

Written by

Sunday, 21 July 2013 16:45 - Last Updated Monday, 22 July 2013 10:26

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (FAXX/jGLi) – Filipino pre-martial law journalist Ruben Javier Cusipag, who went into self-exile to fight off the Marcos dictatorship, died July 9, three days before his 75th

birthday, at Toronto's suburb of Markham Stouffville hospital in Canada when he became "so weak and his blood pressure went down."

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His grieving wife, Maritess Cusipag, said, “Last Sunday, we noticed he looked pale and sweaty so we called 9-1-1. They found out he had bowel obstruction but could not go for surgery because he was so weak, blood pressure went down. They were trying to stabilize him, gave him sedatives and never woke up.”

A former political reporter and weekly columnist of Elizalde-published *Manila Evening News* from 1960 to 1971, Mr. Cusipag, known among his press club peers in Manila as “mestizo” for his light skin and his pointy nose he inherited from his Portuguese mother, was among those rounded up after the declaration of martial law and thrown into prison.

Maritess Cusipag told this reporter that after Ruben Cusipag was released from jail, he worked as a communications specialist in one of the three companies of General Electric in the Philippines for about a year (1973-74) “because there were no more newspapers that were not owned by the (Marcos) administration.

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Filipino Pre-martial Law Journalist Ruben J. Cusipag, 74, Dies in Canada - MabuhayRadio

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Because he had a sister in Canada, Cusipag left the Philippines in 1974 and immigrated to Canada, where he initially edited *Newfoundland Signal*, a weekly newspaper published in Toronto that catered to Newfoundlanders in Ontario from 1975 to 1978.

On the side, he edited *Atin Ito* (This is Ours) News Features, a semi-monthly Canadian newspaper in English, which focused on community events and human interests stories from 1976 to 1978.

Cusipag was also the bureau chief in Toronto of the Chicago-based of the now defunct biweekly newspaper, *Philippine Times*, which focused on a campaign against the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines from 1974 to 1978.

He was also a special foreign correspondent in Canada of the *Bulletin Today* (now *Manila*

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Bulletin

), a

Manila daily newspaper from 1974 to 1975.

It was in 1978 when he started editing and publishing *Balita*, a twice-monthly, 40-page, hard copy and online Filipino Canadian newspaper in English that still circulates to this day. With 15,000 circulations, *Balita* is the biggest Filipino circulating newspaper in Canada.

EDITED & PUBLISHED “DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES”

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O ccasionally writing op-ed pieces for Canada's mainstream, *The Toronto Star*, Cusipag wrote and published his first history book of Filipino Canadians, "*Portrait of Filipino Canadians in Ontario*" (1960-1990) with partial grant from Ontario's former Ministry of Citizenship and Culture.

Cusipag also edited and published from Toronto the book, "*Democracy in the Philippines*," written by Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal. Its original manuscript was smuggled out of the Philippines to Canada, exposing the mockery of the "democratic" rule in the Philippines and was advocating for a bloodless military-backed civilian uprising similar to the "People Power Revolution" that ousted Marcos from power and catapulted Cory Aquino to the presidency.

The book was secretly distributed in the Philippines to people in power, including the military, and to members of the United States Congress to convince them from further extending military and economic aid to a repressive and corrupt regime.

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Cusipag also joined as executive director of the Canada Asia Working Group (CAWG), a human rights advocate for Asia funded by major Canadian churches from 1978 to 1985. The advocacy focused on the Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia (particularly East Timor) and Sri Lanka.

He reported the human rights situation in the Philippines annually to the Canadian External Affairs delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) in Geneva, Switzerland. Among his reports were the “Aquino Assassination” being the result of repression and the Philippines’s “Unabated Abuses.”

Cusipag has been the authority sought by Canadian TV outlets as CBC, CTV, CFTO, Global, City Pulse and Canada A.M. during major political events in the Philippines and as an editorial commentator of “Radyo Pilipino” during the late 70’s and mid-80’s on CHIN.

Cusipag has been in the forefront against the black market of marriages called Filipino mail-order bride in Canada and against Canadian immigration consultants victimizing Filipinos, applying for immigration in Canada.

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HELPED IN RAISING FUNDS FOR FILIPINOS IN DISTRESS

He also helped in some fund-raising campaigns that extended assistance to Cris Yballo, a Filipino seaman, who lost a leg during an accident while working at a dock in Sarnia, Ontario; Rosita Rualo, a Filipino domestic dying of cancer (1982); Lilia Hermitanyo, a Filipino domestic, who was half-paralyzed due to aneurysm (1987); raised \$20,000 for relatives of victims of the worst sea disaster in modern history where from 1,600 to 4,000 were killed during a collision of two vessels in Philippine waters (1988-89); collected \$30,000 for victims of Mt. Pinatubo (1991) eruptions in the Philippines; and for Arian Asrael, a Filipino-Iranian boy suffering from a rare liver disease (1992).

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Cusipag was named one of the most Outstanding Filipino-Canadian awardees sponsored by *B. b. Pilipinas* and one of the Most-Outstanding 20 Filipino Americans in the United States, Guam and Canada both in 1996.

Cusipag took up Bachelors of Arts degree, major in English, at the University of the Philippines. He became a police reporter of *Taliba*, the Filipino vernacular daily newspaper of the *Manila Times* publications in 1972 and an editorial commentator of MBC television and radio program, "The Evening News Report."

Cusipag met a life-changing accident on the night of July 26, 1996, when he crossed a road without looking both ways. He was struck by a pick-up truck. The tragic accident left him comatose for two weeks. It paralyzed his right side that also prevented him from talking. He was hospitalized for six months, and spent a year at a Toronto Rehab before being allowed to go home in suburban Markham.

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Due to his disability, it was his wife, Maritess, who took over from him as editor and publisher of *Balita* while taking care of him.

Aside from Maritess, other survivors are his five children (from Ruben's first wife and a daughter from his girlfriend), Ruby, Marjo, Marie, Imelda, Bong and Nadine, and stepchildren Michael, Anthony and Edward.

Born in Paco, Manila, Cusipag's father is from Tuguegarao, Cagayan, while the birthplace of his mother is unknown

Cusipag played host to this reporter in 1987 and in 2005 when he visited Toronto. He has been acting as mentor to young Filipino-Canadian journalists, who would seek his help and advice. (lariosa_jos@sbcglobal.net)

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