

# FILIPINOS & THE MILITARY

**FOSBE**  
Filipinos of South Bay Exhibit

“Once stewards. Now Congressional Gold Medalists.” Filipinos enlisted in the US Navy as stewards and cooks to help their families. Filipinos overcame discrimination, sacrificed, and fought during WW II. Upon retirement, veterans worked in civil service jobs, established businesses, and became leaders in our South Bay Community.



Medals and Uniform  
Courtesy of Felix Tuyay

**Designed by Herb Delute, Sal Flor, and Felix Tuyay**

# Filipinos in the US Navy

The Philippines was a territory of the United States after the Spanish American War. Filipinos were classified as United States nationals, but not United States citizens.

Filipinos arrived in San Diego at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century via the U.S. Navy. Although it was under the guise of colonial relationship, serving in the navy provided a way for Filipinos to see the world and earn a living. Filipino sailors were aboard the USS Pennsylvania when this photograph was taken on September 8, 1927.



Courtesy of Darlene Tamayo Santos. *Filipinos in San Diego*



In 1945 Sangley Point was officially designated the base maintenance organization for the US Navy. Filipinos were recruited to enlist in the navy, but they were only able to serve as stewards or cooks.

Felix Tuyay served in the US Navy from 1929 to 1946 and worked as a steward. After the retirement from the Navy, many worked in defense industries, the civil service, and the postal service. They were also allowed to bring their wives from the Philippines after World War II.

Courtesy of Josefina Serquina.  
*Filipinos in San Diego.*

# In WWII Filipinos and Americans Fight Side by Side

In the United States Filipinos enlisted in the US Army to form the First Filipino Infantry Regiment, Second Filipino Infantry Battalion, and 1st Reconnaissance Battalion.

Alfredo Lim served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment. Photograph was taken in 1942 at Camp Cook, California.



Courtesy of Lillian Lim. *Filipinos in San Diego*



Shoulder Patch  
U.S. Army 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino  
Infantry Regiment



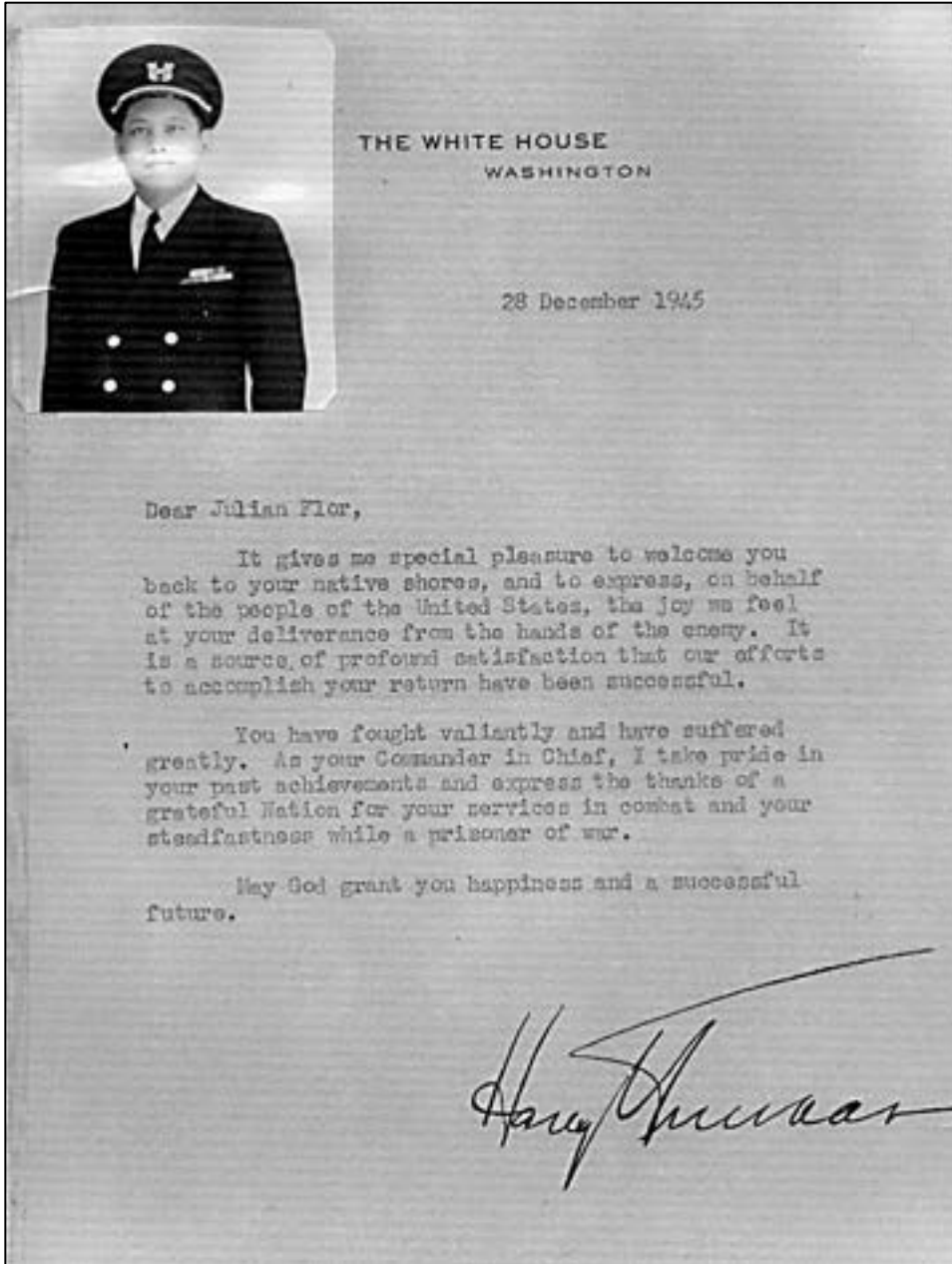
Commemorative Pin  
U.S. Army 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Filipino Infantry  
Regiment

