



No. 3:

*This is the third feature article on physicians in various parts of the world, picturing their endeavors and their achievements. In each case the physician is interviewed on the spot by a member of MD's editorial staff.*

*Photography by H. A. Figueras.*

# Dr. Paulino Garcia of Manila



DR. PAULINO J. GARCIA AT HEADQUARTERS OF NATIONAL SCIENCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD IN MANILA OF WHICH HE IS CHAIRMAN.

ONE OF the few times in his life that Dr. Paulino J. Garcia found himself at a loss for the appropriate word occurred in April, 1961, when he visited the White House. President Kennedy had stepped out of his office for a few minutes, and Dr. Garcia took the opportunity to try out the famous rocking chair.

Suddenly the President appeared and asked: "How do you like it?" Flustered, the physician replied: "It's fascinating, Mr. President."

At a subsequent meeting with the President to discuss scientific and medical problems in the Philippines, Dr. Garcia recovered his normal aplomb, observed that reproduction of the rocking chair would be an excellent project for his country's rattan furniture industry.

The welfare and growth of the Philippines, medically, economically and culturally, is never far from Dr. Garcia's thoughts, and he expresses them with exuberant articulacy in fluent Spanish and English, interspersed with frequent quotations from his favorite Latin author, Cicero. A former Secretary of Health, the physician is a stocky, smiling man whose enthusiasm and crackling energy belie his 56 years. In a recent conversation, during the time it took him to smoke one of the three cigars he permits himself daily, he touched on a dozen subjects, ranging from the Rural Health Program ("Improving nicely") to science development and to the need for physicians to specialize in both medicine and the knowledge of man ("The end of science is ultimately humanistic.").

Another of Dr. Garcia's favorite topics these days is the intellectual integrity of the man of science; his own code of conduct has involved him in periodic battles with authority that more than once almost ended his medical career. As a third year student of medicine at Santo Tomás University in Manila, he brought to the attention of the Department Head of Surgery that his two professors (associate and assistant) were holding opposed views on a certain subject, publicly requested they decide which was correct. He was ordered to follow the associate professor's precept, whereupon the outraged assistant assured the young firebrand that he would never graduate.

Says Dr. Garcia: "It became a *cause célèbre* that shook the campus." He received the unanimous support of the student body, and the professor resigned.

**Youth.** The young Paulino Jacinto Garcia had no intention of becoming a physician. Always articulate, he was a prize-winning debater and a promising actor in college (*Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*); his professors suggested he utilize his oratorical talents as a lawyer. But his father, who was afflicted with a pulmonary lesion, wanted his son to become a physician; the boy, in good Catholic tradition, acceded to his wish. He has no regrets. "I progressed from no interest in medicine at all to a positive fascination."

After graduating from Ateneo de Manila, a Jesuit school, he entered the University of Santo Tomás\* and obtained his medical doctorate in 1932, promptly came down with typhoid fever. After a six-month convalescence, Dr. Garcia became acting resident physician at St. Paul's Hospital for a year, then house physician to the Novitiate of the Sacred Heart, a Jesuit seminary in Novaliches; at the same time he started a private practice and worked (for no fee) in surgery at San Juan Dios Hospital. Out of his small income he donated funds to plant trees on the campus of the Jesuit seminary; today his eldest son, Edmundo, a novitiate at the

\*Founded in 1611 by the Dominican friars, it is the oldest seat of learning in the Pacific.

same seminary, walks under these full-grown trees.\*

Developing an interest in radiology, he studied at the American Military Hospital (Sternberg Hospital), and from 1938 to 1953 he held various positions in the surgery and radiology department at Santo Tomás (assistant and associate professor, chief radiologist), was also head of the radiology department at St. Luke's hospital.

Dr. Garcia's career came close to being terminated several times during this period. As a young physician, he took a few weeks off to join a party hunting gold in the rugged mountains in the province of Abra, almost lost his life while attempting to swing across a deep, rocky gorge on a slender vine ("I sweat now when I even think about it."). Twice he fell asleep at the wheel of his automobile, once awoke to find himself beneath the machine in a rice paddy. Since then he has left the driving to others.

