

## **A MAN WITH AN UNDYING DREAM**

(The Life of Palawan Governor Jose Ch. Alvarez)

Jose Chaves Alvarez, known to every Palaweño as "JCA," is the current governor of the Province of Palawan. He was born on June 29, 1944 in Kidapawan City, Province of Cotabato, to spouses Engr. Tomas Alvarez and Mrs. Lilia Alvarez.

At the age of six (6), Governor JCA started his education at the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Davao University. He then pursued his secondary education at San Nicholas College, now St. Paul University, and finished the same in 1960.

When he was 16, Governor JCA took Chemical Engineering at Cebu Institute of Technology. But due to financial constraints, he was forced to transfer to Xavier University and enroll in Liberal Arts. Because he wanted to help his family and avoid becoming a burden to his parents, the young JCA financed his university education by working as a collector in an insurance agency. Through his own perseverance and skills, the future Palawan Governor was able to graduate from college in 1964.

After graduation, Governor JCA ventured into a small used-car trading business in Cagayan de Oro City. In 1969, he was able to expand his business to Mandaue City. In 1970, he was presented an opportunity to start a logging business in Indonesia and immediately grabbed the same. He stayed in the forests of Indonesia for seven (7) years, far away from his home and family. But through his business and activities abroad, he truly learned and appreciated the importance of environmental conversation and protection.

Governor JCA returned to the Philippines in 1977 to share his knowledge and experiences with conducting trade and business in Indonesia. In 1981, he assumed leadership over the Pagdanan Timber Corporation, a local logging company in Palawan that was experiencing huge losses at that time. But due to his love for Palawan and for the sake and future of the province's virgin environment and rich ecosystem, he waived his company's right to the logging concession earlier granted by the government; and as a result of which he suffered a tremendous loss in the amount more than 25 million dollars.

After his Pagdanan venture, he endeavored to engage in diverse business activities. After years of hard work and determination, he became a very successful businessman – a self-made billionaire to the eyes of many who admire his passion for success and his unparalleled work ethic.

Despite his personal achievements and high status in life, he has never forgotten the Province of Palawan which continues to occupy a very special place in his heart, from the moment he first set foot in it. He also longed to see the long-delayed development that Palawan deserves, the kind of progress that each and every Palaweño should be able to experience and enjoy. He saw the incredible potential of the province, but was frustrated by the slow rate of economic growth and an even worse quality of life of the majority of its population.

All of these prompted him to stay in the province and start his advocacy projects and programs in its various municipalities, to help save the unfortunate Palaweños from further drowning in the quicksand of destitution.

Rising from a failed attempt to seize the helm of the Provincial Government of Palawan during the 2010 national and local elections, JCA and his local political party, *Partidong Pagbabago ng Palawan*, won an overwhelming victory in the 2013 local elections. The victory of the 70-year-old businessman and his first foray into politics gave Palaweños a renewed sense of hope that after a long wait, the curse of underdevelopment in the Province of Palawan could finally be broken.

A visionary and a genius in the realm of business and trade, Governor JCA now leads the Province of Palawan on its journey through the *daang matuwid*, en route to achieve the elusive promise of genuine change and inclusive development. Through his brainchild and now flagship local government initiative, that is the I. H.E.L.P. Program, infrastructure development, healthcare, education, livelihood, and environmental protection are now treated as the five focus or key areas for the long-term development of Palawan.