

“FLUTTER FREE”

Memoirs

Of

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PROLOGUE

“Above all, watch with glittering eyes in the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places.” – Roald Dahl

The afternoon sun glistened off the surface of the blue-green waters on Waiehu Beach in Maui. I had gone there to clear my thoughts and resume writing this memoir. Sitting under the shade of the overhanging branches of a tree on the water's edge, I began to reflect on the successes, resolving challenges and failures I encountered in my life. I needed to understand the lessons learned in my journey of self-discovery and identity. I had grown up in San Francisco, California in the middle of the Twentieth Century, born into a Filipino-American family with a fundamentalist Pentecostal background, and knew I was gay at an early age.

It was during the era of the 1980s when the epidemic known as the Gay Related Immune Deficiency syndrome was emerging that my life changed dramatically. I was infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus in 1989. There had been no physical manifestations of the disease in my body until 2002. I was simultaneously diagnosed with Eosinophilic Folliculitis and Kaposi sarcoma, an opportunistic infection resulting from HIV exposure. From that moment forward, tumors would begin emerging in clusters as nodules and flat plaque on my lower extremities. I understood the trajectory of the disease knowing that there was no cure available.

As an HIV care provider of nearly 20 years, I had observed the trauma and pain, both physically and emotionally experienced by individuals whose lives were cut short by the disease. This understanding had

impressed upon me the need to write this memoir while my mind was still clear.

Scrutinizing my life would be like traveling on an eternal train ride that has no beginning or end. At the start of my life journey I boarded this train, thinking that I was the only passenger. However, stuck in a sheltered crevice outside my passenger car was a tree twig with a tiny egg securely attached. It was protected from the turbulent air as the train rushed along the tracks. Thus, began my journey of discovery and transformation. But was the price of my ticket on this train too costly?

SECTION 1 - THE EGG

“A great beginning is sometimes at the point of what you thought would be the end of everything.” – Dodinsky

CHAPTER 1 – Shell

It was a bright sunny day 18 minutes past 12 noon on March 22, 1947. In the delivery room at Children’s Hospital of San Francisco, California, I gasped my first breath of air. The following day my parents Guillermo Dulay Mangaoang and Florence Villanueva Bernabe took me home to our flat on Buchanan Street. There Grandma was visiting from Fresno and waiting for me to come home. She was babysitting for my sister, who was born in 1943.

There was no special ritual to commemorate my entry into the world or a religious christening. Unlike people with a Filipino heritage, my family was not Roman Catholic, but were converts of Pentecostalism. Little did I know that my being raised and guided by those beliefs would become a subconscious major factor in how I faced challenges and made decisions throughout my life.

When my younger brother Rodney was born in 1949, my family moved into an apartment building they purchased in the Divisadero neighborhood on Golden Gate Avenue. We were too young to play outside in the street because of the traffic. Mom was concerned that we would run into the street after a ball and get hit by a vehicle.

Instead, we played in the halls of the three-story building using the banister between landings as a slide. When I became bored, I would go back into the apartment and stand in the front window watching the other kids. I envied them because they were free to play in the yard of the Golden Gate elementary school across the street. It felt like being a caged animal that needed to roam free. I learned to entertain myself most of my childhood years with no friends to play with except during school recess.

Some of our cousins also lived in the building. We played outside my (Apong) great-grandmother Juanita’s apartment on the third-floor hallway where she lived. She would always say to me in Ilocano, the Filipino dialect of my family. “Inya datoy nga ubing!” (What is wrong with this child!) Or, sometimes in exasperation Apong would say “Natangken ti ulo ditoy ng ubing!” (Hard Headed child!)

We got a television when I was 5 years old. During the day I spent lots of time watching “Crazy Kat”, “Howdy Doody”, “The Three Stooges” or “The Mickey Mouse Club.” At night, the family would watch the latest episode of “Leave It To Beaver”, “Father Knows Best” or “I Love Lucy.” I was always comparing my family with the people I saw on the TV shows. Everything was perfect for them but not for my family and wished I lived with the families I saw on screen.

Next door to our apartment building was an empty lot. What remained on the property were front steps that led nowhere. The apartment building had been torn down after a fire that left only the entry stairs and foundation walls. From our kitchen window I would watch the neighborhood

kids climb up the stairs then jump off and land on the weed filled rubble. There were times when I would sneak out of our

apartment house away from any adult supervision. When I could not be found in the building, mom knew she would find me in the empty lot. Then the scolding would begin and when we got into our apartment, she would spank me. I thought she was mean and did not love me.

Mom was a strict disciplinarian and at the time I perceived mom's restriction where we could play as being unfair. But it was her way of expressing her love for us. I never heard the word expressed within our family, except in the concept of loving God. I did not understand what love meant between people and did not know where it could be found and uncomfortable about asking my parents. It felt awkward whenever I heard the word was used by adults in my family.

But we did not stay away from the Golden Gate apartment building we had lived in before we moved to the South of Market. In 1952 Dad and grandpa converted the ground floor apartment into a "storefront" church. Julian Jacinto Bernabe, was my maternal grandfather, who migrated from Piddig, Ilocos Norte, Philippines to Hawaii in 1917. I had no idea where the Philippines or Hawaii were located except that those were islands in the Pacific Ocean.

Chapter 2 - Membrane

Grandpa was recruited by the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Association (HSPA) to work on the Big Island of Hawaii at the Papaikou pineapple plantation in the camp kitchen. The HSPA were white Protestant plantation owners. They welcomed the presence of missionaries from the Holiness Church, Assembly of God, and the Foursquare Church Pentecostal denominations onto the plantation fields. They would regularly conduct religious services at the plantation camps on Sundays.

It was through those ministries that grandpa converted from Catholicism to Pentecostalism.

Years earlier while working in the plantation fields of Hawaii, Grandpa Julian converted from Roman Catholicism to Pentecostalism. His conviction was so deep that he would devote his future life's work to bring other Filipinos to accept his new-found religious perspective.

Throughout my childhood and teenage years, the Filipino Assemblies of the First Born, Inc. (FAFB) church was founded by grandpa. It was the dominant force that shaped our family values. Fundamental interpretation of the Bible became the guiding thought. Growing up in this environment, I was taught the Judeo – Christian tenets that God is love and Jesus loves you. Prayer was an essential element that became the common precept ingrained into my childhood psyche. Actions were either right or wrong, black, or white. There was no compromise or in between choices.

The offering of prayers was a daily ritual done before eating. But it also was said when someone visiting was leaving the house or if a family member was going on an extended trip. Virtually any situation that needed resolution resulted in a prayer said on the spot. But those prayers were not the recitations of the Rosary usually heard in a Filipino family.

When grandpa would pray before the family would eat, the offering of thanks usually became a mini sermon. I would open my eyes to see if my younger brother or older sister had their eyes open too. They did. Rolling eye gestures between us would be exchanged as if to say, “grandpa, hurry up we’re hungry and want to eat.”

Since grandpa had founded the FAFB, Inc., it was expected that anyone born into our family would become Pentecostal. He was an ordained minister under the auspices of the FAFB, as was mom and my father held an exhorter’s license. Weekly, there were church services on Wednesday and Friday evenings. Then there was Sunday School, followed by morning and evening worship services. Additionally, monthly Saturday exchange fellowship services were convened with FAFB affiliated congregations in Northern California, the annual general convention in Delano and Summer church youth camps.

Yes Chapter 3 – Cracks

Saturday’s was always the busy family shopping day on Fillmore Street. Everyone was doing the usual errands paying bills and buying food for next week. People were weaving in and out of stores and going in different directions on the sidewalk. I always looked forward to this day, since it was the only time my brother, sister and I got out of the house. The isolation we experienced during those developmental years meant cultivating shyness and poor social skills interacting with others.

We lived in a three-story apartment building at 1511 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco. Mom would not let us play outside while she did the laundry, cooking or was house cleaning. It was a busy street with cars, buses and trucks whizzing by. Mom was fearful that if we were playing on the sidewalk without supervision, we would run into the street and be hit by passing traffic.

So, we played indoors on the three hallways and staircases, sliding down the staircase banisters from one floor landing to the next. Bored, I would return to our apartment on the first floor and look out the front window watching traffic go by. At times, the junk man rode by on his

horse drawn cart, its bell tingling. I can still hear his voice calling out as he passed our building, “I buy junk” and the clop, clop, clop, clop of the horse’s hooves hitting the pavement as it pulled the heavy load.

CHAPTER 4 - The Harlequin

Going to visit Uncle Mike when still enrolled in elementary school was always an adventure. It was always an unusual experience. It confused me that he played a musical instrument on top of a metal box with strings. Sounds were made when he slid the bar up and down the strings. He always wore colorful shirts with images of trees or flowers that I did not recognize. To complicate my confusion, grandma’s youngest sister and Uncle Mike’s sister, Auntie Ceffie could dance the hula. I knew that the steel guitar and hula was associated with people from Hawaii.

Mom later told us that she was born in Hawaii. My parents made sure that my siblings and I knew our family was from the Philippines, but I did not know what that meant. That lack of

knowledge did not answer how I was supposed to identify as someone born in the United States, with a Filipino heritage I knew little about. I saw the world from the eyes of “Theodore Cleaver”. My parents never talked about the cultural customs practiced in the Philippines or its history. Emphasis was placed on learning English, not Ilocano or Tagalog, with the goal of assimilation into the American mainstream.

On the television or in magazines I didn't see any people who looked like me. And that held true during my school years up through my graduation from Lowell High, the magnet college prep school in San Francisco near Lake Merced in 1964. The only time I could claim or recognize my identity as Filipino was in the presence of relatives.

It was also during church related activities where I saw people who looked like me. For the most part, these were adults. However, the congregations of the FAFB consisted of families of mixed heritage. That meant a father who was Filipino and a mother, who was Caucasian, Mexican, African American, or Japanese. Our common experience was as laborer families working the agricultural fields of California. Their offspring resulted in a range of diverse physical features including hazel or green eyes, light brown hair, fair complexions and being tall in stature. I considered myself ugly in comparison because I was pure Filipino and not white enough.

As a first generation Filipino American, I was raised with traditional American values and had little cultural knowledge of my heritage. As the first generation born in the United States, my parents believed it was best that their children only spoke English. I was accustomed to hearing my grandfather and father speaking in Ilocano, the native dialect of our province in the Philippines. My mother grew up understanding Ilocano but lost the ability to speak the language. I grew up understanding the basics. If an Ilocano asked my name, where I was from or my age I could respond. Thinking that I was fluent, they would continue the conversation. I had to apologize to them, explaining that I was born in San Francisco and could not speak our language. In response they would say, “you’re not really Filipino.” I had no concept or true cultural and historical perspective of what it meant to be Filipino. I always thought I was American.

Chapter 5 – Ritch Street

Two real-estate investments were made by my family in conjunction with other FAFB Presbyters. The holding company was named the

Brotherhood Fidelity Association. The first property investment was a three-story nine-unit apartment building at 1511 Golden Gate Avenue where my family lived. The second property was a three-story 19th-century Victorian building of six walk-up flats in the South of Market (SOM) on Ritch Street where grandpa lived. Eventually the cost of operating the two apartment buildings far exceeded any expected revenue. The nine-unit building was sold, and we moved in with grandpa when I was eight years old.

I seldom walked down the end of the long, narrow hallway of the Ritch Street apartment. I usually made a left into my bedroom or went straight out the front door. The brittle linoleum crackled beneath my feet as I walked towards the door. But I did not open the door. Instead, I knocked on the door to my left; it was twice as tall as me.

A low pitched, but firm crackled voice spoke, "Come in." I was anxious and scared about disturbing grandpa but my curiosity about all the items in the room stacked on shells and tacked to the walls, gave me the courage to enter his sanctuary.

The shades were pulled down on the three tall casement bay windows. A yellowish glow came from the floor lamp beside the desk. Its light barely illuminated the room. When my eyes adjusted to the dim light, I focused on a combined drop-leaf desk and cabinet bookcase with a glass door filled to capacity with various sized books and loose sheaves of paper all stacked at random on the four shelves inside.

