

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Sunday, 27 March 2011 16:32 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 March 2014 19:37

---

By Roberto Reyes Mercado

### **Filipino Writers Can Write about Changing Finally the Filipino Character Because We Have Many Tools to Advance the Cause**

This story, which is a series of e-mails and commentaries, began on April 8, 2001, at 2:53:53 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time, when Ms. Zen Lopez sent e-mails to Filipino-American writers in Southern California

. I was one of the recipients of the e-mail.

Ms. Lopez said in her media advisory:

QUOTE.

"I still find each day too short ...  
for all the thoughts I want to think,  
all the walks I want to take,  
all of the books I want to read,  
and all of the friends I want to see."  
John Burroughs

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of Edgar Soller.

Edgar passed away Thursday, April 5, 2001, at 8:30 pm Los Angeles time. His wife, Zaida, was with him. He is now with the Lord. May his soul rest in peace, Amen.

Cards, letters and donations can be mailed to:

Zaida Soller

1323 Hallwood Court

Upland, CA 91786

USA

e-mail: [kareena@worldnet.att.net](mailto:kareena@worldnet.att.net) (Daughter, Sunshine's email) UNQUOTE.

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Sunday, 27 March 2011 16:32 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 March 2014 19:37

---

Editor's Note: This article was originally published in the now-defunct yimby.com, the forerunner of this website. We thought to reprint it, as it contains still lessons for Filipino Americans, especially the members of the Fil-Am working press.

In the e-mail, Ms. Lopez also provided the funeral arrangements.

### **Bobby Reyes Replies on Behalf of the MBC**

Roberto Reyes Mercado replies on April 11, 2001, for and on behalf of the Media Breakfast Club (MBC) of  
Los Angeles, California:

QUOTE.

To the Family of the late Edgar Soller:

We at the Media Breakfast Club will include Edgar Soller in the invocation portion of our 505th breakfast meeting, which will be held today from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Social Hall of the FACLA in Temple St., Los Angeles.

The Media Breakfast Club is the only Filipino-led media organization in the United States that remembers the Los Angeles-based Filipino and Filipino-American writers and media practitioners who have passed away. We will include Edgar Soller in the list of our dead comrades, so that we can continue to pray for them during Memorial Day, All Saints' Day, Christmas, New Year and their death anniversaries. We also established in 1999 this practice of remembering the dead members of the Filipino-American Fourth Estate of Los Angeles at the annual Christmas party tendered for the media by the Philippine Consulate General.

Please accept our heartfelt condolences in your hours of grief. Some of us in the Media Breakfast Club will visit with you during the wake and join you at the interment.

With our prayers,

The Officers and Members of the Media Breakfast Club

PS: And thank you, Zen Lopez, for letting us know of Edgar's passing away.

UNQUOTE.

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Sunday, 27 March 2011 16:32 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 March 2014 19:37

---

### **A Ms. Lydia Makes a Sarcastic Comment . . .**

Lydia (not her real name) was one of the recipients of Zen Lopez's e-mail and of Roberto's reply that was sent to Ms. Lopez's e-mail list by BCC (Blind Copy). Lydia e-mailed in turn Roberto on April 14, 2001

. She said:

{xtypo\_quote} That's commendable. To Bobby Reyes, if you only are as kind to living people, too ...– Lydia {/xtypo\_quote}

Roberto replies to Lydia and to Jay of the Mayon eGroup. (Editor's Note: Please read Jay Caedo's comments and the other postings in the Mayon eGroups in the article entitled, [Unmasking the Rich and Infamous Among Filipino Americans](#))

Dear Lydia and Jay:

Firstly, thank you, Lydia, for giving me the commendation. The Media Breakfast Club (MBC) started praying for its members who died in 1994. Then we decided to pray also for our fellow Los Angeles-based Filipino-American writers and media practitioners who have passed away, even if they died prior to the founding of the MBC or even if they refused to join it in their lifetime. Because we thought that politics should not be part of the world of the dead. In other words we decided to pray for our dead comrades because we felt that only in death could Filipino writers be united. Because we are so divided while alive that there are actually four Filipino-American media organizations in Southern California (three press clubs and the MBC).

