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Happy 90th Birthday to Dr. Jose F. Poblete: A Lifetime Dedicated to Public Health Service and Leadership

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Pictured above, lifelong friends: Lifelong friends / Mrs. Emelda Dizon, Mrs. Dinorah Singh, former First Lady Luz Luis, Mrs. Juanita Poblete, Honoree Dr. Jose Poblete, Hostess Dr. Razalina Batenga, Mrs. Barbara Guerra, Mrs. Linda Navaritti, Dr. Sofronio Navaritti, Mr. Terrance Highfield, Mrs. Luz Highfield, Mr. Dilip Singh, Mrs. Gloria Vivot, Mrs. Kim Causey Gomez, Mrs. Gloria Coursey, Mrs. Aracelis Walcott, and Mr. Elmer Walcott.

As Dr. Jose F. Poblete approaches his 90th birthday, we reflect on the lifetime accomplishments of a remarkable man.

We celebrate this milestone occasion and recognize his extraordinary contributions to public health service and the field of medicine in the U.S. Virgin Islands and beyond. His legacy serves

as a shining example of excellence for generations to come.

A distinguished Medical Doctor, Surgeon, Public Health Leader, Chief of Surgery, and former Commissioner of Health, he has made an indelible mark on public healthcare and the communities he has served. Dr. Poblete dedicated his life to improving the quality of healthcare for the people of the Virgin Islands. His illustrious career spans several decades and three different time zones.

Born in 1933, in Manila, Philippines, Dr. Poblete's passion for medicine was evident from an early age. He was one of six physicians in his family, following in the footsteps of his parents, the late Dr. and Mrs. Vincente Poblete. He graduated from the University of the Philippines Medical School in 1956 and pursued his surgical career through the U.S. Exchange Visitors Program promoted by President Dwight David "Ike" Eisenhower.



Dr. Jose F. Poblete was among the first Filipino medical professionals to answer the call in response to a shortage of healthcare services in the U.S. He attained his postgraduate surgical training at Sydenham New York City Hospital in Harlem, which historically served and employed African Americans. He completed his surgical oncology fellowship at Sloan Kettering Memorial Hospital in New York City, a world-renowned leader in cancer care in the United States. He then accepted a surgical staff position at Knud Hansen Memorial Hospital in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, in 1963. Later that year, he requested and was transferred to the Charles Harwood Memorial Hospital Surgical Department in St. Croix with private-practice privileges.

The young Dr. Poblete found himself mesmerized by the breathtaking beauty of St. Croix, the warmth of the people, and the charm of the island community. He quickly grew fond of his new home. As destiny would have it, his heart was captured by the beautiful Juanita Monell, a former Miss US Virgin Islands and a Panamerican World Travel Agent, who soon after became Mrs. Juanita Monell Poblete, a Crucian of Puerto Rican descent; she owned and operated J & P Modeling school in the heart of Christiansted, a graduate of the University of the Virgin Islands and worked as a public school educator. They were blessed with three lovely daughters, Aurora, Marizelle, and Maribelle.



As his career and family life progressed, he worked his way up the ranks with promotions to Assistant Chief of Surgery and then Chief of Surgery.

In 1982, the public hospital services in St. Croix were transferred to the newly built Gov. Juan F. Luis Hospital, where Dr. Poblete continued in his designated capacity as Chief of Surgery. Along with his private practice, he also served as Medical Director of the then Hess Oil Virgin Islands Corporation for 25 years and as Chairman of the Virgin Islands Medical Board for 10 years.

Throughout his career, Dr. Poblete has achieved numerous honors, citations, and commendations. He obtained the designation of American Board Certified Surgeon and also as a Diplomat of the American Board of Surgery after successfully passing the two-part examinations given by the surgical board. He was inducted as a Fellow of the American Board of Surgery, a Fellow of the International College of Surgeons, a Fellow of the International College of Angiology, and the American Society of Abdominal Surgeons. Additionally, he gained membership in several medical and surgical societies, including the American Medical Association and the Virgin Islands Medical Society.

He was cited in Marquis "Who's Who in America" and "Who's Who in the Caribbean and West Indies," the International Register of Profiles, North American Edition Community Service in America, and the Biographical Sketch in America. He was also among the top 100 outstanding graduates of Cavite High School in Cavite City, Philippines, honored during its centennial celebration, where he was personally commended by the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Aroyo. The following year, he was also honored as one of the top 20 Filipino-American career professionals in North America and Guam.

His contributions continue to have a lasting impact on all the communities he has served and on his life journey as a pioneer among Filipino medical professionals, playing a key role in establishing the VI Filipino medical community and becoming an integral member of the vibrant multicultural community of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

He was honored as Physician of the Year by the Virgin Islands Medical Society and the V.I. Medical Institute in 1993 and was commended with a resolution passed by the 19th Legislature of the Virgin Islands for outstanding community service of 30 years to the local community.

In 1996, Dr. Poblete was appointed as the Commissioner of Health by Gov. Roy L. Schneider, culminating his illustrious career in public service. His legacy is a testament to his dedication and commitment to improving public health, particularly for underserved communities.

After 36 years of public service, Dr. Poblete, alongside his lifetime partner and devoted wife, retired and now spend time between St. Croix, USVI, and South Florida, with their three daughters, their grandchildren Nicole, Johnathan, Ariela, and Brandon, and great-grandson Holdon.



Dr. Jose F. Poblete has been and will remain a valuable member of our Virgin Islands community. As we celebrate Dr. Poblete's 90th birthday, we recognize, honor, and salute him for his lifetime of exemplary public service and for answering the call of public healthcare. He is equally exemplary in his personal life as a devoted husband, proud father, a kind and loyal friend to many, a man of quiet dignity, and an honorable man.

We are grateful and say thank you and wish you, Jose, a very Happy 90th Birthday!

Editor's Note: This opinion was written and submitted by Carlotta Luis on Tuesday, March 28, 2022.

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