

FILIPINO AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

FilipinasTM

A MAGAZINE FOR ALL FILIPINOS

US \$2.95

OCTOBER 1996

**Top Corporate
Diversity Programs**

**'30s Labor Strife
in Salinas**

**FILIPINOS
IN THE
CLINTON
ADMINISTRATION**

**Growing Up in
San Francisco
in the '40s**

Surigao's Surf & Sand



Bob Santos



Paula Bagasao



Maria Mabilangan Haley



Danny Aranza



Irene Bueno



CAPITAL GAINS

BY RACHELLE Q. AYUYANG

Their demanding schedules prevent them from crossing paths professionally, but they're well aware of the specific bureaucratic turfs where each of them works. They sometimes bump into one another at gatherings, Filipino or otherwise. As government employees, they're warned against having political axes to grind. As non-elected officials, they must stand by their president who may or may not be reelected this November. As Filipino Americans, they know their *kababayans* expect a lot from them. They're the handful of top Filipino American appointees in President Bill Clinton's administration. The constantly swaying tightrope they walk requires a lot of on-the-job creativity and commitment. It's also a good vantage point for thinking about Filipinos and politics.

In Seattle's old federal building, an ad-hoc homeless shelter was in danger of closing this year, until Bob Santos stepped in. Using his muscle as head of the Northwestern/Alaska office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, he secured funding to keep the shelter open as a safe haven staffed by homeless-sensitive personnel. The irony wasn't lost on Santos, 62, who was appointed to his present position at HUD only two years ago. Prior to his appointment, he was on the other end of the political stick, as a pain in the butt for the housing authority.

"Twenty years ago, I led a group from the International District to demand action from the HUD office," he says of his work in the nonprofit sector. "Now I run the HUD office. I'm more in control of resources that I used to come to HUD for."

Different Motivations

Saving the homeless shelter is Santos' biggest accomplishment because, he says, "It can't happen everywhere." To pull it off, he dug deep into his vast network of civic, political, business and housing allies, which he had established through his 30-year community involvement.

As a government official, Santos had to step down from the boards of a number of agencies that receive federal funding. The new status has restricted his political activism in behalf of Seattle's International District, his home and the city's most visible Asian neighborhood, where many *manongs* live.

In 1945 Santos and his brother used to live in a 9-by-13-foot hand room with their aging father, Macario (Sammy) Santos,



Presidential Pal: *Maria Luisa Mabilangan Haley, Ex-Im Bank board member, has worked with Clinton since his Arkansas days.*

OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

who lost his eyesight after a notable boxing career in the 1920s and '30s. "My motivation all through the years was there had to be something better for our Filipino pioneers to live in and to be proud of," Santos says.

"Now I work with mayors in Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane (Washington), Boise (Idaho) and Portland (Oregon) where the goal is to return the downtown to its residential neighborhoods," he adds.

Santos was a '70s activist fired up by the civil rights movement. His vision, he says, didn't jibe with older, more traditional Filipino American leaders, who, though sensitive to the need for housing for the elderly, focused instead on festivals and banquets. Their differences in priorities led Santos to organize in the International District with like-minded Asian Americans whose efforts also benefited Filipino Americans.

As the executive director of the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority from 1972 to 1985, Santos headed the purchase of a \$2-million county property through a HUD block grant program to build a \$19-million project. The International District Village Square, which consists of a low-income 75-unit housing complex, social service centers for Asian residents, retail space and a parking garage, harmoniously blends both business and residential interests.

"I'm not faulting the Filipino community," he says. "Its motivation wasn't the same as ours." Sure enough, no one in Seattle's Asian American activist circles would argue that Santos got the attention of the White House by organizing fiestas.

His biggest challenge now is delivering quality service with limited HUD resources due to federal cutbacks, while buoying his staff's morale. In the meantime, Santos dutifully goes to briefings on HUD programs and public housing laws. As he performs his busy public relations function—being present at ribbon-cutting ceremonies for new housing developments and speaking with college graduates, public housing officials, regional boards and commissions, banking and lending institutions—Santos never turns away a request to speak to Filipino Americans.

Legal Eye

Since Clinton signed the controversial welfare reform bill into law last August, Irene Bueno has had to comb through the legalese and figure out exactly what social services are going to be affected and how. It's part of her job as the deputy to the assistant secretary for

legislation at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She interprets Clinton's "bipartisan" move "to end welfare as we know it" as a careful political act in an election year.

"It was a very difficult decision," she says. "(Clinton) was troubled with the immigrant provisions. I agree with the president that they're wrong. They shouldn't be in the bill."

