

## **“Poor, Penniless and Alone”: Circumstances Surrounding the Death and Burial of Josephine Bracken in Hong Kong (1902)\***

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Josephine Bracken (1876-1902) entered into Philippine history, and eventually in the lives of every educated Filipino, because of her relationship with José Rizal. Until now, in spite of convincing proof, their marriage, before Rizal's public execution in *Bagumbayan* field (now the Luneta), Manila on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, 1896 is still being questioned, particularly by masonic circles or interpreters of the life and works of the National Hero who still view the Institutional Church, not only as a menace, but as a manipulator of facts and purveyor of deception.

It is not my intention to enter into the polemics of this question. Rizal's death was a public event. No question about that. But his marriage was a private matter, with only a few privileged witnesses. However, it had “public” consequences since it did not only become a bone of contention among scholars, but first and foremost, among members of Rizal's family.

Rather it is my intention to study another private event, this time, probably without any witnesses. I am referring to the death of Josephine Bracken in the land of her birth in Hong Kong. A hundred and two years have passed since that sad event that

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\*I wish to express my gratitude to Román Carter, OP for his invaluable assistance in my research on Josephine Bracken, especially with regards to documents and information from the diocese of Hong Kong.

nipped her in the bud. Sadly, no one remembered Josephine during the centennial of her death two years ago.<sup>1</sup> Not even the nation or foundation that gave her a posthumous award.<sup>2</sup>

### First Signs of a Terminal Illness and Devotion to the Lady of Lourdes

Josephine's brief but intense life is the stuff of legend, not only because of her romance with the Philippine National Hero, but also because of her "alleged" activities in favor of the Philippine nation after the death of her "lover" or "husband" (depending on what school of thought one follows), which sparked a revolution.

Some would even question as to whether there was life for Josephine after Rizal. The present writer has made a first attempt on tracing the six years that remained in the life of Rizal's "Dulce Extranjera" and "Errante Golondrina" especially within the bosom of the Abad family, as Josephine did remarry after Rizal's death and her brief participation in the Philippine revolution, and her eventual "exile" to Hong Kong.<sup>3</sup>

Given that it was the stuff of legend and the romantic ambiance, doubtless inspired by the poetic strains of the verses of Rizal himself, Josephine's tragic existence was viewed or presented from the perspective of romantic pathos. As if her earthly existence was not pathetic enough!

Josephine clearly died of a disease then viewed to be contagious and incurable: Miliary Tuberculosis.<sup>4</sup> Rizal's "Errante Golondrina" started to feel the symptoms of this disease probably by

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<sup>1</sup> Josephine's great-grandson however had a requiem mass offered for the repose of the souls of Josephine and Vicente Abad to mark the occasion at the New St. Michael's Chapel in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig.

<sup>2</sup> This writer is referring to the Bayaning Filipino Foundation Inc. award presented on August 12, 1977 to Josephine's daughter, Doña Dolores Bracken Abad de Mina.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. Ofilada, *Errante Golondrina: The Life and Times of Josephine Bracken* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2003), especially pp. 74ff.

<sup>4</sup> It is called "miliary" because of the appearance of a rash with lesions resembling millet seed. However, the Abad family accounts do not make any mention of the appearance of rashes in Josephine's body.

November to December of 1901. The weather was becoming cooler in tropical and humid Manila. Josephine, as the Abad family claims, was not a sickly person. It all started with a cold, which Josephine attributed to the change of weather.<sup>5</sup> She had grown accustomed to Philippine weather, but welcomed the cooling of the climate as it was more bearable and was indeed refreshing. However, the cold turned out to be an on-and-off fever. Josephine spent that last Christmas of her life, in the company of the Abad family, with an on-and-off fever. She was said to have joined the Abad family in mass at the Old Lourdes Church of the Capuchin Fathers then in Intramuros. The Shrine of Our Lady was the last of the great Churches of Intramuros before its destruction during the Second World War. To the present day, Josephine's descendants keep an ivory statue of the Virgin who appeared in 1858 to Bernadette Sourbious in the grotto.<sup>6</sup> Josephine, Irish and pious lass that she was, was a very devout Catholic and yet she challenged the norms of society then by living in with Rizal, and his liberal and masonic ideas, bereft of sacramental union. And yet, as most historians wish to ignore, she insisted that they legalize their union in the Church, to which the hero acquiesced first during their exile in the lush and green of faraway Dapitan, then under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Cebú. This proposal for canonical marriage was to be finalized in the morning of the hero's death, with the acceptable formula for retraction for the hero and approved by the Dominican Archbishop of Manila, Bernardino de Nozaleda. But this is another story.

