

## 4.0 Story of the Mariner

Do you know this good-looking man whose picture you see on the right? Is he an actor? A military man? Neither.

You may not know him. He was my grandfather. He was a hardworking merchant mariner. He later became a harbor pilot in the City of Cebu in the Central *Perlas*. He taught me the value of thrift. He passed on at the ripe age of 82. I was then a young man in my second year of law school.



A few days after we buried him, his lawyer called me to his office. There, he told me that since I was a favorite grandson, my rich grandfather left me an inheritance of what was then the equivalent of \$10 million dollars.

Stunned, I received the money, and deposited it in a bank.

The day after, I withdrew One Million Dollars, brought my friends to the casino, we got drunk and gambled. The next day, I did the same thing, day after day after day, my friends and I squandered almost all of my inheritance.

Nine and a half days later,  
I suddenly realized that  
I only had \$100,000 left.  
So, what my grandfather saved all his life,  
I squandered in less than two weeks.

As if that was not bad enough,  
I directed my accountant to record  
All my expenses and losses as revenue, as income,  
And report that I have made great progress.

Is that correct accounting?

Of course not!  
Any accountant who would do that  
Will be immediately stripped of his license  
For gross and utter ignorance  
That can result in financial ruin!

But is that not what the economists of the world  
Are doing to the Earth?

The Earth took four and a half billion years  
 To become the ball of life that it is now.  
 All of which is made possible by  
 A very delicate mixture of land, air, and water.

Human beings -- in our present shape and form –  
 Came only in the last few seconds of the Earth's clock.  
 Like any animal, we have lived off the Earth  
 Using the Land, Air, and Water to sustain our Lives  
 We started as hunter-gatherers, then as farmers.

### The Industrial Revolution

Happened only about 200 years ago.  
 This is significant because  
 It marked the start of an era.  
 It was the beginning of a time when we,  
 The last of the Earth's transients,  
 Started to use the life-sources  
 Faster than they can replenish.

In less than 200 years,  
 We cut down trees that took  
 All of time to grow.  
 We removed life-giving soil  
 To disembowel the Earth, threw away the water  
 that got in the way, just to get a few pieces of  
 shiny metals.  
 We have taken out practically  
 All of the fish from the seas and the rivers.  
 We have dumped so much poisons into our  
 water bodies,

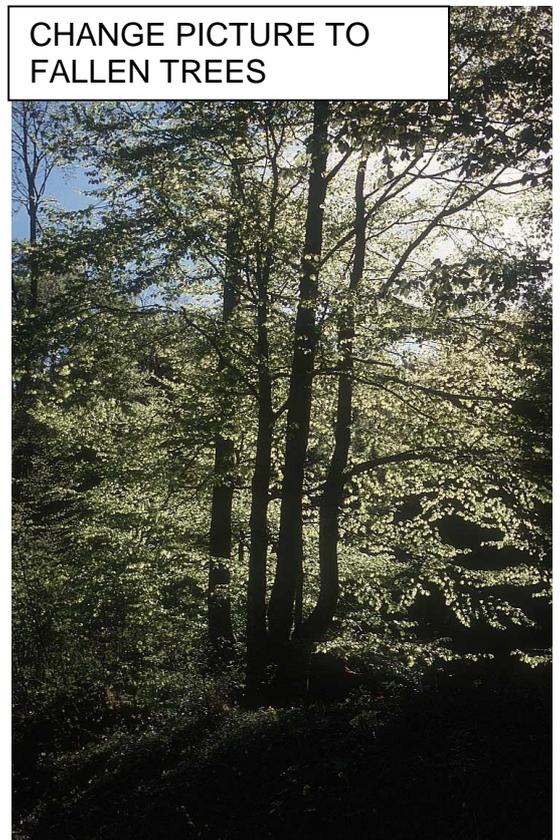
And call it economic progress.

