

If your nose runs and your feet smell, you are built upside down. -

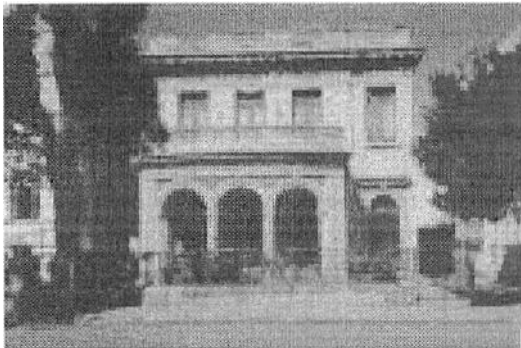
Phos (mascot of MIT's humor magazine VooDoo).

BIOGRAPHY OF EDUARDO L. ELIZONDO

This "literary work" is intended to preserve some of the amusing happenings of my life.

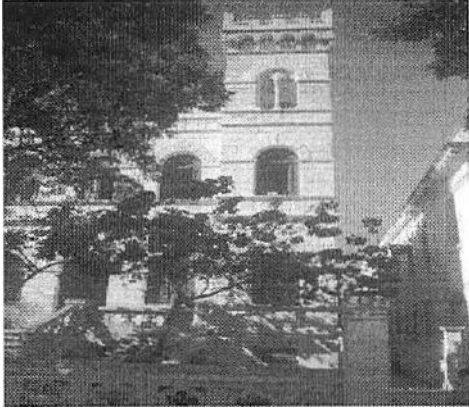
CALLE 17

I grew up in the residential neighborhood of Vedado in Habana Cuba. We lived on the 2nd floor of a private home on 17th Street. In our floor lived my two aunts, Sara & Luisa Elizondo, my uncle Luis Elizondo with his wife Manuelita Garcia and 3 children Grace, Marie & Luis, and my Father and Mother, Gonzalo Elizondo and Anita Silva. I shared a room with my oldest cousin Grace. We also had a cook and servant who lived in the back of the house and on top of the neighbors garage.



Front of the house (photographed in 2002 by a visiting friend)

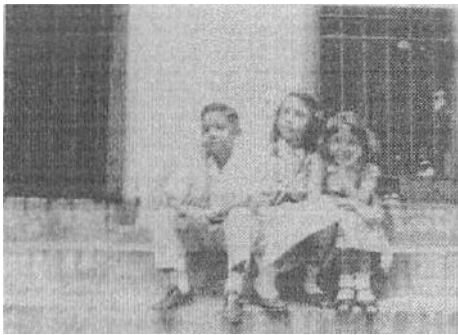
The ground floor neighbors, owners of the property, were two elderly ladies who led a quiet life. They did not own a car, so they made both garages available to our family. Next door, on the West side of the house was a very picturesque residence in the shape of a castle which was owned by Paco Arencibia.



Paco Arencibia's Castle

On the East side, at the corner of J street, was a house originally owned by Ramon Grau San Martin, who was elected President of Cuba in 1944. When Grau was elected a large crowd gathered in our driveway to listen to speeches by Grau and Eddy Chibas. This caused the intervening concrete post fence to collapse. I remember putting one of our radios on our front terrace to aid the listening audience. After Grau was elected he, of course, moved to the Presidential Palace. While he was President he built a magnificent house on 5th Avenue in Miramar.

After Grau moved out, a family moved in which was originally from Santiago de Cuba. They had one daughter named Hyrbiss who became very friendly with my cousin Grace.



My cousins Luis, Grace & Marie on the back steps

CHICKENS ON THE ROOF

Perhaps as a result of World War II, there was a shortage of chickens and eggs in Havana. The suggested solution was to order a large number of baby chicks and let them grow. I remember going to the Habana airport at Rancho Boyeros and picking up an enormous box full of baby chicks. When looking in the box it was obvious that the chicks had not been given any water and some had died of thirst. When we got home, I remember using an eyedropper to feed water to the surviving chicks.

My uncle Luis, who was a dentist, had set up his workshop on top of our garage. He made a caged shelf suitable for the surviving chicks and there they were taken care of for a period of time while they grew up. Eventually, we built a large caged area in the flat roof of our house. There we collected the eggs and, occasionally, ate one of the chickens.



Roof chicken cage.

