

CASA ACACIA
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American-style bathroom with floral wallpaper. It was so disorienting I thought if I closed the door I might be lost. That was the powder room. One day, Lola found me walking upstairs to take a shower after swimming, and suggested I

use the poolhouse shower. She showed me the way to the little outbuilding with two bathrooms, one for men and one for women. Tita Malu showed me Tita Mitos' abandoned darkroom, tucked into a corner of the house. One night a maid was leaving and I went with Lola Luz for my first look at the servants' quarters, and there espied the bunkbeds I had played on so many years earlier. I was quite appalled to see that there were just *banigs* (straw mats) over the wooden platforms, no mattresses. I was told that the maids preferred it that way; they wouldn't want to get used to mattresses and then sleep on a *banig* back home.

The closets and cupboards in Dasma were crammed full of stuff: old photography magazines, *Time*, *LIFE*, Christmas decorations, souvenirs, Lolo Jim's old ivory shark-skin suits. The dresser in the guest room was bursting with old report cards. Of course I read them. They were not all A's let me tell you, never mind what your parents claim. At one point Lola had Tita Malu take an inventory of the household furnishings. Lola remembered the provenance of each piece -- the silver light fixtures on the walls from Italy, the chairs from Spain. Tita Malu once pointed out to me the shop in Mabini where the custom wooden furniture had been ordered. When we took some pictures of Dasma out of the family albums in Morton recently, we found Lola had written on the back of each photo details about the furnishings that were special to her. How precious those comments are now.

Grand as it was, 1253 Acacia Road was only emblematic of Lola's greatest achievement, which was raising eleven children and forming the core of the family ties that continue to sustain us.

LL



MEMORIES OF DASMA

JOVIM LAICO:

LOLA HAD THE MOST HUGEST OF EVERYTHING IN THAT HOUSE:

- the biggest pantry (best hiding place).
- the biggest pillows in the music room (you could make a mansion out of them).
- the biggest master bathroom (we'd get there with Lola still in her corset getting powdered).
- the biggest playground (the house itself).
- the biggest half bath (the powder room).
- the biggest cars (huge finned *chedeng*).
- the biggest servants' quarters.
- the biggest parties (hey, it's a big house).

- We (the boys) used to race our Matchbox Cars down the sides of the driveway.
- Lia and I would wet and mix different leaves on the rocks and boulders.
- When the pool wasn't taken care of, it was TADPOLE season!!
- Tito Popoy's room invasions (since it was by the pool).
- THE POOL!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Playing with the intercoms.
- There were always a lot of snackies in the huge pantry.
- The Dasma House was where all the cousins ended up when school was cancelled due to a typhoon.
- Swimming naked in the pool (everyone under 5 that is).
- Lolo's personal stash of toothpicks (new and used).
- The library with Lolo's pictures of his patients.
- Playing "hiding in the dark" in the library, etc.

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TERESA (FLORES) DAMOCLES:

Before I sat down to write this article for the annual *Laico Lines* newsletter, I put a lot of thought into my memories of visiting Lola Luz. Since I only returned to the Philippines twice after moving to the USA when I was only a toddler, there are a few occasions I can bring to mind.

Those two visits took place during the Christmas seasons of 1975 and 1983. I still remember how the house in Dasma looked, and how huge the family room was. Of course, I remember the swimming pool and watching the gardener tend to the yard

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as I swam around in the pool with Aisa, Lia, and Bambi. I also recall how each phone in the rooms of the house could be used to call someone in another room. Whenever I think of those phones, I remember the time Lola Luz became quite irate with me because I kept calling her in the living room, where she was entertaining some guests at the time. I think I remember one of those guests being a nun.

I still remember how exciting and fun it was on Christmas Day, when the house was filled with lots of Titas, Titos, cousins, food, laughter, dancing, singing, and skits. I had never been around so many relatives as there were that day. After all, I was only 8 years old and had never been around any other cousins or relatives during Christmas. No other Laico relatives live near Bolingbrook, Illinois, even to this day.

I remember much more of my visit in 1983. I turned 16 that year and Lola and Tita Malu were living in the house in BF Homes. I traveled to the Philippines alone that time. My mom followed about two weeks after my arrival. The house was smaller in size, but just as beautiful. Lola Luz was much less active than the last time I had seen her, and all of the cousins, Titos, and Titas were older. Christmas Day saw that house filled with family members, food, laughter, and the Christmas entertainment of skits, singing, and dancing. Just as I had remembered it, back in the Christmas of 1975.

LL



JORGE LAICO

THAT PLACE WAS MAGICAL EVERY DAY. One of my favorite things there was the big rock by the swimming pool. My sister Aisa and I would dunk a whole box of "Skyflakes" crackers into the pool, then mush the crackers into dough, make patties and put them on the big rock which acted as a natural grill. Afterward, when the patties were "cooked," we would ask a younger cousin like Lia or Paul to try them. They were delicious.

Another good memory is of the Matchbox car races down the driveway. They were such short races, but it seemed at that time they went on for miles. Every little boy got into it, so there were always new cars being shown off by different cousins. Always an exciting scene.

There were no snowball fights growing up in Dasma, because of the tropical climate, but we adapted. Although Chong Juan, the old monster gardener, hated it, we didn't care. My brothers and cousins would wet patches of dirt in the backyard and make mud balls, then throw them at each other. Then the gardener would chase us. The best way to get away and clean up was to jump into the pool. On a hot summer day it was the best.

LL



ARTHUR DAVID

I HAVE A BUNDLE OF GOOD MEMORIES of Dasma. As a young lad, to me it seemed like the grandest and biggest house in the world. It was a house fit for a king complete with all the modern amenities in life. Dasma is where the Laico cousins and the Davids got permanently sunburned by swimming every day in the summer. Lolo Jim could be seen doing breaststroke laps every day like clockwork. We would dive to the bottom of the pool to retrieve a one centavo coin much like a dolphin would a dead fish. We would spend many weekends raiding the fridge and giving the maids hissy fits with our mess. It was also our hangout after school where instead of doing our homework, we would race our Matchbox cars on the sloping bank of the driveway. I'm sure some of the scars I have on my knees are from slipping after running up and down the driveway countless times. I remember Lola's cars of which she always had a pair. The finned Benzes, the skinny-tired Renaults and the vinyl upholstered Toyota Coronas. Now that I think of it, I now know where I got my obsession for flies. I remember Lolo Jim chasing flies during outdoor parties in the basketball court. I remember Tito Popoy's really cool bedroom facing the pool and how we tracked water on his parquet floor day in and day out as we used his bathroom instead of the one outside. He was always very understanding, though. I remember the countless hours we spent sprawled all over the floor in front of the living room TV watching Combat in black and white. I remember Lolo Jim's rattan rocking chair as he sat gazing into the garden. I remember Lola Luz's really soft cheeks as I bussed her which felt just like my mom's. Most of all, I remember all the people that lived there that made Dasma a special place.

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