The Ascent of Mount Canlaon

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"Volcán de Malaspina.—Se halla situado en 10° 24’ 35” de latitud N. y 129° 19’ 25” de longitud E. a unas 8 millas de distancia de la costa oriental de Negros; ... es uno de los montes mas culminantes y notables de la cordillera central que divide la isla de Negros de N. á S.; visto desde el frontón de Sojoton, S.O. de Negros, aparece terminando en dos puntas de diferente altura."

—Camilo de Arana (1879)

"Cuando haya mejorado el tiempo y si el Sr. Canlaon continúa en actividad, no me espanta el adherirme a la expedición que Vds. organизen para subir a la cumbre y estudiar el volcán con detenimiento y sin prisas."

—Miguel Selga S.J. (1933)

In 1565 part of the expedition of Miguel López de Legaspi was returning from the Philippines to New Spain. One of the smaller vessels, the San Juan under command of Juan de la Isla, was piloted by Rodrigo de Espinosa whose log of the return voyage has come down to us. Setting sail from the harbor of “Zubu” (Cebu) and skirting the island of “Matan” (Mactan) on the first of June, they made for the Pacific, reaching the open ocean ten days later. They stopped at one of the islands (which they called “Periols” because it was rocky) for a fresh supply of water, and there they saw two “lofty volcanoes.”

Blair and Robertson, who give a summary of Espinosa’s log in Volume 2, have added a footnote to it in Volume 52.
The two "lofty volcanoes," they tell us, may have been Canlaon and Magasó on the island of Negros. If this surmise is correct, this must be the earliest recorded reference to one of our higher and more remarkable mountains. But the footnote is more than likely incorrect. In the first place, Magasó is not at all lofty, although it is situated on the slopes of a lofty mountain, one of the twin horns called the "Cuernos de Negros." Moreover, it seems unlikely that ships leaving Cebu for the Pacific to the east, should stop at Negros which is to the west. They might of course have done so, by rounding the southern tip of Cebu Island and then sailing northwards along Tañon Passage, where one gets an impressive view of Canlaon.¹

**CANLAON IN HISTORY**

Unlike its more spectacular rivals (Apo and Mayon), Canlaon did not get much mention in the early literature of the Philippine Islands. Father Colín (1660) does not mention it, although he speaks of some of the towns on the Negros coast. Juan Francisco de San Antonio, whose *Chronicas* (1738) were highly valued by mariners because of the detailed descriptions of coasts, islands, capes and bays, is silent on Canlaon although he mentions three volcanoes specifically (Mayon, Taal and Lucban, all in Luzon). The *Diccionario geográfico* of Buzeta and Bravo (1850) mentions Bacolod with its "espesos bosques" but not the mountain which is clearly visible from Bacolod. Nor does Canlaon appear in the early maps. And even Jagor,

¹ The geologist Dr. G. F. Becker, in a *Report on the Geology of the Philippine Islands* (1901), gives the following information: "On the island of Negros there are two volcanic vents. One of these is a very small affair at the southern end of the island, some 10 miles from Dumaguete, on the southeastern slope of the Cuernos de Negros. It is called Magasó... The volcano of Canlaon is in the central range of the island, of which it is the culminating point... It is visible from near Iloilo and can be seen even from vessels cruising on the eastern side of Cebu. From the sea on the western side of the island, called Tañon Passage, Canlaon is a very impressive spectacle, for, in addition to the picturesque form of the cone, steam is always pouring out from at least two vents at the summit." (Quoted by M. Saderra Masó S.J., "Volcanoes and Seismic Centers" in *Census of the Philippine Islands*, 1903, I, 184-254.)
who traveled extensively in the Philippines and who has described several Philippine mountains, has nothing to say on Canlaon.²

Some of the early descriptions of Canlaon were at second hand and probably inaccurate. Father Juan Delgado S.J., who was thoroughly acquainted with Samar and Leyte (the introduction to his book is dated from Guiuan, Samar, on 28 September 1751) had to depend on travelers’ reports about the western Visayas. He spoke of a fiery volcano atop a high mountain in Negros, continually emitting flames and smoke and causing earthquakes and much damage to Negros and the neighboring islands. The volcano is unnamed.³

In the nineteenth century, information became more detailed and accurate although some of it was conflicting, especially concerning the mountain’s height. Cavada (1876) described the mountain in some detail, as did the naval captain, Camilo de Arana, whose work was published by the hydrographic office of the Ministerio de Marina in Madrid in 1879. Montero y Vidal mentions it in his history (1886). The anatomist José de Lacalle (1886) speaks of the dense forests that covered its slopes, and tells of a party of Englishmen who attempted to climb to the crater but died from the exhalations. There is of course nothing unusual about Britishers roaming about the island of Negros in the late nineteenth century, since British influence upon the early development of the sugar industry in Negros was very great.⁴

