

## **SIR COLONEL VICENTE O. NOVALES'S SPEECH ON CONFERRING THE PLAQUE AND MEDAL OF PEACE NOBODY IS A WINNER IN WAR**

**'Because of all the experiences that I had, I realized that the inhumanity of man against his fellow being must be stopped,' Sir Colonel Vicente O. Novales says. 'There is only one conclusion: We must stop all wars, because nobody is a winner, and everybody is a loser.'**

I bring you warm greetings from the Philippines and a warmer greeting from a senior World War II veteran. I thank you for having me here to share with you some of my life experiences.

About 60 years ago, like all the students of this magnificent institution of learning, I was full of life and busy with college activities. Basketball is the most popular sport in the Philippines. Once you become a member of the champion team of the National Intercollegiate Athletic Association, it makes you feel like a celebrity. And for a 19-year-old, it was a glamorous life.

As history will tell you, on Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese Imperial Air Force bombed Pearl Harbor, which started the Pacific War. I volunteered in the Philippine Army but was turned down for enlistment because I was only 19 years old and did not have enough military training.

But being 19 years old did not keep me and a lot of my friends on the sidelines. We organized a guerrilla outfit, which is known as the Hunters ROTC. I am very proud to say that this organization has established itself in the history of the Philippines as one of the successful guerrilla movements of our country. We were idealists and loved our country, and we were willing to die for what we believed in. A lot of my friends were killed.

As guerrillas, we were both the hunters and the hunted. We suffered deprivations living in the jungle. We had no food, we were vulnerable to the elements most of the time, and insects and leeches attacked us. I cannot explain to you how life was then, but believe me, it was very hard. To avoid starvation, we learned to eat anything that moved in the jungle. We were living off the land.

The worst thing that happened to me was being captured by the Japanese Imperial Army and imprisoned at Fort Santiago. The dreaded military Kempeitei subjected me and all of us who were incarcerated in this fort to almost daily torture. We were punched, kicked, beaten with pieces of wood and tortured. In addition to this, we were not given food and water. We were subjected to the cruelest and most inhumane torture and indignities, which I would like to forget.

Fortunately, in my case, I was transferred to the island of Mindanao in the province of Davao, where we were away from Manila in an outdoor type of environment. But the starvation and the torture continued.

I was able to escape from this concentration camp and joined a guerrilla unit operating in the area under an American officer named Wendell Fertig.

Can you imagine the hatred and the anger that built within me because of this experience? It transformed me into a machine of death against the enemy, every time I went on a mission. I was very cruel.

But eventually, because of all the experiences that I had, I realized that the inhumanity

of man against his fellow being must be stopped. This is from a man who has suffered and dealt sufferings. There is only one conclusion: We must stop all wars, because nobody is a winner, and everybody is a loser.

Peace, not war, must be the ultimate undertaking of all men.

As Dr. Daisaku Ikeda writes in his 1999 Peace Proposal: "To lay the foundations for a lasting peace, we must deinstitutionalize war. We must effect a transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace. With the end of the Cold War, for the time being at any rate, the threat of an all-out nuclear conflict has been averted. Unfortunately, however, local and ethnic conflicts grow in number year by year all over the world" (May 1999 *Living Buddhism*, p. 29).

Dr. Ikeda is truly is a man of peace, and for this reason, our organization honors him with the Plaque and Medal of Peace.

For an aging veteran like myself, facing the final curtain of my life, I have to say that the honor you have given me today will be treasured not only by yours truly but also my family and the many veterans of World War II.