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THE CONTINUING SAGA OF THE FILIPINO VETERANS

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EDITORIALS

War and Remembrance

The celebrated novelist Herman Wouk starts his famous work War and Remembrance with this unforgettable line—“*The beginning of the end of war is remembrance.*” The “remembrance” may be full of pain but is also fraught with pride and honor, especially for the hundreds of thousands of Filipino veterans who fought shoulder-to-shoulder with U.S. armed forces in World War II in the Pacific theatre.

U.S. Rep. Colleen Hanabusa has introduced twin bills in Congress designed to honor the Filipino veterans for posterity and to reunite the surviving ones with their children who have been waiting. U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono has likewise introduced a companion bill for family reunification in the Senate, the first legislation she has put forward in the Senate since assuming office in January.

We fully support the twin bills introduced by members of our congressional delegation in hopes that these would finally bring some closure, or at least an adequate reward for the longtime suffering that our veterans have endured for more than 70 years—an awfully long time by any human reckoning. Many of our loyal veterans have died “without seeing the dawn,” as penned by Filipino novelist Stevan Javellana.

While there has been a partial resolution of some of the basic issues related to the veterans’ plight, much remains to be done in the interest of justice and equality. The Congressional Gold Medal is a symbolic honor but loaded with meaning for veterans and their families. As with all symbolic action, the medal somehow eases the painful “remembrance of things past.” The medal is the highest civilian honor that has also been given to other groups that saw action in World War II, such as the Japanese-American veterans of the 442nd regiment.

And the Family Reunification bill which is related to the broader contentious immigration reform agenda is now being debated in the halls of Congress and other circles. It envisions a happy ending for the surviving veterans of Filipino ancestry to see their long-absent families in their twilight years.

Sadly, the World War II generation, often referred to as the “Greatest Generation”, is dying off. In a few more years, mortality will make this issue moot. We therefore call on Congress to give Filipino veterans their due—before they’re gone.

Mabuhay, Pope Francis

For the 1.2 billion Catholics around the world, a ride of confusion and hope could best characterize this remarkably dynamic 2013 Lenten season.

First no one expected the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI in late February, and second, his reasoning of poor health for quitting somehow didn’t seem believable, especially given recent memory of his immediate predecessor the late Pope John Paul II who conducted mass well into the late stages of his Parkinson’s disease. Not to mention that no pope has vacated the papacy by resignation in over 600 years.

Then on March 13 cardinals from around the world delivered the perfect news to quiet down any rumors left swirling throughout the streets of Rome regarding Pope Benedict. The selection of Archbishop of Buenos Aires Jorge Mario Bergoglio was giant history-making of its own. The Argentine is the first non-European to be elected pope in over 1,200 years and the first pope from the Americas, the New World. Also a historic first and perhaps more significant is the name Bergoglio has chosen for himself, Pope “Francis,” in deference to the much beloved St. Francis of Assisi.

Why Francis is so fitting

CNN Vatican analyst John Allen called the selection of the

FROM THE PUBLISHER

With spring break now over, schools are headed into the fourth and final quarter of the year. For students, it’s certainly tempting to put it in “cruise control” for the few remaining months. We encourage you to finish strong and study hard to the very end. You’ll be glad you did.

Speaking of the end, our cover story for this issue is about the on-going saga of Filipino veterans of World War II. Now in their twilight years, these aged soldiers continue to press for the benefits that were promised to them decades ago. A handful of bills have been introduced on their behalf by U.S. Rep. Colleen Hanabus and U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono. Unfortunately, these veterans face an uphill battle in Congress where its members have little to no military experience and for whom even Vietnam is a faintly remembered secondhand experience of the horrors of war. Please read about the plight of these veterans beginning on page 4. We are indeed grateful to Belinda Aquino, Ph.D., for her expertise and insight on our veterans.

We also have in this jam-packed issue a recap of the Filipino Chamber of Commerce’s 23rd Trade Mission to the Philippines, which was held February 1-11, 2013 and headed by Lt. Gov. Shan Tsutsui. The mission was his first trip ever to the Philippines. The delegation included more than 40 business executives representing a diverse group of business interests from the president of an electric company on Maui to a military contractor. More on this successful trade mission is available on page 6.

On the lighter side, contributing writer J.P. Orias introduces us to Jay Flores, a licensed physical therapist and an extremely talented stage performer who has appeared in numerous musicals around town. Turn to page 8 for J.P.’s article “Feeling Good with Jay Flores.” We also have in this issue an update on the rail project (page 12), timely advice on how to retire on your own terms (page 5), as well as other useful articles.

In closing, we’d like to send our belated congratulations to the Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii on the occasion of their 35th Anniversary (page 11). Congratulations also to Toy Arre who was recently appointed as a member of AARP Hawaii’s Executive Council (page 12).

That’s it for now. As always, if you would like to share a story idea, suggestion or concern, please send it to our staff at: filipinochronicle@gmail.com. Until next time... *aloha* and *mabuhay!*

Chona A. Montesines-Sonido

name Pope Francis “the most stunning” choice and “precedent shattering.” “The new pope is sending a signal that this will not be business as usual,” he said. Based on who St. Francis of Assisi was, the name Francis symbolizes “poverty, humility, simplicity, and rebuilding the Catholic Church.”

At a time when economies around the world from Europe to the United States are reeling in trouble; at a time when economic inequality is so pervasive that 99 percent of the population are disempowered to make structural changes like healthcare or fair business opportunities set by the 1 percent; and at a time when materialism as a universal culture has led to an assortment of societal ills from unethical gambling in Wall St. that cost millions of jobs and foreclosures to drug running and killing in the streets that have already claimed the lives of over 70,000 in Mexico from 2006 to present -- perhaps, now, at this time, the world needs someone like a pope who possesses the character of St. Francis of Assisi.

Like the saint he is named after, Pope Francis as a world fig-

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OPINION

Global Networking: Widespread Philippine Indifference Towards Overseas Filipinos

By Rodel Rodis

Delegates attending the 2nd Global Summit of Filipinos in the Diaspora held in Makati on Feb. 25-27 were greatly alarmed by the widespread indifference of many Filipinos in the Philippines towards overseas Filipinos. How is it possible that just when the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) released figures showing record remittances by overseas Filipinos, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) announced the delisting of 238,455 overseas Filipino voters?

While the Comelec's December 14, 2012 resolution disenfranchising more than a quarter of all eligible overseas Filipino voters drew howls of protest from overseas Filipinos, the issue barely registered a ripple in the Philippine press.

One notable exception was former Philippine Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban who showed his appreciation for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in his column in the Philippine Daily Inquirer "Our OFWs toil diligently in foreign shores, braving loneliness, illness, family separation and extreme weather. In the process, they collectively remitted last year a total of \$21.4 billion, up 6.3 percent from

the \$20.1 billion sent in 2011. They are the single biggest source of foreign currency for our country. Their relatives here used these remittances to buy homes, appliances, motor vehicles, food items, clothing and toys, thereby keeping our vibrant economy the envy of the world."

But sadly, the Comelec commissioners were not alone in ignoring the aspirations of the estimated 12-15 million Filipinos who live and work outside the Philippines.

Presidential Disappointment

Even Pres. Benigno S. Aquino III proved to be a disappointment when he declined to personally address the dele-

gates at the Global Summit that was sponsored by his Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO). Greg Macabenta, former national chair of the National Federation of Filipino Associations in America (NaFFAA) lamented his absence: "any indication of the importance of the conference, in the eyes of the President of the Philippines, may be gleaned from the fact that he has only sent a videotaped message to the delegates. One senses that this "Gathering of Heroes" is not important enough to merit his personal presence. Aquino also sent a recorded message for the first conference."

That was not the only dis-

appointment. After the Philippine Congress finally approved the amended Overseas Voting Act (OVA) in the first week of February and sent the bill to Pres. Aquino for his signature, overseas Filipino convenors of the Summit requested Pres. Aquino to sign the OVA into law either at the Global Summit or during the week of the Summit to allow delegates to witness the signing of the bill that they had lobbied for since the greatly flawed Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) law was enacted in 2003.