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³ J. Delgado Historia general sacro-profana de las islas del poniente, parte Ia, lib. I, cap. 24, p. 85. (Delgado’s book was not published until 1892).
⁴ Agustín Cavada y Mendez de Vigo Historia geográfica y estadística, II, 173.—Camilo de Arana Derrotero del archipiélago filipino, p. 570.—J. Montero y Vidal El archipiélago filipino y las islas Ma-
THE NAME

In the books and maps of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Canlaon does not always appear under the name but under its other name — Malaspina — which was given to it in honor of one of the most remarkable men who ever sailed the seas. He was a Sicilian nobleman, Alejandro Malaspina, who rose to the highest ranks in the Spanish navy. At least four geographical places in the world have been named after him: a glacier in Alaska, a town in Argentina, a strait in Canada (separating the island of Texeda, east of Vancouver, from the mainland), and the Philippine mountain of Canlaon. This explorer, scientist and soldier, who circumnavigated the world several times, fell prisoner to the British in a naval engagement (1778), and who on at least three occasions sailed through Philippine waters, died in 1809 in royal disgrace, deprived of his rank and possessions. His honor was vindicated long afterwards, in 1885, when the Spanish Hydrographic Commission published some of his notes under the title: Viaje político-científico alrededor del mundo por las corbetas "Descubierta" y "Atrevida" al mando de los capitanes de navio D. Alejandro Malaspina y D. José Bustamante y Guerra, desde 1789 a 1794.

Two other mountains in Negros were renamed after the Descubierta and the Atrevida of Malaspina’s fleet. But these names, like Malaspina itself, have fallen into disuse. Even in the nineteenth century, some writers, who reported that the people knew the mountain as Malaspina, themselves consistently referred to it as Canlaon. In this regard, the name Malaspina has suffered a different fate from many other places in Negros — like Pontevedra, La Carlota, La Castellana — which still retain their Spanish names.

rianas, Carolinas y Palaos, pp. 345-346.—J. de Lacalle y Sanchez Tierras y razas del archipiélago filipino, p. 72.
5 Espasa Enciclopedia universal ilustrada, XXXII, 467-469.
6 E.g. R. Echauz Apuntes de la isla de Negros, pp. 4, 7, 17-21.
7 But Senator Oscar Ledesma tells me that the people of the locality even today still refer to La Carlota by its old native nam, Mancas.
BERNAD: CANLAON

THE MOUNTAIN

Canlaon is a volcanic mass of irregular shape, crowned by a conical summit at its southwestern end — the whole mass sitting on top of the cordillera that runs along the entire length of Negros Island from north to south, dividing the island into the provinces of Negros Oriental and Occidental. Canlaon is almost at the center of the island (or more accurately, a little to the north of the exact center) and is almost equidistant from the eastern and western coasts. Its height has been the subject of the most divergent calculations. Cavada gave it as 7000 feet or 2134 meters. Arana, however, in his Derotero underestimated the height by almost a thousand meters: "tiene unos 1,390 metros de altura sobre el mar, estimados." This discrepancy in estimating the height of the mountain is not hard to understand. In the first place, the instruments for measuring height were not always adequate. Moreover, an irregularly shaped mountain like Canlaon changes its apparent form according to the point of view from which the observation is made. The official figures for the height of Canlaon have been given by the Spanish Hydrographic Office as 8192 feet, and by the Coast and Geodetic Survey which in its map for 1927 gave the height as 2438 meters.

Detailed information on the mountain can be given, partly at first-hand (the present writer climbed Canlaon in April 1961 and has flown over or around the mountain twice) and partly from the reports of others who have made the ascent between 1902 and 1925. The reports and correspondence concerning these expeditions are among the private papers of that avid student of Philippine geography and history, the Jesuit astronomer, Father Miguel Selga, who himself climbed Canlaon in 1933. His papers on Canlaon have been as helpful in the present instance as his papers on Apo had been in compiling

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8 Cavada Historia geográfica y estadística, loc. cit.—Arana Derotero p. 570. The rest of his paragraph on Canlaon is given in the epigraph to the present article. Other authors followed Arana, including Montero y Vidal and the encyclopedic El archipiélago filipino of the Jesuits (2 vols., Washington 1900), I, 423, 440; II, 344.
the data for our previous study on that king of Philippine mountains.\(^9\)