In other words,  
 The mindset of economics that humans practice  
 Is to take out as much of the life-sources  
 And life-forms from the Earth,  
 Use them as quickly as possible,  
 And then throw them away.

That is the economic mindset of extraction and consumption.  
 For short, it is called ex-con economics.

The word 'ex-con' also means 'ex-convict'.  
 In a real sense, after seeing what it has done to the Earth,  
 This kind of economic thinking stands charged  
 And is hereby declared guilty of the  
 Crime of planetary plunder.

CHANGE PICTURE TO  
 FALLEN TREES



## Real Economics

If extraction and consumption (ex-con) economics is the kind of thinking that got us into the problems we are in now, how do we get out of it?

One of the great thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Mr. Einstein said,  
“We cannot solve a problem  
Using the same kind of thinking  
That got us into the problem”.

If so, what is a different way of thinking?  
What is the opposite of extraction and consumption economics?

The opposite of extraction and consumption is  
Conservation, Protection, and Restoration (CPR).  
The opposite and 180 degrees turn-around  
Of ex-con economics is  
CPR Economics

CPR also means the  
Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation  
Of the vital organs of Life –  
Land, Air, and Water.

## The Story?

Oh, the story of my grandfather?

It is said that the best stories are those which blend  
Fact, fiction, and fantasy.

The fact is that he was my grandfather,  
He was a merchant mariner and a harbor pilot,  
He died at the age of 82.

The fiction is that he was very rich.

And the fantasy is that he left me an inheritance of \$10 million.  
And I squandered it all in ten days.

But is that not the fantasy world  
We are now living in?

The Earth took 4.5 billion years to become what it is.  
In the last few seconds, we come in drunk,  
Kill everything we see.  
Poison the land, the air and the waters ...

And then we call it ‘economic progress.’



### Real Story

The real story is that my grandfather was indeed a harbor pilot of the port of Cebu, a major international seaport in the central *Perlas* island of *Ampingan*. By some stroke of serendipity, in circumstances not even a novelist can imagine, I was given to his and my grandmother's care when I was barely a month old. I grew up with him and my grandmother, and they become my adopted parents.

Indeed, Capt. Canuto Oposa, or Papa Oto to me, was a merchant marines and later harbor pilot. For those who do not know what that is, a harbor pilot's job is to escort big boats -- especially international vessels whose captains are not familiar with the local tides and depths -- in and out of the harbor. As a child, Papa Oto would take me on the small tugboats to meet or send off the big boats that came in and out of the *Ampingan* Harbor. Looking back, perhaps that is when I first touched the sea, or was it the sea that touched me? Since then, it has me smitten by the fragrance of maddening affection.

Papa Oto was not a poor. In fact, he was quite financially well-off. He owned a big piece of sugarcane farm in an adjoining province, he founded and chaired a rural bank, he owned a couple of commercial buildings, a few lots in

the city, and a coconut farm in a small and god-forsaken island north of *Ampingan* Island.

Fact: Papa Oto passed on at the age of 82. Among his earthly possessions, the coconut farm in his hometown island of *Pinangga* (pronounced pinangga), was the least valuable. But it had a small opening that faced out to the Visayan Sea.

Fiction: I did not inherit \$10 Million dollars. On the contrary, I inherited practically nothing, except for that god-forsaken coconut farm. It was in a desolate part of the *Pinangga* island in a place that had no running water, no electricity, and not even a market. It was so far away that to get there from the capital of Perlas, even until today, would take almost the whole day.

But I inherited something much more valuable than 100 billion dollars -- the value of thrift. Papa Oto was so thrifty he would be irritated when he saw water leaking from a faucet. I still distinctly remember, I must have been about 7 years old, when he asked me to close the tap tight when he saw that it was dripping a few drops of water. I said, "It is OK Papa, that's just a few drops." To this he replied, "Yes, those are only a few drops now, but the whole night it will become one bucket of water." If we waste water, one day you will have to buy water. Buying water during that time was like buying air. It sounded impossibly funny.

