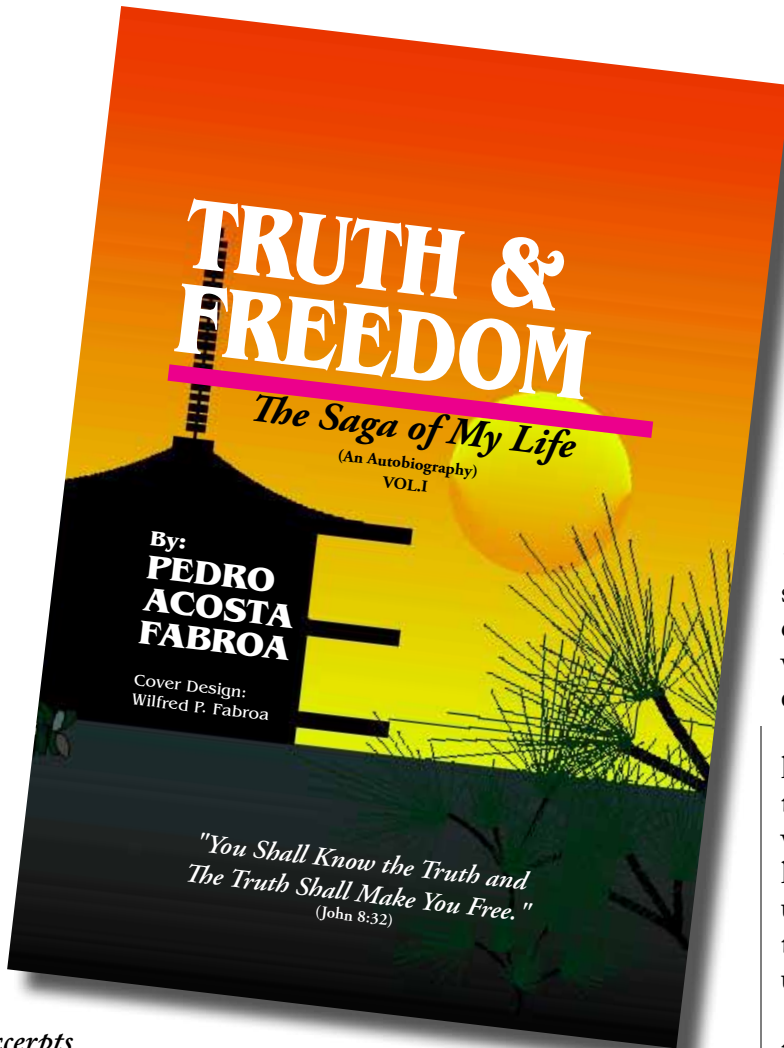




BREAD & BUTTER

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*Excerpts
from the autobiography
"SAGA OF MY LIFE - Chapter 26 —
Bread and Butter,
by Pedro A. Fabroa*

My wife and I were very happy to have children who were lucky to have reached this promised land, where literally milk and honey were found everywhere. Through Fred, his wife Daisy, and Bing, we were fortunate to taste and experience for the first time such an affluent livelihood, or so it seemed to us then.

After a week from our arrival, Wilson and Mel found their first jobs as waiters or busboys in restaurants and hotels in downtown Toronto. Their mother took care of Hy, while I honed my typing speed to prepare for job placement which I was determined to land. Fred and Daisy had two small sons, Jojo and Eric, with whom Hy played as they were still preschoolers. However, Daisy returned her two boys to

their baby-sitter across the street, so Hy was left alone to sometimes play with Benz, who was waiting for the next semester to go to school. We didn't know then, as nobody informed us, that she could've registered at once so that there was no gap in her schooling.

In coming to Canada, it has never been our intention or purpose to take life easy, to reside with and be dependent on our son, Fred and his wife Daisy, although in their sponsorship they undertook to take care of us within ten years as required by immigration policies. We came here filled with guts and strong determination to work and earn our own upkeep and also to help our less fortunate children and relatives, who were left back home without any chance of coming abroad. Were it not for the thoughtfulness and kindness of Fred and his wife Daisy in sponsoring us to Canada, and the loving support of Bing in coming here, we would still be languishing in dire poverty way back home, without any hope and prospect of being extricated from the quagmire of hunger and want.

