which jumpstarted her agri endeavors.



Jennifer fondly recalled that she, along with some members of the Seamen in Agriculture, attended the one-day training at DA-QARES. *"Doon po namin nakilala si Sir Dennis sa QARES. Doon rin namin natutunan sa kanya ang paggawa ng wine. Actually, isang araw lang ang training namin. Kami na mismo ang gumawa ng wine after ng lecture ni sir."*

She also said that through the training, not only did she learn new knowledge, but also the motivation to transfer and share that knowledge to others. A few days after the training, Ka Jaime followed her up. *"Sinabi ko kay Ka Jaime na gawin namin ito sa Kalaw. Ituro namin yung mga natutunan namin sa iba. Libre naman naming natutunan sa QARES, kaya libre din naming ituturo sa mga seaman kung paano mag-put up ng wine business."*

"Sa dami ng in-introduce ni Ka Jaime, yung wine talaga yung napag-interesan kong matutunan. Common naman ang wine, pero para sa akin ang sophisticated niya and at the same time, pwede pala siya sa iba't-ibang klase ng prutas," Jennifer said.

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Dio Banza:

A man after his father's heart

by Ephraim John J. Gestupa



Diogenes Banza or simply “Dio” among his friends was very close to becoming a quintessential probinsyano-turned-big-city-boy. “*Dati sabi ko sa sarili ko, pagbubutihin ko ang pag-aaral sa college, makapagtrabaho ng maganda para hindi ko na kailangan bumalik sa pagsasaka.*” His dream brought him from his small town in Lanao Del Sur to Iloilo where he studied for college and eventually to international waters where he served as a navigating officer and designated medic in a container ship.

But as the captain’s sights were set on foreign shores, Dio’s heart was set on his homeland. “*Kinain ko yung sariling kong salita, nang tumagal na ako sa barko, wala na akong ibang iniisip kundi yung passion ko noong bata pa ako...farming.*”

Dio’s narrative did not drown in a sea of unmet dreams and money-driven pursuits, he was not about to settle on just being a seaman even if it promised financial security not just for himself but also to his extended family. He began investing in a more sustainable profession that won’t drain his physical health: agriculture.

Remembering History

“Actually what I do here in my farm is all attributed to my father whose passion is to plant fruit trees. Some of the seedlings he had in Mindanao, I even flew all the way here to Nueva Ecija,” said Dio. In his 400 sq. meter land he grows calamansi, durian, rambutan, pomelo, lanzones, avocado, sweet guyabano, chico, dragon fruit, santol, mango, tamarind, batuan, and macopa.

Back when he was still living in Mindanao, Dio’s father would

constantly be teased for planting trees he might not even live to see bear fruit, except he proved them wrong. “*Yung ibang tao gusto muna nila matikman yung natanim mo bago pa nila simulan magtanim. Kaya ayun, nagsisimula palang sila, nagsasawa na kami sa bunga ng aming tinatanim.*”

Dio is grateful he was raised by a father who modeled the virtue of delayed gratification and faithful perseverance. Today he adopts the same mindset as a farmer just like his father.

Dio owns patches of land in Lanao del Sur, Iloilo, and Cabiao, Nueva Ecija where he currently resides together with his brother’s family. Aside from taking care of more than a dozen fruit-bearing plants and trees, Dio also takes care of native pigs, native chickens, and Peking duck. He would loan some of his livestock to other smallscale farmers in Sta. Rosa who would fatten and breed his stock. He would eventually take the lesser portion of the offspring and give the greater portion to the people who raised his livestock.

Seizing Opportunities

As Dio’s farm grew throughout the years, he was presented with an opportunity of being part of Seaman of Agriculture (SIA). “I was on-board when my nephew referred me to Jaime Credo, when I arrived home, I was able to meet him in person and he shared with me his advocacy to help interested seamen through his connections with within the Department of Agriculture.”

Ka Jaime would collect IEC materials from the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) and display them under the Narra tree along Kalaw,

Manila. He would put up a sign that said, “*libreng xerox, pakibalik lang,*” and anyone interested can borrow the original copies of information materials and have them reproduced for personal use.

Ka Jaime would also ask soft copies of the info materials and documentary videos produced by PTV 4’s Mag-Agri Tayo program from the BAR’s Applied Communication Division for the seamen to use as references.

Both Dio and Ka Jaime, together with other members of SIA would regularly attend free-to-the-public seminar series conducted by BAR. “*Yung mga nabasa at napanood ko sa mga videos na ibinigay ni Ka Jaime ay mas naiintindihan ko tuwing nag-aattend kami ng seminar. Doon tinuturo ng mas malim yung mga proseso sa pagfufarm,*” added Dio.

Being part of SIA helped further shape Dio’s practice as a farmer. Through the technical assistance that they received from BAR and other DA-attached agencies (i.e. Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization, Bureau of Plant and Industry, etc.), Dio was able to further integrate an organic agriculture approach to his farm. Upon attending seminars, Dio saw the potential of turning even discarded agricultural waste into organic fertilizer through the process of vermiculture. Other organic agriculture practices Dio learned were the formulation of fermented plant juice, foliar feeding, and Simple Nutrient Addition Program (SNAP) hydroponics.

Dio also makes it a continuous

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effort to share his learnings with his neighbors and fellow farmers in Nueva Ecija where he lives, after all this is how Seamen of Agriculture operates: sharing and modeling the farming practices they learned from the DA.