Covering the wall next to the desk were different maps of the ancient world. I was fascinated by the different colors outlining the boundaries of each country but was confused by the names that I saw. In school, the names of those countries and their boundaries were different. On

an adjacent wall were charts with strange names of people, with lines and diagrams showing their interconnecting relationships.

Grandpa was sitting hunched over the desk, his glasses perched low on his nose, as I slowly approached. He was carefully underlining passages in a book that was laid open on top of his Bible. Those pages were also underlined in red. Standing behind him, I watched silently as his hand drew line after line on the page he was reading. It was a few minutes before he remembered someone was in the room behind him. Turning, he smiled and beckoned me to come closer. As I did, he placed his arm around me. Grandpa slowly picked me up and sat me on his lap. I placed my head against his chest. I could feel his heartbeat and his whiskers tickling my forehead. We sat this way for a while and did not say anything.

"Well, I guess this means it's time for me to take a break," he spoke softly.

He yawned, took his glasses off and laid them on top of the open pages, then rubbed his eyes. I slid off his lap and stood next to him, waiting for him to stand up. When grandpa did, he reached for my hand. Together, we made our way around the massive bed that occupied most of the space in the room. We slowly walked out the door and back down the hall towards the kitchen.

At the kitchen table, with its chrome tubular legs, double banded trim and simulated green marble Formica-like top. I sat on one of the matching chairs. I watched as he struck a match and turned on the old gas stove under a well-used cast iron skillet atop one of the burners. He reached for the can placed on the stove. It held fat drippings that had been collected from food previously fried. Scooping out a large

portion of the fat, he placed it into the skillet, waiting for the cream-colored substance to melt.

In the meantime, he began crushing cloves of garlic, peeling back the skin, but keeping the cloves whole. Then he carefully placed the garlic into the fat. I loved the smell of the garlic filling the kitchen air as the cloves slowly turned brown. He took the pot of rice made the night before out of the refrigerator and began scraping its remaining contents into the simmering fat drippings and garlic. Carefully he stirred the contents, making sure that nothing would be burned. At the right moment, some soy sauce was poured into the mixture. When it was just

about done, he cracked a fresh egg and stirred it into the frying rice. We did not have much to eat for dinner during those years, but it was enough for me and the rest of the family.

“Are you hungry now?” I nodded in silent agreement and went to the cupboard to get enough plates and utensils to lay out on the table, so everyone could eat. As we sat around the table and before the family could begin eating, grandpa said a prayer.... more of a mini sermon.

Chapter 6 – South of Market

The South of Market neighborhood sidewalks were cracked. The narrow cobblestone alleyways were crooked, all aftereffects of the 1906 earthquake. An empty lot one side of our building burned down in the aftermath. A brothel was a few buildings up our street and occasionally you had to step around a drunk passed out on the sidewalk.

I was ashamed that we lived in the slums of San Francisco and never invited my school friends to come over and play. But this was our

playground. We were now free from mom’s watchful eyes, to ramble through the neighborhood with our friends riding on our homemade coasters. We made them from our roller skates that had broken. Mom was more reassured that we would not ride them in the streets since we were older.

Gordon and Billy Wong were our daily playmates. Their family owned Wong’s laundry on Ritch Street. Sometimes I would play with Norman Gin, whose family also owned a laundry at the opposite end of Ritch on the corner with Harrison Street.

The only white people in the neighborhood I knew were at the carpenter shop next door to the Wong’s or the Saint Francis Pie Company next door to our building. When the drivers were loading their delivery vans and not looking, the braver neighborhood kids would steal a pie behind their back. The drivers knew what was going on but never stopped them.

Folsom was a main thoroughfare that led to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. Oftentimes my friends and I would race our coasters up Ritch to Folsom Street. We would watch the Greyhound or Trailways buses with signs that read Los Angeles, Sacramento, Reno on their way to the bridge. I wanted to be on those buses and travel to any destination it was headed. We could not afford any real vacation that was not related to the FAFB and besides Dad was always working.

Up through elementary school Rodney and I were constant companions and best friends. Oh yeah, we fought lots as all brothers do, but we also had good times together. Living in San Francisco, it was always raining. There were cracked sidewalks, potholes, and continuous construction sites along Harrison Street. Those became puddles in the winter when it rained heavily. As we walked that street on the way back and forth from first, Lincoln then later Bessie Carmichael elementary schools, we made a game of jumping in every puddle. We would race to each pool of water to beat the other so we could splash as much muddy water as possible on one another. Mom made sure Rodney and I put on our black galoshes and slick yellow rubber raincoats with buckle snaps down the front. There was a matching yellow hood that covered the entire head. It made us look like we were travelers from outer space.

I was a good student and enjoyed reading. This was my way to forget the physical conditions where we lived and escape into another world. Often my book reports were illustrated with my drawings. I drew as another form of escape creating landscapes and scenery with my imagination. There I could pretend to travel on my own bus, car, ship, or airplane. I never felt alone because I had myself to keep company for now.

Chapter 7 – Born Again

Growing up, I was taught the Judeo-Christian tenets that God is love and Jesus loves you. I remember the provocative images of Jesus...a sleek, almost naked man nailed to a cross or that of a man's face with high cheekbones, slender nose, long flowing dark blond hair and beckoning tender hazel eyes. But it was those sensuous lips that had me hooked every time I glanced at his figure. Yes, I loved Jesus, but was conflicted about being sexually attracted to not just him but all men. In those moments I realized how I was different from other guys and was ashamed of what others would think about me if they knew.

There were no options growing up in a devout Pentecostal family. During my teenage years I resented such rigidity imposed upon me and promised myself that when older I would indulge in experiencing life to the fullest. Hume Lake in Kings Canyon National Park was where the FAFB held its annual youth summer camp. My first visit there was when I was eight years old. It thrilled me to be out of the city and in the towering pine trees. Filtered sunlight through the branches cast beams into the camp. Following the afternoon recreation period, the junior and senior boys would return to our separate tents before showering. Junior boys would go first in the gang shower. I tried to hang around until the senior guys would come in, but our counselor always got us out beforehand. I had to settle for sneaking peeks into the senior guy's tent after they showered while they changed for dinner. I already knew that I liked guys by that age and fantasized touching them.

Being "born again", meant that baptism was not only through water immersion, but most importantly through glossolalia or the speaking in tongues. While attending a monthly fellowship church meeting in my early teens, I experienced the surreal uttering of foreign sounding words coming from me while prone on the floor in a trance like state. I was oblivious of my surroundings. My thoughts were being verbally expressed in a language unknown to me. It was strange yet felt natural and peaceful. When I came back into the conscious world, it surprised me that most of the congregation had gone home. The few who remained were kneeling and surrounding my prone body. Looking at the clock, it was 12:30 AM. It seemed only as if 15 minutes had passed. The last I remembered was praying at the altar when the service ended around 10 PM.

My Pentecostal conversion did not last long. By the time I was attending Everett Junior High School, what remained of my religious upbringing was a sense of shame and guilt. I was shy and did not enjoy the gym class. Because of my early childhood isolation from other boys, I never learned to play any sport well. To get out of participating, I asked my mother to write a note excusing me from exercising due to illness. When she grew suspicious, Rodney would forge her handwriting and I would dictate what to write. To my surprise, my gym teacher assigned me instead to pass out towels to all the guys as they came out of the gang showers. I did so gladly and was always sick most of the physical education periods during those years.

I knew that I was sexually attracted to men and thought that there was something wrong with me. But that did not stop me from acting on my desires. In the South of Market on the corner of Market and Fourth Streets was Merrill's drugstore. It was on my way home from Everett Jr. High School. It had a magazine stand, where adult material was in the corner and within browsing range. To my delight, I discovered the pages of the "Young Physique" and "Demigod" magazines with full-page color images of barely clad male bodies in beguiling poses. Too young to buy the magazines, I often used the "five finger discount" method of acquisition. From that point on, the flesh won over the spirit. Pages of those magazines became worn out and soiled. I always had to throw them out, fearing that mom would find them first. But I always went back to get more magazines at Merrill's. In our family, love was never verbally or physically expressed. That usually was shown in greeting cards exchanged during birthdays, Valentine's Day, or Christmas. To embrace one another or talk about romantic love was foreign, much less discussing the topic of sex. That was relegated to the church summer camp and that special talk given to the senior guys. I found out that practicing masturbation would send me to hell.

In my high school years, I had girlfriends, Cena Silvers and Dottie DeArco, but never had sex with them. I was conflicted about my sexual preference. Going to see a movie or listening to the latest popular songs, wearing make-up by women, any social dancing, smoking of tobacco or drinking alcohol were all taboos. And do not even consider masturbation or premarital sex. There were no options growing up in a devout Pentecostal family. During my teenage years I resented such rigidity imposed upon me and developed a rebellious attitude about attending FAFB church activities.

I resented having to attend all those FAFB religious activities. I was ashamed to acknowledge that I was Pentecostal. I did not know what that meant. As I became older, I began to recognize the contradictions. It was between the preached words of compassion and doing good for others and the lack of church activities to improve the lives of those in society who are less fortunate. This observed and confused religious hypocrisy undermined my spiritual growth.

My parents were able to purchase their first home in the Outer Mission at 120 Rhine Street. The house was just two blocks from the Daly City limits. When I turned 18, I was still living at home. The Sunday after that birthday, I told my mother I was not going to church anymore FAFB activities. I rejected religion as a fabricated illusion full of contradictions. It would be only until later in life that I would develop my sense of spirituality. On the following weekend, I began to challenge my social insecurities and shyness by going into clubs and check out the social scene in North Beach, unsure what sex I was cruising for.

SECTION II – THE CATERPILLAR

I wonder if caterpillars know they are gonna fly someday, or they just start building a cocoon and like “why am I doing this?” - Anonymous

Chapter 1 - The Urge

I was drafted during the Vietnam War, but voluntarily joined the USAF in 1966. I became a Site Development Specialist and spent my military career near Nashville, as an engineering draftsman, surveyor, and construction inspector. My entire tour of duty was spent at Sewart Air Force Base in Smyrna, Tennessee.

The Tennessee Valley Authority had completed the Percy Priest dam and the reservoir would eventually inundate the airfield, but not the main base. All my technical training was used to transform the base into a civilian recreation area. Our engineering squadron remodeled the officers and enlisted men’s club into resort facilities. The airbase conversion included building a boat ramp, fishing dock, swim platform and beach for the new lakefront. Those experiences fueled my desire to become an architect. Liberated from any parental control, I explored all the ingrained religious taboos. At day's end, we would return to the beach we built and get drunk, smoke cigarettes then gather at the enlisted men’s nightclub on base.

Aware of the discrimination and racism in the South, I was hesitant to go off base during the first year. I did not know what to expect. Understanding that I would have three more years on this base, I resolved to expand my social horizons beyond the on-base clubs and venture into Nashville or the nearby town of Smyrna.

But I did not go alone. My “posse” was a Mexican, an African American, a Caucasian and me. We would go into Nashville together and make a pact. When we entered an establishment that had no posted sign, we would get up and leave if we were not served in 10 minutes. That happened quite a bit. In one incident, we were leaving a bar and I was the last one out. While leaving, I was punched in the face because I had made a pass at a white female.

Still ignorant about my Filipino cultural heritage, when asked by other airmen what my ethnic identity is, I would say jokingly, “Puerto Rican – Eskimo.” Then, I would point to the shape of my eyes and brown skin. In fact, they gave me the nickname “pineapple”.

While in the USAF I explored my sexuality, first with men. Being shy, I found courage in alcohol. Most of the time in the military I was drunk from Friday night until Sunday night. Frequently, I experienced black outs and could not recollect what took place the night before.

Still conflicted about my sexuality, I would go on drinking binges with some new buddies on base, but never remembered what happened the night before. Often the next day, a handsome guy I did not recognize would pass me on base. I had seen him before and had been attracted to him, but never said a word. Then, he would come up to me with a wink and grin on his face saying, “we had a nice time last night, let’s get together again”. I had no clue what had happened.

