

**VIRGINIA E. RAMOS-OCAMPO, HER OUTSTANDING BRAND OF  
LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE TO SOCIETY AS AN INSECT PHYSIOLOGIST,  
BIOCHEMIST AND INSECTICIDE TOXICOLOGIST**

**Gaudencia A. Lantican<sup>1</sup> and Ma. Anita M. Bautista<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Senior Scientist, Research and Development Department  
Dole Philippines, Inc., Belisario Heights Subd., Lanang, Davao City  
Gaudencia.Lantican@doleintl.com

<sup>2</sup>Professor, National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (NIMBB)  
University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City 1101  
mmbautista20@up.edu.ph

### **Standout Academic Career**



The young Virginia E. Ramos is a smart and diligent student who consistently received the highest honors from her elementary years to college graduation. She was a UP Los Baños (UPLB) scholar under the National Food and Agriculture Council in 1973. She finished her Master of Science in Entomology/Biochemistry, specializing in Insect Physiology and Biochemistry in 1977. From being a graduate Research Assistant, she immediately served the university as an instructor. Not long after she finished her Master's degree when, she again qualified for the National Crop Protection Center – USAID Training Grant to pursue her PhD in

Entomology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, from September 1979 and completed it in August 1983. She then changed her name to Virginia E. Ramos-Ocampo (VERO) after she married her best friend, Dr. Pablo P. Ocampo. The country gained another young talent when she returned to serve the university, particularly at the Department of Entomology, and was promoted to Assistant Professor. She could keep up with the rigors of her various roles in the academe and achieved the Professor 12 level in 2009. She retired in 2017. The rank of Professor 12 is bestowed on a highly productive faculty member who has shown outstanding teaching performance and sustained publication records recognized by peers from within and outside the University.

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## **Subscribed to Bringing Into Being the Fundamentals of the Science of Entomology in the Philippines**

The Insecticide Toxicology Laboratory that she managed was among the busiest laboratories in the Department. It serves as the hub of her projects funded by national or international organizations. There were days or months in a year when the laboratory operated 24/7, without holidays. In the lab, she exemplified the attitude of endurance to thrive in a very challenging research situation. As a result, she has led and completed more than 20 projects, authored more than 46 articles in refereed technical journals, 4 research notes, 3 chapters in books, 4 papers in proceedings, several training manuals, and working and policy papers. She also presented several scientific papers or posters at conferences, meetings, symposia, seminars, and workshops here and abroad. The papers presented covered subjects related to pesticide toxicology, insect physiology, pesticide handling, pesticide residues, insecticide resistance, insect biology, pest population dynamics, botanical insecticides, entomopathogens, biorationals in pest management, mammalian physiology, vector control and public health, crop protection and integrated pest management, bioecology, super and multi-parasitization, non-conventional pest control, and gamma irradiation techniques, among others. The projects are focused on insects of crops of paramount economic importance such as the mango leafhopper, *Idioscopus clypealis* (Lethierry), corn earworm or peanut worm, *Helicoverpa armigera* Hubner, striped flea beetle, *Phyllotreta striolata* F., diamondback moth, *Plutella xylostella* (Linnaeus), citrus rind borer, *Prays endolemma* Diakonoff, common cutworm, *Spodoptera litura* Fabricius. The same laboratory where she welcomes her students to work on their thesis or short-term projects. Her students learn the basics and applications of insecticide toxicology, insect physiology, proper insect rearing, mass production, diet preparation, bracketing techniques, bioassay procedures, host plant growing, and laboratory and field experimental setups. Each student who took the Insecticide Toxicology course must have passed the ordeal of manually isolating an active ingredient and calculating probit. She would be considered a serendipitous researcher after she and her team led in finding and investigating the twisted-winged insects (Strepsiptera) of the genera *Halictophagus* and *Callipharixenos* as parasitoids of the three mango leafhopper species, *I. clypealis*, *I. niveosparsus* Lethierry, and *Bakera nigrobilineata* (Melichar) in the Philippines. Of these numerous projects, she demonstrated how to carry out things with correctness and efficiency, which she did not expect to happen overnight but out of continuous practice.