The OVA law carried an odious provision requiring overseas Filipinos who register to vote to sign an affidavit of intent to return back to the Philippines within three years

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EDITORIALS (from page 2, MABUHAY...)

ure could by example show us the virtues of leading simpler, compassionate lives. Such inspiration could only be achieved through humility; and the perceived religious elitism of the papacy somehow needs to be brought back down to where the people feel that the pope walks among us. Pope Francis has already shown examples of being a "people's" pope. Immediately following his introduction as pope on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, rather than blessing the crowd first, he asked for the people to pray for him. On his way back to the church-run residence where he stayed along with fellow cardinals during conclave, he refused to use the prepared car for the new pope, instead opted to ride the bus, paid for his lodging, and carried his own luggage. This isn't unusual behavior for Pope Francis. It's reported that while Archbishop of Buenos Aires, instead of staying at the Archbishop mansion, he rented an apartment, caught the bus to work, and prepared his own meals. During major bishops meetings in Rome, he always sat in the back rows.

Challenges

In our age of secularism, a challenge for the new pope is finding new ways to keep the

Church relevant. Ultimately it would take more than a popular, "people's" pope to keep the Church from losing members. While Catholicism remains the largest and oldest Christian Church, in Europe and most western countries, statistics show priestly ordination and church attendance in the Catholic Church has been declining for decades. It's estimated that in the United States alone regular church attendance among Catholics has dropped from 75% to 45%.

Even in South America where most people (80.66%) identify themselves as Catholics, active church membership is in decline. In Argentina alone, home of Pope Francis, it's estimated that about 10 percent of Catholics regularly attend mass. If Pope Francis couldn't get people invigorated about the church there, how would he be able to draw inspiration worldwide as the leader of the entire Church? - some people could logically ask. As a cardinal, he has clashed with the government of Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner over many social issues and has lost on many controversial legislations.

With Pope Francis being a conservative theologian, it's unlikely that the type of real

change needed for the Church to become relevant will happen. A Vatican III Council to address changes and bring the Church into the modern era, is not likely to occur. In the secular world, there are new roles for women and new accepted versions of morality with regard to birth control and marriage, that institutional religions, the Catholic Church included, continue to reject. So while culturally, millions of Catholics are born into the Church, millions of others are leaving it due to alienation; and millions of others remain "part-time" Catholics attending mass only on major religious holidays.

Many might be pleased with the trend and say that perhaps it's preferred to have a dominant secular world where government ultimately codifies what's deemed moral behavior without crushing influence from religious institutions. At the same time given the fragile state of worldly affairs, it's undeniable that religious virtues and lessons from God could be much needed.

We have seen in this latest conclave that the Catholic Church isn't short of great leadership. Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle who many say was a leading contender also could have been a worthy choice for the papacy with his charisma

and humility very similar to the elected pope from Argentina. Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana was another leading candidate who is on the right track in emphasizing the need of reforming the international financial system. He has been a strong critic of greedy practices afflicting Global Banks and world financial markets.

It's hopeful that some leaders in the Catholic Church are outspoken over the inhumanity of financial structures and accurately pinpoint the root of soci-

ety's injustice. Newly elected Pope Francis said in 2007 during a bishops conference: "the unjust distribution of goods persists, creating a situation of social sin that cries out to Heaven and limits the possibilities of a fuller life for so many of our brothers."

As Catholics, we pray that God guide Pope Francis in his leadership of the Catholic Church. May he inspire us Catholics and the world to lead virtuous lives and to make our world a better place.



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COVER STORY

The Filipino Veterans Story

—A Continuing Saga

By Belinda A. Aquino, Ph.D.

O it is one of those stories of epic proportions that never seem to end. They have acquired dimensions of “largeness” and continuity that defy time and space. In short, they have become sagas—tales of heroic deeds that evoke the greatness of the human spirit.

Such characterization may rightfully be applied to the continuing story of thousands of Filipino veterans who fought alongside the U.S. military in World War II, starting that fateful day in December 1941 which has been etched permanently in our collective memories over time.

Seventy-two years after the fact, we continue to remember with pain the devastation which that war inflicted on humanity. And as in most sagas of pain and remembrance, there appears to be no closure to it because it is an unfinished story in terms of justice, peace and other values that ought to be served with its successful resolution.

Hundreds of thousands of those Filipino veterans have long been dead and forgotten, but the struggle they started to achieve honor and recognition continues.

Hanabusa Introduces Veterans-Related Bills

In the current session of Congress, U.S. Rep. Colleen Hanabusa (D-Hawaii) has introduced relevant legislation aimed at reunifying Filipino American veterans with their family members who still live in the Philippines.

U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) introduced the counterpart bills in the Senate.

Hanabusa, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee introduced HR bill 966 (Filipino Veterans Reunification Act) to exempt children of certain Filipino World War II veterans from the historical numerical limitations on immigrant visas to the U.S. Hirono’s counterpart version in the Senate is her first legislative bill filed since assuming office in January.

Hanabusa says her bill is



This photo is taken at the Honolulu International Airport when the late Rizal Agbayani (on crutches) together with the leaders of Fil-Am Vets are waiting for their flight on the way to Washington, D.C. to lobby and participate in a rally for the passing of their Equity Bill

an important step towards fulfilling America’s obligations to the veterans.

“When we needed friends in Asia during the war, the Filipinos didn’t hesitate,” Hanabusa says. “They stood up in our country’s time of need, and it is our responsibility to stand up for them.”

According to Hanabusa, of the more than 200,000 Filipino veterans who fought side-by-side with the U.S. during the war, only 6,000 are alive today, many in Hawaii. The Immigration Act of 1990 enabled them to obtain American citizenship for their services, after having been turned down previously for nearly 50 years.

Hanabusa also introduced HR 111, which would collectively honor the Filipino veterans with a Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of their dedicated service. A replica of the Medal will be deposited at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. where it will be on display for public viewing and made available for research purposes.

The Ultimate Honor

Upon hearing of Hanabusa’s bill to award the veterans with the Congressional Gold Medal, former Hawaii State Rep. Felipe “Jun” Abinsay was ecstatic. Abinsay was deeply involved in assisting the Filipino veterans in Hawaii to obtain their citizenship status and benefits.

“If Congress recognizes

the merits of HR 111 (in addition to HR 966), I have no doubt that the World War II Filipino veterans and their families would see this symbolic action as an eventual closure to the injustice of the 1946 Rescission Act, which led to their unjust treatment for over 50 years,” he says. “I hope and pray that this will be realized soon while our heroes are still alive and enjoying their twilight years. We have U.S. Rep Hanabusa to thank for this magnanimous initiative on her part.”

This may not be the end of the veterans’ saga as some issues would probably unravel as in past congressional sessions. But it points towards the beginning of some closure, as we had mentioned earlier, as it would be tantamount to a supreme honor that the veterans have long been denied.

A Look Back at the “Back Story”

It would be instructive at this point, especially for the younger generation of Filipino-Americans and those unfamiliar with the antecedents of the Filipino American veterans’ classic story, to look back at the circumstances that have made this case such a long, drawn-out struggle. Sometimes people wonder why it has taken that long—more than 70 years—for the U.S. to recognize the wartime service of the Filipino veterans and worse, to rescind the promise that the U.S. govern-

ment made when it was recruiting the veterans to assist the American war effort in the Pacific theater.

In July 1941, then U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an Executive Order (EO) calling on the Philippine Armed Forces to fight alongside the Americans in the Pacific. The Philippines at this time was a colony of the U.S. under Commonwealth status, but in what seemed like a strange colonial situation, Filipinos were not American “citizens.” They were called American “nationals,” the meaning of which was never really clear to Filipinos. These “nationals” were subject to the laws of the U.S. and the colony’s armed forces eventually came under the command of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who became the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in the Pacific. The more correct name for the military outfit that the Filipinos joined was the United States Armed Forces in the Far East, or USAFFE.

President Roosevelt’s EO promised the Filipino soldiers American citizenship and full veterans’ benefits for their service to the American military. It was an attractive incentive and Filipinos looked forward to it.