Patch & Pin, Courtesy of Felix Tuyay



Booklet  
U.S. Army 1<sup>st</sup> Filipino Infantry Regiment

Booklet, Courtesy of Judy Patacsil



During WW II more than 260,000 Filipino soldiers served side-by-side with American soldiers while in the Philippine Commonwealth Army, Philippine Scouts, and Recognized Guerrillas.

CGM Recipient Julian Flor was a member of the recognized guerilla group in the Philippines before joining the U.S. Navy.

Pres. Harry Truman's letter thanked Flor for his service and combat while in the U.S. Navy as a prisoner of war. Earlier Flor was recognized for saving 4 downed US pilots in the Philippines

Courtesy of Sal Flor. *Filipinos in San Diego*

More than 57,000 died during WWII. Filipino veterans were crucial in assisting General McArthur win the war in the Pacific. When the Philippines was liberated during WWII, Filipinos were able to enlist into the navy such as CGM recipient, Leonardo Monzon. He served in the Philippine Army before enlisting in the US Navy.



Courtesy of Monzon Family  
*Filipinos in San Diego*

# Filipino Veterans Face and Over Come Racism

1946 marked the end of war and the passage of the Rescission Acts by Congress. This revoked veterans benefits and payments to the Filipino soldiers (Philippine Commonwealth Army, Philippine Scouts, and Recognized Guerrillas) and denied them of their U.S. citizenship.

The battle is not over, and the next mission is to repeal the Rescission Act.



Living WWII veterans or family member of a living WWII veteran at CGM ceremony on Oct. 14, 2018.

Left to right front: Crisanto Garrido, Philippine Army, US Navy; Cornelio Devega, Recognized Guerilla, Philippine Scout; Eduardo Cabling, Recognized Guerilla; Wilfredo Cabarlo, Philippine Scout; Dionisio Academia Jr. US Navy (Son present)

Left to right back: David Sardilla, Philippine Scout; Leonardo Melendrez San Sebastian, Recognized Guerilla; Melencio Nielo, Philippine Scout; William Madamba, Philippine Army; Epifanio Leano, US Navy

[FilVetREP | The Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project](#)

Courtesy of FANHS – San Diego

"Z-gram" was the semi-official title for policy directives issued by Elmo Zumwalt as Chief of Naval Operations many of these directives were efforts to reform outdated policies to bring racial and personnel equity. Zumwalt experienced the roadblocks when he helped a Filipino mess steward become an electrician's mate.