Through those military years, I would frequent the civilian “off-limits” bars deemed by the USAF, in Nashville. My instincts told me that was where the action is, and that is where I wanted to be. When the bar closed it would be too late to catch the return bus to the base. I would stay overnight at the Nashville YMCA anticipating a surprise liaison. But it was at the Janis Joplin concert in Nashville’s Centennial Park, where I finally met a guy in 1968 who was visiting from San Francisco. We went back to his friend’s house where I had my first conscious sexual experience with a man. I was hooked and wanted more.

Then there was Freddie, my Air Force drinking buddy whom I would carouse with all night drinking at the Percy Priest beach on the air base. We would stumble into the barracks during the early mornings. While writing this memoir, he contacted me via Facebook, stating he fondly remembered those days together. We never engaged in physical intimacy.

The last year before my tour of duty ended in May 1970, I had a one- year relationship with Clara Ruth Smith, a hairdresser from Clarksville. We met at the enlisted men’s club during the USO Saturday night dance on base. That night I went home with her. I had sex with a woman for the first time to the strains of Simon and Garfunkel’s, “Bridge Over Troubled Waters”. It was a premonition of my tumultuous sexual preference that would resurface in my life again and again. Usually she would bring me home to spend the weekend. If she had to work and could not pick me up, her mother was glad to get me.

The decision to end my relationship with Clara was my first true heartbreak. We both knew because of our different cultural backgrounds that marriage was not in our future together. Before

leaving her family breakfast table for the last time, I asked why they had shown me such love and hospitality. Clara replied, “Well, my brother is an Army soldier in Viet Nam, and we hope that he has found a family there to care for him just like we have found you”. I slowly sobbed on the plane all the way back to San Francisco imagining what might have been and uncertain about the future. What I did know was that I was still conflicted about my sexual preference.

Chapter 2 - Expanded Horizons

Following nearly 4 years of military service in the USAF, I was discharged in 1970 as a Staff Sergeant. To appease my mother, I agreed to live with my parents until I found work and could afford my own place. While in the military the family moved to the Westlake district above the beach cliffs in Daly City. My intent was to begin college later in the year.

Helping with chores included accompanying mom to buy weekly groceries. During the return to the house on one occasion mom carried one bag and I followed her with two bags of provisions. The house was on a hill. It was built with the garage below and external stairs that lead to a side entrance on the second level.

Unexpectedly mom stumbled but maintained her balance. The bag of groceries in her grip fell to the steps with the sound of breaking glass. A copper liquid began pouring down the stairs and the ocean breeze caught the smell of Jack Daniel’s bourbon. Rather than asking mom if she were alright, I cussed her out. I was just as shocked as she was and ashamed for reacting that way. I

had placed more value on my need for alcohol over the wellbeing of my own mother. From that moment I choose to begin curtailing my drinking. But that would not prevail for

long since I picked up smoking cigarettes while in the military. One substance went hand in hand with the other.

Beginning in the Fall of 1970, I attended the City College of San Francisco (CCSF) to study Architecture and Design. I moved into my first apartment near the campus. It was complete with my drafting setup facing a window where the flowers and plants of the side garden could be seen. As a child I wanted to be an architect. Growing up in San Francisco, I was spellbound by the City Hall rotunda above the massive building. The façade was supported by Corinthian columns with long steps leading up to three gold-leaf embellished glass double doors. As a child I was always drawing pictures of buildings, airplanes, boats, and cars. I would design those objects with my own imagination. The hours would pass creating drawings until it was time for me to go to bed at night.

When at CCSF, during the design team field architectural projects I would often take on the role as the sociologist. Because of that exposure, I decided to broaden my education by becoming involved in community projects. It was more satisfying and stimulating rather than hearing mundane facts being spouted out by an indifferent professor. I began to feel isolation as to how my studies related to the community. It was as if I was ensconced in an ivory tower of academia looking for an escape.

While studying, I worked on design renovations for the Agbayani Village, the United Farm Workers headquarters in Delano, California. The Village was intended to be a retirement home for manongs (Filipino elderly men) complete with a general store, gas station and medical clinic. The construction plans had been drawn but needed revisions.

The Center for Community Change, a Washington, DC nonprofit foundation hired me for the project. I was honored to provide my services and give back to my elders as part of a tribute to correct the social injustices against Filipinos in the United States of America.

During this period, the civil rights movement manifested itself among other ethnic groups society- wide. At CCSF that influence was present in the form of the Tripartite Committee to create an Ethnic Studies Program composed of representatives from the administration, faculty, and student body. The Filipino Club on campus was involved, along with the Black Student Union and La Raza organizations. Our inspiration was influenced by the recently established Ethnic Studies Program at San Francisco State. We believed it was time for a similar program at CCSF.

I became an active member of the Filipino Club on campus. It was through activities there and by enrolling in the first Philippine history course at CCSF, that I began to understand the history of what early Filipino pioneers experienced in the United States. I learned that my Filipino American heritage included 400 years of Philippine colonialism under Spain and about the racism and discrimination during the 1930s against Filipinos in the United States. This was exemplified in Stockton, California where “No Filipinos Allowed” signs were posted on hotel doors or, when Filipinos were called “monkeys” on the streets of San Francisco.

Resolving to correct past social injustices against Filipinos, I got involved with the looming crisis at the International Hotel (IH). Many retired elderly Filipino farmworkers and Chinese men were being evicted from the IH. It was their home. The hotel was to be replaced by the encroaching financial district of San Francisco.

Through a study group at CCSF I was introduced to the Marxist-Leninist Mao Tze Tung philosophy by lesbians, Jeanette Lazam and Jocelyn Wan. On campus I became involved with organizations supporting national liberation movements in El Salvador and the Philippines.

Daily, there was a frenzy of meetings to attend for one concern or another, not to mention my academic studies. I worked as a draftsman for Morris Guralnick Naval Architects and Engineers in the afternoon and at night as a guard for Burns Security. There was barely enough time to sleep, prepare for my morning classes or complete the design projects and schematic drawings.

My closeted sexual identity implored me to participate in the gay liberation activities on CCSF by the Radical Faeries group, but I was not secure about my own sexual identity to do so. I was still playing the macho man to hide my being gay. As my cover, Maria Formalejo was my girlfriend, who represented the Filipino Club as President on the Tripartite Committee. I feared that if other Filipino students saw me going to gay related events, they would know I was gay, and that I would be shunned from participating in club activities.

When time allowed on evenings or weekends, I would be cruising for a trick on Polk Street or the Tenderloin district in San Francisco. I wanted to experience the same sensations again. Just like my sexual encounter back in Nashville, with the guy I met at the Janis Joplin concert.

My political and social awareness was also nurtured through associating with other Filipino students from UC Berkeley, who were building community resistance as supporters of the I Hôtel struggle. It was there that I became aware of other Filipino student organizations on the West Coast. They were also involved with efforts to establish Ethnic Studies Programs and community projects to improve the quality of life for Filipinos in the United States.

In 1971 on the Labor Day weekend at Seattle University, the first Young Filipino People's Far West Convention (FWC) was to convene. I was just beginning to understand the history of my people, both in the Philippines and the US. The conference agenda promised the opportunity to expand my thirst to know more. I intended to go. But this was a crossroads for me. I wanted to become an architect. Yet I could not reconcile the social injustices that prevailed, not just towards Filipinos in the United States, but also directed towards people from other social and cultural groups in the United States and around the world.

I needed time to think about what direction in life I was going to pursue. I wanted to be an architect. Yet I was drawn to the conviction that social injustices needed to be challenged. I was conflicted and understood that either choice would require my total commitment. My mind kept repeating an echo in my head, "I want to get involved!" I had missed out on participating in the fervor of the civil rights movement of the mid-1960's since I was in the USAF.

I was conflicted and needed to run away from this dilemma and give myself a break from academic studies, rather than enroll for the Summer quarter. And, to sort through my decisions, I chose to remove myself from any political activities during that summer. Instead, I hitchhiked

across the US visiting high school friends who had moved away from San Francisco and buddies from the Air Force.

With my sleeping bag, canteen, cook stove, tent, dry food, extra clothes, a small Philippine flag draped over the backpack, I stood by the side of multiple highways anticipating my next ride. At Detroit I crossed the border into Canada. I visited grandpa's relatives in Montréal before hitchhiking through Canada on my way to Seattle, Washington. By the time I reached the first FWC, I had made my strategic decision to graduate from the "University of the Streets", rather than pursue my BA. This decision was heartbreaking, yet in my soul I knew it was the right choice. Architecture and design would always be my avocation that I could practice in the future.

Chapter 3 – Martial Law

In the Fall of 1971, I withdrew from my studies at CCSF. I was swept into the excitement of the social change momentum of the time. I had the opportunity to meet people who were involved in saving the International Hotel from demolition and was eager to do more. I was beginning to see my world through changing eyes.

I was asked to join the Kalayaan (means independence and solidarity) Collective by Bruce Occena. This was a San Francisco Bay Area left organization composed of Philippine national and Filipino Americans. Its intent was to confront the perpetuation of social injustices against the Filipino communities in the US and the Philippines. I had found my purpose in life. My dedication to this concept gave me the energy to draw upon lessons and influences gleaned from my grandpa and parents. It was akin to the experience of being "born again"!

Most of us had some type of way to support ourselves in part-time jobs. For me that meant working part time with nonprofit health and social service organizations. But the real hours of the day were given to the political work. Each member of the Kalayaan brought a range of skills into the collective.

I was the layout editor of the Kalayaan newspaper due to my design background. I recall vividly the incident of September 21, 1972. The front page of the current issue had just been laid out on the photographic printing flat. It was ready for the press. Over the radio came a news cast, "President Ferdinand Marcos has declared martial law in the Philippines and the writ of habeas corpus has been suspended."

The Kalayaan supported the resistance movement in the Philippines against Marcos' anti-democratic programs and brutal acts being committed against the Filipino people. It did this through publishing newspaper accounts and analysis of the scandals, corruption and violence conducted by the Marcos government.

Nevertheless, I was in a quandary of having to re-layout the front page of the newspaper. But, with the magic of a handmade stencil and black marker I superimposed in huge letters, the words "Martial Law" over the existing layout. My approach was to recognize this not as a problem, but instead as a challenge to create the appropriate solution.

During the initial days of the imposition of martial law, spontaneous rallies, demonstrations, and teach-ins were conducted across the US, denouncing the tyrannical rule of Marcos. I spoke at numerous forums in San Francisco including Glide Memorial Church, Union Square and went to Hawaii to inform the public about the ongoing atrocities and to demand the restoration of civil liberties in the Philippines. Those oratorical skills were honed from childhood and teenage experiences. My siblings and I were requested to sing as a trio in church service and performed in front of congregations. Stage fright was never an issue for me.

The Marcos dictatorship repressed the voice of free opposition in the Philippines. The Kalayaan newspaper became the voice that could be heard. The Kalayaan Collective eventually merged with like-minded formations from the Northwest, California, Hawaii, the Midwest, and East Coast to form the Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP) or Union of Democratic Filipinos as a nationwide organization in 1974. Many of the members were Filipino nationals who were part of the resistance movement in the Philippines. Those individuals were part of the Philippine “intelligencia”. It was through their family social, economic, and political connections in the US, that visas or decrees of political asylum could be arranged for them. But others were deported with the label “subversive”.

Among those who came from the Philippines to the United States were key leaders in the Communist Party of the Philippines. It was critical to the existence of the anti-Marcos resistance that they remained in the US. An immigration loophole enabled them to obtain residency status. As part of my contribution to the resistance movement, I married Cynthia Maglaya so she could remain here as my legal spouse and continue her leadership.

A blacklist prepared by the Marcos regime was circulated in the Philippines, directing the immediate arrest and imprisonment should any KDP members be discovered there. Through the Freedom of Information Act, I found that I was number six on the list. This was based on my public speaking against the Marcos dictatorship in the early months after the declaration of martial law in the Philippines.

Surveillance by the US government was intense. During this period, it was common to hear a click when I was having a conversation on the phone with another KDP activist. Often a car would be parked near the KDP headquarters with two men inside or the same vehicle would be trailing me on my way home. At two separate locations, the Oakland Police Department had officers living across from my house and in another instance below my apartment.

