

Traditions from growing up on campus



the past: in the '70s



BY **BINO C. GAMBA**

The UP exodus from Manila to Diliman brought not only learning and knowledge to the vast, cogon-dominated area, and rustic part of Quezon City but also families who would call UP Diliman (UPD) their home.

Among those who heeded the call to transfer to the campus was the late Augusto L. Tenmatay, PhD of the then Department (now Institute) of Chemistry. He served as its director from 1959 to 1960 and eventually became UP Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Tenmatay, who was one of the prime movers of the UP General Education Program, is the grandfather of Laura T. David, PhD of the Marine Science Institute (MSI).

David said it was in 1951 when her grandfather relocated to UPD. Considered pioneers of the “Diliman Republic,” her grandfather’s family initially lived in Area 5.

“Area 5 was the area from the UP School of Economics up to the Asian Center,” David said.

GROWING UP. When David’s grandfather returned from his PhD studies, they transferred to Area 14 — the part of the campus where NISMED (National Institute for Science and Mathematics Education Development), the Office of the University Registrar (OUR), the School of Statistics, and the UPD Police (UPDP) are currently located.

UP exodus motorcade on Feb. 12, 1949. Photo from the UPD Main Library Archives Section



David. Photo by Leonardo A. Reyes, UPDIO

But her most awaited Christmas activity was what she called the “battle of the ‘kanyon.’” David said they had cannons made from bamboo and some from metal (dug up from the ground), fashioned about a meter long.

“Iyong bahay ay kahilera ng UPDP, tapos iyong dating UP Fire Station, then one house na duplex, then bahay na nila Lolo. Nakaharap ang bahay sa UP Playground,” she explained.

David added, “Doon ako lumaki, although I spent my first four years sa UP Los Baños (UPLB) kasi si Nanay naging faculty sa UPLB. Tapos bumalik kami dito sa Diliman, sa bahay nila Lolo sa Area 14.”

David happily recalled that apart from the UP Playground fronting their house, the whole Area 14 was her playground.

“Iyong buong area na iyon, tinatakbo namin kasi iyon ang may paakyat na kalye, from UPDP going to the UP Executive House. Doon kami natutong magbisikleta.”

She added that the neighborhood kids would play “patintero” and “taguan” at night, especially during full moon.

David also had fond memories of the waterways or flood drains near their house.

“Iyong flood drains, nakabukas lang iyon. So, galing kalye may tatawiran na parang small bridge paakyat doon sa bahay namin. Kapag tag-ulan malakas ang agos ng tubig kaya doon kami nagsi-swimming magkakapatid at mga kalaro namin. Doon din kami nanghuhuli ng tadpoles and guppies.”

Another favorite hangout was the area where the Vargas Museum is currently located. According to David, that part of the campus was then a vacant lot that had a small lagoon and several big trees. “Common ground ’yan ng mga bata sa campus para maglaro at lumangoy.”

Aside from playing fun street games, David also remembers memorable occasions and traditions when she was growing up.

During Holy Week, they would regularly join the “Pabasa.” According to David, the

chanting of the life, passion, and death of Jesus Christ could be heard far and wide. Their neighborhood would also participate in the Stations of the Cross, which would pass through Village A, Village B, Area 14, and Area 17. “Flores de Mayo, mayroon din ‘yan,” she remarked.

Come Christmas season, the young David always looked forward to the joyful community atmosphere of the UPD Lantern Parade.

But her most awaited Christmas activity was what she called the “battle of the ‘kanyon.’” David said they had cannons made from bamboo and some from metal (dug up from the ground), fashioned about a meter long.

“Gamit ang pulbura, sisindihan namin ang kanyon para pumutok, then sasagot ‘yong Village A and B. Minsan mauunang magkanyon ang Village A and B, then sasagot iyong lugar namin, Area 14 and 17,” explained David.

The event, according to David, was a tradition from 1974 until 1979 casually started by young adults of the communities on UPD campus. It usually commenced

after the Lantern Parade and ended on New Year’s Day.

A CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY. David’s family stayed in a sawali (bamboo-slatted) house left behind by American soldiers who occupied the campus during World War II. It was a house on stilts with a crawl space underneath. David described their house as a “very cool place” because the materials used were porous, allowing air circulation in the whole house.

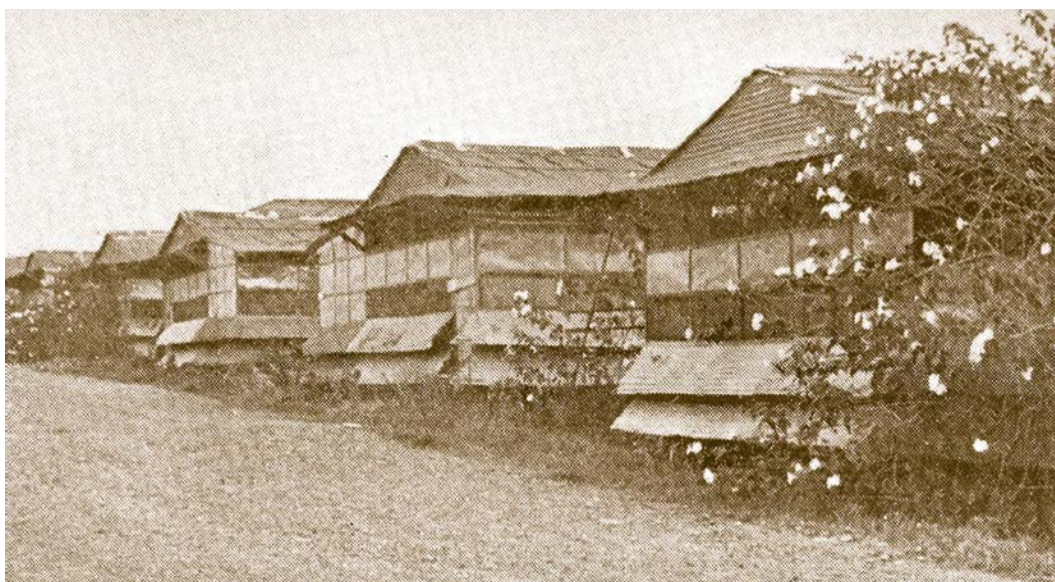
She recalled that they were neighbors with Chemistry professors Aurea R. Aparato and Bienvenido T. Miranda.