Josephine was devoted to the Virgin, even naming her daughter María Dolores, after the Virgin of Sorrows, as she depicted her life as full of sorrows and even acquiring an ivory image of Our Lady of Lourdes. Aside from the image of the Lady of Lourdes, Josephine left her daughter a rosary, said to be the

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<sup>5</sup> Josephine's sister-in-law, Ana, in fact, recalls that Josephine's final illness commenced with a cold from which she never recovered. At first, Ana thought it was the flu, then very common with the change of weather in Manila which ushered in the Christmas season. The first symptoms consisted of a sore throat.

<sup>6</sup> Some historians would even claim, with no tangible proof, that said image was said to have been given by Rizal himself or was acquired by Josephine when she was still Rizal's mistress. The present writer conjectures that the image must have been acquired when Josephine was already Mrs. Vicente Abad in Manila.

one that accompanied Josephine in the darkest hours previous to Rizal's execution.

The apparition of the Virgin to Bernadette created a sensation. In Josephine's time the event was recent. It was first and foremost a sort of confirmation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception defined four years before the apparitions that took place in 1858. But the real sensation was that the Virgin of Lourdes was said to be a healer of the sick with the celebrated springs of water that still flow to this day by the grotto where the apparitions took place.

The Immaculate Conception was not only patroness of the Manila Cathedral (and of the Philippine nation), but also of the Cathedral of Hong Kong where Josephine was baptized on September 27, 1876, a month and fifteen days after Josephine's birth.<sup>7</sup> Devotion to Mary, the Immaculate Conception, was something ingrained to Josephine. And now as the Lady of Healing, Mary's Immaculate Conception had a new meaning to Josephine in the newest Church then within the vicinity of Manila Intramuros just a stone's throw away from the Cathedral. Devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes was brought to the Philippines by the Spanish Capuchins. It is said that Josephine frequented this Church not only because of the Lady of Healing, who was the Immaculate Conception, but because this edifice did not remind Josephine of times past, i.e., of the Spanish occupation with its oppressive clergymen, who had brought her (and Rizal) heartaches. It is said that Josephine was fond of the Spanish Capuchin friars who were manning the shrine of Intramuros. Josephine always was respectful of the clergy, even during the hard times with Rizal and the Rizal family. Her sister-in-law Ana says that Josephine frequently kissed the hands of the priests and asked their blessing, for herself, for her family, and for her little daughter whom she fondly called "Dolly."<sup>8</sup>

In all probability, Josephine intuited she was ill all along even before the symptoms presented themselves. She was a person with a tragic sense of life. Josephine was a quiet person. Ana Abad,

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<sup>7</sup> For a transcription of Josephine's baptismal register, see: M. Ofilada, *Errante Golondrina*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> Doña Dolores Bracken Abad de Mina died in Parañaque City on the night of the 7th of December, 1987.

her sister-in-law, out of concern would ask Josephine; "¿Qué te pasa, Josefina?" when Josephine, who was then running a cold and fever, had difficulty in breathing and apparently very much fatigued while helping with the household chores. Josephine, according to this sister-in-law, was fussy in caring for her daughter Dolly. She helped in the marketing, cooking, and cleaning. She even embroidered pillow cases with the name "Dolly."

Ana Abad recalls Josephine easily grew tired and was not feeling better, and even gives us a picture of Josephine, in silence, saying her beads in front of the small ivory image of the Lady of Lourdes (around one foot tall) enshrined on the Abad family altar<sup>9</sup> and accompanied by the various images of Our Lord and Saints, as the Abads were a pious family.<sup>10</sup>

### The Trip to Hong Kong

Josephine indeed, grew weaker by the day. She insisted on doing her share of the household chores, until the entire family, especially Vicente her husband, her brother-in-law José (then professor of Pharmacy in the University of Santo Tomas, Manila where he would eventually become dean), and the spinsters Ana, Victoria and María, convinced Josephine to stay in bed.

