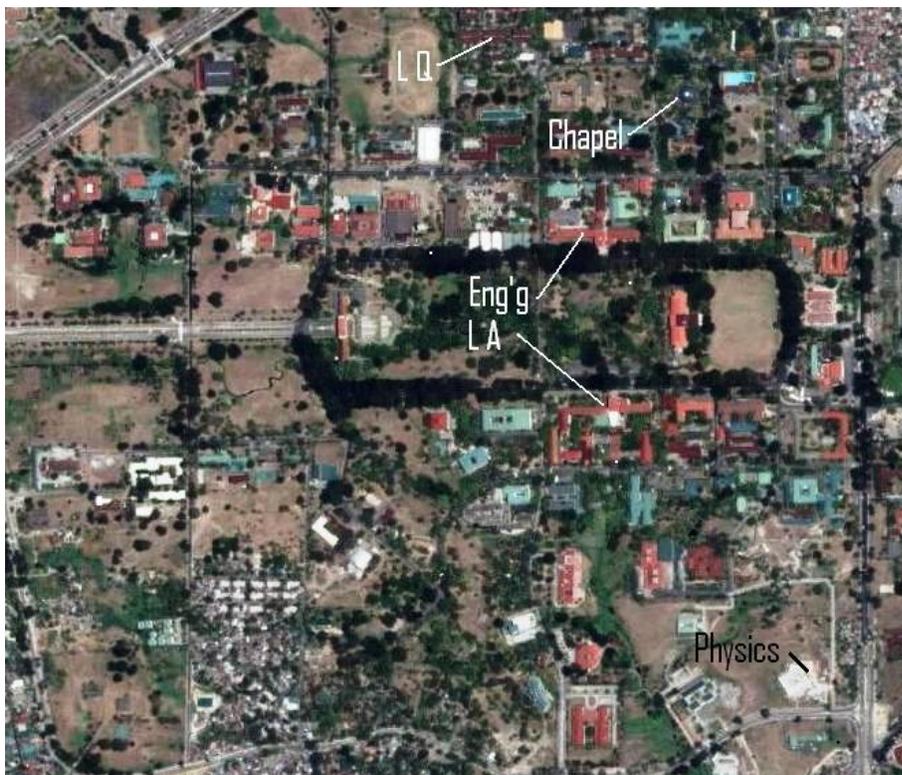


STEPPING BACK IN TIME IN U.P.

The idea of having almost 10 days of free time in the Manila environs while staying with my Ma in the Makati house, with not much of a planned agenda, seemed at first a boring proposition. That exactly is what I found myself in when I flew to Manila without Lisa so as to stand as ninong in Cybele's wedding. Her parents, Jimmy and Mercy Abad, were our good friends from the UP days. Due to all the preparations for our trip back to the US, it was not practical for Lisa to fly in with me, and then while away the rest of the 12 days prior to our departure. Nor would it have made sense for me to have returned to Tanjay, then double back again to Manila after less than a week.

Fortunately, Amador Muriel was in town since 2 weeks back. He was mentoring some physics undergrads in UP, and in his words, was terribly excited about the rare confluence of events that saw three bright students (one of whom was a summa candidate) embracing his turbulence theories, getting the cooperation of their professor - Amador's former student - and all jointly writing a number of scientific papers for publication in the international scene. Alone, he said, it would have taken him more than a year to write them.

I met him that Monday noon at his Makati condo and we drove in his Honda to UP. Normally, he commutes by combination of LRT and/or cab. Our first stop was lunch at LQ or Little Quiapo, near the Chapel, where the sprawling structure, since rebuilt from the '60s still holds a host of eateries, shops, and small establishments that cater to the students and faculty alike. One name I remember was Rodics, a carinderia where in 1959, one could have a good meal for 60 centavos. Rodics was still there, though we choose another place which also served food in those WW2 tin trays. I loaded up my tray with more food than what I would have had in 1959, and the cost came up to 75 pesos. This uncannily validated again the "rule of 100" that I have been espousing, which simply says that anything now costs about 100 times more than what it did during our college days. But this factor also extends to earnings, so everything evens out. Consider the following:



teachers then made 120 a month, now it's about 12,000. Minimum bus fare was 10 centavos then, now about 9 pesos. Apartments then started at 80 pesos per month, now about 8,000. This ratio also extends to wet market items, utilities, and a whole lot of other commodities and services. So for those who have come back after a long absence, the apparent big jump in prices shouldn't be shocking; it is merely inflation that now hovers at the century mark factor.

Anyway, all the above was beside the point. I came to UP to kill time and bum around and reminisce, while Amador would be spending some hours with his physics crowd. Though I have often come to visit the campus over the years, it always was to do something specific, such as to hear mass, or attend an alumni meeting, etc. Besides, it was a school day. What better time to walk the haunts, just by myself.

