

Those C. Ayala Days

by Malu Laico

First of all, I remember when there were relatives visiting from Bicol and other mestiza friends of Lola Luz were invited for lunch, we were only to sit at the kitchen counter and not at the formal dining table with the guests. Imagine sitting at the kitchen counter facing the window, and your view would be of the live chickens and turkeys and dogs. The food would just pass by because guests were served first. And you had to wait until everybody in the formal dining room had been served. Then you would be given your share. Because it took so long for the food to get back to the kitchen, Popoy and I would sit in front of the mirror and make faces or wiggle our baby teeth until they came off.

Secondly, the night before the Feast of the Epiphany (Feast of Three Kings) we were to clean all our shoes and leave them on the windowsill. The reason for this is that if you were good, the Three Kings would put candies in your shoes. Popoy was probably around

seven years old then and had a little bit of a hint that there was no real Three Kings. But to make it sound real, since I still believed in the Three Kings, he joined me in cleaning his shoes. So, at night, when Popoy was already sleeping, here came Peewee and Rory putting candies in our shoes. But because of their giggling and loud whispers, Popoy jumped on the back of Peewee, thinking she was a burglar. He enjoyed it so much then, but that ended our Three Kings belief.

They thought it was the Munster Family or House of Horrors . . .

One thing I remember about Lolo Jim: he loved to bring the whole family out on picnics, swimming, to the Rizal Park, or out of town. And he would always make sure there was a family picture. He would gather everyone for the picture, and

he loved to have some of us sitting on the ground because there were no panoramic or wide-angle lenses then. But when all the pictures had been processed, there were no heads or eyes or bodies in the pictures. Sometimes the pictures were against the light or overexposed. I guess he thought we were his patients.

Talking about Lolo Jim's patients, since some of them could not pay for their hospitalization, Lolo would take them to C. Ayala and help them out by paying them for their services. They would either do the laundry, cook, or do housekeeping. So, in the evening, when the dates for Nonon, Bingbing, Mitos, or Bibot came they would get so scared because the patients were the ones who would let them in. They thought it was the Munster Family or House of Horrors. There was one patient with a cleft lip, and one with a "hot-dog" on the face (part of Lolo's skin grafting), and one with a long stitch from the chin to the forehead. **LL**

**Maligayang
Pasko!**

from the staff of
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My Delicious Chocolate Cake

Bingbing Laico Juarez

By the time Bibot was ten, she was already a good baker. Being an older sister, I was not to be outdone so I baked a chocolate cake. It was a flop! It didn't rise, so it was tough. Before anybody could see it, I fed it to the dog. He loved my cake and devoured it. So I left him to enjoy it. When I looked back at him, he was lying on his back with his paws reaching for the sky and not moving at all. One of my sisters saw him and cried, "The dog's dead!" I was filled with guilt and confessed to Mama that I had poisoned the dog with my cake. Then the maid came along to check on the dog and assured me that he was still alive. It was just his habit to lie that way when his stomach was full. **LL**