

FOREWORD

JOSE C. CAMPOS, JR.: THAT SHINING MOMENT*

Hilario G. Davide**

It is said that no matter how long or short our lives, we truly live in but one instant. In that Shining Moment when we know who we are, and are all that we can be by making all happen through the use of all the talents God has given us, and doing all in perfect accord with God's will.

There is no doubt in my mind that the greater and best part of Justice Jose C. Campos, Jr.'s eighty-two years was one such Shining Moment. It includes his twenty-six years in the Judiciary, the brightest of which were his seven months and five days of service in the Supreme Court. In that very brief period of time, he wrote eighty-seven full-blown decisions and several resolutions. This is undoubtedly an impressive record, especially if one considers that from March 17 to April 7, 1993 he had written twenty-eight full-blown decisions and resolutions, the more significant of which is the resolution lifting the indefinite suspension from the practice of law of now Department of Justice Secretary Raul M. Gonzales.¹ As the presenter of the book of decisions during Justice Campos' retirement ceremonies on April 13, 1993, I said:

Reading through his *ponencias*, one can easily discern the mind, heart and soul of the man woven into the fine print; perceive his highest sense of Justice, strict adherence to Truth, and uncompromising respect for the majesty of the Law; and discover his

* Eulogy delivered at the Supreme Court's necrological services for Justice Jose C. Campos, Jr. (1923-2005) on January 6, 2005 at the Sta. Maria dela Strada Church. The JOURNAL thanks the author for graciously submitting this piece shortly before this last issue went to press last January 10. *Cite as* Hilario G. Davide, Foreword, *Jose C. Campos, Jr.: That Shining Moment*, 79 PHIL. L.J. 870, (page cited) (2005).

** Member, Student Editorial Board, PHILIPPINE LAW JOURNAL (1959). Chief Justice, Supreme Court of the Philippines. LL.B (1959), B.S. Jurisprudence (1958), University of the Philippines. Delegate, 1986 Constitutional Commission and 1971 Constitutional Convention.

¹ *Zaldivar v. Sandiganbayan*, G.R. No. 79690, 221 SCRA 132, Apr. 7, 1993.

philosophy in life and the transcending virtues and values he holds so dearly. In a manner of speaking, every *ponencia* embodies his juristic thoughts and ideals which now form part of our country's jurisprudence. With these decisions, Justice Campos will certainly continue to influence the country's legal system even as he goes into retirement from the Supreme Court.

On that same occasion, his colleagues and the Court eloquently engraved the following words, as a testimony to Justice Campos's greatness, on a plaque for all the world to read:

JUSTICE JOSE C. CAMPOS, JR., retires today leaving a splendid record of dedication and achievement befitting the true public servant. It bespeaks the giving heart and the sapient mind. It shines with the virtues of erudition and compassion and courage and that ceaseless passion for justice under law that was, and still is, his guide and goal.

It is a record we honor even as it honors us. Best of all, it is a record that proudly, and in full measure – and deservedly so – honors him.

The radiance of Justice Campos' life was sourced from the integrity by which he lived it. It was an integrity which he jealously, and even savagely, guarded. It defined his sense of self, created in the image of God. Justice Campos knew that without it, he would be a man adrift in a world where men care too much for things that matter too little. Wrote he: "I paid a dear price for my principles and self-respect but I have no regrets whatsoever about what I did."

One can say that, for his achievements outside the Judiciary alone, Justice Campos was already a star. Indeed he was many things, and he excelled in all of them. As a student, he always was at the top of the class. He finished his law studies *cum laude* at the University of Philippines College of Law, and was a bar topnotcher with a grade of 93.1%. He married his college sweetheart, Maria Clara Almeda Lopez or Marita, who he had pursued with as much passion and love as he did for law and justice. Marita herself is a star in her own right, being a *cum laude* graduate and now a Professor *Emeritus* at UP.

As a judge, Justice Campos was an epitome of integrity, rectitude and impartiality. He was cited by the Integrated Bar of the Philippines as one of the *Most Outstanding Judges of the Court of First Instance*. In the Court of Appeals, among his legacies was a clean docket.

As a husband and a father, Justice Campos was even more than a star. He was a superstar. Yes, he was a superstar. Just look at the happiness which perpetually shines on Marita's face and the sterling record of his children's successes.

Let me add a personal note. Justice Campos was Professor Campos to me before anything else, an honor he shared with his loving and equally brilliant wife, Marita. Both of them were my professors in Commercial Law subjects at the UP College of Law nearly five decades ago. Of his particular brand of teaching, Justice Campos wrote:

I found my technique very effective in compelling my students to study and in forcing any slackers to drop out. There was little room to play on my personal estimates of my students' performance. Memorization or cramming for my class was never a fruitful venture because my questions were all practical – designed to test not a keen memory, but the keen, analytical mind of a student who has gained the mastery of the course. A fragmented knowledge of the course was a sure cause of failure.

No wonder then that we his students, for our own survival, endeavored not to miss a single word of Professor Campos' lectures. He was equalled, if not surpassed, only by his wife. To both of them I owe so much. I got 100% in Mercantile Law in the Bar Examinations of 1959.

Justice Campos' prodigious achievements and commitment to excellence were grounded on an unblinking moral code that to some may appear overly adamant. It is so because Justice Campos has the highest expectations for the Judiciary to which he devoted three quarters of his forty-three years of public service. To his mind, the venality of men should not tarnish the prestige of the Judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, for such prestige is "essential to the continuing existence of order in society."

That is why he made sure only the best of the legal profession made it to the Bench when he served in the Judicial and Bar Council from September 22, 1993 to July 9, 1997. In his words: "Those chosen must be above the ordinary crop of lawyers, since they must be in a position to command the respect of the people over whose lives and fortunes they preside." He introduced many reforms in the JBC, many of which were incorporated into that body's Rules, which were adopted sometime after I took over as its *Ex-Officio* Chairman.

By happy coincidence, I, his student, became a colleague of his in the High Court. He was so happy when I was appointed in January of 1991.

He was among the first who called to congratulate me. I will always be grateful that, in my copy of the book of his decisions given at his retirement in 1993, he wrote:

To Jun,

In college I used to consider you as a likely candidate for the bench. In the few months I stayed in the Supreme Court, I am leaving with a firm conviction that you will be the top man in the years to come. You have the demeanor and the makings of a future Chief Justice.

Indeed, he saw to it that I got to the top. As he disclosed in the Epilogue of his autobiography, he drafted a letter, with the assistance of retired Justices Isagani Cruz and Ameurfina Melencio-Herrera, requesting the President to observe and follow the well-established tradition of appointing the justice who is next in seniority to the outgoing Chief Justice. They signed the letter and were joined by the other retired Justices, then submitted it to then President Estrada through a presidential adviser.

In the end, Justice Campos who had withstood many a seductive entreaty faced one summons he could not refuse: "Come, share now the joy of the Lord!"

The Shining Moment is gone now. But to his beloved wife Marita and his children, children-in-laws, grandchildren, his brothers and relatives, it shall live forever.

And to us in his judicial family, which includes the Justices of the Supreme Court, incumbent and retired, and many of whom are now with us this afternoon, we take comfort in the thought that Justice Campos lives on, united in the Eternal Flame that is our Lord Almighty God. Like Paul in his second letter to Timothy, Justice Campos could very well say:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day – and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his Appearing.²

² 2 Timothy, 4:7-8.