I am not sure what you mean by the phrase, "kind to living people."

If you, Lydia, consider my frankness as a writer and as a friend as being unkind, then perhaps your thinking comes as a result of the supposed flawed character of the typical Filipino or Filipino American. The average Filipino considers it unkind for one to tell the community of what ails its people, especially its leaders. It is a "No, No," among Filipinos to publicize or display in public the dirty linen of the community. Filipinos, or for that matter, Filipino Americans, just act meekly in front of their leaders or friends that they may be accusing – for instance of corruption or dishonesty – and they would just talk behind the leader's or friend's back, as a way of protest.

If you have noticed, I have been waging a crusade – full time for almost a decade now – of trying to change the character of the Filipino. Because sadly in the Philippines, and even in the Filipino-American community, character often does not count. And I don't select targets, be they be bishops in the Philippine Catholic Church, Philippine tourism secretaries or community leaders in Southern California or at the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA) headquarters in Washington

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Sunday, 27 March 2011 16:32 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 March 2014 19:37

---

DC

. For as long as I see corruption, lack of accountability and/or abuse of discretion or indiscretion, I use the power of the pen, nay, the word processor and now the computer, in unmasking the perpetrators and in demanding reforms and penalties for those who take advantage of the kindness of the Filipino people. When I started my crusade I was labeled as a "crazy SOB, a mad troublemaker who was a solitary voice in the wilderness . . ."

But I persisted. I self-published a political novel in December 1993 and called it, "One Day in the Life of a Filipino Sonovabitch." If you have not seen its cover, I had the faces of Ferdinand Marcos, Ninoy Aquino, Imelda Marcos and Cory Aquino on it. (You have to read it to know that the Filipino leaders in the cover were not the SOB referred to in the novel.) I started giving the Philippine tourism secretaries a citation or prize called the "Oscar S. Tupido Award." Because I adopted the motto of the American literary legend, Jessica Mitford. Her motto said: "While I cannot change the world, I can embarrass the guilty."

At the start of the crusade I was just photocopying my essays and handing them out at the MBC meetings or mailing them to friends. Many Filipino-American publications refused to print my essays and commentaries. Then my son equipped me with a computer and the AOL as the ISP . Then in September 1999 we launched the Yimby.com (now the MabuhayRadio.com).

Subsequently the (now-defunct)

*Diario Veritas*

of San Diego (CA), the

*Philippine Time*

(now called the

*Fil-Am Weekly MegaScene*

of Chicago (IL) and the

*Philippine Sentinel*

of Houston (TX) are periodically printing my articles. The

*Filipino Express*

of Jersey City (NJ) has invited me also to send to them my articles and materials.

{xtypo\_quote} Editor's Note: Bobby Reyes was forced to fold up the yimby.com when its webmaster, Bill Saunders, died and he took to his grave the passwords for the domain name, as registered with Register.com, and its Internet service provider. The MabuhayRadio.com continues the tradition established by the yimby.com. {/xtypo\_quote}

If WE, or at least a majority of our fellow writers, friends and associates, work together perhaps WE can indeed change the character of the Filipino in a shorter time. Perhaps we can change for the better the character of our people in one generation, instead of two to three generations.

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Sunday, 27 March 2011 16:32 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 March 2014 19:37

---

I think that my crusade is getting a lot of support. Remember when Lourdes A. Ongkeko, the president of a press club "expelled" me (without any hearing or cause) from the organization in 1992? I was kicked out because I demanded that she issue audited financial reports and show us the club's bank statements. No one among the 70 other members of the association stood up to protest my expulsion. But slowly many of the association members, including its founding president and former presidents, began questioning the club leadership. Eventually some of its former officers and members who stepped into my shoes were also unceremoniously kicked out. Many more refused to renew their membership. Now the club is down to about 10 members (or even less) and has become the laughing stock of the community. The club cannot attract even the minimum number of members to fill up its 17 elective positions. The Media Breakfast Club that I organized in 1993 now attracts many of the former club members. Last Wednesday we held our 505th meeting and 21 Filipino-American media practitioners and more than 30 community leaders attended it.