According to Ana, by February of 1902 Josephine could no longer speak, because the effort caused her great pain. She commu-

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<sup>9</sup> Even after Josephine's death the image was enshrined in the Abad family altar with explicit instructions from Josephine, before parting for Hong Kong, to be given to Dolores when she reaches the age of reason. In this present writer's youth, he was able to see remnants of the old Abad family altar centered around an antique image of the Sacred Heart in the old Abad home along Dimasalang St., Santa Cruz, Manila. The present writer resided next door to the old Abad home in his youth. The old Abad home, truly a museum and shrine of sorts of old master paintings and other items, was unfortunately demolished by the heirs around the year 2000.

<sup>10</sup> The Abads unanimously trace their ancestry to Zaragoza, Spain and thus had a fond devotion to the Nuestra Señora del Pilar or the "Pilarica." They frequented the shrine in Santa Cruz, Manila of which they were parishioners when they still resided in Trozo, Manila before transferring to Dimasalang St. Dolores married Salvador Mina y Lamadrid of Narvacan, Ilocos Sur, in Santa Cruz, Manila, dedicated to the "Pilarica" whom Dolores respectfully always referred to as "La Virgen del Pilar."

nicated by means of pen and paper and at times by improvised sign language. Then March came and with it the hot and humid Philippine summer which compounded Josephine's woes. And yet even in bed, she cuddled her little Dolly.

As she grew weaker, Josephine felt that she was gravely ill and the death was knocking at her door. The more she turned to her Lady of Lourdes. Ana testified that she spent most of her time in prayer and recollection, even asking that the ivory image be brought to her bedside together with her rosary beads.

Then a decision was reached to bring Josephine to Hong-Kong. Actually, by February Josephine had already wanted to go to Hong Kong. In paper she reasoned out, with Vicente's silent acquiescence, that the cooler Hong Kong weather will do her good and that she wanted to consult the specialists in the land of her birth. February slowly announced the cool weather, which reaches its climax in January was nearing its end and was a prelude to the heat and humidity of March. Clearly, Josephine never lost contact with the Charity Hospital run by the Canossian sisters with whom she studied in her youth.

Ana noted that Josephine was increasingly becoming melancholic. This she interpreted to be pessimism. And she was correct. Josephine felt that her energy was being drained. The Abads agreed to Josephine's request, but they were all optimistic that the cooler weather in Hong Kong would do Josephine good. They all reached the unanimous decision that Vicente was to accompany his wife, and that funds would be given them for their trip and stay given the Abad connections with *Tabacalera* of Hong Kong. They also agreed that Dolly would be left behind. Vicente's brothers, particularly José and Castor, promised to take care of Dolly, who was to be left in the care of the spinster aunts. This they promised Josephine, who according to Ana, was able to manage a faint smile, reflective of her weariness and her lack of hope.

The couple eventually left for the Crown Colony, according to Ana's recollection, during the second week of February, 1902. Here Vicente was to stay until shortly after Josephine's demise, which took place hardly a month after.

As stated, the Abads were hopeful of Josephine's recovery. But Ana, the closest of Josephine's friends among the brood, noted Josephine's growing melancholy and pessimism.

Ana Abad, in her countless dialogues with Dolores's daughter Ma. Sagrario, recalled Josephine's tearful farewell to Dolly. Josephine silently shed tears upon seeing her little daughter and upon kissing her for the last time. Josephine knew it was the last time that she would cuddle her Dolly, the one who gave her great happiness in the years that followed Rizal's death. Ana could not help but shed tears too, and yet at the back of her mind she was optimistic of Josephine's recovery and return. Still, however, the scene was overflowing with pathos.