He admits that not everyone he mentors is open to seeing it through. While many of his peers show initial interest in what he does in his farm, “*umiiral parin ang katamaran. Hindi nila matuloy-tuloy.*” But Dio himself doesn’t have a problem with overcoming any doubts in his decision to be a farmer. For Dio, what keeps him going is a good sense of his past. “*Sa farm ako lumaki, kinagisnan ko na siya, hanggang sa ngayon itutuloy ko ito. Kumbaga, binibigyan ko ng halaga yung pinaghirapan ng mga magulang ko. Maraming mga anak ng magsasaka, pinapaaral ng mga magulang para maging*

professional hindi na sila bumabalik, nababawasan na ang mga lupang sinasakahan.”

Reaping the Harvest

When asked about what he enjoys in farming he said, “I enjoy farming because I’m very close to nature. *Kung pumasok ako dito sa farm na pagod lalabas akong tangal na yung stress.*”

This sense of fulfillment in managing his own piece of land translates well in Dio’s understanding of what a farm should be. “*Dapat kumpleto at integrated lahat, may tanim, baka, kambing, baboy, at isda. Hindi pwedeng iisa lang yung tinatanim or inaalaagan ng farmer.*”

Farming has also taught him the virtue of patience of contentment. “*Pag makita mo na healthy yung*

mga alaga, nagbubunga at maganda ang mga tanim, masayang makita yung positibong resulta. Kapag medyo mahina naman ang harvest, kailangan tanggapin mo yun. Yun ang bigay sayo sa season na yan.”

Part of Dio’s vision for his farm is developing his area to become a farm tourism site where visitors can enjoy picking fruits, taking care of livestock, and living out the same stress-free life Dio himself has experienced.

Dio still works as a seaman up to this day, but he remains to be a farmer at heart. In his youth, he left home not wanting to return but home never really left, it stayed with him even in the farthest seas. Dio’s father planted the seed and his son’s stubbornness was of no match. After all, Dio is a man after his farmer father’s heart. ###





With Iloilo, her native province, home to many kinds of fruits, Jennifer had a wide selection of ingredients for winemaking. “Ang ginagamit kong ingredients sa ngayon ay macopa, cacao, mango, duhat, avocado. Itong mga prutas na ito ang marami sa amin.”

But what really inspired her to engage in winemaking is the fact that the required capital is not that costly. “Sa training natutunan ko na konting kapital lang pala puwede ka nang magtayo ng wine business, kasi kahit anong season ng prutas pwede mo siyang gawin. Hindi ka mawawalan ng raw materials kasi may mga prutas na laging available naman, tulad ng Indian mango.”

Dealing with Challenges

As in any undertaking, it wasn't always a smooth journey. There were times when Jennifer could not

perfect making the wine. “Kaming grupo, gumawa kami ng wine gamit ang ubas. Nasobrahan ang lagay namin ng Sodium met bisulfite (SMS), kaya umasim, naging suka ang grapes. After noon parang nawalan na ako ng gana,” she recalled.

Ka Jaime, being the leader that he is, came to her rescue, reminding her of the potentials she could further discover if she just continues. “Sabi ni Ka Jaime sa akin, ‘ngayon ka pa ba susuko?’” So, with Ka Jaime, she went to see Mr. Bihis for a consultation. She was then given with SMS that the station produced, plus three kilos of cacao to try for her winemaking.

This challenge proved that Jennifer's passion moves beyond herself, her failures, and shortcomings. Now, she knows the process of winemaking like the

back of her hand. “Hindi na mahirap gumawa ng wine pag nakasanayan mo nang gawin. Sa ngayon, dahil natapos na ang kontrata namin sa Kalaw, dito na ako nakakapagbenta ng wine sa bahay, by order.” She is currently selling her wines at 250 pesos per bottle.

From being a nurse to a fulltime housewife, Jennifer now enjoys her involvement in agriculture. She may not have been an agriculturist, but the learnings she acquired from various trainings make her feel like a legit one.

Presently, she trains wives of other SIA members on winemaking, while doing the business. “May kita po sa paggawa ng wine, basta mag focus lang. Ang laki ng pasasalamat ko sa BAR at kay Ka Jaime dahil sila ang naging daan para matupad ko ang matagal ko nang pangarap,” she concluded. ###

Roberto Esperida:

Growing black pepper organically

by Leoveliza C. Fontanil

Mr. Roberto “Bert” Esperida, one of the members of the Seamen in Agriculture (SIA) Association from the province of Indang Cavite, was a former marine operator in a shipping company. At that time, he was only 21 years old when he left his hometown to see the world and work as a seafarer.

But after 10 years of working as a seaman, Bert decided to leave his job due to labour crisis and retention issues among seafarers. He entered into a new trade as a recruitment officer in an inter-island

connection corporation.

Bert grew up in Cavite that is predominantly known as an agriculture province. Despite urbanization and industrialization in the area, still, a significant number of Caviteños are engaged into agri-business. No wonder, Bert, being a true Caviteño, has a heart for farming.

This is why when he first heard of the group of Ka Jaime through a friend, he didn’t hesitate in joining the group and officially became its member.

Bert’s family has inherited a 400-square meter farmland in Cavite which he now nurtures by planting black pepper or “*paminta*”. This provides for his family as additional source of income.

According to him, in his old farming practice, he would apply commercial fertilizer to ensure that the needed nutrients to grow for black pepper are provided. He didn’t know that the application of too much synthetic fertilizer can lead to the depletion of soil fertility and its ability to support crops.

After becoming a member of SIA, Bert joined the group of seafarers who were regularly attending the free seminars conducted by the Bureau of Agricultural Research





(BAR). Luckily, he was able to attend a seminar on vermiculture management and its applications. This enabled him to know the benefits of valuable fertilizer and soil additive using worm castings.

