

Jeepney Ride:
A Tribute to Reynaldo Reyes
on the occasion of his retirement
from 50 years of teaching
at Towson University

by Sara Davis Buechner
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Fifty years, a full half-century, a large and formidable number. If I think backwards 50 years, I can still see and feel freshly in memory, the black-and-white world of a Baltimore long vanished. When I say black-and-white, it's with a feeling for the righteous suburban order and vision of that era -- when the newest technology around consisted of color television sets, which my family could not afford. I grew up in the northwestern suburbs of Baltimore, where indeed the daily life around me seemed to mirror the television images of Beaver Cleaver and his CBS sitcom world. It was a tidy and socially proscribed time.

It was my mother who saw and heard things in richer shades, and thanks to her, the interior walls of our bland little house were adorned with copies of impressionist paintings; provocative books and magazines filled our living room; and music -- on the radio, always set to one of the classical channels, or on the baby grand in our living room -- floated through the house. That piano was my own alluring Pandora's Box, and as I could not be kept away from it, a teacher was brought to me, as young as age three. She was a Saint with enormous patience, young Miss Veronika Wolf. When her patience grew thin, and the obligations of her Doctoral studies grew heavy, she took me to play for her own piano teacher, Reynaldo Reyes. The man who became my third parent first heard me in his apartment on Saint Paul Street, when I was five years old. The first piece I played for him was John Schaum's arrangement of the theme from Haydn's "Surprise" Symphony. I always loved the surprise *sforzando* chord in the middle of that one, and sometimes jumped from the piano bench when I hit it. I believe Reynaldo liked that, for I saw him leap from the piano bench himself in concert, many times. To this day, I tell everyone that Reynaldo Reyes is the most exciting and athletic pianist alive.