But it was not to be. In what could be considered a cynical act of betrayal, the U.S. Congress after the war passed the Rescission Act of

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COVER STORY

(from page 4, THE FILIPINO...)

1946, which rescinded the promised citizenship and benefits to the Filipino veterans while approving such for their European counterparts, such as the soldiers from England and Iceland. Why? Who knows? “These are only Filipinos,” could be the thinking of many of the Congress people at this time. They were not as appreciated and valued as their counterparts from Europe. This came down like a ton of bricks on the ever loyal and faithful allies of the American military who sacrificed their lives so that the U.S. may win the war. Thus began their long struggle for justice and the benefits they

rightfully deserved.

Advocacy Efforts Directed at Congress

This unjust treatment of the Filipino veterans, among other grievances, led to a flurry of advocacy and campaign efforts on the part of numerous supportive groups, such as the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans, Inc. (ACFVI), headed by Eric Lachica. The Coalition managed to recruit 4,000 supporters nationwide who were ready to take action to redress the veterans’ plight. They focused their energies towards the Senate Veteran Affairs Committee chaired by Sen. John Rockefeller IV (D-



Filipino Veterans in Washington, D.C. awaiting instructions at a rally in front of the White House.

Virginia). The blitz of letters, faxes, emails and other forms of communication over the years, and visits to the nation’s capital had productive results. Until then it was a futile uphill battle.

It was here that the late U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye came to the forefront to take up the cudgels for the veterans and he enlisted the Hawaii Congressional delegation, such as the

late U.S. Rep. Patsy Mink, to introduce and support legislative measures aimed at giving citizenship and benefits to the Filipino veterans.

In July 2002 Senators Inouye, Corzine (New Jersey), Millender-McDonald (California) and 16 others signed a letter endorsing the approval of HR 3645, which reversed the infamous Rescission Act and finally enabled the Filipino veterans to become American citizens. At this time, there were only about 11,000 surviving veterans living in the U.S. with majority of whom were in Hawaii.

Becoming a U.S. Citizen: the Hawaii Scene

Former State Rep. Abinsay rendered extraordinary efforts to help the large numbers of

Filipino veterans who came to Hawaii following the passage of the Immigration Act of 1990. Mila Medallon Kaahanui, executive director of the State’s Office of Community Services (OCS), recalls how news of the Immigration Act of 1990 “spread like wildfire.”

“The veterans suddenly arrived from the Philippines en masse with only one-way tickets, a few dollars in their pockets and no place to go,” she says. “They were temporarily housed at the Philippine Consulate lanai—more than 50 of them—which created problems of accommodation.”

The Filipino Coalition for Solidarity (then headed by Jun Abinsay), the Philippine Consulate and KNDI Radio (through Flor Martinez) worked closely with the Filipino Veterans’ Task Force and the State Office of Veteran Affairs to find adequate housing. According to Kaahanui, the spirit of *bayanihan* prevailed and showed how Filipinos could come together for a com-

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SOCIAL SECURITY UPDATE

Retiring on Your Own Terms

By Jane Yamamoto-Burigsay

Most Americans are aware that they need to save for retirement. It’s a topic that’s easy to brush aside because although saving for retirement is important, it may not seem urgent. But the longer you put off basic retirement planning, the harder it will be to catch up.

Now may be the perfect time to start thinking about retirement, since National Retirement Planning Week is set for April 8-12, 2013.

When you’re ready to begin planning for retirement, the easiest and most convenient way to start is from the comfort of home. Go to www.socialsecurity.gov where you can apply for retirement benefits in as little as 15 minutes. In most cases, there are no forms to sign or documents to send—simply submit your electronic application.

You can also call toll-free at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) or visit the Social Security office nearest you. Be sure to have your bank account information handy so we can set up your payments to be deposited directly into your account.

Your age when you start to receive Social Security makes a difference in your benefit amount. The full retirement age (the age at which 100 percent of retirement benefits are payable) has gradually risen from age 65 to 67. You can retire as early as age 62, but if benefits start before you reach your full retirement age, your monthly payment is reduced. Find out what your full retirement age is by typing in your year of birth at: www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/ageincrease.htm.

You can keep working beyond your full retirement age to take advantage of a larger payment. Your benefit will increase automatically each year from the time you reach your full retirement age until you start receiving your benefits or until you reach age 70.

The decision of when to retire is personal and depends on a number of factors. We suggest you read our online fact sheet “When to Start Receiving Retirement Benefits” which is available at: www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10147.html.

You may also want to consider your options by using our “Retirement Estimator” to get instant, personalized estimates of future benefits. You can plug in different retirement ages and scenarios to help you make a more informed retirement decision. Try it out at: www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator.

You’ll also want to set up an online “my Social Security” account which you can use to obtain a copy of your Social Security Statement to check your earnings record and see estimates of retirement, disability and survivor benefits you and your family may receive. Visit: www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

Another great website for financial planning can be found at www.mymoney.gov. The website contains information on how to plan for the birth or adoption of a child, home ownership, retirement and other life events. The website also provides a financial savings calculator and other money management tools.

To learn more about Social Security retirement benefits and options, please read our publication, “Retirement Benefits” at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10035.html.

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HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

Filipino Chamber of Commerce Holds 23rd Trade Mission to Philippines

By Paul Gaerlan
Alimbuyao

With Lt. Gov. Shan Tsutsui and Philippine Consul General of Honolulu Julius Torres at the helm, approximately 45 delegates participated in the Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii's 23rd Trade Mission to the Philippines.

Participants included those from a variety of businesses including restaurant franchises, airlines, manufacturers, commodity exporters and importers, hospitals, financial institutions and professional services. All were seeking to either invest in or strengthen relations with the Philippines.

Delegates met with government officials, business and community leaders, U.S. embassy officials and members of the community. They were able to build and foster relationships with the Philippines and the people in order to facilitate current and future business dealings.

This year's mission theme is "Fostering Sustainable Growth in the Asia-Pacific Region." The goals of this trade mission were to increase business activity by promoting Hawaii and the Philippines as investment and tourism destinations, encourage trade and economic activities across the Pacific region, and develop renewable and green technology.

The delegates visited major cities in the Philippines that are experiencing tremendous economic activities and emphasis on renewal and green technology, namely Manila, Laoag, Vigan, Candon and Caoayan.

The team that planned the

trade mission included Bryan Andaya, FCCH president; Rosemarie Aquino, mission co-chair; site coordinators Bennette Misalucha, Mell Felipe, Jun Abinsay and Bernadette Fajardo; Teresita Noble and Joyleen R. Espinosa-Santos from the Consulate General.

Hello Manila

After sightseeing of Taal Volcano in Tagaytay and lunch, the delegates' first official activity was a courtesy call with Manila City Mayor Alfredo Lim. They were warmly welcomed by a marching band and a red carpet heading to the office of the mayor.

The delegates then proceeded to Rizal Park to pay tribute to Philippine national hero Dr. Jose P. Rizal. Although unable to personally meet with President Benigno S. Aquino III, delegates instead enjoyed a formal welcome dinner reception or "Aloha Night" at the Mandarin Hotel Ballroom.

The reception afforded delegates the opportunity to meet government leaders and prominent businessmen. The delegates were joined by Eddie Flores, who together with Bryan Andaya, had the opportunity to discuss franchising opportunity. Melody Calisay, president and owner of East West Marketing, had a chance to meet with potential export-import business partners.

Maui Electric Company President Sharon Suzuki was the keynote speaker during the reception's formal program. She gave a great presentation on MECO's renewable energy activities and initiatives.

On Day 2, the delegates visited the Consuelo Foundation office in Makati. Jon Matsuoka, the



President & CEO with his staff gave the delegates a historical overview and perspective on the various activities and projects of the foundation. Before heading out of the office, the delegates were treated to various native delicacies before heading out to visit the Tuloy Foundation.

The Tuloy Foundation is a not-for-profit organization for marginalized children. It was founded in 1993 by Fr. Marciano "Rocky" G. Evangelista and lay volunteers committed to the cause of poor, abandoned and homeless children. It pursues the charisma of St. John Bosco who dedicated himself to the care and training of poor boys in the 19th century.