The craters of the volcano are contained within a rocky cone that protrudes upward from the western end of the southern crest. The highest point on this cone overlooks the active crater, which is a deep sulphuric lake, with sheer walls whitish in color, the mouth of the crater being estimated at 500 meters in diameter. Besides this active crater is the old, extinct crater, at the bottom of which is an islet raised above the level of the surrounding floor. The side walls of this extinct crater are likewise precipitous and cannot be descended except at one point, on the northern wall. Echanojaúregui describes the craters as follows:

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\text{El cráter activo mide unos 500 m/ de diámetro, y es un poco ovalado, presentando sus paredes la figura de un cono invertido. Este cráter se alza desde una de las paredes de otro cráter apagado, de forma casi circular, y cuyas paredes forman una muralla de 400 pies de altura. —Al fondo de este último se puede descender por un solo punto, siendo los demás tan escarpados, que se hacen inaccesibles.... En el fondo del cráter apagado no hay fumarola alguna, tampoco la hay en la caldera ni en el cráter activo. —En la planicie que forma el fondo del volcán extinto, solo hay una especie de isleta que levantará unos 25 o 30 pies sobre el fondo de dicha planicie, así como un charco de agua, que tendrá unos 200 m/ quadrados y 1/2 de profundidad como máximo, quedando seco en tiempo de sequía. Esta planicie circular tendrá unas doce hectáreas de superficie y está sembrada de guijarros de lava de distintos colores, cuya nomenclatura no conozco.}^{10}
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This point at which the extinct crater may be entered is called Ella Pass. The name was given to it in 1902 by Charles S. Banks in memory of his wife, Ella Nora Banks.\(^{11}\)

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\(^9\) See "The Ascent of Mount Apo: 1859-1958" PHILIPPINE STUDIES, VII (Jan. 1959) 5-67.—Father Selga was Director of the Manila Observatory and of the Philippine Weather Bureau until the Japanese Army of Occupation seized the Observatory in 1943. His papers, almost lost during the Battle of Manila in 1945, were happily saved.

\(^{10}\) E. Echanojaúregui to Selga, from Hacienda Carmen, 23 Feb. 1933. (Echanojaúregui ascended the volcano on foot in 1916 and flew over it by air in 1933.)

\(^{11}\) Banks to Selga, from Manila, 24 April 1933. This is in reply to an inquiry from Selga, dated 20 February 1933.
Almost directly below the craters, to the northeast is a big caldera, resembling a dried-up lake and consequently popularly referred to as the laguna. It is nearly perfectly circular, like an amphitheatre, with almost perpendicular walls thickly wooded with fern, laurel and rhododendron, very much like those on the upper slopes of Mount Apo. Apo too has a caldera or dried-up lake, except that the floor of the Canlaon caldera is far more firm than that of Apo, which has several feet of mud and in places real quagmires. Moreover, the Apo caldera is immense, being several kilometers long and almost a kilometer wide.

Canlaon is not in "continual" explosion as the earlier authors believed. Nor has it been as destructive as Taal or Mayon or Hibok-Hibok. But its eruptions have been frequent enough. Father Miguel Saderra Masó S.J. in 1927 listed several eruptions. Foreman mentions an interesting detail of the explosion of 1886: he says that a portion of the crater subsided, accompanied by tremendous noise and a slight ejection of lava. Foreman of course must have seen a good deal of Canlaon from the lowlands, as he crossed the island on horseback from Refugio to Hinigaran, noting the tropical forest around Escalante, the beautiful orchids clustered around the stately trees, the distant murmur of mountain torrents, and the beating of tom-toms and hollow logs announcing to the Aetas the unexpected apparition of an Englishman.

Canlaon today is no longer inaccessible. The southern slope has been invaded by clearings and settlements up to a height of some 2,000 feet. On the northern slope at about the same height is the well-furnished ranch house of the late Mr. Daniel Lacson. But above this height and all along the western slopes, there remain the tropical jungles, the density of which can be admired from an airplane but can only be appre-

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13 John Foreman *The Philippine Islands* (1898) pp. 8, and 468-485.
ciated by one who has had to hack his way through the undergrowth.\textsuperscript{14}

In general there are two ways to the summit of Canlaon. The easier way is from Masulug, within the territory of Canlaon town in Negros Oriental. The trail goes straight up the southern slope, beyond the kaingins into the forest, veering eastward across the dry bed of the upper Nahunhunan River, and then straight up again until one emerges beyond the forest-line into a grass-covered slope that gives access to the top ridge. From this top ridge or southern crest the immense cone protrudes that contains the active crater. There is no grass upon the slope of this cone. It is all rock and loose stones, broken up on the north side by gullies which drain into the laguna a thousand feet below.

This southern trail is the easier of the two. The harder trail is up the western slope, precipitous and densely forested, and guarded by the saddle-like mountain called “Siya-siya” and by other hills and gorges. The trail starts at Ma-ao and Ara-al above La Carlota. Along the trail is a cave, useful shelter for a night.