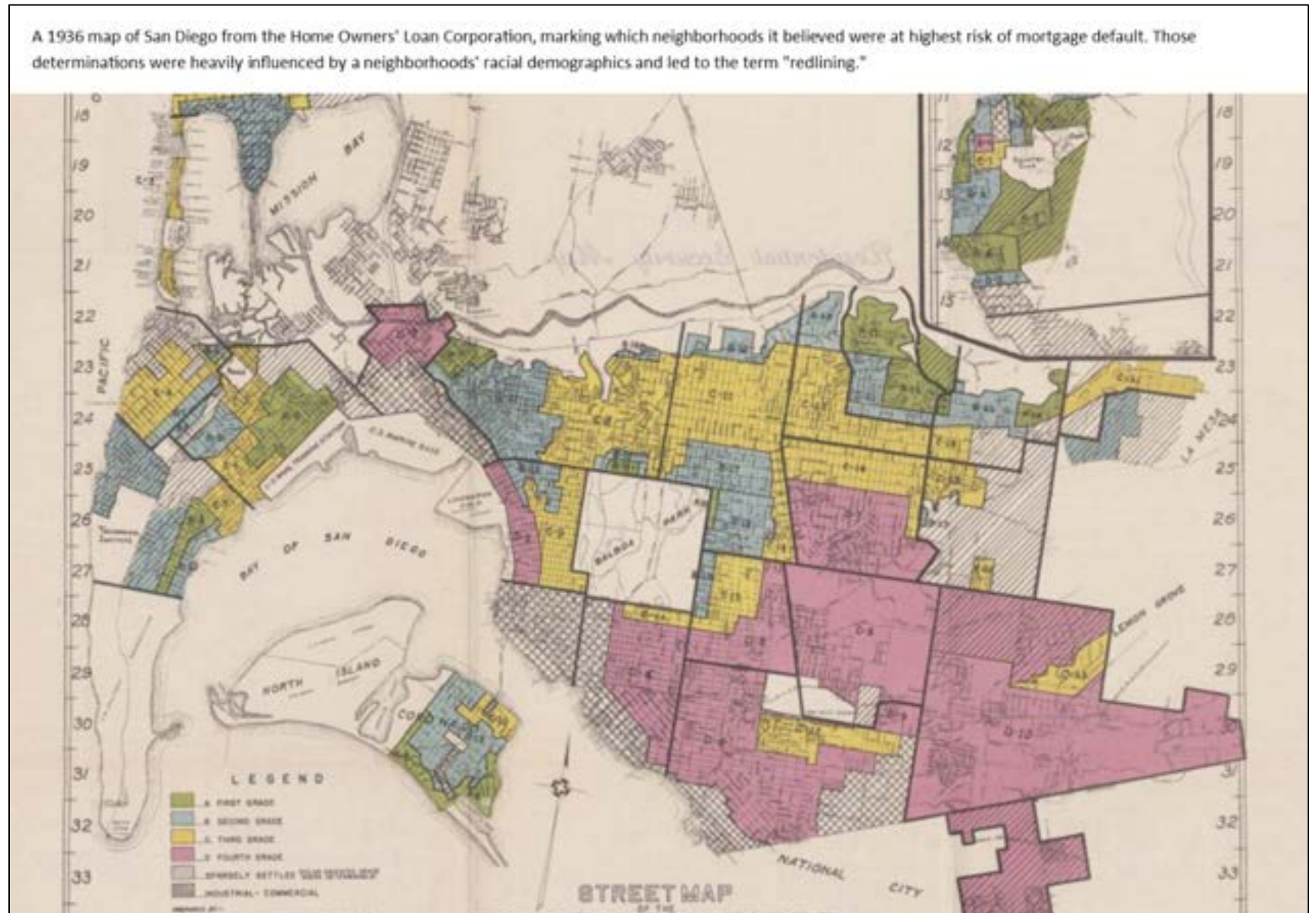


CGM Recipient Pete Estepa (first row, far left) joined the navy as a steward, became an engine mechanic, and retired 22 later years later as a chief petty officer.

Courtesy of Rose Estepa Ibanez. *Filipinos in San Diego*



Filipino servicemen first lived in the downtown and Southeast San Diego area but only owned homes in red lined districts such as Southeast San Diego and the South Bay. As more Filipinos joined the U.S. Navy, they received military benefits. This allowed them to purchase single-family homes in National City, Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, and Nestor.



The War Brides Act of 1945 and the Fiancés Act of 1946 allowed our veterans to return to the Philippines to bring back fiancées, wives, and children. In this 1949 picture new families raised a second generation of Filipino Americans. Women played the major role of preserving the culture. Children attended schools and attended college, joined the work force, raised families, and integrated in American society.



Courtesy of Jim Tuyay. *Filipinos in San Diego*

With numbers increasing, Filipino service men formed the **American Legion Leyte Post 625** and **Fleet Reserve Branch 84**. In 1946 the Filipino American Veterans Association (FAVA) was formed and raised funds to build the FAVA Hall located on 2962 Market Street in San Diego. The hall became the hub of Filipino gatherings which included the Visayan Circle of San Diego in the picture.



Courtesy of Sarmiento family, *Filipinos in San Diego*

# Filipino Veterans Now Recognized

On Oct. 14, 2018, under the Filipino Veteran Recognition Education Project (FilVetREP). 10 living Filipino WWII Veterans received the Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) and 60 family members received the CGM on behalf of their Filipino WWII Veterans. The CGM is an award bestowed by Congress and is the highest civilian award in the United States



