

Manuel Alba 1  
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JSPS Philippine Technocracy Project  
Transcript of Interview

**Manuel Alba**  
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Third World Studies Center Office  
Palma Hall University of the Philippines  
Diliman, Quezon City

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KATAYAMA: You look very strong.

TADEM: He plays tennis!

ALBA: I am all right. I am physically in good health. You know, it has gotten to the point where we get together with my colleagues. Cesar Virata has been gathering the group every so often, the so-called finance group. We were about 14 or 16 in a group. The number is dwindling. First, Geronimo Velasco went and then Armand Fabella, then Aber Canlas. So the first topic usually when we get together for lunch is, "Who's next?" I am 69 years old so; I was the youngest Cabinet member. I was 39 when I became Cabinet Secretary.

TADEM: Sir, when you were here [at the University of the Philippines], were the Economics Department (School of Economics) and CBA (College of Business Administration) still one?

ALBA: They were one. Pepe [Jose] Encarnacion [Jr.], with [Jose] Belmonte, Cesar Virata and Jimmy [Jaime] Laya were the deans of the unified and later on the [School of] Economics... Gerry [Gerardo] Sicat got some major funding so he separated ... Economics from Business Administration.

TADEM: I remember ... the building....

ALBA: The Benton Hall...

TADEM: They called it the Palma Hall Annex.

ALBA: They used to call it the Benton Hall...

TADEM: ... Sir, let's start with your family background...

ALBA: I saw the whole outline. I said that this would take like the whole day. But I have an appointment at noon.

KATAYAMA: Maybe one time would not be enough, so if it is okay we will come back...

ALBA: Who has been interviewed already?

TADEM: Sir, Prime Minister [Cesar] Virata, Ting [Vicente] Paterno, Armand Fabella, O.D. Corpuz.

ALBA: Because he is sickly. He got emphysema. You have not interviewed him yet?

TADEM: We have.

ALBA: OD? Here?

TADEM: No, in his house, but it has been a series of calls—like one day, he says he's coming and then he will get sick...

KATAYAMA: Do you see each other regularly?

ALBA: No, we just see each other when we visit him from time to time. I was one of his boys. He [OD Corpuz] was the one who brought me in the Cabinet. He was Secretary of Education and then became the UP (University of the Philippines) President.

KATAYAMA: We interviewed Vicente Paterno and the last one was Washington SyCip.

ALBA: Washington [SyCip] was never in government. He was in SGV (SyCip, Gorres and Velayo) as Cesar Virata's boss. Vicente Paterno is one of my favorite people.

TADEM: Sir, the purpose [of the project] is that we would like to get the perspectives of the technocrats [on decision-making in government]... and come out with ... [transcripts of interviews], which would be valuable materials for our writing on economic decision making

KATAYAMA: We have many books on the Marcos administration but there is this missing link. The technocrats have been very silent.

ALBA: The role of the technocrats...

KATAYAMA: We would like you to speak up because there are very few of the technocrats involved with the administration [who are available] to tell us what happened, so we would like to listen to your version of the Marcos administration.

ALBA: ...My role is subject to interpretation... in terms of my own intimate direct involvement in particular areas, essentially education and development planning. But you know, as Cabinet people, [we were] involved with other personalities [who] established particular relationships with the President, for example, Madam Imelda Marcos... they were the key people there. Then you get to appreciate the nuances of "Why they did this," Why should we be doing this?" There were the ideas that would not come out from formal Cabinet meetings..... and there were lot of those opportunities and occasions that you know... the informal sessions with the President and the other Cabinet [members]...

KATAYAMA: And we are here to listen to you...

ALBA: I have some insights, for example, on how sick he was. Could it have affected his decision making in these particular stages when he was very ill? He put up a good front, like President Franklin Roosevelt. What amazed me about President Roosevelt... he was already paraplegic when he became the president but you never saw a picture of him in a wheelchair because he agreed with the press that he would not be shown in a wheelchair lest people lost faith in his capacity to run the country. That made him a bigger president to me. He was the second-best president, according to America.

TADEM: Actually, we also touched some issues [about the health situation of President Marcos then] with PM [Cesar] Virata and ... [he said], he did not know... [how sick he was].

ALBA: I am curious [about] what they said. I know what happened to Ting [Vicente] Paterno toward the end. He was [moved] from DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) to [Department of] Public Works. He was of course a professor in UP (University of the Philippines), Industrial Management. President Ferdinand Marcos raided UP with the technocrats... to the point when [Onofre D.] Corpuz was president he came up with an

imaginative way of drafting the appointment for us. He called it “faculty and government service” or FAGS. We were the first FAGies in the university. There were several of us, Jaime Laya, Gerardo Sicat, myself, Cesar Virata, Tony [J. Antonio] Aguenza. You know Tony Aguenza, Tomas Fonacier? That group.

KATAYAMA: By the way, we also interviewed Jose Almonte.

ALBA: Well, he was not with our group. He was the head of... what institute was this? PCAS (Philippine Center for Advanced Studies)?

KATAYAMA: So can we start the interview?

ALBA: Do we have to start with this? Or can we go back to this bio-data portion later? Unless you see it as significant to my role [in government].

KATAYAMA: This is very important, particularly, how did you develop your interest and priorities? You are one of the best and the brightest...

ALBA: May I first ask, what would be the disposal of this oral interview? Is this going to be written out in full? And then is [this] going to be published or what? I mean, as is?

TADEM: Sir, the interviews will be published, but of course drafts will be sent to you and the other technocrats whom we interviewed [for review and approval].

ALBA: Because the things we will say may not be for public consumption. Or even for academic consumption...

KATAYAMA: Parts you do not like to publicize we could embargo if you like.

ALBA: We have no written agreement on that. You know I've learned in government that everything has to be in writing. I've been sued. I ended up with four cases in Sandigangbayan ... to work in the government, only to end up being accused... I could have ended in prison during my retirement, that kind of thing.

TADEM: This interview will only be for people here and the raw materials will not be shared.

ALBA: I suppose the other people also said the same thing, to embargo the information, while shared willingly if only to elaborate on some process; some are very confidential since some information has something to do with personality styles.

KATAYAMA: Not only Mr. and Mrs. [Imelda] Marcos but also other figures.

ALBA: I have an appointment on the 19th [of December] to be video-interviewed about Mrs. [Imelda] Marcos because her birthday is in July and I think they are preparing for it. You know you should interview her. If there's any person to be interviewed, it is her. I agreed but we still have to agree on the time.

TADEM: How old is she now?

ALBA: I think she would be 80 but she is still fantastic and so beautiful. You can see [I am] an admirer.

KATAYAMA: Last week Mrs. [Imelda] Marcos came to [the Japanese] embassy on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday. Many people were surprised. Some people were embarrassed.

ALBA: She's very thoughtful about this thing. You should interview her.

KATAYAMA: She agreed to our proposal. She accepted our offer to interview her. Maybe, we will interview her next year.

ALBA: She may not have that big an [influence], but she had that informal influence.

TADEM: She was the Governor of Manila.

ALBA: ...and Minister of Human Settlements. She was the one who conceived of the Metropolitan Manila... a concept that she had before everyone... That was why when the

new presidential decree was passed transferring the capital of the country from Quezon City to Manila, it did not mean Manila Mayor [Alfredo] Lim's but "Manila" as Metro Manila. At that time, the Metropolitan framework was already in place. To the rest of the world, when we say Manila, they are not referring to Mayor Lim's "Manila" but rather to the National Capital Region.

TADEM: Do you invite her in get-togethers?

ALBA: No. She has her own group. She calls her own group; O.D. Corpuz is in one of them. He is one of her favorites.

KATAYAMA: Even now?

ALBA: Yes. O.D. [Onofre D. Corpuz] is one of his favorites. She admires intellectuals.

TADEM: So sir, you're also there?

ALBA: I mean that group, [including] Jaime Laya. Well, this should be insightful for you, during those periods, among officials of the government, there were "his" and "hers" people. So the "his" [included] Gerardo Sicat and Cesar Virata and the "hers" were [Jose Conrado] Jolly Benitez and Aber Canlas and the "his and hers" were myself and Jaime Laya.

TADEM: Why was that the case?

ALBA: Because we know how to deal with... when you know how to *sipsip*. No, I think she liked us because Jimmy [Jaime Laya] was the "culture culture," me I am just the "good errand boy."

TADEM: Sir, maybe you gave her the budget?

ALBA: I gave her my own opinion whether she liked it or not.

TADEM: How about Ronnie [Geronimo] Velasco?

ALBA: Ronnie Velasco was unto himself.

TADEM: Why?

ALBA: I do not know. But he had to be in the “his”... Marcos’...the formal power of the president was there.

TADEM: Sir, how about [Benjamin] Kokoy Romualdez? Did he have any group as well?

ALBA: He had his own group. He was the ambassador to the United States. That was an arena where he could explore things, the U.S. Congress and trade policies. He was not really inside, so to speak, but he is the brother of the First Lady.

TADEM: Sir, we will go now to our questions.