Not many seem to have climbed the mountain before the twentieth century. In his article on volcanoes and seismic centers in the Census of 1903, the Jesuit scientist Father Miguel Saderra Masó mentions only one published report of an “ascent,” namely that of a “well known publicist of the Far East,” Mencarini, who claims to have gone to Canlaon “reaching the wide terrace where the lowest solfataras issue. He took also some photographs, but a coming storm prevented further investigation.” It is obvious that Mencarini was nowhere near the summit.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Through the kindness of friends, the present author has been able to examine Canlaon from the air twice: once (in 1956) flying over the craters on a clear day, and once (in 1961) flying around its southern and western bastions, admiring the waterfall that flows down the western wall below the crater.

\textsuperscript{15} Census of the Philippine Islands, 1903, II, 184-254.
In 1902, Charles S. Banks climbed Canlaon with a party of American teachers. Echanojaúregui, a Spaniard residing in Negros, walked up to the summit in 1916 and flew over it in 1933, reporting to Father Selga the changes he had noted in the crater in the seventeen-year interval. In 1927, the engineer of the La Carlota Sugar Central, Julio Villazon, went up to the summit by the Ma-ao trail, accompanied by a Mr. Thompson and 28 others. He has left a description and sketches of the river system that drains the crater on the western side. The river system, of course, was important to both the sugar centrals and the planters.

Among the Selga papers is a four-page unsigned report (probably Viaplana’s) of a remarkable expedition that bivouacked upon Canlaon for twenty-one days, from 1 to 22 April 1930. Viaplana (if it was he) and his companions arrived at Masulug on Tuesday, 1 April, at 11 a.m. His altimeter registered 1150 feet, the temperature at mid-day was 29 degrees Centigrade. For the next twenty days he kept careful record of the altimeter readings and of the temperature several times a day. They camped for two days upon the southern slope and for seventeen days in the laguna. They visited the crater on 11 April. The temperature readings are interesting. The lowest recorded was 2 degrees below zero Centigrade at 5 a.m. on 12 April.

In 1933 a regular climbing spree seems to have centered upon the mountain. Villazon and Cabarrus went up in January, Father Selga with a very large party ascended the mountain in March, and in April Viaplana led an expedition which included five women.

The occasion was the renewed volcanic activity that began to be noticed on Christmas Eve of 1932 and was intensified in

16 Viaplana, in a letter to Father Selga on May 1, 1935, refers to his 1930 ascent of Canlaon. He again ascended Canlaon in 1933 and 1935, taking barometer and temperature recordings. So the 1930 report is probably his. A summary of the report is found in the Appendix.
January 1933, continuing through March and April. Smoke was observed emanating from the volcano, accompanied by a light rain of ashes. On Sunday, 8 January, the Najalin River became swollen, its waters the color of ink. Anxious about the effect that this water might have on the boilers of the central, the manager of the La Carlota Central, the Belgian, Mr. P. Verstokt, sent samples of the water to the Bureau of Science for analysis with instructions to inform Father Selga. A sample of the volcanic ash was also subsequently submitted for analysis. At the same time, Verstokt sent Villazon on another reconnaissance of the mountain. Villazon’s party, which left La Carlota on the Ma-ao trail on 9 January, included the chief of police, a surveyor, ten workers from the central, and Mr. Jesus Cabarrus who ascended to the summit while Villazon reconnoitered along the volcano’s base. Cabarrus’ report is still extant. So are the reports of the analysis made of the water and ashes by the Bureau of Science.\(^\text{17}\)

Apprised of the volcanic activity, Father Selga wrote to various individuals and officials—including the Constabulary—asking for more detailed information. On the basis of these reports, he was able to write a reassuring article, allaying fears of a violent eruption.\(^\text{18}\) Then, in response to a suggestion made by Verstokt that a “representative” of the Weather Bureau should make a personal reconnaissance of the volcano, Father

\(^{17}\) The water analysis showed the following proportions: Moisture 2.52%; Silica (SiO\(_2\)) 49.84%; Calcium oxide (CaO) 3.30%; Magnesium oxide (MgO) 0.83%; Iron oxide (Fe\(_2\)O\(_3\)) 7.45%; Aluminum oxide (Al\(_2\)O\(_3\)) 17.64%; Manganese oxide (MnO) 2.28%; Sulphates (SO\(_4\)) 15.43%; Chlorides (Cl) 0.05%; Phosphorus pentoxide (P\(_2\)O\(_5\)) 0.31%. The water was “very turbid,” its taste “acidic,” its classification for boiler use “very bad,” with the final remark that “This water is corrosive.” The analyses were signed by L. Ocampo, chemist, on 31 Jan. and 2 Feb. 1933. The volcanic ash contained Phosphoric anhydride (P\(_2\)O\(_5\)) 0.743%; Potash (K\(_2\)O) 2.056%; Lime (CaO) 4.782%; Magnesia (MgO) 1.086%. These were fertilizing values.

