

Equity Bill Facing Opposition in the House – Amb. Gaa

by RENE VILLAROMAN
AJPress

UNIVERSAL CITY – Ambassador to the United States Willy Gaa last week told a handful of Filipino World War II veterans that the Equity Bill is facing opposition in the House of Representatives. “The good news is that all parties, or at least a good number of them, agree that the services of the Filipino World War II veterans need to be recognized and that benefits are due them,” Ambassador Gaa announced during the celebration of the 67th anniversary of the founding of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) held at the Sheraton Hotel. The “Celebration of Survival” was organized by the Filipino Veterans Foundation, which is headed by Dr. Jenny Batongmalaque, daughter

of a USAFFE officer. “According to our estimates there are approximately 200 votes in favor of Senate Bill 1315 in the House,” Gaa said. He said that the House will have one more opportunity to put the bill to a vote before it goes on recess for the November elections, adding that the Equity Bill still could still be passed under the so-called “suspension rule,” but that would require a two-thirds majority of the House or 290 votes.

Gaa said that the house is committed to put the bill to a vote in September, the last time this year that the Congress will be in session before it adjourns for the elections.

“I therefore enjoin you to continue your strong lobbying efforts nationwide to secure 290 votes in support of Senate Bill 1315,” Gaa implored. “We were able to do this in the Senate; we can do this again

in the House,” Gaa said.

Col. Edwin Ramsey, who was stationed in the Philippines as a First Lieutenant with the 26th Cavalry Scouts when the war broke out, told Asian Journal that he was disappointed with the US Congress for enacting the Rescission Act of 1946.

He had appeared in Congressional hearings three times, the most recent in April, and has continued to advocate the enactment of the Equity Bill. “The Congress should absolutely correct that mistake and do everything to make up for it,” Col. Ramsey said. “I thought it (Equity Bill) had a very good probability of passing. The Senate passed it so overwhelmingly; I don’t have any idea where it stands now. I am not a politician. Therefore, I have no way of knowing what had happened.”

Col. Ramsey, 91, fought through



Commodore Ramon Alcaraz (middle) receiving a Legacy Award from Philippine Ambassador Willy Gaa. At right is Dr. Ed Banez of Philippine Medical Association.

AJPress Photo by Rene Villaroman



Private Rommy Entac and his wife, Lucita, view a war memorabilia exhibit during the celebration of USAFFE's 67th anniversary at the Universal Sheraton Hotel.

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the war in Bataan. Upon the surrender of USAFFE forces, Ramsey, who was 24 at the time, escaped and organized guerilla forces in Central Luzon. His campaign covered a wide area from Manila to Lingayen Gulf and between the Sierra Madre mountains and the Zambales mountains.

He was recognized for his effort in organizing 40,000 guerilla troops, and continued fighting against the Japanese forces for three-and-a-half years behind enemy lines. “Unfortunately, most of my comrades were captured, executed or killed, and fortunately, I happened to be the one to live through it,” Ramsey recalls.

Ramsey, General Tagumpay Nanadiego and Commodore Ramon Alcaraz received FVF “Legacy

Awards” presented to them by Ambassador Gaa, assisted by Dr. Batongmalaque and Dr. Ed Banez, President of Philippine Medical Association, who co-sponsored the event, together with the Philippine Nurses Association of Southern California.

Legislative Leadership award recipients Sen. Daniel Akaka, Sen. Daniel Inouye and Rep. Bob Filner, who were unable to attend, accepted their awards through videotaped messages.

“The celebration of the 67th anniversary of the USAFFE completes a story of courage, honor, and extreme sacrifice of accomplished men and women who have gone through a common experience of the Second World War,” declared Gaa. “It is also a story of friendship

between people bounded by shared values of freedom and democracy. But it is a story that deserves a happy ending sooner,” Gaa concluded.

One of the handful of Filipino veterans that attended the commemoration was Private Rommy Entac, 89. He arrived with his wife, Lucita, and they admired a small exhibit of WWII memorabilia – consisting of medals, vintage rifles, period uniforms, sepia and black-and-white photographs and paintings depicting battle scenes. Entac served in Quezon, then he was sent to the Bataan theater and fought in the towns of Balanga, Abucay, Pilar and Orani. He was captured and endured the “Death March” to Capas, Tarlac. He received two medals for his service, one of which is a Purple Heart. ■

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Norberto F. Reyes III is Of Counsel to Bander Law Firm, LLP, and he currently serves as general counsel in the petroleum and alternative energy industries. For over 16 years Mr. Reyes was the principal of Norberto F. Reyes, III & Associates, A Professional Law Corporation, based in Anaheim, CA.

He focuses on business law and litigation, commercial real estate transactions, contracts, business and corporate matters, international commercial and project finance, and white collar criminal defense. He received his J.D. from Western State University in Fullerton, CA in 1991, and has conducted more than 30 jury trials, obtaining millions of dollars in jury verdicts and settlements for his clients.

He is a member of the Orange County Bar Association (Real Estate, Business Litigation Section, and Corporate Counsel Sections), the Los Angeles County Bar Association, the California Public Defender's Association, and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. He has previously served as legal counsel for the Asian Business Association of Orange County, and is a founding member of the Filipino-American Chamber of Commerce of Orange County. He is also a licensed California Real Estate Broker.



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Associate Attorney Mary Lyn Tanawan Sanga is licensed and experienced practicing law in both California and the Philippines. Ms. Sanga practiced corporation, tax, labor and transactional law in the Philippines for more than five years with the Makati firm of Folosco Morallos & Hecce before coming to America in 2006. Joining Bander Law Firm as a legal assistant in February 2007, Ms. Sanga passed the California bar on her first try in May 2008. Ms. Sanga's emphasis practice areas are immigration and naturalization law and business litigation. Ms. Sanga has a Bachelor of Science degree in economics from the University of the Philippines (U.P.) in 1992, and obtained her Bachelor of Laws in 2000, also from the University of the Philippines. Ms. Sanga wrote the Philippine law chapters for Secured Transactions in International Practice (2003) and Security Over Immovables in Selected Jurisdiction (2005) published by Kluwer Law International under the auspices of the Center for International Legal Studies, Salzburg, Austria. She has also worked as a systems analyst for Metropolitan Bank & Trust Company, Manila, Philippines, and for Atty. Bernard Wolfdorf, a leading business immigration attorney, in Santa Monica, CA. She is married and has a baby girl.

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Gawad Kalinga Targets...

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aimed at the young FilAms.

“It’s important to invite the second and third generation [FilAm] to the GK cause,” said Meloto to a group of FilAm students. “It’s the same massive poverty today that forced many of your parents to flee the country...As long as your parent’s county remains a third world, you’ll never be able to be proud of being a Filipino.”

“We have the numbers,” added Meloto. “But we are not united. Use GK as a vehicle for uniting and nation building.”

Since founding GK, the organization has helped build more than 1,700 villages and helped 200,000 families in the Philippines, according to Meloto.

But there’s more work to be done.

Meloto said that their new goal is build homes for five million families, the number of people in the Philippines who consider themselves poor.

“I have no doubt it can be done,” he said.

Last year, his son-in-law Dylan Wilk drove with his family more than 25,000 miles across the US, visiting 82 cities in a three-month span to spread the word about GK.

Meloto said the object is to set up branches of GK all across the

US. He understands that the one of the best way is to tap the FilAm youth and college market. California State University, Fullerton FilAm student Christopher Cerame said it’s important for his peers to give back to their roots. “It’s their culture whether they admit it or not,” he said. “When you get older you start realizing these are your people that need help.” ■

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