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transferred from the car to the emergency room. Rey's "white duck" was splattered with blood as he helped carry her from the car. Benjie later remembered that as Rey was rushing her to the hospital, she could faintly hear the cannons being fired to welcome the prime minister. Although that was not her concern at that time, she later thought it was a fitting welcome for the birth of her son. To commemorate the minister's visit, Rey and Benjie named their son Roman Lee.

A few weeks later, the baptism was held with godfathers and godmothers coming from PMA '71 and their ladies. The reception at the couple's quarters was almost like a *fiesta*. Rey's classmates were the prominent guests and, as is usual when PMAYers get together, they joked about their cadet days. They also discussed how each got assigned to the Academy. Most of all, they talked about the achievement of their classmate, Aris Delos Reyes, as mess officer.

Cleaning Up the Mess

At 5 am every day, Aris would already be awake. He was staying at the Bachelor Officers' Quarters (BOQ) located four down from the top of the cluster of quarters along the long stretch of Quezon Avenue, the main road of Fort Del Pilar. After a light breakfast, he would slip on his gray long-sleeved military jacket. He was ready to go to work.

Aris returned to PMA in December 1974. His first assignment was as tactical officer of Charlie company, his company when he was still a cadet. In July 1975, he took over as cadet mess officer, in charge of the procurement of food and the preparation of the cadets' meals. On his first day, he preferred to just walk to his office since it was just half a kilometer south of Quezon Avenue. The route was downhill and an easy walk. It was a fine day. The sky was blue but the weather was cold. At the far west horizon was the 4,554-foot Mount Santo Tomas. Aris always bragged to his friends that he had hiked the top of that mountain when he was a plebe in 1967.

He had already waived off two military jeeps whose drivers offered to give him a ride. He passed by the houses of his classmates – Reggie and Gigi Regalado's and Nelson and Chit Eslao's. Raising a family in PMA is a wonderful idea, he thought. The weather is excellent. Life is peaceful.

At 26, Aris was still a bachelor. For the last three years, he was assigned to Mindanao on board the patrol ship RPS Datu Kalantiaw PS76. He had no time to look for a wife. He expected to find the time at PMA; in fact, he had already one girl in mind. Nina. She was

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working for him as the dietician of the cadet mess. The day before, she was at his office giving him a copy of her prepared menu for the forthcoming visit of President Marcos and party. As she left the room, he followed her with his eyes. He often did that. Sometimes Nina would catch him looking at her and Aris would give her a sheepish look. Many times he dreamt he was married to her and playing with their children. The truth was that he was already in love and wanting to marry her! But how could that be? He had not even begun to court her. By golly! He was cursing himself.

As Aris turned left at the south wing corner of Melchor Hall, a group of senior cadets were walking by on the sidewalk. When they saw him coming, they stepped aside and out of the cemented path. Nobody dared to look at his eyes for more than a minute. Cadets avoided him because he was strict and issued so many delinquency reports on erring cadets. "He seldom smiled," a cadet commented. "Expressionless," another quickly added.

With his trademark expressionless look, Aris would check on the cadets on the nights when he was the Officer-in-Charge (OC). An OC was a guard duty detailed daily among officers of the Tactics Group. He was responsible for watching over cadets for 24 hours. As such, Aris stayed and slept at the cadet barracks. He saw to it that the rules and regulations were followed. He would go around the barracks after meals to deter hazing. He would also do random inspections at certain hours of the night to look for cadets going on off-limits and committing serious offenses.

The OC's uniform included a saber sword in a scabbard attached to a sword belt. Aris usually tried to lift it a little bit so it would not rattle too much. He was reminded of Captain Abraham Manuel PMA '57, tactical officer when the Class of '71 were plebes. His intentional heavy footsteps along with the loud rattling of his saber would forewarn upperclassmen committing hazing. That usually saved the day for the upperclassmen at the expense of the plebes.

