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The President's Report 2022

To: The Board of Trustees

From: Rodelle B. Bolante

It is my distinct honor to make this report.

Our term started on January 1 pursuant to the PBA's Amended Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws.

We hit the ground running as the beginning of our term coincided with the successful staging of the 2nd PBA Art Auction in the month of January. With practically zero overhead costs since it was done through a social media platform, the auction yielded a hefty profit of P248,300.00. Close to 30 artworks from various artists were sold. I wish to thank PBA member Divine Pedron, Trustee Bingbing Fernando and Trustee Rachelle Santos for their hard work.

On January 31, we issued our first public statement for the year on the COMELEC's delay in resolving the disqualification case against a presidential candidate. The statement was eventually picked up by leading dailies through their online platforms. I thank Trustee John Molo for drafting the statement, and special mention to Trustee Arnel Valeña for being interviewed by Pinky Webb during her program, The Source, on February 2.

On February 9, we had an in-person induction of the 2022 officers and trustees with Justice Jhosep Y. Lopez administering our oath of office at the Supreme Court Main Session Hall. Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo also graced us with his presence. The event was reported by the Manila Bulletin in its online publication. Lunch followed at Casino Español and the first in-person meeting of the 2022 Board of Trustees.

On March 13, we had our fellowship activity hosted by Trustee Peter Corvera at his farm in Silang, Cavite. After the board meeting, he gave us a tour of his ultra-modern farm followed by dinner and drinks with a live band entertaining us. It was good to see Past Presidents Pope Solis, Juju Lotilla, Rodel Cruz and Tess Sison Go enjoying themselves bonding with the incumbent trustees.

In late March, we received an invitation from RTC Manila Branch 19 to submit an amicus curiae brief in a case involving the anti-terrorism law and the proscription of the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization. Trustee John Molo and his law partner, Darwin Angeles, took the lead and the brief was submitted sometime in June as requested by the court. The rest as they say is history. This was the landmark decision rendered by Judge Marlo Malagar who adopted portions of our amicus brief relating to constitutional and jurisdictional grounds. Among several organizations and bar associations that were invited, only the PBA submitted an amicus brief.

On April 29, we conducted our first legal aid project, which was a virtual lecture on the rules of evidence. Trustee Arnel Valeña delivered a comprehensive lecture to over 70 case investigators of the Army Provost Marshal's Office led by Col. Randy Remonte. I thank Trustee Joel Ayson and Trustee Arnel Valeña for leading this project. This is a novel legal aid project as it benefits the administration of justice among the ranks of our uniformed service.

On May 5 and just days before the elections, we issued a public statement reminding the presidential candidates to ensure fair and safe elections, maintain respect for election officials, protect public school teachers and remind their supporters to exercise patience and understanding. Trustee John Molo drafted the statement which was picked up by various online media organizations.

On May 25, we held another in-person board meeting at the Paradise Dynasty Restaurant hosted by Trustee Mike Orosa. Army Provost Marshal Col. Randy Remonte joined us and personally presented plaques of appreciation to the PBA and Trustee Arnel Valeña for the virtual lecture.

During the June 29 board meeting hosted by Trustee Joel Ayson at the German Club, the board began preparations for the PBA Law Day and Yearbook. The trustees enjoyed a true German lunch over pints of beer while going over the details and nuances of the PBA's first major event since the pandemic.

On July 26, it was Trustee Raul Paras' turn to host the lunch board meeting at the Hai Shin Lou Seafood Restaurant in Makati. It was an authentic Hong Kong food experience. Final details for the PBA Law Day and Yearbook were discussed.

A few days later, Trustee Bingbing Fernando and I attended the PBA's joint COVID vaccination project with Rotary District 3780. It was held on July 31 at the Rotary Center along Roces Avenue in Quezon City. Among the recipients of the free vaccine were family members and friends of PBA members.

Trustee Jerby Rebano hosted the August 24 lunch board meeting at the lovely penthouse of the Del Rosario Law Office Building in BGC. For some trustees, the meeting extended until the late afternoon as our host made sure that "spirits" flowed in abundance.

After several months of planning, September 9 finally came and the PBA celebrated its 130th Foundation Day and Law Day Celebration. With more than 200 members and guests in attendance, it was a tremendous success well worth all the preparations. Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo was our guest of honor and speaker. Joining him as VIP guests were 4 Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, several ambassadors and consuls and many legal luminaries.