For their unselfish and sterling qualities, our gratitude knows no bounds and soars to high heaven, praying to God that He will recompense, what we can never ever do even with our lives, the love and benevolence of our son Fred and his wife Daisy, and our loving daughter Bing, they imparted upon us, their poor parents and their siblings, which were the key to the gateway of a more decent livelihood for all of us in the family. May God bless you all!

My wife told Wilson and Mel to save their pay, which they did, and after two and a half months temporary stay in Fred's house, for which we were indebted with much gratitude, we moved to a two-bedroom apartment at 105 Westlodge Avenue, Lansdowne, on March 1, 1980.

It was the same day, too, that I finally found work as a typist in the Medical Division of the Workmen's (later Workers') Compensation Board at Yonge and Bloor, after undergoing several typing and clerical examinations in various offices, which I passed. However, I failed in the interviews for lack of Canadian job experience, not being a Canadian citizen or a British subject, which were priority qualifications for employment.

How could an immigrant acquire such qualifications when he/she has just arrived in Canada? I feel that such requirement, as job experience, required of an immigrant who has just landed, is discriminatory and superfluous in nature to newly landed immigrants like us, because the time element was beyond our disposition and control. The same should be eliminated from the provisions of the labour law, being unconstitutional and against human rights.

In one of such interviews, a well-meaning interviewer gave me a piece of his mind when in answer to his question, I told him that the occupation of my wife was a mere housekeeper. He retorted at once, "Housekeeping is one of the noblest occupation in the world!" I was humbled by that man's enlightening remark and went home with an apologetic heart. I told this incident to my wife and I just discerned in her beaming face that at last she triumphed over this proud husband of hers, who had always taken her for granted.

(In sequel: Now that I'm a retiree, I fully understand why the interviewer defended the position of housekeeper that I took for granted. I'm now relegated to such an occupation and the hardship that I've undergone for the last couple of years humbled my mind to the extent that it opened my understanding that no job, whatever it may be as long as it's a decent one, should be belittled, looked down upon, or taken for granted. I sincerely apologize with all my heart to my loving wife, with the fervent hope of forgiving my shortcoming and shortsightedness.)

This incident may have triggered the desire of my wife to earn her own money because not long after that, she began working as a seamstress in the Divine Knit, a sweater-knitting factory at a walking distance from our apartment at Westlodge. After working there for five years and we were already residing at Cassandra Blvd., her workplace was too far west, so she applied and was accepted as seamstress in Westin Hotel, now Hilton Toronto, where she hope to retire at 65, God willing. (God granted it and she retired at age 67 in Dec. 1995).

When she began working, my wife was at her half-a-century mark already, but her facial features belie her age by more than a decade, most people say. Men were still attracted by her beauty and one early Sunday, while she and Hy were walking on the sidewalk on their way to church, a guy was slowly following them in his car along a deserted street. Sensing that he had an ulterior motive to them, my wife and Hy cut through a lot to the other street but again the guy turned at the corner and followed them. He came very close and this time he was insinuating something lewd with hand signs to my wife.

She and the child hastened their pace but they couldn't out-distance the pursuing car. In her desperation due to imminent danger, my wife shed all embarrassment and shamefulness and knocked at the door of the nearest house, to ask for help and refuge. Luckily, the owner was a co-Filipina, who, upon knowing my wife's problem, gladly admitted her and her child into the house. The sex pervert immediately left the scene and after a few minutes of mutual introductory conversation with her hostess, my wife and Hy came home, accompanied by their Filipina protectress.

For ten months I worked in the Board and perhaps my work was satisfactory because one day I was slated for permanent employment. However, when it became known

that I was not a Canadian citizen nor a British subject, my would-be promotion was withdrawn, and worse, I was given a week's notice of separation.

I resented such a vulgar way of being racially discriminated against and some well-meaning friends suggested for me to assert my rights in the Human Rights Commission. However, prudence took the better part of valour and I rested my case in the justice and mercy of the Almighty, upon whom I had always depended my fate and that of my family.

I immediately looked for another job in the classified ads, and a senior typist was wanted by an employment agency at 100 University Avenue in downtown Toronto. I went to apply post-haste. It was a Friday, December 4, 1980 and after I took the speed and accuracy tests in typing, I was told to wait for a call in the afternoon of that same day.

