

Very few people now remember the exploits of Filipino veterans, especially their great (and only major) victory at Bessang Pass in Ilocos Sur on June 14, 1945

. Well, several scions of Filipino veterans at the Media Breakfast Club (MBC) of

Los Angeles

are determined to remind the coming generations of Filipino Americans the history of their elders, especially during World War II. For the past six years, the MBC members have combined the Bessang Pass Victory Day with the United States Flag Day and the anniversary of the

Equity

Village

at the

MacArthur

Park

in

Los Angeles

,

California

.

On Sunday, June 14, 2009, at 11:00 a.m., the MBC members, several veterans and their kin and friends will mark the U.S. Flag Day, the Bessang Pass Victory Day and the 12th anniversary of the

Equity

Village

at the Gen. Douglas MacArthur monument at the

MacArthur

Park

. The monument is located near the corner of

Seventh Street

and
Alvarado Street
at the
MacArthur
Park

. The commemoration will consist mainly of a stroll in the park, silent prayers for the departed veterans and hugs for the living veterans in attendance.

It was on Flag Day on June 14, 1997, that Filipino WWII veterans decided to chain themselves to the MacArthur monument at

MacArthur
Park

as a dramatic protest of the inaction of the United States Congress on their lobby to secure equality with other American veterans and secure the benefits due them. The veterans and their supporters decided to make a camp at the MacArthur monument and they called it the “

Equity
Village

.” It was only on
April 20, 1998

, did the Los Angeles City Parks Department close the veterans’ campsite.

Eventually, the leaders of the Filipino veterans asked their pro-bono counsel, Atty. Joel R. Bander, to form and incorporate an “Equity Village Foundation,” which is at present a dormant entity. Many of the original foundation incorporators and officers have died.

There were simple ceremonies at the MacArthur Park that commemorated the Equity Village during the U.S. Flag Day from 1999 to 2002. As more and more of the Filipino veterans and their leaders passed away, the June 14th commemoration got less and lesser publicity and few and fewer people in attendance.

The MBC decided to hold from 2003 to 2008 the combined U.S. Flag Day, Bessang Pass Victory Day and the anniversary of the Equity Village at the Social Hall of the Filipino-American Community of Los Angeles (FACLA) on Temple St.

,
Los Angeles

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Last Wednesday, June 10, 2009, at their club's 998th meeting, the MBC members decided to move back the site to MacArthur Park and get matters organized for a bigger celebration starting on June 14, 2010, and hopefully every year thereafter.

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

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Some of the MBC members cannot understand why the Filipino-American community and even the Philippine government are not enthusiastic about commemorating the Bessang Pass Victory Day – as celebrated with the U.S. Flag Day and the Equity-Village anniversary. Many Overseas Filipinos and Filipinos would rather commemorate defeats like the Bataaan Day (now called “Day of Valor” or “Araw ng Kagitingan”) or Corregidor Day. Or for that matter, why does the Filipino-American community spend more-than \$130,000 to celebrate one Philippine Independence Grand Ball in Los Angeles and budget exactly zero dollars for even a Day of Remembrance at MacArthur Park?

Perhaps our readers can see the irony in the parody written by our website’s poet laureate, Ms. Maya Teague, [A Night at a Fil-Am Dinner Dance](#)

Ms. Maya’s poem is a must reading for the attendees of the biggest dinner-and-ball receptions in the Filipino-American community in commemoration of the June 12, 1896, declaration of Philippine independence from Spain. Ms. Maya’s parody is very timely and relevant to this week’s functions in our respective communities. Yes, readers can both cry and laugh at the same time while reading Ms. Maya’s poem.

* This editor wrote also about the ubiquitous Filipino-American dances and grand balls in this article,

[It Is Time to Reinvent the Filipino Presence in America and Build Philippine Centers](#)

And perhaps, readers can put their thinking caps on and read again these articles:

[Filipinos Ought Not to Celebrate this Year the June 12th Philippine Independence Day](#)

[Reconciling the 1898 and 1946 Philippine-Independence Days](#)

[The Fourth of July Is RP-US "Interdependence Day"](#)

Perhaps by June and July 2010 (next year), the Filipino-American community leaders and the Philippine public servants may be able to strike a

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balance between and among the different events marking the declaration of Philippine independence from Spain and the United States. For it is not only at the dance floor of five-star hotels but also at the MacArthur Park, libraries and other simple but more-relevant venues can we make Filipinos look good, feel great and proud of their positive socioeconomic contributions to the United States and the world. # # #

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