

A Tribute to My Teacher

One girl hares how her teacher changed her life.

By Jay Ann Delos Santos

The sun in the sky is at its peak. My eyes are wide open but I cannot see anything clearly. But I know I am not blind, for I see a silhouette in my surroundings. A warm hand pats my shoulder and leads me to a road that gradually becomes visible. Thank you...

I met Mrs. Alona T. Knapp during my first year in high school, when she took over our class because our teacher was absent. My first impression was that she was a very strict teacher. You needed to work hard to earn a smile from her. She said things I could not fathom; but then, deep persons can be hard to understand.

During the following three years of my high school life, she regularly taught one or two subjects in my class. I started to know her better and gradually discovered her true personality. Her toughness on the outside, I learned, was equal to the softness of her heart.

I graduated valedictorian of my high school class in Antique, but didn't think I would be able to continue my schooling. My family is not financially stable. My mother is the breadwinner of our family, and it's very hard for her to support us. I have two younger brothers

who are still studying. Then, Mrs. Knapp told me that she found herself in me: a student who is determined to go to school, but not able to go for lack of financial support. I am currently taking up Education at Antique State University with my teacher's help. When Mrs. Knapp decided to support my studies, I started to dream again.

Strength of Character

Mrs. Knapp's toughness hints at her inner strength, which was forged by her own difficult childhood. When her father died, her mother was incapable of sending the children to school. Despite this, Mrs. Knapp found a way to continue studying by working at the same time. She never gave up and often told her own students, including me: "poverty is not a hindrance to success."

No one can tell, though, that she has gone through many rocky roads. Contentment covers the scars of past hardships. One would have a hard time imagining what she went through just to make a dream a reality. And now success is in her hands. Her strong faith in God never fades. She always acts with His guidance. As



Left: Alona Tabang-Knapp with her husband, Joe Knapp. The couple met through church. Alona was the song leader at her Seventh-day Adventist church, where Joe was doing evangelist work. He strongly supports her efforts to promote college education. Above: the author with her teacher.

she always says, "All things happened with a purpose so let it be. God knows what is good for the welfare of humankind."

Wise Words

Mrs. Knapp is one of the most understanding teachers I have ever encountered. Whenever you confess your problems to her, the advice she gives would lighten the burden you feel. I don't know what it is in her that allows her to empathize and adjust to any personality or feeling. She helps you feel important when you're down and depressed. She encourages you when you've started to give up. She is beside you when you need comfort. She listens when you need someone to talk to. She gives alternative solutions when you are confused, especially when adjusting to new

and complicated situations. One piece of advice I'll never forget when you've failed is to "survive and move on."

Her belief is that teaching does not stop in the classroom. Even outside, the teacher-learner relationship should still take place. Though she herself is supporting me financially, she says that the messages a teacher imparts to her students are richer than money.

Big Help

Recently, I noticed how relevant her maiden name is: Tabang. In our dialect, tabang means "help." And that's what she's been to me and countless other students. I'm so proud that I've been a part of her life. A big THANK YOU to her for coming into my life. As my journey to life continues, I know for sure that she continue to be my guide.