Chapters of the KDP were nationwide and communication was paramount to coordinate community meetings, rallies, demonstrations, marches, and sit-ins. As a grassroots organization, the chapters were assessed dues which were always late and never enough. There were living and travel expense stipends for the National Executive Board. Additionally, the national headquarters operational expenses of the KDP National Secretariat, the day-to-day staff which I chaired, had to be factored in. It was composed of the Education and Propaganda Commissions, the Finance and National Organizing Departments.

Being a grassroots community organizer, guaranteed that there was no such thing as a boring day. There was a flurry of meetings, telephone calls, reports to prepare, budgets to review or planning for upcoming conferences. Often the pace inside the headquarters was so frantic, we

would forget to eat until the loud rumble from someone's stomach would remind us during a meeting to do so. My adrenaline was pumped throughout the day and often it flowed into the late evening hours. I loved it. There was the exhilaration of knowing that the KDP activities were having a political impact in the US. The organization was finding receptive audiences in support of democracy in the Philippines and against the Marcos dictatorship.

Chapter 4 - Brigadista

In 1972, I met Fely Anna Maramba at the Second Filipino People's Far West Convention in Stockton, California. I shared a loving relationship and moved into an apartment on California Street in the Polk neighborhood of San Francisco; we were happy.

Anne was raised in Chicago and we returned there for our wedding engagement party at the Palmer House. On our return to San Francisco, we explained to her mom why we could not marry because I had a political marriage. She was understanding and moved to San Francisco where she lived with us. I was treated like her son. Daily she always asked me what to cook for dinner. My gratitude was shown by volunteering to walk her black poodle "Gigi" down Polk Street. During my days as a student at CCSF, the Polk district was one of my favorite areas to hook up with guys. I knew that a cute dog was perfect man bait. Many guys would stop me so that they could pet her. It gave me the opportunity to cruise not so discreetly. My attraction and need to have sexual encounters began to conflict with my relationship to Anne.

In 1973, Anne and I had the opportunity to participate in the North American, Venceremos Brigade. This was an International solidarity organization with the people of Cuba. Its purpose was to provide first-hand experience to help the country survive the US economic blockade. Previous brigades had worked side-by-side with other Cubano's cutting sugarcane. Our brigade was different. Instead, we constructed housing for the workers. Now, I truly had the opportunity to utilize my architectural training to build a better society. Most of the time, I was tasked with using the jack hammer used to dig foundation posts for the building. "Guillermo Mangaoang, please report to the camp office." Now, why do they want to talk with me? Do they suspect me?

Acrid smells of burning wood still lingered in the air filtering through the hazy morning sky. The night before, we just completed three days and nights of building the men's dormitory in eight hours shifts. There was a fire that destroyed the building and all our belongings. A foreboding anxiety began to creep through me. Rumors were floating through the camp that a saboteur was among our ranks who purposely set the fire.

Upon entering I sat down in the chair nearest the door. The air was hot and still inside the sparsely furnished camp office. Armpit sweat stains began to show on my newly issued parade clothes. The Bay Area brigade leader was already waiting inside. A solemn look was on his normally smiling face.

"Gil, I'm sorry to tell you that your father has died." A piercing stab went through me. Deep heaviness squeezed my chest. "You don't have to march in the parade today; stay in the camp if you choose. Arrangements have been made to get you back to the US. You'll fly out on the diplomatic carrier for the invited foreign dignitaries after the celebration." Then he left me alone. I felt an emptiness in my heart that was filled with remorse. My mind was racing. Now, it all

made sense. Anne and I had gone to my parent's home to say goodbye before leaving on the brigade. I had to reassure them that we would be safe. Dad was distraught about my decision to go to Cuba. "Son, don't go," he pleaded. Tears were pouring down his face as his frail arms held me tightly. I had never seen him crying openly

before and especially about my travels. "Don't worry dad. I will be back." His grip tightened and I could feel his sobbing body.

Previous infrequent times when I would visit my parents for dinner, discussions would revolve around the political turmoil in the Philippines. My mother could never understand why I had chosen to be involved in my political work. Heated conversations would ensue between her and I, but dad would always say, "let the boy speak!" He never elaborated as to why he tacitly supported my political and social activism.

It would only be later that I would meet a member of the US Communist Party manong Pablo Valdez, a veteran union organizer of the Alaska cannery industry. He knew my father when he was attending UC Berkeley. He had constantly encouraged my father to join them. Dad always declined but remained an active supporter of their efforts but could not participate since he now had a family to support. Now, it all made sense. He knew he was dying but did not let the family know. The clues were there, I just did not put it together. Over the previous 10 years. He had survived two heart attacks but not the third.

Chapter 5 - Conflicted

Anne entered the dorm and we embraced without saying a word. I was still in shock and had not cried. "I'm so sorry. Gil, they just told me about your dad. How soon can you get back to the States?" She asked. "Sometime after the parade is over." It was only years after his death that I would really understand the sacrifices he made for our family.

The brigade leader came back into the camp office. "Are you going to wait in the dorm until after the parade?" I hesitated, what better way to honor the memory of my father than to march at this event. After all, it was not every day that the Venceremos Brigade from North America was invited to be the leading contingent opening the International Workers Day parade at the Revolutionary Square in Havana, Cuba. And then, to be told that only two rows above our seats in the grandstands, would be Fidel Castro addressing the millions present. I had to be there!

I regret not being able to share those moments with my father. I reflected on his own experience as a working man who struggled to make a better life for his family in a new country. There was so much I wanted to tell him, but most of all... that I love him. It was too late. Wiping tears from my face, I ran to catch up with the other brigadistas who were gathering outside the dorms and already boarding the buses for the parade grounds. "Hey, wait up!" I could only hold on to the notion that there was no better way to commemorate my dad's life than marching on May 1, 1973 to celebrate the working-class proletariat.

Anne and I moved with her mom to Oakland in 1975, where my internal sexual identity struggle intensified. I was miserable with Anne; we were always quarreling. We had been living together for three years and had a wedding engagement party in Chicago, her hometown. I was

emotionally distraught and conflicted again about my sexual orientation! I realized that my sexual relationship with Anne was not the life I wanted but felt such angst at the obvious option. I did not want to hurt Anne with our separation, but I needed to be me. I feared and concerned with what others would think of me. I had yet to fully discover and embrace my gay identity with pride and dignity. I was intensely involved with central leadership responsibilities administering the daily activity of the nationwide KDP. It covertly ascribed to the Marxist-Leninist philosophy that homosexuality was an aberration of the bourgeoisie and counter revolutionary. "Screw it!!"

My life had been on hold for too long, and a break with Anne had to happen. It was heart rendering emotionally for both of us.... A broken heart again. What made our separation particularly difficult was that we worked in the KDP national Secretariat and would see one another daily in the national HQ.

Chapter 6 - Choose

During the mid-70s, there were few gay role models within the KDP or society-wide for that matter. Nor was there any established, "gay code of conduct", as to what should, or how does one "come out." There was no experience in the US political left movement with the concept of "disclosure" regarding one's sexual orientation. The entire theoretical foundation for gay sexuality was yet to be couched in "politically correct" terminology. It had to be experienced and lived first before any "gay social norm" could be hypothesized and written. At that time in history, the gay culture paradigm was for individuals to come out in overly dramatic and expressive ways; the more shocking the act, and "in your face", the greater the impact.

Most consider the Stonewall Inn riots of New York City, by transgender and transvestite minorities in 1968, as the renewed battle signal for the modern-day gay liberation started in the mid-50s. However, it was in 1967 at the Black Cat in Los Angeles, California, where the true roots of the modern-day gay liberation movement began. The Los Angeles police department raided this bar known to have transvestite and gay patrons. The LAPD used their batons to beat them and haul them to jail. In response, the fledgling gay community fought back as the bar patrons were being placed in the police vans.

When I made the decision to embrace my gay identity, it was a traumatic experience for me. It was in 1975, that Anne and I went through a wrenching emotional breakup during an ideological campaign against male chauvinism within the KDP. I was indirectly characterized as a villain. My sense of self-esteem was shattered. I had to figure out what to do next and how to survive the emotional freefall I was experiencing. First, there were no openly gay men within the KDP. So here I was, perceived within the KDP as a straight man who was in a live-in relationship of three years with Anne. Yet, my inner self-identity as a gay man was always being suppressed.

Secondly, I was conflicted with the tension of not knowing whether I would be accepted or rejected within the KDP. I feared the perceived ostracism and potential organization discipline. But I said to myself, "What are they gonna do, kick me out? I do not think so; I am the "master of organization" as the chairperson of the National Secretariat. After all, it was only a few months earlier that Melinda Paras and Trinity Ordonez, leading members of the National Executive Board, were known to be an openly lesbian couple. When they came out, no one in the

KDP made any disparaging comments. Their action was all I needed to begin my transition, although unconscious. I saw it as a clear signal that expressed, “Go for it.”!

Up to this point, I continued the straight charade, yet lived in constant fear that my gay identity would be discovered. I was miserable living a lie. Now do not get me wrong, I loved Anne and still do. It was a difficult decision for us to make the break. But it had to be done. I understood that I deserved to have a relationship with someone who was sexually attractive to me as a gay man. Annie also deserved to have a relationship with someone she was mutually attracted to sexually.

All politics aside, though tragic in one sense, my breakup with Anne led me towards my journey of true liberation and freedom. For this I am grateful. But there were still new pathways to explore and challenges to hurdle. I was yet to figure how to integrate my newfound gay identity in the context of the KDP much less how to interact with the burgeoning gay movement. This conflict tugged at my mind and soul for expression and freedom. I was yet to be fully liberated.

Chapter 7 - Rainbow

So, my being comfortable to have a sexual liaison in the KDP National headquarters, amid a rehearsal break for a revolutionary song, was my way of making a revolutionary statement at that time about who I am. Having sex at the National headquarters seemed the appropriate action to declare once and for all, and to set the record straight, that I am gay.

This impetus was not conscious on my part, but one that was intuitive and spontaneous, though controversial in action. It felt comfortable, and I recognized the right circumstances for my dramatic “coming out”. It seemed to be the right place and with the right person at the right time. Bob was working with the San Francisco chapter, and I had known him socially through interactions at different gay clubs in the Castro district or encounters during progressive social events. We had flirted at times, but never had the chance to “get it on”. We both knew it would happen, it would just be a matter of time.

It took some time for me to gather my strength to express my newfound sexuality in front of KDP members. I had never carried on a conversation with the KDP that, “I’m gay, this is who I am—it’s new for me, too; deal with it.”

The room was warm and dank with the dark green shade pulled all the way down to shut out the glaring noonday sun. From the room next door, voices could be heard, and the smell of coffee and cigarettes crept under the door. I finished putting my last item of clothing on and was tying my shoestring. I stood up from the bed and began straightening my hair.

Roberto Cruz had already begun fixing his side of the bed, so I joined in and tugged the sheets and blankets to make them smooth. I tossed him one of the pillows for his side and fluffed up the other one for my side of the bed. I looked around the room one last time to make sure we did not leave any traces.

“Are you ready?” I asked Roberto.

He just smiled, standing there wearing his skintight jeans and T-shirt (he only wore T-shirts, but he had a great selection in different colors and styles). His hand was on his left hip, elbow pointing out with his weight shifted on his right leg, the good one.

“Any time, darling,”. He crooned in his lilting singsong way.

Outside, I could hear the exasperated voices of females asking one another, “Where are Gil and Bob? We have to finish our rehearsal before the next meeting.” At that, I turned toward the door; the old hardwood floor creaked under our feet as we moved. I took a deep breath and turned the doorknob. Immediately, a flood of bright sunlight streamed into the darkened bedroom as the door was opened. The yellow kitchen walls were even brighter with the flooding sunshine. In front of the two unadorned, tall Victorian double paned glass windows and against the glare of the sun streaming in through the window, were four silhouetted figures: Christine, Letty, Thelma, and Cathy. They were in various poses of sitting or standing around the kitchen table in front of the windows facing the bedroom door. The expression on their collective faces was a wide range of reactions from awe, to disgust, then amazement and surprise.