CHANGE OF ROOMMATE

Something happened (I think Grace reached puberty) so her mother decided that it was time to change roommates so children of the same sex would share each room. I was disappointed with this decision because Grace and I were only 5 months apart in age and we were able to talk about things of mutual interest. I ended up with Luis as a roommate, who was 5 years younger and not interested in the same things.

MY AUNTS

Sarah Elizondo worked for the Cuban branch of the Squibb Drug Company. She was therefore able to obtain medicines which were in short supply, such as sulfas and eventually antibiotics.

Luisa Elizondo worked for the Cuban Electric Company. One advantage from this was that the family was able to access the Cubaneleco recreational area, which originally was not very far from where we lived. I remember that they had a miniature railroad that gave rides to all of us kids.

Eventually, both aunts decided to buy a house and move to Santa Maria del Mar, a beautiful beach resort area East of Havana. This was triggered mainly by the completion of a tunnel to cross the mouth of Havana Bay. This tunnel was completed in 1957-58 in a short time by the French Societe de Grand Travaux de Marseille.

SANTA MARIA DEL MAR

COLEGIO LA LUZ

Because my birthday is in November, I was able to start Kindergarten at age 5. My father was quite opposed to religious schools, so I was matriculated in a non-religious school, the Colegio La Luz in the Vedado neighborhood. This school had been founded originally in the city of Matanzas by educators Ariorga and Eduardo Meireles Bito. My father had attended this school until 1915.

I consider the education I received in La Luz as the basis of everything that followed in my life. I remember the arithmetic and science of Dr. Calderon. I have always found useful the definitions of the Latin and Greek prefixes and suffixes of Dr. Russinyol, which, according to my father, were a reasonable alternative to the study of those languages. One of the most useful subjects was the afternoon session, entirely in English, which helped enormously when I came to the US to study High School. In the afternoon there was a large succession of professors teaching English, Palmer Calligraphy, Music, etc. I was a few years from completing my primary education at La Luz when the school was sold to Gil Beltran. One of Beltran's first actions was to superimpose his name on the school emblem. This strongly irritated my mother who decided to use the former emblem in all my school shirts.

I used to go to school riding one of the buses driven by a chauffeur named Pancho. She asked one of the older students, Olga Pando, to look after me.

BOY SCOUTS

While I was attending La Luz, I joined the local Boy Scout troop. One problem was that the official US Boy Scout uniform had short pants, indicative in our society of not having passed puberty. One of the Troop leaders got special permission from Boy Scouts Headquarters in the US to change the official uniform in Cuba to long pants.

VFMA

Somebody in the family suggested I be sent to high school in the US to become fluent in English. There was discussion with my uncle Juan Silva who recommended that I be sent to a school in the Northern half of the US. The final recommendation was to send me to a military school so that I would be "fully taken care of". The decision was to send me to Summer Camp in Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne, PA to see if I would like the school. Summer Camp, of course, was an entertaining experience led by a Native American Chief. My mother took a room in a private home in Wayne and she would walk up to the school and peer through the fence at what I was doing (visitors were not allowed during the week). When Summer Camp was over, she returned to Cuba.

In September I started my Plebe year. First thing I remember was undergoing a crew cut which left me almost no hair. They taught me to march, make my bed, wash and fold my laundry, all under strict regulations.

During my years at VF I was assigned one or more roommates. Among them I had Calvin Beebe (NJ) and P. Ripepi. Later I was able to choose Carlos Arazoza (son of a Cuban Senator), and Jose Gonzalez Artigas Diaz (Ecuador), whose brother had been accepted as a cadet at West Point.

Several things I remember well:

- 1) I was chosen (I never found out by whom) to attend several classical concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra. This got me intensely interested in classical music.**
- 2) At the library I was loaned a book "Adventures in Time and Space", By Healy & McComas. This got me permanently hooked on science fiction stories.**
- 3) One of my fellow students Harry "Oogie" Krause, enlisted me as a member of the motion picture club. We would rent out full length films and show them in the cadet theater. As part of our "duties" we would also prepare the PA system for use during home school football games.**
- 4) In 1950 we were allowed to watch on TV the visit of Winston Churchill to the "Mid Century Convocation" hosted by MIT. In it I was very surprised when the MIT host told Churchill that MIT did not confer honorary degrees but that they would present him a document declaring him a "friend of MIT". At the time, Churchill was a "god" in our eyes. As a result of this action I decided to apply to MIT, in addition to the other schools I had applied to.**

MIT