### Poor, Penniless and Alone?

As expected, Josephine was brought to the Canossian-run Charity hospital. Given her pious nature, she made friends with the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (P.I.M.E.) missionary of Italian origin, who eventually became vicar of the Apostolic Vicariate of Hong Kong, Giovanni Michael Spada (1867-1950). This priest, then assigned in the Cathedral of Hong Kong who administered to Josephine the last rites of the Catholic Church, testifies: "The last time I saw Mrs. Rizal, I was stricken with pity. She was broken down; yes, very much broken down both in health and spirit. I deemed it my first duty to comfort her and revive her spirit, but my efforts were futile. It was a losing fight. Poor woman, she had lost all hope, and with it her faith, in humanity."<sup>11</sup>

With all probability, Vicente was informed of the diagnosis very quickly: Miliary Tuberculosis. He was advised to stay away from Josephine as it was a contagious disease. Ana Abad recalls Vicente's frantic wires from Hong Kong informing the family of Josephine's worsening condition. Vicente, clearly without delay, informed his family of Josephine's real condition and that it was deemed terminal by the doctors. It was only a matter of time, he wired. The news was quite shocking to the Abads. After Josephine's death, when Vicente returned to Manila, he confided to his family that Dolly was always in Josephine's thoughts as she lay in her death bed, expecting the cessation of her time on earth and the beginning of her sojourn to eternity. And yet, a pious Catholic that

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted by G. Cabrera, *Rizal and Josephine* (Manila: Bookman Printing Co., 1960), 13. For information on Fr. Spada, see: <http://archives.catholic.org.hk/memory/J-Spada.htm>

she was, Josephine was quite morose, cheerless, gloomy. Nothing could lighten her spirits.

Vicente kept a safe distance from his ill wife, who had a contagious disease. He would view her from afar. Anecdotes abound in the Abad family that Vicente, who was around Josephine's age<sup>12</sup>, was not a courageous man and became frightful of the possibility of contracting the same disease.<sup>13</sup> José, the pharmacist, was said to have advised his brother to keep a safe distance from Josephine and let the medical personnel do their duties undisturbed and unworried about the possibility of the husband being infected with the same disease that was wasting away the body of his young wife. Vicente did so, but was able to look at Josephine from the door of the ward where she was confined.

Vicente was definitely not present at the exact moment of Josephine's death which took place around a half-hour after midnight. He may have turned in for the night and was nowhere in the hospital premises. This brought about the legend that Josephine died "poor, penniless, alone, and abandoned" in a charity hospital in Hong Kong, which was of her own choosing because of the bond of friendship with the Canossian sisters.<sup>14</sup> None of the Rizal family

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<sup>12</sup> This we deduce from Vicente's academic records in the University of Santo Tomas archives thus correcting the impression, from Ana Abad's erroneous accounts that Vicente was one of the elder brothers and was even than José. Thus we have to correct our allegation, basing ourselves on the Abad family accounts (particularly Ana) that Vicente was born in 1869. He was in all probability, judging from his academic records, the same age as Josephine (or born around 1876). The search for his baptismal register has not been successful to this date, but it is certain that Vicente was born in Cebú and baptized, like another brother of his, in the Cebú Cathedral. Our letter to the present Rector of the Cathedral of Cebú a few years back did not even merit a reply.

<sup>13</sup> In fact, it has been believed that Vicente died of Miliary Tuberculosis in 1903. Prominent among them was the pioneer Rizal biographer W.A. Retana, basing himself on an informer (a certain Santos Abad) who claimed he was a brother of Vicente, but was not. Retana writes: "Ella [Josephine] murió en Marzo de 1903, de tuberculosis laríngea... Él (Vicente Abad) murió en Agosto siguiente, de una cosa parecida...", *Vida y Escritos del Dr. José Rizal* (Quezon City: R. Martínez & Sons, 1960 reimpresión), 455. Retana errs as to the year of Josephine's death, which occurred in 1902. Ana Abad contradicts this account by stating to Dolores and Ma. Sagrario "que Vicente se murió de ataque de corazón en agosto de 1903."

<sup>14</sup> Admittedly, it is not a far-fetched idea that Josephine was not charged for her stay in the hospital nor did Vicente pay for Josephine's quick and hasty burial.

members were present during the hero's execution and yet no historian or Rizal biographer dared write that the patriot died "poor, penniless, alone, and abandoned," just because no blood relative of his was present in Bagumbayan when the guns barked.<sup>15</sup>

Dolores's eldest daughter, Ma. del Sagrario, made the following declaration in 1958 apropos this "legend":