\(^{18}\) “Is Canlaon Dangerous?” Graphic, 2 Feb. 1933. A good picture of Father Selga accompanies the article. The Constabulary report, prepared by Major H. Garma, Provincial Commander, on 17 Jan. 1933, was transmitted to Selga by Col. C. H. Bowers through Feliciano Ocampo, Undersecretary of the Interior and of Labor.
Selga offered to go down to Negros himself if Verstokt organized the expedition.

Father Selga's expedition turned out to be the most massive assault ever hurled upon the offending mountain. There were sixty-three men in the party that assembled in Masulug on Sunday, 12 March 1933, and began the ascent on the following day. Modesto Colmenares (sixty-year-old "king of the forest," as Selga called him) led the party and brought along twenty-eight cargadores. Diversion was provided by an Andalusian, Julio Montealegre, who had seen action with the American Navy during the first World War and who "in moments of distress and affliction proved to be of valuable assistance in maintaining the spirits of the party by recalling his glorious deeds during the World War and the fierce attack of a submarine in the North Sea." The "moments of distress and affliction" must have been many, for Father Selga was not a thin man and the steep climb must have been for him a strong assertion of will over matter.¹⁹

Doubtless encouraged by the success of this large expedition, the ladies now began to feel that what many men could do they could do better. Accordingly, a month later, Mr. Federico Viaplana of Hacienda Caman-ug, La Carlota, who had gone up to Canlaon in 1930, organized a climbing party which included his wife, four other ladies, six gentlemen and sixteen porters. They went up by the Masulug trail on 17 April and returned four days later, having enjoyed better weather than most expeditions enjoy. Their exploit was recorded in full in La Vanguardia, the article ending with an invitation to all Negrense ladies to make the climb, on condition that they had a

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¹⁹ In the party were Modesto Colmenares (with 28 men), Francisco Esteban, president (mayor) of Pulupandan (with 7 men), Enrique Martin (with 14 men), and ten other gentlemen, namely: Jose Silverio of Bacolod and Pontevedra, Julio Villazon and Dr. Alexander Gordon of La Carlota Sugar Central, Ramon Echecopar of the Iloilo office of Inchausti and Co., Jose Espinos of La Castellana, Jose and Aquiles Colmenares, Severo Cadungon, Manuel Digon, and Julio Montealegre. It was from Montealegre's farm in Masulug that our ascent of April 1961 started.
good guide, a good tent, and that they wore "men's trousers"—"porque de otra manera es imposible subir." Viaplana made another ascent in 1935, with four ladies in the party.20

Besides the Colmenares clan, whose assistance was invaluable in any ascent made from the Masulug side, there was also another personage whose cooperation in such ventures was indispensable. Viaplana, in his letter to Father Selga of 17 April 1933, refers to him as "el célebre Leoncio." Father Selga, in his fragmentary report of his 1933 climb, has a more picturesque description of the man:

No man should ever dare to enter barrio Concepcion without passports from its cacique, the one-eyed Florencio Floreta (sic). For his friends he will open a trail with his bolo through the forest to climb Canlaon; for his friends, he will walk up and down the mountain in 12 hours to collect a bottle of volcanic ash; for his friends he will penetrate the thickest forest and climb the highest tree to pick the most beautiful orchid; but he knows the cliffs and the gorges of the forest, extrication from which would be impossible for his enemies. He knows the plants, the herbs, the nuts, the fungi that could give excruciating pains to the stomach and skin... He is as good a marksman when he shoots his revolver... as he is when he draws his bow on a deer. Fortunately for our party no passports were necessary to enter Salvacion; on the contrary 50 per cent of the family of Leoncio (sic) volunteered to act as leaders and Leoncio himself gladly accepted the position of chief of the cargadores...21

20 "Primeras mujeres que se asoman al crater húmeco del volcán Kanlaon," La Vanguardia, 6 May 1933. The ladies in the 1933 party were Mrs. Maria Viaplana and the Misses Carolina, Margiolina and Elena Corteza. The 1935 party (mentioned in Viaplana to Selga, 13 April 1935) included: Mr. and Mrs. Federico Viaplana, Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Ferrer, Miss Adela Valles, Miss Julita Say, and Willie Ghezzi, Marcelo Concepcion, Horacio Rodriguez, Jose Espinos, Jose Colmenares, Tito Lobregat, Dr. Robustiano Ramos, and Adolfo Sierra, with 16 porters. The ascent started on 7 April.