ALBA: Okay. I mean, I am already answering you some of them.

KATAYAMA: For that, we are very interested in your family background.

TADEM: Usually, we usually think of technocrats as experts or as coming from the middle class or as defined by the West...

ALBA: Oh well, I came from a very poor family of eleven children. I struggled to get through my high school and college education, but I entered elementary postwar. There was an interruption of about four to five years, so there were elderly people who would go back to school. At that time, 1945 or 1946, the government adopted the policy of acceleration for the elderly students, so what happened was... I was entering grade 1 at that time and they accelerated the elder students, and I was swept along because they could not leave me behind because I was having better grades than the other guys. I finished my elementary in three years.

TADEM: How old were you?

ALBA: I was about thirteen or fourteen when I entered... [College], but you know, it's amazing... Jimmy [Jaime] Laya was younger than me by a few months.

KATAYAMA: You were born in 1939.

ALBA: In 1939.

KATAYAMA: In which province?

ALBA: In Iloilo. In a town called Dueñas. It is a nice province but it was devastated by flood recently. It was a total devastation.

KATAYAMA: Coastal area or the interior?

ALBA: This is the interior, but every town there is close to the shore.

TADEM: So, sir, what was your school, your elementary school?

ALBA: I finished in the West Visayas State University. It used to be called Iloilo Normal School, a good training school. I think I got an excellent education there.

KATAYAMA: So your parents were farmers, teachers?

ALBA: My father was a municipal treasurer, in the lower rank of the government bureaucracy. My mother was a plain housewife.

KATAYAMA: No landholdings?

ALBA: Nothing.

KATAYAMA: Your family was not that rich?

ALBA: My father just worked hard, but as is common among Filipino families, we have an extended family system. Everybody helped out.

KATAYAMA: Among the eleven children, are you the eldest?

ALBA: I am the fourth so I have an older sister who sent me to school. She became a teacher.

KATAYAMA: Your sister and brothers advanced into tertiary education?

ALBA: All of us finished college.

KATAYAMA: Could it be possible?

ALBA: My sister finished a college teacher's certificate. She spent for me and for the younger siblings. Other relatives helped a lot... I was a working student. I was the most fortunate of them all. I was the one who got the better job. Right after, I helped everybody else.

TADEM: Sir, your high school was still in Iloilo?

ALBA: Iloilo National High School, at that time, it was one of the biggest high schools in the Philippines.

TADEM: But the education system back then was good.

ALBA: Yeah, we got very good teachers. They spoke English better. They were very committed and very serious. We looked up to them.

KATAYAMA: While you were a high school student, what kind of vision did you have for the future? How did you develop your dream?

ALBA: I wanted to be a medical doctor. Why? Because I think I read a lot of *Reader's Digest*... my most favorite magazine. It was a school unto itself for me. I read it from cover to cover. I learned my English there. I learned about good old United States. I learned about the middle class in America.

KATAYAMA: How did you get them? You borrowed from..?

ALBA: My father subscribed to the magazine. My father was an avid reader. I read after him. This was a very good magazine. It contained so much useful information. It taught me English. I think my English was refined because of reading *Reader's Digest*. At the house, we had a huge collection.

KATAYAMA: What books did you read that inspire you most?

ALBA: Not much book reading, really. I got to read Tom Sawyer. I got to read Huckleberry Finn. We did not have Filipino books at that time, like Pepe and Pilar. I read the adventures of Robinson Crusoe. Then we read the Comic Classics. I still have a collection of it. At that time, they produced all the classics... That was essentially how many of us got familiar with American literature, through the comic classics. At that time, we also read reliable periodicals.

KATAYAMA: How about newspapers?

ALBA: We tried to get newspapers every day.

KATAYAMA: Did you find it interesting, [reading about] politics?

ALBA: Yes. We knew who the presidents were. We knew who the senators were. Those were parts of our lessons in school. We had projects about it like who were our favorite senators... we had very good and active politicians at that time, like Sen. Cesar Zulueta.

KATAYAMA: Among your relatives, did you have medical doctors as role models for you?

ALBA: We had priests and nuns all over the place. My father was very religious. My sister became a nun. I nearly became a priest because my relatives wanted me to become a priest. Cardinal [Jaime] Sin was a friend of the family because our hometowns were Banga and New Washington. The latter is the hometown of Cardinal Sin. The relatives on my father's side, my first cousins, were very close to the Cardinal... I don't know of any doctor or engineer in my family.

KATAYAMA: You thought of becoming a doctor?

ALBA: Yes, because I was a sickly boy. What I actually have now is bronchitis. It is boyhood ailment. Nothing of what you might call overwhelming influence or inspirational character had shaped my thinking about it. When I was going to college, my family wanted me to be a doctor, but then toward the end of my studies, [my father] said, "To be a doctor? That would take seven years." How would our families survive? I have cousins who are accountants. My father said that they are doing very well. My father told me that these guys are doing [well]. So why should I not be an accountant as well?

KATAYAMA: This was after U.P. (University of the Philippines)?

ALBA: When I was entering U.P. I had to decide whether I should go to a pre-med course or not. In fact, I started my course in pre-med. At that time, I had an Associate of Arts degree. Well, if you wanted to be a doctor afterward, you could take it up after your CPA (Certified Public Accountant).

KATAYAMA: I am also from province in Japan. So how did you feel when you entered U.P.?

ALBA: You know, we were staying in Iloilo City, which is fairly a large city, so I got this exposure already. Then many of my teachers were U.P. graduates. Many of the leaders were U.P. graduates so we got to read about them, for example, Camilo Osias, [Ferdinand] Marcos. They were all U.P. people so the image [of UP] was very strong right at the beginning. There was no question when I finished high school that I would be going to U.P. I could not think of any other school at that time.

TADEM: Were you the only one who went to U.P.?

ALBA: Well, not only I went to U.P. I have a younger sister who finished Business Administration in U.P. In fact, she was my student and she did not like me for it because I gave her low grades.

KATAYAMA: I am also interested in the reaction of the local folks when they saw you proceeding to U.P. What kind of reactions did they have?

ALBA: My father was ecstatic about it. It was very fortunate for us because at that time, U.P. had established a branch in Iloilo, in the city. U.P. was there already. The outstanding teachers there were Inez Belleza, Dan Rola and O.D. Corpuz. That was where I first got to take History 5 under him, in Iloilo. [Tomas]Fonacier was the dean. You've heard about Dean Fonacier? He was the first dean. It was an outstanding branch of U.P. I finished my Associate of Arts there with the highest honors. It was automatic; you know, I could have gone to other colleges nearby, but we could not afford it, but my father said, "No, you are going to U.P." My sister promised to help me... I got a job. I was a working student all the way. I was an accountant/bookkeeper. There was a university paper mill beside the College of Engineering. There was a building there owned by Amando Clemente, the famous food chemist, the brilliant ... scientist of the Philippines in chemistry.

TADEM: They owned that building?

ALBA: No, it was an engineering unit constructed by American military. It was producing paper, rolls of mimeographing paper and Dr. Clemente bought it because U.P. could not maintain it. They got me as bookkeeper. They asked the college if there was a student there who was interested in working and I needed money to get through. It helped me. My sister was sending me thirty pesos a month, which was enough for a ride because I lived far away in Dapitan for free with a family, with a relative.

KATAYAMA: What happened to the tuition?

ALBA: I was an entrance scholar because I graduated with honors, so I maintained it.

KATAYAMA: So how much did you need at that time to survive a month?

ALBA: How much do you think I needed to live comfortably? You know, I would wake up early in the morning. Are you familiar with Dapitan near UST (University of SantoTomas)? That's quite a walk, like 4 km. I walked from there all the way to Welcome Rotonda, about 3 to 4 km. Rain or shine! I had to walk because that would save me about 15 centavos. I used

my 15 centavos to buy pan de limon along the way. That was my lunch and I would take lunch here inside the comfort room inside this building here at the third floor. <laughs> I lived with three relatives. My grades suffered when I was a working student.

KATAYAMA: So how much, Sir, for one month?

TADEM: He is comparing it with his life experiences.

ALBA: Since I was tuition-free, it was 30 centavos fare at that time. That was one-way every day and another 15 centavos for lunch money. I would buy pan de limon and peanut butter that would last me for about one or two weeks... so I don't know how you would calculate that. I had no allowance for...

TADEM: No money for books or supplies.

ALBA: Of course when I got to be working, I forgot how much I was earning during that time, but I guess I was earning enough to allow me to buy some new clothes.

TADEM: Sir, how different were you from your classmates?

ALBA: I was different because I was poor. My closest friend when I was in college was Jaime Laya. The reason for that was that our age gap with our classmates was so big. We were both fourteen and the rest were seventeen or eighteen years old. I was by myself and he was by himself. We gravitated toward each other, and up to now we have remained very close.

TADEM: Was he from the middle class?

ALBA: He was well off because his father was the famous writer, Juan Cabrerros Laya of *Diwang Kayumanggi*. Did you not take *Diwang Kayumanggi*?

TADEM: We took up *Ibong Mandaragit*.