While at the start of the crusade, many organizations literally avoided me for thinking wrongly that I was a troublemaker, now I am a member or officer of 35 associations. Sometimes I am embarrassed by my newly-found image as some kind of a folk hero. As you probably heard that my image as a crusader was helped by the libel case filed against me by Mrs. Ongkeko. I consider the libel case not only as my fulfillment as a writer but also as an expensive way to know the truth. (Editor's Notes: For the record and information of all, here are the details about the libel case. The *Manila Bulletin* was the first to publish on Sept. 25, 2000, the story about the libel suit filed against Roberto Reyes Mercado. The case is still pending as of April 15, 2001

. Joseph Lariosa, the Chicago-based correspondent of the *Manila Bulletin*, wrote the story that landed on the Philippine publication's front-page. The *Manila Bulletin* also placed the libel story in its web site, with the address:

<http://www.mb.com.ph/MAIN/2000-09/MN092508.asp>

⋮  
(Page is no longer found or available.)

### **No Longer a Solitary Voice in the Fil-Am Wilderness**

I think that I am no longer alone in this fight to change the character of the Filipino. This morning I was invited to deliver the closing remarks at the 52nd anniversary ceremony of the Filipino-American Community of Los Angeles (FACLA). The Filipino consul general and the only Filipino-American superior court judge in Los Angeles were the guests of honor. My wife and I received also certificates of appreciation for the financial and moral assistance that we extended

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Sunday, 27 March 2011 16:32 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 March 2014 19:37

---

the FACLA in 2000 and 2001.

I'm sorry for emulating today Carlos P. Romulo and becoming also an I-specialist. But there is hope that WE Filipino writers can write about changing finally the Filipino character because we have many tools to advance the cause. Unlike Jose P. Rizal, we have today the information highway and we can reach many more households that our national heroes at the turn of the 20th century could not even target in their dreams.

**“Edgar Soller was buried yesterday, a Good Friday. Perhaps tomorrow, Easter Sunday, Edgar and all of our dead writer-friends may be able to persuade in the Next World the Risen Redeemer to usher in redemption for the Filipino-American media and the Filipino nation.” – Bobby Reyes**

### **Remembering Edgar Soller, the Artist and “Bayanihan” Dancer**

And talking back of our departed friend, Edgar Soller, I found that even in death the Filipino-American media could not be united. Aside from Oscar Jornacion and Aurora "Awee" Abayari, Edgar's bosses in the *California Examiner* (where Edgar was the editorial cartoonist), only Al R. Alicante and I were the only other members of the Filipino-American media present at the funeral service and interment. (Mr. Alicante writes also a column for the *California Examiner* and he is also an MBC member.)

Did you know that aside from being an outstanding cartoonist, graphics artist and painter, Edgar was also a member of the world-renowned Bayanihan Dance troupe? Edgar's fellow members in the Bayanihan Alumni Worldwide not only showed up at his funeral but also hosted the reception for the Soller Family and their friends who showed up to pay their last respect to their fallen colleague. Probably dancers have better rapport among themselves than writers do?

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Sunday, 27 March 2011 16:32 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 March 2014 19:37

---

## **Jay Caedo of the Bay Area Comments**

By the way, Jay Caedo of San Francisco, California, commented about a book project that I am doing. Jay, my blind fraternity brother, said in a posting at the Mayon eGroup about my forthcoming book, "

***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 . . .***

" Rizal, the foremost Filipino national hero, tried too to change the character of his countrymen. He did not live long enough to push his program.

Perhaps Edgar Soller's untimely death might serve now to unite our peers and eventually our people. For how can writers and journalists and book authors write about the unity of their people if they themselves cannot unite?

Edgar Soller was buried yesterday, a Good Friday. Perhaps tomorrow, Easter Sunday, Edgar and all of our dead writer-friends may be able to persuade in the Next World the Risen Redeemer to usher in redemption for the Filipino-American media and the Filipino nation. If this happens, perhaps the character of the Filipino will change for the better, in which case all of us will be kinder to the living and more so to the dead.

Happy Easter,

Roberto

April 14, 2001, at Los Angeles, California # # #

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)