That afternoon, Wilson and his fiancée Ana Maria Valdez, who hailed from San Mateo, Rizal, a stewardess of Saudi Airline, who came to visit Wilson in our place, were getting married before a judge in the old city hall in Toronto. After a simple reception in a Chinese restaurant, we went home at Westlodge. The phone was ringing and it was the call I was expecting from the employment agency. I was told to report next morning to McLeod, Young and Weir, Inc. at York and Wellington Streets, just across University Avenue.

That was a Saturday and a great surprise was awaiting me! I was told to sit before a strange looking machine - a combination typewriter and TV screen. I was told to be a computer data entry operator, which at that time I had no inkling what it was all about - it was all Greek to me!

I was completely taken unaware and unprepared to see, much less use, such a machine unknown to me and I honestly confessed it to the interviewing officer, Mr. Vic Bunker. He, however, told me that I had the speed and accuracy in typing they needed and he'll train me to be a good data entry operator. Therefore, without much ado, I calmed down, rolled up my sleeves and submitted myself to his, rather, the machine's, instructions and commands.

The whole day I was introduced into the world of computers, their functions and operations. Their commands must be explicitly and definitely obeyed and performed, otherwise it will not follow your instructions, like an intractable and hard-headed mule. After a week of continuous and intense training, dummy runs of trial and error method, I was assigned in the retail sales department.

There were five young girls as my co-operators and we were "On the Air" sending electronic information of stocks, bonds and options transactions to various stock markets or Stock Exchanges in different cities in the world, such as in London, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Zurich, Sydney, and all major financial cities across North America, including New York and Montreal, as well as Toronto.

That was my position and function for ten long years with McLeod, Young and Weir, Inc., later changed to

ScotiaMcLeod, Inc., when the company was merged with Scotia Banking Corp. I worked there with some of the loveliest American and Canadian girls I've ever had the fortune of knowing - tall and slender Ivy Greene (a chain smoker, though), with blond hair and typing speed like lightning; petite "a la Farah Fawcett" Jane Mahoney, with an encyclopedic memory of thousands of stock names and symbols, from whom I frequently referred to; Diana Miotto, petite Italian girl, the back-up operator of Ivy, who later became a stock broker herself. Lovely Lianne (Liana) Vieira, a young Portuguese girl with platinum hair and a big warm dimpled smile always decorating her moon-shaped face, as my back-up and who also became an executive assistant.

(In sequel: Among these girls I worked with, Ivy Greene and Lianne Vieira remained my close friends even after I retired from my job, and we use to communicate with each other. Ivy is still single and bought a house of her own with her widowed mother.

Lianne got married with her fiance Douglas Clark, on July 17, 1993. She sent an invitation to my wife and me, but coincidentally we were first invited by my cousin Lourdes Balido to her silver wedding anniversary with her husband Robert Tan. After three years of her marriage, Lianne had her firstborn child, again invited us to the baptismal party, which we were unable to attend - again - as I just had my aneurysmectomy on May 16, 1996).

Lest I forget, Lena Madiera, another Italian girl, whose jet-black, long, undulating hair I haven't discovered whether or not it was dyed, as our girl Friday. Through these decent, lovely, white-complexioned, light-hearted and exuberant girls, who became my friends, specially Lianne and Ivy, I came to know first-hand the real Caucasians, whose customs and culture are diametrically different from what were seen and depicted as immoral and easy-going in the movie screens of Hollywood.

The retail sales department where I worked as data entry operator was engaged in the buying and selling of stocks, options, bonds, and every kind of financial transactions. My job was to enter into the computer system whatever the investment executive (stock broker) writes in his/her order slip, whether it was to buy or sell client/s shares in company holdings on a given price at a given time. Speed and accuracy in entering the data into the terminal and sending it electronically to the central computer system of the Stock Exchange concerned, wherever it may be located in the world, determine the success or failure, profit or loss, of the transaction. If the data were entered on time, the deal may be profitable, if not, maybe a loss for the client, but not the broker who always has a commission for his service, either from the company or his client or both.

This explains why the computer operator imperatively be mentally sound, emotionally calm and physically healthy at all times, always ready and prepared to act immediately as soon as the order slip was handed to him for transmission. His action produces either love or hate of the stock broker,

success or failure of the transaction, and the source of his promotion or outright dismissal from the job.