ALBA: *Diwang Kayumanggi* was the textbook of the Filipinos during that time. Then they owned the Kayumanggi Press. They had properties all over the place. The mother was well off. I had also friends in U.P. Iloilo. There was a big group of us who went to U.P. Diliman. That group of ours became close, a support group for a while until I met new friends. Fortunately, several took the same course as I took, Business Administration, so we were classmates.

TADEM: Sir, who were your professors at that time?

ALBA: Amado Castro. You know him? One of my favorite teachers, Anacleto Lacebal, Eugenio Sabangan; **Mrs. [Garces] (full name)** the famous Mrs. Garces who died in the car accident; Gloria Barcelona in Economics; [Augustin] Dodong Kintanar, the husband of Thelma Kintanar. She is now with the Kalayaan College. I had good teachers and then there were several exchange professors. One of them was Robert Holloway [who] eventually became my professor at the University of Minnesota. When I finished college, I was fortunate enough to get admitted abroad. My first choices of course were Harvard or Stanford [University]. I did not get into Harvard because of the cutoff. I was accepted in Stanford, but then when I wrote to Holloway in Minnesota, I ended up choosing Minnesota. Such a good business school, so I got my MBA [Masters of Business Administration] there.

TADEM: The fellowship was care of the university?

ALBA: Funded by USAID (United States Agency for International Development). At that time USAID was funding a lot of scholars. That was good about the United States at that time. They funded a lot [of scholars].

TADEM: Were you headed to an academic career already if they funded you?

ALBA: Right after graduation, I was taken in. Well, not immediately. A few months after graduation, while waiting for the certified public accountancy results, I got into SGV (Sycip, Gorres and Velayo). I am an SGV alumnus... The College invited me to teach so I took it right away.

TADEM: Would they pay higher in SGV?

ALBA: I could not recall how much I was getting. When I started as assistant instructor, [I got] one hundred fifteen pesos. I got promoted to one hundred ninety-five pesos then I became instructor at two hundred forty-five pesos. I recall those things. I was independent already and then I was able to get a house here. Fortunately, there were a lot of timing-coincidences in my life. At that time, U.P. was building faculty houses. I think USAID [United States Agency for International Development] assisted here. There were cottages. Do you still see these cottages there? My house is still there. You know the Chateau Verde? Just below that was a small cottage. I was able to get that, one unit. At that time, that was like godforsaken country, very distant. Nobody was getting houses there. I got one, which was why I moved out from my relatives' house. I saved on transport money since it was walking distance.

TADEM: So was the attraction of U.P. strong?

ALBA: Yes. Why? U.P. is U.P. I don't know. It is just an iconic institution to everybody. I guess many of the people I respect [...] were UP alumni. And there was a branch in Iloilo at that time, so between Panay University and Iloilo City University versus U.P., which would you choose? Being a U.P. alumnus is a ticket to everywhere. That's what they tell everybody.

TADEM: Ateneo de Manila University did not figure?

ALBA: Very glamorous. Rizal was an Atenean, but we knew right from the start that it was so expensive. U.P. [education] was essentially free, very low tuition. That was good about U.P.

TADEM: We were talking to PM [Cesar Virata] and to augment [his UP salary] he also had consultancies.

ALBA: He did? .... Cesar [Virata] ... came from an established family in Cavite. They were the direct descendants of Emilio Aguinaldo.

TADEM: Sir, he told us he was poor. But he had ten hectares of land.

ALBA: We had no land at all. Ten hectares, poor? I'd be a millionaire with that! [Cesar Virata] is one of my idols. He finished the two degrees at the same time. He was the last one to do it. He finished a BA degree and an engineering degree at the same time.

KATAYAMA: How did you find SGV (Sycip, Gorres and Velayo)?

ALBA: Slave driver. I am writing my biography... and that had been one of my most memorable experiences. I worked there just over the year while anxiously waiting for the results of my (CPA Certified Public Accountancy) board exam. So as a junior accountant, they first assigned me to the proofreading room where you read all those financial statements before they assemble it. After a while I got so sick and bored with it, I started assembling the papers to attract attention. They noticed that I was not meant to be a proofreader so they transferred me and gave me what they called real accounting work, bookkeeping. I became a junior accountant of one of the senior accountants there, Eddie [Eduardo] Villanueva, one of the senior partners of SGV. My assignment was to go with the team to La Union to do a physical inventory of re-dried tobacco. You recall Harry Stonehill? Harry Stonehill owned the Cooperative Exchange in La Union where they re-dried tobacco leaves for processing and for cutting, and then exporting them as cigarettes, so you had to get into the tobacco warehouse. Have you ever been inside a tobacco warehouse? You know how dried tobacco smells? Physical inventory! You count that and then you would be working up to 10 o'clock at night. It was a half-humid atmosphere. You are sweating down to your polka-dotted briefs. That was public accounting! I had my CPA in U.P. and there I was counting pails and pails of re-dried tobacco and I was not a smoker. I vomited many times and had to take three showers for several weeks. Boy! I thought the assignment was finished, but I was sent to Purico ....In those days the shortening used in our cooking oil was from coconut. This is the fluffy kind of thing. Have you seen that shortening? ... It was semi-fluid and when poured in a pan, it melted very quickly, the Purico. You guys should have your history now. This was the famous brand, eventually of the PMC (Philippine Manufacturing Company), a subsidiary of Protocol and Gamble. The raw material for that was, of course, coconut, copra. So if you think that counting bales and bales of tobacco is the adventure of your life, then you're wrong. Have you been inside a copra warehouse? You know what copra does? If tobacco is foul-smelling, so is copra. While tobacco sticks to your skin, the smell of copra gets inside your skin. So you don't need just a shower but disinfection. Have you smelled copra at all? Dried coconut?

TADEM: Different from virgin coconut oil and all that?

ALBA: No, that's different... So this is public accounting? When we went to U.P., we were told that, "You know you'll be a CPA graduate, you will get into companies like SGV." I got to SGV and SGV slave-drove me like anything. We went back to San Luis, the headquarters of SGV. Cesar Virata, by the way, was a partner there already during that time. He was one of the big bosses there. Maybe when I was there, he was not yet there. He was with another accounting firm that eventually merged with SGV. So when I got back, there was letter from Amado Castro. And the result of the Board was released and I passed. I think I was number 13. I saw this letter asking me to join the faculty. I wrote a letter of resignation [to SGV] and I was kidding my boss, "This is public accounting! You can have it!" <laughs> I was so happy. I thought I would turn my back on accounting. I knew better about accounting since at that time SGV was already a prominent accounting firm... At certain levels, they slave-drive you, but when you reach a certain ceiling or when you are already a senior adviser, the sky is the limit for your pay. You are paid by engagements. The more clients you get, the more money you have. That was known to me. Had I stayed with this firm, I would have been a partner already.

TADEM: But you could not teach right away in UP?

ALBA: I was CPA already when I taught. The Board results were released when I was still in SGV, and that was also the reason why UP got me—because I passed the Board. You cannot teach Accounting when you're not CPA.

TADEM: Sir, until now?

ALBA: Yes. You cannot teach Accounting if you're not CPA. Yet, when we came back, it was not Accounting that I first taught; it was Economics. I learned my Economics while teaching it. You have to read several chapters ahead of your students.

TADEM: Sir, from there... before any involvement in the government, you did your PhD first?

ALBA: Of course, U.P. sent me to get my MBA. Jimmy [Jaime] Laya and I... we were just nineteen and twenty so we were disqualified because we had to be twenty-one. We lied a little bit about our age. We got accepted. I got accepted in Minnesota and Jimmy in Stanford. He got his degree in Industrial Management there. So when we got back, I started to teach full time, MBA also. After a year or two, I had the chance again to get a PhD.

KATAYAMA: May I ask what kind of impression you had when you entered the University of Minnesota?

ALBA: U.P. at that time was very well respected in the United States. We had no problem getting all our courses credited. For example, I was not asked to take Accounting and Economics anymore. So I was able to finish my MBA in two years because of that. Although, initially I did badly on some courses because I could not understand the accent of some professors. Particularly, we had an Australian professor in Psychology. We could not understand him so I got a C with him and I took this course again and got an A.

TADEM: You got an A because you'd gotten used to his accent?

ALBA: No, he was not the professor...

TADEM: Was the American system then the same as U.P.'s?

ALBA: Actually the same. I got adjusted socially, very quickly. I guess *Reader's Digest* had something to do with it. You know, Minnesota was your truly typical American state, middle class, the Obama type of middle class, though [US President Barrack] Obama was an unusual type of middle class. [More the] Sarah Palin kind of Americans, the hockey moms—that is what you will see in Minnesota, although it is heavily Swedish....

TADEM: Sir, was there any discrimination?

ALBA: I did not experience it at all. Even in school... essentially we stayed in a big dorm in Minnesota. It was an international dorm. There was no discrimination that I experienced.

TADEM: Who were your friends there, more than the Filipinos?

ALBA: I had several friends, Filipinos. But my closest friends there were a Chinese, an Indian, and a Jesuit priest.

