REUNION SPEECH

FOR

ANGELITO CADIENTE

REVISED

Hello everyone and thank you all for the warm welcome, the always generous and overwhelmingly friendly hospitality, and such genuine, heartfelt good wishes for all of us. This moment has been decades in the making and so this really is a monumental occasion in the history of the Cadiente family. I know I speak for all of my brothers and sisters when I say that we would not have missed this event for the world and although we have been separated from our homeland as a group for many decades, the time and distance that has passed make this reunion that much sweeter. I think it’s safe to say that each one of us has an appreciation and respect for this community and for the people that continue to breathe life and character into our neighborhood.

To all of you that have taken the time and effort to organize these wonderful reunion festivities and especially this beautiful dinner, we thank you all from the bottom of our hearts. We are so happy that you’re here to attend and personally welcome us back to the friendly embrace we know so well, and have missed so much. There is a familiar **warmth** each one of us felt upon returning to this town (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) … and even though most of us are used to the dry and sunny heat of Southern California, I don’t mean the humidity! (**And wait for the laugh**). And no matter how far we may have traveled physically or emotionally in our time away from this place, no matter how many years it’s been since we’ve shared the love of this community, no matter how many trials, challenges, or triumphs each one of us may have experienced, there is **NOTHING** that will ever change the simple fact that this is our home, you are our people, and everything we learned and shared throughout our lives is influenced by the time we spent growing up and living here.

It’s been said that when one finally comes face to face with old dear friends after time and space has separated them, it really is like coming face to face with oneself. **NO** matter how “**mature**” any of us may have become…. and let’s face it, the years **HAVE** flown by, still however, being with all of you has rekindled youthful emotions and memories that have rested in a warm and loving place. Reuniting with all of you is like seeing mirrors of our selves and it is very reaffirming to remember those days that formed us… and though it’s been said that every parting is a form of loss, every reunion is a chance to experience a type of heaven. The embrace is real, familiar, loved and missed. Whether you realize it or not, you are with us on our journeys throughout life.

We are moved and honored to have here tonight so many loving friends as well as distinguished leaders of our community. (**If there are any distinguished leaders from the church and the community as you had mentioned, please acknowledge them here)**. I would like to take a few moments to acknowledge and thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for being such guiding lights for our friends and family. Our community is strong, dedicated, and considerate of each other because of the dedication each one of you demonstrate to the well being of this town and its inhabitants. You inspire each one of us to join you in making a difference in the lives of others no matter where we might be. The kindness, enthusiasm, and good will of all of you have spread to points far and wide. Your influence is felt as we keep your message of faith and brotherhood (**Peoplehood?**) with us. You inspire our actions and it is very gratifying to spend this time with you.

Each one of us is filled with every emotion imaginable right now and I have been asked to share some memories and sentiments from my siblings. I once read a beautiful description of family. It said that, “Family is a circle of strength, founded on faith, joined in love, kept by God, together forever.” And as we live and learn, our circle grows. There is no way any of us could speak of our childhood memories without honoring the people that meant the most to all of us, our parents, Angel and Nena. Our father was also known as Bongkil- he earned that nickname during his time as Barrio Captain. People would refer to him as “Maestro” because he would skillfully settle issues presented to him. He was a wise man- an educator, a mediator, and the man to whom the neighbors came in order to sort out domestic issues within the community. What made him special…. besides his great good looks, was his mild manner and his soft-spoken way that he communicated. He had an unforgettable quiet strength that inspired all of us and the members of the community as well. Our mother Nena was also an educator and although she was not anative of our Barrio, she quickly learned the ways and customs and adapted to how "Ilocanos" do their "Things". As an outsider of the Ilocano tribe where Dad was from, I remember, she and Lola Idot, Dad’s mother, our grandmother, had so many differences, and the arguments between the two were almost “legendary” as they were a common occurrence. Even so, we are so thankful to have had such loving, caring, wise parents. Family comes first and we hold their example with us every day.

What began with these two beautiful, humble, hard working and devoted people has grown to the eight of us siblings, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ spouses, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ children, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_grandchildren, **(If you want to be a little cute you can say**) and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ adorable pets!!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

With that, I would like to share a little bit from my brothers and sisters, some of their most vivid or fondest memories of being here in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and what they’re doing now.

