

OPINION & FEATURES

An end to the Filipino Veterans' long journey

AFTER more than six decades of struggle and fighting for benefits, the Filipino veterans of World War II may now have reached the end of their long journey. This was after a provision for benefits for Filipino WWII Veterans was inserted by Senator K. Inouye in the American Recovery and Reinstatement Act of 2009 or more popularly known as Obama's Stimulus Bill.

As far back as 1941, the Philippines was considered as a protectorate of the United States. It was then that US President Roosevelt ordered that Filipino soldiers who fought against the Japanese in the Philippines would acquire US citizenship and be granted the same privileges and benefits as US soldiers. There were approximately 250,000 Filipino soldiers and guerilla fighters who bravely fought alongside with American soldiers.

However in 1946, the Recission Act was passed, deeming the Filipino soldiers as not in "active service" and denied them most of their veterans benefits they were promised.

But in the early '90s, President Bush signed a bill that granted Filipino veterans instant US citizenship. About 30,000 veterans came to the US, but most have tried to live off with the small pension they receive and waited for the US government to give to them what they truly deserve. Sadly, most have died or returned to the Philippines, and to date, there are only about 18,000 veterans left.

Finally, Congress has approved the Stimulus Bill that includes the Filipino veterans' long overdue benefits.

Year after year, it was a continuing fight—a journey that will finally reach its destination. A journey that would give them hope that what was promised to them will now be fulfilled. (AJPress)

EDITORIAL



AJPress Photo by Andy Tecson

Deny to death

THE Senate committee on economic affairs chaired by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago resumed last Feb. 12 the inquiry into the alleged bid rigging cases of Philippine government road projects that were investigated by the World Bank. As previously announced, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo did not appear at the Senate hearing upon medical advice by personal physicians led by Dr. Antonio Sibulo. The First Gentleman was "invited" to the Senate inquiry after he was among those implicated in the supposedly "confidential" WB report.

Instead of their controversial patient, it was Dr. Sibulo, director of the Heart Institute of St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City, who appeared at the Senate hearing yesterday along with the chief legal counsel of the First Gentleman, Ruy Rondain. Dr. Sibulo reiterated to the Senators it might be too stressful and fatal for his patient to answer these allegations considering his medical condition.

The First Gentleman, who underwent open-heart surgery for dissecting aneurysm in April 9, 2007 at St. Luke's, is still undergoing regular stress therapy supervised by Dr. Sibulo at the same hospital Tuesdays and Thursdays. Dr. Sibulo related to the Senators that his patient undergoes regular stress tests that include a 30-minute treadmill exercise.

The doctor was kind enough to indulge the Senators with "Medicine 101" when Sen. Rodolfo Biazon

tried to squeeze information from him about rather personal medical details of his controversial patient. Unlike the WB, Dr. Sibulo did not invoke "confidentiality" of his patient's medical record during his Senate testimony.

Biazon cited his own personal knowledge of how the levels of treadmill stress test could be comparable measured with certain physical activities like brisk walking or hiking or playing tennis. The treadmill is an exercise equipment to determine the patient's heart capacity to absorb or withstand physical exertion.

Biazon tried to lead the doctor into saying the different levels of "stress" tests would show his patient's medical condition is in no danger by testifying at the Senate. This was after the chief legal counsel of the First Gentleman was quoted as saying in media that Dr. Sibulo allows his patient to play golf but advised against testifying before the Senate.

Describing his patient as "too emotional" to succumb to dangerous level of stress, Dr. Sibulo impressed upon the Senators that it would be too risky to compare such stress condition to the physical exertion that he gets in playing golf to the emotional stress if he testifies at the Senate.

Dr. Sibulo explained Arroyo's present health status might worsen if he will not avoid "mentally stressful" activities. He offered as an acceptable mode for his patient a written deposition where there will be no "face to face" confrontation with the Senators who would interrogate him. Such "mental stimulus," the doctor warned, could be a compounding situation to the cardiovascular problem of his patient. The risk for a recurrent dissecting aneurysm of his patient, he

admitted, is 20 percent annually and survival among this kind of cases is only 50 percent in five years.

Despite treading on this legally-protected "confidentiality" of medical record of the patient, Biazon asked matters that should be personal knowledge already of the First Gentleman. He asked the doctor whether his patient bets on his golf games which he says could add to the stress. It was no wonder why the feisty Miriam failed to control her much vaunted sharp-tongue when she finally cut down Biazon at the next round of his questions yesterday to the other witnesses.