TADEM: The Jesuit was what?

ALBA: American. He was teaching in Market University in Wisconsin. We stayed friends all throughout my stay. I enjoyed my stay in Minnesota.

KATAYAMA: You finished in less than two years?

ALBA: Yes.

KATAYAMA: And then you came back to the Philippines after?

ALBA: Essentially yes, because that was your contract, to serve your sentence. Two years for every year [away] so I served U.P. for four years.

TADEM: Sir, where was the social life in all of these \_\_your wife, your tennis? Was it all work and study?

ALBA: Well, when I was there, I was all by myself. I went out with friends. We went to parties. We travelled from one state to another. We went apple picking in Minnesota. It is the state of a thousand lakes. The legend there was that long ago there were giants fighting with each other and this giant picked up Minnesota and then threw it to the West. That was how the mountains in California were formed.

TADEM: Sir, it's very cold there. How did you adjust with the weather?

ALBA: Surprisingly, I had no problem. We had indoor heating. But there was this one time that I underestimated the weather. They gave you the temperature every so often. There was just this one time, I did not know of the temperature and we went out. I thought my nose would fall off. Winter was not that bad if you were prepared for it. You had a heated room, the dormitory was heated, and I had an American roommate who was out most of the time. It

was a good thing because... [I was able to] study by myself. The dorm rooms were very nice and very comfortable.

TADEM: The stipend that was given also was...

ALBA: USAID (United States Agency for International Development) was funding my stay.

KATAYAMA: After you came back, how many years did you teach before you ....

ALBA: I came back in 1961. I went to University of Minnesota in 1957. Last year [2007] I was a golden jubilarian in UP ... I went abroad in 1959, finished in 1961, and taught up to 1964. Then in 1964 I went to Northwestern University, one of the best business schools...often always in the top 5. They were just changing ranks with Harvard, Stanford, and Chicago.... I finished my doctoral dissertation, my dissertation had an award in marketing and my adviser was no less than the... You know?

BEAS: The marketing book?

ALBA: Philipp Kotler, the guru of marketing! He was my adviser; he was the one who asked me to be his advisee.

TADEM: What was your topic, Sir, for the dissertation?

ALBA: Oh gee, highfalutin sound, "Micro analysis of the socio-dynamics diffusion of innovation: a computer simulation model." Imagine, at that time, it was 1964 or 1967, I was doing computer-simulation when the computer was as big as this room.... Computers were huge and you had to use these IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) cards. I had rows and rows of boxes of cards just to input into the machine. It was Kotler who encouraged me to do something in this area. I guess even the judges of the American Marketing Association found it so new and innovative. They just awarded me the best doctoral dissertation award, out of, like, 38 schools. Kotler was so happy about it and he immediately published my abstract in his book. It was his first time also that he came up with the book in marketing, the guru and the book. Remember that. It is one of those famous books, very influential. Peter Drucker is to business as Kotler is to marketing.

TADEM: How would you compare your experience in Northwestern University with Minnesota?

ALBA: Slightly different. Surprisingly, I experienced some awkward racial situations in the neighborhood because when I was in Northwestern I did not stay in the dorm. When I went there, you know **Vic Pulmano (full name)**. Engr. Pulmano, he was already there... That time Northwestern did not have good dormitories for graduate students... They had no housing for the graduate students. So you had to look one for yourself. Fortunately, I found so many boarding houses. The one I got was owned by a Swedish couple. They were strict but they gave me a room in the attic. I was fastidious and they liked me for it. You see, I bought cartons of milk in the evening and opened the window to cool them outside. The lady noticed it. "Manuel, come here!" she told me one time. "I don't want you to put milk cartons outside the window! Very ugly! But you know what I like about you is that you clean your bathtub ring and you fix your bed. That is what I like about you!" So I enjoyed my stay there and later on a friend, **Francis Quan (check name)**, joined me. He was at the university for a PhD in Finance and was looking for housing so I recommended him to the lady. The lady liked me a lot so they were also nice to my roommate. But since it was little bit difficult for us to stay there, we moved out to a kind of apartment house. We got a separate unit for ourselves. So we cooked for ourselves. We stayed there for so long but Francisc met his girl there, a graduate student. They got married while they were there so I was by myself in a big room. Shortly I found another studio-type housing. I lived by myself throughout the two years of my doctoral studies.

KATAYAMA: USAID (United States Agency for International Development) funded this for you?

ALBA: No. This time the Ford Foundation had given a liberal grant to the U.P. and in fact it was Ford Foundation that funded the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education (PCSPE). I guess you noticed this. This was the project I was deeply involved in. They funded me throughout my doctoral studies, two and a half years.

TADEM: Why?

ALBA: Because I was good! <laughs> but if you study full time, you can do it! You can finish your course program in one year. What will take you so long actually is your doctoral research study.

TADEM: There's a comprehensive exam?

ALBA: I had to take that and I had a language requirement. I had to choose my language and I thought I was good in Spanish. Imagine we had 24 units of Spanish. I flunked it. It was Cervantes Spanish. You know Cervantes? With a lot of idiomatic expression! I said that we did not use this in business, give me technical Spanish, and that was what I did. Have you read Cervantes Spanish? Have you read Jose Rizal's *Mi Ultimo Adios*? You cannot translate that directly.

TADEM: Sir, it seems you were never homesick at all.

ALBA: I was homesick, but I am one of those who get so fascinated, walking around, I would take what they called the "L," the elevated frame, and go from Evanston to Chicago, the field museum, on the other side of the town. It is one of the fantastic science museums in the world. You could spend the whole day there. But the University of Chicago—unlike the Northwestern, which is located in Evanston, an old white neighborhood—is located on that southern part where Obama is from. It was all black. As you moved from Evanston and you got on the "elevated," the color of the people got grayer and grayer until it became black <laughs>. The Downtown is in the middle of Evanston and the Southside of Chicago.

TADEM: Sir, were there Asians? Where were they?

ALBA: Asians? Not many in the Midwest. There was a concentration of Asians in Chicago, a lot of Mexicans there but mostly Polacks, the Scandinavians. Evanston was an all-white area.

KATAYAMA: When you finished your PhD you did not think of staying in the United States?

ALBA: You know I was under contract. If you're funded by a university, you have to pay back. That was a serious constraint for any kind of alternative thought about employment, but

I entertained it because Northwestern asked to me teach, to join the faculty. I taught for one quarter and was a teaching assistant for Kotler. I had to get back because I could not afford to pay back. Otherwise, you work and then you pay.

TADEM: Sir, there are many who do not return.

ALBA: Yes, they have to pay back. Well, I am not like that. I feel guilty when I do not pay my debt. Besides, coming from a poor family, here was U.P. that helped me out to achieve this career so I had to go back. One motivation of course was that with the PhD I could do a lot in the country because the management consultants here knew about SGV. They wouldn't have me do menial work again.

TADEM: Sir, who were those who had PhDs when you came back?

ALBA: A lot of them returned as well at the time. One of them was Mag (Magdaleno) Albarracin. Ralph Rodriguez did not finish. You know that? He does not have a Ph.D.

TADEM: How come he did not finish?

ALBA: I think he failed in his doctoral research.

<Dr. Alba removes his coat.>

ALBA: I wear a jacket because it is cold in my office... These were the people who were sent abroad. Nick (Niceto) Poblador finished at the University of Chicago. Emmanuel Velasco, the dean, also finished at Chicago. Manny [Emmanuel Velasco] and I were there together. He was in Chicago; I was in Northwestern. There were quite a few, so it bolstered the faculty of [the College of] Business Administration in different aspects, marketing, business finance, and social science in business. Then in Economics, a lot of PhDs returned: Dondon [Cayetano] Paderanga and Ben [Benjamin] Diokno, among others. Many of them became Cabinet secretaries, too. There was some sort of a "PhD contest" then among the Colleges of Business, Economics, and Engineering.

TADEM: Dondon [Cateyano Paderanga] likes to say you were Wall Street while they were Main Street.

ALBA: What?

TADEM: He had a talk on the financial crisis, in which he joked that the School of Economics was Wall Street while the College of Business Administration was Main Street.

ALBA: They caused the problems. <laughs>

TADEM: Compared to other schools...

ALBA: Yes. U.P. had topnotch students in Economics and the school of business. We were always the CPA topnotchers, always the winner in finance competition, in marketing competition; we always won. The CPA board exam is given twice a year, in May and October. I think U.P. takes it in October. [At that time] La Salle, the strongest competitor of U.P., did not want to take it at the same time that U.P. did. They couldn't top the exams, so they took it in May.

TADEM: Ateneo's strong suit is perhaps the MBA?

ALBA: Ateneo is not well known in... but they have a good management engineering program, in business management. I think they would have been helped by a two-million grant from [John] Gokongwei Jr. Gokongwei is a La Sallian but somehow he gave money to Ateneo. I don't know why.

TADEM: So sir, how did you make time for tennis?

