

Whenever my mother spoke of her nine-year-old self, I was transported from our home in Alaska to the Philippine Village Hotel and Casino, where she'd stand outside shouting "Sigarilyo! Boss sigarilyo!" *Cigarettes! Boss cigarettes!* Other times, she'd approach drivers in the parking lot asking "Carwash? Do you want carwash? 20 pesos for carwash." She and her siblings would work on the streets of Manila everyday after school, hustling so that they could have something to eat the next morning.

My father's recollections, on the other hand, took me to the mountains of Olliao, Namatucan, covered in forests of coconut, mango, banana, and bamboo. He and his family tended the land in order to feed themselves since the market was quite far away. They were so isolated that he and his siblings would walk barefoot through vast jungles, rocky terrain, and muddy paths because they couldn't afford to wear out their slippers as they walked to school.

Rather than walking miles through the jungle, I take the bus to school. Rather than working on the streets of a city, I've worked in a McDonald's drive-thru. Rather than wondering where my next meal will come from, I always have breakfast: white rice, Vienna sausage, and soy sauce. Although we aren't wealthy, I am grateful to my parents for providing me with a life of comforts they couldn't afford as children. Their stories gave me a passion for serving others by providing them with comforts and resources.

This is precisely why I joined a club called Rotary Interact. From promoting peace and fighting disease to supporting education and growing local economies, Rotary Interact is a service organization that participates in a number of humanitarian initiatives around the world. One particular service project that left a lasting impact on me was our collaboration with a non-governmental organization called Tanzanian Organization Facilitating Community Development Projects (TAFCOM). Based in Tanzania, Africa, TAFCOM primarily focuses on poverty alleviation, human rights, and sustainability. TAFCOM organized a group of tailors to produce various styles of cloth designed with traditional Tanzanian patterns and Rotary Interact imported these products for fundraising. In only a year, the proceeds made it possible to construct two new buildings for education and healthcare for the surrounding communities in Tanzania.

More recently, while searching for organizations that combine my passions for service and engineering, I discovered another humanitarian non-governmental organization called Bridges to Prosperity (B2P). B2P's main mission is to solve poverty exacerbated by rural isolation by constructing bridges in third-world countries. According to a recent study conducted by researchers at the University of Notre Dame, these bridges resulted in a 75% increase in farm profits, 30% increase in labor market income, 18% increase in health care treatment, and a 12% increase in student enrollment. Programs like B2P give me hope and direction as I seek to use engineering to improve the quality of life for people who are just like my parents and relatives.

In a world where access could mean life or death, I want to build bridges that can withstand typhoons and hurricanes so that people can safely get to hospitals and schools in the aftermath. I want to create effective rainwater catchment systems so that families don't contract illnesses from contaminated water. I want to increase efficiency for farmers who spend all day working on the fields with their sickles in hand, harvesting food to eat so that they actually have time to spend with their loved ones. I want to increase awareness so that these communities are no longer forgotten in such a

corporate world. I want to help because the effects of poor accessibility are realities that I've witnessed. After all, engineering is most fulfilling when it is done in service to humanity.