

# Randy Bantog

## Star Wars' Concept Designer

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO / AJPress

**A** FEW weeks ago, the first weekly television series from Lucasfilm Animation was launched—*Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, inspired by the classic *Star Wars* movies. A great hit to TV viewers of all ages, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* is as much fun to produce as it is to watch. So revealed Fil-Am Randy Bantog, a concept designer for the series. Bantog said in an earlier interview that the show's working environment is fantastic. "We work in what looks like a gigantic mansion, hidden in a valley, surrounded by lush green hills, trees, rocks and a lake. The people are very easy to work with and easy to communicate with. Working on this show is pretty incredible," said Randy who admitted that being in the series is the fulfillment of his childhood dream.

Randy has been making waves in the Filipino community ever since the news came out that a Filipino animator is one of the creative talents working behind the scenes of the new TV hit. Confessing to not having visited the Philippines since he was five years old, Bantog said most of his time is spent behind his desk, with hardly any time left for vacations. In an interview with the *Asian Journal*, Randy shares some interesting snippets of his personal and professional life.

"I was born in San Diego, California on September 22, 1981. My father served in the US Navy for over 20 years, and my mother was an architect when I was a boy. I have an older brother who is a scientist of some sort. He tried to explain what he does, it involves shooting

lasers into something or other, but it was way over my head. I'm sure he's doing something that will save the world one day though! I also have an aunt (my mom's sister) that live with us and is like a second mom to me," said Randy.

Bantog confessed that he has been drawing since he was a kid, which motivated him to pursue a career in Art. "I moved up to Los Angeles when I was 20 and studied at a few small art schools before enrolling at the Art Center College of Design, where I received my Bachelor's degree in Illustration (August of 2007). It was at Art Center that I focused on doing entertainment design for the film and video game industries," he revealed.

Randy shared with the *Asian Journal* how he got started in

the industry. He recalls, "When I realized that I wanted to become an artist working in the animation industry, one of the main things that I knew I had to do was move to LA. From there I suspected that I could get a better education at one of famous art schools in the area, where I could possibly make contacts with people that would later be working in the same field that I wanted to work in."

"At Art Center, I made many friends and met many instructors who are all working professionals. I learned from them how to break into the business, and I still keep in touch with many of those amazing people. In fact, it was my friend Jackson Sze, from Art Center, who told me I should apply for a job at Lucasfilm. If not for



him, I would never have had this amazing opportunity to be a part of the TV series that I'm currently working on," said Randy.

The Fil-Am animator credits two of his instructors who inspired him the most- Kevin Chen and Ryan Meinerding. "I learned so much of what I know about art from Kevin, and Ryan always inspired me to be a better designer and thinker. I've never seen people that have worked so hard at their craft," said Randy.

"But before all of this, I would have to say that it was my parents that motivated me the most. My mom was always encouraging me, constantly telling me that I was going to make it. And my dad was never really encouraging in the verbal or emotional sense, but was always inspiring in terms of how he approached his work ethic. After he served in the US military, he opened up an automobile repair shop with a few of his buddies. And for the first 10 years or so, I saw him go to work 10-12 hours a day, 7 days a week, and he hardly took any vacations. He still works at the same shop today, but fortunately, he doesn't have to work as many

hours as he used to. He would always tell me that it didn't matter what job you had, you should always try to do the best job you could do. You could be a janitor or a garbage man, but you should be the best possible janitor or garbage man that you can be. The huge college loan is also an important factor! I need to keep doing a good job, so I can pay it all off!" he added.

Unlike in the past when it was quite difficult for Asians to get into the industry, the art industry in Hollywood has opened its doors to many Filipinos. Randy affirmed this as he said, "In the art industry, it never really felt to me like there were any challenges being a Filipino, or of any other nationality, in terms of breaking into the industry. In the visual art field, it seems like the thing that matters the most is a person's skill and ability to do good work and meet their deadlines."

Randy's advice to other Filipino artists who want to get into the industry is, "Work hard and be friendly to people. If you want to work in a certain field, find out where that work is and go to



**Galing Pinoy** showcases the triumph of the Filipino spirit—the Filipino's innate perseverance to rise above. A double entendre, **Galing Pinoy** literally translates to both coming from (or brought to you by) the Filipino and Filipino ingenuity.



that area. Get a solid education. And it takes a lot of sacrifice and patience."

The hardworking animator admits that his present job is a dream come true and hopes to stay in the business for a long time. "Right now, I'm having fun working on our animated series, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. From here, I hope to just keep working on projects that are fun and keep me interested and motivated. Hopefully, I'll get to do work on feature films and continue to improve on my skills," said Randy, another amazing talent who makes *Pinoy*s proud. ■

## Congresswoman Hirono reintroduces Filipino WWII Veterans Family Reunification Act

**W**ASHINGTON, DC—Congresswoman Mazie K. Hirono (D-Hawai'i) reintroduced last May 14 the Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act, H.R. 2412, aimed at exempting the sons and daughters of Filipino World War II veterans from immigration quotas that have delayed the receipt of immigrant visas to the United States, which has kept these family members apart.

Some 200,000 Filipinos served with American troops during World War II. About 18,000 of those Filipino veterans are alive today. Thousands reside in the US, with a significant number of these veter-

ans living in Hawai'i.

"These soldiers were members of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East. They were led to believe that at the end of the conflict they

would be treated the same as American soldiers," said Hirono. "It took more than sixty years to begin to make good on our commitment. The Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act recognizes the special circumstances surrounding this group of soldiers."

In 1990, the Congress recognized the courage and commitment of the Filipino World War II veterans by providing them with a waiver from certain naturalization requirements. As a result, many veterans became proud US citizens and residents of our country. However, allowances were not made

for their children and many have been waiting decades for petition approval.

The Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act would allow for the further recognition of the service of these veterans by granting their children a special immigration status that would allow them to immigrate to the US and be reunited with their aging parents.

Congresswoman Hirono initially introduced the bill in 2007. A companion bill will soon be introduced by Hawai'i Senator Daniel K. Akaka in the US Senate. ■



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