She believes Clinton's promise that he'll issue executive orders to change the provisions, and that the law could also be repealed. That is, if Clinton's still in the White House and the Democrats win back Congress this year.

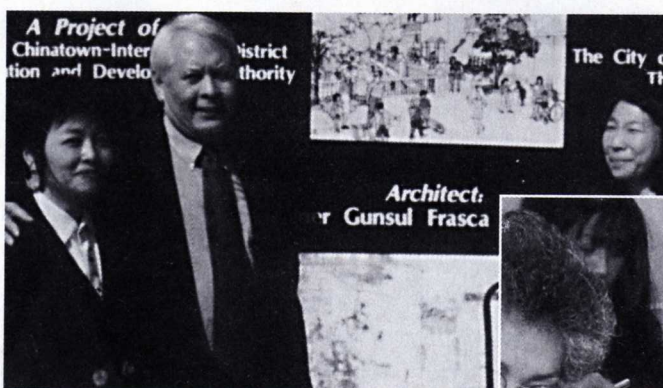
She's clearly frustrated with the

California, she became legislative attorney to U.S. Rep. Edward Roybal and later to then-Senator Alan Cranston, both Democrats.

Bueno could very well throw her hat into the political arena, with campaign and government policy experiences under her belt. (She helped run Filipina Gloria Ochoa's failed run for Congress in 1992.) "That's still in the back of my mind," she says.

To gain political empowerment, Bueno says, Filipinos must first get their U.S. citizenship and then vote. In addition to being knowledgeable on current issues, they must make their faces and concerns known to their elected officials.

She believes Fil-Ams are now taking participation in electoral politics more seriously. "The community is finally waking up to the



Delivery: HUD's Bob Santos with Seattle International District advocates at the transfer signing ceremony for the ID Village Square.



Trouble-Shooter: Deputy Irene Bueno (right), seen here with Health And Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, often "puts out fires."

Republican-dominated Congress, which ignored all advice against eliminating public assistance to legal immigrants. "My experience, coming from an immigrant family, is that immigrants work hard and don't come here to go on welfare."

Although the battle in Congress was lost, Bueno believes she has personally raised people's consciousness about the immigration issue.

She jokes that her position also entails "putting out fires" because an emergency never fails to knock her off her work schedule. For instance, she helped prepare the Health and Human Services Department Secretary Donna Shalala for a hearing on increased marijuana use among youths, despite having no background on the matter.

After a nine-month fellowship with the Coro Foundation, Bueno, a graduate of the Hastings College of Law in California, chose a career in public policy over a private law practice and moved to Washington, D.C. Shortly after interning for three weeks with the office of U.S. Rep. Don Edwards, a Democrat from

fact that, just because you take a picture or give money, it doesn't mean you have access."

Islander

Ferdinand "Danny" Aranza, who believes Fil-Ams "are a part of the American family," can't agree more.

"If we act as neglected children," he says, "instead of speaking out as active participants at the dinner table, we'll only get the scraps."

Aranza, his wife Sonia Lugmao, who's director of constituent relations to U.S. Rep.

Neil Abercrombie, and Fil-Am appointees Paula Bagasao of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Stanley Suyat of the Peace Corps. are at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, speaking to a group of young Fil-Am professionals. He advises anyone thinking of building a political career to volunteer in local campaigns and get involved in Fil-Am organizations, since funding and networking are the keystones to a successful run for office.

Aranza, deputy director of insular affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior, has the perfect background for the job of coordinating with other government agencies the affairs of the U.S. territories, including American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands. He was a legal counsel to U.S. Rep. Ben Blaz of Guam before join-

However, the commonwealth, where Filipinos are the majority of overseas workers, has been plagued by reports of widespread labor abuse, including the forced prostitution of some Filipino women.

As Aranza moved to help correct the problem, he ran into resistance from some agencies, which, because of federal cutbacks, were hesitant to send assistance to "a small, faraway island." But he argued that his department received Congress-approved funding to help a U.S. territory protect the rights of its people.

With the help of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Justice Department as well as commonwealth agencies, he says the situation is improving. However, Aranza must still be vigilant of overzealous U.S. intervention in the commonwealth while focusing on how to get at the root of the problem—the wayward employers.

Always a Democrat

Paula Bagasao is careful not to "step out of her role" as senior policy advisor at USAID. "Sometimes our communities ask us to get out of our

roles to do things when, in fact, it's not 'appropriate,'" she explains.

