

In Memoriam: PROFESSOR AURORA ROXAS LIM

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We lost another pillar in the academic community. Prof. Aurora “Roxy” Roxas Lim passed on November 16, 2020, one week short of her 85th birthday. We grieve for her and for our irreparable loss. But we let her go in peace knowing that her life was meaningful and well lived.

I first knew her late husband, Benito “Ben” Lim, before I knew Roxy. Ben was my professor when I took up graduate studies at the University of the Philippines Asian Center in 1972 to 1973. When my late husband, Chinben, and I came back to the Philippines from China in 1978, Chinben first taught at the De La Salle University. After a year, he applied and was accepted at the UP Asian Center. It was Roxy who defended the rank of Associate Professor II to be given him. For this, my family and I would be forever thankful.

We started meeting with Ben and Roxy to discuss social issues and the Chinese-Filipino community. I knew Ben but got to know Roxy better and would join Chinben in meetings with them just for friendly but heated discussions on many burning issues. Often the conversations jumped dizzily from one topic to another because of the Lim couple’s wide range of interests and deep insights.

Those who knew Roxy would know how her mind would go off tangent to many side issues from the main topic. She always illuminated the discussions with her erudite and incisive mind.

Even with her bad eyesight, she was very well read and very well informed. She can discuss any topic under the sun and in conferences and seminars, her presence was always appreciated because of her insightful questions, some of which were kilometric and would have taken another conference to take up. But it showed the many side facets and aspects of the theme or topic of the conferences.

Roxy and I became closer when we founded the Philippine Association for Chinese Studies (PACS) in 1987. She widened the PACS horizon by encouraging us to touch on topics other than geopolitics and South China Sea disputes. She introduced studies on public health, science and technology, arts and culture and convened many conferences and discussion groups on the topic. She became president of PACS in 2001 to 2006, and I was her work horse helping her to organize and mobilize our PACS members.

In 2018, I broached the idea that she should compile, edit, and put together her articles which I can publish as a volume. We started doing that but like many good intentions, the volume was sidetracked by many other pressing tasks. I promised her that the volume will be ready by 2020, but that was before the disastrous pandemic struck. It was no excuse, but I only hope she understood and knew that her book took a backseat because of our massive Taal Volcano eruption relief operations followed by COVID 19 Kaisa Kontra Korona project. In October, I was getting ready to pick up again where I left off. I feel sad and inconsolable that the promised book did not materialize before she left us.

She had so much to offer and she had offered herself to teaching, research, and writing all her life. Her invaluable contribution to Chinese and Chinese in the Philippines studies cannot be measured and could hardly be surpassed.

Roxy, we will surely miss you. We mourn and grieve for our irreparable loss. But are comforted that you left at this time of anxiety, suffering, pain and uncertainties. We shall always treasure and remember the legacy of scholarship, tenacity and principles you imprinted on us and on those whose lives you have touched.