

My Life Story

I have never thought that one day I would be able to write my own success story to inspire other people. A story that is full of adventure I may say.

Growing up in the province of Aklan wherein you can barely see an ounce of hope was probably one of the most difficult challenges I had to go through. Being the eldest of the nine children, I had to live like an adult at such a young age. I had to care of my younger siblings while my parents were away to look for an extra job that can provide us food. I had to look after my siblings while studying and weaving a mat (Mat- is a native product through weaving that the people in our town do for a living.) I had to weave a mat to earn and help my parents with the everyday expenses and to support my studies as well. My father barely graduated high school that is why he only managed to work as a construction worker and a chain saw operator. My mother was able to earn her high school diploma but only to become a fulltime housewife when she married my father. Although my family didn't have everything, we were able to live without other people's expense.

“To just reach even a year in college would be a great achievement for me”. This is who I was back in high school because I knew that the probability of me getting into college was almost zero due to financial problem. Until few days after my graduation in high school, that's when I realized that I had to keep chasing my dreams. I thought that if I don't look for that opportunity that could help me reach my dreams, it will never be realized. Back then, for me, taking a risk would mean that I had to leave my family and had to live away from them. This is the only I way I saw that can help me lift my family from the ground. That was a decision I had to make which my parents had supported. The drive I had to reach college brought me to Roxas city, the capital of our neighbouring province which is Capiz, one of the four provinces of the Panay islands. I worked as a student assistant in one of the colleges there in lieu of the 18 unit free tuition excluding the miscellaneous fees. I had to endure working and studying during weekdays. I also had to work as a part time sales lady during weekend for my additional allowance. I had to bear it for a year until I decided to just stop. I stopped because it was too much for me that I couldn't take it anymore. That decision didn't mean quitting for me. Besides, my initial dream was to just reach college even for a year so that I could have a confidence looking for a job. Thereafter, I went back home and tried my luck applying for a job in Boracay.

I worked in Café Del Mar (Boracay) for two years as a waitress. Working there was probably the best opportunity I got because I had a chance to meet different kinds of people with different backgrounds, personalities and culture. My experience in Boracay has really boosted my confidence on how to deal with different people and without my knowing has brought me to where I am right now. I met the people there whom I consider to be my second family and whom I really look up to very much. They offered me a scholarship and brought me here in Manila to become one of the apple scholars. To become an apple scholar would mean that I had to leave Boracay and continue my journey in chasing my dreams. That was another risk and a hard decision I had to make but I guess that was the best decision I have ever made.

Being an apple scholar has helped me appreciate and value more what I have. Kalinga at Pag-Ibig Foundation has helped me understand more how the unity and helping each other work to achieve a common goal. Kalinga has opened doors for me to meet a lot of people whom I shared memories with. Meeting my co-scholars was one of the highlights for me because I met people whom I share the same dreams. To be an apple scholar is a proof that no matter how far away a person maybe for as long as the intention to help others is real, there is no impossibility. We are maybe worlds apart, yet we connect with you by heart and will forever be thankful for giving us apple scholars a hope and an opportunity.

Because of the scholarship, I got to enrol in a BS Accountancy program in a university in Manila. A chance I have never even dreamed of. My first semester was my adjustment period where I

had to master different route going to school from my Uncle's house where I stayed during my entire college days. I had to deal with the crowded place of Manila, a completely different place from Boracay and my hometown where I came from. Accountancy is a five year program in my university. Taking up Accountancy wasn't that easy and I think a lot of people would agree with me. I had to undergo qualifying exams in accounting and law subjects to be admitted as a second year Accountancy student otherwise I have to enrol in another program. In every level, I always had to deal with extreme experiences with the major subjects which mean that the program I chose demands so much effort in studying to prepare ourselves for the CPA licensure exams after graduation. But the best thing about being in a university was meeting my new friends where I shared a lot of experiences. I gotta deal with different professors with different personalities and teaching styles. I had to learn so many lessons there. But my college days weren't just about all accounting and auditing books. Students are always encouraged to think out of the box especially during our research and business plans. Moreover, the main reason I guess why a lot of students want to take up Accountancy is to prepare ourselves in passing the CPA exam.

My last semester in college was probably the hardest of my entire college life. The subjects left in my last semester were all board exam related. Those were included in our curriculum to determine whether students are already equipped with the knowledge we need for the CPA exam. However, it wasn't that easy because I had to deal with the pressure on me that I might not be able to graduate on time because my exam results were not good. Of course, maybe it was just a part of the process of me getting a degree after 5 years which seems to be far from over. But I had to bring back my focus and had to awaken my fighting spirit so that I could survive my last semester. Fortunately, I was able to pass the exam and got my degree with a Latin honour (Cum Laude). Thereafter, I enrolled in a review school for almost 7 months as a part of my preparation for the CPA licensure examination. The exam was given last May, 2012. Well, it was another adventure for me to review the entire 7 months. I had to discipline myself and keep my focus so that I will be prepared enough comes the exam day. I had to make a lot of adjustments and even have to lessen my sleeping time to review the topics needed. Finally, the next day after the 2 week exam, I saw my name on the Professional Regulation Commission's (PRC) website as one of the successful examinees of the exam. WOW!! It was the feeling I never had. Tears were not enough to express my gratitude and happiness. I was really happy because I knew I made my family(both in Netherlands and Philippines) especially my parents proud of me.

Life is indeed a cycle because life doesn't stop after we get a college degree or a title. It would just give you an additional ticket for another journey. Few days after the exam, I had to choose which firm to go to which can offer me a better career path. I have always wanted to work for Punongbayan & Araullo, a member firm of Grant Thornton International Ltd., so after going through the hiring process and got an offer, I immediately accepted it. Now, I am working as Tax Junior for Punongbayan & Araullo. To become a very good expert in Tax would probably take a little time of course. I chose tax because it is something that only a few would want to be in but I guess for me it offers a wider scope to learn. Working for a firm that offers assurance and non -assurance services would expose me to a different industry especially those of multi- national companies. Compliance with the rules and regulations is very critical which then would help us do a good corporate practice. More opportunities will also open given enough experience and talent in the long run.

I have already fulfilled my dream of getting a degree. It is time for me now to fulfill the dreams of my other siblings as well.

You have already read my story and I want to thank each and everyone who have helped me reach the place where I am today. Lastly, I just wish I was able to inspire people through my story. Indeed, having the drive to take whatever it takes to get an education will always carry you to the right path.

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