As a professor, she taught challenging courses at the Department of Entomology (1977-2017), now the Institute of Weed Science, Entomology, and Plant Pathology. These include Insect Physiology, Insecticide Toxicology, Insect Ecology, Principles of Crop Protection, Integrated Pest Management, and Urban Pest Management. She challenges her students to stretch themselves intellectually, to be patient, and not be afraid of hard work. Her students and advisees looked up to her as a good and dignified model. She produced more than 50 successful graduates of Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy from various parts of the Philippines and other countries in Asia, being the major adviser, co-adviser, or panel member. She has helped pave the way for her students to realize their dreams. She gives encouraging words when her students or advisees need them. Her careful and critical editing of the students' manuscripts is her way of demonstrating empathy. Her students produced research published in either national or international journals. This is one of the many proofs of how she, as an educator, inspired her students to understand more deeply and be more critical of their work. Among those published works were granted International Publication Awards:

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## Championed an Unorthodox Teaching and Research Conduct Style

Besides the laboratory and classroom teaching setups, she champions the non-conventional method of teaching, where she coordinates with private firms, farms, screen houses, and laboratories for her students to visit and learn. She ups the ante for her students to get acquainted with the possible work environment after completing their degrees. Most of them now hold respected offices related to pesticide toxicology, pesticide resistance, pest management, crop production, and crop protection, be it in academe, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, multinational companies, and business owners.



She would be described as having a stern outlook, strict, and straightforward with her lab team of students, assistants, and associates. The way she manages her projects and the lab exudes how she possesses integrity. Her brand of

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leadership may seem intimidating, but this is her way of bringing out the best in each of her teammates. Outside working hours, she is a very thoughtful person

who looks after the welfare of her students, assistants, and associates. During days when budgets are not yet available from the funding agency, she readily pulls out support, even from her pocket, to keep everyone and the projects going. This is one of the reasons why her team values the opportunity to have worked and learned under her tutelage.

How she took care of her work is proven by the numerous recognitions awarded to her. In 1988, she received the Lingkod Bayan Presidential Award given by the Civil Service Commission as a member of the research team on National Integrated Research Program on Medicinal Plants (NIRPROMP) – “in recognition of their outstanding accomplishment in the propagation, pharmacologic screening, clinical testing, formulation and manufacture of drugs from Philippine medicinal plants such as *lagundi*, *tsaang gubat*, *yerba buena*, and *sambong*.

She did not rest on her laurels. She continued to undergo rigid training from different research institutions around the world – in Asia, Europe, and America and in the country to beef up her knowledge and initiate more projects in the science of entomology, pest management, and pesticide toxicology.

She does not confine herself in a bubble. She exchanges knowledge and expertise with other academic and professional organizations, being a life member of different prestigious professional organizations such as the Alpha Chi Chapter of Phi Sigma Honor Society for Biological Sciences, the Gamma Sigma Delta Honor Society of Agriculture; the Radioisotope Society of the Philippines; the Philippine Association of Entomologists, Inc. (PAE); and as a member of the National Research Council of the Philippines, Inc. It is in PAE, which she considers her home professional association. She has held various offices in this association to advance the science of entomology in society. Serving as president during fiscal year 2001-2002 and currently serves as an active member of the Executive Committee (Board of Directors).



### **Eagle-eyed Editor-In-Chief of The Philippine Entomologist**

VERO has the most extended years of service to PAE's scientific journal as Editor-In-Chief. She assumed the position in *The Philippine Entomologist* (TPE) for 12 straight years from 2003 – 2015, aside from her tenure in 1995-1998 and 2002. During her office in 2005, the journal became ISI-listed, which indicated the highest level of authenticity in the studies reported. Her unusually sharp visual powers or keen ability to check for details in the submitted manuscripts for peer review and publication was undeniably the reason for TPE's continued success as the lone Entomology journal in the country. She has retired from the university but has unwavering support for the journal as an adjunct editor and a PAE Board of Directors member, who is always at the forefront of looking after our beloved journal. This proves her steadfast commitment to the PAE and the science of entomology.