His closest escape from death came during World War II. The Japanese occupied Manila on January 2, 1942; the next day a contingent of Japanese civilian physicians took over St. Luke's hospital, where Dr. Garcia was working.† The next three years were, in his words, difficult and unpleasant. Manila, the "Pearl of the Pacific," was devastated, with entire blocks reduced to rubble and the port area a shambles. Civil liberties were stringently curtailed, food was scarce, the cost of living increased some 700 percent. President Quezon fled to Washington, D. C., and a government set-up which was expected to collaborate with the invaders was established by them. The great majority of Filipinos remained loyal to the United States. Guerrilla groups fought heroically in the hills, informing on Japanese military movements, blowing up bridges and roads, providing weather information for American ships and planes, rescuing downed airmen. In Manila, physicians, technicians and public officials worked desperately to keep the hospitals open, food markets supplied and water and electricity available: their efforts prevented chaos and starvation.

Dr. Garcia and the other Filipino physicians enjoyed excellent relations with the Japanese medical men, but the hospital eventually ran short of almost everything: food, drugs, anesthesia, x-ray films. Dr. Garcia developed x-ray anemia: "We ran out of film and I was indiscreet, doing more fluoroscopy than I should have." His weight dropped from 180 to 140 lb. and his white blood cell count went down to 3000, necessitating a rest of several months.

Passionately loyal to the Philippine cause, Dr. Garcia and many of his hospital colleagues joined an underground resistance movement, in spite of the continual harassment and close surveillance of the Japanese secret police. They obtained reports of the progress of the war, often held clandestine meetings in Dr. Garcia's office and passed bits of information concealed in old x-ray tubes. Periodically, a Filipino physician would be caught and disappear.

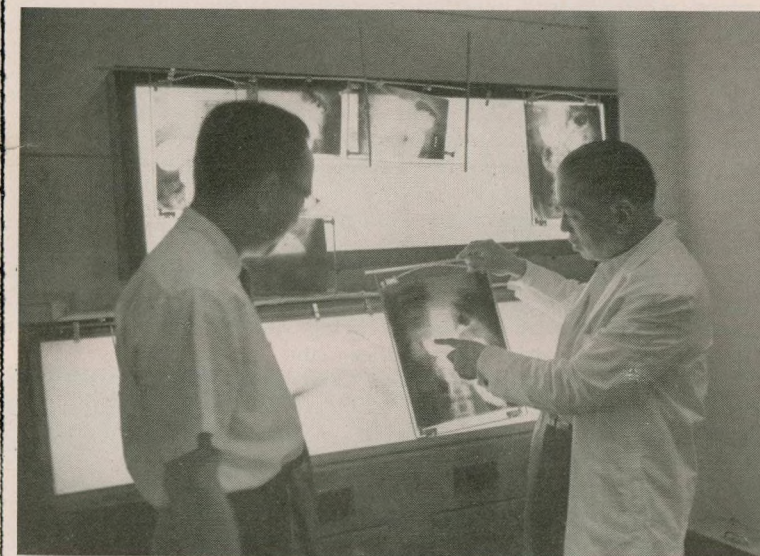
On May 7, 1942, the day Corregidor fell, Paulino J. Garcia married the beautiful Rosalinda Guidote, whom he had met the previous year when she was a medical student at Santo Tomás. Not being permitted to leave town on a wedding trip, they went to the groom's home. An hour later the secret police came to the hospital looking for Dr. Garcia and several of his colleagues, having discovered the underground cell.

\*Dr. Garcia's other children: Paulino, Jr., at business college; Armando, in high school; Marisa, Isidro, Maria Divina and Jesus Maria, seventh to second grade.

†Santo Tomás University became a prison compound for 6000 people, including some 3500 United States citizens.