Poverty did not drive Josephine to Hong Kong. It was her wish to die in the land of her birth. Our grandfather (Don Vicente) may not have been very wealthy, but his family had the means. The Abads during the turn of the century owned stables, carriages and big horses in Intramuros. They owned a drugstore on Magdalena, Trozo, Manila, known as Farmacia Abad, and could easily have afforded my grandmother's medical expenses... It is impossible that Josephine died alone and penniless in Hong Kong. Our grandfather who was very religious and who had the means did not abandon and desert her at a time when she needed him most! They were a happy and contented couple, according to our late aunts and uncles. They were always very fond of each other.<sup>16</sup>

Ana Abad, the last of the surviving in-laws of Josephine was adamant in saying that the Abads sent the couple money in Hong

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Josephine may have, in all probability, been the recipient of an act of charity of her dear mentors and friends, the Canossian sisters. However, Ana Abad recalls that Vicente was given a considerate sum of money for the trip and expenses incurred by Josephine's transfer to Hong Kong and through the family's Tabacalera associates received sums of money from the family. Likewise, Vicente was still employed by Tabacalera till his death. Thus, Vicente clearly had the means to sustain himself and his wife during the latter's final illness. It is said that during this period Vicente resided with his friends from Tabacalera, with whom he stayed previous to his marriage to Josephine. However, the exact location cannot be ascertained.

As to Josephine being a charity case, it can be deduced from the words of Fr. Spada, that he and the sisters took pity on the young couple (both Josephine and Vicente were then twenty-six) and given Josephine and her step-father Taufer's friendship with the Canossians, did not charge them for her stay.

As to how Vicente spent the money he had at his disposal, there is no explicit accounting. But clearly, Vicente, given his employment in Tabacalera and the means of the Abad family in Manila, had the means to support himself and Josephine at that time in Hong Kong.

<sup>15</sup> In *Errante Golondrina*, Op. Cit., 71ff. we affirmed Josephine's presence in Bagumbayan field during Rizal's execution.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by G. Cabrera, *Rizal and Josephine*, 16-17.

Kong through their contacts in Tabacalera and took care of the expenses. Ana fails to mention the fact that Vicente then was employed in Tabacalera. Ana even claims that most of the expenses were taken care of by José, the pharmacist, the most affluent of the Abads at that time. The other brothers, among them a Judge and a Medical Doctor, also chipped-in, according to Ana's version.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Entry in the *Liber Defunctorum* of the Vicariate of Hong Kong**

Vicente told the Abad family that Josephine died the night of March 14-15, 1902 and was given a hurried funeral in the Happy Valley Cemetery, given the prevailing (and not unfounded) fear of the contagious disease that claimed Josephine's life. Vicente was told that Josephine died around half past midnight.

The Abads have always accepted March 15 as the death anniversary of Josephine.<sup>18</sup> It was the date that Dolores accepted. However, Fr. Spada, who administered the last sacraments to Josephine, signed the entry in the *Liber Defunctorum*, March 14. The most plausible explanation is that Fr. Spada gave the last rites to Josephine on the night of the fourteenth and presumed that death took place on the same night. Vicente claims that death took place, according to the nurses, after midnight (therefore, the fifteenth). Vicente was informed in the morning.<sup>19</sup> He did not however see the body (as it was already wrapped) and hurriedly transported to the Happy Valley Cemetery. He did catch up with the burial and

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<sup>17</sup> The present writer hopes to publish soon a study on the Abad brothers. Vicente finished his *Bachiller en Artes*, following the reforms of the *Segunda Enseñanza* in the Philippines, which commenced during the academic school year of 1866-1867, at the University of Santo Tomás. See: *Programa y Reglamento de la Segunda Enseñanza para las Islas Filipinas* (Manila: Imp. de la Universidad, 1866). Also: F. Gainza, *Reglamento de escuelas de latinidad* (Manila: Imp. de la Universidad, 1858). The present writer has found in the University archives the academic records of the Abad brothers and wishes to thank the assistance of the archivist Fr. Fidel Villarroel, OP and his assistant, Mrs. Lulu del Mar, for their kind assistance.

<sup>18</sup> The present author, following the Abad family tradition, also accepts March 15 as the date of Josephine's death, cf. *Errante Golondrina*, Op. Cit.