### **Committed to Serve as a Woman Leader**

A few years after establishing the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA), VERO, as a young professional, started as a SEARCA Consultant for the FPA. Her education and vast experience in pesticide toxicology have made her one of FPA's reference persons for evaluating pesticide products before certification and registration for use. Her ability to produce timely and quality outputs made her an invaluable member of FPA's pool of experts and technical evaluators. Most pesticides certified for use in the country passed the critical review of VERO. She has been the Director of the Training Committee of the PAE since 2009. It is under her direction that the PAE became an FPA-Accredited Training Association.



These trainings include: 1) Accredited Fertilizer and Pesticide (Bioefficacy and Supervised Pesticide Residue Trial) Researchers; 2) Accredited Responsible Care Officers; 3) Certified Pesticide Applicator Exterminator; and 4) Pesticide Bioefficacy and SPRT Researchers in Agricultural Veterinary Facilities. The different Training Manuals developed are products of collaborative work among esteemed experts she has impeccably chosen.

Hundreds of pesticide professionals in the Philippines who are engaged in the proper handling, warehousing, use, application, and research are certified and updated by the FPA through these trainings and workshops. Through VERO's leadership, this PAE Training Committee program has helped various pest management professionals on pressing issues such as pesticide use, emerging pests, pesticide resistance, adulterated pesticides, food safety and quality, environmental hazards, ecological imbalance, and climate change. These training courses also help the association fulfill its commitment to serve society. For every pesticide professional in the country, hers is a name treated with enormous respect.



*Dr. Virginia E. Ramos-Ocampo signing the FPA Researchers Training Manual in July 2023*

She held various administrative offices and served as an exemplary leader - as the Chief of the UPLB Staff Housing Office (1998 – 2003), the Project Leader of the UPLB Termite Management (2003 – 2009), the Chairperson of the Department of Entomology (2001-2005), the National Team Leader of the National Crop Protection Network (2003-2005), the Director of the Crop Protection Cluster (2005-2008), the Technical Consultant of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (2007-2008), and the

Assistant Secretary of the UP System (2012-2016). When the situation needs, VERO rolls her sleeves, literally and figuratively speaking.

We celebrate VERO's leadership track as the first Woman President of the Pest Management Council of the Philippines in 2002. This positively impacted the pest management professionals in the country, particularly for women as leaders. From her, many women in the pest management industry have led the council, which has continued to thrive for more than five decades.

Her leadership by example and her engagements in the activities that she commits prove her nature as a trustworthy and dedicated professional. Her leadership calls out on what is good and faithful about the group she leads, giving them the right encouragement to serve.

Is this the profession that she yearned for? Her dream was to be a medical doctor. However, the path led her to the portals of UPLB, particularly at the Department of Entomology, where she grew, blossomed, and bore fruits. It may be different from her childhood dream, but she embraced it and engaged in the responsibilities that shaped her to become the Entomologist that she is. She willingly learned and listened to her mentors and respected their values and worth (Ocampo, 2003), creating a ripple effect on other parts of her life.

### **VERO, as a Person Outside the Academe**

She was a supportive wife to her husband and a nurturing mother who does only the best for her family. Her children, Jan Astrid and Juan Miguel, are now successful professionals in their chosen careers, and the family she built continues to grow with her children-in-law and grandchildren.

Her hard work and willingness to persevere earned her the Outstanding Professional in Agriculture Award from the Professional Regulations Commission in 2011. This award recognizes and honors professionals who, like her, are hallmarks of integrity, responsibility, competence, excellent service, and valuable professional contributions.

Her monumental works, her leadership, and her unwavering dedication to serving society through the science of Entomology make her a true inspiration to every individual willing to persevere for oneself and society. This is her mantra, and she continues living her name, VERO – in Latin, true.

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