



# Angelica Ligas, her Cinderella Story

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In this day and age when yabang Pinoy has become a positive connotation, reading and knowing about Filipinos who reap accolades locally and internationally are welcome news indeed. There is so much bleakness nowadays and good news is like manna from heaven, something that all of us need on a daily basis.

Thus, meeting and hearing the story of true-blue Bulakeña Angelica Ligas, recipient of the Palm Beach Health Care 2011 Nursing Distinction Hands and Heart Award, is a most inspiring read.

Petite, tastefully clad in a cream tailored suit, speaking in a sing-song manner with a distinctive American twang, sincere and quite frank in her story telling, Ligas's eyes lights up, even teary at times, and giggles heartily as she shares her amazing Cinderella story.

"At the tender age of five, my father died. Our house was burned down. Nothing was left, and we had no choice but to live in an abandoned piggery," recalls Angelica, with a hint of sadness in her voice.

Looking straight at this writer, she says: "It was a very tough time but my loving mother raised us well (three sisters and one brother). She is one hell of a fighter and survivor. She instilled in us the value of prayers accompanied with hard work, of working together as a team. We drew our strength from her because she was always calm and very positive in her outlook, telling us that our future will be bright even if we don't have that much."

"To help our mother, we climbed trees to pick fruits so that we can sell them at the market. We planted and harvested our home-grown vegetables. The trying times seemed forever," she stresses with a faint smile on her lips.

"My siblings and I helped each other. We worked as a team, whether it was school work or house work. In school, I was a full time scholar. I was really diligent. I was aware that we don't have much and I know that having a good education can bring us somewhere. We valued its importance. We absorbed every thing in school like sponges. We knew that it is our only tool to realizing our dreams," continues Ligas.

High school she finished at the Holy Angels Academy and her nursing degree at the Dr. Yanga Francisco Balagtas College. After graduation, she took the next bold step — to work abroad.

"I am a very strong woman," avers Ligas. "I want to leave the country not because I don't like out country but because you know, opportunities were not ripe for a young nurse like me at that time."

She carries on: "In my mind, as prepare myself to conquer a whole new world and leave my family behind, I conditioned it, constantly reminding it that I am going to be somebody some day. Nursing was the course that I took because ever since I was little girl I feel that I can help and take care of other people. In my heart, I knew then that I was born to care."

In 2001, she went to Toronto, Canada, working as a live-in care giver for kids the whole day and at nights taking additional units in Georgetown College to be a full-time registered nurse. In two years, she became a registered nurse and was hired by her employer Sarah Cayman.

"Being alone in Canada was tough. There were nights when it felt like my loneliness is killing me," Angelica frankly admits.

She reveals: "Work has become therapeutic. I worked really hard. When you're busy and tired, you no longer have the time to think, and you don't remember your heavy heart. My being far away from my family made me stronger."

Her attitude towards work is most inspiring: "In whatever I do, I do it with love, respect and compassion. While in Canada, I realized that Canadians love Filipinos very much. We are known as great workers. We are very caring. We are dedicated. We treat them as family. That is why they love us."

Getting and receiving "so much love" is what this nurse from Bulacan felt upon receiving the very prestigious Palm Beach Health Care 2011 Nursing Distinction, Hands and Heart Award.

Her citation reads: "Angelica has been called an angel by her patients and inspiration by her colleagues. She is known to go beyond the call of duty to help a patient, even going to a patient after a twelve-hour shift. In the words of one of her patients, she gave me security, a sense of trust and comfort that leads to fast recovery. I can see in her heart that she loves taking care of people regardless of who they are. She takes care of her colleagues too, always taking the time to teach and lend a helping hand."

"It was like a dream come true, and winning it was something else!" exclaims Angelica. "Imagine, being nominated for the entire Palm Beach area, wherein there are more than 12,000 registered nurses and only 22 finalists are chosen from that great number. Luckily, I was one of eight winners, and the Hands and Heart Award is very special because it is given to a nurse who exemplifies compassion and care in the practice of nursing."

What made her win then? "I think I bagged the award because of my compassion," she quickly replies. "My winning is a just a validation of the kind of work we Filipinos give, especially in the nursing industry. We treat them like family. We are more loving, very patient with patients. Nasa puso talaga nating Pinoy na maging maalaga."

For this nurse who idolizes Sharon Cuneta and Judy Ann Santos, Angelica concludes: "I am living proof that with hard work and prayers. Dreams do come true. The key to success is that one must really love your work. When you love what you do, everything good and positive comes back to you."

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