Delegates proceeded to the gymnasium where about 800 children sang a rendition of Josh Groban's "You Raise Me Up."

"As a father to two growing up boys, this visit was especially touching," says a delegate. "Seeing the smiles of these children as well as their excitement and enthusiasm during our visit was priceless and further reminded me of the importance of giving back to one's community, not just in Hawaii but globally."

Congress and Manny Pacquiao

The delegates then headed out to the Philippine Congress to meet Speaker of the House of Representatives Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte Jr. and other

members.

They were greeted by Speaker Belmonte and Representatives Bernardo Vergara (Baguio City), Rodolfo Farinas (Ilocos Sur) and Joel Duavit (Rizal). Introductions were cut short when Representative and boxing champion Manny Pacquiao unexpectedly entered the room and graciously posed for pictures with delegates.

Day 3 in Manila included visits to the U.S. Embassy, Asian Development Bank and Philippine Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCCI). After an early morning breakfast, delegates met U.S. Ambassador Harry Thomas and enjoyed in a very lively discussion.

At the Asian Development Bank, delegates met with Ambassador Robert Orr who gave an overview of the various duties, responsibilities and services offered by the ADB. Delegates then headed to the PCCI and were formally welcomed by Miguel Varela, President of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce. Delegates introduce themselves and presented their goals, objectives and reasons why they joined the trade mission, as well as their interest in networking opportunities with their counterparts and other members of PCCI.

Laoag and Paoay

After Manila, delegates headed to Laoag, Ilocos Norte and proceeded to Fort Ilocandia Hotel where they were greeted by Ilocos Norte Governor Imee Marcos. After luncheon and a brief rest, the delegates visited the famous Bangui Windmills. Officially referred to as the North Wind Bangui Bay Project, the windmill is the first "Wind Farm" in the Philippines and provides 40 percent of the power requirements of Ilocos Norte via Transco Laoag.

From Bangui, they proceeded to Pagudpud Beach, which is famous for its white-sand beaches and crystal-blue water. They were met and escorted by Pagudpud Vice Mayor Marlon Sales. The following day, the delegates toured the President Ferdinand Marcos Museum.

Vigan, Caoayan and Candon

At Vigan, delegates were

met by former Hawaii State Rep. Abinsay who briefed them on the schedule of activities in Ilocos Sur. They proceeded directly to Baluarte which is a wildlife sanctuary owned by Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

After a sumptuous luncheon, they headed to Caoayan and visited places that produce native products like dried water lilies, the famous "chichacorn" (fried corn) and other local delicacies. Their visit to Caoayan was capped by a courtesy call to Mayor "Germ" Singson and a formal welcome by Gov. Singson and Hawaii State Rep. Romy Cachola.

The next day, delegates visited the city of Candon in Ilocos Sur which is dubbed as the "Tobacco Capital of the Philippines" since the city is the Philippines' largest producer of Virginia-type tobacco. They were met by Mayor Allen Singson and later proceeded to the City Hall Chamber for a business luncheon. Joining them were former Congressman Eric Singson and his wife, former Congresswomen Grace Singson.

Delegates enjoyed a fruitful discussion with government, business and private sector officials, particularly due to the similarities of Ilocos Sur and Hawaii as it relates to tourism. Garan Ito, Director of Laboratories of the Queens Medical Center, visited the local hospital where he was able to see the major differences between the facilities, structure and medical equipment in the Philippines and in Hawaii.

Capping the final day was a sunset farewell dinner at Santiago Cove Beach Resort—dubbed the Boracay of Ilocos Sur. During dinner, they were serenaded by a group of young musicians who were musical scholars supported by Eric and Grace Singson.

Overall, the 23rd Trade Mission was a success due to the professionalism and cooperation of the delegates, who measured success by the fruitful business and investment opportunities, as well as tremendous personal growth.

Major sponsors of this trade mission are Consuelo Alger Foundation, First Hawaiian Bank, GMA Channel 7 in the Philippines, Hawaiian Airlines, Hawaiian Electric Industries Inc. and the Renato & Maria Etrata Foundation.

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IMMIGRATION GUIDE



By Atty. Emmanuel Samonte Tipon



What is 'chair' in Tagalog?" a high school Tagalog teacher asked the

student.

"Silya," he replied

"Wrong, it is 'salong-puwit,'" (literally, ass catcher) the teacher corrected him.

"If so, ma'am, is bra 'salongsuso'?" (breast catcher), the student retorted.

"Sit down," shouted the furious teacher. From that day forward, the teacher always called the student. The student never gave an answer that satisfied the teacher who gave the student a "D" (dumbbell? doldog (Ilocano for stupid)) in every grading period. Alarmed, the student went to see his uncle, a judge, telling him that his fellow student, the son of an ex governor had the same level of knowledge of Tagalog but got "C's", and asked his uncle what could be done. I'll see what I can do, said his uncle. The student got a final grade of "C". Instead of being a valedictorian, he became a boloktorian.

The student vowed never to have anything to do with Tagalogs. Well what do you know? He married a Tagalog and is living happily ever after.

Language purists do not want to import into their native language any foreign word. They pretend to be nationalists. Pseudo nationalists might be a better term. Developing a language is not the occasion for "nationalism." The English language is replete with imported words mostly from the French - fiancée, rendezvous. Even the English word "boondocks" was derived from the Tagalog word "bundok" meaning mountain.

Language Purists, Literalists, and Interpreters Could Get You Into Trouble

Where there is no term in the local dialect, the purists import the English term but change the spelling to make it look local, which in some cases sounds funny. In an Ilocano glossary on the internet, which apparently is being given to Ilocano interpreters in the United States when they seek certification, the term "affidavit" was translated into Ilocano as "abidabit". Sounds like Abu Dhabi. In a Hawaii criminal court form, the word "circuit," was translated into Ilocano as "sirkuit". Sounds like Queen Sirikit.

In some cases, the Ilocano translation by the glossary consisted of a misspelled word taken from Spanish. Thus, "prejudice" was translated into "prehuisio" (actually it should be "perhuisio").

The word "larceny" was translated into Ilocano as "saan a legal a panangikot iti kukua ti maysa a tao" (did not legally turn the property of another person). What? How can a defendant intelligently plead to a charge of larceny based on that translation?

In fact the word "panangikot" is Ilocano/Tagalog, which confirms my suspicion that the author of the Ilocano glossary is an "Ilotag" (half Ilocano/half Tagalog).

The glossary's Ilocano translation of "Miranda warning" is "Palagip a mainaig iti napasamak iti Miranda". An Ilocano said that he has been speaking Ilocano for more than 70 years but he has never heard "palagip a mainaig". That translation will not help a defendant understand what a Miranda warning is and whether he was given such a warning when he was interrogated. The defendant might be saying "yes" just so he would not seem stupid, even though in reality he was not given the warning, which would be a ground to suppress his confession.

In one case the glossary compiler translated "pimping" as "di nasken" or "di impor-

tante". Obviously, the compiler does not know what a "pimp" is. So, if the defendant is charged with "pimping" and the interpreter translates it as "naidarum ka ti 'di importante," the defendant might probably rejoice and say "Yes" thinking that the charge is "not important" and he would probably be let go, when in fact he could be convicted and be tagged as lacking in "good moral character".

The glossary's Ilocano translation for "rape" is "aradas". Susmariosep. The word "aradas" does not mean "rape". It means crawling on all fours stealthily at night with the intention of going to a woman's bed and making love with her, not necessarily by force. (Full disclosure: This writer has never tried this). It does not mean that the "aradasero" achieved his objective. So if the interpreter were to ask the defendant: "Ti caso contra kenka ket napan ka nag-aradas - guilty wenno not guilty." The defendant who did not even reach the woman's bed when the woman heard his heavy breathing and made an outcry, might say "guilty", thinking that "aradas" does not really mean "rape" since he did not even touch the woman and therefore it is not a serious matter and he will be given probation. But in fact he could get a lengthy jail term and be deported for having committed an aggravated felony because the court and interpreter using the glossary thought "aradas" is the correct translation for "rape".