Unlike Captain Manuel, Aris would just barge into a room catching regulation violators in the act. He knew what a few seconds could do to avoid being caught. When they were cadets, his classmate, Arpee Santos, their techno genius, had devised an early warning device that alerted them when OCs were coming. Arpee was able to connect the door to the electrical switch of the ceiling lights. One night, the OC saw unauthorized late lights from their room through the small glass window above the door frame. He turned the door knob to open it when suddenly, the ceiling lights went off. Still holding the knob, the OC bent forward

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to find out what was happening. Shaking his head, he pulled the door to shut it. The ceiling lights went on again. When he opened the door again, the ceiling lights went off again. He did this three times with the same result. Stifled giggles could be heard inside the room. The OC was fuming mad. "Godsake, you're fooling me! Everybody out of your bed," ordered the angry OC. The cadets were made to align and were reported for using late lights.

In one instance after taps, Aris caught Cadet Victor Ibrado of Class '76, drinking in an alcoholic beverage – a very serious offense in the Academy. He reported Ibrado. During the battalion board inquiry, Ibrado admitted he committed the offense. "I thought another officer was detailed OC, not Lieutenant Junior Grade Ariston Delos Reyes," Ibrado told the board. (Ibrado would become the Chief of Staff of the AFP 32 years later.)

Aris was strict but not just for the sake of strictness. Foremost in his mind was the good of the cadets and the Corps. In fact, one time he awarded Cadet Alexander Yano also of Class '76 for having established the Corps' record in the 400-meter run. The award granted Yano merits that offset his demerits. Yano, who would also become Chief of Staff of the AFP, claims that he was so proud of the award that he has kept it on a frame.

Aris' thoughts were cut short as he reached his office at the back of the Yap Cadet Mess Hall. He loved his job so much that many times he would sleep in the mess hall to be near the food storage and to guard against sneaking plebes. Among the plebes he had caught was the cadet from Singapore, Michael Siew Kiat Goh PMA '79.

One night, clad in his pajamas and his robe, Goh undertook a mission past midnight. Despite the regulation forbidding him to be out of his bed after taps at 10 pm, he risked his neck by going to the kitchen of the cadet mess hall to eat leftovers. Just like any plebe, he took pleasure in satisfying his craving for more food.

Goh was the 10th cadet, out of 18, sent by foreign governments to study in PMA since the practice started in 1956. He was the third Singaporean, the first being Kah Kee Lim PMA '77. Thailand's Thaval Sawangpunka PMA '60 was the first foreign cadet. He was followed by four US exchange cadets from classes '63, '66, '67 and '68. American Robert L. Dance PMA '68 was a senior when class '71 was a plebe. Malaysia, with two cadets belonging to classes '80 and '81, was the fourth country that sent cadets to study in PMA.

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Goh, believing his raid of the mess hall was successful, headed back to the cadet barracks. He was almost there when Aris caught him. From a distance, the blinding light from Aris' flashlight found the plebe's face. Goh recognized Aris. He ran to his room and tucked himself in bed. To his surprise, Aris followed him and picked him out from the rest of the sleeping occupants of the room. Aris reported him.

On Aris' first day as cadet mess officer, the funds bookkeeper was hesitant to show him the book. He discovered the dismal state of the mess fund. It was in the red! It meant that expenses were more than the allotted fund to support its operation. Allotted funds were taken from the daily meal allowance of ten pesos each from all cadets.

With the procurement officer, Aris mapped out the procurement plans. His order: "I'd like you to shop all over Baguio for the best bargains." A few days later, a staffer reported, "Sir, we found a dealer willing to supply us with a superior grade at a reduced price." "Let's buy from them," was Aris' immediate reply.

"A few weeks later, the cadets were eating good rice," said Cadet Goh. "The next few days we had *tuyo* [dried fish] for our meals and then our fair share of a full tin of milk for each table was reduced to a half size tin."

Realizing that his initial effort was not enough, Aris decided to open a canteen for cadets and visitors. It generated an additional income of P20,000 that was then added to mess fund savings. Although bigger savings was generated at the expense of the cadets' meals, the cadets were not complaining. The cadets knew where the savings went. They got new sets of china ware, tablecloths, curtains for the hall, silverware, and a tea set for every table. In short, it was a complete facelift for the mess hall.

Aris was elated to know how the cadets felt. As Cadet Goh reported, they wondered what the cadet mess would be without him. "They're part of each other. One would be dead without the other."