21 It is evident that Florencio and Leoncio are the same person since Selga interchanges the names. I am not sure if Salvacion and Concepcion are the same settlement. It is unfortunate that we do not possess a complete copy of Father Selga's report (if it was ever completed). The extant copy consists of a few fragments, mostly about the start of the ascent, and an interesting list of flora encountered on Canlaon. According to Viaplana (To Selga, 17 April 1935), Leoncio assured him that between 1933 and 1935, no one climbed the mountain from the Masulug side.
BERNAD: CANLAON

In recent years the number of those who have gone up to Canlaon must be rather large. Some have gone up to hunt, others for the fun of the climb. Not a few are said to have gone up to fulfill a religious urge, for there is a local superstition that climbing Canlaon, especially in Holy Week, possesses some spiritual efficacy.

MASS ON CANLAON

The present writer has had the happiness of offering what appears to have been the first Mass upon Canlaon. It was offered in the shelter of a large rock upon the southern summit at the base of the great cone that contains the craters. This rock is historic and is prominently mentioned in some of the unpublished correspondence concerning Canlaon. Viaplana, describing his ascent of 1935 in a letter to Selga, uses the rock as a point of reference: “llegamos a la roca grande del cráter a las 4:30 p.m.” In a subsequent letter he again mentions the rock: “La piedra grande sigue igual, con la diferencia de que marcamos más nombres en ella. Algunos con sinceles y otros con pintura negra.”

The Mass was celebrated on Easter Friday, 7 April 1961, and was served by Benjamin J. Ledesma and Antonio L. Mapa, recent graduates with bachelors’ degrees from the Ateneo de Manila. Attending the Mass were the other members of the expedition: Mr. Basilio Manalo (the noted violinist and manager of an hacienda in La Castellana), Mr. James Gaston (an Ateneo undergraduate from Bacolod), and the guides, cook and porters from La Castellana, La Carlota and Ma-ao—a total of nineteen men. An account of the expedition follows.

THE ASCENT OF APRIL 1961

On the way back from a preaching engagement in Mindanao during Holy Week, I stopped over in Bacolod on Easter Monday where the rest of the climbing party were to assemble. James Gaston was already there. Benjie Ledesma arrived by plane from Manila the following morning, and Tony Mapa arrived by plane in the afternoon. Basilio Manalo was waiting
in the interior in their Hacienda Canticvil in La Castellana. Dean Alejandro Roces, who was to have been the sixth member of the party, could not get away from Manila. The heavy gear (consisting of tents, knapsacks, canteens, ropes and gloves) had previously been shipped to Bacolod by air and sea through the kindness of Senator Oscar Ledesma, and was waiting in the house of Mr. German Unson in Silay. The necessary ecclesiastical faculties and permissions were graciously granted by Monsignor Antonio Fortich, pastor of Bacolod and vicar general, acting for the bishop in his absence.

On the evening of Tuesday, 4 April, we proceeded to the interior, to the Hacienda Salamanca of the Ledesmas in La Carlota. That hacienda and the house of Mr. Luis de la Rama in Bacolod served as headquarters until the actual climb.

An unfortunate accident almost deprived us of the company of Tony Mapa. No sooner had he arrived in Bacolod on the afternoon of the 4th than a long distance telephone call from his father, Mr. Placido Mapa, informed him that his brother had had a serious accident and that he was to return to Manila immediately. He took the first plane to Manila the following morning; but finding his brother out of danger, he took the afternoon plane back to Bacolod, appearing at Salamanca early the following morning in time for Mass.

Before the climb could be made, a strategic difficulty had to be overcome. A few days before, a young hunter called Milabo had stumbled upon the wreckage of an American plane, hitherto undiscovered, and it was natural that the members of our party should desire to go and see the wreckage and take photographs. The guide and porters that we had from the Ma-ao haciendas (through the kind offices of Mr. Enrique del Castillo) were familiar only with the Ma-ao trail, and consequently wanted to go up that way. On the other hand, Billy Manalo and the men from La Castellana were in favor of the easier Masulug trail. In the end we compromised: we would ascend by Masulug, descend by Ma-ao.

