

PAO@75th: From Looking Forward to Forging Forward

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If not for the COVID 19 pandemic, the 75th Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee at this time would already be in the thick of things putting the final touches on the grand celebration of the **Diamond Jubilee of the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology**. But just like most events that are supposed to happen this year, our celebration is on hold till a more definite future can be predicted. My first impulse after we have decided to postpone the activities is a deep sense of loss: the loss of this once in lifetime opportunity to celebrate a historical milestone in the year 2020, a number that is intrinsically linked to our field of ophthalmology; the loss of momentum of the members of the team who have rolled up their sleeves working hard to deliver a most memorable and meaningful commemoration; and the loss of the time spent brain storming, planning, and organizing the myriad celebratory events in case all these will not come to pass.

But wallowing is not what we do. So, life threw us a curve ball. The best thing to do is to move forward – to **forge forward**. The PAO did not reach 75 years sailing on placid waters but rather it surmounted all challenges and obstacles thrown its way over

more than seven decades through sheer grit and determination.

As I have mentioned earlier, this milestone comes only once in our lifetime and we have to celebrate it since it is an opportune time for us to reminisce with gratitude the historical achievements of our professional society, to recognize the contributions of our founders and all those who came before us, and to be proud of Philippine ophthalmology as a whole. This commemoration, I believe, is a powerful unifying force for the members of PAO and, at the same time, will allow us to showcase the contributions of our Academy in nation-building. It is also hoped that the image of PAO will be uplifted in the local and international medical community that could lead to increased collaboration and cooperation with the international ophthalmology community and other stakeholders.

So what if we can't celebrate in the year 2020? It is an awful year anyway. The year, like age, is just a number. What's more important is the spirit of celebratory pride no matter what year it may be. So, celebrate we must. Hopefully in 2021.