ALBA: Going back, when I was a bookkeeper in the paper mill. It was not a laboratory but a real paper mill. It produced about ten rolls of mimeograph paper every day. You know how big that roll is? It is low-quality paper but during that time, they printed the examinations in low-quality papers.

TADEM: Sir, now we have the blue books.

ALBA: Still the same? Not yet computerized. Exams should already be computerized. Our low technology has somehow protected us from the global meltdown. We are less globalized [in that sense]. Well, anyway, the paper mill was right beside the tennis court at that time and among the outstanding players then was Dean Jose Belmonte of the College of Business Administration. He was one of those. After work in the office, there was this tennis court staring at me. So I picked up a racket and started playing tennis. I kept playing even in the United States. There was a good tennis court at the Northwestern University.

TADEM: Were you able to play with [Prime Minister] PM [Cesar] Virata?

ALBA: I don't think he could win against me. No, honestly. We played doubles only, but the guy I played singles with was Secretary Geronimo Velasco. You know, Geronimo Velasco and the PNOC [Philippine National Oil Company]. There was a tennis court in the PNOC compound. He [Velasco] was the lord and master of that tennis court. He would challenge Cabinet people who would be playing there. He probably did not know how good I was so he challenged me. "Manny, let's play tennis." Of course he lost. "Okay my record against you is 1-0," I told him, because he always boasted to the Cabinet that he was one of the best tennis players. So he challenged me again. "Okay," I said. "It's your court. It's your referee. It's your ball.... I am sorry if you still cannot win." So he lost again. I said, "Let's stop our record at 2-0 otherwise you will never live it down." By the way, have you read his book? One of the guys I admire most. He did a lot in energy.

TADEM: For a while, he would have his meetings here because he knew Randy [Randolf] David well. He used to come here.

ALBA: The book is one of the better autobiographical books. [Take], for example, the book of Hilarion Davide Jr. by Tony [Antonio] Tupaz. It was garbage. I mean Davide was a good person. He deserved a better biography. [Aquilino "Nene"] Pimentel and Jovito Salonga also wrote their own. I thought to myself, "We should be writing our own biographies." Fortunately, Imee [Maria Imeda Josefa] Marcos has this Pamana project and she envisions writing about the Marcos years, particularly Marcos's accomplishments, especially since President Marcos now seems to be gaining fresh currency in terms of his accomplishments. Think of any development area, for example, rice shortage or rural electrification. Marcos

solved [or] started to solve these [problems]. Think about reducing dependence on foreign energy. Marcos was on the way to 50 or 60 percent. Think about key resources—water, electricity, transport infrastructure, education—all of these things were [thought about by Marcos]. We started all these massive innovations in education and nobody knew about it. Imee said “so you guys, it is time you write about it”. So I promised to write in a couple of areas in the budgetary system of the country and education. [Cesar] Virata promised to write something also. Then O.D. [Onofre D. Corpuz] promised to write the overall framework. I think [he’s] the only guy who can do it.

KATAYAMA: This was Imee [Maria Imelda Josefa] Marcos?

ALBA: Yes, her project. The Pamana is ongoing.

KATAYAMA: Do you have any idea how things are between Imelda [Marcos] and Imee [Marcos] now? The reason I am asking is that...

ALBA: You mean whether they are friendly...

KATAYAMA: There were picture displayed in her room. I saw many pictures in her room.

ALBA: Except Imee’s [Maria Imelda Josefa Marcos].

KATAYAMA: Exactly! So I wonder why there are no pictures of Imee.

ALBA: I really don’t know. I do not have an insight on the relationship between the two... [Imelda has a good] heart. She is forgiving and motherly. I don’t think she would continue to be so distant from her children. On the other hand, Imee is so intelligent I don’t think that she would let this thing get in the middle of the two of them. Maybe they are in this snuggling situation, besame mucho kind of [...] but you know, to me, they are okay.

TADEM: But the distance [between the two] maybe because of her marriage to [Tomas] Manotoc?

ALBA: I don’t know. It could be.

TADEM: Not money? Or...

ALBA: No. I do not think money would be an issue.

KATAYAMA: Do you keep a diary?

ALBA: You know that is a good question. I regretted not having been organized about this thing. I never imagined I would be a great man. <laughs> You better start your diary. But I kept my calendars with my commentaries on it and if you see my house, I have this warehouse. I am a trivia collector, but essentially, I collect documents that I had accumulated. They are all there in the corner, always an inspiration to write. I never threw things away. But one thing I regretted was not having records of people I met. I met Indira Gandhi [of India] and Hu Yaobang of China. I have pictures of the present president of Taiwan, Ma Ying-jeou, a young handsome guy, a Harvard graduate by the way; and then the former president who is now in prison, Chen Shui-bian. I mean many of those people that I had pictures with. [I also had pictures with] President [George] Bush Sr. when he came here. He said that President Marcos is the most democratic leader and he adhered to democratic principles. <laughs> Those things I could hardly recall anymore.

KATAYAMA: How about personal letters?

ALBA: I have letters. I kept President Marcos's letters. I have picture of Mrs. <Imelda> Marcos with myself and there is the dedication, "The best budget secretary" kind of thing.

KATAYAMA: Can you donate these to our project, to U.P. through the main library, which is now able to digitize the files.

ALBA: I am not averse to that; I should have an archivist.

TADEM: Sir, we would show you what we did with the Sixto Roxas documents.

ALBA: I would be happy to work it out.

KATAYAMA: After twenty years, your family discovered [...]

ALBA: Yeah, I know. That's why I am writing my biography but it is not going to be published. It's just going to be written so I could have my [...]

KATAYAMA: But those documents for other people are trash, but for us they're precious.

ALBA: One avid collector of these things is no less than my boss right now, Mayor ["Feliciano" Sonny] Belmonte Jr. He is a collector of these things. He has old coins etc. He collected documents like anything. He was into this auction kind of thing. He saw this letter of President [Fidel] Ramos when he was the Chief Staff to me. He kept it and told me, "Manny I would sell this to you. Are you going to buy it?" He gave it to me. I am going to show this to President [Fidel] Ramos one of these days. Those kinds of things I am keeping. They are just there in the boxes. I hope they are still there because my helper in the house could not tell one document from another.

TADEM: Oh no! Our head librarian would faint.

ALBA: But you know, the first thing I asked when I got kicked out was what happened to the Marcos library. We used to meet [there] for some intimate conversation with President [Ferdinand] Marcos in his study library.

KATAYAMA: In Malacañang?

ALBA: Yes. I was one of those who had the very rare opportunities to be called for chit-chats with the president. In fact, I was having a hair cut one time and he asked me over. [That library had such] a fantastic collection! The president, to me, was among genuine intellectuals like O.D. Corpuz, Ting [Sixto] Roxas, Father Horacio de la Costa and Blas Ople. I think there isn't any nice biography written [on Ople]. Somebody should be writing about Blas Ople. He was among those who wrote very well. I am sure he has collection of documents. You might be able to talk to the Blas Ople family for that. O.D. [Onofre D. Corpuz] is probably one those efficient keepers of documents.

KATAYAMA: But he told to us that he had no memoirs or diaries. Do you believe that?

ALBA: I don't know, but he could not stop anybody on writing about his diary. I would like to write about him. Not in biographical terms but on his role in the administration.

<The team shows the Sixto Roxas collection to Dr. Alba.>

TADEM: Sir, this is the sample. This is what will happen to your documents. That is the first batch of materials. You can access it in the computer.

ALBA: I can collect those... are you giving this to me? Can you give this to me so I can have some ideas about [...] Well, you know, I started to... but I should be very frank with you; I am one of those guys... while many of the Marcos guys were charged of illegal wealth when they left, I am being charged of illegal poverty. I did not make money when I was in position. I still have to continue to earn money so I have my own firm right now, a management consultancy firm. Fortunately, my work with [Mayor Sonny] Belmonte does not keep me from working so I accept management services. I still teach. I've been asked to be the president of the university, but I said no more administrative work unless it pays me enough. I have to keep my modest lifestyle--"moderate my greed," according to Romy [Romulo] Neri who was my student, by the way. He was in the same batch with Manny [Manuel] Villar. They were my students. I hope Manny Villar wins as president so I can ask him for some assignment. <laughs>... so I have boxes...

KATAYAMA: Two days ago, I met [Eduardo] Danding Cojuangco [Jr.]...

ALBA: He is a very interesting person. He got a lot. Gee, my gosh, you should ask him to write about Marcos. But you know, if you [can] put together all accounts of the Marcos years from everybody, if they can simply be asked to write...

KATAYAMA: You know our project has many purposes, but for me the question is, "Who is Marcos?"

ALBA: Who is Marcos? You will have as many portraits of him. If you will listen to Imelda, he is a saint. My God!

KATAYAMA: She never narrated it in that way. She always talked about herself. Like, she said that she met Mao Zedong and according to her Mao Zedong gave her a compliment, “Imelda ... I initiated [the] Cultural Revolution, you started more projects.”

ALBA: But, you know, based on my experience, [she] would always have very loving description of the President. She has very affectionate, loving [thoughts of him]...

TADEM: Sir, you never saw them fight?