When asked how the seminar was able to help him, Bert said, “*Malaki talaga ang tulong sa akin, nagkaroon ako ng bagong ideya sa mga bagong teknolohiya...isa na rito ang paggawa ng sarili kong organic spray. Mga ibat-ibang pamamaraan na teknolohiya na ngayon ay na-aadapt ko sa pagpa-farming.*”

After attending the seminar, Bert is now using natural composted materials supplemented with worm tea and compost from the vermiculture. He applies worm tea,

diluted to a ratio of 1:20 with water, approximately twice a week. He also makes his own foliar and organic spray using kakawate leaves and molasses, which he learned also from BAR seminars.

“*Malaki talaga yung kaibahan noon, dati yung pamintahan ko marami sa bunga na napo-produce ay walang laman, ngayon halos lahat ng bunga ay may laman na. Simula ito nang mag-apply ako ng compost mula sa vermi, ang laki ng na-improved,*” he explained.

Today, Bert’s farm in Cavite is able to produce 100 kilos of black pepper per year. They sell their produced in Metro Manila, Pampanga, near local market, and some of their products in the neighborhood.

Bert also mentioned that he is able to share to his fellow farmers in Indang all the things he learned from BAR. He is also giving some of his planting materials for free.

“*Sa pagpa-farm my income ako. Hindi naman habang buhay seaman ako. Ito, pang lifetime support ko. Lifetime, meron akong maaasahan. Hindi ako mahihirapan. At least meron akong income na mapagkukuhanan na magiging source ko financially,*” Bert concluded.

Bert learned that a healthy crop relies on having a healthy soil. He considered vermicomposting as perfect plant food that can sustain his black pepper farm. ###



Willie Patiño:

A chief engineer turns poultry farmer

by Rita T. dela Cruz

As a child, Willie Patiño had but one dream: to get his family out of poverty. He had no particular inkling on what course to take in college until his eldest brother took a course in marine engineering to be a seaman. Thinking that this would better the lives of his family, he followed the same path. “*Kaya ko naisip maging seaman,*

para maka-ipon at balang araw ay makapag-negosyo ng kung ano man ang maganda,” said Willie.

In 1976, after he graduated, Willie became an apprentice for two years to eventually pass the licensure exam to become a fourth, third, second engineer, and finally achieving the highest position as a

chief engineer.

Being in the seafaring industry for more than three decades now, Willie learned that the path towards a better life was never easy. “*Oo maganda ang income lalo na kung tuloy-tuloy ang sakay mo saka marunong kang mag-ipon, pero mahirap maging seaman,”* Willie admitted.

He cited that there were downsides to being a seaman, one of which is being away from your family for a long time. This is hard especially when Willie got married and he had to be away from his wife who was then pregnant. *“Noong minsan umalis ako, buntis na yung misis ko, pagbalik ko malaki na yung anak ko, madami akong namiss. Kaya naisip ko noon na mag-short contract na lang. Kase dati, 10 years or minsan mas matagal pa yung kontrata ko.”*

He added that other difficulties were adjusting to the sudden change in weather and coping with stress. *“Mahirap ito lalo na kapag nakaka-edad ka na, yung katawan mo hindi na rin masyadong makaka-adjust. Isa pa yung pressure at stress lalo na kung nasa management level ka na.”*

Meeting Ka Jaime

In 2014, offshore work was done and Willie had difficulty in getting on-board. It was during that time that he met Ka Jaime, president of Seamen in Agriculture (SIA).

“Nakita ko si Ka Jaime sa ilalim ng puno ng Narra, naglalatatag doon ng mga pamphlets tungkol sa iba’t ibang technologies, sa crops, livestock at kung anu-ano pa. Na-curious ako, kaya nagtanong-tanong ako tapos nagbasa-basa doon. Hanggang sa nag-file ako ng membership sa kanya. Doon na ko nagsimulang sumama-sama sa mga libreng seminar sa Bureau of Agricultural Research o BAR,” recalled Willie.

It was from these free seminars that Willie learned how to make Indigenous Microorganisms (IMO) and Fermented Plant Juice (FPJ)

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concoctions for organic farming; and livestock and poultry productions.

But out of the many learning that he gained from these technologies, Willie got particularly interested in poultry production, specifically raising chicken. “Noong bata pa ako may alaga na kaming native na manok. Ako nakatoka na mag-alaga, nagpapakain, binibilang ko yun isa-isa tapos nililipat sa kulungan kase madaming daga sa siyudad. Bukod sa manok at pato, may alaga din kaming baboy, mga isa o dalawa. Kase pang-benta rin namin yun, pambayad ng tuition. Kaya nagka-interes ako, kase sanay na ako sa pag-aalaga ng hayop,” he explained.

It was in 2015 that he first attended a free seminar at BAR. The topic, according to Willie, was on goat production. “Kung hindi man ako natuto sa mga seminars at training, nagamit ko din yung mga pamphlets on chicken raising,” he said.

Applying the Technologies

Agriculture may be a new turf for

Willie, but he got by from the technologies he got from reading the information materials and the free seminars. Finally, with the help and facilitation of Ka Jaime, his first 100 heads were shipped from Manila to his residence in Sta. Barbara, Iloilo.

“Bago dumating yung mga manok, nag-ispray ako ng probiotics (organic spray) at saka naglatag ako ng rice hulls and stalks para walang amoy yung kulungan ko since malapit lang siya sa bahay.” Willie learned these through the seminars and the information materials.

Since Willie is just starting, the chicken meat and eggs were for family consumption only. Sometimes, he sells the eggs if there are interested buyers and the others he incubates so that he can grow more chicken. “For study purpose muna ito. Gusto ko din matuto sa initiative na ‘to para yung susunod mas ma-improve ko na,” he added.