Dr. Garcia, left, a hero of modern Philippine science, discusses mementos of Dr. José Rizal, revolutionary martyr, with Jesuit father Horacio de la Costa in the Rizal room at Ateneo de Manila University. Above, he discusses an otorhinolaryngology patient with medical students at the University of Santo Tomás where he held positions in the surgery and radiology departments.



Despite his intensive administrative schedule, Dr. Garcia makes time to keep abreast of his medical colleagues and visit old friends. Above, he discusses an x-ray with Dr. Angtuaco, his successor as chief radiologist at the University of Santo Tomás; at right, he visits with Father Irwin, S.J., a former teacher at Ateneo de Manila University.



The others were caught and packed off to prison, but the Japanese physicians protested that Garcia could not possibly be mixed up in any subversive activities, having been totally engrossed for weeks in preparation for his marriage. Fortunately, the secret police forgot about Dr. Garcia. Says the physician: "Otherwise it would have been the shortest honeymoon on record."

After the liberation of Manila by United States troops in February, 1945, Dr. Garcia was able to put in a good word for the Japanese physicians who had befriended him and who were now in prison. On a visit to Japan some ten years later he was tendered a surprise banquet by these men in appreciation of his help.

**Public Health.** In 1953 Dr. Garcia assisted the newly elected President, Ramon Magsaysay, in preparing a speech on public health. Impressed with the professor of radiology, the president offered him the cabinet position of Secretary of Health. It was at this juncture that a national figure, José P. Laurel, one of the most outstanding Filipinos who served his country effectively before, during and after the last World War in various capacities such as Senator, Cabinet Member and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court advised him to accept. Then Dr. Garcia decided that he could not with honor refuse to serve his country when the rare opportunity came along; he was sworn in on December 29.

**P**RESIDENT MAGSAYSAY gave his new Secretary virtually a free hand, and Dr. Garcia tackled the job with his characteristic gusto. He began by a fact-finding tour of the rural areas of all the provinces, found the public health problems to be formidable. The republic is underdeveloped, economically and industrially; the average yearly family income in Manila is \$400, only \$75 in the back-country communities called *barrios*. Many indigenous tribes, such as the bat-eating Negritos and the primitive Igorots of Luzon, view modern medicine with suspicion, continue to rely on folk remedies and superstition. In the lowlands the people are more receptive to medical help but attitudes change slowly. Infant mortality is high, and a common reaction to serums and shots is: "Better our children die than our customs."

The ratio of physicians to population is 1.8 per 10,000; they are heavily concentrated in the large cities, e.g., one physician per 600 in Manila, one per 20,000 and occasionally one per 60,000 in some rural provinces. Dr. Garcia was the first Secretary of Health in more than a century to visit the tiny northernmost islands (the Babuyanes, facing Formosa). He found the people without medical aid of any kind and assigned a physician and a sanitary inspector to the area. The lack of physicians in the *barrios* is largely attributable to a frustrating scarcity of supplies and equipment. Dr. Garcia persuaded young physicians to practice in the rural communities by tripling their government salaries; they became part of four-man teams, with a nurse, midwife, sanitary expert. When the Secretary left his post after four years, more than 1000 villages enjoyed this service.

Responsible for the enactment of the Rural Health Law, Dr. Garcia began the Liberty Wells program which brought artesian well water to the rural areas. Under his guidance the Department embarked on a hospital building program: the North General Hospital and the National Orthopedic Hospital (to be completed this year). Hospital standards have been raised and the number of beds increased from 7475 to 10,050. To finance his program he obtained a budget increase from 16 to 47 million pesos a year, received in addition some \$12 million from the United States.

Convinced that the economic development of the Philippines is hindered by the ravages of certain diseases, he procured funds for research in the control of malaria, leprosy, schistosomiasis, tuberculosis, yaws, filariasis. Concurrently he served as President of the National Red Cross for eight years, was a member of the board of trustees of the International Rice Research Institute and headed the Philippine delegation to the World Health Assemblies in 1954, 1957, 1958.