USAID coordinates U.S. foreign aid programs for major recipients like the Philippines. The agency, for example, recently gave a \$650,000-grant to a project that will assist Filipino Amerasian children in integrating into the economic, social and cultural environment. In the last two years, however, Congress has cut by 25 to 30 percent USAID's budget, which, according to the agency, makes up less than one percent of the federal budget.

"My job is to ensure that the work USAID is doing gets a positive image," she says, "and to communicate to the tax-paying public the effectiveness of the work that we're doing in places like the Philippines."

If Bagasao had her way, the government wouldn't be a slow-moving bureaucracy. She maintains her own pace, though, as she meets with representatives of regional bureaus to finalize an annual report on humanitarian aid performance in various countries.

Bagasao is proud to have helped strengthen U.S.-Japan cooperation when she was the USAID Japan coordinator. Both countries were able to maintain respectful ties as major donors of humanitarian assistance, despite their tenuous trade relationship.

If Bagasao does step out of her official role, it's often to refer Filipino Americans with questions to appropriate government offices, or to encourage them to go after important government or electoral positions. She hopes there'll be at least one Fil-Am elected to Congress by 1998, the Philippine Centennial. "I like to see people break barriers," she says.

Bagasao suggests Fil-Am political aspirants start out in the local school boards or a congressional district and then build a base that covers all voters, not just Filipinos. The strategy, she says, worked for Hawaii Gov. Ben Cayetano, the highest-ranking Fil-Am elected official. She's mum about running for office in the future herself, calling the rumor "provocative."

Bagasao, 47, was introduced to the Democratic National Committee while she was living in Washington, D.C. in 1989.

"I've always been a Democrat," she emphasizes. "I've always been a liberal."

Bagasao's political connections and background in education (with the University of California, American Association for Higher Education and College Entrance Examination Board) earned her a spot on the '92 Clinton-Gore transition team responsible for recruiting Asian Americans and women. She has also worked with the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, Department

Continued on page 60



Brainstorm: Dr. Paula Bagasao of USAID (right) at a roundtable on women's issues, at the World Trade Center in New York.

ing the administration. For the graduate from the Boalt Hall School of Law at the University of California, Berkeley, it's simply altruism.

"You have a real sense that you're not working to make a profit," says Aranza, who's most likely return to the private sector in a few years. "You're actually contributing to the community. That's hard to measure in dollars."

It's also his way of giving back to Guam, where he and his siblings were raised by their mother. Guam, where Filipinos are 25 percent of the population, is separated from the U.S. mainland not only by an ocean, but also by complex national identity issues.

In the Northern Marianas Islands, Filipino overseas workers are contributing significantly to an expanding economy as hotel personnel and domestic helpers.



Bridge: Insular affairs deputy director Danny Aranza is the Department of the Interior's link to the U.S. territories.

OTHER FIL-AM PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEES:

Eugene Bae	Department of Defense; senior program analyst in environmental security
Christian Baldia	Department of Treasury; senior policy analyst in domestic finance
Tyrone Cabalu	Department of Commerce; confidential assistant in the bureau of export affairs
Irene Natividad	Member of the Student Loan Marketing Association
Alice Bulos	Member of the Federal Council on Aging
Josie Natori	Commissioner of White House Conference on Small Businesses
Rockne Freitas	Presidential Committee on Physical Fitness and Sports

HELEN BROWN, *continued from page 58*

rowers kept coming, we thought about setting up a library."

PARRAL is dedicated to furthering community education and development and advancing Filipino and Filipino American history. The increasing number of users and visitors and its growing collection of mostly donated Filipiniana books, magazines and journals forced PARRAL to move in 1994 to its current location at the Luzon Plaza, 1925 West Temple Street in Los Angeles.

PARRAL is supported and operated by Pamana Foundation, a nonprofit, purely volunteer organization made up of local Filipino scholars and community leaders. There's also an unpaid staff, but "Auntie Helen" applies her personal touch by assuming most of the supervision and management during the three days a week that the library is open. The library holds an estimated 5,000 Filipiniana and Filipino American books, journals, clippings and theses. There are coffee-table books on Philippine culture, children's books in Tagalog, English and Ilocano, Tagalog dictionaries and grammar books, a complete set of Blair and Robertson's *The Philippine Islands* and an 1895 edition of *Doctrina Christiana*, the first book printed in the Philippines in 1593.