A Hawaii court form translated the word "waiver" into Ilocano as "panangbay-bay-a" which all the Ilocanos at a recent interpreter seminar admitted they never heard of. How can an Ilocano defendant intelligently decide whether or not to waive his rights if he does not understand the words of the form? The word "waive" means "to give up". If there is no Ilocano word for "waiver," why

not simply say "pinang i-give up". Every Ilocano knows what "give up" means. Why do the purists concoct words that nobody understands? The purpose of translation is to facilitate communication with those who have limited English proficiency (LEP).

One morning, a lady whom this writer met at a seminar for interpreters called asking for help in preparing for an English exam. She asked what an "idiom" was. I know "idiot" but I do not know "idiom," I joked. She said that the practice exam contained "idioms" and asked what this sentence meant: "After losing a big case, the lawyer went home, his career all washed up." The literalists would probably translate this as: "Pagkatapos natalo ang abogado sa malaking caso, umuwi at hinugasan ang buong kotse."

In an immigration case, the alien was asked what he did in his native country before coming to the U.S. He said that he was a "cook". The interpreter translated it as "crook". The alien was ordered deported.

Right to Competent Interpreter

The right to an interpreter

is given to criminal defendants and aliens in removal proceedings under the due process and equal protection clauses of the Constitution and under various federal and state laws and regulations. Like the right to a lawyer which means a competent lawyer, the right to an interpreter also means a competent interpreter.

A recent television story said that there was a need for competent Ilocano interpreters in Hawaii to insure fairness in the administration of justice. There are about 250,000 Ilocanos in Hawaii which has a total population of 1,250,000. Could the lack of competent interpreters be a factor in the numerous convictions and deportations of Ilocanos?

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FEATURE

Feeling Good with Jay Flores

By J.P. Orias

Recent research has shown that certain abilities like math and music are strongest when both halves of the brain work together, defying the dichotomous attribution of the left brain to tasks that involve logic, language and analytical thinking, and the right brain to expressive and creative tasks. Admittedly, this translates into taking out the fine line between the two hemispheres of the brain by making them work together as husband and wife—like purpose and passion.

Case in point is Jay Flores who feels good when pouring his passion into memorizing his lines for the stage and working with his wife Shirleen in their physical therapy business.

Flores is a licensed physical therapist, owner and founder of Waipahu Therapy Center—an outpatient orthopedics practice and massage establishment with offices in Kalihi and Waipahu. His wife, also a licensed physical therapist, co-owns the company and is mother to their three children Rachel, Joshua and Shiloh. Yes, Flores has a lot to feel good about.

Flores' creative side was on display this past December at the 35th Inaugural of the Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii. He appeared on stage with a jazzy rendition of "Feeling Good" in the stylings of Michael Buble, then shifted to an operatic "Adagio" in a duet with Dr. Cielo Guillermo.

Flores started singing with Doctors-On-Stage last year on the same occasion and was in the cast of "Believe," the recent

fundraiser of the Bayanihan Clinic Without Walls. In "Believe," Flores rendered 12 numbers of the 25 songs in the line-up with remarkable solos and magnificent group songs. He was effortless with expressions of "Lost in the Wilderness," "I Believe In You," "Through Heaven's Eyes," and "Corner of the Sky" and was equally at ease harmonizing with other singers in the group songs.

A smooth tenor, Flores is gifted with a wide vocal range which enables him to have a very flexible repertoire. His theatrical presence and decorum set him apart in a niche of his own. He is passionate about musical theater because he "loves music and watching a story unfold with the use of music and singing makes the experience a lot more interesting."

Flores' interest in musical theater heightened when the megamusical "Miss Saigon" became a financial and artistic success with a squadron of Filipino actors led by Lea Salonga.



Jay Flores in (1) *Godspell*, (2) *Kismet*, (3) *Miss Saigon*, (4) *Aida* and (5) *The King and I*

"I become passionate and try to do my best to communicate the message of the song through my stage performances," says Flores, who never appeared in musicales in the Philippines.

Locally, he has performed in Diamond Head Theater as the herald in "Cinderella" (2001). A decade later, he joined the ensemble of "Phantom of the Opera" at Paliku Theater. In between those years, he toured Honolulu's community theaters by performing in musical theater presentations in a variety of roles.

He was in the ensemble of "Mulan" at the Convention Center, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" at Hawaii Theatre, "Pirates of Penzance" at the Blaisdell Concert Hall, and "Les Miserables" at Diamond Head Theatre. He was also Amonasro in "Aida," the Wazir in

"Kismet," the All Good Gifts soloist in "Godspell," Simon Zealotes in "Jesus Christ Superstar," Bustopher Jones, Asparagus and Growltiger in "Cats," Thuy in "Miss Saigon" at the Army Community Theater in 2005 and Lun Tha in "The King and I," at Diamond Head Theater in 2011.

At age 9, an aunt gave Flores a guitar and mentioned to his mother what a beautiful voice he had.

"That ignited my passion for vocal performance leading to training with "Papuri," a Christian recording company in the Philippines," he says.

During college, Jay learned basic vocal technique from the recording studio. As a tribute to his Creator, he currently dedicates his time as a vocalist in the New Hope Leeward worship team.

Humble Beginnings

Born in Quezon City and raised in Makati, Flores is the eldest of four siblings of Guillermo Flores and Rosemarie Queipo. His late father, a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1959, was a high ranking military officer who was at one time the vice chief-of-staff of the armed forces of the Philippines and commanding general of the Philippine Army.

His mother, originally from Samar, graduated from Lourdes College, Cagayan de Oro City in 1966. She held the fam-

ily together during the turbulent years of the Philippine insurgency, when Flores' father was gone for months at a time.

Flores graduated from the University of Santo Tomas-Institute of Physical Therapy with a bachelor's degree in physical therapy in 1991.

After three years working as a physical therapist in Georgia and Tennessee, he decided to enroll in business school. He attended the Asian Institute of Management and finished his master's degree in business management in 1997. Previously licensed as a physical therapist in California, Florida, Georgia and Tennessee, Jay recently entered the Doctor of Physical Therapy program at Utica College's distance education department.

From his humble beginnings as an army brat with a "Maria Von Trapp" auntie and supportive parents who molded Flores in hard work and dedication to family, Flores was bound for success.

His daughter Rachel is a freshman who is showing signs of following in her dad's theatrical footsteps having appeared as the orphan Annie in her school's production of the vintage musical. Joshua, 6, and Shiloh, 4, have yet to display an interest in the performing arts.

As the song goes, "It's a new dawn. It's a new day." It's a new life for the Floreses. They are all feeling good.

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OPINION (from page 3, GLOBAL...)

or face incarceration of up to a year in jail. This provision discouraged overseas Filipinos – most of whom planned to live and work abroad for more than three years – from registering to vote.

The resulting low registration turnout vindicated the self-fulfilling prophecy of the skeptics who opposed suffrage for overseas Filipinos. Despite this extreme disincentive, however, more than 350,000 overseas Filipinos registered to vote in the 2004 elections. But a lesser number registered for the 2007 and 2010 elections and only about 300,000 registered for the May 2013 elections bringing the total to less than 900,000 overseas vote



New Overseas Voting Act

The removal of this provision was a source of great relief for advocates of suffrage for overseas Filipinos. But Malacanang Palace sent word that Pres. Aquino could not accommodate the request for them to attend the signing ceremony because he was too busy that week, perhaps campaigning for his Team PNoy senate slate. Did he not understand that a photo-op of him signing the OAV bill in front of overseas Pinoys would draw support for his slate from overseas Pinoys, like the 65% of them who voted for him in the May 2010 presidential elections?

Perhaps Pres. Aquino should talk to one of his own Team PNoy senate candidates, Sen. Koko Pimentel, who announced in a press conference last month that he expects six million overseas voters to cast ballots in the 2016 presidential election following Congressional approval of the Overseas Voting Act, which he sponsored in the Senate.

Pimentel said that the Senate's approval of the bill on February 5 "was a red-letter day for the over 13 million overseas Filipinos..Maybe not in this coming election in May, but once the OVA amendments take effect, overseas Filipinos may soon be able to register and vote using mail, whether postal or electronic, fax, and other secure online systems."