Dionisio Academia  
US Navy



Nemecio Avinante  
US Navy



Adelino Bernal  
US Navy



Pete Flore Estepa  
US Navy



Julian Martinez Flor  
Guerilla  
US Navy



Crisanto Garrido  
Philippine Army  
US Navy



Ettie Gomez  
US Navy



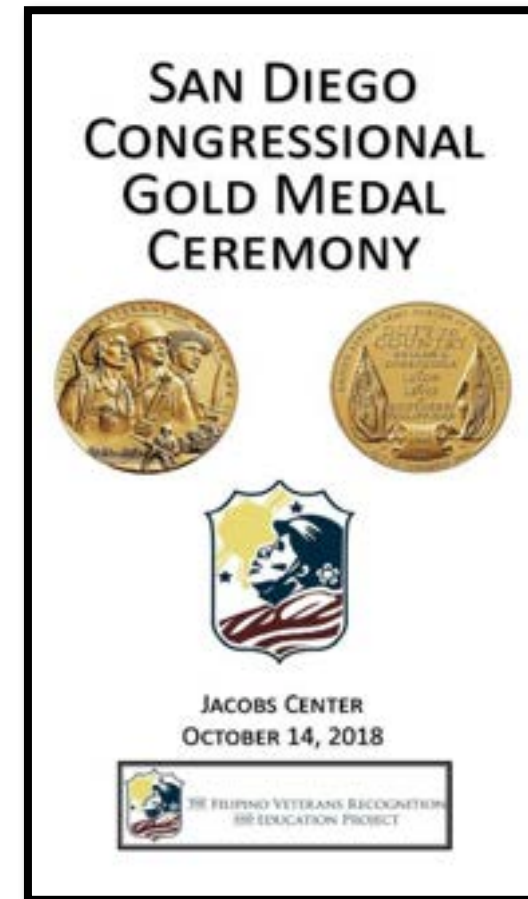
Epifano Leano  
US Navy



Leonardo Monzon  
Philippine Army  
US Navy



Amado Quintanilla  
US Navy



Pictures Filipino WWII veterans of the South Bay who received CGM  
Courtesy of FANHS – San Diego



The front depicts faces of soldiers and guerrillas in their period uniforms, headgear, and weapons, representing the Philippine Commonwealth Army, Philippine Scouts, First Filipino Infantry Regiment, Second Filipino Infantry Battalion, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, and Recognized Guerrillas. These units comprised major combat forces of the US Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) from July 26, 1941 to December 31, 1946. The bottom depicts a landscape scene of a U.S. Army soldier in a guard and defend position on a beachhead in Leyte during the liberation of the Philippines, a Commonwealth or territory of the United States, on October 20, 1944. [Congressional Gold Medal | FilVetREP](#)



The reverse highlights the theme “Duty to Country” — the core value inherent in citizenship, patriotism, courage, honor, selfless service, integrity of men and women who willingly served their country in defense of freedom and liberty. The four major campaigns inscribed on the reverse (Bataan and Corregidor, Luzon, Leyte, and Southern Philippines) were fought in an archipelago of over 7,000 islands. The dates emblazoned on the scroll below the campaign:

- 1941 Japanese attack of the Philippines;
- 1945 Liberation of the Philippines and defeat of Japanese Imperial Forces; and
- 1946 End of war and passage of the Rescission Acts by Congress. This revoked veterans benefits and payments to the Filipino soldiers and denied them of their U.S. citizenship evoke the period of desperation, humiliation, and daunting experience of the Filipino Veterans of WW II.

FilVetREP Website to Under One Flag- Education Program

[Under One Flag | FilVetREP](#)

Congressional Gold  
Medals  
Courtesy of Sal Flor,  
Elaine Elefante-Leano



# SAN DIEGO CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY



- Academia, Dionisio\* .....U.S. Navy
- Acosta, Telesforo .....U.S. Army, 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment
- Adamos, Romulo .....U.S. Navy
- Adrid, Felimon .....U.S. Navy
- Alberto, Francisco Sagad .....Philippine Commonwealth Army
- Alvedia, Jorge .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Bataan Death March Survivor, Died in  
Prisoner of War Camp
- Amiling, Machaun .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Recognized Guerilla
- Antonio, Agapito .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Recognized Guerilla
- Avinante, Nemesio .....U.S. Navy
- Bacaycay, Marcelino .....U.S. Army, 2nd Filipino Infantry Battalion
- Bernal, Adelino .....U.S. Navy
- Bernido, Consorcio .....U.S. Army, 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment
- Cabanayas, Maurice .....U.S. Army, 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment
- Cabalo, Wilfredo\* .....U.S. Army, Philippine Scouts
- Cabling, Eduardo\* .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Recognized Guerilla
- Castillo, Godofredo .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Recognized Guerilla
- David, Bienvenido .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Army Medical Corps
- De Ocampo, Agustin .....U.S. Navy
- Del Gallego, Julio .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Recognized Guerilla, Bataan Death March  
Survivor, Prisoner of War,
- Devega, Cornelio\* .....Recognized Guerilla, Philippine Scouts
- Elefante, Getulio .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
U.S. Navy
- Escritor, Gregorio .....Philippine Commonwealth Army
- Estepa, Pete Flores .....U.S. Navy
- Estoque, Florentino .....U.S. Army, Philippine Scouts
- Femer, Oscar .....Philippine Commonwealth Army
- Figaracio, Gregorio .....Philippine Commonwealth Army
- Fior, Julian Martinez .....Recognized Guerilla, U.S. Navy