<sup>19</sup> Burials took place at the crack of dawn and not in the dark of the night.

saw the place of burial. He knew the exact spot.<sup>20</sup> She was buried probably together with other victims of the same disease<sup>21</sup> – since the grave was hurriedly dug – and was given a hasty burial.<sup>22</sup> He was told that the chaplain, who aside from giving her the last sacraments, gave Josephine's body absolution and a blessing. Spada, who was close to Josephine, most probably offered a requiem mass in private. The Italian sisters too remembered Josephine's soul in their community prayers and mass.<sup>23</sup>

Below is a transcription of the entry of Josephine's death, confirming that she received the last sacraments, in the *Liber*

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<sup>20</sup> It is not clear whether Vicente arrived on time for the burial or arrived as the burial was taking place or arrived afterwards and was informed that the body was buried in the available spot in the Catholic section.

<sup>21</sup> Josephine's illness was considered a plague. Josephine was buried in an area where quick burials were made. It is the area where victims of the same disease were laid to rest.

<sup>22</sup> In the Abad family accounts, there is no mention as to whether Josephine was placed in a casket. What is known is that immediately after death her body was wrapped in a shroud for purposes of hygiene and immediately forwarded to the Catholic cemetery. The fact that the body was taken to the Catholic section and not to the unconsecrated area showed the Fr. Vicar's intervention, thus corroborating the claim that there was an absolution of the body by Spada. Spada knew Rizal to be Rizal's widow and knew of Josephine's canonical marriage to her first husband and as Pro-Vicar knew of Josephine's second marriage, though he did not preside at the ceremony. See: transcript of Josephine and Vicente's matrimonial register in *Errante Golondrina*, Op. Cit., 91-92. Spada certainly would have had the time to leaf through all the registers in the diocese at that time.

<sup>23</sup> In Manila, according to Ana Abad, requiem masses were offered at the Capuchin Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Manila, Intramuros. This was Vicente's request and it was fulfilled, given Josephine's known devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. Ana also claims that another mass was offered at the Church of Our Lady of the Pillar in Sta. Cruz, Manila where the majority of the Abads went to Sunday Mass. The spinsters attended daily mass in Sta. Cruz which was their parish church. They were then living in Magdalena St. (now Masangkay), Trozo, Manila. Ana claims that Josephine's "influence" made them also frequent the Capuchin Church in Intramuros, then beside San Agustín Church, which still gloriously stands after surviving the holocaust of the Second World War. The Abads then maintained a stable in Manila Intramuros and were fond of taking long walks within the vicinity and even in the famous Bagumbayan park, by the sea, where Rizal was executed. Ana recalls that they used to take Dolores by the sea side to watch the entry of ships in the famous Manila Bay. These ships eventually would pass the famous light house at the mouth of the Pasig River. Aside from being a promenade for Manilans, the park was also used for executions.

*Defunctorum* of the then Vicariate (now Diocese) of Hong Kong. This is the first time that this document is being published:

*Animadversiones*  
Nº 17

*Josephine Taufer Abad*

*Widow of Rizal*<sup>24</sup>

*Habuit omnia Sacramenta*

*Anno Domini 1902 die 14º, mensis Martii*  
*In communione S. Matris Ecclesiae animam Deo*  
*reddidit Josephine Taufer Abad*  
*filia cuiusdam militis hiberni*  
*ex*  
*annos nata 31*<sup>25</sup>  
*cujus corpus sepultum est in nostro Cem.*<sup>26</sup>

*In quorum fidem subsignavi*  
*G.M. Spada*

## Final Reflections

Given the prevailing fear of contamination then from the dreaded disease, Vicente did not plan to eventually exhume Josephine's body and transport her remains to the Philippines. There was no time to have Josephine's name engraved on the tombstone. Vicente, who was distraught over Josephine's expected death, was in a hurry to return to the Philippines to be with his family and little Dolly. He remembered the spot. He could have wanted to bring along Dolly to Hong Kong, when she grew up, to visit Josephine's

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<sup>24</sup> This is a posterior annotation by an unknown hand, which is not immediately visible to the naked eye, but becomes visible in a photocopy of the same register.

<sup>25</sup> Spada errs as to Josephine's age.