Suddenly, it felt like we were in the spotlight as Bob and I stepped into the kitchen. He and I just looked at one another. I had a playful smirk on my face; this was a deadpan. From different voices came cries and rebukes, “Walang Hiya!! (No shame!) Dios Ko!! (My God!) And Animal”!!! Bob was just, oh so nonchalant and said with exasperation, “Get over it already!”

In a composed voice I replied to the gathered assemblage, “We were just clearing our throats. By your responses, it worked well, because obviously you heard us as we hit the high notes rehearsing.” With that Bob and I turned back to the four and just smiled sweetly. And with that we all went off to begin practicing “Alerta Katipunan” A cut on the KDP album “Philippines. BANGON! ARISE!”

The record album was produced in 1976 by Paradon records. That is how Bob Cruz happened to be at the KDP national headquarters. The singers on the album were members recruited from the KDP National Staff and the Northern California Regional chapter personnel. Bob and I sang tenor on this song for the record cut. It was hoped that by music and lyrics, the “Bangon” album would provide the uninformed with information about the economic conditions and political developments occurring in the Philippines, under the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Hopefully, it would inspire the listening audience to support the Philippine resistance movement against a corrupt system of government. The collection of songs selected for the album chronicles the call to action, a call to arms.

We were part of the KDP singing group responsible for performing numerous songs on the KDP album, “Bangon”. Sales from this long- playing album would provide operational financial resources for the national headquarters. It would also simultaneously provide education about the exploitation and resistance against the Philippine dictator Marcos.

Chapter 8 - Felon

I was fortunate to work with creative people in the KDP. I shared a house with Roger Hickey and Terry Bautista after Anne, and I parted going our separate ways. Roger loved to tinker, always

trying to figure out how things worked. The KDP National telephone bills were exorbitant since daily contact with local chapters throughout the US was imperative. Quick to offer a solution, Melinda, a member of the National Executive Board went to work as a telephone line installer to understand how phone calls could be interrupted. After figuring it out, she instructed Roger how to make telephone bypass devices. These “black boxes” would interrupt any calls made from or to the national headquarters by local chapters. By using an established code, it was possible to call long distance without being charged. These devices could be attached to any telephone and were distributed for use by each KDP chapter across the country.

While working as a researcher with the Filipino Immigrant Services, one day I received a frantic call from Anne, who was a member of the Finance Commission. She had been arrested after FBI agents raided the KDP National headquarters and confiscated the illegal telephone device. She had been released on her own recognizance, but charges of violating federal interstate communication practices were levied against the KDP.

After much discussion within the National Executive Board, it was concluded that I was the best candidate to take the rap for the KDP. My reputation was in good standing within the Filipino Community and thus had the best chance of beating the charges. This was the least I could do in comparison to the life-threatening actions being waged by the Marcos regime against our compatriots in the Philippines. I expected to be arrested and criminal charges levied against me.

“Okay, roll your thumb over this pad and then press down on this square. Now stand over here and hold this in front of you.” A bright flash of light momentarily blinded me. “Put that down and turn to your right.” There was another burst of light. I was taken back to where Dale Minami from Oakland’s Asian Law Caucus was waiting for me. “They are releasing you on your own recognizance. We’ll get a trial date once the calendar is set.” We left the courthouse.

That is how I ended up getting booked with a criminal record as a felon. Dale was fantastic in getting the judge to reduce the charges to a misdemeanor with three years of probation. Years later, just for the experience, I lied during a jury summons as to whether I had been convicted of a felony. I was selected to serve on the jury that convicted a drug dealer.

Chapter 9 - Collision

The freedom was exhilarating to finally be “Out!!” I no longer cared what others thought and continued with my political responsibilities. The political New Left in the San Francisco Bay Area was in its nascent stages that included Men-of-Color gay groups. We would meet at the bars, or sometimes a group would host a private party.

The Gay Pride marches were just beginning nationwide in the early 1970s. The organizing meetings and preparation for such actions was primarily where gay men from any ethnic culture could congregate and find brotherhood. On the last weekend in June, the annual San Francisco Gay March was held on Sunday. There were more people on the sidewalks observing the “demonstration” as it was perceived to be, than those participating in the march. It was common for those marching to recognize faces within the crowds, with whom they had sexual encounters at the gay bars, bathhouses, and sex clubs the night before.

At the front of the San Francisco 1976 Bicentennial March, I was holding one end of the Bay Area Gay Liberation banner and the other end was held by Michael Jerry Krause, the chairperson of the June 28 Union. The group was named for the date in 1969 that gave rise to the modern-day Gay Movement, when drag queens in Greenwich Village at the Stonewall Inn fought against the New York City Police Department who were conducting a harassment raid.

Michael and I were at the beginning stages of our relationship together. Most nights I was sleeping at his Guerrero Street second floor apartment. The front windows framed the palm trees standing on the outside median traffic divider. At the foot of his bed was a fireplace no longer in use. Instead, a gas heater stood in the hearth surrounded by tiles matching those on the floor. Woodwork throughout the Pullman style flat reflected Victorian craftsmanship. Otherwise, we spent the night in the rear bedroom on 21st St. in Oakland, a Queen Anne cottage which I shared with Terry Bautista and Roger Hickey. The first time Michael spent the night with me there, I left drippings stains on the bedroom wall high above my pillow.

Finally, I had found my true love and thought this relationship would be forever. Unfortunately, it lasted only three short months. He was returning on his bicycle from his late-night meeting riding down Dolores Street when he collided with a car at the intersection of 19th Street. He died on the spot and was attended to by the driver who hit Michael. Ironically, the driver of the car happened to be the Chief of Trauma Surgery at San Francisco General Hospital. Michael had just graduated from nursing school and was providing care at St. Mary's hospital the following Monday.

Since Michael and I did not live together it was common for a couple of days to pass without any contact. My first boyfriend Ferd Eggen kept phoning me on the weekend, but I would let it default to the answering machine. I never returned his call. He came to the Filipino immigrant Services/Filipinos for Affirmative Action office where I worked as a researcher. It was only then that I found out about Michael's death. By that time, his body was already being flown back to New Jersey. The last time I saw Michael was when he was dressed in his nursing on his way to work and he kissed goodbye as I lay in his bed.

Gone was the opportunity to build a meaningful open relationship with Michael whom I loved body, mind, and soul. We shared perspectives on how social injustices are the basis for our political activism. Michael was the central leader within the June 28th Union and was interested in how the KDP became an organization. Our exchanges often took place over chamomile tea with honey and cucumber sandwiches at a vegan café in upper Noe Valley. We both took inspiration from the lessons shared. Michael was able to formulate an approach to organization development. I indirectly assuaged the political conflict between wanting to totally immerse myself within gay politics, or my responsibilities in the KDP. I resolved to carry on the political work in the Gay community which Michael no longer could accomplish. A deep conviction of dedicating my life to making the communities I identified with, better than when I first became conscious of their existence. The feeling was empowering.

Chapter 10 - Flames

While grieving Michael's passing, one weekend I went to the Carmel By the Sea canyon area on the Central coast of California. There was only one gay bar in Monterey, "After Dark" where that

evening I went to soothe my broken heart. I had taken up drinking again, scotch over. Outside and in the rear of the rustic bar was a brick paved patio with a raised circular fire pit. I was standing, staring catatonically into the dancing, red and yellow tongues of flame flaring upwards. Billowing smoke rose from the glowing logs as golden sparks were ejected to crackling and popping sounds.

“Don’t I know you?” came a male voice next to me. I continued to stare blankly into the fire and think to myself, “can’t you be more original”?! I took a sip from my drink, hoping whoever the person was, that they would just leave me alone. “Aren’t you. Michael’s friend?” Turning to him, I looked up, not recognizing his face. “You and Michael came to my place on Polk Street. You returned the Bay Area Gay Liberation banner you guys carried at the front of the Anti-Bicentennial March. Look, I know it is too early, but when you get back to the City. Let’s get together.” Borrowing a pen from a passing waiter, he wrote a note on a cocktail napkin and gave it to me. “I’m sorry.” He hugged me and left. I was about to throw the napkin into the firepit but hesitated and read what he wrote, “Please call me. Juan Lombard and his phone number.

Chapter 11 - Intersections

There were no People of Color Gay Organizations in San Francisco, other than the Gay Alliance of Latin Americans when Juan moved there in 1971. He became involved with the Third World Gay Caucus, which directed its actions towards racism within the Gay community. And it was at one of those beginning social and political gatherings known only through word-of-mouth where Juan first laid his eyes on me. Decades later during a joint interview of Juan and I by Eric Watt for the Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team where I was employed, Eric asked Juan, “what was his impression of me?” Juan responded, “I was in lust and jealous that he (Gil) already had a boyfriend!” Juan did not know any Filipinos, much less someone with a radical left political world perspective.

When Juan and I began our relationship in 1976, my phase of gay sexual exploration was only beginning. It was my decision to remain monogamous in the early years of my relationship with Juan, but subsequently I experienced casual relationships with other men. Simultaneously, my political responsibilities organizing in the Filipino community placed me in direct contact with individuals who would not necessarily accept my sexual lifestyle. I did not want to jeopardize the goals and objectives of community organizing work with those individuals, by not being open about my sexual orientation. I had yet to be comfortable with my orientation. I felt hypocritical and ashamed of my behavior.

I continued to subsume the need to explore my sexuality beyond my relationship with Juan. Also, I was becoming lackadaisical about my responsibilities as Chairperson of the KDP National Secretariat. The National Executive Board recognized this dilemma. Their decision was based on the premise a different political assignment with front line experience was necessary. And, through such a process my own political growth and development would be enhanced.

Simultaneously in 1981, the ILWU local 142 in Hawaii, commissioned the KDP to create an original theatrical production to commemorate the Union’s 75th Anniversary. I was transferred to Hawaii temporarily to assist in this endeavor. The play would illustrate the history of the struggle

by the sugar plantation workers to unionize against the Hawaii Sugar Plantation Association, an agribusiness conglomerate. The docudrama musical “Ti Mangyuna - They Who Were First”, was written by Ermina Vinluan who cultivated her extraordinary gift of theatrical arts as a member of the KDP Propaganda Commission. The premier would be unveiled at the Ilikai ballroom in Waikiki.

I was part of the production company running the soundboard and acted onstage in two scenes as separate characters. During the final week of the theatrical production preparation, I received word that mom had a stroke and was in the hospital. I was on a plane headed for San Francisco within a few hours.

Chapter 12 – What is Love

Walking into mom’s hospital room, I was not prepared. Usually immaculately coiffed, her hair was in an unruly fashioned hairdo, partially hidden under what looked like a surgical cap. She smiled weakly; her good eye not quite focused behind her black framed glasses. Those were decorated with three rhinestones set into its corners and the front hinges. Her face was pale above the hospital gown. On her shoulders was her favorite sweater. I do not recall our conversation. I was in shock by her reduced language capacity. It was as if mom had become a little girl who wanted to be comforted but did not know how to ask for it. And, I had not learned to physically express what love meant from my family growing. Intimacy was never an experience that flowed with ease throughout the current of our family interactions, or conversations while growing up.

All that changed after I came out to her, eventually sharing my experience with Michael, and my joy of having Juan come into my life. Mom and I had made the transition from being that of a parent-child relationship to that of adult friends. I had no choice in being born, but I could choose my friends. Our roles had reversed. She, as the child, and I, as the parent. I was heartbroken again. Before leaving, she asked me to fix the blanket around her feet because they were cold. Asking for a kiss would have been too much. Physical displays of affection in our family were hard to come by and awkward at best.

I returned to Hawaii to prepare for the Honolulu premier of Ti Mangyuna. A month later I received a call that mom died due to pneumonia complications. Gone was the feisty spirit when provoked. Gone was the blessing always bestowed upon me when leaving her presence. Gone was the resonance of her golden voice. I felt an unfathomable emptiness in my soul. Immediately, I made return plans for San Francisco. How ironic that mom was born near the plantation town of Hilo, and I was in Hawaii to celebrate the Union’s right to organize sugarcane workers. I will find out if there is an afterlife, perhaps it will include her singing beautiful melodies.