Referring to his tenure as Secretary of Health, Dr. Garcia says: "It was an exhausting routine. I'm glad I was young." A year after taking office the physician's demanding schedule caused his collapse at a cabinet meeting; he found his blood pressure was 180/110, took a two-month rest and decided it was time to take up golf. Today he plays almost every morning, teeing off at 6:30 and going around with a score comparable to the Manila temperature.\*

In 1957 Dr. Garcia recommended that the president authorize a survey of the status of science in the Philippines. Result was a sweeping seven-point indictment† and the passage of the Science Act of 1958 which created the National Science Development Board for the purpose of institutionalizing the nation's scientific efforts. Dr. Garcia was offered the chairmanship of the board, a position of cabinet rank. He did not hesitate overlong, although the position prevented him from accepting more lucrative offers. Says he: "I must, of course, give my children a good education, but I feel no compulsion to pile up wealth for them."

Dr. Garcia laid out both short-range and long-range goals for the two research-implementing agencies of the NSDB: the Philippine Atomic Energy Commission and the National Institute of Science and Technology, which carries on research in biology, medicine, industry, agriculture, food and nutrition.\*\* He launched a program to expand scientific manpower (one of the Philippines' most pressing needs), collaborated closely with the Department of Education and the 381 colleges and universities to upgrade the educational system. The NSDB supports such programs as the Talent Science Search, Summer Institutes for elementary and high school science teachers, an educational television course in physics, conferences between educators, industrialists and scientists.

The NSDB is now in the second phase of its growth, centered principally in the establishment of a Philippine Science Community, a national laboratory and research center that will define the standards of excellence, promote and synthesize the efforts being undertaken in universities, industrial laboratories, and government agencies. Already completed are three buildings, the Science Pavilion, the Planetarium and the Food Nutrition Research Center constructed within the NSDB Compound.

Already installed is a three-megawatt atomic reactor, under a bilateral agreement with the United States. Dr. Garcia is gratified at being able to see the completion of this project about April of this year; during the construction he was hit in the head by a falling beam, saved from serious injury by a metal hat he had borrowed from a worker.

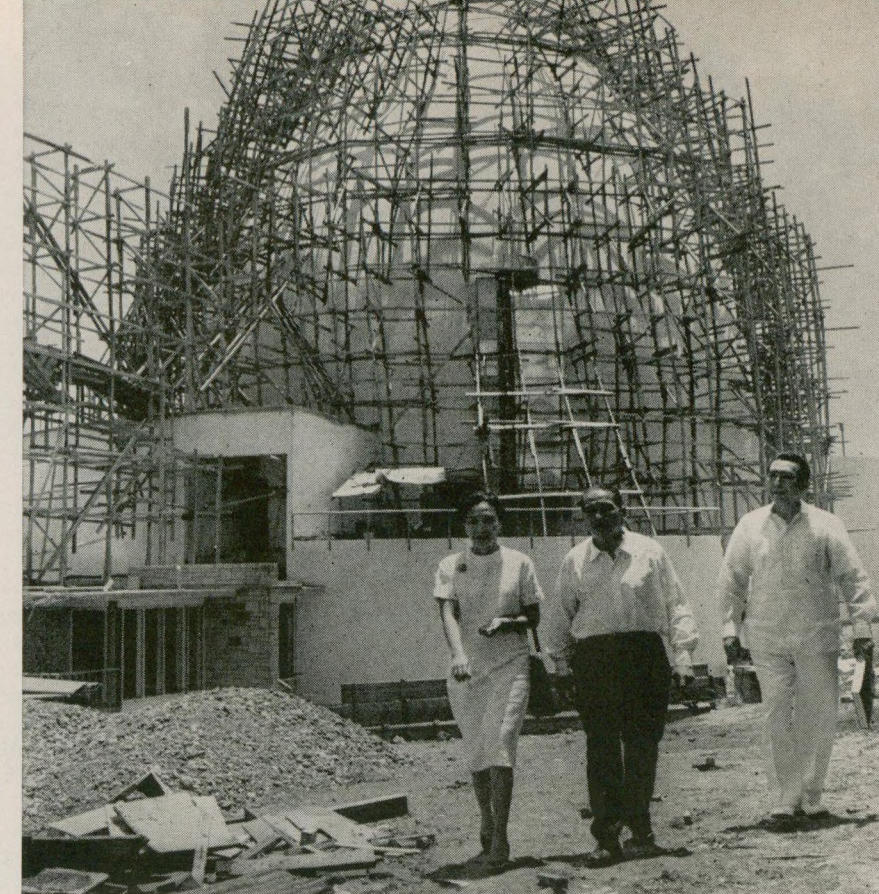
Responsible for guiding the efforts of the 1300 people of the NSDB, Dr. Garcia is busier than he was when