## PROGRAM

Welcome

Presentation of Colors

Philippine National Anthem and American National Anthem

Blessing

Lunch

Tony Olaes, Founder of The Filipino School

Joint Congressional Proclamation

Congresswoman Susan Davis,

Congressman Scott Peters,

Congressman Juan Vargas

### CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARD CEREMONY

Major General (Ret.) Tony Taguba, U.S. Army

Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project

Presentation of Medals

MG (Ret.) Tony Taguba And

BG (Ret.) Oscar Hilman

\* Living World War II Veterans \*

\* Next of Kin of Deceased World War II Veterans \*

Congratulatory Remarks

By Congressman Juan Vargas

Closing

By Dr. Judy Patacsil

- Fontinayor, Alfredo .....U.S. Navy
- Fordan, Gregorio .....Philippine Commonwealth Army
- Garrido, Crisanto\* .....U.S. Army, U.S. Navy
- Gomez, Etie .....U.S. Navy
- Guemes, Pablo .....U.S. Navy
- Halili, Rogelio .....U.S. Army, Recognized Guerilla
- Handagan, Victoriano .....U.S. Navy
- Languit, Miguel .....U.S. Army, Philippine Scouts, Killed in Action
- Leano, Epifanio\* .....U.S. Navy
- Leano, Louis .....U.S. Navy
- Madamba, William\* .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Recognized Guerilla, U.S. Navy
- Madla, Medardo .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Prisoner of War, U.S. Navy
- Masangcay, Pedro Payad .....U.S. Army, Prisoner of War
- Monzon, Leonardo .....Philippine Scouts, U.S. Navy
- Munar, Quirino .....Philippine Commonwealth Army,  
Recognized Guerilla
- Nielo, Melencio\* .....U.S. Army, Philippine Scouts
- Odedicen, Juan .....Philippine Commonwealth Army
- Olaes, Emilio .....U.S. Navy
- Pagtakhan, Nicolas .....Philippine Army, Recognized Guerilla
- Patacsil, Eugenio .....U.S. Army
- Plandor, Francisco .....U.S. Army
- Quintanilla, Amado .....U.S. Navy
- Reyes, Hilario .....U.S. Navy
- Rosa, Guillermo .....Philippine Army
- Sablan, Juan .....U.S. Army, Philippine Scouts, Killed in Action
- Salazar, Fernin .....U.S. Army, Recognized Guerilla
- San Sebastian, Leonardo Melendrez\* .....Philippine Army, Recognized Guerilla
- Santos, Francisco Boobo .....U.S. Navy
- Sardilla, David\* .....U.S. Army, Philippine Scouts
- Sarno, Romulo .....Recognized Guerilla, U.S. Navy
- Sulpacio, Conrado .....U.S. Navy
- Tamayo, Phillip .....U.S. Navy
- Vales, Ramon .....U.S. Navy
- Vega, Andres .....U.S. Navy

\*Living

# Benedicto Tulao: A Navy man to remember

By JOHN CHARLES WELF  
The Compass

"I brought Tulao forward," wrote Admiral William F. Halsey, in his autobiography, *Admiral Halsey's Story*, "and told them, 'I want you to see what a loyal fighting Filipino looks like.'"

This man was on the destroyer *Flamer* when she was torpedoed by your friends the Japanese, and many of his relatives have been tortured or killed by those same friends of yours.

His name is Benedicto Tulao, and he's a damn fine man. Take a good look at him!"

This is how Halsey presented his Chief Steward Tulao, to American, German, and Japanese wartime prisoners at a Yokohama, Japan jail in the fall of 1945.

Tulao is a grandfather of Robin Mangarin, an anchor for the local television station KPMH. Mangarin spoke at the station's Asian-Pacific American Month Celebration here May 9, where she dedicated her speech to her grandfathers — Tulao and Cecilio Ruzon Mangarin.

Both men retired from the Navy as chief stewards. Tulao died in 1969.

Tulao's long journey from the Philippines to National City is a sample of the limited suc-



Official U.S. Navy photo

Adm. William Halsey awards Benedicto Tulao with a campaign award during World War II. It was one of numerous awards Tulao collected.

cess Asians experienced in the Navy half a century ago. His wife, Fanny, still lives in National City, where she keeps dozens of her husband's personal letters and notes from some of the highest ranking naval officers serving during World War II.

"All of my husband's friends

prized," she said, smiling with pride.

Fanny said her husband was just a "really honest person."

But according to the many letters from several admirals and captains, including Admirals Halsey and Robert Carney, Tulao did much more than tell the truth during his 28-year military career.

Tulao joined the Navy in 1926 from the Binakayan, Kavit, Philippines. When World War II started he was already a chief steward for Adm. Halsey.

He served on numerous flagships in the Pacific theater, in San Diego, and in Europe.

Tulao married Fanny in 1951, and retired from the Navy in 1954.

Adm. Halsey's feeling for the 5-foot, 4-inch food service worker is evident in the admiral's personal letters to Tulao.

"I am still most anxious to have you come and live with us," Adm. Halsey wrote. Halsey offered Tulao a job in New York when he learned of Tulao's retirement.

"Benny had to refuse because he wanted to prove to my parents in the Philippines he was a good man," Fanny said.

The couple met at a market-place in Kavit in 1945, where Tulao followed her home. "It was a really nice love story," she said.

Tulao visited the Philippines

numerous times after 1945 to see Fanny and his ailing mother. He took leave after World War II to help his family renovate their dilapidated home.

Armed with a letter from Adm. Halsey, ordering the Navy in the Philippines to give Tulao anything he needed, he returned home in 1945. He hadn't seen his mother since 1931.

