



## No age limit

• Rommel R. Embuido

**T**here are those whose accomplishments are hollow that they need to broadcast it to everyone. And then there are those whose achievements shine out without them calling for attention. Such is the case for the nearly 69 years young, soon-to-be ALS Junior High School graduate Remigia Royupa Villanueva of Barangay Salapingao, Dagupan City.

She is the only child of Alejo Royupa, who died when she was only two weeks old, and Julia Lorenza, a buri hat weaver from Calasiao who then passed away when Remy was 13. Nanay Remigia lived a life worthy of an MMK (Maalaala Mo Kaya) episode. When her mother remarried, she was abandoned and sent off to live with relatives who could not fully support her education. She thus had to quit school, a pity since she was Elementary School salutatorian in 1963. She bounced around from grandmother to aunts taking various jobs from waitressing to household helper. These were difficult times for the teen orphan, being less fairly treated in other people's families and narrowly escaping an attempted sexual assault when she was 14.

In Pampanga, she lived with her aunt. At night, she had to walk through a sugarcane field which was overrun by political miscreants. While working as a waitress in Dagupan City, she had a relationship with co-worker Leonardo Flores Villanueva. She married him after 3 months in order to escape an unwanted marriage arranged by her grandmother. She was only 16 then.

Her prince turned out to be an abusive drunk in those early years but she stuck it out and they had 10 sons and a daughter. Her eldest is now 52 years old.

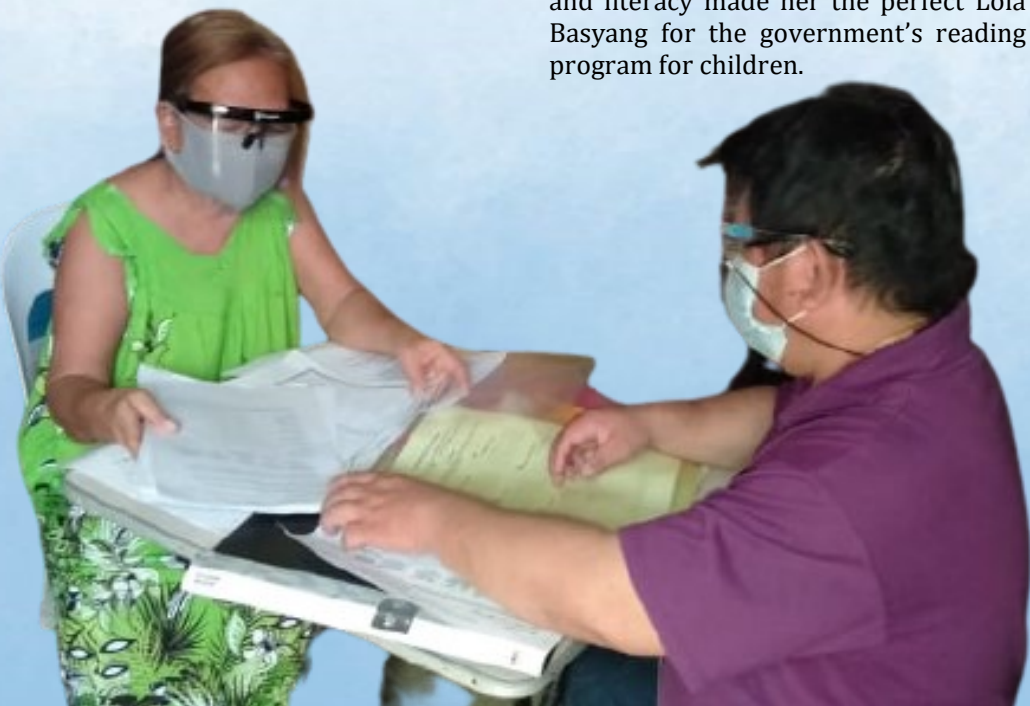
Her prayers and tears were answered when her husband found the Lord and became a Pastor. Their residence in Salapingao became a house church for eight years until her husband died in 2016.