I have successfully gone through this gauntlet of nightmarish electronic jungle for ten long and tedious years, with the mercy and help of Almighty God, who inculcated in my mind long ago, "God only help those who help themselves."

During summer time, from June to September, there were musical concerts during lunch time three times a week in the TD Centre plaza, a wide grassy, manicured lawn in the midst of skyscrapers in downtown Toronto where I worked. Various musical organizations contribute their parts in the program for public entertainment, particularly the thousands of employees who worked in different business establishments in the surrounding area.

I usually brought my "baon" in a brief case. I thought at first, that everyone carrying such a symbol of business status was a business entrepreneur, but when I had mine, then the record was set straight in my mind. Every lunch time, I left the office with my "portfolio" and went to a secluded corner in the plaza to quietly refuel my empty stomach. My lunch was relatively simple, just a portion of my wife's baon - chased by a bottle of orange juice or just plain H2O when I was short of cash, which was often the case.

After lunch, I sat or laid down on the soft grass among hundreds of my co-workers and basked under the rays of the noon day sun, which was supposed to enhance healthy skin, but later medical research found to be a cancerous, health hazzard. I listened to concert music of the orchestra playing on the stage under the 64-storey TD Bank Centre.

On alternating days when no concert was held, I just laid down on a bench or on the grass and looked up at the towering buildings, rising to dizzying heights; or direct my sight to the amazing CN Tower, the tallest man-made free-standing steel and concrete structure in the world where a revolving restaurant, "Top of Toronto" was housed, on top of which was located a telecommunications centre. Beside it was recently built the "Skydome," a domed athletic gymnasium, the first of its kind in the world. It's roof could be completely rolled back or opened within twenty minutes by electric and mechanical machines. There's a giant TV screen, three stories high, where the games inside the dome are projected.

The Royal Bank building which was literally walled with gold that glitters and shimmers in the morning and afternoon sunlight; and the Montreal Bank and nearby was the Scotia Plaza building, where I worked during the last two years of my employment with ScotiaMcLeod. Sometimes I photographed this wonderland and sent the prints home for our loved ones to see and trigger their imagination of where and how I was spending my leisure time. Often I wondered how in the world did I get to be in this strange place, among these strange people, since it seemed like only yesterday that I was in my native land with my native people.

This amazing and wonderful environment I was surrounded with for more than a decade, really show the mysterious ways God manifests His greatness and power for His own glory, praise and honour. Were it not for His kindness, mercy and benevolence, I would still be languishing in the confines of a miserable lifestyle, beset with hunger and want in my native land.

Modesty aside, during the ten years I worked in this company, I was cited three times for exceptional service, which occasions were published in the company's newsletter, "Intercom." However, on February 28, 1991, I was retired from my job at age 67, and the company gave me a gratuity lump sum, a monthly pension, and my CPP (Canadian Pension Plan).

On Christmas 1984, I composed and dedicated a poem (gave as a Christmas card) to all my co-workers, quoted thus:

A CHRISTMAS WISH AND PRAYER

1. May the joy of Christmas
And the wonders of the New Year
Be with you and your love ones
Today, tomorrow, and forever.
2. But X'mas isn't so joyful,
And New Year not so wonderful,
If we share not our love and concern,
With our less fortunate brethren.
3. Our brother is he who's in want
Of food or spiritual guidance;
Help him keep body and soul together,
Let's be our brother's keeper.

4. A cup of coffee, a piece of cake,
Do wonders to an empty stomach;
A warm handshake and sweet smiles,
Lift the soul to heaven's heights.

5. That's what X'mas is all about,
Love God and do good to mankind,
Then hap'ness is ours, no doubt,
As promised by Jesus Christ.

6. This is my wish and prayer,
For my friends and co-workers:
May you and yours be happy always,
God bless you all on these Holy Days.

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More Excerpts to come.....

To All Alumni Reunion Attendees,

It is just 5 months and some odd days to reunion weekend and we encourage you to start preparing your solo or group presentation for the Friday Night Reception Shindig. It's your option as to what you will present, be it karaoke singing, line dance, etc. There will be prizes up for grab so prepare yourselves to a fun-filled reunion weekend.

Register Now while you have more lead time. Don't wait for the last minute to register.

Thank you and we look forward to meeting you all in July.

The Reunion Planning Committee