<sup>26</sup> This is proof that Josephine was given Catholic burial in consecrated ground and not in an unmarked "pauper's grave" as some historians contend. "In nostro cem." signified the Catholic section of the Happy Valley Cemetery, which was consecrated and marked ground wherein infidels, heretics, schismatics and non-catholics could not be buried.

grave. After all, Hong Kong too was Dolly's land of birth. Ana Abad believes in this plausibility as there was talk in the Abad family that Vicente would resume his work with Tabacalera in Hong Kong, where he first met Josephine as his tutor in English.<sup>27</sup> But this was never to be, for he died the following year.

Vicente's death was a big blow to future Rizalists and Bracken enthusiasts in search of Josephine's tomb. Likewise Ana Abad's lack of historical sense dealt a strong blow on future historiography. Upon hearing of Josephine's demise, Ana burned all her clothes, hats and shoes, even calling them "basura" (trash). But in all actuality she feared the disease, which was then incurable. And yet kept for Dolly the ivory statue of the Virgin of Lourdes, Josephine's rosary beads, Josephine's bible, Josephine's copy of the Imitation of Christ given to her by Rizal, with the dedication "To My Dear and Unhappy Wife"<sup>28</sup>, and a lock of Josephine's hair. Gone too are the pillowcases and other dresses. Ana kept for herself a diary of Josephine which was lost in the Second World War, when the house in Trozo St., which was Josephine's last shrine on earth, was burned to the ground. In Dapitan, given her hurried departure with Rizal from his idyllic exile, however, she left behind some of her clothes, together with personal effects and the bed she shared with the National hero, all in the care of the Aseniero family.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> According to Vicente's academic records in the University of Santo Tomás archives, Vicente took English as a foreign language, required by the curriculum of the Segunda Enseñanza at that time. The choice was between English and French. However, Vicente received only minimal instruction in the University at that time. He never became fluent in English, but his interest in learning this language never wavered. For this reason, he solicited private classes from Josephine in Hong Kong. However, at home, they always spoke in Spanish and they addressed Dolores in Spanish. Dolores only knew Spanish. She never learned English nor did she perfect Tagalog. Even Ana became interested in taking private lessons from Josephine, but eventually gave up in the process. This was told by Ana herself to Dolores, Ma. Sagrario and many of Dolores's cousins, among whom was the late Don Conrado Abad López (second son of Viente's brother, the pharmacist José), who passed away in June of 2001 and who told this writer of this anecdote he himself heard from the lips of his spinster aunt, Ana Abad Recio.

<sup>28</sup> Now in the possession of the Dayco family.

<sup>29</sup> Rizal himself entrusted his possessions, and that of his mistress Josephine, to the elder Aseniero, of whom Josephine was fond of and probably her favorite among the hero's students in Villa Ceele (C.L. or Calamba, Laguna), as Rizal himself

Yet Ana remains a valuable source.<sup>30</sup> In fact, more valuable than all the remaining Abad brothers and sisters whom Dolores knew as she was growing up in the Abad home in Trozo, Manila, and later on in Dimasalang, St., Sta. Cruz, Manila. Ana, Josephine's confidant and bosom friend, is a valuable source in knowing the private life of Josephine as Mrs. Vicente Abad, away from her painful past as Rizal's lover and wife. In fact, Ana, who burned Josephine's belongings and lost her diary in the confusion brought about by World War II, was Dolores's (and eventually Sagrario's) most important source of memories of the mother she never really came to know, but was undoubtedly the object of love and affection of this same mother, who probably knew that she had an infectious disease and chose to be separated from the center of her personal universe after Rizal's passing.

Perhaps we could forgive Ana's lack of historical sense. She was a valuable arsenal of personal memories and anecdotes which were very helpful in posterior Bracken historiography. Perhaps these verified anecdotes more than make up for Ana's rather impulsive and rash move to burn all of Josephine's "basura" under the pretext of being an orderly housekeeper, bereft of sentimentality<sup>31</sup>, as were all the Abad women in their heyday.

Josephine died physically alone (that is, without any direct relative present), the night of March 14-15, 1902, but she was not abandoned nor forgotten. The Canossians and Fr. Spada attended to her. Vicente was just a stone's throw away, in the *pasillos* of the hospital or at the home of his colleagues in Tabacalera, where he lodged during this period. Her Abad family prayed for her, hoping against hope that she would return to be with them and with Dolly, who was still too young to be cognizant of what was happening

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called his place of exile. An unconfirmed story states that Aseniero fell asleep on Josephine's lap when she suffered a miscarriage.

