Howard McKaughan was director during my second year of SIL’s training program at the University of North Dakota, in the summer of 1955. One time he sent me an urgent message. I had skipped breakfast because I had gotten such exciting news the night before that I couldn’t sleep. My Ilokano informant, Rosendo Apeles, a jeweler, had told me that he himself had once checked the size of my finger so Dave could tell his uncle, a jeweler in Rockford, IL, what size rings I should have.¹ Dave had already begun working with SIL in the Philippines late the previous year. Dave had also worked on Ilokano, publishing a paper on that language’s pronouns (Thomas 1955) the same year as the story mentioned here.² When I got to Howard’s office, he handed me a box with an engagement ring, along with a wedding band for me to take to the Philippines for our ceremony there! He said I could wear the engagement ring, but I said no, I was not yet officially a member of SIL. So he said that at least I could show it around the dorm.

We were married in 1956, immediately after I arrived in the Philippines. Dave had already been asked to go to Vietnam, so in late 1957 we moved there together. We eventually worked on the Chrau language. Howard visited us in a Chrau village in 1959 or 1960.

I guess it was that Ilokano-pronoun paper that Dave presented in about 1958 to a French linguist in Saigon. The Frenchman looked up and said, “I did not think you were old enough to have published anything yet!” Vivian (then Forsberg) Van Wynen says that he looked like a fifteen-year-old when he first arrived in Manila at age twenty-four! Although Dave’s life on earth ended in April 2006, his work on Chrau sentences should soon be revised (from his handwritten notes) along with a Chrau dictionary that is still being worked on.

References


¹ Ilokano (also spelled Ilocano), one of the most widely spoken languages of the Philippines, was an important bridge language to SIL’s work on the less documented languages in that country. McKaughan & Forster (1952/1957) is a conversational grammar of this language designed for training Philippine-bound linguists at SIL’s North Dakota training programs.

² That article is based on work with Mr. Apeles at the 1954 SIL course (Thomas 1955:204 fn. 2).