Even opposition Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, a known arch critic of the First Gentleman, was Christian enough to relent by not forcing the presidential spouse to appear at the Senate hearing. Lacson noted the First Gentleman is a "walking time bomb" to describe the latter's medical condition even after more than two years since the heart surgery.

Also a bitter critic of the First Gentleman, opposition Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano expressed his willingness to accept a compromise arrangement. Supported by his "Ate" Sen. Pia Cayetano, Alan is willing to allow the presidential spouse to appear via remote arrangement through the Webcam to personally answer the Senators. But both insisted a medical excuse should not be a security blanket for whatever liability the First Gentleman must face and answer.

At the end of the Senate hearing, however, the presiding Senator ruled that a written deposition from the First Gentleman would be enough. While it may be the safest mode for him, medically speaking, such written deposition is a high legal risk that the First Gentleman would have to take and assume.

A blanket denial of his alleged participation in the alleged collusion among blacklisted Filipino contractors for public bidding in WB-funded projects, legally speaking, is a weak defense of one's innocence.

Himself a lawyer by profession, the First Gentleman branded the WB report allegations against him as mere hearsay and rumors that are not backed by solid evidence. He denounced as "outrageous" specifically the WB report about a Japanese contractor who purportedly linked him to bribery. Interviewed by reporters after his regular therapy at St. Luke's, the First Gentleman questioned the logic why would he personally meet with the Japanese contractor to talk about bribes.

Mr. Arroyo is walking on dangerous grounds here by going legalistic in professing his innocence. The case has taken a political life of its own that will never die like a zombie. He can deny them until he turns blue but still no one will believe it. But he has survived past scandals where he was also dragged into, including the alleged secret bank accounts he supposedly maintained in Germany.

This was exposed by then Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano during the previous Congress when the First Gentleman flew all the way to Germany along with several other House leaders and proved he has no such bank account there. From hindsight, the First Gentleman blamed Alan for causing so much stress to his health. He surmised this contributed a lot to his near fatal heart attack in 2007. "They want to kill me but I don't want to die yet," Mr. Arroyo quipped. He was smiling all right when he said it. But he was visibly hurting inside. That's the unseen stress that kills. (Philstar.com)

COMMONSENSE

Marichu A. Villanueva

Pledging virginity in vain

WE'RE at that time of the year again, when thoughts turn to amorous affairs and the merchants of love and lust start toting up potential profits and expanding markets.

Dropping by the Market! Market! mall at the Fort, one skirted the flower stalls that had spilled their boundaries, rose petals and cut stems strewn all around, entire families busy bundling up red long-stemmed roses in cellophane cones. It took a while to sink in: that in two days' time, Valentine's Day fever would descend on the country. Considering that flower vendors have only two "official" occasions to make a bundle—the Day of Hearts and the Day of the Dead—I made a silent wish that this year love would not take a back seat to financial woes and cascading unemployment rates.

It would be a pity if it does, for Valentine's Day 2009 happens to be strategically placed, occurring on a Saturday, meaning more time for lovers to indulge their romantic whims, and giving those with roving eyes and treacherous hearts another day to play faithful lover.

An episode of the TV program *Probe Team* in fact tackled this phenomenon, not confined to Filipino men, of course, but certainly one which has a disproportionate representation

among our men folk. One of the most amusing portions of the episode, in fact, was an interview with a self-confessed playboy who apparently has mended his ways. "I hope my sons will not follow my example,"

he told the interviewer, while admitting that his own father and grandfather were also Lotharios. Aware of the seeming rogue gene in his DNA, why then did he expect his sons to behave differently when he had kept the genetic disposition intact with his behavior? Of such fervent wishes are delusions made.

Perhaps another delusion is at work for parents and adults at the other extreme: those who believe telling young people to "just say no" is enough to guarantee that their purity and innocence will remain intact until the day the young folks get married.

Most often, in an attempt to convince teens to delay their sexual initiation, or gratification, adults ask young people to take "virginity

pledges," sometimes with elaborate rituals and even symbolic rings thrown in. Basically, those who take the pledge make a promise—to God and themselves, but often also to their parents

—that they will delay having sex until the day they get married. But this doesn't mean that they will delay thinking about sex, or fantasizing about it, or talking about it.



It goes with the territory, after all. Adolescence is a time of changes, in physiology, anatomy, hormonal surges, emotions, concepts

of self, and yearnings for autonomy. It is the time the body begins to prepare for reproduction, and fills the mind with an intense curiosity about its processes. And given young people's contrarian tendencies, I'm of the opinion that virginity pledges, instead of turning their minds away from making whoopee, will instead concentrate their thoughts on what they're missing.