ALBA: No, I think the President was not like that. Sometimes during official meetings, he would call me “Manny” if it was just the two of us, but “Minister Alba” when everyone was around. You know that is another aspect, the Parliamentary system. Some things should be written about that. One reason that I am for “Cha-cha” if only to transform the parliamentary system, because I think it will work well. That kind of thing, but he would also recognize how much Imelda had done. If there was a conservative Ilocano-style type of person, it was President Marcos. If there is a *bongga* (flamboyant) type of person, it is Imelda Marcos. But her flamboyance stems from the fact that she thinks that the projects she thought out are worthwhile, like the Film Center...Look at the PICC (Philippine International Convention Center), that’s her project. How much do you think the government would have to spend to put up a facility like that years later? It gave the country a lot of foreign exchange [earnings]. The [building of] the Cultural Center of the Philippines, you know, was [after the fashion of Egypt’s] pharaohs, kings, who built temples like anything. King Rama was criticized for building so many temples during his time but look now, these are returning billions and billions of dollars to Thailand. It was expensive at that time but she brought the IMF (International Monetary Fund) - World Bank meeting here. She brought the Ms. Universe pageant here. You have to view her unofficial role that way as First Lady and her official role as the governor of Manila. She did many things in Manila as a starting point.

TADEM: Did she ask for any budget from you?

ALBA: Yes, of course. In the parliamentary system, you have a question hour for every minister. For one hour, you have to stand there and defend your program and your budget. Imelda Marcos was the Minister for Human Settlements, but she never stood there. I was the one who stood up for her. I was the one answering questions for the Human Settlements.

Nobody else could possibly stand there because Jolly [Jose Conrado] Benitez, who was undersecretary of Human Settlements, could not because he was not part of the Cabinet. You heard of PD 1177? Benjamin Diokno or Dondon [Cayetano] Paderanga must have known this. This was the budget charter of [Ferdinand] Marcos. You should get to know that... It was an instrument formulated by President Marcos. When Marcos was kicked out and a new administration came in, they wanted to get rid of PD 1177 since for them it was the instrument of the devil... but look, 1177 is still there being used as the Budget Charter. Several administrations found it useful, very rational, very objective. It was drafted by Jimmy [Jaime] Laya, essentially because he came in as budget commissioner. But it was implemented at the time the parliamentary system was established and I became the budget minister. I was the defender of PD1177 in the parliament. Everybody wanted to get rid of it! I mean the opposition. For them, it was the instrument of the devil, but look, what could they have done without PD 1177 now? So, even just for that... look at PD 1177, it is just an honest document... that is so rational and objective. It [aims to] improve the budgetary system procedures, and has not been amended.

KATAYAMA: What are the main features of this decree?

ALBA: Okay so you start with a plan. You know, you can't formulate a budget without working on plans, objectives, mission, and so on. The second is to estimate revenues and so forth. That's why all these [insertion] issues... you can insert and that is allowed by PD 1177, but it should be a rational amendment to the General Appropriations Act. Just put a special provision to allow you to do that. You have indicators like an inflation indicator for the next year. Then you have the list of projects. The Cabinet Secretary had to formulate the Budget program and then the Cabinet of course would determine the allocation for all the projects before they would submit it to Congress. Of course under the present system, it is the Congress that should author the General Appropriations Act... They saw nothing unconstitutional about PD 1177, just an instrument to make the budget an effective policy instrument to implement development programs. It is a good measure of control for spending. It imposes discipline on the fiscal policy, and sanity and equity among the implementers. It also includes provisions on how to deal with the debt problem. Would you allocate for debt service, for example? That is why the lower the value of peso, the more you pay for your debts. The two sides of this thing: the exporters are happy that the peso value is decreasing... [which means] more peso per dollar, but it is bad for our debt. These are all factored in. It is

required... this should be formulated before you present the budget program in the Congress. When I was a minister, there was no pork barrel. But look, how much pork barrel does each one have now? Two hundred million pesos per congressman, at least.

TADEM: What about your relationship with OD Corpuz?

ALBA: When I came back with a PhD, I was already being invited to be a resource person here and there but it was really my closeness to O.D. Corpuz. He was not only my teacher; he was my mentor and an inspiring person to me.

TADEM: Sir, where did he become your teacher?

ALBA: He is a political scientist. He was my professor in History 5. He got married in Iloilo and he knew that I am an Ilonggo. He had very loving attitude toward Iloilo and Ilonggos. He is an Ilocano from Tarlac, [a Carlos] "Romulo" kind of thing. Romulo is one of my favorite persons. Romulo entrusted his budget to me when he was Secretary of Foreign Affairs. "Oh Maning, take care of my budget!" Viva Voce, [his was] the only budget... that was not questioned. How well loved Romulo was. But I guess O.D. [Corpuz] just took solicitous patronage of me, so he adopted me as a sort of protégé. We became close socially and so he asked me to head the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education (PCSPE). It was a major initiative on his part. This was just before Martial Law, 1968 or 1969. O.D. [Corpuz] as education secretary asked me to head that, and in the commission were Ting [Vicente Paterno], Father Horacio de la Costa, Vel Samonte, Miguel Gapud, and Armand Fabella. The commission formulated the First Ten-Year Development Plan for education, which incorporated a list of development projects for education that the World Bank funded with the 35 million dollars. It was one of the biggest World Bank-assisted projects in education, and subsequently, after the Presidential Commission they established the EDPITAF (Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force) to implement the projects. Of course, the commission had already done its job. Up to now EDPITAF is still there, still implementing projects.

KATAYAMA: Was this a part time...?

ALBA: No, it was a full-time job. I had to leave U.P. in 1971. It was essentially in 1972, including the EDPITAF days. [It was] one year and a half of [the] Presidential Commission and then EDPITAF.

TADEM: Sir, were you seconded?

ALBA: Seconded, although I was still teaching. I did not want to leave teaching.

KATAYAMA: How much was your compensation?

ALBA: Bureau director-level. It was not cabinet-level.

KATAYAMA: How much was that?

ALBA: I really did not know how much that was at that time\_\_ maybe about fifteen thousand pesos, or eighteen thousand pesos for director.

KATAYAMA: But better than [the salary of a] U.P. professor?

ALBA: Yes, better. I think I was already an associate professor when I left. That was still low on the pay scale.

TADEM: I'd go for the bureau director position; it pays higher.

ALBA: At that time, I don't think the Career Executive Service Board was in place. So the standardization of salary was not yet there. I was [with] FAGS (faculty and government service), particularly under O.D. Copruz. In a sense, I got inside... at that time, too, Blas Ople got interested in me. I wrote speeches for him. I was his speechwriter at that time. I wrote speeches for a lot of people. I was not a bad writer. I always wrote the President's budgetary speech.

TADEM: Blas Ople's?

ALBA: On education and manpower development. One of the key components of the education project was the ten regional manpower training centers [MTCs]. These were training centers under the Department of Labor, headed by [Blas] Ople. That was how I got close to him. Up to now, the MTCs are still there.

TADEM: How long was this, your FAGs for education? ...

ALBA: As long as I was in government; that was why when I retired from public [service], including from my services in Makati, I automatically returned to U.P. Normally, you have to decide after two years whether you will be resigning or not. I did not do that. I was automatically returned.

KATAYAMA: When you [learned] that martial law was declared...

ALBA: Okay, when the Presidential Commission was finished, that was 1971. [I had built a sort of international reputation.] The World Bank, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations) got to know about me. East-West Center invited me to be head of the Technology and Development Institute that they had in Honolulu. This was 1972. Then martial Law was declared. They thought I was leaving Marcos because I was disgusted with martial law, but the truth was that I was invited. The timing just happened, but I stayed long enough to put up the educational project in [its] implementation stage. My successor was Waldo Perfecto. You've heard of him? He was the President of the De LaSalle University. Then it was Augusto "Ten" Mathay afterward? You know Dr. Ten Mathay? Our top chemist! So I left to become the director of the East-West Technology Institute for three years and when I was there, a retinue of government officials was passing through Honolulu on the way to the United States or elsewhere and they would always call on me. So that was how I got to know them while I was an exile. <laughs> They thought of me as an exile. O.D. [Corpuz] stayed with me there for almost a week at that time because he got the flak here when he was president of DAP (Development Academy of the Philippines). One of the key projects of DAP was how to systematize and improve the judicial system.

KATAYAMA: Judicial system?