On Thursday, 6 April, we motored by landrover and jeep across the cordillera to the Masulug River, crossed the boundary
into Negros Oriental to a point one kilometer beyond the bridge. There we were met by Rudy Montealegre who led us to his farm, situated at some 2,000 feet above sea level upon the southern slope of Canlaon. After lunch the loads were distributed, a group picture taken, and the prayer recited that we always say before a journey and which we were to repeat daily for the next three days. We walked beyond the clearings into the great forest, reaching the dry bed of the Nahunhunun at four o'clock, where it became apparent that some members of the party would have to make the rest of the climb slowly. I therefore sent Jimmy Gaston ahead, with the guide, cook, and as many of the porters as possible. The rest of us with three porters (one was Aurelio from La Carlota, and the other an engaging fellow with a fine sense of humor, called Pablo) proceeded slowly and emerged from the forest into the vast grassland on the upper slopes at dusk. There the tents were set up, a fire built, supper eaten, the Rosary said together, the harmonicas played, those who had cramps were massaged. Then we bundled ourselves in blankets, for it was distressingly cold. Our tent opened south, and we slept within sight of the Southern Cross which seemed very near.

The weather was clear the following morning at sunrise and Tony Mapa was able to get a clear picture of the crater-summit, some 2,500 feet above us. It was our mistake not to have taken advantage of this clear weather in the very early morning. By the time we had broken camp and resumed the climb, the fog had descended upon the summit. We gained the southern crest and found ourselves enveloped in thick fog, with a strong cold wind blowing like a gale from the northeast. Leaving the packs on the crest, we climbed the remaining 500 feet up the cone to the crater's edge.

THE SUMMIT

It was an unpleasant and a frustrating climb. The heavy fog kept one's glasses streaming, until they had to be removed. One had to hold on to one's cap to prevent it from being blown away, and to lean heavily on one's walking staff to keep from being knocked off balance by the strong gusts. There is no
ill wind, however, that blows no one good: the wind came from the northeast, hitting us obliquely in the back and blowing away from our nostrils whatever noxious fumes might have come from the crater—for there was a strong scent of sulphur about the mountain.

Arriving at the summit we peered into the active crater but saw nothing except the white sheer inner walls leading to a foggy abyss below. Since one could see only a few yards, it was useless (and dangerous) to creep around the crater’s edge in search of the extinct crater. That crater, we did not see. It had been our hope to say Mass somewhere upon the summit or down on the floor of the extinct crater. In the dense fog and strong wind, this was out of the question. There was nothing to do but go down cautiously against the wind and return to the southern crest. There, near the base of the crater peak, we found a relatively sheltered spot behind the historic rock upon which former climbers had chiseled or painted their names.

We ourselves had neither chisel nor paint with which to mark our own names upon the rock. But we did something more historic. It was in the shelter of that rock, at mid-morning of Easter Friday, 7 April 1961, that we offered the first Mass upon Canlaon. Benjie Ledesma and Tony Mapa served it, the one holding the missal (for it had to be held), the other handling the cruets. Billy Manalo, Jimmy Gaston and the men, unprotected by the shelter of the rock, bravely stood (and knelt) reverently in the strong wind.

THE LAGUNA

From the southern crest to the laguna or caldera is a sharp descent of another 500 feet, rendered easy by the rhododendron to which one could cling. The laguna is a beautiful amphitheatre, completely cut off from the outside world by steep walls 500 feet high. But alas, it was not protected from the sky, nor from the wind that kept blowing as if it would penetrate our bones, nor from the fog that would lift momentarily and then come swirling down and cancel all visibility. At midday the men were shivering. At this point three of the carga-
diores asked to be allowed to go home and had to be paid off and dismissed. Two others made a similar request but were persuaded to stay. We were afraid there would be a general exodus of cargadores, leaving us helpless on the mountain top. Moreover, we found the cold difficult to bear. It had been our intention to camp in the laguna for the night. After much discussion it was decided to break camp immediately and begin the descent.

As previously agreed, the descent was to be the Ma-ao side. We ran immediately into trouble, for our guides had difficulty finding the way. Our progress was thus several times held up, and much precious daylight was lost before the actual descent. We first had to emerge from the laguna back to the southern crest, and then skirt the base of the crater along the north side, crossing some eighteen gulleys which (fortunately for us) were dry at this time of year. It was three o'clock by the time we gained the western crest. With Pidik, the guide, hacking his way, we left the tall cogon and plunged into the thick jungle.

The descent was a nightmare. Some managed to make the descent erect. Others, including the author, preferred the easier technique of sliding down on one's back, fifteen to thirty feet at a time. Darkness caught us in the jungle, and the tricky descent had to be negotiated with only three flashlights to relieve the darkness. This was of course a violation of all hiking procedures, but the alternative would have been to spend the afternoon and the night on the mountain-top in that unbearable cold. To add to our discomfort it began to rain. At long last we found ourselves in the rocky bed of a dried-up river, probably the Najalin. There we stretched canvas across two logs, ate supper, crawled in, said our Rosary and went to sleep.