In a matter of one year, Willie admitted that he learned a lot.

“Natutunan ko na mas maganda kung may vaccine sila para matibay sa sakit. Nalaman ko din na mas okay yung organic na pakain kaysa yung commercial feeds kase maamoy siya. Okay din kung may extra area ka para ikaw na mismo ang magtanim ng mga pakain sa hayop gaya ng kangkong, Trichanthera, etc. Kase kung aasa ka lang sa pagbili, hindi ka kikita,” Willie said.

Willie is now 60 and soon he will be retiring from being a seaman. But he does not worry because he has plans. “Ang plano ko, mag-alaga din ng Peking duck. Maganda kase ang karne at itlog nila. Saka in terms of meat, mas malambot siya kaysa Muscovy Duck, kaya susubukan ko din ito. Isabay ko ang pag-alaga ng manok.”

He likewise, promised to capacitate himself by attending seminars and trainings if given the chance so that he will be able to learn more and apply them to his own farm. He believes that learning doesn't stop for those who continue to search for it. ###

To reinforce his understanding on seaweeds, SIA members attended training on Seaweed Postharvest Handling organized by DA-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Regional Office 5 in Sorsogon. The training taught Alex how to process different products from seaweed. This gave him the idea that it would be a good business opportunity to go into seaweed food products since nobody else is doing it in Bohol.

At first, his interest in seaweeds was in the buying and selling of the commodity. But he saw better potential in making seaweed-based food products like *pancit*, crackers, jam, and pickles, among others.

But what really got his interest was seaweed ice cream because no one else had thought of making it. After a series of trials (and failures) he was finally able to make good seaweed ice cream.

His seaweed ice cream business is still new. He started during the first week of June 2018 after SIA attended training on ice cream making at DA-Regional Field Office 4A. This prompted him to think of other novelty use of seaweeds (aside from the usual products).

In Bohol, seaweed ice cream is totally new. There is no ice cream made with seaweed, only ube and the likes.

Seaweed Business

Aside from ice cream, dried seaweeds can be processed as seaweed crackers and seaweed jam. It can also be used as animal feed ingredient.



He thought long and hard about seaweed ice cream. To him, there is a clear advantage because the other ice cream products are no longer new.

Seaweed ice cream is novelty product and if he starts making it, he will get ahead. He admitted that he has a good feeling about this business idea even though he has not yet commercialized it.

Because its novel, it will click with customers, he reasoned. In fact, he has been receiving good reception and feedback, even from his neighbors, that it will be a good business, a sign for better opportunity.

He uses seaweeds as binder in ice cream instead of corn starch. In his tests, the idea worked although the final product has yet to be further refined.

Advice to Fellow Seaman

“Sa kapwa ko seaman mag-log in tayo sa website ng BAR at saka tumingin doon sa mga trainings na binibigay nila dahil

pinakamagandang training ito sa kung anong klaseng business ang gusto ninyong pasukan,” Alex encouraged other seaman who are interested in agriculture.

According to him, they should bear in mind that every time that they board a vessel, the income that they earn could easily dissipate and not return any benefit. *“Ang tulong ng BAR ay parang stepping stone sa ating pag-unlad, hindi lamang sa pamamaraan, kundi magbibigay din sa atin ito ng mga idea, mga kaalaman ng kung ano ang gusto natin na ika-uunlad natin”.*

To date, Mr. Alex enjoys the good life. He owned and manages an area of two hectares, planted with kalamansi and assorted vegetables.

He plans to retire this year, 2018 but does not worry of the future that lies ahead. *“Nagpapasalamat ako sa BAR dahil sa seminar na ito. Malaking bagay sa aming mga OFW at sa iba na gustong subukan ang pag negosyo pang agrikultura. Plano ko nang iwanan ang paglalayag at tutukan ang seaweed ice-cream,”* Alex said. ###



Captain Tor Abuzo makes fruit wine in Camiguin

by Victoriano B. Guiam

Camiguin is one of the small island provinces of the Philippines. Only larger than Batanes, it is located in the Bohol Sea about 10 kilometers off the northern coast of Mindanao and is part of Region 11. Also known as “The Island Born of Fire,” it has the reputation of the island with the most number of volcanoes.

It was in this fiery island that Adjutor “Tor” Abuzo, an international ship captain was born and raised.

Captain Tor was born in Barrio Tupsan, Mambajao, Camiguin to Arcado Abuzo, Sr. and Remedios Abuzo. He has seven brothers and sisters, several of whom now reside

elsewhere such as Bohol, Manila, Davao City and Samar. Captain Tor himself now calls Cagayan de Oro City home with his wife and son but returns to Camiguin where he has a farm and where he is developing a fruit wine making business.

It was during trips to Manila with his father on board inter-island

ships that he took an early interest in the seamen in their uniforms going about their work. He decided that that was what he was going to be when he grows up. He entered the University of Cebu in 1975, finishing the first part of his education to become a seaman, a two-and-half year course, in 1977. He then became an apprentice for one year and half to complete the requirements for the B.S. degree in Nautical Science, finishing in 1979.

He worked on different local sea vessels in the 1980s starting with cargo ships, boarding his first vessel in 1980 in Davao City. He then went to Manila where he found regular employment that continues to this day as he continues to be called to serve on foreign ships that have included tankers and, currently, offshore oil rig support vessels.

Seamen in Agriculture and BAR: Interconnections

He met Ka Jaime, a former ship captain, at Kalaw St. in Manila near the National Library where seamen congregate or “istambay” while

waiting for calls from international recruitment agencies. He found Ka Jaime (Captain Jaime Credo) sharing magazines and other information materials that he got from the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR) with the seaman on “tambay”.

