

Memories of an idyllic childhood

BY ANNA E. REGIDOR

Both of Eduardo Francisco's parents were employees of the University Food Service.

His father, Elias, hailed from Aklan, while his mother, Zenaida, was from Laguna. He is the eldest of three children.

The Franciscos were transplants from Area 5 (where Romulo Hall now stands) to Area 3 (now the UP Shopping Center) before finally settling on De Jesus Street in Area 17, where Francisco lived for the next 41 years.

“Doon na ako nakatapos ng pag-aaral, hanggang sa nakapag-forge ng mga kaibigan na mababait lahat. Mga anak nina [Supreme Court Associate] Justice [Jose] Campos, Atty. Fernandez, Prof. Hernandez, Prof. Lagmay, mga Demetillo. Twenty-one kaming magbabarkada na puro kami boys. Isa 'yon sa masasayang part sa pagtira rito sa loob ng campus,” Francisco said.

According to Francisco, it was a tight-knit community.

“Ang gaganda ng mga bahay diyan at ang neighbors namin na sina Atty. Laureta at si Justice Campos, kahit mataas ang stature nila, kapag nag-usap-usap sila ng parents ko at mga kapitbahay, pare-pareho lang ang turingan. Lahat talagang tunay na magkakapitbahay,” he said.



Francisco. Photo by Jefferson Villacruz, UPDIO

Opposite page: Area 17 at present (top) and the UPD Institute of Civil Engineering building which is located at the then Area 17 (bottom). Photos by Jerald DJ. Caranza, UPDIO



He has fond memories of hanging out at the UP Playground beside the Philippine Association of University Women Child Care Center (now PAUW-Child Study Center) and the golf course where the National Science Complex and National Engineering Complex are presently located.

“Iyong science complex at engineering complex dito sa may Sunrise Cottage noong araw ay golf course ’yan. After noong matigil na ’yong maintenance ng golf course, napabaya na at naging bukid na lang. Doon kami noong araw namamasyal ng aking mga kaibigan at namamana kami doon ng mga tikling [also known as the Buff-banded Rail],” he said.

Francisco also has memories of scouring the same grounds with another “batang UP,” now UPD Chancellor Fidel R. Nemenzo, for spiders to use in spider-wrestling matches with the other kids.

He remembers how, during summer time, the UP swimming pool would be opened to the public for summer recreation activities, and during Holy Week, Barangay Krus na Ligas would broadcast the “Pabasa” over its public address system.

As he grew up, the boys took a liking for basketball which Justice Campos encouraged by sponsoring small tournaments. “Noong araw, noong nabuhay pa si Justice Campos, masipag [siya] na nagpapa-inter-color ng basketball,” he said.

Francisco also mentioned that there were several bus companies plying their routes on the UPD campus then, among them DM Transit, JD Transit, and De Dios Transit. “Ang terminal nila ay doon sa gate ng Balara, tapos papasok dito sa may pagitan ng CBA [ngayon ay Cesar E.A. Virata School of Business] at iikot ’yan sa loob ng campus.”

He remembers the oil price hikes of the 1960s, when the Ikot fare jumped from 5 to 10 to 15 centavos: “Singko lang ang pamasaha sa Ikot noong araw. Itinaas ng



10 centavos, nag-rally ang mga estudyante. Itinaas ng kinse sentimos, nag-rally ulit ang mga estudyante.”

Because he was only 12 when it happened, Francisco’s recollection of the First Quarter Storm and the Diliman Commune were vague but sensory.

“Medyo mataas iyong lugar namin. Mabababa pa iyong mga puno kaya nakikita namin ang University Avenue. Mayroong naghahabulan tapos nagpuputukan. Tapos, the following day, amoy na amoy mo na ang teargas all over the campus. Tapos iyong mga truck ng Metrocom, nakaparada doon sa may CMO noong araw [ngayon ay College of Architecture].”

Francisco started working at the University in 1979 after completing his high school education at the nearby Ramon Magsaysay High School in Cubao and forgoing a career as a seaman. He is currently working as an administrative aide at the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.



*Top: UPD College of Science complex.
Photo by Leonardo A. Reyes, UPDIO*

*Left: UP Ikot jeepney.
Photo from the UPDIO archives*

“By choice na rin kasi kailangang nasa bahay na ako ng ganitong oras dahil walang tatao rito. Since ako ang eldest, pumayag na ako. Kaya nga ako hindi nakasakay ng barko e. I was supposed to be a seaman pero aalis ako at the age of 27. Iyong mga kapatid ko, mga bata pa. Kung may mangyari sa kanila na pareho silang may sakit, walang agarang makatutulong sa kanila. So iyong dalawang kapatid ko na lang ang pinag-adventure ko sa labas. Ako na lang dito sa loob ng campus,” he said.

In recent years, he began to organize annual reunions with his childhood friends.

“One New Year’s Eve, kumpleto ako—may inumin, may pulutan—the problem was mag-isa lang ako, malungkot. Ang ginawa ko tinawag ko iyong available at pinapunta ko rito. Up to now, ginagawa pa rin namin except itong two years of pandemic. Ang saya-saya kasi iyong old people from Area 17 hanggang sa youngest na barkada ay nagpupunta,” he said.

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While he has no regrets staying in UPD and is thankful to it for providing his family with a home, as time passed, Francisco noticed that urbanization and the growth of the University began to change UPD’s physical landscape. He admits that he finds himself having to look outside the University for the outdoor pursuits he indulged in when he was a child. “Ngayon na lang, pupunta kami ng kapatid ko sa Santa Maria, Laguna. Itong Monday, pupunta kami sa Valenzuela para mag-fishing.”

Overall, Francisco says he wouldn’t exchange the life he had here in UPD with anything. For him, it was really convenient to live on campus.

“Mayroong dalawang churches at mayroong ding infirmary [UP Health Service]. May mini grocery stores din. So lahat ng kailangan mo ay nandito na sa campus kaya hindi mo na kailangang lumabas,” he said.