“Miranda Hall or the Natural Sciences Research Institute (NSRI) was named after Sir Ben. He was NSRI’s first director,” David said.

David is really proud of the place she grew up in because of its sense of real community.

“It’s a close-knit community, and we are closely acquainted with our neighbors,” she said.

Aside from going on afternoon walks and engaging in chitchat, the mothers in Area 14 exchanged food a lot. David narrated that



Sawali houses. Photo from the UPD Main Library Archives Section

they frequently delivered food prepared by her mother to the neighbors. She also remembers that when her grandmother was pregnant with her last child, her grandmother couldn't eat the food she herself cooked.

"So pinapadalahan siya nila Miranda ng food kasi iyon lang ang nakakain niya. Madalas din mangyaring nagbibigay ang isang mother sa kapitbahay, tapos iyong neighbor na iyon, magpapadala naman sa iba," explained David.

MARTIAL LAW. David said she was very young when Martial Law was declared, but she clearly remembered and witnessed some incidents that happened.

"Klaro sa akin iyong protest na tinakluban si Oblation. For a long time, naka-black siya. Then, kapag nagkakahabulan, kapag pumapasok iyong black guards, tumatakbo sila. Usually, ang taguan nila ay sa Executive House, so dadaan sila sa amin o kaya pumupunta sila sa silong ng mga bahay," she said.

Despite the dark years of dictatorship, the young kids still found reasons to be happy. They were still able to play their favorite games, but they needed to be home by sunset. Gone were the days when their parents let them play outside at night.

"Dahil may curfew, kapag padilim na, nagtatakbuhan na kami pauwi. Mayroon na ring silent or candle protests na papatayin ang mga ilaw sa bahay at maglalagay ng kandila sa labas so makikita mo iyong mga kandila kasi kaunti pa lang ang street lights noong panahong 'yon," David said.

She added that there was a designated time of the day when everybody would make noise using pots and pans or with anything that would produce noise.

"Mabilis lang 'yon, parang isa o dalawang minuto at tahimik na ulit. Dahil sa mga ganoong pangyayari, maiisip mong hindi na normal ang mga panahong 'yon," David explained.

Even the Lantern Parade slowly changed from festivities to protest. Political statements amplified as the years went by.

"Mula noon, talagang mas political na 'yong Lantern Parade. Iyong theme n'ya ay iyong tipong 'oust the dictator,' and I remember this specific float that says, 'All I want this Christmas are my two kidneys. This is for Marcos,'" said David.

TRANSFER TO AMORSOLO. In the late 1970s, David said they transferred to UP's new housing project because their area would be the site of new structures, such as the OUR.

Their new location? C. V. Francisco Street in Pook Amorsolo.

"At that time, Pook Amorsolo was a dirt road," she said.

David clearly remembers that basketball games between teenagers from Amorsolo and the kids from neighboring Krus Na Ligas (KNL) would usually end in a fist fight and stone-throwing.

"Malapit lang ang bahay namin sa basketball court kaya na-witness ko iyon," David said.

David also said she wasn't really aware of KNL, but she was amazed when she saw KNL's beautiful church, an old Spanish-looking church. Since then, David said, they would regularly attend the Mass at the KNL church since it is much closer than the UP Chapel. She felt sad and disappointed when the old KNL church was demolished to give way to the new one.

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*Top: C. V. Francisco Street in Pook Amorsolo at present.
Photo by Jerald DJ. Caranza, UPDIO*

Right: Old KNL church. Photo from the Holy Cross Parish



“Nanghihinayang ako nang sobra noong giniba nila iyong simbahan, malaki ang pinagkaiba,” she said.

UPD NOW. Asked about her thoughts on the changes in UPD, David was quick to point out the waning practice of some of the traditions that she witnessed and experienced while growing up. She misses the sense of community and the atmosphere of “being in the province.”

She is pleased, however, with the developments on campus especially on matters that address the academic needs of UPD, such as new laboratories and libraries.

What she would really love to see is for UPD to become a model of how to deal with multiple communities in a certain area. She cited the increasing number of informal settlers.

“Kung, we are supposed to be getting people out of poverty, sana maipakita natin to the rest

of the country how we should deal with it. Like zoning, housing, education of the kids, and so on. Iyon bang magiging source of solution tayo,” David said.

STAYING ON UPD CAMPUS. David, who is now the director of the MSI, chose to work and reside on campus partly because of her family history—being one of the pioneers in UPD. She, however, left UPD on two occasions. When she was in grades 6 and 7, they lived in Malaysia because her mother worked there. The next time she left was for her PhD studies.

David said she always had opportunities to live or work elsewhere or abroad. Still, she chose to be in UPD.

“Home pa rin talaga ang Diliman at gusto mo itong balikan. Even though marami nang nagbago, hindi na ito iyong Diliman noong lumalaki ako, it is still Diliman, still a home.”