

This article started with a note to Bobby Reyes from Angie S, the moderator of the Mayon eGroup:

Angie S wrote: "I note your comment with interest about people who have made even small fortunes changing their lifestyles. Not necessarily so. I personally know some relatively wealthy people who DON'T look the part.

"Like someone who won (the lottery in 1996) \$27-million and still lives in the same house, does the same things, continues with the usual routine. Heck, most non-rich Filipinos would put her to shame! As a matter of fact the ongoing joke in our family gatherings is that she looks poorer as time goes by . . .

Editor's Note: This article was originally published in April 2001 in the now-defunct yimby.com (the forerunner of this website). It started from a Dialogue in the Mayon eGroup, an online community discussion group of Overseas Bicolnons (originally from the Bicol Region in the Philippines). "And I have a really good friend who made his fortune in commercial real estate and as well as (being a technologist by training), helping get some software startups off the ground so they could go public. He's made some of his fortune that way, thru IPOs. A multimillionaire, yet he's the most unassuming person I've ever encountered. Very down-to-earth, wears a Casio watch, wears very casual clothes, drives a Volvo (and he bought it slightly used) . . .

"Bobby, in my area, outward appearances as the gauge for wealth can be very misleading. People with the real wealth look like slobs - I don't mean filthy - just a tad sloppy. And they look boring. No flashy ornaments.

"Recently I read the runaway bestseller, 'The Millionaire Next Door' which was based on 20 years worth of research into the secrets of most of America's wealthy. Here's an excerpt, based on their findings.

"We define wealthy differently. We do not define wealthy, affluent, or rich in terms of material possessions. Many people who display a high-consumption lifestyle have LITTLE or NO investments, appreciable assets, income-producing assets, common stocks, bonds, private businesses, oil/gas rights or timberland. Conversely those people whom we define as BEING

Unmasking the Rich and Infamous Among Filipino Americans - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

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WEALTHY get more pleasure from owning substantial amounts of appreciable assets than DISPLAYING a high consumption lifestyle.'

"The book (by Stanley, Ph.D. & Danko, Ph.D.) is a great eye-opener and dispels a lot of myths about America's rich."

A Retort from Bobby to Angie S:

There are exceptions of course to the practice of those who change lifestyles after earning small fortunes or receiving inheritance.

I know of many friends who remain the same true unassuming pals as in the days when most of us were riding jeepneys in Manila and elsewhere. But I have been also researching on Filipino Americans who tried to live the life of the rich and the famous of America and ended up fleeing the United States as they were nothing but crooks in the proverbial sheep's clothing.

I am writing a historical novel about these rich and (in)famous (sic) Filipino Americans. Take this woman character in the novel. She insists on renting a one-bedroom apartment in Beverly Hills because she loves the zip code (that's the title of a television show) and she assumes that people think that residents of Beverly Hills are that rich. (But she never invites friends to her flat because people would get to know how small it is.) She loves to be called "Doctor" even if she earned her Ph. D. from a correspondence school. She carries the Ph. D. title in her check, in all correspondence and even in the church collection envelope. (There is a story that she returned once the collection envelope to the church because it did not carry "Ph. D." after her name.)

She always wears the same 5-carat diamond pendant to all occasions, especially at functions at the Philippine Consulate General. But in reality her wardrobe and jewelry pieces are very limited, as she keeps on wearing the same red dresses and pendant to almost all functions. In fact my friends and I always make a small bet on whether she would wear the same red dress at functions that we attend. (Why she prefers red dresses? Remember that movie, "Lady in Red?" that was shot in Beverly Hills? But she forgets that the lady character played the role of a woman of the night.) She drives a Mercedes Benz but it's an old car, vintage 1970s.

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People say that she, being a retiree, does not really earn that much from a financial nest egg. So she keeps on organizing fundraisers supposedly for Filipino-American causes but she does not submit financial reports about the events. She loves to be called as the Number-One Public Figure in the Filipino-American community not only in Southern California but also in the entire United States

. And this woman has guts to publicize her activities. Like when she and her husband attended a function at a private reception thrown by another couple for a visiting Filipino senator and his wife. This woman and her husband posed with the visiting dignitary and did not even invite the party hosts to join them. Then she publicized the photo in many Filipino-American newspapers with the following caption, "Mr. and Dr. XWY pose with Filipino Senator and Mrs. ABC at a recent reception they hosted for the visiting Filipino official."

Yes, this lady in red has the guts to upstage the bride in a wedding reception and even take the attention away from the deceased during wakes and funerals.

The chapter for this character is tentatively called, "The Countess of Tehachapi." Why the title? She loves to count donations that her group and she keep without accounting the proceeds to the donors and to the public. Like their project to build a \$2-million religious shrine at a mountain in Tehachapi, California. The shrine was not built at all. No refund was made to the donors.

{xtypo_quote} Editor's Note: Actually Bobby Reyes published this story about the "Lady in Red" in June 2007, as per this hyperlink, [A Parable of the Filipino Ph.D. in Beverly Hills](#) {/xtypo_quote}

Another chapter in the book is about the infamous Jun Reodica. (He is the one who fled supposedly to the Philippines while leaving some \$124-million in unaccounted loans from General Motors and several banks in Southern California.) The chapter about him is tentatively titled: "The Grand Count of Chevrolet." Yes, my book will be about Filipino Americans who rose from rags to riches and turned their success stories into prison sentences and notoriety primarily because of vanity and greediness.

Writing this book is part of my crusade to force individuals like this Beverly Hills-based Filipino-American lady in red to make public accounting of their fundraising schemes. Hopefully my written work may become a satirical Filipino version of Stanley's and Danko's book that will "dispel a lot of myths about America's rich" of Filipino ancestry.

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Hopefully someday my book will come out someday on an Easter Sunday. I hope to help raise the image of the Filipino American with that of the Risen Redeemer. And our community may probably really start to ostracize the supposed Filipino-American rich and (in)famous who are really crooks taking advantage of the friendship, the goodwill and the naiveness of our people.

A Rejoinder from Jay

"Nice insight, as if we are reading here a 21st-century chapter of Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*. Nothing has changed indeed; the 'cancers' a century ago still exist today . . ." – Jay Caedo of San Francisco

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CA
, and Batangas, PHP

I replied to Brother Jay, my fraternity brother at the Ateneo de Manila College of Law: "My remarks about your comments are found in another article, which is reprinted with this piece. The second article is entitled, "

[A Filipino-American Story of Death and Redemption for Lent \(And Remembering Edgar Soller\)](#)
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(To be continued . . .)

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