



Standing on Her Shoulders: Ms. Victoria Navarro, MAS, MSN, RN
By Matilde Delos Santos Upano, MSN, RN, FNP



Picture taken at M. Upano's Induction as PNA-IN President in 2014 by Ms. Victoria Navarro
Left to right: Mr. Ernie Rosas, PNAA North Central Region Vice President & his wife Beth, Linda Chase, IUH VP, University Hospital, IU Health VP of Human Resources, M. Upano, Senator Brandt Hershman, Orson Mason, IUH Diversity Officer, Dr. Linda Everett, IUH Exec. VP & CNE, Sagamore of the Wabash Awardee, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard & his wife Winnie, Marilyn Cox, CNO, Patient Services, Riley Hospital for Children & Ms. Victoria Navarro, PNAA President

In the late 1960's, Victoria "Vicky" Navarro was one of my nursing students doing clinical experience at the Medical Center Manila (MCM), Philippines where I was a Nursing Supervisor. Upon graduation in 1970 she proceeded to work in MCM as a Clinical Nurse at the Medical-Surgical Unit, OB/GYN, & Pediatrics. To her, and till a few years ago I am still "Miss Delos Santos." Fast forward to 2014, Vicky was now President of the Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA) and she inducted me into office as the 8th President of the Indiana Chapter of the PNAA.

Ms. Navarro is the most dynamic president of PNAA, and even after her term ended she continued to accomplish so many firsts. During her term as Chairperson, PNAA Office of International Affairs entered into an agreement with the Philippine Department of Health Secretary Enrique Ona, Order 2013-1591, establishing the Nurse Anesthetist Program in the Philippines. Additional achievements were the partnership of PNAA with the Philippine Embassy Washington DC Consular Outreach Service and Nurse Curriculum Compliance with the US State Boards of Nursing. She was Co-Chairperson with Washington DC

Philippine Labor Attaché, Saul de Vries on the Task Force, The New Paradigm for Recruitment of Foreign Educated Nurses. The Task Force completed the seminal document on “Proposed Provisions on the Termination and Breach of Employment Agreement of US Bound Filipino Nurses” which was submitted to Philippine Department of Labor, Silvestre Bello in 2018.

In 2014, she spearheaded a worldwide fundraiser as the inaugural Co-Director of the Philippine Humanitarian Coalition (PHC) in partnership with the US Philippine Society and Philippine Embassy Washington DC, held the “After the Storm” concert at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC for the relief of Typhoon Haiyan victims, participated by world renowned performers. As Director of PHC, she continues to fulfill its mission of helping the survivors of natural and man-made disasters with climate change mitigation materials such as solar lanterns, livelihood and home building materials with a Filipino American community/professional organization. Major disasters were as follows: 2015 back to back typhoon in Bicol, Philippines, 2015 Nepal earthquake, 2017 Marawi Siege, 2018 Jolo fire and in 2020 until the present, food aid to Filipinos who lost their daily meager income due to COVID-19 enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

Ms. Navarro has more than 47 years’ experience with expertise in healthcare leadership, education, clinical quality, patient safety, and risk management, community/civic leadership and humanitarian endeavors. Thus, my hats off to Vicky, indeed, she is the epitome of “A SHOULDER I CAN STAND ON.” On top of this activism and professional achievements, she continues to advocate for Filipino Americans here & in the native land as Director of the Philippine Humanitarian Coalition and as the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, Office of the President of the Philippines Honorary Representative to the U.S. She remains pleasant, personable, empathetic, humble and true to her St. Paul University School of Nursing values as I am.

To get a glimpse into what embodies Ms. Navarro personally and professionally, I present to you my telephone interview of her while she was driving from one of her meetings to another:

1. What were your areas of commitment to nursing?
 - Clinical, administration, safety and quality at Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins Medicine International as Director of Clinical Quality
 - The Joint Commission International as Nurse Surveyor
 - Director of the Philippine Humanitarian Coalition – Helped about 8,000 families with food aid and relief to fight hunger; rebuild homes from Typhoons Rolly and Ulysses.
 - Past President Philippine Nurses Association of America 2012-2014

- Submitted more than 40 publications in peer reviewed professional journals, clinical books and over a hundred presentations in local and international conferences.
 - Earned the 2014 Presidential Award for Filipinos Overseas from His Excellency, Philippine President B. Aquino, Jr. because of her significant contributions in advancing the cause and leadership of Filipino Nurses internationally and her philanthropic activities.
 - Recipient of the 2016 Outstanding Filipino American awarded by Philippine to the US Ambassador Plenipotentiary, Jose L. Cuisia, Jr.
2. What challenges did you find in being a nurse of color? (If not a nurse, what challenges have you encountered in your life?)
- I see myself within the context of a professional, thus I did not have any. This was feasible because I worked in a diverse environment at Hopkins and Joint Commission International.
3. How did you overcome those challenges?
- As an immigrant, coming from a different country, I always have to go the extra mile, be articulate in my communication/language, to overcome the accent of a non-English speaking person.
 - Be cognizant of microaggressions; I don't see myself as different, although others look at me as different such as the way they ask questions, I have to be very acute on listening, perception of my own work expectations which others may see differently.
4. What suggestions, recommendations do you have for me?
- See yourself as at par with your colleagues
 - In addition, you have to remember that you have more challenges, more things to cope with and overcome.
 - As an immigrant coming from another country you have to deal with status – You become a novice once again; each time you move from one job to another;
Being a novice is not a step back but a way of learning again.
 - Have the humility to accept the status of a novice, to accept the role, accept, communicate, do research and learn more.
 - Be honest to accept mistakes, say I stand corrected and learn from it. **LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES RATHER THAN YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS.**
 - As GRETSKY says “Always look at where the puck is going” – you can actually determine in your mind where you are going or if you jump on horseback “look to the next jump” so you can anticipate where its going because sometimes you cannot predict the outcome.

- DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE OR HELP.
- DO NOT GET HUNG UP ON WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT YOU – STAY FOCUSED, DO NOT LET THOSE CRITICISMS DETER YOU IN YOUR GOALS.
- Also, as FDR says “There is nothing to fear but fear itself”