

Column for Manila Bulletin
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Of Trees and Forest

Tribute To 'King Of Comedy'

MANILA, Philippines --- I am taking this opportunity to share with readers of this column my thoughts about Rodolfo Vera Quizon, better known as "Dolphy – the King of Comedy," an entertainer extraordinaire, a thespian par excellence, and a true friend.

I will forever be indebted to Dolphy, one of the few gems of our entertainment world, for supporting my advocacies, and especially for his invaluable help during the 2010 presidential campaign.

I have great admiration for people who came from humble beginnings and worked their way to the top. They teach the youth the value of hard work. Dolphy is one such person.

Dolphy, the second of ten children, was born in Tondo, the poor district of Manila, to a father who was a ship mechanic and a mother who worked at home as a dressmaker.

He was not afraid of menial labor. He sold peanuts and watermelon snacks inside movie theaters (where he probably gained interest in acting) during his youth, and he took up whatever jobs were available, as shoe-shine boy, laborer in button and bottle factories, stevedore at the pier, and calesa driver, among others.

His break in the entertainment industry came at the age of 17, when he was hired as a chorus dancer during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. His first screen name was "Golay," probably because of his Chinese looks. From the stage he moved on to radio, then to the movies, and the rest is history – hundreds of movies (many of which he produced himself) and numerous acting awards – which catapulted Dolphy to the top.

In addition to many acting awards, Dolphy was recently conferred the 2012 Gawad Diwa ng Lahi award by the city government of Manila. The city government started giving the annual awards in the 1960s to honor Manila artists who have contributed to the city's cultivation of culture and the arts.

I strongly believe that Dolphy also deserves to receive the National Artist award, the highest recognition given by the national government to citizens who have made significant contributions to the development of Philippine arts. I have been pushing for Dolphy to be named as National Artist (Pambansang Alagad ng Sining) since 2007, when I wrote Chairman Emily Abrera of the Cultural Center of the Philippines nominating him to be an awardee. Now I just learned from newspaper reports that the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) has started processing the nomination to declare Dolphy a National Artist.

I don't think anybody will disagree with me that Dolphy is an artist who has helped build a sense of Filipino nationalism through motion picture. He is respected by his peers as well as the industry from which he received many awards.

More than the trophies he collected, Dolphy is known as a compassionate man, donating substantial wealth and talent to assist health welfare programs and provide financial assistance to senior actors and those involved in filmmaking, including extras, stuntmen, bit players, crews, and technical staff.

As of this writing, Dolphy is confined in the intensive care unit of the Makati Medical Center because of complications from a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. I join the nation in praying for his recovery.

If it is true that laughter is the best medicine, then I say that Dolphy has given the best medicine to cure millions of sick Filipinos during his many years of making humorous shows and movies.

This alone is more than enough to qualify him as recipient of the highest honor his country can give. In my heart and in the hearts of many Filipinos, Dolphy is a National Artist.

(For comments/feedback email to: mbv_secretariat@yahoo.com. Readers may view previous columns at www.senatorvillar.com)

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