Our first-born sister, Star …. Remember that a lady doesn’t give her age….. has this to say:

“… We didn’t have electricity then. We used a gas lamp at night to do our homework and at times we would have to gather tree branches as firewood for cooking. I fondly remember taking advantage of the full moon as we used its light to have fun and play games in front of the house or catch fireflies when they would come out. As Brother Jose said, “We would work on the tobacco plantation, get paid for a nickel per stick and save it for our pocket money.” Maybe most of our generation experienced the joy of walking home in a group from the National High School (NPHS). I remember every time we missed the last trip of the Philippine Rabbit Bus Line we would take the calse of Uncle Siping or Lakay Immong, or jump on Lolo Ommki’s “Pison” on his way home from work. I still remember, Saturday is our “Wash-ington” day at the Carayan River, and we would clean and scrub all our pots and pans, and have our organic hair shampoo done (Arotang). I still remember when our family would go for a day picnic at “Paraiso Ni Juan” Beach with only rice, salt and fresh Tamarind as our (baon) provision. We prepared our cooking areas out of stones, gathered firewood, then cooked rice and fresh fish, seashells or seaweed which were brought in from the ocean. Drinking water was also not an issue. Just dig a hole in the beach until fresh water comes out, presto! …Water of life. Simple living…” Yes, simple, beautiful living at its finest!

Our eldest brother Walter, our next oldest sibling age 64 has his own point of view as expressed here:

“As far as I can remember the reason why we left Ilocos Sur was about politics and killings. Some relatives were killed during the election. Daddy was also hunted down after the election by goons of the winning candidate while he was the campaign manager of a relative candidate. He did his job and was able to campaign but lost after all and the whole family then was also hunted down so Lito (**You can say**)… That would be **me**… and Daddy went first to Solano, Nueva Vizcaya to avoid any untoward incidents. Daddy asked Uncle Osias, then the Mayor who later became Governor, what the possibilities might be if we moved to Nueva Vizcaya. Uncle Osias assured Dad and Mom a teaching position there so Daddy then hurriedly sold our house and lot to a relative for merely 7,500 pesos (Approx $165.00) plus a .45 caliber pistol and immediately arranged for bus transportation to Solano with the help of the Pacis’ family.

A funny memory that has stayed with me is when I saw Grandpa Ommi and how he pruned the stem of the big coconut trees between the house and Dad’s poultry facility. I asked him why he pruned around the trunk and said so that it will bear a lot of fruits. One day when no one was around I also cut around the stem of 3 or 4 fruit trees between the house and Grandpa’s house and when Daddy noticed it he asked everyone and I said I did it because Grandpa said it will bear a lot of fruit. Grandpa was so mad at me that after few weeks all the trees wilted coz the cut was so deep…. **Woops!!** (**Or use a word native to you home**)… That’s what you get for trying a little too hard!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Also, at the river, Lito …. that would be me again… and I saw an unexpected view and appreciated it and we called it **EXACTLY**. It was a censored sight from a young lady…. (**You can turn to Walter and stop speaking abruptly and say**) Walter, have you heard of the expression “**TMI**?” It means “too much information!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

In addition, our brother Robert’s memory recalled the time about the “Nabartek” when I got so drunk… we would have a group picnic in Sulbec Beach where we drank “Quatro Cantos” gin and everybody tried but Walter… meaning me… did the most and ended up being brought home lying down at the back of Jose Villanueva’s “Calesa”. Ah… what memories… or so I’ve been told!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)…..That’s all folks…” (**Wait for the laugh**)

I am the third oldest of the siblings.  I remember my fellow childhood "Mittong" who now also lives in California, using the name Dennis (An American Name), and Oscar, who also lives in Los Angeles, California. From time to time we see each other. We also of course have our very own Barangay Captain, the Honorable Elmer, who many-many **hairs**… I means **YEARS** ago was known as one of the Town’s Gigolos. Having childhood friends nearby in California is a little relief when we all miss those good old days and the places where we grew up, but being back here helps us to hold new memories to keep with us and to share.