You don't have to take my word for it. In the January issue of *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, are the results of a study by Janet Rosenbaum of Johns Hopkins University. Her research found that people who make the pledge are not less likely to engage in sex than people who don't, or more likely to delay having sex. But the avowed virgins, Rosenbaum found, are significantly less likely to use contraception or protection when they bid their virginity goodbye.

Rosenbaum used 128 different factors to ensure that her samples (both pledgers and non-pledgers) had similar attitudes toward sexual activity, including economic status and how they felt about sex and religion. So with most other variables eliminated, the crucial difference between the subjects became whether they took the pledge or not.

Along with earlier researchers, Rosenbaum found that virginity pledges have no protec-



AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



Main Office:
1150 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90017-1904
Tel: (213) 250-9797 • Fax: (213) 481-0854
e-mail: info@asianjournalinc.com
http://www.asianjournal.com

Manila Office:
Suite 208, The Manila Bank Corp., Bldg.
6772 Ayala Ave., Makati City 1226
Tel.: (632) 893-1720 • Fax: (632) 813-8746

New York and New Jersey:
5 Penn Plaza, Ste. 1932, New York, NY 10119
Tel.: (212) 655-5426 • Fax: (212) 655-9241

2500 Plaza Five, Harborside Financial Center,
Jersey City, NJ 07311
Tel.: (201) 484-7249 • Fax: (201) 484-7201

Las Vegas Sales Office:
3700 W. Desert Inn Road
Las Vegas, NV 89102
Tel.: (702) 792-6678 • Fax: (702) 792-6879

ROGER LAGMAY ORIEL
Publisher & Chairman of the Board

CORA MACABAGDAL-ORIEL
President & Executive Editor

BELLE M. SISON
Executive Vice President
Los Angeles Asian Journal

MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA
Senior Vice President
Los Angeles Asian Journal

IVY MANALANG
Vice President - Marketing

MOMAR VISAYA
Editor-in-Chief

JOSEPH PERALTA
Associate Editor

SHARON ANN BATHAN
Features Editor

MARIA LOURDES HALILI
Advertising Editor

DANTE SAMBILAY
Art Director

ANDY TECSON / TED TALAG
Photographers

BANDER LAW FIRM, LLP
Legal Counsel

ADVERTISING AND ADVERTORIAL POLICIES

Asian Journal Publications, Inc. ("AJPI") reserves the right to refuse to publish, in its sole and absolute discretion, any advertising and advertorial material submitted for publication by client. ("Client's Material")
Submission of an advertisement or advertorial to an AJPI sales representative does not constitute a commitment by AJPI to publish a Client's Material. AJPI has the option to correctly classify any Client's Material and to delete objectionable words or phrases.
Client represents and warrants that a Client's Material does not and will not contain any language or material which is libelous, slanderous or defamatory or invades any rights of privacy or publicity; does not and will not violate or infringe upon, or give rise to any adverse claim with respect to any common law or other right whatsoever (including, without limitation, any copyright, trademark, service mark or contract right) of any person or entity, or violate any other applicable law; and is not the subject of any litigation.
Publication of a Client's Material does not constitute an agreement to continue publication.
Client agrees and covenants to indemnify AJPI and its officers against any and all loss, liability, damage, expenses, cost, charges, claims, actions, causes of action, recoveries, judgments, penalties, including outside attorneys' fees (individually and collectively "Claims") which AJPI may suffer by reason of (1) Client's breach of any of the representations, warranties and agreements herein or (2) any Claims by any third party relating in any way to Client's Material.
AJPI will not be liable for failure to publish any Client's Material as requested or for more than one incorrect insertion of a Client's Material. In the event of an error, or omission in printing or publication of a Client's Material, AJPI shall be limited to an adjustment for the space occupied by the error, with maximum liability being cancellation of the cost of the first incorrect advertisement or republication of the correct advertisement.
Under no circumstances shall Asian Publications, Inc. be liable for consequential damages of any kind.

ASIAN JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS, INC. publishes the Los Angeles Asian Journal, published twice a week; the Orange County and Inland Empire Asian Journal, Northern California Asian Journal, Las Vegas Asian Journal and the New York / New Jersey Asian Journal which are published once a week and distributed to Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange Counties, Northern California, Las Vegas and New York and New Jersey respectively.
Articles published in this paper do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher. Letters to the Editor are welcome. Letters must contain complete name and return address. The materials, however, are subject to editing and revisions.
Contributions and advertising deadlines are every Mondays and Thursdays. For advertising rates and other information, please call the L.A. office at (213) 250-9797 or the Las Vegas Sales Office at (702) 792-6678 or send us an email at info@asianjournalinc.com