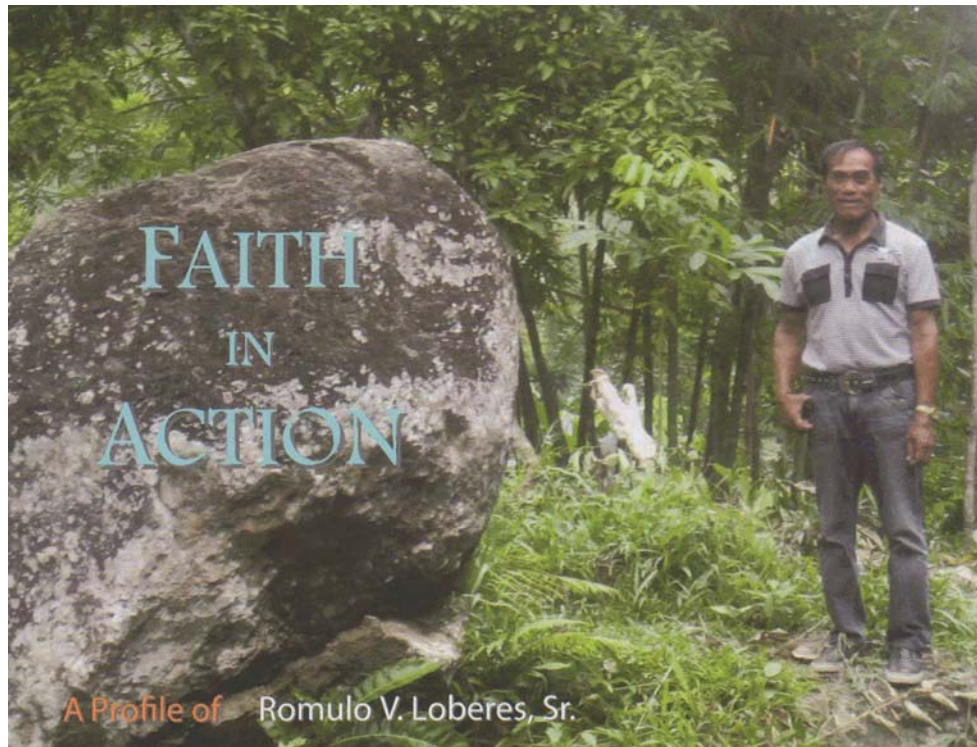


# Faith in Action

## By: Marife V. Sison



Nong Molo as he is fondly called, Romulo V. Loberes Sr., hails from barangay Agustin Navarra, Ivisan, Capiz. He is now 71 years old and has been married for the past 51 years to Leticia. Their union was blessed with eleven children, eight boys and three girls.

In the early years of his married life, and to support his growing family, he worked with his father in the latter's tenanted rice farm which was then owned by Nicanor Azarraga. From then on, he cultivated almost a hectare of Riceland which was to be their main source of livelihood. Every cropping period, Nong Molo dutifully paid a fix rental of 16 cavans per cropping or 32 cavans of palay per annum. Besides farming, he and his wife tended to their pigs, chicken and ducks at their backyard. He likewise ventured in buying and selling of native chicken and eggs during market days in Ivisan (Tuesdays and Fridays) and on Sundays, he went as far as the Roxas City Public Market.

Not the typical farmer who relied merely on traditional planting of rice, Nong Molo sought the advice of his fellow farmers and agricultural technicians who rendered agri-extension service in the area on how he could improve his harvest. He likewise participated in almost all rice farming technology-transfer seminars and applied what he learned. His perseverance and hard labor eventually paid off since then, for he started harvesting one hundred and twenty (120) cavans per cropping from his farm.

## From farmer to ARB...



In 1978, Nong Molo was awarded his Certificate of Land Transfer (CLT) by then Ministry of Agrarian Reform (MAR). Thereafter, former President Marcos signed Presidential Decree No. 27 (Operation Land Transfer). This was a blissful time for him with the hope that under the program, he would eventually be the owner of the rice land he was tilling. Finally on November 14, 1994 Emancipation Patent Nos. 9380 and 9378, were registered in a Transfer Certificate of Title under his name, making Nong Molo the proud landowner of a total area of 0.80537 hectare Riceland.

