

Cilandak Campus Architect Returns



JIS had the pleasure of welcoming back after many years, Arthur Pope, the lead architect of the Cilandak campus in the early 1970s, and his wife, Salamah. They were accompanied on a tour of the campus by Will Woodruff, Publications Director, and were able to see how much the campus has changed, yet remained true to Arthur's original concept.

Following their visit they responded to an email interview and offered some insights as to how the Cilandak campus was developed and their thoughts on the fire that razed five modules of the campus in 1981.

How did it come to pass that you were the lead architect for the Cilandak campus and how/why was Subud influential?

The Cilandak campus, as it was in the early 1970s, won awards for its innovation and environmental design back when Jl. Fatmawati was not paved and the road to the campus could hardly support construction trucks.

I first came to Indonesia in 1962, and lived for a time in the Subud Compound at Cilandak. Subud is a world-wide spiritual movement, and its name is an abbreviation of three Sanskrit words, Susila Budhi and Dharma, meaning "right living in accordance with the will of God".

In 1967, together with a German architect, Hubert Winkler and an Australian structural engineer, Lionel van Sommers and two Indonesian partners, all Subud members, we set up a joint venture architectural and engineering practice, "International Design Consultants", known as IDC.

In 1969 when the then Joint Embassy School decided to build a high school campus, as far as I can remember, we were the only foreign architects licensed to work in Jakarta. Therefore IDC seemed a natural choice for the work. Also, Erling Week, another Subud member, and the Chairman of the school's Buildings and Grounds committee, had also been involved for a time in IDC, knew our capabilities, and recommended us to the school board. As I had worked on schools while living in the USA, I was chosen as the partner responsible for the design and supervision of the school.

What particular difficulties did you encounter in the construction phase?

For the first five modules, which were completed in 1971, we employed a South Korean joint-venture contractor, but this turned out to be very unfortunate as the Korean foremen could not speak Indonesian and therefore could barely communicate with their Indonesian workers.

For all other school contracts, from 1972-1987 we always used Indonesian Chinese contractors who, in general, worked very efficiently. For the first five modules another severe handicap was that the last part of the road from Jl. Fatmawati to the school had not then been paved, and trucks bringing materials up the hill to the school had great difficulty getting up the slippery, muddy road when it rained.

You have a theory about the fire that destroyed five modules in the Cilandak campus in 1981. Please explain.

The fire that destroyed the first five modules could have been deliberately lit. My reasons for suggesting this are as follows:

1. Anti-American feeling at that time was quite strong and a small bomb had been detonated a week or two earlier outside the foyer of the Hilton Hotel.
2. The timing of the outbreak of the fire was suspicious - on Sunday mid-day, just after the Principal, Everett Gould, had gone home for the day and the school was empty except for one or two guards.
3. We were told afterwards, the stand-by diesel fire pump did not function because water had been added to the diesel fuel in the tank.
4. The fire started in the most inflammable part of the school - the Admin office full of paper files - and spread very rapidly, suggesting it was started with some inflammable liquid or substance. From the Wisma Subud I happened to see a vertical plume of black smoke rising rapidly into the air - which seems to confirm this possibility. (If it had been an accidental or electrical fire, the smoke would I think probably have been more gradual, and more spreadout.)

However, no proof of arson was ever found, so who knows what really happened.

How do you feel the current structure of the Cilandak campus meets with your vision 35 years ago?

What is now the High School and the Middle School were completed by 1977. In the 1980s we added second floors to several of the modules. On my recent visit I was pleased to see that you have now added the Pondok Indah Elementary school, the new arts building, and the theatre, all of which have rounded out what is now a very impressive campus.

I was particularly pleased to see how the landscaping has developed, and would like to congratulate all who worked on this and the other recent developments at the school.



JIS Cilandak in the early 1970s was a much different place.

Also I was very pleased to learn that Indonesian children now make up a sizable component of the student body.

With best wishes from Salamah and myself, to you and all at JIS. May JIS prosper and continue for the rest of this century!

Sincerely,
Arthur Pope

Arthur and Salamah are now running the Hilltop Farm Conference Center, a venue for small conferences, spiritual retreats and workshops in the rolling hills surrounding Perth, Australia (www.hilltopfarm.com.au).