**Our brother Oliver is sibling number four. He is a retired truck driver and although he has suffered a stroke and is partially disabled, his memories are vivid. From his wife Wenona we have Oliver’s recollections:**

“To all, Oliver just remembered when Daddy and Castor Cadiente had a nice bout (quarrel) in the middle of the road because of chickens running into each other’s properties. It was like a wrestling match in the middle of the road that busses had to stop for them as they settled their difference. (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) Thanks Wenona, **NOW** we **KNOW** the answer to the age-old question of why the chicken crossed the road…. it was to get out of the way of Daddy and Castor Cadiente!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Also in Anteng, a barrio where Mommy used to teach as a schoolteacher, he remembers the long walks would sometimes take a few hours especially in bad weather. Oliver also remembers the time they went to the hills “Bantay Bassit” to gather some “Paria Leaves” and in the process saw a lot of human skulls. **WOW**. …And they also discovered caches of WWII ammunition and spent cartridges. In addition he had fun picking wild mushrooms in between bamboo trees, getting “Bisukol” snails in rice paddies, and some fresh water clams “Bennek” from the river “Karayan”. Sorry folks, these are all he could share….” (**You can add**)…. Thank you Wenona. (**If she is not there you can say**) We thank Wenona for all of her love and support and for giving a voice to Oliver’s thoughts. Those memories are precious and paint a vivid picture of what life was like back then.

**Ronald is our fifth oldest sibling and is a Retired Master Chief from the US Navy. Here’s what he wants us all to picture in our minds:**

“Saturdays were wash days at the river “Karayan” (still very clean and active at that time) sabay burak iti rama for jumping salad or kilawen nga udang. The river also served as the boundary of palsiit (sling shot) wa, just as Robert described” between laod and daya (east and west) kids. We used to wear WWii helmets for protection…and yes I did also participate in those war game activities.

Agtalon it pagay (harvesting rice) with GG (a local fish species) and rice with “Kamatis” tomatoes, salt wrapped with banana leaves for lunch at a small hut in the middle of the rice field, with hallowed out bamboo as water containers for our drink. We would also go trekking in search for anything edible to add to lunch or dinner like wild edible leaves in the mountains, including papaya, marunggay, “parria ti bakir”, saluyot, plus a lot more. At the time we were still finding WWII gear on the mountain, i.e. rusted bayonets, gun parts, human bones, etc.)

Also one night I remember when, in the middle of the night, some people unloaded machinegun rounds at the Couton Residence, which was not too far from ours. I can still recall how everyone stayed put in each house. The next morning we were shown the houses riddled with bullet holes. Those houses that were hit were mainly in the North side of town but even so, thank goodness there were no reports of casualties.

I remember going to school in Anteng with Mommy, and from the main road, we would walk a distance to reach the school. It seemed far at that time with my still “little legs”. It was worse during rainy season when the road turned into a mud pit and it was so bad that there was no use for boots… which didn’t matter because we didn’t have any anyway have because we could not afford them.

Grandma Idot also wrapped “Aramamng” (Baby shrimps) with abocado leaves and grill if for ulam. Eat on their “dulang” a low table while squatting down, with coconut shell used as bowl for water cup or water container to wash our hands before “ag-kammet” eating.

I was also tasked by “**My Boss Lito**” to buy a “bilog”, a type of liquor, at the Sari-sari Store, You see at that time there was no restriction of who can or cannot buy liquor as long as you can pay for it. This was the time while they were playing “Mahjong” with our cousins. I remember how a dog chased me so therefore I ran causing the dog to bite me in the leg. Mom and Dad loaded me in a Kalesa to the “Agsumang” … who turned out to be a quack doctor. He did the usual stuff with live styone to trace the poison and used the carabo (water Buffalo) horn tip to suck the poison. I’m glad I was cured and there were no side effects from the rabies. I still wear that scar bite to this day. **Thanks “Boss Lito**….” (**You can say**) and You’re welcome, Ronald!!! Have you forgiven me yet? It’s only been, what? **FIFTY PLUS YEARS**? It wasn’t MY idea for the dog to bite you… I guess you had “tasty” legs… (**And wait for the laugh**)

**Our brother Robert, the sixth sibling, who is also a retired US Navy Chief, shared these memories:**

“There are a few things that I remembered before we left Narvacan when I was 6. Manong (Brother) Walter was drunk one day and was taken home with a two wheeled carrier towed behind 4 legged horse, better known as “Kalesa”. I think he had some Vigan after school. I was so scared seeing him very sick and dirty all around Kalesa and I though he was dead. I didn’t see any of his muscles move but help from neighbors dragging him off from “Kalesa” to the house was an unbelievable sight. And there was that trail of his cerveza still oozing from him while he was being moved. Sorry Brother Walter, that’s one of the images that I can never forget.