Ka Jaime heads the group, Seamen in Agriculture (SIA). Captain Abuzo became a member in 2013 and hangs out with the group when he is in Manila.

Before seamen can board a vessel, they are required to undergo medical examination. Seamen's foreign employers are now stricter with this requirement even for small medical issues such as kidney stones. According to Captain Abuzo, seamen can have a lot of health issues and many cannot return to ships anymore. Once denied the chance to sail again, they lose interest in being a seaman and go away to look for other means of livelihood. Those who do not know about available alternatives would be hard up.

What Ka Jaime would like is for

seamen, especially those who can no longer board vessels, or even those still able to do so, is to get a livelihood opportunity in agriculture. Ka Jaime has brought the SIA members to trainings as far as Tiaong, Quezon and Muñoz, Nueva Ecija where they learned a lot. Some even reached Sorsogon for trainings on making seaweed products. Those who cannot board vessels anymore, and even active seamen, have made the most use of visits at BAR.

“Nagmula yan sa BAR, yung mga training namin. Sila ang nagturo sa amin ng direksyon,” said Captain Abuzo. He added that *“Mas nadagdagan yung kita namin dahil yung mga turo ng BAR sa mga seminars ay nagamit namin.”*

Captain Abuzo said that the information being provided by BAR has been a big help with many of the members engaging in activities such as poultry production, swine raising or growing crops when they are home. *“Yung mga nakakuha ng seminar, yung kanilang mga*





natutunan ang ginagamit nila. Kung mayroon silang kaunting lupa ay naiisip nila na dito na lang sila kaysa pupunta pa sa labas”, he added.

From Seaman to Fruit wine Maker

It was while hanging out with other SIA members and Ka Jaime that Captain Abuzo visited BAR where he attended seminars such as goat and swine raising. He also learned about the management of poultry, tilapia, and rice and developed many interests because of these. But what really got his attention was fruit wine making because fruits are plentiful in Camiguin which, at times, are just left to rot. To him, if the fruit wine technology could be developed locally, it would help, not only his family, but others who are willing

to go into wine making.

His effort is about a year old now. He said that he is still the only one in Camiguin who is into fruit wine making. Much of his activities have been for trials. From those who have tasted his fruit wine, the feedback had been mostly positive.

According to Captain Abuzo, the possible products from processing the fruits are wine, beer or vinegar. Wine will not taste good if not prepared correctly. In his trials, there were some who did not like the taste. The product has since been improved. Those who know the taste of real wine say that the taste now is practically the same as the imported ones that can be bought in malls, he added.

He mentioned that the technology on fruit wine making that he uses

came from a BAR seminar. In his search in the internet, he found that the process used in other places is practically the same as what he learned from BAR. He has also gone to Tiaong, Quezon (Department of Agriculture-Quezon Agricultural Research and Experiment Station) to learn the finer aspects of fruit wine making from the group of Mr. Dennis Bihis.

The fruits that he uses are those available locally and in season. Camiguin has plenty of bananas and is used for making most of his wine. He prefers the sweet type of banana as less sugar is needed for processing into wine. Sometimes he uses pineapples. Other fruits in Camiguin that he has used are jackfruit, mango, durian and star apple. He still has to make wine from lanzones as last year's harvest was quite low and also because he was just starting

then. Now, the lanzones trees are flowering profusely with a promise of a bountiful harvest. He hopes to get a lot of fruits to make lanzones wine.

According to Captain Abuzo, the taste and aroma of the fruit used will come out in the wine. Each fruit has its own aroma and this will define the aroma of the wine, he added. The fragrant banana is excellent to use because its aroma comes out in the wine.

Tongkat Ali Wine

With some Tongkat Ali (*Eurycoma longifolia*) infused in the wine, Captain Abuzo created a new product. He said that the bark has good therapeutic properties and also adds to the taste of the wine. According to web sources, Tongkat Ali preparations can boost testosterone in the body and is regarded as an aphrodisiac in the places where it is grown and consumed (Malaysia and Indonesia). It finds use in treating male problems and for boosting athletic performance. He hopes to get more supply of Tongkat Ali as there is a demand for it and because it is

generally good for the health.

Fruitwine in Camiguin

He thinks that fruit wine making will be good for people in Camiguin, particularly Barangay Tupsan, as it will generate jobs once his business goes into mass production. He said that this will jive very well with the effort of the local government in identifying particular product/s that each barangay can make in order to create livelihoods.

Captain Abuzo is not yet done boarding ships as he is still called up by employers. Already a senior citizen at 62 years old, he feels that he has 1-2 years left in him as a seaman as he can still pass the medical tests and, therefore, can still board vessels.

When he is not in the country, he leaves production to his siblings remaining in Camiguin. What he learned from BAR about wine making, he has also taught to them. He lets them make the wine and just checks on their progress. Even if he is not around, they know what to

do, he said.

They plan to register the fruit wine making enterprise once it is set up. He hopes that BAR can still assist them in establishing the business. Additional training will also help, he said. With knowledge acquired from BAR and the steady availability of fruits as raw material, Captain Abuzo believes that they have a good future in wine making. With further help from the government particularly in financing to support the enterprise, he believes that they will have a good fruit wine making business in 5-10 years' time.

Advice to Fellow Seaman

His advice to his fellow seamen, particularly those about to retire and younger ones who cannot pass medical examinations and feel discouraged, is to go to BAR to attend the free seminars and ask for possibilities for them in agriculture. "*Mag-venture kayo sa kaunting negosyo at baka lalaki rin yun... Bukas ang Bureau of Agricultural Research doon sa Quezon City sa lahat ng gusto ninyong malaman,*" he concluded. ###



Seaweed money-making adventure of *Alejandro Galaura*

by Patrick Raymund A. Lesaca



Although Alejandro Galaura or “Alex” was born and raised in Guimaras, Iloilo, is presently residing with his wife and three children in Ubay, Bohol.