A letter from an unknown source summed up the Tulao family's situation:

"The financial condition of the family is poor. They are living from day to day. They have no financial reserve."

Despite Tulao serving in Saudi Arabia and Europe and trying to help his family, Fanny kept in contact. "Adm. Halsey offered to marry us by proxy, but Benny didn't want to do that," Fanny said.

Her face glowed as she explained the 6-year courtship. "My folks were mad, especially my mother. They said, 'You can't marry him. Sailors always have a woman in every port. I was forbidden to go to church when he was there,'" Fanny said as she chuckled.

Her solid white hair was cut short and neat. With the coyness of a 20-year-old she gingerly touched the fringe of her hair and told of the big day.

See Tulao, Page B-4

## Tulao

Continued from Page A-1

"My sister told me if I didn't elope with him we would never marry. So one day in church he waited for me hiding in the corner afraid someone might see him. I walked over to him and we snuck out together," Fanny said.

Court officials legally married the couple Nov. 3.

Two weeks later, they took their religious vows in a Catholic church in Manila in 1951.

Tulao returned to the Philippines in 1954 to show Fanny's parents he was worthy of their daughter.

"This is why he turned down Adm. Halsey's offer to work in New York.

Between the time Tulao left the Philippines in 1926, to the time he returned after his retirement in 1954 he shaped a successful career. Fanny said her

husband's accomplishments in the Navy happened because he sweated the details and related to people of all ranks. "He was a warrior, and people liked him," she said.

Tulao's superiors left no doubt about the quality of his service and their respect for him. When Tulao fell ill working for Adm. Carney in Europe, Tulao was transported to the Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland.

Adm. Carney wrote Tulao a letter dated July 10, 1951, on his official letter head that started with, "My dear Benny, I love very bad that I could not have been around when you left for the airport; we have been shipmates for a long, long time and I was very distressed that you should get away without my saying goodbye. I am sure that you know how high you stand in my regards..."

Tulao often worked with Adm. Carney during World War II.

# Benedicto Tulao, U.S. Navy



This card was issued to Benedicto Tulao for being aboard USS Missouri when the Japanese signed surrender papers ending World War II.

Adm. Halsey recalled in his autobiography a celebration the three men shared at a flag officer's rest home in Oahu, Hawaii. When an announcement was made regarding the Army's entrance into Manila, Adm. Halsey called for Tulao to share the good news. "I... hugged him and gave him the great news. He was on the verge of tears... Now," Mick

(Adm. Carney) said, "I want you to join us in a toast to your wonderful people." Tulao appealed to me. "The Admiral knows I don't drink, sir." "This is one time you do," Mick said. "It's an order. And the three of us drink to the health of the Philippine nation," Adm. Halsey wrote.

Tulao earned admiration from captains of flagships he served aboard, too. His wife has several autographed portraits of captains, many with personal notes. One Captain, whose signature has faded away from the tattered picture, paid Tulao his highest compliment.

"To Tulao, the most accomplished steward I've seen in any Navy."

With Tulao's talents and ability to earn the admiration of his superiors, Fanny said she believes her husband could be among the leaders of today's Navy.

"Back then, Filipinos in the Navy couldn't be anything but a

steward. They couldn't advance past E7, and advancement was tough. He went as far as he could," she said.

"Today, it seems people coming from the Philippines can advance quickly. Filipinos can now become officers like lieutenant commanders, or higher," she added.

Still, Fanny said she is glad her husband served in the Navy and brought their family back to America.

