

Students from the Philippines were new to IU in 1904

"Saturday afternoon four bright, young men — the first Filipinos ever in Bloomington — stepped from the passenger train, and in broken English, yet quite plainly, asked for a good rooming place."

— *Bloomington Evening World*, Sept. 5, 1904.

Some of Indiana University's early graduates had studied for their degrees with the intention of going into the ministry or becoming missionaries. Of the latter group there were those who were sent to the Philippine Islands.

Among the Filipinos they came in contact with there were those who wanted to come to the United States as foreign students. Some of them must have been influenced to come to IU to further their education.

The four who arrived in Bloomington in 1904 were Jose E. Valdes, Mariano H. de Joya, Jorge C. Bocobo and Francisco A. Delgado. They had spent the previous months in California, taking some courses and improving their command of the English language.

Bocobo was the spokesman for the group to an *Evening World* reporter. He explained



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

that their education in America was being paid for by their government. They were allowed \$500 per year for rooms, meals, clothing and books. Another fund paid for the students' transportation.

Bloomingtonians could not help but notice that the new foreign students looked different. Commented the newspaper, "The young men are very dark-skinned; small, and in eyes and general form very much resemble the Japanese."

As for their religious backgrounds, the *Evening World* revealed that three of the students were Catholic and the other one was a Methodist. The newspaper added, "The four are typical college boys, of the highest society on the Island, and graduates of their schools."

The *Evening World's* readers may have

been taken aback by what Valdes said, when asked what he thought of America. "The American people, in general, I like, but I find that they are the most selfish people in the world, for they think that there is nothing besides them; that there is no other civilization, education, white race, morality or religion but their own. I thought that as they call the Filipinos semi-savage, that they (Americans) would be very civilized, or that civilization would be in very high standing, but I find that many of them are ignorant."

Bocobo revealed that he was 18 years old, the son of a farmer and lawyer. He was the Methodist of the group.

Three years later, when three of the Filipino students received degrees from IU, it was Bocobo who sat down and wrote a thoughtful letter to the newspaper.

In departing, permit me to say that we have enjoyed our stay in the University, in Bloomington and in the community; and that we are very grateful to the faculty, students and Bloomington citizens for the kindness and courtesies they have shown us. I am sure no one will deny me the pleasure of taking

back with me the sweetest of memories of my Alma Mater, of this city, and of America."

He said that when he returned to the Philippines, he would tell his people that Americans mean well for them. Bocobo also believed that the United States would ultimately give the Philippines its independence. (The Philippines received its independence in 1946, ironically or intentionally on July 4.)

Bocobo wrote, "I came to this country neither to pick holes nor to be a blind admirer of everything American, but during my four year's stay I was always ready and willing to praise the good things and to be sorry for the bad things I observed."

The young Filipino achieved the promise so obvious in his youth. He took his bachelor of laws degree from IU back to his country and set to work, looking forward to independence.

On Aug. 11, 1934, he was elevated from the position of dean of the law school at the University of the Philippines to its president. He did, in fact, become the 66th graduate of IU to become a university or college president.

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