Mass was said the following morning in the ravine. The descent was resumed until we emerged from the forest through the gorge below Siya-siya, and found ourselves upon the great plateau to the west of Canlaon. There we came upon the spring (Gintubdan) which is the source of one of the rivulets that
irrigate the vast sugarlands below. We bathed in the cold clear water, changed our clothes and had lunch, and then resumed the walk to Ara-al where the jeep and the landrover came to meet us.

There, one last picture of the group was taken, followed by a prayer of thanksgiving for our safe return. Then, with the mountains behind us and the great lowlands and the sea ahead over a thousand feet below, we motored down a dirt road (called Quezon Highway!) back to Hacienda Salamanca, where Jimmy Gaston, Tony Mapa and Benjie Ledesma amazed everybody by challenging the local players to a game of basketball.

That night, after the guides and porters had been deposited safely in their homes, Billy Manalo drove off to Canticvil, while the remaining four of us drove back to Bacolod. The following morning we left Bacolod, grateful for all the help that had been given us by our many friends—in Bacolod, Silay, La Carlota, La Castellana, Ma-ao, Masulug and Manila. In particular we wish to express our gratitude to: Mr. and Mrs. Luis de la Rama, Mr. and Mrs. Rosendo de la Rama, Mr. Enrique del Castillo, the family of Mr. Ben Gaston, Mr. and Mrs. Jesus Celdran, Mr. and Mrs. Savillo, Mr. and Mrs. Basilio Manalo, Mrs. Daniel Lacson, Senator and Mrs. Oscar Ledesma, Mr. and Mrs. German Unson, Mr. and Mrs. Placido Mapa, Monsignor Fortich of Bacolod, and the Montealegre family of Masulug. Also to the Columban Sisters of Misamis, who had prepared the Mass kit that I used on the trip. And finally, to Bishop Patrick Cronin and the Columban Fathers of Misamis, for innumerable kindnesses, some of which indirectly helped us in the present expedition.

Appendix

ALTITUDE AND TEMPERATURE: THE 1930 REPORT

The following data from the four-page unsigned report among the Selga papers which is entitled "Expedición al Volcán Canlaon en el año 1930" (which I take to be Federico Viaplana's) may be interesting.
BERNAD: CANLAON

1. Altitudes:

Masulug .................. 1150 ft. (1 April, 11 a.m.)
Lower edge of forest ....... 1400 ft. (2 April, 11 a.m.)
Cogonal (grassland) ......... 4625 ft. (2 April, 5 p.m.)
South crest ................ 6800 ft. (4 April, 11:45 a.m.)
Laguna ..................... 6400 ft. (4 April, 1:30 p.m.)
Crater ........................ 7300 ft. (11 April, 11:45 a.m.)

(NOTE: Altimeter readings are often inaccurate and must be checked against the actual barometric pressure in the lowlands for a particular day and hour. These readings were unchecked.)

2. Temperatures (in Centigrade):

At Masulug: 1 April, 11 a.m. : 29
2 April, 6 a.m. : 22

At the cogonal: 4 April, 5 a.m. : 15

At the laguna: 6 April, 5:30 a.m. : 1
12:00 m. : 20
8:30 p.m. : 6 1/2

7 April, 2:10 a.m. : 1 1/2
5:30 a.m. : 9
12:00 m. : 22

12 April, 5:00 a.m. : 2 below 0
5:30 a.m. : 1 1/2 below 0
6:00 a.m. : 0
6:15 a.m. : 1/2
6:30 a.m. : 1
7:00 a.m. : 3
9:00 a.m. : 19 1/2 (with sun)
12:00 m. : 17 1/2 (cloudy)
9:00 p.m. : 9
Plate I. The crater rises majestic in the sun, as seen from the road that crosses the central cordillera of Negros Island. The forest-line ends about 2,000 feet below summit.

Plate II. From the tent-flaps at sunrise the crater, soon to be enveloped in
Plate III. The early morning sun accentuates the rugged terrain just below the crater.

Plate IV. The final climb was made in thick, blinding fog.
Plate V. The fog swoops in and out of the caldera, which some ancient explosion had hollowed out of the mountain top.

Plate VI. Mute eloquence.—Gloves and walking staves and packs against the

Photo by B. Ledesma
Plate VII. The group poses for a picture on the top during a momentary lift of the fog. Standing third from right, Jimmy Gaston, to his left Billy Manalo, Antonio Mapa, and the author in dark glasses. Aurelio stands with carbine behind the author. Not in picture, Bonjie Ledesma who took it.
Plate VIII. Mass is said on the boulders of a dry river bed in the thick jungle. Benjie Ledesma serves the Mass.
Plate IX. Billy Manalo (right), the author, and Benjie Ledesma (looking over author's shoulder) examine the almost illegible identification cards which man at left (face covered) has picked up from the wreckage of an American plane.