

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Friday, 23 January 2009 12:24 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2015 11:37

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**By Bobby M. Reyes**

Very few Filipinos and Overseas Filipinos, even Americans and Canadians of Filipino descent, know the roles early Filipino settlers played in naming key American and Canadian territories. Here goes . . .

**Did you know that an American state whose capital is Salem was named after its first Bicolano settler?** This writer heard it first from Los Angeles (California) Superior Court Judge Mel Red Recana, who originally hailed from the Province of Albay in the Bicol Region. The Recana story says that when the first Caucasian-American settlers arrived in what is now the City of Portland, they asked the Native-American Indians the name of the place. The Indians thought that the white guys were asking for the nickname of the Bicolano immigrant. So, they answered, "Oregon." And so the white guys named it after the Bicolano and now the territory is known as the Great State of Oregon. The Honorable Judge Recana refuses to tell how and when the first Bicolano immigrant arrived in what is now Oregon. He invokes the Fifth Amendment.

**Did you know a Filipino settler allegedly named the biggest city in Ontario Province and even Canada itself?** The story goes that the first English colonizers asked for the name of the

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place from the first guy they met. That guy was a Filipino immigrant. The Filipino thought that the English were asking for the name of the fried bananas wrapped in spring-roll shells that he was eating. So, the Filipino answered, "Turon, ito." And that was how Toronto got named. Then the English asked for the name of the entire territory. The Filipino thought that he was being asked how he made his living and so he answered, "Kana diyan, kana doon, kana dito." The English thought the name was too long and they cut it short to "Canada." No, the story did not come from Judge Recana. This writer, who spent Christmas 1978 in Toronto, heard it from a Chinese-Canadian grocery operator whose ancestor allegedly sold the spring-roll shell to the Filipino settler.

**Did you know that a Filipino was responsible for the name of the state where Sarah Palin is the state governor?** The story goes that in 1741, Vitus Bering, who led an expedition for the Russian Navy, asked the first natives they met the name of the place. The guy who answered was a Filipino fisherman who was playing poker with some Eskimos. Just as Admiral Bering posed the question, the Filipino settler showed his pair of aces to the Eskimo player who had a pair of kings and said, "Na-alas ka, Noy." The story said that Admiral Bering heard only "Alas-ka" and so he wrote it down and reported the name of the latest addition to the Russian Empire after he returned to Moscow. Yes, that Filipino settler in Alaska was probably a fellow Bicolano, as Judge Recana and this writer are. Actually the source of this tall tale is another Bicolano, Poet-pundit Fred Burce Bunao.

**Speaking of tall tales, did you know that a Filipino-American wannabe writer has been named the American version of Aesop?** This Northern California-based Filipino-American self-proclaimed journalist has been known to write news articles and commentaries in the style of fables and fairy tales. Professional journalists now call him the "perrytale" writer.

**Did you know that it was Chicago-based journalist Joseph G. Lariosa who coined "perrytale?"** Did you know that Mr. Lariosa hails from the Donsol (Sorsogon Province), the

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“hometown” of the Butandings (whale sharks)? And did you know that whale sharks travel from Donsol all the way to Seattle/Tacoma area and then on to Alaska and then back to the Philippines?

**Speaking further of the State of Washington and fairies**, did you know that a community leader in Seattle has been dubbed affectionately by her friends as the Filipino-American “Fairy Godmother?” Her name is Ms. Anita Sese.

**Did you know that Ms. Anita is planning to come up with a biographical book?** Its tentative title is “The Life and Loves of a Filipino ‘Fairy Godmother’ in America.” She says, however, that she will not hire the perrytale author to write her biography. Perhaps Mr. Lariosa and/or Seattle-based writer Jesse Jose would be interested in writing it? By the way, former U.P. Prof. Cesar Torres coined the term, “Filipino Fairy Godmother,” which he used to honor Ms. Anita.

**Did you know that Ms. Anita used to look as attractive as Elizabeth Taylor was during their younger days?** But did you know that Ms. Anita has more marriages (and divorces as well) than Ms. Taylor? And that is why Messrs. Jose and Lariosa and this writer bet that Ms. Sese’s book will surely become a best seller. # # #

**Editor’s Note:** To read the earlier parts of this series, please click on these hyperlinks:

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