

He Also Heads the Wack Wack Club

Philippine Bank President Revisits City

By ANN CONNELL
Register-Guard Society Editor

The president of Manila's Philippine National Cooperative Bank looked about Eugene, smiled, and said: "It's great to be back! Feels like home — in spite of the changes." He saw the city first in 1922, and last in 1947. Changes have been many.

He is Augusto F. Espiritu, who was a student at Eugene High School in 1922, and went on through the University of Oregon to graduate in 1929 with a degree in business administration—major, accounting, accounting; minor, banking.

"It was before the days of scholarships," he said. "I am proud that I came by my own efforts, with help from my parents only for tuition. I worked for my room and board."

When he attended the university, he lived for a time in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred B. Johnson of Springfield. Two other Filipino students also lived there—Manuel Alcide and Romulo Avilo, still friends of his in Manila. "Manuel is credit manager in a bank, Romulo is manager of a sugar company," he reported. All were active together in the underground forces during the war.

On his way from San Francisco to Seattle on a round-the-world trip for his bank, in which he is establishing corresponding banks in major international cities to expedite the financing of foreign trade, Espiritu stopped off here for a day and a half to renew local ties and to visit with the Johnsons. He had made a similar visit after the war, 15 years ago.

On his journey, he started from Manila Oct. 10, and visited banks in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Honolulu before coming to the United States. He spent several days in San Francisco and will stop in Seattle, Chicago and New York City; then to London, Frankfurt, Germany, and home again in the first week of November.

He had banking business in San Francisco, but another interest kept him there longer. His son, Augusto Jr., 20, is working and studying in the American Institute of Banking in the bay metropolis.

Augusto is the eldest of the three sons of the family. At home with their mother, Kay, who visited Eugene and the Johnsons five years ago, are Octavio, nearly 18; Arturo, almost 16, and little Lelida, a six-year-old daughter. An older daughter, Virginia, is in Chicago, where she also is employed by a bank.

"When I left Eugene in 1929, I went east,

intending to do further study. My mother's death changed that; I went home at once. I went to work then for an American firm of public accountants, Haskins and Sells — one of the largest in the world. I stayed with them until '39. Then the Philippine Trust Co. invited me to come into the bank; I was taken in as an auditor, and stayed with them until the war came.

"I had been a member of the Philippine Army Reserve Corps for some time; with advent of war, I was called to active service as a major in the finance service — that was my specialty, of course.

"After the fall of the Philippines, I was active in the underground, in Supply and Intelligence. My major problem was getting food to feed our members."

He was asked to go back into the bank in 1946, and there has remained, now its president and chairman of the board.

Not all his time is spent at business, for he is president also of the international Wack

Wack Country Club — "it's named for a bird; 'wack wack' is what the bird is supposed to say, as you say 'quack quack' for a duck," he explained.

General Romulo, now president of the University of the Philippines, is a personal friend, as is the present Philippine ambassador, Amelito Mutuc, whom he plans to see on a side-trip to Washington, D.C. "He's a brilliant young man, a lawyer; he was right-hand-man to President Macapagal. He also was president of the Manila Jaycees."

Mrs. Espiritu also is active in many circles, but is especially an ardent grower of orchids. "Her orchid garden practically surrounds the house, and they look in at all the windows," he laughed. She will be chairman of the annual Orchid Show in February, which is famous in those latitudes and draws exhibits from gardens all over the world.

Since Philippine independence, there has been a resurgence of national pride, the visitor noted. "Formerly we had five major dialects, according to the various districts. They

are trying now to unite these into one, the Tagalog (accent on second syllable), and this is being developed as the national language. "Up to now, we've often had to use English as an intermediary tongue between Filipinos, if they were from different areas. English is being replaced somewhat by this movement, although still taught, as it has been for 50 years."

The Manila banker keeps in touch with former classmates through the school magazine, Old Oregon, which he has received continuously as a life member of the U of O Alumni Association.

"I frequently meet students who have returned from the USA, and some have been at the University of Oregon. Most of them seem to be majors in education, and many are teaching in our high schools now. One chap went into foreign service, and now is a consul.

"I tell them that I, too, once was a member of good old 'Cosmo' Club on the Oregon campus."



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