ALBA: You had to deal with these justices and some of those [were] independent stubborn people. They did not want you to monkey around with what they were doing and here were these young people hired by DAP (Development Academy of the Philippines) to look into how the Supreme Court operates. My God! The justices got so mad, “Who are these young people... [to] tell us how to do our job?” They sort of scolded DAP and maybe O.D. [Onofre D. Corpuz] got the flak for it. He had to leave for a while and I entertained him there. ...Alex [Alejandro] Melchor, who was head of the Malacañang Management Office, invited me back when I was on my second year there: “I like you to join me in Malacañang.” But I said I could not leave yet because I had a three-year contract and I did not want to break that. But then almost at the same time Gerry [Gerardo] Sicat [invited me to join him.] You know, Gerry Sicat, Jimmy [Jaime] Laya, and I were like brothers. We were together in college when Gerry and Loreta Sicat got married; Jimmy and I were the only *ninongs* (sponsors). No ceremonies. It was just a private occasion. He [Sicat] said, “Manny, come back and join me in NEDA (National Economic and Development Authority).” So I had to make a choice between Alex Melchor and Gerry Sicat. I had no problem choosing Gerry Sicat because at that time Sicat was also a very empowered person. [President Ferdinand] Marcos liked him also. He headed NEDA well and transformed the agency into a leverage... it was a powerful board, not like the board that [Romulo] Neri headed. But the NEDA at that time was a leverage office. [Gerardo] Sicat was the director-general. Now Sicat, during the parliamentary [days], also got the title Secretary of Economic Planning, then of course Minister of Economic Planning. In the parliamentary system, the title director-general was lower than the Cabinet. It was bureau head; so every time he was invited in international conferences, he was seated behind. So he had to insist that he be given that dual position so he became the director-general and at the same time the Minister of Economic Planning. So I returned...

KATAYAMA: ... please tell us frankly, what thoughts did you have when you heard about the declaration of martial [aw]?

ALBA: We people had no sense about the so-called martial in martial law. For us the technocrats, [we thought], “Hey this is an opportunity to change things in the Philippines.” Since I had already begun in education, the best way to implement the educational reforms was under this regime instead of being subjected to all those bureaucratic hassles in Congress. While there was a parliament, it was a *lutong-makaw* [done deal] in the sense that

“everything that went to the Parliament... [was approved immediately]” because that is the nature of the parliamentary system, when you control the majority, if the majority wants to vote you out right away, that’s how the parliamentary system goes. In fact, it is only tolerated that you have a debate there, but when a program is submitted by a prime minister or by the president—this is the French model—to Congress, it is already with the ... entire cabinet and with the entire party. Now, the party happened to be majority in the Parliament so when the program was presented there, it was only by toleration that you would allow a debate to go on but when the majority party would say, “Enough of this debate, we will vote,” they would always win. That was how [it seemed] to me. It was not that the programs were just thought out so hastily, but no, under the Marcos system everything was done well in terms of the debate in the Cabinet about programs and projects. The technocrats gathered together to discuss, for example, how the investment programs had been worked out. What kind of external assistance would be needed? What were the economic objectives that should be achieved in this project? And these preliminary proposals, already including the budget program, were presented to what we called the Batasang Bayan, which was really the party. This was the entire party, which was bigger than the Parliament in membership. The Parliament only had three hundred members but the Batasang Bayan had more than two thousand five-hundred because it included all the governors and some mayors in a major conference or gathering. The program of the country formulated by the Cabinet was presented to this Batasang Bayan and they would vote on it and so on. There were debates. The governors and business sectors were invited to this gathering. Once presented and approved, that program, which became the party program, would be presented to the Parliament and would be subject to deliberations there. So by that nature it was already approved by the majority.

KATAYAMA: May I shift my question a little bit, you suggested that [President Ferdinand] Marcos handled everything very properly, if so... did you find any urgent necessity for Marcos to declare martial law? Without martial law, would Marcos have had difficulty in implementing programs?

ALBA: Should I be the one to answer that question? We never thought of these things, martial Law and so on. They debated that, this country was in a mess. What were our options? We had lot of things to do and we were not doing these well. The poor became poorer, which was why the socio-equity program of [President Ferdinand] Marcos had very

high priority, but there were a group of us, professors from U.P. who were working on these projects but nothing seemed to happen. What could be done then? Maybe when martial law was declared, this was the opportunity for us to get things done.

KATAYAMA: Let me clarify why I am asking about that. There is a hypothesis strongly supported by political scientists and political economists about the necessity of martial law, or an authoritarian regime, which prevailed in East Asia to isolate political leadership from the interventions of Congress, politicians... [This] allowed them to go ahead with long-term programs and, to some extent, in some countries like South Korea or Thailand or Indonesia, they succeeded in achieving remarkable economic development...

ALBA: With what, with a strong sense of government?

KATAYAMA: With a strong sense of leadership and a suspended Congress. It is centralized, and economic policies are implemented by technocrats. Do you believe in that?

ALBA: Yes. A hundred percent! You cannot pursue development programs and objectives under conditions of instability. That is why China would always say that it wants stability first before economic progress can take place. Can you imagine if China loosened a bit and allowed protests all over the place? Do you think that they would be progressive? I think Vietnam is looking at that model, not letting go of its strong central government while pursuing [economic goals]. In the Philippines, we have a freewheeling Western-style democracy that is hurting initiatives.... You cannot get the budget done without debates. One thing, initially, that is beneficial is the controlled democratized corruption. I am not saying that corruption was eliminated. Eventually, the primary charge against Marcos was corruption, but these projects were taking place much more efficiently .... I go for the fact that—I guess this is a technocratic perspective—under conditions of instability, it is extremely difficult to implement programs and projects. The political debates that were happening were destructive in a way because priorities had since changed too often; popular political options were given priority and not real priorities were being implemented. There are options of course for dictatorship. I would not call it martial law but I'd rather refer to them as a strong central government, the Lee Kuan Yew type of thing. I go for that. Lee Kuan Yew was a dictator, but he was able to accelerate development for Singapore. To me, that would be a good model, at least for developing economies that in general have been unstable.

KATAYAMA: When Gerardo Sicat or even Alejandro Melchor invited you, did they mention the kind of atmosphere or the political situation during that time?

ALBA: I knew martial law had taken place.

KATAYAMA: No, like, “Manny, we are now in control and we can now implement projects.”

TADEM: Did they entice you to join?

KATAYAMA: I had first-hand knowledge already because of the education project and the only way I could see how this project could get implemented was under that setup. So the invitation by [Alejandro] Melchor was like, “Manny you can continue your work in education; this is your opportunity to oversee what you have started.” Then [Gerardo] Sicat of course encouraged me by saying that... new development programs would have to be implemented, which we did not have before. So he suggested that I join him in formulating these projects. I thought this was an opportunity. And could martial law be expediting those things? Well yes, the first decade maybe, since in the second decade there were rallies and these started to [tilt] the situation. The first ten years of the martial law regime were, I thought, very productive. In that context, I knew the opportunity for more expeditious projects was there. I really did not have any hesitation [about] wanting to come back under that kind of situation.

KATAYAMA: When you were introduced to Mr. [Ferdinand] Marcos for the first time, what kind of impression did you have about him? What kind of conversation did you have?

ALBA: We did not have that long conversation, really, but I had some images of him beforehand. He was a very bright, intelligent person. He spoke very deliberately. He was not a tempestuous kind of person. In a sense, he was a democrat. Paradoxically, it was martial law but he gave everyone the chance to talk. The first time I met him I presented the education plan and later, when I became the deputy director-general of NEDA (National Economic and Development Authority), I had the opportunity to talk to him again in terms of how the development planning that was being authored by NEDA should proceed. I think he

knew. This guy knew a lot. He could lecture and he was very well read; he was a speed reader. He read about little less than two thousand words per minute. The average person could only read three hundred words per minute.

KATAYAMA: How did you know that?

ALBA: He told us. He was a genuine intellectual. You could [discuss] any subject matter with him. He also claimed that he was very lawful: “if there was a law, I would follow that.” Now, it was another matter what kind of law, so maybe that was where you could raise the issue with him. He passed laws that may not be [...] but once it was already a law... like for example, the Budget Law—he never violated that. That was why people ask, how did he have money? Not through the budget or treasury. If the Marcos people—and I would say Marcos people because it included not only the president... there were many ways to amass a billion. He could never become a billionaire by raiding the treasury. He had been’s guarded. I would, for my part, question him on this. He could not bypass the Parliament. In other words, if there was amassing of finance[s], it could not have been [by raiding] the treasury since he was guarded by all laws protecting the funds of the national treasury. One way you could do that was [through] the differential in oil pricing and sugar pricing... that was how you would make money.

KATAYAMA: I am particularly interested in his capacity: did he understand whatever you made a briefing of?

ALBA: Marcos? He was probably ahead. He was just so bright.

KATAYAMA: So he understood everything?

ALBA: Yes. He could talk about education better than we did. The books he authored, he wrote those, of course with some research backing of O.D. Corpuz or Jun [Serafin] Quiason, those books on the notes to the New Society. He was very well informed. You know that he was the best extemporaneous speaker I could think of. He delivered speeches in international conferences; well I do not think he memorized them, he delivered speeches [before] international conferences and gatherings before ministers impromptu.

KATAYAMA: I have strong impression about his speech [prowess], which was shown in a UN (United Nations) general assembly. I think he was given [the text]; [he looked at it] and after few minutes, he closed it. There was no prompter at that time. It was very impressive.

ALBA: The words just came [to] him, [a] very well-read guy. You should have seen his library... I would love to have some of his books. I do not know what happened to the Malacañang library... where all the documents are. You may want to investigate it. I went back there several times to ask about those documents there.