During the event, we inducted 18 new members to beef up membership. We also had a silent art auction while our members and guests were enjoying the music of the a string quartet. As planned, we were able to distribute copies of the PBA Yearbook to sponsors and guests. The evening was not only enjoyable but profitable as well. The Yearbook yielded a net profit of P472,600.00 while ticket sales posted a modest P8,620.00 surplus after deducting costs. The silent art auction gave us another P50,000.00 in net profit.

I hosted the next board meeting on September 28 at 1898 Club Filipino to celebrate my birthday and as a humble token of appreciation for the trustees' support. Following a clamor to hold the meeting after business hours, the trustees met over dinner and drinks to discuss the remaining projects/activities for the year.

On September 30, we released another public statement concerning Lorraine Badoy's verbal attack against Judge Marlo Malagar. Drafted by Trustee John Molo, the statement rose above the "red-tagging" complaints raised earlier by other organizations. It was a solemn and sober reminder to the public to respect judicial processes and to uphold the Rule of Law because the alternative is the Rule of Force. The statement was soon picked up by several media outlets quoting the elegant language of Trustee John Molo.

The Hague Convention on Private International Law - Asia Pacific Week was held on October 18-20 at the Makati Diamond Hotel. Trustee Peter Corvera acted as moderator in one of the sessions while Trustee Bingbing Fernando was a delegate. We were invited by HCCH Secretary General Christophe Bernasconi for a lunch meeting on October 19. Present during that small group lunch meeting were Philippine Ambassador to the Hague Ed Malaya, IBP National President Burt Estrada with 2 IBP Governors, representatives from the Philippine Institute of Arbitrators. The PBA was represented by your President, Trustees Joel Ayson, Bingbing Fernando and Peter Corvera.

During the closing ceremonies, Trustee Bingbing Fernando read a statement from the PBA drafted by Trustee Peter Corvera urging the Philippines' accession to the Evidence Convention and Child Protection Convention under the Hague Convention. The Supreme Court requested a copy of that statement, which I believe will be used as basis for future accessions. This momentous event, which places the PBA in the international affairs arena, was reported by the Manila Bulletin on October 31 along with a photo of PBA officers during the lunch meeting.

On November 4, the PBA co-sponsored with the Department of Trade and Industry the E-Commerce Congress held at the PICC. Trustee John Molo was actively involved in that joint project with Trustee Ian Malilong. With its extensive media coverage, this event will surely bring the PBA to the forefront of national affairs.

The Annual General Meeting and Elections will be held on November 11 thus signaling the end of my term by December 31. As of the date of writing this report, we still have some activities lined up ---

1. PBA Legal Aid Clinic and Coastal Clean Up, November 12-13, Anilao, Mabini, Batangas. Organized by Trustee Chryse Bautista. This activity will feature Trustee Arnel Valeña who will give a lecture to the residents on land titling concerns, which seems to be a big issue in the area. We also invited Register of Deeds (Nueva Ecija) Atty. Bong Africa as a resource person.

2. Through Dean Gil delos Reyes of the DLSU College of Law, Mr. William Bryson-Watson, a senior legal officer of the Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT - <https://www.unidroit.org/>) reached out to us to arrange the visit of Professor Ignacio Terrado and Professor Anna Vicenziano from November 13-16. The UNIDROIT delegation will visit and meet the officials of the Asian Development Bank, International Finance Corporation, Department of Justice, and Department of Foreign Affairs. The UNIDROIT delegates will pay a courtesy visit to the PBA on November 14. This will be hosted by Past President Rodel Cruz at the Manila House.

3. PBA-IBP Makati-DLSU College of Law Roundtable Discussion on the Proposed Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability, November 24. Past President Fina Tantuico, Past President Peewee Agcaoili and Trustee John Molo will be assuming important roles in this activity.

4. National Legal Aid Summit hosted by the Supreme Court, November 27-30, Bacolod City. Trustee Arnel Valeña will represent the PBA as a panelist in this very milestone event.

5. PBA Christmas Party to be held at the Del Rosario Law Office Building Penthouse. Date to be confirmed.

In closing, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all the officers, trustees and advisers of the PBA for the support during my term. Allow me to thank our very competent Office Manager, Ms. Jing Osias, who capably assisted me and the Board of Trustees in implementing all the projects and activities of the PBA.

For the Rule of Law!