Nanay Remy never wanted to quit school by choice but God was still gracious and she was able to enter public service as a Barangay Health Worker in 1982. She distinguished herself through conscientiousness and hard work and was promoted to Barangay Nutrition Scholar in 1989. From there her career took off and she enjoyed some distinctions more eminent than those obtained by many with higher education than her.

She was adjudged as the Most Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Scholar for Region 1 in 1992. Then Congressman Jose de Venecia Sr. and Senator Rodolfo

Biazon handed out the award at the Malacañang Palace. She was also the Most Outstanding BNS of Dagupan City twice. Part of her responsibilities is heading the Barangay Feeding Program for children ages 0-23 months, and 24-59 months. She lectures on Nutrition in Mother's Classes even in mainland barangays and was often invited to speak on Nutrition in public elementary and high schools of the different island-barangays.

When she volunteered at the DSWD before, she connected indigent patients with benefactors to help them receive subsidized health care. As a Barangay Senior Citizen Association vice president and working with the Population Commission, she has also counseled battered women and referred many to the Women's Center. Her age and literacy made her the perfect Lola Basyang for the government's reading program for children.



Guided by her mobile teacher, Nanay Remy works on her modules.

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# PRECEPTORS' VIEW



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*Nanay Remy writes her reflection on the things learned for the week.*

Despite these accomplishments, Nanay Remy regretted being unable to work at Dagupan City Hall due to the lack of a high school diploma. So, she entered the government's Alternative Learning System program. She enrolled under Mobile Teacher Rommel Embuido in 2019 and was as driven as a student as she was a government worker. She dug into English grammar since part of her job is to prepare a lot of reports. It helped that the classes were conducted in her workplace, the Barangay Evacuation Center which also housed the Barangay Captain's office. Nanay Remy enjoyed the lessons and school banter with co-barangay classmates who were young enough to be her grandsons. She was a positive influence on them, imparting the wisdom of both a mother and a grandmother.

A minor tragedy struck towards late 2019. On the docks on her way to the mainland, she heard a pop on her knee and she was barely able to walk. It was arthritis. Doctors prescribed pain medication for two weeks but she was debilitated for much longer. Even before the lockdowns, she began working from home and continued her ALS classes from

home through self-learning modules which was actually the backbone of the ALS program.

The Covid-19 lockdowns gave her time to heal, and despite her late age, Nanay Remy continued to study and work. Then Christmas came early on February 2021 when the Department of Education and ALS Task Force recommended portfolio assessment in lieu of the oft-postponed Accreditation and Equivalency Test (A & E) as the sole basis for the issuance of an Elementary Diploma or a Junior High School Level Certificate of Program Completion. ALS learners enrolled since 2019 need only accomplish and pass the required portfolio in order to pass.

That included Nanay Remy, who could have easily passed the A & E examination had it been administered. This means that a Junior High School certificate which she should have obtained in 1967 is finally within her reach. Unfortunately for Nanay Remy, by a cruel quirk of the educational system, she could not be called a high school graduate because of the Senior High School requirement. But surely, that

would not deter a Remigia Royupa Villanueva should she ever decide to still pursue that High School diploma.

At age 69 when she finishes Junior High School ALS, she is way past retirement age for government workers. But Nanay Remy shows no signs of slacking off and the Alternative Learning System is there to support worthy learners like her to achieve their dreams even if it is now more for self-respect and satisfaction rather than employment.

Although ALS may not have been the main contributor to her success, the program can accredit and validate her achievements and give due recognition to the fact that she has accomplished more than what many College graduates have achieved. She is more than worthy to be called a high school graduate and perhaps the law should reassess the merits of prescribing Senior High School to seniors like her.

"He who has less in life should have more in law," said former President Ramon Magsaysay. It is for people like Nanay Remy, from which life has taken so much, that the Alternative Learning System exists.

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