Amador guided me to the new Physics building almost out of the campus, marked as such on the lower right corner in the Google map on previous page. As I later found out at most building entrances, the armed guard and sign “no ID, no entry” was ubiquitous. Fortunately, Amador was known to the guard, and he hailed both us through. The building was spanking new. It was a trifle



early so even the door to the faculty room was locked. See photos on left. So we settled at the library, and not before long, Amador left. We agreed to meet at 3:30 at the faculty room. I went back to his car, and drove around, meandering here

and there, finally settling down at the parking lot in front of the LA building. There were lots of cars. I remember during our time back in the late '50s, I could count with the fingers of one hand those whom I knew had vehicles.



The photo above, looking towards the LA Bldg, didn't catch the rest of the cars out of the field of view. The other photo was a shot of me with the Engineering Bldg behind, not visible because of all the trees. Barely visible is the Beta Way on the left. I've always wondered whether there was a pun intended for this concreted pathway.



Then I walked along the Beta Way towards the Eng'g Bldg, now known as Melchor Hall. Photo on left shows the view. But I had no ID, and much as I would have wanted to enter the building, I didn't relish the idea of explaining the situation to the guard. I walked alongside to the right, then angled off left at the next corner that would bring me to the Chapel. Melchor Hall didn't appear to have changed at all.

However, on the adjacent road towards the chapel were newer small buildings, one of which sported a sun dial that wasn't there during our time. At the chapel, the foliage and greenery seemed like an overgrowth as compared to the campus during our time. But then, it is understandable, considering that it is almost 50 years later. See both photos below.



From the Chapel, I walked back. The main Library was flanked by smaller structures that seemed like canteens. And the foliage was just as dense. Photo on left shows a ficus tree (balete?) growing in front of the north wing. The sunken gardens at the back of the library were devoid of any trees; apparently, it still is used as the parade ground, very evident in the Google photo.

Finally, I was back at the parking lot, and I noticed there were lots of students coming out from the LA building, milling around and sitting down on the stairs, just like in our time. I saw an obviously gay couple sashaying out hand in hand, more blatantly than what probably would have happened during our time. One contrasting item was the dress code: almost everyone wore jeans and slippers or sandals. And the many of the boys were in short pants.

I then decided to enter the LA Building; after all, many of the students were not sporting any of those large IDs hanging around the neck. The guard didn't stop me as I entered into the lobby. I



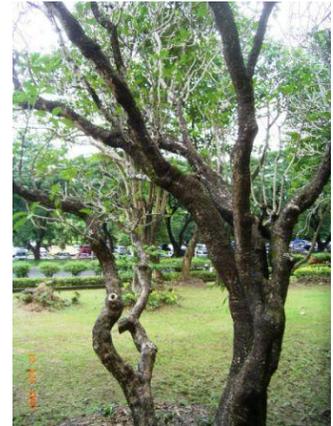
I remember it being cavernous. But it wasn't anymore. There was a fenced-in area in the middle that was full of computer stations. I gathered it was an internet café. See photo on left.

I walked along the corridors, exited at the backside to the covered walkways interconnecting what was then the Pharmacy, Chem, and Physics Pavilions. They all looked familiar; hadn't changed much. But at each corner was a copying machine kiosk, each with a sign "load for sale". Obviously cells phones generate lots of business.



I peeked into the classrooms, and noticed the chairs and blackboards were still the same. The restrooms were clean and more brightly painted, with plant pots adding a touch of environmentalism. Photo on left is at the first floor of the west wing of the LA Bldg. At that spot on the left side, I distinctly remember a small Calachuchi tree. Well, it still was there, a bit bigger though, shown on right.

The bulletin boards on the left looked like the original ones before. I wanted to take more pictures but didn't like to appear like a tourist. Who knows, maybe some of the students looked on me as professor or parent looking for his daughter, or perhaps even a janitor. But who cares.



Back at the Main Lobby, I ventured down the stairs to the “basement”, that hangout during our time where one could get sandwiches, and gawk at the avant-garde crowd with their heavy make-up and fascinating mannerisms. But it was not there anymore.

So I retrieved Amador's car (there was no parking fee, surprisingly), and meandered around a little bit more, getting as far as the Computer Center which was the terminus of the clockwise running jeeps known as Toki. Photo below shows a barely discernable “UP Toki”. During our time, there only was “Ikot”. Since years ago, there have been no more red JD, MD or CAM buses, nor yellow Halilis. And the road where they used to pass, between LA and the dorms, is closed.



I failed to take pictures of the Oblation, or the Carillon. I didn't get a chance to enter the Business Ad Bldg (I don't know what it is now) but the last shot below shows the lobby now fenced in. Could it have been because years ago, some pranksters bodily carried Nida Jimenez' small car into that lobby.

Finally, I went back to the Physics Bldg, picked up Amador, and then we headed back to Makati. He had set Wednesday as sailing day in Lake Caliraya with his students, but I declined due to a family event.

It was a nice trip back through time.

Danny Gil - Nov, 2007