But perhaps because we did not heed his warning, we continued to waste and dirty so much of our water that today, we have to buy clean water. Yes, a warning come true. Would buying clean air not be far behind?

That value of thrift is what later expanded in me into value of conservation. It is really nothing more than the truth that we should not waste water today -- or any the life-sources -- so those who will come after us will have water to drink, air to breathe, and soil to grow their food.

The narrow strip of seafront has since multiplied ten-fold. It is today a very desirable stretch of beachfront property. Despite several offers of commercial 'development' for incredible amounts of money, I have decided to keep it open and have kept 99% of the land in a state of wonderful wilderness. People have called me a fool behind my back for missing the millions offered for even a small part of this beachfront. Instead of making money on it, I decided that maybe, just maybe, it can make a little difference.



What difference? Well, one hardly sees this wide stretch of white sand beach anywhere in the Islands of *Pinangga*, *Ampingan*, or even in the whole country of Perlas that is left open. All privately-owned sea-front areas are always transformed into resorts and other money-making ventures. By its mere sight alone, I hope that when people see it, especially our own people, their jaws will drop at the sight of such pure and unspeakable beauty. Often they say, "Wow, it is so beautiful it does not look like any part of the Perlas." To which, our answer would be, "No, that is how the Perlas is if we only we do not abuse it, and if only we took a little more care."

Instead, I turned it into the School of the SEA -- Sea and Earth Advocates. It was (and is) a non-profit experiential learning facility on how to live in harmony with the Earth. Almost all of the trainings are funded by a very shallow well of water (I don't like the word 'money'. I call it 'water').

Together with my volunteer friends, we have trained thousands and thousands of many young people, schoolchildren, fishermen, women, teachers, local and national officials, and ordinary citizens on how to live sustainably. ([link to the video of the House Rules of the School of the SEA](#))

The patch of the sea in front of the School of the SEA has since been turned into a marine sanctuary. There, fish and marine lives are given their space to breed, to nurse and to roam protected from the greed of human hands. The fish and corals were blossoming, until November 8, 2013.

On that day, we were hit by the most powerful typhoon ever to make landfall – Typhoon *Haiyan* (local name 'Yolanda'). Shortly after, concerned friends asked me, "What happened to the School of the SEA? Was it damaged?"

My answer, "No, we were not damaged ..... we were *erased*."

It took more than a year, and with a lot of help from friends, to rise from the ruins. We have been able to reconstruct only two of the nine structures wiped out by *Haiyan*. In adaptation, the School of the SEA is now called the SEA CAMP – Sea and Earth Advocates of Culture, Arts, and Music for the Planet.

As this is being written, we are preparing for an intensive training 3-day experiential training of a crack team of environmental lawyers and actionists (I don't like the word 'activist'). If we succeed in training this powerhouse team to take catalytic and focused environmental actions, it will turn the tide of official apathy and neglect. It took me 12 years to put this team together. It is finally happening. Of course, I cannot tell you who they are.

On April 22, we will rise from the ruins of Typhoon *Haiyan*. To celebrate the resilient genius of the Perlinos -- people of Perlas – and to thank those who came to our aid and comfort in the times of crisis, we will:

1. Close off from all human entry a sizeable portion of a freshwater wetland to become a wilderness area and bird park.

2. Open the *Art Center for the Earth*.

3. Start a legal revolution -- a pebble will be thrown into a pond, in the hope that its ripples may yet go far beyond. (Program may be found in [oposa.ph](http://oposa.ph))



Going back to the story of my grandfather, Papa Oto. What happened to the things I inherited from him is exactly the opposite. The most precious thing I inherited from him was the seed of conservation. As to the physical thing, in today's money, it was only about \$1,000.

What I have done with both heirlooms is, in today's money .... beyond money.

Attached: Program for the April 22 activities

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