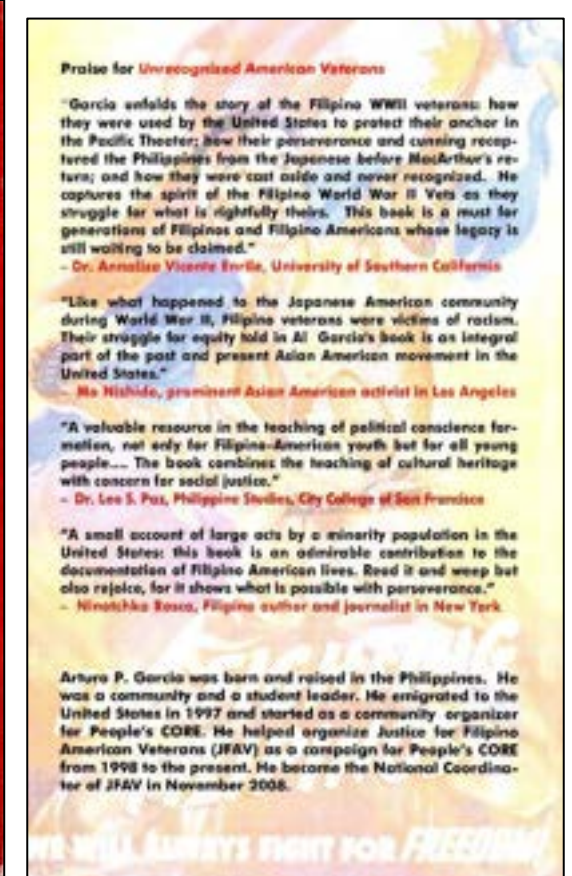
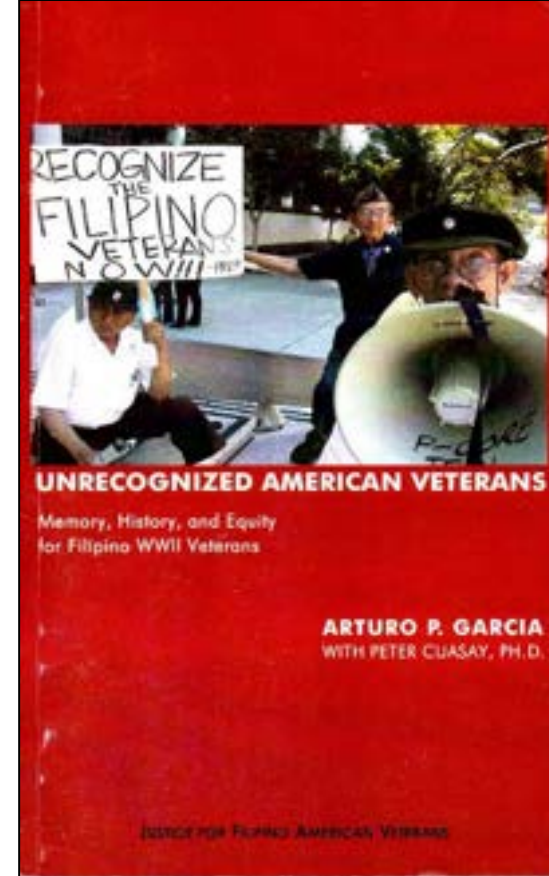
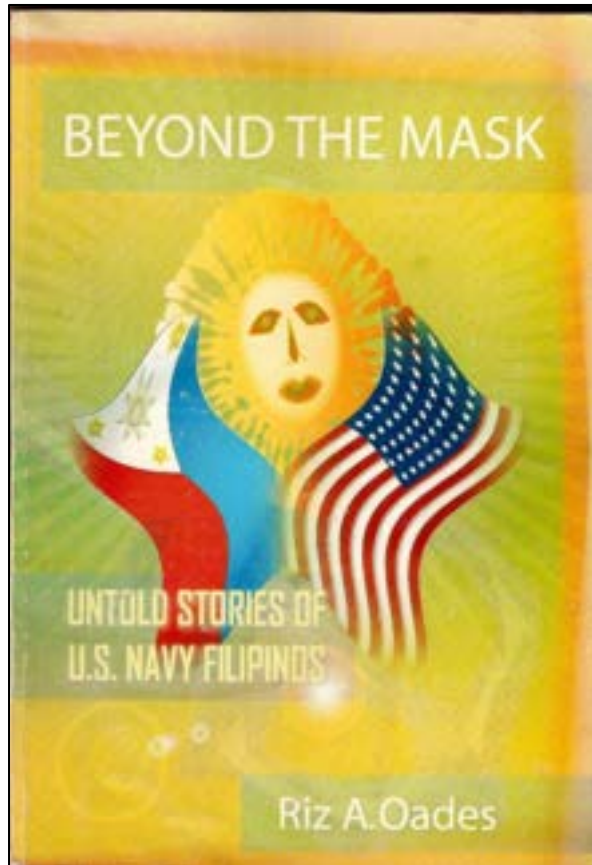
"We have better opportunities here. My children are much better off here because America has so much to offer."