Chapter 13 - Cue

To be a member of a theatrical company was an aspiration of mine. Theatre arts always fascinated me since childhood, participating in church and school productions. It was not until after I was discharged from the USAF and went to the City College of San Francisco that the opportunity emerged once again to be up on stage. On campus I was a member of the Bay Area

Asian Coalition Against the WAR (BAACAW) and it had adopted a form of street theatre like that of the Teatro Campesino. BAACAW guerrilla theatre would be performed at anti-VietNam war rallies, demonstrations, and marches.

While my initial political working relationship with Ermina didn't occur until she became a member of the KDP Propaganda Commission, I had been aware of her talents due to the 1972 theatrical performance at the Second Young People's Far West Convention in Stockton. The KDP Propaganda Commission's Cultural Bureau, Sining Bayan performed "Isuda Ti Imuna", an original docudrama written by Ermina with music about World War II brides. This FWC was also the convention, where I met Anne Maramba.

Ermina was my theatrical arts mentor. During the six months, we worked together in Hawai'i sharing frustrations and successes. I learned the finesse required to be a writer, producer, and director. Erminia's artistic output exhibited her compassion and struggles of the Filipino experience in the United States...thank you Ermina for your gift to humanity.

As part of the Hawai'i Sining Bayan company, it produced and performed the play on every island over 6 months in 1981. During that time, I lived in a collective including siblings Barbara and Raymond Camacho. Here we could relax and be "home" from the bustle of auditions and casting, rehearsals, wardrobe purchases, lighting, sound, backdrop set design and construction, music selection, musician and a different experience involving any of those elements required to produce the play.

And relax at home we did. We were the unofficial "suntan caucus", as we were referred to by KDP members. Just sunbathing in the backyard of the Hawaii HQ on Farr Lane in the Kalihi neighborhood was a reprieve. This was a predominately Filipino neighborhood in Honolulu Or, better yet we could be found at the Ala Moana Beach. As much time that we could find away from the hectic pace of the theatrical production, was spent idly laying on the sand slathered in suntan lotion. The tall monarch palms swayed in the gentle breeze above our heads. It was the fun loving, free spirit character that drew me to Ermina's intriguing yet quiet personality. She would be lost in her thoughts then suddenly interject a stimulating spontaneous topic.

One of the most enjoyable experiences for the "suntan caucus", was when we were in Maui during the preparation phase for the tour of "Ti Mangyuna." Following our meeting with local union and community leaders, we decided on a trip to Hana. The serpentine road hugging the mountain cliffs, was dense with tropical vegetation on both sides of the narrow two-lane road. At one point we stopped on the side of the road near a gigantic banyan tree. It was overgrown with dangling vines hanging from its tall branches, yet close enough to...you guessed it. Each of us chose our own vine, climbed on and held on as best as possible not to fall, we swung back and forth like kids at play.

Barbara had a room to herself while Raymond and I shared a bedroom. While 10 years apart in age, I had been attracted to him since our first meeting in the SF Bay Area. We spent hours working together at the ILWU union hall, long after the office had closed for the day. This was the only place where the construction of background sets for the play could be built. There were many opportunities when alone with Raymond where my libido conflicted with my political

responsibilities. I did not want to complicate the social interaction within that limited political sphere of the Hawaii KDP chapter, by making a pass at him.

However, while I had outed myself already in the KDP years ago, I was still unable to genuinely enjoy my sexual activities. I was still not comfortable with myself and the judgment I perceived that would be cast on me for acting on my sexual intentions. Honolulu had a bustling gay community during this period yet frustrated that I was not able to participate in the frivolities inside the gay dance bars and clubs of Waikiki.

Chapter 14 - Stranglehold

When I returned to the SF Bay Area from Hawaii, my assignment in 1982 was to work with the Northern California Regional Executive Board. I became entrenched in the daily political leadership responsibilities for multiple campaigns, leaving little time for a social life. I felt the “Gay me” slipping away... my private social life of barhopping, all night bathhouses and one-night stands, would not be accepted, nor understood. I feared that some bigot in these political circles would discover my “secret” and thus jeopardize the validity of my political work. I had to protect my “politically correct” persona. I was a conflicted hypocrite.

Simultaneously, this perspective coincided with seven years into my relationship with Juan. I experienced a crisis since my paradigm for political social change based on Marxist Leninist principles had been shattered with the demise of the Soviet Union. My entire life up to this point, had been dedicated to the objective of creating a socialist society.

I had grown cynical and skeptical about the prospects of social realism and communism. Widespread dissent was emerging in those societies threatening their political stability. Perhaps it was time to review my own political orientation, but without pressure from my comrades.

In 1985, the opportunity to move to Hawaii once again presented itself through the transfer from the KDP Bay Area Regional Board. I would become a member of the Hawaii Regional Executive Board in 1985. This also coincided with my uncertainty as to whether I could commit to a long-term relationship with Juan. With reluctance he agreed to a long-distance relationship, with the caveat that I would live there for a specific amount of time.

Given those combinations of circumstances, Juan and I agreed to a temporary physical separation with my move to Hawaii. This decision was underscored by the fact that when I turned 40 years old, I would have to decide whether to continue our relationship.

Besides, going to Hawaii was a transfer sanctioned by the Line of March, a leftist political organization. The KDP was within its realm of ideological influence. Both were two left-wing political organizations focused on social justice and human rights issues in the US and abroad.

Transferring to Hawaii made logical sense to me. I could try to figure out what my next stage in life was going to be... Not that I had any real plans. I was open to new dimensions and the challenges that would emerge.

Chapter 15 - Waves

It was a clear night with a bright full moon above. The sand beneath my feet provided a soft crunching sound as I walked along the beach in Waikiki. "I did it! I am finally living in Hawaii. Now, I could have the freedom to be me." There were a few people on the beach, their figures casting shadows as they strolled on the shore. At first the features of a silhouette began approaching me but was indistinguishable. Gradually the image of a young man wearing board shorts came into focus. We made eye contact and smiled at one another. Instantly, I thought, "score"! The conversation began. He was on summer vacation break with his mother and this was his first time in Hawaii. This trip was his graduation present.

The full moon shone brightly illuminating his face, green eyes, and long eyelashes. We were of the same height, but nearly 20 years apart in age. As we stood on the soft sand, the surf gently rolled in between our feet and toes. After a few minutes of small talk, he said, "there's a lot of guys on the beach and they keep on looking at me. I bet their gay." Finally, he said his mother was waiting for him, they had reservations for dinner at the Royal Hawaiian hotel. "Don't get her mad by being late on your first evening in Hawaii." He turned around from the direction he came. "Hey, I enjoyed talking with you." He glanced back at me as I said, "have a great time on your vacation---also, I'm gay. Have a great life!" He smiled at me and I winked at him. Yes, it was nice to be in Hawaii!

Maria Abadesco, a member of the Hawaii Chapter Executive Board encouraged me to come to Hawaii. She, Jaime Geaga, Rose Ibanez, and I were the known "partiers" in the KDP. Following endless meetings during week long conferences or weekend retreats of the organization, we would check out the social hotspots in whatever city where we happen to be located.

While being a member of the Hawaii Chapter Executive Board, I was assigned minimal responsibilities. That meant fewer meetings in the evening, leaving more time to party in the evenings. Kalakaua Avenue in Waikiki was where the most popular gay hangouts were located... Hamburger Mary's, Hula's Bar and Lei Stand, the Wave.

Impatiently, I would look at my watch during a meeting, not concentrating on the agenda but instead contemplating which bar I would go to first. During the first four months while in Honolulu, I was seen by the locals as the "fresh meat from the mainland." There was no absence of guys ready to go home with me. The choice was mine.

CHAPTER 16 - Chance

I was dating Brent Milburn at the time. He mentioned that a position was open at the agency where he volunteered. He thought I had a good chance, after learning about my skill set of experiences, both paid and pro bono.

After two intense interviews with the head-hunters of the nonprofit agency, Sumner La Croix and Dr. David McKuen, Secretary and President respectively, I was hired as the first employee of the Life Foundation of Hawaii/AIDS Foundation of Hawaii. As Administrative Assistant to the Board of Directors, I managed the daily operations of its first service center in Waikiki. That

included coordinating the volunteer activities, providing clerical support, and functioning as liaison between public officials, government entities and the Board of Directors.

Little did I know that a major element of the job would involve being in the direct firing line for public information about the Human Immunodeficiency Virus\Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV\AIDS). What little I did know came from health and wellbeing articles printed in the Gay newspaper, "Bay Area Reporter". Luckily, I was a fast learner. Daily, I would receive panicked phone calls and have people walk in off the street. Questions ranged from whether they were could get infected due to certain sex practices, through a cough, sneeze, handshake, or toilet seat. After a while, it was easy to talk about various modes and vectors of transmission. Most important was educating the individual how to protect themselves against HIV infection.

As the public face of the Life Foundation, my persona was well known in all the gay clubs and bars. I felt that my actions were always being scrutinized. My previous days as the "go-go" boy on the dance floor who would pick someone to go home with every night, was a thing of the past. My string of serial monogamy and affairttes was over.

Simultaneously, in 1986 I met Bryan Freitas. His charm and charisma were infectious. The Imperial Court of Hawaii was a Gay social organization structured with a Regency hierarchic. It conducted fundraising drag shows for AIDS programs. Bryan was the Imperial Prince of the Court. When we met, he was working with Rent A Center (RAC), a furniture store. During his lunch break, he would come to the Waikiki office of the Life Foundation. Most of the time there was little time for me to interact with him. I was usually on the phone counseling someone about HIV/AIDS. I did not know that all the time, he was intensely listening to the HIV/AIDS prevention education advice given.

In the red-light district of Honolulu in Chinatown, was the Question Mark One (QM1), a Gay cocktail lounge that had seen better days during the 1950s. The interior of the bar still had the old red leatherette banquettes, now weathered, and cracked. Cocktail tables were placed in front of each seating area. On the walls surrounding the bar was faded wallpaper printed with green Monarch and Fan palms against a cream background. The long mahogany bar was placed against the wall. It had a brass foot rail to rest the feet while sitting at the bar. The same red leatherette covered the elbow bunting at the bard edges; it too was cracked and had a lot of cigarette burns. The bar surface itself, while still shiny, had lots of holes. The room was kept purposely dark, oftentimes the "infamous" Hawaii flying cockroach would out crawl from those holes.

The bar was a notorious hang out for sex workers who were on break between "customers". Here they could "refresh themselves" by consuming their drug of choice, which was readily available. After my workday at the Foundation, I would hang out with Bryan while he worked the night shift at the QM1. Most of the sex workers were transgender who were members of the Imperial Court. I became a familiar face at the bar with whom they could talk with in confidence about their sex activities. I took the opportunity to provide HIV prevention counseling. Bryan would often tell them to "talk with Gil, he knows a lot about AIDS".

CHAPTER 17 - Again

Through my previous experience in Hawaii in 1981 during my participation as a member of the Sining Bayan theater company, I met Edna Kong. She was a participant in the Marxist-Leninist Education Program sponsored by the KDP where I was the instructor. Her family had generational roots in Hawaii since the 19th Century. My socialization with her was reestablished when I returned to Hawaii. Through multiple conversations, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the indigenous Hawaiian culture. Pidgin English was the common vernacular among the “locals”. I was able to learn and effect the intonations and vocabularies as needed when working with people who were born in Hawaii.

My ability to switch back and forth between formal English and pidgin English was perfected to the point where “locals” assumed I was born in Hawaii. Because of the insular nature of Hawaii, people usually identify themselves by the high school from which they graduated. During a conversation with Bryan, he asked me what high school I went to. My reply was “Lowell”. He said, “Where’s dat?” I said, “San Francisco”. The look on his face was one of shock and betrayal. “What brah! You are not local”?! From that point forward, my affairette with Bryan was on a downhill trajectory. He said to me, “I don’t like cartoons!”

