



A MEMOIR OF A TRICYCLE DRIVER

by: JAMES O. BAES

It was one hot afternoon when Lolo and I were riding in his tricycle. I was a high school student back then in 2008 when he told me that, "pursue your dream of becoming a teacher someday because that's your only passport in these trying times." My lolo was already a retired government employee yet continuing his driving routine just to support his "apo's" needs like "baon" every day.

I was the eldest of the grandchildren of Lolo and we were six. The rest were still in the elementary level of education.

Back then, I did not pay attention at all to what lolo was saying to me because I was a stubborn kid and all along in my mind was playing all throughout the day and thinking of no problem at all. My life was happy back then because I have my Lolo beside me in supporting my basic needs. Although it was not that much but that's all I need for me to survive.

My daily allowance was Php50.00 only and that includes my snacks and fare. The life was very simple before, less social media and people were really indulging into reading and chitchatting to others in a personal kind of way.

Years have passed. I graduated high school in 2012 and still my Lolo keeps on supporting me all the way. Then, he asked again the question after many years have passed.

"So, what program are you going to take in College?" He asked.

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"I decided to take AB English program, Lo. Since, I love English and discovered my passion in reading."

Lolo replied immediately. "Since, you love English and the passion for reading, why not share it to the people or community what you loved and passionate about. You are not just helping yourself improve but you are helping other people and the community. Take teaching instead. I'm sure your passion will elevate you on the next level."

I was like struck by a lightning of Lolo's reply. It was like my head was being hit by a baseball bat. And made me to a great divide of realization that I think a lot of people needed me in the academe.

But according to what they say, "a gray-haired man's words are enough to believe."

Later, I went immediately to the institution in our town to inquire and at the same time enroll in the program of BSEd-English under the School of Education in Andres Bonifacio College.

As I was riding in Lolo's motorcycle since this is one of the traditional means of transport in our town which is Dipolog City. A lot of people have great memoirs on this kind of transport. We were not just riding it but the conversation between the commuters and the driver is priceless and highly valued.

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Until now, it has been evolving from generation across generation. Most people prefer to ride in a motorcycle because they will be dropped from door-to-door according to your destination, unlike the bus you will just be dropped off whenever the bus stop sign is nearby.

This is already written in our hometown's history and culture and hopefully it will not be eradicated, since the day I got here in this world, now I'm already in my thirty's.

By June 2016, the dream that Lolo had once talked about during that hot afternoon ride had, really finally, turned into something solid. I was already teaching, you know, standing before my students, carrying books instead of toys, and getting ready for lessons rather than spending my days with no care in the world. Every time I walked into the classroom I kept replaying his words, like they were stuck in my head, for real:

"Pursue your dream of becoming a teacher someday because that is your only passport in these trying times."

That's when I got it, fully, or at least as much as I could. Education wasn't just a passport aimed at getting a job. No. It was more like a passage toward purpose, dignity, and a life that leans toward others, not away. Teaching let me pass on what I learned, and also become part of my students journeys, just like Lolo had become the driving force behind mine, bit-by-bit, day-after-day.

My first year as a teacher was not easy. There were moments of exhaustion, uncertainty, and fear. I mean I sometimes asked myself if I really chose the right road. And

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then whenever those doubts came back into my head, I remembered Lolo, driving his motorcycle beneath the scorching sun and also through the pouring rain. He kept going even with his age, his tired body, and all those years of government service. He never complained about the heat, the dust, or even the long stretch hours on the road. He just drove. Because he knew that every passenger and every peso he brought in helped support the family he loved.

To many people, a motorcycle driver might look like just an ordinary kind of worker. He waits at the terminal, he takes passengers to their destinations, he gathers their fare then returns to wait for another run. But behind each driver there is a quiet story that passengers may never fully grasp, or even imagine.

Some drivers are fathers, trying to send their children off to school. Some are grandfathers too, backing up their grandchildren with steady patience. Some are breadwinners carrying the family's hopes along with them, on each and every ride. Their hands can be rough, from years of gripping the handlebars, and their faces may be browned by the sun, yet their work feels soaked in dignity, like it never really diminishes.

That was my Lolo.

His motorcycle was more than just a way to get from one place to another , it was his modest livelihood, his instrument for giving, and also his quiet method of showing love. Every single turn of its wheels meant something to eat for our table. Every passenger he managed

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to bring along helped cover my daily allowance. And every trip he finished was another step, pushing me closer to the future he had already pictured for me.

Lolo didn't teach inside a classroom, not really, and still he was one of my best teachers. His lessons were not for a chalkboard, like, no-chalk-talk. They were shown through patience, perseverance, generosity, and the everyday hard work too. He kind of taught me that no work is really small if it is done honestly, and with love. He also made it clear to me that someone's greatness isn't judged by a title stuck to their name, it's measured more by the sacrifices they choose to make for other people.

Then came June 9, 2017.

It was my cousin's birthday, one of those days that should have been full of celebration, laughter, and easy joy. But it turned into one of the most painful days we've ever lived through. Lolo passed away.