\*In the 90s.

†Lack of coordination and programming in scientific work, perfunctory support of scientific efforts, lack of data on manpower, a dearth of top scientists.

\*\*Most prominent physician-scientist brought to the Philippines to work as advisor to the Institute is Frank Co Tui, M.D., famous for his investigations on the use of amino acids in the treatment of peptic ulcers.

*Dr. Garcia at the site of the three-megawatt atomic reactor being built with United States help. With him are his assistant Dr. Josefina Magno, left, and Dr. Tranquilino Elicaño, a close associate, former head of the Bureau of Hospitals and Undersecretary of Health, now Professor of the History of Medicine in Manila.*



*Below, Dr. Garcia is seen riding in a carabao cart at his birthplace in Gapan and contemplating the impending pleasures of a traditional pig roast. Once a month he retreats to the farm his family has owned for more than 100 years to enjoy a much needed rest in the countryside.*



*Dr. and Mrs. Garcia leave their modern house in Manila to attend one of the many social evenings they enjoy. They met while Mrs. Garcia was a medical student at the University of Santo Tomás and were married on May 7, 1942, the day Corregidor fell to the Japanese.*

Secretary of Health, generally works seven days a week. But he always manages to take a half-hour siesta after lunch. ("Those thirty minutes permit me to work on into the evening").

**E**ARLY IN 1962 Dr. Garcia's career, never placid, hit its roughest political storm. Following the election of the new president, Diosdado Macapagal, Dr. Garcia was asked to submit a courtesy resignation in order that a new chairman, friendlier to the administration, might be appointed in his place.

Dr. Garcia refused, pointing out that the NSDB charter set by law his tenure at six years, removable only for cause; his resignation, he further declared, would set an unfortunate precedent, for no scientist would agree to accept an office subject to the vicissitudes of partisan politics.

The administration then announced that it had found cause for his removal: that he had engaged in politics by openly campaigning for the election of former President Carlos P. Garcia (no relation), that he had entertained the president at his country home. The chairman was formally suspended from his post. Dr. Garcia asked that an impartial commission should assess the charges.

Dr. Garcia viewed his suspension with equanimity, unhappy only because the work of the NSDB could suffer a setback if politics invaded it. Although he conceded that his fight against the administration was that of a pigmy against a giant, he considered his chances of exoneration to be good, but his usefulness to the cause of Philippine science might be damaged as he stated at the MIT centennial conference: "The number one roadblock in the medical and educational development of emerging countries is politics. Above all, a developing country cannot afford political obstructionism, chicanery or graft; corruption of any kind is the one thing that will ruin its future."

President Macapagal appointed three former court justices to investigate the charge of electioneering, and last November the committee gave Dr. Garcia a complete bill of health: "The evidence is either hearsay, inconsistent or unworthy of belief." Following the committee's recommendations, the President reinstated Dr. Garcia as head of the NSDB.

During his suspension, Dr. Garcia considered the idea, should he be forced out of office, of establishing a private organization that would be a kind of clearing house for the technical assistance that comes from the United States, assuming the task of determining the best use of funds and material, plan worthwhile projects and act as consultant to private agencies.