Bryan’s prominence within the Gay community and the gossip network resulted in my social isolation. As a marked “fraud” no one in the local Gay community wanted anything to do with me. My days as a “player” in Hawaii was over. The remainder of time that I would be in Hawaii was devoted to working with the Life Foundation and less in the KDP.

Maria and I continued to be housemates where I lived in between numerous “affairettes”. During my last year in Hawaii she, Kelley Collins, John, and I were housemates on Lanikai Beach, considered to be the best beach area in Hawaii. (The future location of President Obama’s vacation compound.) This was where I celebrated my 40th birthday with friends, including Juan.

Maria was the first who returned to California, followed by Kelley. I had been infatuated with Kelly, but he was not interested in developing a relationship. My core friendship group had begun to dissolve, leaving me with new housemates having nothing in common.

The ultimate deadline Juan and I had agreed to about the continuation of our relationship had been reached. He was prepared to go on with his life without me. Ironically, with every “affairette” in which I had been engaged, my comparison with each guy was measured against Juan’s qualities. How blind I had been. He stood head and shoulders above all of them. I resolved to recommit to a lifetime relationship with him and in 1988 returned to Los Angeles where he now lived.

SECTION III - THE CHRYSALIS

“Nothing happens until the pain of remaining the same outweighs the pain of change.” – Arthur Burt

Chapter 1 - Transformations

Beginning in 1989 and up until the present, I would experience transformative conflicts within my life. Most significant of the challenges focused on my health. This was intertwined with defining my individual freedom of sexual expression as a gay man while at the same time being in a committed relationship. It would mean an intense re-examination once again of my relationship with Juan. Understanding what is the nature of love, based on my own values and experience.

Chapter 2 – Replanted

With the epidemic of AIDS in major areas of the United States, those fortunate individuals who had the financial resources, came to Hawaii to die. The intensity of work at the AIDS Foundation of Hawaii/Life Foundation was relentless. It was common to experience six-day weeks of 10-hour days. I was burned out and was ready to leave Hawaii.

Having established modest expertise in the fields of HIV/AIDS education, I applied for a related position in Los Angeles where Juan had moved in 1987. Merrily Newton, Human Resources Director at the AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) hired me as her Administrative Assistant. This was a multi-million-dollar non profit AIDS organization that prided itself in providing comprehensive case management, social support programs, mental health counseling and medical treatment referrals.

Most of my personnel experience was related to staff recruitment and assignment to respective Commissions or Departments in the KDP National Secretariat. The APLA operation was much more sophisticated than I anticipated. Additionally, there was no one to train me for the job. This staff member was hospitalized with late stage AIDS. Once again, the challenge was to teach myself the procedures based on the office systems that were left behind by my predecessor.

It was a struggle to multitask and gain a handle on the scope of all the staff positions open, review the submitted resumes, send out letters of acknowledgement, and provide the HR Director with suitable candidates for advertised positions.

There were accusations of misused funds targeting the APLA Department Directors. One by one, their resignations were taking place or pink slips were passed out. Merrily fought fiercely to retain her position until she knew I had a confirmed job after I would resign from APLA; only then would she depart.

When I left Hawaii, I pledged to myself that I would finish college. I knew that the employee of a four-year accredited institution would be provided with education benefits. Resumes went out to USC, UCLA, Pepperdine, Mount St. Mary's, and Loyola Marymount University. It was

Loyola Marymount University (LMU) that hired me as the Assistant Registrar at the Loyola Law School in downtown Los Angeles, with full employee benefits.

I was enrolled in a returning adult education program, which enabled me to utilize past life experiences as a counselor and community organizer to fulfill certain academic requirements. An independent study program was designed with a major in Urban Studies, emphasizing the economic development in minority communities. This level of economic stability enabled me to have my own apartment since my earlier student years at the City College of San Francisco. Although Juan and I had agreed to reestablish our relationship, he supported my need to live independently from him. Beachwood Canyon Apartments in Hollywood was where I lived; the previous tenant was the yet unknown actor Ray Liotta.

Chapter 3 - Next

I had returned from a winter vacation to Hawaii in 1989 to catch up on life experiences with friends. It was hot and humid there but in Los Angeles the weather was chilly.

I was thinking about all the fun I had with both old and new buddies at the familiar bars and clubs along Kalakaua Avenue in Waikiki. That experience guaranteed I never sleep alone at night while on holiday. But that was no consolation to how I felt now. Here I was flat on my back, lying on a mattress in bed.

I was cold all night. There was no carpet in the bedroom and beneath the mattress was the bare floorboards and below, the carport. To make matters worse, I had a fever, was extremely tired, not eating, and had a sore on my butt hole that was not healing.

These symptoms had been lingering for nearly a week. I told myself it was just the flu, but in the far reaches of my mind was the dreaded fear that it might be something else. I made a point to myself that when I got well; I would go to the Gay Lesbian Service Center Clinic on Highland Avenue and get tested for HIV. My last test was more than six months ago, so I was due.

My name was called by a staff member to come inside his office. After he reviewed my registration paperwork and reassured me that the test results would be anonymous, he withdrew a vial of blood. I did not watch. The site of blood makes me weak, much less seeing my own fluid pouring into a glass cylinder. I was given an appointment to return in two weeks for the test results.

Those were two weeks of torment, agony, fear, and anxiety. I was dreading the results. I knew the symptoms all too well. Many times, while in Hawaii, I had to counsel people on the early signs of HIV infection.

Finally, two weeks had passed since my test at the GLSC clinic. That waiting time dragged on, day after day; it was tortuous! Voices in my head kept saying, "you'll be okay," or "you fucked up royal this time!" I walked into the clinic and sat down in the waiting room corridor. A few seats away was another guy; we avoided eye contact. A guy came out of one room with his head bent, shoulders slumped and slowly moving to the exit door. The other guy seated away from me

was called in. After a while he came out with a smile on his face, standing tall and strutted out the door.

Then it was my turn. My palms were sweating; I could feel my heart beating rapidly. My breathing was deep and heavy. Entering the barren room, I sat on the one chair facing the counselor sitting behind a desk. He introduced himself and asked what I thought the results were. I told him with a pause, “positive” hoping against hope I was wrong.... He was silent. It was deafening. The room was a kaleidoscope closing in on me.

I was numb and trembling inside. Tears began welling up in my eyes. But I held the flood back. My mind was full of self-chatter, “how stupid could I be! How am I going to tell Juan?” After I came to LA in 1988, we recommitted our relationship. Now here I was infected with HIV, he would leave me for sure. I had seen this happen to others in Hawaii, who were left alone to die. I could not think. Who could I talk to about this nightmare?

The voice of the counselor was droning on and I refocused enough to hear him ask, “are you okay?” I could not speak. I was frightened and scared. Catatonically, I stumbled out of that room and down the corridor to the exit doors. I slowly walked out of the clinic into a completely different world than when I had entered. It was one with an uncertain future... My life would never be the same again. Medical prognosis at that time for an HIV-infected person gave only seven more years to live. I was overwhelmed with emotional despair and fright.

Juan was visiting a friend in Nigeria when I received the results of my HIV test. I chose to wait until his return. When I told him how I became HIV-positive, his response was reflected in a statement made about caring for others. During an interview by Eric Watt, who asked how did we deal with my infection? Juan responded, “the only thing you had was your humanity to each other.”

Chapter 4 – Sheepskin

As the Registrar at Loyola Law School, I supervised the office staff. The most intense period of activity was at the end of the semester. This included working with professors to develop the semester catalog of courses offered and scheduling the final examinations. Most significant was validating the student’s completion of academic requirements to graduate. It was essential to confirm that each student had also paid their tuition before sitting for their final exams.

The Spring semester final examination sessions of 1993 were no different from previous semesters. Proctors had to be recruited, trained, and assigned when to be present to monitor the examinations. During this two-week period, the security of the Registrar’s Office was imperative.

There was a continuous flurry of activity in the Registrar’s Office. Final examinations for each course were printed and sent to the Registrar’s Office. Those had to be secured and released on schedule to the appropriate proctor, who would monitor the examination. Certain students had special needs to be accommodated to take the exams. Often separate rooms were set aside where they would complete the exam. These individual students also required their own proctors and would come into the Registrar’s office at irregular times. Simultaneously, proctors were coming

into the office returning with exams already completed, which also had to be secured until the professor retrieved them to grade.

As part of the law school financial budget, an additional parking fee for all employees was in the process of implementation. I was cognizant of the fact that upper-level administrators and professors could absorb this cost. Recognizing that line staff would have difficulty with this added expense; I lobbied for a two-tiered parking fee structure. It was successful and created an additional unforeseen cost expenditure that had to be subsidized by the law school. I had been warned by other staff members who were close to the inner circle of the administration, to be on my guard. My time at this institution was in jeopardy.

It was amid the final examination maelstrom, that the Dean of Students, Michiko Yamamoto, brought a note into the Registrar's Office that was to be given to a student. The student had not paid their tuition and thus ineligible to take any final exam. Unfortunately, I did not give the student that note until the examinations had already begun. The student maintained that due to negligence on my part he was not at fault. When Dean Yamamoto was informed by the student of this infraction I was confronted in the Registrar's Office in front of the staff. After the reprimand and her departure from the office, I was overheard muttering "bitch", by a staff member. When the Dean was informed this resulted in my forced voluntary resignation.

I was devastated. When I was hired at Loyola Marymount University in 1989, I replaced the staff member who was hospitalized in the last stages of the HIV/AIDS disease. Ironically, Magic Johnson was also diagnosed with HIV in that same year. The response of the Registrar's office staff was incredulous and demeaning, yet sympathetic for this celebrity athlete. No one at LMU knew of my diagnosis and there was no way that I would reveal my status.

A career opportunity was bungled. I had been functioning as the Acting Registrar but was now being walked off campus by the previous Registrar, Frank Real, who had been promoted within the law school. His parting words were, "there is one thing that cannot be taken away from you and that is your education."

As part of my termination agreement with LMU, I was provided with full tuition for my senior year. This was a blessing, since up to this point; all my classes at the main campus in Westchester were either early morning or in the evening. That meant attending classes there, then going downtown to work at the law school only to return for evening classes on the main campus. However, most of my senior year classes were held during the day. There was no way that could be accomplished as the Acting Registrar.

I graduated in 1994 with honors in Urban Studies, with emphasis on economic development in minority communities and a minor degree in Chicano Studies. After graduation, my intention was to work with nonprofit organizations.

Chapter 5 – One More Time

In 1995, I was searching for a social network within the Asian community where potential employment opportunities might be present. I attended a social function at Dockweiler beach sponsored by the Asian Pacific Gays and Friends. There I met staff members from the Asian

Pacific AIDS Intervention Team (APAIT). They described the programs offered by their organization, including a support group for those infected with HIV. Before leaving that afternoon, I was given information by Napoleon Lustre and Ren Laforteza about when and where the next support group would convene. They invited me to the weekly day room, which included a complimentary lunch. After participating in those activities for several months, there was ample time to interact with the APAIT staff members. I shared with them my work with the Life Foundation in Hawaii and the AIDS Project Los Angeles.

One of the programs offered at APAIT was Treatment Advocacy and Education staffed by Ric Parish and Irene Soriano. This was not the first time that I met Irene. She was a first-year law student at Loyola Law School when I was the Assistant Registrar. She had decided to drop out of law school. Knowing that there would be a continuous need for lawyers within the Filipino community who were American-born, I encouraged her to continue with her legal studies. However, I could not encourage her to do something for which she had no interest. Becoming a lawyer was what her family wanted but it was not something she aspired to become.

As a Treatment Advocate their responsibility was to accompany clients during medical appointments and assist with follow-up adherence to treatment protocols prescribed by their doctor. My participation in the APAIT support group and day room events had been less than six months, when Ric announced his departure from the agency. To my surprise, he asked that I take over responsibilities for the Treatment Advocacy program. With reassurance from Irene and Ric's confidence in me, I accepted the position.