Alex began as a limestone maker in his hometown province. Due to poverty, he had to work as a laborer to earn a living and feed his family. Work was hardly available and never permanent until he made a life-changing decision. In 1989, a prodding came to him, and he started his career as a seaman.

He started with Aboitiz Shipping Corporation. For the next four years, he rose from the ranks starting as an apprentice, an oiler to become a chief engineer. He went back to school

for further his studies as port engineer. After another year in local shipping, he moved overseas.

He is now ranked as chief engineer in an international shipping line and boards vessels that transport supplies and materials, and crews to offshore oil rigs in the Middle East.

Alex happily confessed that he is at par manning the stern rather than being a laborer. For 15 years, he navigated the borderless bodies of water around the world and had many sea voyages along with stories to tell, until he decided to finally quit for good. “*Matanda na rin ako, bukod sa nami-miss ko*

ang pamilya ko, naisip ko na huwag na muna mag-seaman at subukan mag-negosyo. Sa loob naman ng mahabang panahon, naka-pagpundar na din naman ako kahit papano. Nakaipon at nakabili naman ako ng sasakyan,” said Alex.

Joining Seamen in Agriculture

“*Si Ka Jaime ang nag-convince sa amin na umattend ng libreng seminar sa Bureau of Agricultural Research. Ang biro ko pa nga sa kanya, seminar? Libre? At noong nakadalo nga ako, ah-ah libre nga!”*

According to him, he first met Ka Jaime during an outdoor BAR seminar on fruit tree grafting in

2017. At that time, Ka Jaime was mainly into livestock such as swine, cattle, goat and the likes. Alex got interested in agriculture because of Ka Jaime who developed contacts at the Department of Agriculture (DA), including BAR, and other government agencies. With the range of information available from various seminars and trainings, Alex joined the Seamen in Agriculture (SIA).

“Nalaman ko kay Ka Jaime na... sa agriculture ay maraming oportunidad,” he said. Opportunities to earn can be made in agriculture. This made Alex think that agriculture can be a good alternative source of income, a sideline, for his family. He realized that agriculture can be a big help not only for his family but for the country as well. Productivity can be improved with the information being made available by the government. Seafarers, like him, can learn appropriate farming techniques such as organic agriculture.

About BAR Seminars

At first, he did not know that it was a BAR-led seminar that he was into upon the invitation of Ka Jaime. In several occasions, their group attended BAR seminars on several topics including beekeeping, production of native animals and goats, duck raising, and production of different crops. But the most interesting for him was the topic on seaweeds as this was abundant in his locality.

In 2018, in one of the seminars organized by BAR, members of SIA stormed the office wherein

the topics were on fisheries. Believing in the strong viability of the fisheries sector as a potential source of income, the idea to pursue his dream was realized.

“Ang masasabi ko po ay maganda yung mga training sa BAR dahil makakapamilya ka ng kung ano ang angkop sa iyo, yung magaan sa puso mo.” He said that the BAR seminars give you the possibilities, about what can be done with the resources available to you. They also increase your stock of knowledge on different agricultural livelihoods such that if one does not work, there would still be others that can be tried. According to Alex, the BAR seminars offer new technology with information that are not yet well-known.

While he did not know yet how

to run a seaweed-based business, the seminars motivated him to pursue this venture. The training on seaweeds was the start. *“Yun ang maganda sa seminar ng BAR, marami kang mapagpilian,”* Alex recounted. He added that if one has learned a lot of things, he will not run out of ideas on what to venture as a business.

Seaweed Ice Cream

The adventure to seek greener pasture, literally and figuratively, did not come in an instant. It took him several months to ponder more the wealth of the sea through seaweeds.

Alex got interested in growing seaweeds, *“maraming kang puwedeng gawin sa seaweeds, maraming paraan na puwedeng matutunan.”*

