

UOG Memories: Special Education, School of Education

By Lourdes Palomo Klitzkie, Ph.D.

I am an 81 year-old mother, a grandmother to four grandchildren, and a great-grandmother to six great grandchildren with ages ranging from six months to 16 years. I have led a fulfilling life through my personal achievements and my academic accomplishments.

I graduated from the University of Guam in 1970 with a B.A. in Elementary and Special Education (SPED). I received my M.A. in Learning Disabilities from the University of New Mexico in 1974 and my Ph.D. in Special Education from Utah State University in 1980.

In May of 1976, I was a resource room special education classroom teacher at Finegayan Elementary School. When the late Dr. Michael F. Caldwell came to my classroom to tell me they were looking for someone with a master's degree in special education to supervise student teachers out in the schools, I immediately applied for the position. This program was under federal grant money and was only for a year, but I accepted the position anyway. My teaching load was always full four 3-credit hour courses, and sometimes I would get an extra load because of students needing certain courses. I was also given a quarter load working for the Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Services (Guam Cedders).

After my year's contract was up, the late former dean of the college, Dr. Richard Tennyson, and the late Dr. Michael Caldwell approached me about being a permanent faculty at the university. They said that they were willing to send me to Utah State University to get my doctorate degree in special education under federal grant money. I took the offer and went to Utah in 1977. I completed my doctorate degree two years later in December 1979.

Shortly after, I returned to UOG and joined the faculty in special education. At that time, it was only Dr. Caldwell and Professor Gloria Peckens teaching SPED courses. In the 70s and 80s, very few professors had doctorate degrees. In the summers of 1998 and 1999, I was one of four faculty members who taught graduate-level courses for 11 Federated States of Micronesia students working on their masters' degrees. Six of those students graduated in May 2000.

The late president of the University, Dr. Rosa Carter, encouraged my application for promotion to assistant professor after I completed my doctorate. I was promoted to full professor in 1993. Over the years, I taught a number of undergraduate and graduate-level courses in regular and special education classes. I've conducted numerous workshops and in-service training for public school teachers and administrators in instructional technology and behavior management. And—in the summers—I taught individualized degree program students (IDP) in Micronesia, Palau, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas and the Marshall Islands. Teaching out in the islands of Majuro, Yap, Pohnpei, Kosrae and Palau were memorable and fun times because not only did I teach, but I got to learn the languages and cultures of each island.

Aside from my teaching experience, I set up the School of Education (SOE) Alumni Association in March 1998 and recruited classroom teachers and administrators for membership. I have been the Advisor since 1998. In 2002, SOE unveiled the Honor Wall for classroom teachers,

counselors, and administrators. This was made possible through our fundraising efforts. I was also responsible for establishing the Wall of Honor for members of the Society of Emeritus Professors and Retired Scholars (SEPRS), which I joined in 1998.

In 2022, we will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of the University of Guam. I will also be celebrating 52 years since I graduated with a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education from UOG. The special education program in the 1960s had only five students and two full-time faculty members. There were only two buildings—A & B—that were used for classrooms and faculty office spaces. Students and faculty got to know each other very well.

I am indebted to the University of Guam and forever grateful for the years that I spent both getting my undergraduate degree and teaching at the School of Education. I was able to present papers in national and international conferences with my colleague, Professor Emerita Dr. Heidi San Nicolas, in Australia, Namibia, London and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A few of my research papers were published in refereed journals in Special Education dealing with individuals with disabilities and bilingualism.

I've received the following awards for my time spent contributing my knowledge and services to the university: Who's Who in American Education and School of Education Awards from 1992 to 1993, the 20 Years Service Award from UOG in 1996, and a Certificate of Appreciation for Professional Service Award for UOG/SOE's National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Accreditation. I feel that I served the university well in the areas of teaching, research, and service.

I have also contributed numerous volunteer hours to the community at large dealing with developmental disabilities, health and physical fitness and sports, with the latter being of great importance to me. Running has been my sport since I was 35 years old. I ran numerous 5Ks and 10Ks, 14 ultramarathons, and over 40 marathons. I ran the Boston and Honolulu Marathons and the XXIV Olympiad in Seoul, Korea when I was 48 years old. I was the oldest woman to run in the Olympics.

I've received numerous awards for running in 5Ks, 10Ks, marathons and ultramarathons from the Guam Running Club with some of my notable achievements including the U.S. Congressional Award for running the 24th Olympiad in Seoul, Korea by Congressman Ben Blaz, the Governor's Magnificent Seven Award for Olympian of the Year in 1988, and A Commendatory legislation for being the first Chamorro woman to run in the Boston Marathon in 1987. I was also featured in *Runner's World* magazine in July 1990.

I am grateful that I was able to accomplish so much in both my academic career and personal life ambitions—from a student and an instructor to Professor Emerita at the University of Guam and an seasoned Olympiad, I am proud to say that UOG is the best institution in the Western Pacific. It is the natural choice. My words of wisdom to current faculty and future professors or administrators is simple: "To get to the top, work hard and be humble."



Caption: 1981. Dr. Lou Klitskie in her office in Dean's Circle.



Caption: June 2012. Dr. Lou Klitskie and her poster board at the Society of Emeritus Professors and Retired Scholars (SEPRS) Display at the UOG Field House.