Dr. Garcia found his enforced seven-month vacation a welcome change of routine, enjoyed the rare opportunity to relax, read and think.\* Paulino and Rosalinda Garcia live in a modern house in Manila and enjoy the delights of this bustling, cosmopolitan city in which Western ways are superimposed on an Oriental atmosphere. In the distance they can see the dim outlines of the Mariveles Mountains; lovely parks look out on the pageantry of the busy waterfront; churches of Spanish architecture contrast with modern apartment houses and government buildings in the Greek classic style. Gaily decorated jeepneys, radios blaring, careen wildly through the congested streets; the drivers honk appreciatively at the girls in dresses of brightly colored Manila hemp who clatter by on carved wooden shoes.

\*"The passion for action and the disregard of thinking is perhaps the greatest flaw in modern society."

At least once a month Dr. Garcia leaves the sophisticated metropolis, drives 70 miles to a vastly different world: his ancestral home in the little town of Gapan. This is in the rice bowl of the Philippines, and along the way Dr. Garcia passes mile after mile of checkerboard rice fields, the farmers still trudging behind wooden plows and the women wearing great cartwheel hats of split bamboo and palm-leaf strips as they plant the young shoots; he sometimes stops to chat with old friends who live in the small palm-thatched shacks, perched on 12-foot bamboo poles, that line the roads.

Here in Gapan, Paulino Garcia, one of 12 children, was born and grew up in a thick-walled, 100-year-old house built by his grandfather and now occupied by his sister Amiceta, principal of the local elementary school. The spacious courtyard is aflame with exotic flowers and heady with the scent of jasmine; the walls of every room are covered with religious pictures and family photographs; the dark mahogany furniture has been polished by generations and the beds are of bamboo cane for ventilation in the hot climate; artesian well water is stored in great clay jugs for cooling. Dr. Garcia resigns himself to a slight gain in weight; his sisters concoct succulent dishes of *adobo*, spicy pork and chicken with rice and gravy, or *relleno*, boneless stuffed chicken, and *lumpia*, a type of hamburger mixed with egg and fried in the shape of a roll.

A gay people, the Filipinos love fiestas, music and dancing. At night Gapan, wrapped in tropic darkness like a hot, moist blanket, resounds to the romantic tinkle of stringed instruments, occasionally the staccato pop of firecrackers. In this little town with its unpaved streets, with its gaily decorated two-wheeled horse-drawn carts called *calesa*, young Paulino played football, boxed, attended the cockfights, learned to breed and train fighting spiders.

Dr. Garcia is the local boy who made good, and his visits invariably spark a celebration among his scores of relatives and friends. On the evening of a recent visit the physician, grinning happily, was serenaded as usual by the local stringed orchestra, seven or eight talented amateurs who wandered into the Garcia courtyard to spend two or three hours playing folk songs. The tradition of the stringed group goes back 140 years, which pleases Dr. Garcia, for tradition looms large in his personal lexicon. "Continuity, tradition, they are good for us oldsters and better for the children. They give us roots, purpose, a sense of belonging."

Dr. Garcia particularly likes the holidays in Gapan. One such occasion is the Festival of the Farm, when peasants from the outlying districts come for a day and a night of gossip, trade and mild merrymaking, arriving in heavy wooden carts drawn by the mournful, patient *carabao* and protected from the heat by awnings made of green tree branches. The families pull up in the streets, cook their dinners over small braziers, visit the market, the old white church, make small purchases at the grocery and the *botica* (drugstore).

Life in Gapan is slow, dreamlike. Says Dr. Garcia: "I feel a century away from Manila. Here I can recharge my batteries, renew old friendships, ponder the future."

The future holds promise of challenge for the genial, energetic physician. He has been pressed to enter politics, but refuses, although he thinks it would be good if politicians were scientifically literate, in order to fully appreciate the problems of advancing science. He said: "To serve the people with emphasis on the less fortunate is what I, as any other physician, have been trained for. There are ways other than politics in rendering service to the people."