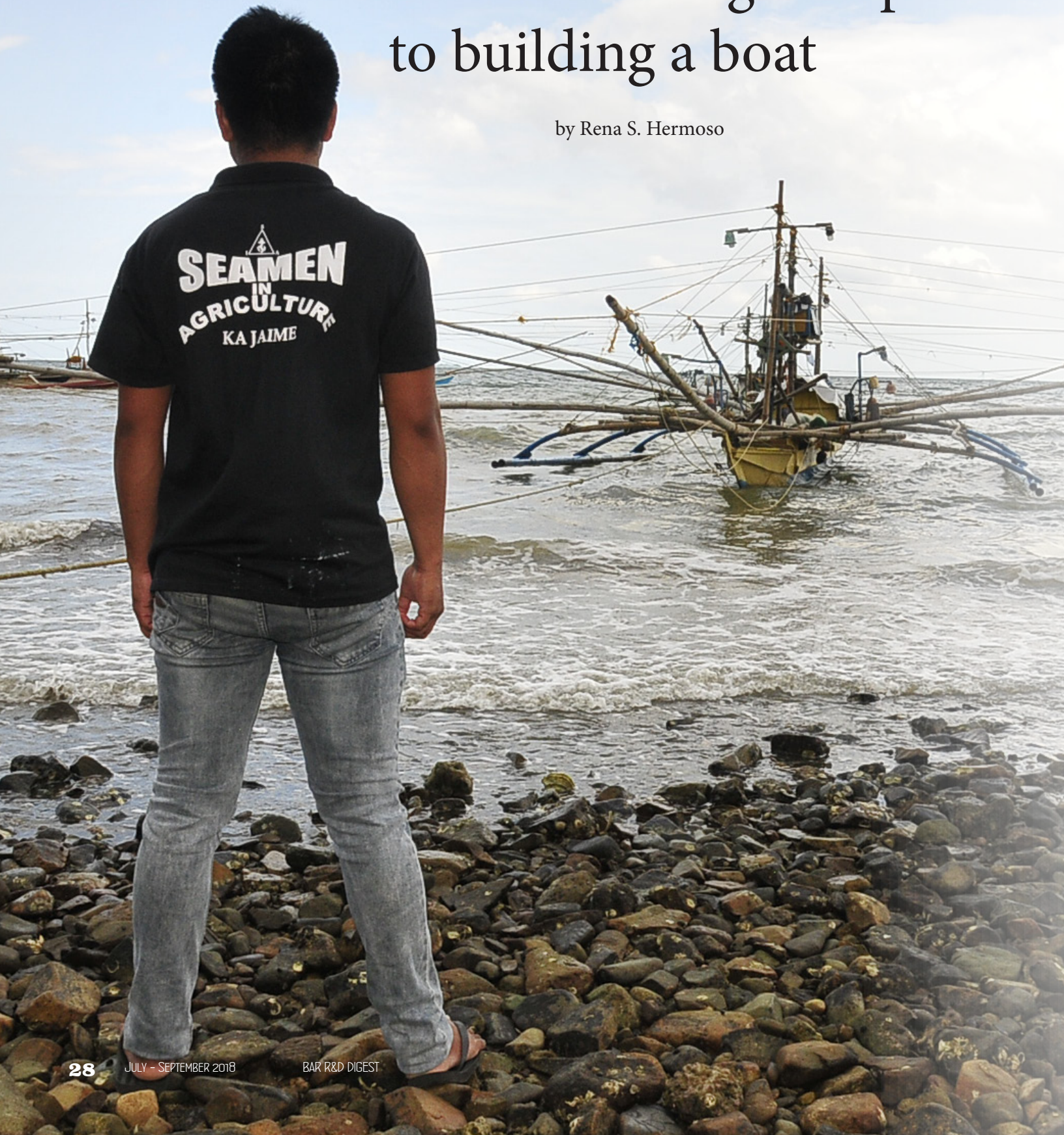
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Going ashore:

From manning a ship to building a boat

by Rena S. Hermoso



Earning money, while sailing across the globe is the lifestyle that makes seafaring a highly-lucrative job. But, like any other job, being a seafarer has its own drawbacks. They earn bigger paychecks off shore at the expense of quality time spent with their families.

Eduardo Espinosa, 60, is no stranger to this game. He was able to provide for his family's needs and support his children's education through his income as a seafarer. After spending 28 years off shore, he decided to drop anchor to venture onto another tide. He shared, "ayaw ko ng magbarko, nakaka-stress. Kasi kung nandito ka magaan...at ease ka sa pamilya mo. Iyong iba na matagal nang nandito gusto magbarko pero iyong matagal na nagbabarko gusto na rito mag-pirmi. Napakahirap maging overseas Filipino worker sa lahat... nandoon lahat ng sakripisyo."

On the other hand, Ronel Lagrada, 30, dreamed of becoming a seafarer at a young age to uplift his family's living condition. On his journey to become one, he realized that being a seafarer is not enough. He shared that for him, "iyong pagsi-seaman ay puhunan lang po iyan para makapag-invest ng kanilang sariling negosyo." Lagrada also said, "ang disadvantage po ng pagiging seaman ay kapag nasa lupa ka wala ka namang kita...wala kang sahod. Karamihan pagbaba ng barko, wala na pong sahod 'yon...end of contract na."

Kalaw and the Changing Tides

T.M. Kalaw Street in Manila, as Espinosa described it, is the "opisina ng mga walang hanapbuhay na hindi makasakay." According to him, this is where

seafarers flock to in the hopes of finding recruiters who would hire them. This is where he met Ka Jaime, president of the Seamen in Agriculture (SIA), through his brother who is acquainted to Ka Jaime. Two months after his retirement, Espinosa joined SIA in the hopes of finding another source of income.

Similarly, Lagrada also met Ka Jaime along Kalaw Street. He fondly recalled, "*nakilala ko po si Ka Jaime doon po sa Kalaw...doon po sa opisina niya sa puno na napaikutan ng mga bato...doon po siya laging nakatambay, nakaupo. Ako naman po curious kasi iyong mga tinuturo niya po ay agriculture....na-curious po ako kaya nagtanong-tanong po ako sa kanya kung pwede ba pong sumali sa SIA. Sabi niya sa akin, 'hindi ka naman seaman.' Hindi niya po kasi alam na seaman po ako kasi po may tindahan kami ng asawa ko na maliit doon sa harap niya mismo.*" After showing pertinent documents that proved that he really is a seaman, he was able to join SIA.

Through the guidance and help from Ka Jaime, both Espinosa and Lagrada together with the other members of SIA were able to attend trainings and seminars on agriculture and fisheries conducted by government agencies under the Department of Agriculture (DA) such as the Bureau of Agricultural Research, Agricultural Training Institute, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Bureau of Animal Industry. Espinosa was able to learn about fresh water fish technology, fruit wine making technology, and apiculture; while Lagrada was able to the same on mango production and native chicken and duck production.

Espinosa shares in Ka Jaime's observation that SIA could be instrumental in linking and/or sharing technologies from DA, its attached agencies and bureaus as well as its partner R&D institutions to the public. Since most of the seaman have the capacity to invest in business, they can invest their money on agribusiness ventures.