One month later, the mess fund was in the blue. It remained that way until the end of Aris' tour. By mid-1976, he decided he wanted to go back to the Navy to pursue his career at sea. When he requested the reassignment, the commandant of cadets extolled his achievement, "You have been a big asset to us," Aris was told. "You're leaving at a time when we need you most. You've done an outstanding job handling the cadet mess fund. However, we respect your decision to go back to the Navy for your professional growth."

Before leaving PMA, Aris was awarded his first "Military Merit

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Medal” by the superintendent. The Cadet Corps also gave him a Certificate of Appreciation. Aris learned later that one month after his relief, the mess fund was in the red again.

Aris considers his one-year stint as cadet mess officer “the most rewarding position I had ever occupied in my entire military career.” His reputation spread far and wide. “Members of PMA Classes ‘76 to ‘80 would later keep on mentioning that tour of duty of mine to other cavaliers and even to their friends.”

During a Senate Committee hearing on a proposed mess allowance, Aris’ classmate, Senator Ping Lacson PMA ‘71, stated on record, “I believe in his statements because I know how he had performed when he was the mess officer in PMA.”

The biggest reward however was winning his staff dietician, Nina’s, heart. Aris and Nina tied the knot on July 10, 1976.

Managing a Bigger Corps

Outside Yap Hall – the cadets’ dining hall – one morning after breakfast, a plebe together with other fourthclassmen in their squad were double-timing around a yearling (sophomore) cadet. They were ordered to throw their legs up high as if reaching for the sky. The plebes were being punished for their very lax decorations for Thanksgiving Day. As they rounded the bend from the Mess Hall between the cadet barracks and Melchor Hall, one plebe saw Lieutenant Frank Brawner PMA ‘71 likewise rounding the bend. Frank was an instructor, tactical officer, senior tactical officer, and the department head for military leadership of the Tactics Group.

Immediately, the plebe exaggerated his double-timing and pushed his head to more than parallel to the sky purposely to endorse the yearling cadet for excessive punishment.

“Tsun [Stop] plebe! Demmet! You may get me slug [punished] because of your laxity!” the yearling immediately ordered.

But it was too late. Frank saw what the yearling was doing to the plebe and his classmates. Expecting that the upperclass cadet would be admonished, the plebe secretly chuckled, “I feel triumphant! We’re now even!”

In his classic drawling voice, Frank thundered to the yearling, “Are you supervising these plebes?”

The yearling cadet replied, “Yes, Sir!”

Then the plebe heard that line he would never forget.

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“You supervise these plebes properly.”

Pointing to the plebe, Frank said, “He’s fooling.”

It was one of the countless Saturday parades and reviews that PMA cadets had rendered for its guests. At the grandstand were the commandant of cadets and the tactical officers. There were no special guests but the grandstand was full of visitors. The left and right slopes on both sides were also full. Frank thought it was a good time to focus on the cadets rather than pleasing the guests.

Frank nodded with approval as the Corps rendered a single click after inspection of arms was given. The Class of ‘71 where he belonged once stood in the exact spot where the Cadet Corps was standing in formation. During their time, the cadets used the heavier M1 (caliber .30) rifles for parades and inspections. By 1978, cadets were issued relatively lighter M14 rifles, part of the hundreds of M14s that the government seized from the CPP-NPA’s botched attempt to land arms at Digoyo Point, Isabela in 1972.

How life in PMA had changed in ten years. The Cadet Corps had only 281 cadets in March 1967 when the 148-strong Class of ‘71 reported on April 1st that year. With the succeeding recruitment exceeding 100 per class, the Corps’ strength rose to 453 in 1971. By 1975, it almost doubled. The tactical officers worked hard in coping with a bigger Corps. Numerous meetings were held. The Treasurer and S-4 (supply) Officer Lieutenant Rey Rivera PMA ‘71, Frank’s classmate, had his hands full as he procured additional supplies and equipment for new cadets.

Since the postwar era, the Cadet Corps was divided into two battalions and four companies: Alfa, Bravo, Charlie and Delta. In 1975, the Corps was reorganized into six numerical companies and three battalions as its strength increased. On October 14, 1975, the companies were renamed after famous battles: Bessang, Tirad, Pinaglaban, Bud Daho, Mactan, and Imus. As the Cadet Corps’ strength reached 1,000 another re-organization took place. From six cadet companies, it increased to eight companies. It became a four-battalion Cadet Corps. The company designations reverted to lettered companies. Echo, Foxtrot, Golf and Hawk companies were added to the original Alfa, Bravo, Charlie and Delta. Most of the Class ‘71s reassigned to PMA served as tactical officers of the newly organized cadet companies.

