

Down Valenzuela Street, there lived Kiko

BY MARIAMME D. JADLOC

In her article, “The UP in our minds” (“Ugnayan” Vol. 1, No. 1), anthropologist and UP professor Monica FA W. Santos said, “Thus, while we can all collectively claim that we are from UP, being ‘from UP’ can have various meanings because we inhabit UP in different ways.”

P. Valenzuela Street at present. Photo by Jerald DJ. Caranza, UPDIO



UP, particularly UP Diliman (UPD), carries various meanings for many people. For some, it's just a usual university; for others, it's the place where they get an education or a place of work. Still, there are others who consider UPD their "home."

Francis Carlos "Kiko" B. Diaz is one of them.

And how could he not? Since he was a newborn baby and until now, Diaz has been living on campus.

He used to live on Valenzuela Street.

"I was born here in UP. Our house was on Valenzuela Street in Area 2. Kami iyong unang beneficiary ng brand new two-floor apartment housing unit in 1968," Diaz said.

He described the UPD neighborhood while he was growing up as very safe.

"Sadyang napakalawak dahil sa dami at laki ng lupain. Ang buong komunidad ay isa ring napakaligtas na lugar para sa lahat ng mga naninirahan dito," Diaz said.



Diaz. Photo by Jefferson Villacruz, UPDIO

There were activities he considered his favorites, and one of them was going to the UP Coop or the UP Cooperative.

"Isa pang paborito namin na puntahan ay ang UP Coop. Tuwing ang mga magulang namin ay may dividend, nagmimistulang mall na ang UP Coop noon sa amin at nagagamit namin pangbili ng mga laruan ang 'chits' na ibinibigay sa amin ng aming mga magulang," he said.

Growing up in spacious UPD must have been pure joy for the young Diaz. In fact, he remembered that he did not have to venture too far just to play with his friends. Their yard was enough.

"Ang sarili naming bakuran sa Valenzuela Street sa Area 2 ay nagsisilbi bilang aming malaking playground at laruan ng aking mga kalarong kapitbahay," he said.

Diaz further explained, "Dahil ang aking ama na si Prop. Joe Diaz ay isang guro ng practical arts sa UP High/Elem/UPIS (UP Integrated School), gumawa siya ng isang malaking farm kung saan marami kaming taniman. Doon, nag-alaga kami ng baboy, kambing, at mayroon ding maliit na palaisdaan. Ang aming bahay kasi ang

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pinakadulo na ng mga apartment housing kaya't pagkatapos ng bahay namin ay nakatiwangwang na lupain na."

Diaz recalled the whole Valenzuela Street morphed into a playground full of kids at play.

"Ang buong kalye ng Valenzuela ay nagsisilbi rin bilang aming playground kung saan kami nakapaglalaro ng patintero, agawan-base, siyato, at taguan. Ang kalye ay mawawalan lamang ng mga bata kapag dumarating na ang takipsilim at kinakailangan nang magsi-uwian para maghapunan sa kani-kanilang mga bahay. Sikat din sa aming magkakapitbahay ang pagpapalipad ng mga saranggola tuwing summer months," he said.

There were many occasions that the UPD community would always look forward to. For the young Diaz, it was always the Christmas time that was special and unforgettable.

"Pinakamasaya lagi ang panahon ng Pasko. Una, malamig ang simoy ng hangin kaya masarap maglaro sa labas ng bahay. Masaya rin ang aming ginagawang pangangaroling kasama ng aking mga kalaro sa aming mga kapitbahay. Labis din naming ikinasisiya ang paggawa ng mga sarili naming 'kanyon' gamit ang buho ng kawayan at kalburo para ito ay pumutok," Diaz reminisced.

Diaz, who is now dean of the College of Human Kinetics, still calls UPD his home. He briefly left and lived near the campus but eventually came back.

"Kasalukuyan pa rin po akong nakatira sa



*Facade of the UPIS at present.
Photo by Jefferson
Villacruz, UPDIO*



Opting to live in UPD does not mean that Diaz agrees to all the changes happening on campus even if these may be signs of progress.



Former Chancellor Michael L. Tan (left) and Diaz (right) during the CHK Dean Affirmation in 2019. Photo by Jefferson Villacruz, UPDIO

loob ng UP[D] campus dahil nagawaran din po ako ng pabahay bilang isang guro simula pa noong 2005. Noong panahong nanirahan kami sa labas ng UP[D] campus ay hindi masasabing lumayo kami dahil sa Teacher's Village lamang din kami nanirahan," he said.

Why did he choose to stay in UPD?

"Hindi po matatawaran ang practicality na ikaw ay nakatira sa loob ng UP[D] campus habang ikaw ay isang guro rin sa UPD. Napakalaki ring benepisyo ito at napakalapit ng UPIS, kung saan nag-aaral ang aking mga anak, sa aming bahay," Diaz explained.

Opting to live in UPD does not mean that Diaz agrees to all the changes happening on campus even if these may be signs of progress.

"Sadyang hindi kasiya-siya ang dami ng nag-usbungang malalaking building sa loob ng UP[D] campus. Ito yata ang kapalit ng 'progress.' Hindi ko malilimutan ang malawak na espasyong mayroon ang UP[D] noon at napakagandang mayroon pa tayong sariling golf course sa loob ng ating campus," Diaz said.

UPD means many things to many people. Even with all the changes happening on campus, for Diaz, who spent his life on campus as a young boy with his family, a UP student, and a UP faculty and administrator, UPD is and will always be his home.