His death left this kind of silence that, honestly no sound could fill. The familiar voice that used to guide me, was just gone... and that alone was hard to take. The hands that had been gripping the motorcycle's handlebars for countless years had finally stopped moving and were at rest. The man who had driven us to school, to the market, to church, and toward our dreams he had reached the end of his earthly journey, like that, quietly.

Our family mourned deeply. There were six grandchildren who had grown up under his care and I, being the eldest, I felt the weight of his absence even more. I kept

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remembering all the times I had brushed off his advice when I was younger. I still regret those moments I was too stubborn to listen and too carefree, to see the depth of his sacrifices.

I wished I could ride with him one more time.

I wished I could sit right behind him again, feel that warm afternoon wind against my face, and listen to him talk about life. I also wished I could tell him that his words finally took root in my heart, like he always said they would. I wanted him to know that the stubborn child he once saw riding along on his motorcycle had somehow grown into the teacher he believed I could become.

Three months after his passing, in September 2017, the results of the Licensure Examination for Teachers were released.

I passed.

It was one of the happiest, and also the most painful moments of my life. I had finally earned the professional license that would affirm, my place in the teaching profession, and yet the person who had first encouraged me to become a teacher was no longer physically present, to celebrate along with me.

I kept imagining how his face might have brightened when I told him. Maybe he would have smiled, in that quiet way, and said he had always known I could do it. Maybe he would have cruised his motorcycle around our neighborhood, and with that steady confidence, told every passenger that his eldest grandchild was now a Licensed Professional Teacher.

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I cried not just because I had succeeded, but because I wanted so badly to share that victory with him.

Still, I understood that I had not reached that milestone by myself. Lolo was there in every page I studied, in every sleepless night I endured, and in every prayer I whispered before the examination. His sacrifices were recorded kind of invisibly on my professional license. My name might have showed up on the list of passers, but underneath that name there was a motorcycle driver who had been carrying me long before I could carry myself.

As the years passed, I kept to grow in the teaching profession, bit-by-bit. I ran into new responsibilities, taught countless many learners and even followed those bigger, quieter dreams. Still, no matter how far education has carried me, a small part of me stays parked behind Lolo on his motorcycle, absorbing the counsel of an old man while we travel the familiar streets of Dipolog City.

Now I am already in my thirties, and I finally see it clearly: not everyone recognizes the true weight of a journey when they're still inside it. There are moments when we only value the driver after we've already arrived, like suddenly the meaning shows up once the road is over.

Lolo was the driver of my childhood, but he was also the driver of my dreams.

He carried me through years of uncertainty, kind of like, never really knowing where we'd land. He travelled under the sun so I could sit comfortably inside a classroom, and that

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was his way of making things steady. He endured exhaustion, not because it was easy, but because I needed food, books, and school materials. And even when his old age had nearly run out, he kept spending what he had left, making sure his grandchildren would get chances he might never have tasted himself.

Maybe his motorcycle stopped running, but the values he taught me are still moving through my life, sort of quietly, yet not fading. Every time I teach a struggling learner, urge a student to chase a dream, or simply remind someone that poverty should never bar them from an education, I hear Lolo's voice again.

The motorcycle drivers in our city, well they are more than just people standing at street corners waiting for the next ride. They are witnesses, to real lives, the kind you can't fully measure. They hear the stories of students rushing to school, workers going to their jobs, parents heading back to their families, and strangers travelling toward uncertain destinations. In the end, they turn into silent companions for people's everyday journeys, steady as a rhythm you almost don't notice until it's gone.

They may not always get recognition, but somehow they keep the whole community rolling. Their motorcycles do more than just take people. They bring along schoolchildren's ambitions, parents' duties, workers' income, and entire families' dreams. Sure their engines sound loud, but under that clamor there are these calm little stories of sacrifice.

Lolo's life was one of those stories.

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Whenever I see an elderly motorcycle driver waiting patiently for a passenger, I kind of remember him. I notice the same tired eyes, weathered hands, and that quiet determination, like it's always there. I'm reminded to treat every driver with respect because I know that behind the handlebars may be another father or grandfather working tirelessly, to build somebody else's future.

This memoir isn't only about a motorcycle driver, really. It's about a man who took an ordinary way of earning and turned it into something extraordinary, kind of like a legacy you can feel. It's about a grandfather, and his wisdom travelled farther than any road his motorcycle had ever reached. And it's also about those sacrifices that often go unnoticed, until the people who made them are finally gone.

Lolo may never have worn an academic gown, held a teaching license, or stood before a classroom. Still, he taught me the most lasting lessons of my life: to work with integrity, to dream boldly, to serve others, and to stay humble no matter how far someone has travelled.

Whenever people call me a teacher, I kind of share that respect, quietly, with him.

I got into teaching because one motorcycle rider once told me, in a way, that I was capable.

And even though Lolo finished his last road trip on June 9, 2017 his memory still keeps moving with me. It shows up in every lesson I give, in each learner I nudge forward, and in the future hopes I help push, step-by-step toward where they're meant to arrive.

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His motorcycle carried me through the streets of Dipolog City.

And his love, well that has carried me through my whole life.



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