"In 2016, when Filipinos come together as one nation to decide on the next administration, one of our biggest legacies to voters around the world is an OVA law that offers flexibility in terms of new technologies," Pimentel said. Under the amended Overseas Voting Act, "the participation of overseas Filipinos in the election of national officials would be as easy as their turning on their computers and connecting to the Internet to register or to vote," Pimentel said.

Former Filipinos?

Global Summit delegates trooped to

the Philippine Senate building on Feb. 28 to personally thank Sen. Pimentel and Sen. Loren Legarda for their support of the OVA bill. During a roundtable discussion about issues of concern to overseas Filipinos, Sen.

Legarda encouraged "former Filipinos" to invest in the Philippines. At that point, I said "Senator, there is no such thing as a "former Filipino". You can be a former Philippine citizen but never a "former Filipino". Once a Filipino, always a Filipino." Sen. Legarda readily agreed.

While Sen. Legarda and Sen. Pimentel were meeting with the Summit delegates, another Team PNoy senate candidate, Cynthia Villar, was busy putting her foot in her mouth. When she was interviewed on TV by host Wennie Monsod who asked her why she intervened in favor of nursing school diploma mills in 2005, Villar replied that there was no need for Philippine nurses to graduate with Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees since they only wanted to become "room nurses" or caretakers anyway.

The social networks of global Filipinos exploded with fury. Here is one comment, among thousands that were posted: "Telling your precious Pinay nurses that they don't even need to have a BSN because they only want to work abroad as a room nurse and that they don't really need to be good because they are only there to be a caretaker for others is utterly degrading and demeaning. And by the way, there's no such thing as a "room nurse". Operating room nurse, yes. Emergency room nurse, yes. But a room nurse? Seriously?"

Villar should not underestimate the influence of outraged Philippine nurses working abroad who remit billions of dollars of their salaries to their families in the Philippines. One word from them to their relatives and Villar's hopes to succeed her husband in the Philippine senate will be dashed.

Dismal Alternatives

But the alternatives offered by the opposition UNA slate are even more dismal. One UNA candidate, Nancy Binay, has only held one job in 39 years - being the personal assistant of her father, Vice-President Jojo Binay. Another UNA candidate, Jack Enrile, son of Senate President Juan Ponce-Enrile, had to publicly deny on TV that he killed four people, including movie actor Alfie Anido. And another candidate, JV Ejercito, son of convicted plunderer, former Pres. Joseph Estrada, is running a very public feud with his half-brother, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

(continued on page 13)

SOCIETY PAGE

PMAH is 35 Years

By J.P. Orias

The Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii celebrated its 35th Anniversary at Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki last January 12 with Senator Josh Green, MD as guest speaker and officiant for the induction of its officers and Board of Governors composed of Drs. Jose De Leon, president; Jerald Garcia, president-elect; Glorifin Belmonte, secretary; Michael Castro, treasurer; Arnold Villafuerte, immediate past president; Carolina Davide, Nestor Herana, Amelia Jacang, Melvin Paul Palalay and Ray Romero, governors and affiliate presidents; Nicanor Joaquin, (BCWW), Jose Madamba, Foundation and Russell Kelly, OMM.

The formal event which was well attended by friends and associates from the medical industry, featured the musical talents of Michael Castro on guitar, Erica Brenner, Louise De Leon, Anna Davide and Carol Davide, Jay Flores and Cielo Guillermo. Drs. Dan Ablan, Fort Elizaga and Joe Madamba were the hilarious gangnam emcees of the program with members of Himig at Indak led by Edith and Roland Pascua giving terpsichorean support on the rumba number which opened the evening's dancing.



HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

City to Begin Collecting Photovoltaic Permit Fees

Beginning April 6, 2013, City officials will begin collecting fees on building permits issued for photovoltaic (PV) solar electric power systems.

Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell signed into law Bill 68 (2012) CD1 which repeals

the permit fee exemption for PV systems. The waiver was implemented in October 2007 as an incentive to the new PV industry and residents to install the energy saving systems.

City officials say that an incentive is no longer necessary given that the number PV

systems have nearly tripled each year since 2008. Repealing the fee waiver means PV contractors will be treated the same as other contractors who have been paying building permit fees all along.

The PV fees collected will be used to hire additional in-

spectors and plan checkers to improve service, and to reduce the time needed to obtain other permits and to conduct inspections.

A solar PV system converts sunlight into electricity by means of PV cells made of semiconductor materials. The

result is cheaper, greener and cleaner electricity for homeowners and businesses.

The City's Department of Planning & Permitting (DPP) is updating the online PV permit application system to allow contractors to pay the new fees electronically. More information will be available soon at www.honoluluapp.org.

Arre Named to AARP Council

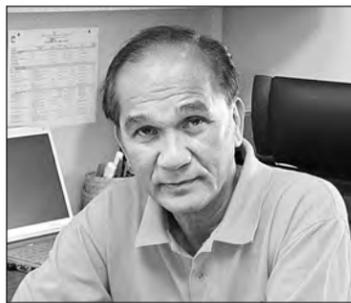
Geminiano "Toy" Arre, former Filipino Community Center (FilCom) CEO and president, has been appointed as a member of AARP Hawaii's Executive Council.

AARP Hawaii is a non-profit, nonpartisan membership organization that works to influence positive change and improve the lives of those 50 and over in Hawaii. Its execu-

tive council is an all-volunteer advisory board that shapes the 148,000-member strong organization's strategic direction for the state.

AARP Hawaii director Barbara Kim Stanton notes Arre's distinguished record of multi-cultural service in the community.

"We are delighted that he has elected to focus his energies on AARP's goal of em-



powering Hawaii residents age 50 and older to pursue their goals and dreams," Stanton says.

Arre was the first Filipino

appointed to a cabinet position in City government when he was named director of finance by former Mayor Frank Fasi. He also held a variety of City budget and legislative positions dating back to the 1970s.

From 1999 to 2004, he served as financial advisor to Manila Mayor Jose L. Atienza before assuming leadership of the FilCom Center in 2004. Arre oversaw budgeting, management, and cultural and educational programs at the FilCom for more than eight

years before retiring in 2012.

AARP estimates that by the year 2030, one in every five Americans will be age 65 or older. The organization fights for issues on behalf of older Americans, including the high cost of long-term care and access to affordable, quality health care for all generations. AARP also serves as a reliable information source on issues critical to older Americans and provides tools needed to save for retirement and protect assets.

RAIL UPDATE

Honolulu's Rail Project Remains on Track



By Dan Grabauskas

Much has taken place over the past six months regarding Honolulu's rail transit system. At

the end of last year, \$1.55 billion in federal funding was secured for the rail project with the signing of the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) between the Federal Transit Administration and the City. This federal funding will be provided in installments over the next six years, with the Hon-

olulu rail project scheduled this year to receive \$255 million of that money.

The FFGA shows the continued commitment of our federal partners in providing Honolulu with a safe, reliable and efficient transportation alternative to some of the nation's worst traffic congestion.

Following last year's ruling by the Hawaii Supreme Court, a temporary hold was placed on construction of the 20-mile rail system from West Oahu to Honolulu until all archaeological inventory survey work is completed for the rail route. In January of this year, the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transit (HART)—a semi-autonomous public transit authority tasked with overseeing the planning, construction, operation and extension of the rail system—completed the archaeological fieldwork and is now compiling the findings for state review and approval.

Rail column construction in West Oahu is scheduled to resume later this Fall. With the project being one of the largest job creators for our local construction industry, we look for-

ward to restarting work to build the rail system. Work continues on the design and engineering

phases of the project (including the train cars and other facets of the rail system), so construction can move ahead quickly as possible once it resumes.

In the near future, HART will be host community workshops to gather the public's input regarding the train stations. Our architects have already begun designing the train system and stations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and to ensure a convenient and comfortable experience for all rail passengers. Part of that design includes elevator service to all levels of the elevated train stations. There will also be easy and level access from the station boarding area onto the trains.