Other vivid experiences were “Palsiit” sling-shot war between Barrio Lungog and the other side of the river. On that war field, you can hear small rock projectiles swooshing overhead or bouncing off bamboo trees as shield and fortress for all incoming treats. As a small boy, I was told by my teenager allies to keep ducking down because I see most of them with a big “Bukol” bump but bravely shooting back with their customized slingshot.

Prior to leaving the town of Narvacan, Mommy Nena told me we were going on a pleasure trip. It would be a long distance away from Ilocos Sur. I remember I was very happy preparing my stuff for the journey. Departure day was very exciting and a huge red bus pulled over in our big two-story house. Even at my young age, I remember I said “Wow”, it will be a great trip. A whole bus is chartered exclusively for the Cadiente’s travel. Next thing I remembered was a group of folks along with my siblings who started to load up the bus with numerous belongings, not luggage but furniture, kitchen materials and bigger stuff. That really excited me more because it appeared that this would not only be just a trip but we were going camping. They overloaded the bus and even our solid wooden sofa and bed frames were placed on the bus rooftop. I said, oh boy we are riding in style. The following day, we arrived in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya that turned out to be the end of our pleasure trip. Mommy never clarified the actual purpose of that trip until I started to learn that we had a new hometown filled with new adventures, and the rest is history.

Cherry is our seventh sibling. She is not able to be here due to her physical disabilities and challenges, but I would like to share some memories on Cherry’s behalf. I remember she was the youngest of the sisters, so as the “baby” she enjoyed all of the attention from our parents. She was loved and still is, and her strength of character and determination are obvious in the way she has overcome great challenges in life. Although when she was a young woman, in the early years of her married life, she suffered an aneurism with postoperative complications; she did not allow her limitations to interfere with having a normal and fulfilling life. Even though she is not here with us physically today at this event, she is definitely here in spirit. She wants to make sure all of you know that her heart and prayers are with us, her brothers and sisters, and with all of you.

**Our youngest brother Richard is sibling number eight. He is also a retired US navy Chief and unfortunately, as the baby, he doesn’t have much to say… except for this:**

“Sorry folks. No recollection from me, as I was in the conception stages, or perhaps being conceived during that time…” Well, Richard, … not so fast!! I have memories of your early years… I remember Richard was born in Solano into a family with SEVEN… count ‘em- **SEVEN** siblings who would alternately baby sit for him, teach him, play with him, kiss him, hug him, spank him…just a little… when absolutely necessary (**Wait for the laugh**)… shower him with attention…. you get the picture!!!

I think you can see by the comments and testimonials from my family that growing up here in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ meant a lot to us and those memories have stayed with us. Tonight we’re all here as adults with vivid experiences that have influenced our lives…. (**If you want to add a little joke you can say**)…. …Wellllll, except for maybe Ronald who is still blaming me for that dog bite…. **It was the** **DOG** Ronald… **NOT** me!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

There is an expression that teaches us, “I am part of all that I have met.” That’s certainly true of all of us and of course with regard to all of you and this entire community. Our childhood memories live within us almost as if they were a dream but this week those dreams came true to a great extent. We are so thankful to have had the opportunity to celebrate our past and our heritage and because of all of you it has been that much sweeter.

We want you to know that this trip is dedicated to the memory of our parents, Mr. and Mrs. Angel Cadiente, without whom obviously none of us would be here at all. It is their spirit and love that brought the eight of us together as a family and it is their sense of love and devotion to us and this community that brings us back here to be with all of you. We hope you have enjoyed hosting us as much as we have loved being here. This week we’ve made memories that will stay with us for a lifetime and it is our intention that through this reunion, the sense of love and devotion to **YOUR** families is reignited in each one of you. Time is fleeting. It flies past us so quickly we don’t even see it moving. It seems like just yesterday we began to make plans for this trip but it was actually \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ months ago.

I think that through the process of planning this reunion each one of us found a new appreciation and respect for our past, our parents, and our childhoods. I don’t know when we will all meet again like this but on behalf of all of my brothers and sisters, please know that we really treasure the privilege of reconnecting. May we make new and wonderful memories each day forward with our families, friends, communities and each other, and may we all live and be well, and meet again to share more good times. Thank you all.