KATAYAMA: What was his management style? He listened to all the Cabinet members?

ALBA: Yes, but if he got impatient because of this *bobo* [stupid] guy—and I know several stupid guys in the Cabinet—he would just mow them down. “You are so stupid!” He would say that. When he was presented with the draft of an executive order or PD, he would scribble very quickly, “This cannot be”, and then he would scribble the correct wordings.

TADEM: He was not a micro manager?

ALBA: No... but he was talented and competent enough to do a micro critique.

KATAYAMA: How about his relationship with O.D. Corpuz?

ALBA: They have mutual respect. He listened to O.D. [Corpuz] who just had good words for the President, and if you listened to President Marcos, O.D. was simply one of his valuable advisers. O.D., by the way, is the official biographer of the President. No, let me change that: he is the official historian of the President. I think he is the one expected to write the history of [Marcos]. He has done that already, *The Roots of the Filipino Nation*? Have you read the two volumes? That stopped in the 1960s. He has to write the next one. I do not know whether he is still writing despite his conditions...

TADEM: Sir, who had the same caliber as O.D. Corpuz in the Cabinet? Was there anyone else that Marcos looked up to?

ALBA: You cannot compare them in terms of individual profile, skills, or talents because O.D. [Corpuz] is a political scientist. He is different from Cesar Virata. Cesar Virata is very insightful [but he] may not be as eloquent as Corpuz in exposition. Blas Ople was [a] very eloquent person; he was extremely bright, as bright as Marcos. He was also respected by President Marcos. You might say they had a mutual admiration group. Blas Ople respected O.D. O.D. respected Blas Ople, and so on. This kind of thing, they all have respect for intellectuals.

KATAYAMA: Do you think Mr. Marcos had very clear [preferences] regarding his Cabinet members or his men? For instance, did he prefer middle class or upper class?

ALBA: I did not detect that. His preference was for what you [might] call intellectual, [he valued] even emotional intelligence.

KATAYAMA: But eventually, you are not from upper class, and also what is more important...

ALBA: He never looked at that. He never asked me what my social background was.

KATAYAMA: He was a self-made man? This is my hypothesis about him, like Blas Ople.

ALBA: Well, I do not know. I cannot really say that he had that kind of preferential criteria or whether social class was relevant in his choices...Name them; they were all intellectually bright. They were either professors or topnotchers. Bobby [Roberto] Ongpin was head of SGV. [Tomas] Fonacier was my deputy, BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue) Commissioner after awhile. Tony [J. Antonio] Aguenza was Undersecretary of DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources). Jun [Jose] Lido Jr. was a lawyer. He was not essentially known... [but] bright enough to know the nature of the agency, DENR. You have to deal with local politics to some extent. What else? Energy? [Geronimo] Velasco was a very bright fellow. If you listened to Velasco's exposé on energy, he was very convincing. Jolly [Jose Conrado] Benitez has a PhD in education. He was very bright in [a] sense. Armand Fabella headed the Presidential Commission, was deputy director-general of PIA (Program Implementation Agency) under Ting [Sixto] Roxas and eventually also became head. Alex [Alejandro] Melchor was bright also.

KATAYAMA: So Marcos never felt uncomfortable working with the best and the brightest? He had enough confidence in commanding his Cabinet members?

ALBA: Very comfortable, he thrived on it and loved it. He would engage us in intellectual exchange from time to time.

KATAYAMA: Did you sense if there was any particular topic that he did not like, for example, in public or in Cabinet meeting?

ALBA: Of course, he was sensitive to criticisms when he declared the martial law.

KATAYAMA: How and when did you sense that?

ALBA: How did I sense that? Because at the latter half, I guess, of the martial law regime, the populist reactions [against it] started to get stronger, [and] he grew concerned about it. I suppose martial law survived because of the support of the military. I was not sure if he was comfortable entrusting this to the military; and he was right, the head of the military went against him, his own cousin, President [Fidel] Ramos, his own trusted person; and Johnny [Juan Ponce] Enrile headed the [coup d'état ]; he was well loved by President Marcos. I had some stories during the declaration of martial law. I mean of [its] last few days.

TADEM: What went wrong for you during that time?

ALBA: I guess there was probable corruption, not necessarily by the president, but what really strongly got into the extreme opposition were the [violations of] human rights and civil liberties. To us, we did not feel that we were deprived by civil liberties, because our own areas of concerns did not require that our pronouncements be controlled. The press, the politicians, and the Church were the ones [deprived]. But I would say that the grassroots were not ... Marcos had good support from local leaders, pretty much like Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand. If they would have another election, I guess he would win [with support from the grassroots].

TADEM: How about the cronies?

ALBA: Well, the best example I can tell you here is Danding [Eduardo] Conjuanco Jr.. He was often described as the crony of cronies, but Danding said and I agreed with the guy, if I were a crony, I wish I had one hundred of me. Why? All he did was to implement programs and projects. In a sense, he could not be said as having grown rich in these projects. Who were the cronies?

TADEM: Bobby [Roberto] Benedicto?

ALBA: President Marcos had also asked old friends and classmates to join him. Bobby [Roberto Benedicto] was one of his classmates in the College of Law in U.P. The two chief justices were his classmates, Chief Justice Felix Makasiar and [Chief Justice Ramon] Aquino. They were solid men of integrity...

KATAYAMA: I am very much interested in Alejandro Melchor. Can you describe his personality?

ALBA: I am afraid I do not really know him. He was a military man, very religious, with a nice wife. He had a very strong technocratic posture. He described things in a very technical or stiff, not aristocratic, manner. Personally I found it difficult to do chit-chat with him or something like that. Maybe we had not had many [social] occasions with him, unlike O.D. [Corpuz] with whom we had drinking sessions or even [Blas] Ople. Ople drank a lot so when he was drinking, I was with him.

TADEM: How about PM [Cesar] Virata?

ALBA: Yes, he was my professor. In short, we had [known each other] before [we had] Cabinet relations. We already had some knowledge about each other. As I said, Gerry [Sicat], Jimmy [Laya], and I were already very close so in many respects we could get many things done...

KATAYAMA: The reason I was asking about Alex Melchor and also Rafael Salas is because there were some speculations ... they lost the confidence of Marcos. For example, Marcos

was said to have thought of Melchor as a threat because Melchor had been building his own part in the military. What do you think of these?

ALBA: I did not have that impression. I thought of [Alejandro] Melchor as a kind of loyalist to President Marcos. It was Paeng Salas who probably appeared to present some kind of political threat because he was talented and he also had the personality to be a “presidentiable”. So maybe President Marcos entertained [the notion] that Paeng could also aspire for the [presidency]. That was a distant thing, but Salas was also supportive of Marcos and he was not questioning martial law. But Melchor, I never detected that he was... I do not think that the military was particularly strongly behind Melchor; more behind Fidel Ramos or maybe Enrile.

TADEM: Did you know [Rafael] Salas from before?

ALBA: No, but I know that he was also not that well off but was from the middle class. His family was in Iloilo. I guess he was the grandson or son of one of the well-known revolutionaries, Colonel Salas of Iloilo, Paeng Doromal Salas. He was a Doromal... the cousin of Tintin Doromal. “Drilon, Defensor...” notice the beginning of their names, letter “D.” In Iloilo, we have this. During the Spanish rule [the citizens had to be identified according to their hometowns]... like if you came from Dumanga, then your surname started with the letter D. My middle name is Solo, my mother’s name, coming from **Saraca [check]**. Jaranilla, Jalbuena these are from Jaro.... Lagunza from Lambunao... Pedrosa, Postero from Putotan... these kinds of things... so Defensor, Drilon, Doromal—they are all from Dumagas.

<Dr. Tadem asks about whether Dr. Alba is already leaving. They have some small talk about other interviews with the technocrats.>

ALBA: I can probably share with you some insights, for example, on how sick Marcos was. He was going through this therapy... Could it be that the decision making of this guy had been affected by how bad his kidney problem was? And this rumor that Bong-bong (Ferdinand Marcos Jr.) donated one of kidneys to him, I think it was true.

KATAYAMA: When did you notice his health problem?

ALBA: It was all over. Everybody talked about it. He had a private clinic for his [sickness]. He puffed out every time he had his dialysis. It was very painful. One time [he] called me for a private [meeting with him]. I asked, “Sir, how are you?” and I shook his hand. He squirmed in pain. I did not realize it that was painful.

KATAYAMA: Which year was that? 1981?

ALBA: I guess 1984, toward the latter period when he became really sick. You know I brought [some things] to show you some of the things I did.

<Dr. Alba shows the team his works and papers.>

ALBA: I directed the formulation of the First Five-Year and Ten-Year and Long-term Development Plan of the country and the eleven or twelve regional plans of the country, the first ever. I was the one who directed that. I just want to show you this. This regional plan, you know this was one thing that Marcos did—the regionalization of the country.

KATAYAMA: Can we photocopy this?

ALBA: You should also see the Educational Plan also. I will bring it next time.

< End of interview >