In addition, surveillance cameras will be installed at



numerous locations to ensure the trains, rail stations and park-and-rides are safe for passengers. The train and The-Bus will eventually be integrated to create a single systemwide fare and one-pass system.

Rail will be an efficient and reliable transportation option for the Filipino community living on Oahu. Seven of the 12 communities along the rail route from East Kapolei to Ala Moana have a significant Filipino population that could ride the train as part of their commute to and from work and other destinations.

Rail for Oahu remains on track, and HART asks for your support in moving this important project forward.

DAN GRABAUSKAS is the CEO and executive director of HART.

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LEGAL NOTES



By Reuben S. Seguritan

Contentious Issues Emerge in Immigration Proposals

bers. The Senate is seen to complete a draft bill by June of this year at the latest.

A number of House members from both parties are also aiming to come up with a draft bill in the month of February. The draft of the House bill largely reflects the framework initially presented by the Senate. Similar to the proposed framework of the bipartisan group of senators, the draft House bill provides a “path to citizenship” to undocumented immigrants, intensified enforcement and border security measures and an effective employment verification system.

The draft House bill also conditions granting permanent residence to undocumented immigrants on the government’s success in securing the borders. However, unlike the Senate framework, it does not provide for the creation of a commission tasked to make a determina-

tion whether the borders are already secure.

For the Republican senators who came up with the proposed immigration reform framework, hinging the issuance of green cards to undocumented immigrants on border security is essential.

The proposition draws major concern because there is always the issue of whether the border is secure enough and it remains uncertain how long this process would take. President Obama, for his part, stands by his proposal to provide a clear and direct path to citizenship and not just create “some vague prospect in the future that it will happen.”

Although the proposals are generally in tune with the President’s immigration plan, this is one of the key differences between the President’s plan from the Senate’s immigration reform framework and the draft House bill. This

is a critical issue which will without doubt spark long and heated debates. Another major difference is the President’s plan to provide same-sex families the same immigration benefits enjoyed by heterosexual families.

Aside from the two contentious issues, the proposals, including the President’s, put emphasis on eliminating long waits for family-based petitions, adding visa numbers to reduce backlogs and wait time for employment visas, and expediting the process for DREAMers to obtain citizenship, among others. The President’s plan particularly creates a “start-up” visa for investors and expands their opportunities in the U.S. He also recognizes the need to

invest in the country’s immigration courts and provide wider discretion for judges to keep families intact.

Also, the proposals stress the need to provide advanced degree graduates of U.S. universities in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math with green cards. In fact, a group of bipartisan senators just proposed a bill called the I-Squared Act of 2013 to address the matter.

Fleshing out the details and coming up with a complete bill will be a challenge. The President is looking to having a comprehensive immigration reform bill passed in six months. Hopefully, our legislators won’t let us down.

REUBEN S. SEGURITAN has been practicing law for over 30 years. For further information, you may call him at (212) 695 5281 or log on to his website at www.seguritan.com

Efforts towards coming up with a comprehensive immigration reform bill are rapidly gaining momentum. Bipartisan groups in both the Senate and House of Representatives are now working on their own versions of a draft bill to fix the broken immigration system.

Although the bipartisan group in the Senate earlier announced that they are aiming to complete their version of the bill by the end of March, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid recently announced that they want the draft bill to go through the “normal traditional process” even if it takes more time. This is to build the support from its Republican mem-

OPINION (from page 10, GLOBAL...)

Despite the absence of inspiring candidates to vote for, representatives of the Global Filipino Diaspora Council (GFDC) still sought to get the Comelec to reconsider its decision to disenfranchise 238,455 overseas voters.

At a scheduled meeting at the Comelec headquarters in Manila on March 1, GFDC delegates from the United Kingdom (Gene Alcantara) and Norway (Nitnit Hogelshom) explained the difficulties that overseas Filipinos encounter in traveling all the way to the nearest Philippine consular office to register and then to vote. Another explained that 250,000 Filipinos serving in maritime vessels find it next to impossible to vote in the consulates they originally registered in.

GFDC spokesman Ted Laguatan pointed out that the provision of the law Comelec relied on was simply discretionary, not mandatory, as they may have believed. Comelec Chairman Sixto Brillantes, Jr. acknowledged that perhaps the

Comelec may have been too hasty in its interpretation of the 2003 OAV law.

Overseas Voters Re-Enfranchised

On March 5, the Comelec reconsidered its decision and voted unanimously to reinstate the 238,455 overseas Filipino voters it had ordered delisted in December.

It was a major victory for the GFDC which was formed only in September of 2011 and which last year organized a European Summit of Filipinos in the Diaspora attended by over 250 delegates from 29 European countries. The GFDC plans to hold a Summit of Filipinos in the Middle East and Africa in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates on Oct. 15-18, 2014. And then in February of 2015, the 3rd Global Summit of Filipinos in the Diaspora will be held in Manila once again. And then Singapore in 2016 for the Diaspora Summit of Filipinos in Asia.

Greg Macabenta reported in his Business World column

that “the new organization has lined up a set of goals and programs that should have considerable impact on the country down the road. When that happens, perhaps the President of the Philippines will consider it fit to honor Global Filipinos with his personal presence.”

(Send comments to Rodel50@gmail.com or mail them to the Law Offices of Rodel Rodis at 2429 Ocean Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94127 or call 415.334.7800).



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Bacalao: Penance or Indulgence?

TURO-TURO
by Claude Tayag

Atendant to the deep Catholicism we've inherited from Spain's more than three centuries of colonization is the practice of fasting and/or giving up certain types of luxuries as a form of penance during Lent, in particular abstaining from eating any type of meat. Though we faithful are obligated to fast and abstain from eating meat only on Ash Wednesday (the official start of the cuaresma or 40 days of Lent) and Good Friday, a lot of devout Catholics practice varying degrees and forms of self-imposed sacrifices, the most common of which is having meatless-Fridays for the whole of Lent, or even going dessert/chocolate-less, soft drink-less, smoke-less, and of late, the good Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle urging the faithful to give up watching one's favorite telenovela (soap opera) and spend more quiet time with God this Lenten period.

Ergo, have you ever won-

dered why many Filipino households would have monggo soup and tuyô (dried salted fish) on Fridays, some not just during Lent but even as a year-round practice? And, in a strange twist of faith (pun intended), in Bantayan Island just off the northwestern tip of Cebu, the locals got papal dispensation in the 19th century (so the local historians claim) to eat meat on Good Fridays since fishermen do not set out to fish on that day, and besides, they subsist on seafood the rest of the year anyway. Stretching a bit this dispensation, the natives not only feast the whole Holy Week but also have lechon on Good Fridays (quick, book me a flight to Cebu!).

As for me, admittedly, the main reason why I anticipate with so much excitement the coming of Holy Week is not so much its religious significance (forgive me, Father, for I have sinned), but the once-a-year appearance of the precious bacalao ala vizcaina on our mother Imang During's table. This indulgence in itself may warrant some form of penance. And, as a penitence



Tejadas de bacalao rebosado: My all-time favorite bacalao dish, next to the vizcaina that my mother used to cook. I first stumbled on Casa Labra bar/restaurant way back in 1980 during my first trip to Spain, and on many succeeding visits thereafter, I never failed to make a tryst once or twice a day while I was in the city. This is an institution founded in 1860 and run by the same Molina family for the past six decades. It was brought about by the backlog of newly fried tejadas de bacalao, big slices of desalinated cod fritters in a batter so crisp and airy light, fried in olive oil to boot. Best eaten with a glass of cerveza, manzanilla or fino. Casa Labra, calle Tetuan12 (just on the side of El Corte Inglés, Puerta del Sol, Madrid).

for my wrongdoing, I willingly forego the pleasures of meat. It has always had a special niche in my heart — nay, stomach — topping my list of special-occasion dishes, not just because my mother cooked it, but because of its savory flavors like no other, with its milky white, buttery meat (oops, I mean flesh, no meat remember? Wink, wink). Though the prohibitive bacalao from Spain can be bought year-round, somehow it's never the same if you have it any other season (Dulcinea Restaurant serves it year-round). Just try having queso de bola and jamon in July, two other Spanish imports we associate with the Christmas season. But I digress too much.

