

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: GLORIA ALCANCIA

Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a country at war, struggling for survival as a family under a brutal totalitarian government? Hear the nightly air raids and dogfights overhead. Picture your mother's face every morning awaiting news, or as she hears random gunshots knowing that they may be aimed at one of your brothers or even your father on his way home from work. Because most of us were born in a country protected by an inspired Constitution and a strong Judeo-Christian tradition, and with no wars on our own turf since the 19th century, such scenes are almost unimaginable. But we have two fellow residents of Treemont who know only too well, one raised in Poland and Nazi Germany, and the other in the Philippine Islands prior to and during World War II. The European story will be told at a later date, but our profile today is of Gloria Alcancia, an attractive petite brunette whose pleasant demeanor gives no indication of what she has been through.

Born Gloria de la Llana in 1930 in the Philippines, she was one of six girls and three boys in her family. Their father was the distinguished journalist and author Pedro de la Llana, sometimes called "the stormy petrel of Philippine journalism." A reformer and strong supporter of the U.S., his outspoken comments and world view sometimes landed him in hot water. There was no neutral ground of reaction to him: you either admired and respected his boldness and integrity in "telling it like it is," or if you were part of the oppressive group you despised him as a thorn in your flesh and a block in your intended path to total control of the country, its people, and its multiple natural resources. His writings, many of which are in the U.S. Library of Congress, reflect his love of freedom and his aspirations for his native Philippines.

At the time of Gloria's birth the Philippines were under the protection of the U.S. under terms of the Treaty of Paris signed in 1899 following the Spanish-American War. William Howard Taft was the first governor appointed. With independence in mind he was able to start preparations by improving economic conditions, establishing a "Pensionada" program, and allowing Filipinos to study in the U.S., which helped modernize and westernize the country. The U.S. Congress in 1916 established an elected Filipino legislature with house and senate. In 1925 Governor General Leonard Wood (yes, Teddy Roosevelt's commanding officer in the famed Rough Riders) appointed to the House of Representatives a young newspaperman named Pedro de la Llana. By 1934 Filipinos were promised independence by 1946, and in 1935 the people approved a Constitution creating the Philippine Commonwealth with Manuel Quezon as president. The transition was underway.

All these noble intentions came to an abrupt halt on December 8, 1941, when the Japanese invaded the Philippines. After the devastating battles of Bataan and Corregidor, General Douglas MacArthur was forced to withdraw, but it was with the firm promise, "I shall return!" He made good on that promise in 1945, but meanwhile the Islands suffered a prolonged period of deprivation and brutality by the Japanese conquerors. Their only means of retaliation were guerrilla raids of varying degrees of effectiveness, and some underground newspapers including The Flash, edited by Pedro de la Llana. In 1944, in a case shrouded with mystery, Editor de la Llana was assassinated and a courageous voice was silenced. He was 49.

Meanwhile Gloria was completing her education as best she could, delighting in her country's deliverance from the hated oppressor and rejoicing in the safety and hopes of peacetime. Though profoundly

saddened by the death of her father, she knew his life had gone far toward accomplishing his lifetime dream of independence for his beloved country.

In due time she married a young doctor named Maximino Alcancia and they began their family. When their second child was still quite young Dr. Max came to America to further his medical education in Canada. Gloria joined him there as soon as she could, and their third child, Caesar, was born a Canadian citizen. On completion of the medical exchange program that had brought him here, the doctor moved his family to Cleveland, Ohio, to work with the renowned Dr. Robert White.

In 1970 Dr. Alcancia died quite suddenly, leaving Gloria with children ages 16, 14, 8, and 3. The next few years took her over many ventures and covered many miles from upstate New York to Florida, from Falls Church, Virginia to Queens, New York. She made trips to Hong Kong and Japan as a buyer for stores owned by several of her brothers and sisters. She earned a real estate license and became a broker not only for the income of selling other people's property but also so that she could trade property herself without paying commissions. She dabbled in insurance and investments, and remains an active partner in a company she started which recycles used tires for domestic and industrial use.



Gloria is pictured here between her two daughters, Lizabeth, her eldest child, and Juliette, the youngest. Lizabeth lives in Houston and is currently updating her education. Juliette lives in the New York area and is employed by Morgan Stanley to design the interiors of their buildings and offices. Elder son Oscar works for Shell Oil and lives in Pearland, TX. Younger son Caesar lives in Pennsylvania and is Sr. Design Engineer for GTC, an electronics company dealing in highly specialized communications systems for use at airports.

Her family has now expanded to include four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. She is extremely proud of all of them, and for good reason

It has been a long, hard row that brought Gloria de la Llana Alcancia to the relative luxury of her quiet, peaceful and comfortable life at Treemont. Yet she, perhaps more than any of us, can fully appreciate what she has.

“Whose creeds of social service shall outlast the pow’r of tyrants and the Thrones of Might, March on beneath the banner of the free, as soldiers of your country’s liberty. Whose hearts that throb with patriotism grand subdue the very forces of despair...”
from Pedro de la Llana’s address to UP Graduates of 1922. He was then 27 years old.