<sup>30</sup> As a matter of fact, there are still some unpublished anecdotes of Josephine's life with the Abads with Ana as the source, but which the present writer has not been able to verify with Ma. Dolores nor Ma. Sagrario.

<sup>31</sup> In fact, people who knew and lived with Ana Abad (like the late Ma. Dolores Abad, Salvador Mina, Ma. Sagrario Mina, Conrado Abad) testify to Ana's great love and fondness for Josephine and how at times the memory of Josephine, and her brother Vicente, brought tears to Ana's eyes.

around her. Her Abad family also took care of Josephine's expenses during her last days, including her daughter María Dolores's expenses (upkeep, schooling<sup>32</sup>, etc.), even after Vicente's untimely passing in 1903, until 1926 when Josephine's orphaned daughter marched the aisle of Sta. Cruz church to marry Salvador Mina.<sup>33</sup> Dolores blossomed into a woman, mother and grand mother who lived a happy and full life, dying at a ripe old age, unlike her tragic mother who, as already mentioned, was nipped at the bud. Dolores's happiness was undoubtedly unhappy Josephine's dying wish.

May the information we provide in this essay put a stop to the romanticizing of Josephine's last days to the benefit of Bracken's detractors, who because of their obstinate ideologies, could not accept that Rizal, the mason, was capable of renouncing masonry, not because he sold his soul to the Church which he denounced with his rational mind and in which he was baptized and reared as a Catholic, but because he wanted to marry the woman he loved, give her his name, give her a legal basis to be a member of his earthly family, to whom he made the following impassioned plea, in his last letter to them, minutes before he fell to the bullets while facing the sunrise in Manila Bay: "Tened compasión de la pobre Josefina" (Have pity on poor Josephine).<sup>34</sup> Clearly, Rizal, after

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<sup>32</sup> Dolores's schooling was paid for by the Abad matriarch, Doña Maximina Recio. According to Dolores, her grandmother Maximina was a strict and loving disciplinarian who closely monitored her studies, enrolling her as an "interna" at the Colegio del Inmaculado Corazón in Manila under Mrs. Pilapil. In the possession of this writer is one of Dolores's report cards in said colegio.

<sup>33</sup> Till her final illness and eventual death, Ma. Dolores maintained her very close relationships with her Abad cousins, whom she considered her "brothers and sisters." The last of the Abad cousins to visit her, a few days before Dolores's passing, was one of our informants on Ana Abad, Conrado Abad López. Other surviving Abad relatives attended Dolores's burial at Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque in December, 1987.

<sup>34</sup> See the last (undated and unsigned) letter Rizal wrote his family on the day of his execution, *Cartas entre Rizal y los miembros de la familia*. Vol. II: 1887-1896 (Manila; Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1961), no. 256, p. 562. In fact, aside from explicitly asking them to have pity on poor Josephine, Rizal explicitly asks his brood to forgive one another and to live united in peace and harmony. This implicitly meant to include Josephine: "Os recomiendo que os perdoneis unos a otros las pequeñeces de la vida y tratad de vivir unidos en

his death, wanted Josephine to remain within the bosom of his family, though he was cognizant of the friction between Josephine and his mother and sisters. But the errant swallow would fly beyond the Rizal nest and reach Hong Kong to recreate herself, to spread her wings, descend to a more discrete height, and eventually return to the then Crown Colony to sing her swan song from her anguished and exhausted soul, though her illness prevented her from using her voice. Resigned to her fate, and after having reviewed her brief and yet intense existence of love, depravation, triumph, and short interlude of piece and happiness, the errant swallow was ready to fly towards eternity, beyond the realm of pain and sorrow.

With Josephine's, and then later on Vicente's, passing, María Dolores became for the Abads the only living relic left behind by the woman whom the National Hero immortalized in his poems as his "Errante Golondrina" and "Dulce Extranjera." □

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paz y en buena armonía.", Ibid. José knew that the family was divided over his tragic circumstances. Paciano was nowhere near at home, for he had joined the rebels. The sisters were also divided, particularly on Josephine and the tension brought about by José's circumstances caused division in his own family. Josephine was clearly a poor victim of this tension.