What is bacalao anyway?

It is actually the Spanish name of codfish found in the cold waters of the North Atlantic. It is one of the most important fishes in the history of mankind, as fresh, frozen, or dried and salted. Locally, the imported fresh/frozen kind is known by its Japanese name gindara, while the Portuguese call it bacalhau, and the French morue. Nowadays, the term bacalao is universally accepted to mean dried salted cod. It is milky white, delicate, and tender when desalinated (usually soaked in water for 24 hours, with three changes of water), with the lomo as the prime, most expensive cut, while the tail is stringy and dry, being the cheapest cut, and lends itself well to a wide array of cooking methods and sauces.

Bacalao's superstar status in the gastronomic world hasn't always been so. In the past, its reputation has suffered from its being unattractive in appearance and considered a "penitential" food, or at best it was the poor man's fish (just as tuyô and daing are to us). And since medieval times in Spain, there has always been a heavy demand for dried salted cod, especially during Fridays and Lent. In its dried form, it keeps and travels well, especially important during those pre-refrigeration times. And much earlier than that, the Vikings valued dried fish as a

foodstuff on their long sea voyages.

This cold-water fish largely comes from the North Atlantic seas, particularly Scandinavia, Scotland and Newfoundland. But perhaps we should credit Spain and Portugal, who popularized and perfected its preparation, for the sublime status it enjoys today. Both claim to have more than 365 different ways to prepare it year-round. And it was the Basque fishermen who initially discovered, introduced and traded bacalao salado (salted) to the whole of Spain more than 600 years ago, and then spread out to its former colonies in the Americas and the Philippines. Hence, as former colonies, we all share a common "bacalao tradition" associated with Lent in our respective cuisines.

When the Spain Tourism Board invited me to attend the food conference Madrid Fusion last January, one of the specific requests I made was to try as many bacalao dishes as time permitted in the different destinations they were going to take me to after the conference. Hombre, was I in for a treat! It was a veritable bacalao road tour, a moving bacalao feast. I said it before in my last column and I'll say it again — I got more than I bargained for. There's more to eat than the vizcaina we are most familiar with.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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OUR LADY OF MANAOAG FIESTA • April 17, 2013 • Saint Jude Catholic Church, Kapolei, HI • Contact: Fil Castillo 386-0775 email: filcastillo@hawaiiantel.net; Fred Martinez 358-8049 email: fmar10nez@yahoo.com

NINE (9) DAY NOVENA FOR OUR LADY OF MANAOAG BEFORE THE FIESTA • April 18-26, 2013, 7:00 PM daily except on Wed April 24, 2013 will be 5:00 PM • Saint Jude Catholic Church, Kapolei, HI • Contact: Fil Castillo 386-0775; Fred Martinez 358-8049

CAGAYAN VALLEY ASSOCIATION INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS & ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS BALL • May 18, 2013, 6 PM • FilCom Center • Contact: Dolly Ortal - 422-1667 or 225-9997

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MAINLAND NEWS

JFAV Begins Lobbying 113th Congress

“You Filipinos won’t just go away.”

Those words were uttered by a veteran news correspondent at the time when U.S. Rep. Jackie Speier (D-California) introduced the Filipino Veterans Fairness Act of 2011 (HR 210) on behalf of pro-veterans group Justice for Filipino Veterans (JFAV).

HR 210 was never given a hearing, despite having 96 co-sponsors and two years spent by JFAV members lobbying its behalf. JFAV national coordinator Arturo Garcia blamed Republican members of the House Veterans Affairs committee under U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller (R-Florida) for ignoring the

measure.

“Despite the drawback, JFAV will return to Congress to start fresh lobbying efforts,” Garcia says.

JFAV has already lobbied senators from Hawaii and California, notably senators Mazie Hirono and Brian Schatz, and Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein, respectively. The group hopes that U.S. Rep. Speier will re-introduce HR 210 by another name for the 113th Congress and that a companion bill will be introduced in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

JFAV members are remaining optimistic since U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont), who chairs the veterans’ affairs committee, is

reportedly sympathetic to progressive causes. JFAV wants nothing less than a repeal of the Rescission Act of 1946 and recognition of the remaining Filipino veterans of World War II and giving them their long overdue benefits.

The group continued to lobby Congress even after the Obama administration passed the Filipino Veterans Compensation Fund in 2009 as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Since then, it claims that more than 59 percent, or 24,000 Filipino veterans, have been denied claims for the lump sum and remained unrecognized for the last 67 years and counting.

COVER STORY (from page 5, THE FILIPINO...)

mon cause.

Abinsay relates a story of an aging Filipino veteran who was housed at the Consulate lanai for several days while his immigration papers were being filed.

“He whispered to me that he was tired, old and wanted to go back to the Philippines,” Abinsay says. “But when he told his children there about it, they begged him to stay because his presence (in Hawaii) was the only hope for them to have a better life in America.”

This episode, according to Abinsay, ended tragically, as the veteran died after a few months.

“This lonely man passed on without fulfilling his dream and the future of his children in the Philippines,” Abinsay says.

Such was the predicament of many veterans who literally died waiting in vain. Another personal story cited by Abinsay was even sadder. He once accompanied a group of 37 Filipino veterans who were going to meet with some Congress people regarding their case.

“I was accompanying one of them—Rizal Agbayani—who was already weak. While preparing to



Filipino veterans lobby in support of the Veterans Equity Bill

board our flight back to Honolulu, I noticed him using crutches and I asked if he could manage the long trip back home,” Abinsay says.

Back in Honolulu, while Mr. Agbayani was being helped to his hotel, he collapsed and died. But his ultimate mission was accomplished and his body brought back to the Philippines with the assistance of the Philippine Consulate and various Filipino community organizations.

“He was eulogized in the halls of Congress by Rep. Bob Filner, the primary author of the bill in the House,” Abinsay says. “Agbayani’s death prompted many House members to

support the Filipino veterans, which culminated in the partial resolution of their benefits.”

According to Kaahanui, veterans who became ill and died became the shared responsibility of the Filipino Coalition for Solidarity, which worked with the State for burial assistance. Prolonged negotiations took all of two decades. Finally, the veterans were given rights towards medical benefits and burial at a national cemetery.

“In short, the epic struggle of the Filipino veterans for equity and recognition for their role in helping America’s war in the Pacific is a story of unparalleled injustice but enduring triumph of the human spirit,” Kaahanui says.

From instances like this came more determined efforts to push the veterans’ cause for other benefits due them. Eventually, through the efforts of the late Sen. Inouye, the veterans living in the U.S. got a lump sum payment of \$15,000 and those living in the Philippines got \$9,000 each as part of the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, which were included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.

Conclusion

In view of the fact that the surviving Filipino veterans, now numbering only a few thousands, are dying everyday, the urgency of the twin bills introduced by Hanabusa in Congress becomes more compelling. The family reunification bill is very much at the heart of the immigration reform issue that is now being intensely debated in Congress and other circles. Many of the adult children petitioned by their veteran-fathers have waited for as long as 23 years in the Philippines because they are lumped together with the traditional quotas that the U.S. established long ago to treat applications for immigrant visas. The separation has been excessively long and painful. The remaining veterans and their families have suffered enough. They should be granted an exemption in the interest of equity and fairness.

The bill to award the veterans a collective Congressional Gold Medal with appropriate design is essentially symbolic, but it will mean a lot to the veterans and their families. It has been given to other groups like the Japanese-American veterans of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, including the late Sen. Inouye. The Filipino-American veterans equally did their share with pride and courage on the other side of the world.

The Congressional Gold Medal represents the highest civilian honor which will remind future generations of the bravery, loyalty and sacrifice of a group of men in the distant past who gave their full devotion to the cause of justice, peace and democracy in the world.

(DR. AQUINO is Professor Emeritus at the University of Hawaii-Manoa where she was Professor of Political Science and Asian Studies and founding Director of the Center for Philippine Studies. A Ph.D. in Political Science and Southeast Asian Studies from Cornell University, she is an internationally-recognized authority on contemporary Philippine politics and society).



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