He never had any financial obligations with Land Bank of the Philippines for the said land anymore, because under the OLT program, all the rentals paid to the previous landowner were automatically deducted from the valuation of the land. Thus, his diligence in paying his rentals paid-off, when the bank issued him a certificate of full payment for the land.

Aside from being responsible, our ARB winner is also a very industrious worker, which people around him noticed. Thus, he was offered a job as fishpond overseer by Mr. Antonio Soriano, who gave him PhP 1,800.00 per month as salary. Despite this additional endeavor, Nong Molo never neglected his rice farm. He was a reliable and good overseer in Mr. Soriano's fishpond. With his modest savings and experience, he purchased a one (1) hectare fishpond where he raised prawns, milkfish, and crabs.

Being adventurous, Nong Molo decided to deposit all his palay produce from his CARP-awarded land, to a Poblacion-based trader for five (5) long years, without getting a single centavo from the sales. Their agreement was that he would withdraw his money (sales from the deposited palay) from the trader after the lapse of five (5) years at current market price. Though he personally knew the trader, Nong Molo knew then that he was subjecting himself to a risk. But he said "In life, sometimes we have to be very brave and always look at the positive side. I thank God my decision was right." Thus, after five (5) long years, his venture provided him with five times the value of his crop. The total amount that he was able to withdraw from the palay trader was PhP 300,000.00

With the cash at hand, Nong Molo started implementing his long time plans. First, he acquired a 12-hectare land planted to coconut (which he later subdivided to all his children). He bought farm and other equipment to increase his farm production such as traveling rice mill, three (3) units of tricycle and a service vehicle to transport his produce. Likewise, he

now owns two complete sets of farm machineries (each set is composed of hand tractor, turtle tiller, blower and a thresher).

### **The socially-responsible family man....**



As previously mentioned, the couple was gifted with 11 children, whom Nong Molo and Nang Lety consider as their biggest blessing. The children are all grown up and successful. Two (2) daughters are now based in Canada while four (4) sons are working in Taiwan. He even sent two (2) of his daughters-in-law to finish college. One is now a public school teacher while the other one is taking up a nursing course and is set to graduate this school year.

As a further proof of his well-earned wealth and financial stability, Nong Molo's house is the biggest and the grandest in Barangay Agustin Navarra. It stands on a more or less 2,000 square meter lot.

To show his full support to CARP, Nong Molo served as BARC Chairman in Agustin Navarra for 18 years (1990-2008). During the time that he was Chairman, Nong Molo settled various agrarian conflicts that were brought before him.

He is likewise an active member of CAMMA Small Farmers Multi purpose Cooperative, a DAR assisted Peoples' Organization. When it was organized in 2006, he was among the pioneer members and supported the coop all the way. He availed of the coop marketing services for his copra to be sold to the other cooperatives in Ivisan, Capiz.

From the trainings provide by DAR, he gained knowledge, techniques, strategies and technology adoption greatly improved.

Nong Molo is a passionate supporter of CARP. Quoting him “I believe our government spends so much money for good purpose. That is why whatever technology that the government agency like the Department of Agriculture promotes, I really support and apply in my farming activity.” He also stated that almost 80% of farmers in Agustin Navarra support organic farming. They use and apply inorganic fertilizers and chemicals only during bad times, such as when there is massive infestation. He also added that he never burned rice stalks in the middle of the field because the DA technicians strongly prohibited it, but rather he scattered it to decompose and turn into organic fertilizer.

The DA technician assigned in the area could attest that all farmers from Agustin Navarra strongly support government programs. A long season farmer’s field school in the area was recently conducted and the implementation is being sustained.

In 1990, Nong Molo was awarded by the Philippine Coconut Authority as the Most Outstanding Coconut Farmers (National Level). The ceremony was conducted in Malacañang. And for this year, 2009, DAR recognized him as the Most Outstanding ARB for Bicol-Visayas.