The members of Class ‘71 were first lieutenants (or lieutenant junior grades for the Navy) for only a short time. In April 1977, Frank

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Browner reported to the commandant of cadets. "Come in CAPTAIN Browner," the commandant told him. Did he hear CAPTAIN? Surprised, he wanted to ask the commandant to repeat what he just said. Maybe he was just mistaken? Seeing that Frank was perplexed, the commandant told him, "Your class has just been promoted to the rank of captain effective April 1, 1977. Didn't you know that yet?"

After six years of military service where three years were spent as first lieutenants, the PMA Class '71 were promoted en masse to the rank of captain (lieutenant senior grade for the Navy) except Egay Aglipay, who was promoted ahead due to his exemplary accomplishments during the Palanan incident where his troop foiled the attempt by the CPP-NPA to land arms.

As tactical officers at PMA, the members of class '71 had different styles in administering the cadets. Take Aris Delos Reyes and Frank Browner. Aris was strict, Frank was lenient and forgiving. But the end result was the same. Both earned, for years, the praises and recognition of the PMA classes they had taught.

The Legend That Was Frank Browner

One night after taps, Frank, who was the OC that day, decided to do a round to inspect cadet rooms. In one room, he caught one cadet, covered with a blanket, holding his "thing" while reading a Hustler magazine using a flashlight. In his distinctive voice, he told the cadet, "Gaad ... deemmm ... just doing that 'thing'... you still have to use unauthorized late lights?" The roommates, who knew that the cadet kept *Penthouse* and *Playboy* magazines with his dirty laundry, were giggling in their beds. Frank forgave him. No delinquency report was issued.

Frank was surprised to find out that the class of '81 thought him a legend. They baptized him "Kiwi," as in the shoe polisher. During Class '81's Southeast Asian tour, Frank acted as guide during the cadets' visit to Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. One morning he walked out to the ship's deck. Thinking he was alone, he leaned over the railings and yelled "*Gising! Gising!* (Wake up! Wake up!)." Then he noticed with his peripheral vision that a whole bunch of '81s were watching him. He composed himself, cleared his throat then sang a perfectly rendered "Shadow of Your Smile," a popular song composed in 1965 for the movie "The Sandpiper." Softly thumping his feet in rhythm and accompanied by the splashing of sea waves, he began:

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*The shadow of your smile
When you have gone.
Will colour all my dreams
And light the dawn.*

“His voice was a mix of the cool and slow voice of Tony Bennett and deep tone of Nat King Cole,” Cadet Butch Cabanban PMA '81, who was present when that incident occurred, recalled. “The rhythm and melody seamlessly mixed made us quiver. His captivating voice was so soothing that it could make a baby sleep. Or put you in a relax mode as if hypnotized.”

Frank's classmates recalled how his soothing voice captivated the audience when they were cadets. During cadet hops (parties), his future wife, Cynthia, felt like floating on air when he sang.

Everyone was dumbfounded as Frank delivered the last lines:

*Now when I remember spring,
And every lovely thing,
I will be remembering
The shadow of your smile.
Your lovely smile.*

A thunderous ovation followed. Frank bowed his head and said, “Thank you, thank you.” He was told that this story of how he delivered that song over the bow of the BRP Datu Kalantiaw PS76 in the waters of Celebes Sea became a classic to be told and retold during his tour as tactical officer in PMA and beyond. “Kiwi had style,” said Cabanban. Frank just shook his head the first time he heard that remark.

The Adventures of Joey Lalisan

In mid-1977, newly promoted PC Captain Joey Lalisan PMA '71 was briefing a team of PC Western Sector Metropolitan Command (METROCOM) soldiers at its headquarters at the former San Miguel Brewery building close to Malacañang, where he was assigned as its chief of intelligence and investigation. It was a few ticks before midnight. Drawn on the board was a sketch of a penthouse, their target for their mission. “We'll take the front entrance while you provide cover for us,” Joey pointed to the two men seated on his right. To the two soldiers seated on his left, “Your team will cover the