Courtesy of Tulao Family





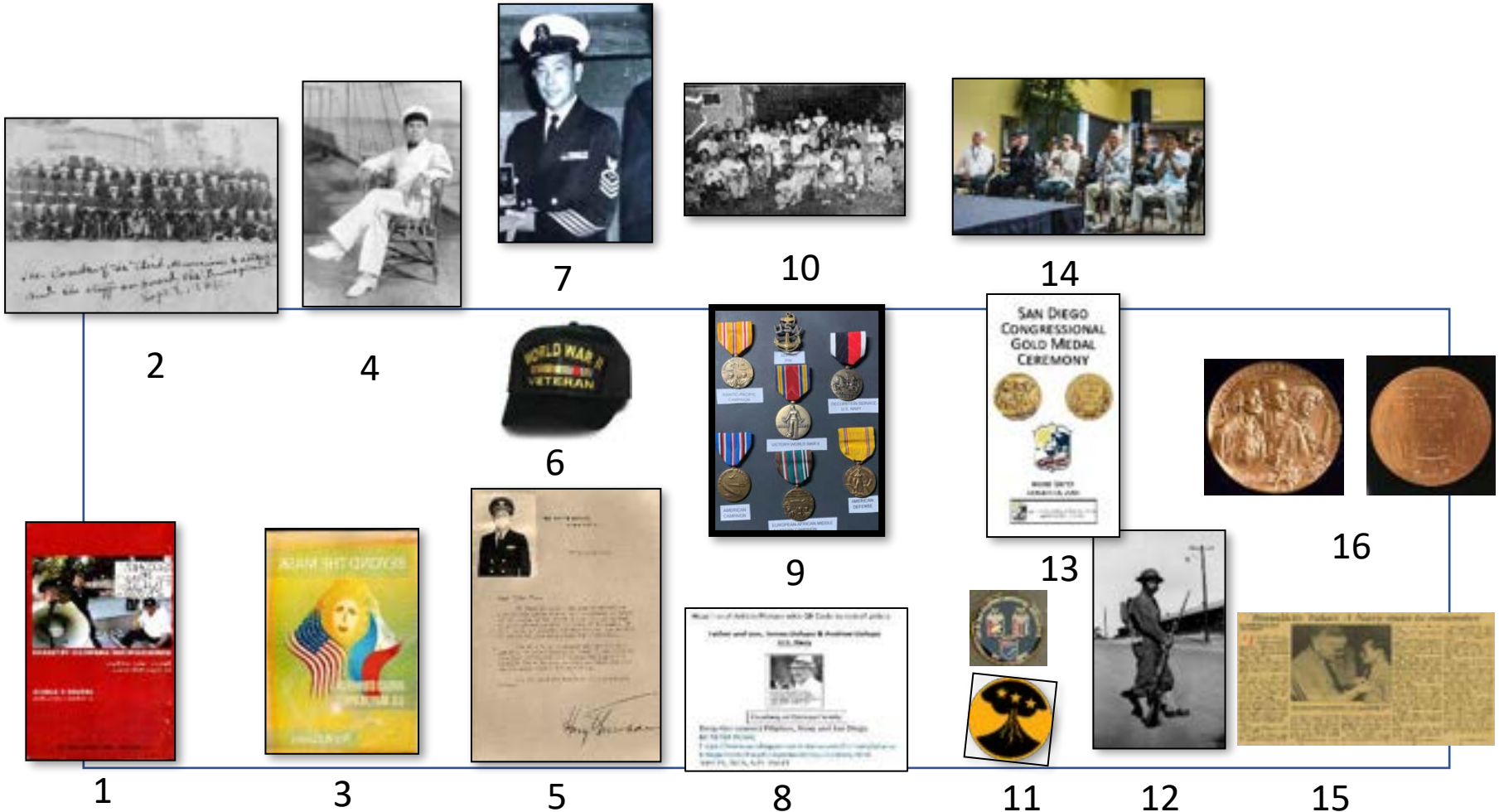
# Books on Filipino WWII Veterans



Courtesy of Felix Tuyay

# Filipinos and the Military

“Once stewards. Now Congressional Gold Medalists.”



Uniform of U.S. Navy 17

	<u>Title</u>	<u>Courtesy of</u>
1.	Unrecognized American Filipinos, Memory, History, and Equity for Filipino WWII Veterans - Garcia with Cuasay	Felix Tuyay
2	Filipino sailors on USS Pennsylvania (September 8, 1927)	Felix Tuyay
3	Filipino WWII Veterans by Dr. Riz Oades	Darlene Tamayo Santos, Filipinos in San Diego
4	Felix Tuyay, US Navy steward from 1929-1946	Felix Tuyay
5	Julian Flor, member guerilla group & U.S. Navy, Pres. Truman's letter (1945)	Josefina Serquina, Filipinos in San Diego
6	WWII Veteran Cap	Sal Flor, Filipinos in San Diego
7	Leonardo Monzon served in Philippine Army before enlisting in the Navy	Sal Flor
8.	Filipino veterans now recognized: Father, Tomas Dolopo, & Son, Andrew Dolopo, U.S. Navy	Dolopo Family
9	Navy Medals	Felix Tuyay
10	New families raised a second generation of Filipino Americans (1949)	Jim Tuyay, Filipinos in San Diego
11	1st Filipino Infantry Commemorative Pin and Shoulder Patch	Felix Tuyay
12	Alfredo Lim, 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiment (1942 at Camp Cook, CA)	Judge Lillian Lim, Filipinos in San Diego
13	Congressional Gold Medal Program - San Diego Ceremony, Oct. 14,2018	FANHS – San Diego
14.	Recipients of Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony for Filipino WWII Veterans (Oct. 14, 2018)	FANHS – San Diego
15	Filipino veterans now recognized: Benedicto Tulao, U.S. Navy	Tulao Family
16	Congressional Gold Medals for Filipino WWII Veterans	Elaine Elefante-Leano and Sal Flor
17	Navy Uniform	Felix Tuyay

## Notes:

### Main slides for condensed PowerPoint

1. Slide 1 Intro
2. Slide 2 Filipinos in the U.S. Navy
3. Slide 4 In WWII Filipinos and Americans Fight Side by Side
4. Slide 5 In WWII Filipinos and Americans Fight Side by Side
5. Slide 7 Filipino Veterans Face and Over Come Racism
6. Slide 11 Filipino Veterans Face and Over Come Racism
7. Slide 12 Filipino Veterans Now Being Recognized
8. Slide 13 Filipino Veterans Now being Recognized