“Ang kailangan lang namin ay matulungan kami kung anong pwedeng gawin doon sa lupa. Kasi marami sa atin sa agriculture wala namang pagpupuhunan,” he explained. They are hoping that their business ventures in agriculture and fisheries could encourage more seamen to do the same.

Time and Tide Wait for No One

Espinosa, on the basis of his retirement, decided to venture into fiberglass boat business. Instead of venturing into small business enterprises or franchising business, he saw this opportunity as a safer investment because both him and his wife are not really knowledgeable on business management and entrepreneurship. He shared, *“ang pagnenegosyo sa seaman kung ikaw lang medyo mahihirapan ka rin kasi mabuti kung nakakuha ka ng pondong malaki...”* He added that even if he has a large amount of money he would not invest it in a small business because he doubts its profitability index given the tedious process of starting up a business. *“Kaya ako sumama sa kanila dahil kaming grupo may initiative na pwedeng gawin iyong ganito....at least mas safe ka doon, maliit lang magiging puhunan doon,”* he concluded.

“Sa simula hindi naming pinaplano na magtayo kami ng business sa fiberglass boat. Nagtraining lang kami dahil nagkataon na may opening sa Navotas technical training tungkol sa fiberglass boat,” recalled Espinosa. It was after they finished the training on fiberglass boat making technology under BFAR that they were able to realize that it is a good business idea.

Meanwhile, Lagrada was nudged by Ka Jaime who saw a potential in him into venturing to the fiberglass boat business. According to him, Ka Jaime along with other members of SIA were the first ones who trained under BFAR on fiberglass boat making technology. *“Noong time na iyon nandito na po kami sa Iloilo tapos tinawagan niya po ako na pumunta sa Navotas para mag-training sa fiberglass,”* he narrated. After this, he flew to Manila to undergo training on fiberglass making. He continued, *“so ayon na po, simula na po ng paggawa namin ng fiberglass.”*

Espinosa and Lagrada together with Captain Tor Abuzo, Chief Engineer Willie Patiño, and Chief Engineer Alejandro Galaura pooled their money together to start up their enterprise on fiberglass

boat making. In April 2018, they were able to put a shop at Estancia, Iloilo. Lagrada shared, *“may nagawa na kaming plug doon. Iyong plug na iyon doon na gagawa ng molde tapos iyong molde doon na gagawin iyong mga bangka....may mga gamit na rin, may mga mat na rin kaming nabili. Ginagawan pa po naming ng mga improvement.”* Interested parties who want to order fiberglass boats are now welcome to negotiate with them. They are currently in negotiations with various potential buyers of fiberglass boats.

Dubbed as “unsinkable boat,” fiberglass boats are sturdier and more durable than boats made of wood. Interest in fiberglass boat grew after BFAR started building fiberglass boats as part of the rehabilitation of the Typhoon Yolanda-affected fisher folk. Fiberglass boats are sold in bulk. The cost of making one fiberglass boat is estimated at around Php 80,000 and this can be sold for an estimated amount of Php 150,000-200,000. Lagrada shared, *“malaki ang kita sa fiberglass boat making kasi after two years siguro i-implement ng BFAR na-ipe-phase out na iyong bangkang de kahoy at ipapalit na iyong fiberglass.”* This is the reason why they are aiming to be a subcontractor under BFAR.

Aside from selling fiberglass boats, they are also doing a strategic move of duplicating their shop to increase their income. *“Nagi-invite kami through duplication ng aming shop, kagaya ng franchising. Ang style po namin sa fiberglass boat making*



business ay duplication. Kung sino po iyong gustong mag-duplicate ng shop namin, iyong technology po manggagaling sa amin, tuturuan po namin kayong gumawa ng fiberglass boats at saka iyong chemicals po pwedeng sa amin manggagaling. Bago po namin kayo bibitawan, ibigay po naming sa inyo iyong technology sa paggawa ng fiberglass boats,” said Lagrada.

Setting profits aside, one of the reasons they really wanted to pursue this business is to be able to provide another source of income for seamen ashore. Espinosa said, *“ang purpose namin kapag na-establish namin ito ay dahil marami kaming kilalang seaman na pagbaba doon sila magpopondo sa amin, ‘pag nakapondo sila doon e ‘di magkakatrabaho sila.”* He also added

that this endeavor is not just for those who could invest but also for those who cannot get onboard. He shared, *“para iyong mga seaman na walang trabaho matulungan din namin kung anong pwedeng gawin.”*

Lagrada has no more plans on continuing his voyage as a seafarer. According to him, it might take him around 5-10 years before he could achieve the highest position as a seafarer whereas his venture on fiberglass boats making could generate equal if not more profit at a shorter period of time. *“Ang pagbabarko po kasi sa iba ay pagkukuhanan lamang ng ipangpupuhunan. Hindi naman po kasi lifetime ang trabaho bilang seaman at hindi po biro ang malayo sa pamilya,”* Lagrada concluded. ###



FRUIT WINE WITH TONGKAT ALI (*Eurycoma longifolia*)

Putting a twist to the usual fruit wine, Capt. Adjutor “Tor” Abuzo, a member of the Seamen in Agriculture, infused Tongkat Ali to create a new product. He said that the bark has good therapeutic properties and also adds to the taste of the wine. Likewise, TongkatW Ali is known to boost testosterone in the body and is regarded as an aphrodisiac in the places where it is grown and consumed like in Malaysia and Indonesia. With this wine, Capt. Abuzo hopes to get more supply of Tongkat Ali as there is a demand for it and because it is generally good for the health.



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