

## The Wit, Wisdom and Humor of Fred Burce Bunao - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes (Guest Columnist)

Wednesday, 31 October 2007 07:06 - Last Updated Saturday, 28 June 2008 04:45

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I always tell friends that I learned more about literature from Poet-pundit Fred Burce Bunao than from my journalism professors in San Beda College. Mr. Bunao has been my literary mentor since the late 1980s.

There is one other important lesson that I learned from my literary guru. Mr. Bunao says that the best way to deflect criticism, especially the unkind and/or unfounded ones, is to use satirical humor in answering the critics or detractors.

When the national executive officers (NEOs) of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA) started bashing this writer as "a crazy troublemaker out to destroy the federation," Mr. Bunao came up with the perfect answer. He said that he conducted an informal survey among Filipinos in Southern California and these were the results: "One-third of those polled said that Bobby Reyes is crazy but not a troublemaker. Another third said that Reyes is a troublemaker but is not crazy. And the final third said that Bobby is simply trouble if one does not practice accountability and transparency." So, I started quoting Mr. Bunao in replying to the NaFFAA NEOs and people liked his witty answer. And folks remembered more the lack of accountability and transparency in the NaFFAA than its NEOs' vicious description of me.

I have been jotting down the instances when Mr. Bunao displayed effortlessly his wit, wisdom and humor for several years now.

Like when Mr. Bunao and I were drinking coffee in a donut shop in Beverly Boulevard and one of his friends came in. The friend joined us for coffee. Mr. Bunao's friend asked about his wife and children. The poet-pundit said that everybody in the family was OK. Then the friend asked where Mr. Bunao's physician-son was? Mr. Bunao said that his son was in a prison in Massachusetts. The friend nearly cried and said, "What a pity . . ." Mr. Bunao said that there was no need to pity his son, who was working as the physician in the prison's clinic.

Then Mr. Bunao told the friend that I came from the Bicol Region. His friend remarked that Mr. Bunao is also a Bicolano. Mr. Bunao said that his parents were from Albay but he was born in Manila. The friend remarked, "Pero sa Bicol ka lumaki, Fred?" ("But you grew up in Bicol, Fred?") Mr. Bunao, whose height is below five feet, answered, "E, kung sa Maynila hindi ako lumaki, sa Bicol pa kaya?" ("If I did not grow tall in Manila, how much more in Bicol?") I nearly spilled my cup of coffee, as I laughed loud and hard at Mr. Bunao's joke.

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Then came in another writer, Bob Corrales, who joined us for more coffee. Mr. Corrales asked Mr. Bunao and me to look at, and perhaps edit, his manuscript of a short story. Mr. Bunao read the introduction of the writer, which said, "Bob Corrales is a Filipino-American short story writer." Mr. Bunao said that a hyphen should be inserted between "short" and "story." Mr. Corrales, who is an inch or so taller than Mr. Bunao, asked why the need for the hyphen? Mr. Bunao said that the adjective "short" refers to the story and not to the writer.

Like the NaFFAA founder, Mr. Bunao has also the early symptoms of Parkinson's Disease (PD). I asked the poet-pundit how he was taking it. He told me that the PD brings also some advantage. "Like what?" I asked.

"Well, in the morning when I mix my usual cup of coffee, I simply pour into a cup of hot water the instant coffee, the right amount of sugar and cream and then I let the shaking of my hand take over. I do not need any stirrer to mix the ingredients," Mr. Bunao said.

Well, if Mr. Bunao can laugh about his PD, perhaps other Filipinos, especially Filipino Americans, should emulate his wit and humor. Imitating his satirical wisdom is like the icing on the cake of life. Yes, life is too short, unless it is accompanied by a robust simulation of the poet-pundit's zest for the funny bones.

(To be continued . . .)

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