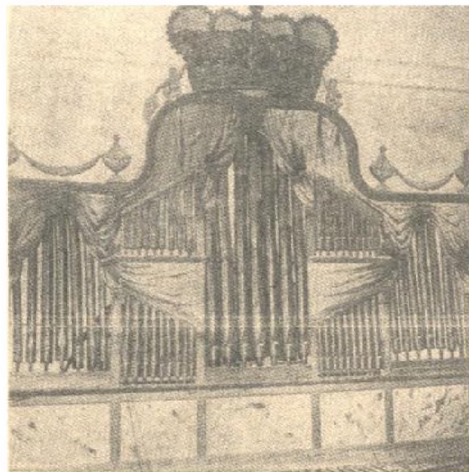


LAS



By MENER FRADES

The famous bamboo organ.

**M**ORE than two hundred years ago, which is how old it is, Las Piñas town was just a beach. Fishermen from Parañaque town used it as a starting point for their nightly fishing expeditions. The Recollects won't even consider the "sitio" a parish although it had some thousand or so inhabitants at the time. It was a poor man's village. Today Las Piñas is not only a rich town, it has become world famous because of an ingenious bamboo organ in the town's Catholic church.

Moreover, the town's over 20,000 inhabitants had during the postwar years energetically transformed this shoretown into an industrial community. It is not infrequent, for example, that one hears of Las Piñas referred to as the "jeepney town of the Philippines." There are many other more industries, of the cottage industry variety, that make it among the most "forward moving" communities in the country. Fishing is still a major industry, but the hard-working townspeople are also engaged in farming, and other allied and productive undertakings.

For a time Las Piñas had even its own townspeople worried over its future. Unscrupulous operators had taken advantage of the peaceful climate in the town for fast-buck activities that tended to destroy the moral fiber of the community. The determined drive of the people to clean their town and to direct their efforts to more productive pursuits prevented its decay and assured its continued progress. The town had seen calamities of all sorts, earthquakes, typhoons, epidemics, drought, war, prostitution, and vice. For some time, it seemed

## PIÑAS:

the town would never recover from these destructive forces.

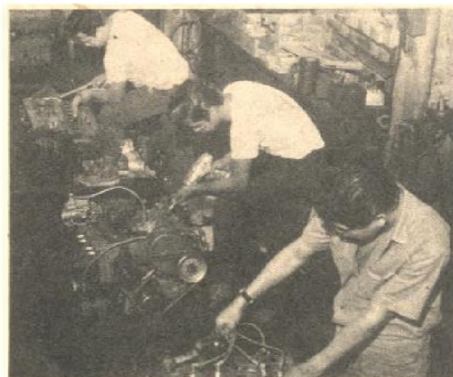
Today, Las Piñas is one of the most vigorous industrial community in Rizal province. Only a quarter of an hour drive from Manila, this town booms with beach resorts and jeepney building shops. The advent of the jeepney gave the town the push that moved it forward to progress. Widely known is the fact that the country's largest jeep and jeepney manufacturer, the Francisco Motors Corporation, operates from Las Piñas with an assembly plant that sprawls over a 2-hectare lot. Sarao, another name in jeepney-making, is also a Las Piñas based company. There are many more small and independent jeepney builders, and they contribute to the title

of Las Piñas as "jeepney town." It is estimated that Las Piñas assemblers alone supply over 70 per cent of the jeepney units now

operating in the country.

Francisco Motors is a good example of the town's character. The firm's owner, Anastacio T. Francisco, was a farmer before he ventured into the business of making jeepneys and jeepney bodies. As a matter of fact it is the only firm in the country that assembles jeepneys, light trucks and cars, in one assembly plant. No other plant has a similar integrated operation. Together with his brother, Fernando and Jorge, Mr. Francisco had helped tremendously in getting Las Piñas better known not only as the bamboo organ town, but also as the "jeepney town of the Philippines." And the town is proud to be called the homebase of the jeepney — the industrial era's "vehicle of burden" just as the carabao was the beast of burden in the early stages of the country's agricultural development. FM

## JEEPNEY TOWN



FMC jeepney assembly is 100% Filipino labor.