PARRAL has become a valuable resource for students and graduate researchers in Southern California. Since its formal opening two years ago at the new site, the library has been throbbing with a variety of social and cultural events such as film and slide shows on Philippine art, a workshop by the BIBAK (Benguet, Ifugao, Bontoc, Apayao, Kalinga) dance troupe on Northern Luzon dances and cultural traditions, a reception for Herbert Zipper, conductor of the Manila Symphony Orchestra during the war years, and, more recently, a memorial in honor of the late writer Bienvenido Santos. PARRAL holds field trips to historic Filipino Town and even has a regular history discussion group.

Brown's Filipino heart has found a fitting extension outside her body—the library, her pride and joy. And in this city of angels, home to the largest Filipino community outside of the Philippines, a beacon casts her radiant glow. ■

Bangele (Nonoy) Alsaybar is a doctoral candidate in cultural anthropology at UCLA.

OFFICIALS, *continued from page 33*

of Education and Culture and Department of Science and Technology.

Giving Opportunities

Maria Luisa Mabilangan Haley went to the Philippines last July on an official U.S. visit for the 50th anniversary celebration of independence from the United States. She returned with the belief that President Fidel V. Ramos has done an "incredible" job on the economy. "There seems to be a real economic lift in the country, and you can feel that." She should notice.

Considered the highest-ranking Fil-Am in the White House, who maintains close ties with Clinton as a fellow Arkansan, Haley is a member of the board of directors of Export-Import Bank. She focuses on expanding small businesses' role in the export market.

Ex-Im Bank, an "earning" agency that returns \$17 to the U.S. economy for every taxpayer dollar invested, finances American trade projects that private banks can't back, says Haley. The Philippines, by the way, is Ex-Im Bank's third largest customer, with \$2 billion worth of export projects awaiting approval. The bank also helped secure airplanes from U.S.-based Boeing for Philippine Airlines and has aided the Philippines in installing the "Mabuhay" satellite, the first of its kind for the country's telecommunications industry.

Haley, a member of the '92 transition team, says, "Clinton has been extremely open to Filipino Americans." She's thrilled with the young Fil-Ams appointees and congressional aides.

She first worked as a state trade consultant in 1979 for then-Governor Clinton, who wanted to bring Arkansas into the international arena. Haley rose to the position of the director of the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission and continued working for the state until 1992.

Born in Manila in 1940, she was a diplomat's daughter who was groomed to become a diplomat's wife. But after living in Europe, Haley, the product of many finishing schools, went into business. In the 1960s, with top Filipina model Conchitina Sevilla Bernardo, she established the first finishing school in Asia.

Haley moved on to a management position for Hilton International in the Philippines, where she met and married John Haley, an international attorney from Arkansas. She moved to his home state. "I knew Arkansas would be very different,"

she reflects. "I had no preconceived notions and opened up to new experiences." Haley felt right at home.

"Working for Bill Clinton as governor was a big challenge," she gushes. "It was lots and lots of fun. I was constantly amazed by his capacity to learn and understand. He has boundless energy and a big heart. He's been good to me."

Controversies in his first term over Whitewater, "Travelgate," the FBI files and the sexual harassment suit filed by Paula Jones have cast an unflattering shadow on Clinton's character. But Haley, who volunteers that Jones was working as a messenger/secretary in the state commission she was in charge of, says she was shocked by Jones' allegations.

"I never saw a relationship there," Haley protests.

On November 5, the American electorate will determine whether Clinton deserves a second term. The Fil-Am appointees will somehow help without violating the integrity of their positions. If he isn't reelected, they'll most likely be looking for other employment. But their presence in key government, though non-elected, roles is reassurance that Filipino Americans will increasingly be seen and heard. ■

Before 1987,

few people realized the quality and beauty that Philippine arts and crafts possess.

Before 1987,

those that did know and admire the Philippine arts had virtually no way to obtain these well crafted items.

In fact, before 1987,

the only way you could get your hands on Philippine art was to go directly to the Philippines.

1987:

AD∞INFINITUM opened its doors to Chicago with a single purpose, to promote Philippine art and culture. We intended to accomplish this by making the many wonderful objects that Filipino hands produced available to America:

Hand carved santos — antique and reproduction

Handcrafted angels

Handcrafted Venetian style mirrors

Handcrafted tribal art

Handwoven baskets, textiles

Artwork — oil paintings, watercolors, prints

New and antiquarian Filipiniana books for adults and children on Philippine history, art, culture, politics, prose and poetry, cooking and wildlife

For a free book catalog, call or write:

AD∞INFINITUM

2825 N. Southport • Chicago, IL 60657

Tel (312) 281-2659 • Fax (312) 281-3235

Wed.-Sat. 12:00 - 7:00 PM • Sun. 12:00 - 5:00 PM