

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF UP BETA SIGMA FRATERNITY, INTERNATIONAL, INC.

BETA SIGMA HERITAGE TREE PARK

by Rene de Rueda

Rationale

Our Credo speaks for all the Beta Sigmans "to cultivate the seeds of love". Our fraternity is known for our love and care with our fraternity brothers. It is real. It can be felt. It can be seen. It is a reason for envy by many by the members and non- members of other fraternities.

One expression of our love in the brotherhood is for us to be interconnected with one another even in our physical absence because of our distant locations and, more importantly, when we are not anymore on this earth. With our love with our Creator and His creations, particularly the trees and the environment, the Brotherhood can indeed venture into activities that will immortalize the brothers and, at the same time, bring honor and glory to our God.

It is on the above premise that the Beta Sigma Heritage Tree Park is being proposed in order for us to be interconnected with our Creator and with everyone in the fraternity, regardless of time. Initially, and for lack of better terms, the proposed project was planned to be called "Beta Sigma Memorial Forest" but there were so many apprehensions on the use of the word "memorial". Hence, it was changed to Heritage Tree Park, which seems to be acceptable to many.

Concept

The Brotherhood in our beloved fraternity is second to none. And therefore such love has to be expressed into concrete terms, such as but not limited to honoring the brother by planting and growing a tree in his name. Initially, the fraternity can locate and identify an area that is accessible, after which a management plan has to be prepared and serve as basis for the sustainable management and development of said park. Hopefully, the concept will be found worthy of implementation by all the Beta Sigmans in the planet and additional sites can be formalized in the near future.

Once an area is formally awarded for the purpose, the development plans shall be prepared immediately by the brods who are in the environment/ forestry sector for the approval of the UPBSFAA here in the Philippines and elsewhere in the world. All the trees to be planted are to be properly marked and geo- referenced. Hence, wherever we are we can view the trees planted and grown using our computer via google system.

Once the area is ready, it is very worthy to propose that the first selected trees to be planted in the Heritage Tree Park will be in the honor of all the visionary founders of our beloved fraternity. The

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This monthly publication started way back in January 2009 and because our fraternity is never lacking in neither expertise nor writing talent, we have faithfully kept our self-imposed commitment to continue on not only as an information campaign but also as a way of advocating environmental protection in very concrete terms.

In this particular article, our author Rene de Rueda writes a second article in this publication. Here, he follows up with a specific proposal an earlier idea that was hatched in the course of recent discussions and findings of the Centennial Forest Project supported by UPBSFI, with our UPVisayas Beta Sigmans at the forefront.

Editor, Environmental Awareness

About the Author

Brod Rene de Rueda was Undersecretary of the Department and Natural Resources in the 90s. He is currently UPBSFI's consultant for our Centennial Forest project which is led by our UP Beta Sigma brothers based in Miag-ao, Iloilo.

A professional forester whose passion is in helping the upland poor he is happily married to Pilar from Cebu, good father to his 3 children and a happy "lolo" to his 6 grandchildren.

succeeding plantings shall be in the honor of all the members of the fraternity who have gone ahead of us and joined our Creator.

It is the responsibility of the leadership of the fraternity, both residents and the alumni, to inform the loved ones of our deceased brothers, so that when the opportunity comes, they can also visit the park and tend the trees we have planted for them. Symbolically, they can even show their love by hugging and talking to the trees we have planted in honor of their loved ones- our departed brods.

Strategies

1. Coordinate with decision makers, especially to the members of our fraternity who are in a position of influence to identify and designate an area for the heritage tree park. Maybe we can start with one, but over time, it might be worthy to have as many sites in the geographical regions or in areas where the UP systems operate.
2. Work for the area to be officially designated as heritage tree park, and the necessary development/management plan duly approved by the fraternity's leadership. This includes the planned expenses necessary to make the area ready for the activities leading towards the establishment of heritage tree park.
3. Procurement/production of selected seedlings worthy to be planted in the area, such as but not limited to indigenous and/ or valuable tree species in the country, or the favorite trees of the departed brothers, if there is any.
4. The plantings should be done with the presence of the fraternity's leadership and or the family members, or their representatives. It should be entered into the official book of the fraternity prepared for the purpose. The planting should be done in such a way that there will be no more need for thinning in the future.
5. The heritage tree park shall be subdivided to compartments corresponding to the approximate number of schools who have had Beta Sigma fraternity, beginning of course with the UP system. Each compartment, with varying sizes depending on the fraternity membership, should be properly surveyed and mapped, developed and managed.
6. The fraternity shall hire person/s to protect and maintain the park from any form of destruction, including fire or vandalism, on contractual basis or on allowance basis. The lawyers in the fraternity could help draft the needed documents for the purpose. And periodically, the alumni association leaders and or the resident brods in the campus can visit the area for worthy reasons.
7. For brothers or family of brothers who are landed, coordination will be made with them if they can donate part of their lands for the heritage tree park, especially in areas where there is no designated area yet.
8. The area can be designated also as a wildlife sanctuary where the hunting of birds and other forms of wildlife is prohibited. Hence, in its full development, we will see various forms of life joining together enjoying mother natures' care.

UPDATES

1. There is already one (1) area proposed for the heritage tree park. This is located in the Mt. Arayat National Park, Arayat, Pampanga. Initial activities, such as surveying and photo documentation are underway, according to Brod and concurrently the Regional Technical Director for the Protected Area in DENR Region 3, Roger "Ogie" Trinidad, uplb-cfnr batch '65, whose area of jurisdiction covers the whole Central Luzon area, including the proposed park.. Brod Ogie made an initial report to brod Johnny Regadio and other brods during the luncheon/ fellowship tendered in honor of our balikbayan brod JR.
2. A similar project is presently undertaken by the Iloilo and Panay brods in the UP Visayas area- the Centennial Forest (CENFOR) Project of the UPV but managed by the fraternity brods in Panay and Region 6. The plan for the project is to plant ultimately 100 species of plants, e.g. trees, palms, shrubs, etc., to be consistent with the centennial celebration of the UP. In the meantime, the immediate objective of CENFOR project is to plant immediately and grow trees in the planned 3- hectare project site, to restore vegetation and improve the micro- climate in the area.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

1. The establishment of heritage park is not an ordinary undertaking. This needs commitment of the present leadership and to be sustained by the succeeding ones. It needs also the support by the general membership. It also needs allocation of financial resources to cover the expenses of the person/s to be hired for the project's needed protection and maintenance.
2. How to protect the said park from potential envy and "anger" from the other organization/ fraternity who are traditionally the "enemy" of our own fraternity or by some individual brods?
3. How to prioritize the members of the fraternity to be honored, who are from the other universities/ colleges/ schools? Do we need to promulgate protocols? Who will keep the book for the heritage park?
4. Whatever, failure is not an option! "Beta Sigma, beloved, forever true sons of thine we will be, our hearts and minds, our hands we give to thee"...