Tracy Nako had been the Director of Client Services for nearly 3 years. Before submitting his resignation in 1996 from APAIT, he asked if I wanted to assume the Directorship. Fully aware of the scope of responsibilities and the challenges I had experienced in previous leadership capacities, I accepted. Now, it meant leading a staff with a case management program, self-help program and mental health counseling. This would be in addition to the treatment advocacy and education program in which I would still be a part-time counselor.

The APAIT was a division of the Special Services for Groups, Incorporated, a multi-sectoral nonprofit organization responsible for the legal and management oversight of government-funded programs in Los Angeles under its umbrella structure. As an APAIT Director, I was part of the management team, which included the SSG Division Director, and Directors from Development, and the Woman's Program.

Chapter 6 – Trenchwork

I became a member of the Los Angeles County Commission on HIV/AIDS brought me in touch with service providers from various community sectors. Organizations representing the needs of African Americans, Latinos, mental health, case management, treatment advocacy and education, physically challenged, veterans, women, LGBTQ, and the homeless sectors of the population. My seat on the Commission was representing APAIT and the voice for the Asian Pacific Islander communities.

At monthly Commission meetings, decisions were made as to which program services would be funded at the current level, and either increased or decreased. Negotiations were difficult, since

every program was critical, and each deserved to be fully funded. It was a classic governmental tactic to divide the opposition and conquer the disenfranchised. I did not like having to make such decisions. When asked to become the chairperson on the Commission, I resigned.

Years earlier a similar scenario had occurred within the KDP. While chairing the National Secretariat, I was also assigned to be an instructor in the Marxist-Leninist Education Program (MLEP). The psychological pressure of teaching this ideology was weighing on my self-confidence. I had barely grasped the concepts. Students in attendance for the most part had their Bachelor and advanced degrees. I had yet to complete my college education. After a near nervous breakdown and sedatives, I quickly learned how to say “No”!

Annually, the US Conference on AIDS (USCA), sponsored by the National Minority AIDS Conference was convened. Thousands of delegates involved with HIV/AIDS from around the country and the international community were represented. Vendors from the health industry were present, marketing their most recent medications and apparatus available for HIV patient care. As a delegate, the opportunity to provide their best practice in HIV service being provided was on display. Usually this meant being a presenter at one of the seminars, workshops, panel discussions, or round table sessions.

At the 1998 USCA, a workshop on treatment adherence was presented by me and Ric Parish, who was now a program manager with Los Angeles Shanti. As a Treatment Advocacy and Education counselor at APAIT, I saw firsthand the difficulty clients had with their inconsistent adherence to HIV medication protocols. When escorting a client to their medical appointment, oftentimes, the doctor only had 15 minutes of examination time, which included writing new prescriptions. Brief instructions were given to the patient and then the doctor went to care for the next scheduled patient.

This is where work as a treatment advocacy and education counselor becomes critical. It would mean helping the patient to interpret into layman's terms what the doctor had diagnosed and prescribed. Also, developing for the client a schedule when various medications would be taken if it required refrigeration and whether food or water was necessary.

Chapter 7 - ReCue

Finally, after meandering through numerous halls and connecting corridor doors in the convention hotel, we found the assigned workshop location. “There had to be some mistake on the program.” I said to Ric. Drawing back the huge floor to ceiling black curtain, I realized we were standing in the side wing of the main hotel convention stage ballroom. From there I saw 25 rows of chairs with a center aisle and 15 seats on either side. In the distance was a table and two chairs facing the impromptu auditorium.

We proceeded to set up the rear table with information materials, the workshop participant sign in attendance roster and refreshments. As the scheduled time for the workshop to begin drew near, one by one delegates began to enter the space and take seats. Either Ric or I would instruct each attendee to take a packet and information sheet from the registration table. Only the first few rows of chairs were beginning to fill.

Soon there was a constant flow of people entering and looking for a place to sit. However, just before beginning our opening remarks, a familiar figure walked towards the first row and sat down directly in front of our presentation table. Ric and I glanced at one another with looks of nervousness and pride. Our presentation was of interest to the

Chairperson of the Los Angeles County Commission on HIV/AIDS Services, technically our boss. “Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for being present today, I know you must have had difficulty finding this location, just as we did. My name is Gil Mangaoang, Director of Client Services and part time, Treatment Advocacy and Education Counselor with the Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team. With me is Ric Parish, HIV Services Program Manager at the Los Angeles Shanti.”

In my left hand I held up a small manila packet and in the right hand, a sheet of paper. “Before we begin, please pick up a packet and instruction sheet, if you have not done so when entering the workshop.” And with that, Ric moved from his seat and stood in front of the presentation table to face the audience. “Please open the packet. Inside you will see various colored candy tablets. The accompanying instruction sheet indicates which colored tab is to be consumed. That must be done at specific time intervals and with or without food or water. Are there any questions?” No response from the audience.

Ric continued, “I’m sure that I also speak for Gil, that it is encouraging to see so many present. Hopefully, you enjoyed the luncheon and speakers who presented research about recent pharmaceutical options to sustain the lives of people living with HIV. We’ll try to keep you awake this afternoon.”

Even as he began his presentation, a continuous flow of people began streaming into the makeshift presentation space. Soon all the seats were filled, and people found places to stand alongside the walls. In some locations, it was two rows deep. I recognized many of the faces as colleagues from other service organizations, and medical practitioners, ranging from doctors, nurses, mental health clinicians, pharmacists, and social workers.

Moving from his position at the front of the room, Ric casually sauntered up and down the center aisle as he spoke. “As noted by Dr. Anthony Fauci during today’s luncheon, a glimmer of hope for the control of HIV has emerged. The most recent classification of medications in the treatment of HIV now exists with protease inhibitors. This is in addition to the already understood medications of non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase and the nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors. Together these three medications when used in combination form a potent “cocktail” that is now available for treatment to those living with HIV/AIDS.” He followed up by sharing in detail the difficulty of working with clients who had multiple health problems. Besides HIV infection, many were homeless and dealing with substance abuse issues. Nearly all experienced confusion about when and how to take their prescribed medications if they were compliant at all.

Momentarily, my thoughts drifted to my own experience and my decision to begin my treatment for HIV infection. Witnessing clients who valiantly had to face a no-win situation in their life, forced me to think about what I would have gone through.

It was imperative that a new paradigm and sociological approach was necessary to control the spread of the virus for someone who was already infected with HIV. The known medications for treatment at that time had reached their efficacy. Options were grim since AZT was the only medication available and at best was effective for only six months. At this threshold, the toxicity to the body resulted in death. Those who remained on the medication faded away into barely recognizable skeletal figures of their past selves.

To willingly begin treatment, I had to be certain that it was the most up-to-date research regarding pharmaceutical treatment to block the reproduction of the virus. In April 1995, I made the decision to participate in the first national clinical trial of the protease inhibitor, a new classification of drug that could be used in combination with other HIV medications. It was under the auspices of the Center for Disease Control and administered for one year as a double-blind study. Due to the marked decrease of the HIV viral load in the recipients of the protease inhibitor, the study subjects in the control group were immediately placed on the same treatment protocol. Mentally returning to Ric's presentation, I realized that he was nearly finished. I would be next.

“Thank you, Ric. I am certain that many of you can relate to your own practice and the conditions experienced when treating patients under your care. I'd like to take a break right now, and ask how many of you remembered to follow the instructions given to you at the beginning of this workshop?” A few hands were raised as people glanced around the room to see who had complied. The instructions sheet outlined that the white tablet was to be taken every 20 minutes, two blue tablets were to be taken every 30 minutes with food, and the three red tablets consumed with food and water every 15 minutes. Expressions on the faces of those in the audience ranged from shock, embarrassment, surprise, and shame.

Gauging by their response, it became obvious to those present how difficult compliance with medication protocols can be. They were only in a 45minute workshop and the majority had disregarded the importance of the instruction sheet given to them at the beginning of the workshop. “As you recall, the title of this workshop is Treatment Compliance and Advocacy. Now I ask you to please put yourself in the circumstances of those for whom you are providing care and recognize the critical importance of providing them with a schedule indicating when and how their prescribed medication should be taken. Ric and I thank you for your participation and if you have additional questions, we will remain for a few minutes after the session.”

While gathering our materials together, we were approached by the Chairperson for the Los Angeles County Commission on HIV Health and Prevention Services. “Congratulations! Your presentation provided a magnifying glass image on the detailed work required to assist those infected with HIV and living with AIDS. Has your presentation been made before the County Commission?” Almost simultaneously, Ric and I said no. “Well, I intend to have this topic on the next commission agenda, so be prepared.” That presentation was never given. However, from that point forward the issue of providing detailed medication instruction to patients became the nationwide universal best practice protocol and principles for HIV care.

Chapter 8 - Air

“Beep...beep...beep...beep...beep.” I open my eyes seeing the silhouette of the San Gabriel Mountains framed by the window in front of me. The sun glinted off the Griffith Observatory dome. To its right was the Frank Lloyd Wright Innes house perched in the Los Feliz Hills. On its left proudly declaring to the world, was a huge sign with white capital letters spelling “Hollywood.” I rubbed my eyes as I heard the door open behind my reclining chair and the sound of fast footsteps approaching. It is Vee, my nurse; she turns off the alarm and begins to adjust the monitor, so it infuses the final medication. “I set the timer for three hours. Have a nice rest; you have the call button beside you.” She walked out the door and closed it behind her. My eyelids still heavy from the drug induced sleep, slowly closed until I saw darkness.

My parents told me that when I was six months old, I was in Children’s Hospital for two weeks because of double pneumonia. They recounted how I would cry in my crib when they left me alone. Perhaps that portended my future.

There were normal childhood illnesses experienced, I succumbed to: measles, mumps, chickenpox. In the 1950s, the polio vaccine was made available through the public schools. Mom being a fundamentalist Pentecostal believed in the power of faith healings, so she refused her permission to have us inoculated.

Allergic reactions to certain pollen became a continuous nuisance during the Spring season. During those months, our family would attend fellowship church services on rotation with congregations in San Jose, Salinas, Broderick, Isleton, Stockton, Vallejo, or Orange Cove. I would sneak out of the church services to play with my friends in the yards. Almost immediately, sniffing sounds would come from me and my eyes would begin to itch. Scratching my eyes only made it worse. By the end of the day, my eyes would be bloodshot and swollen with my nose dripping like a leaking faucet.

I was a chubby kid and self-conscious about my body and could only fit into Husky size pants. I was ashamed to take my shirt off in Junior High because I had “breasts” that jiggled. I sent away information I found in my Superman comic book. It advertised how to change from being a 98-pound weakling, who had sand kicked in his face by some brawny brute, to become transformed into a “Charles Atlas” muscleman. By the time I was discharged from basic training in the United States Air Force, those mounds of fat were shaped into muscles.

I occasionally exercised following my days in the military service. But it was not until after Michael’s death that I began to exercise to release my grief. Michael and I went on a hike in Kings Canyon National Park along the Seven Lakes trail that led us to a granite dome above the timberline overlooking the mountains of the Sierra Nevada. That evening, we watched in awe as high in the night sky, the full moon cast our shadows against the glistening granite beneath our feet. Only the gentle blowing wind could be heard. I was hooked on nature hikes from then on.

Juan and I lived near Highland Hospital in Oakland when we first moved together. We could jog down to Lake Merritt, make a circuit around it, then jog back up the hills to our place. There was a health club nearby the lake where I continued to do my workouts, after completing a nutrition and bodybuilding course at Laney Community College.

I was blessed with good genes. As a child, I admired my father's slender frame with his full chest and perky nipples and wanted the same for me. Over the years, I built on that genetic legacy to become that image of the bodybuilder in my comic book ads. Modeling opportunities have come my way that included the Tom of Finland Foundation, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Advocate magazine, All Worlds Video and in private sessions.

During my young and middle adult years, my allergies annoyed me, requiring treatments that would gradually increase my resistance to the allergens causing me problems. At one session, the dosage injected went above my tolerance threshold. While waiting the required 15 minutes after treatment, I began feeling dizzy and walked back to the treatment area. I never made it.

I heard voices. "I can't find a pulse! Call ER!" The strangest thing was that I watched this scenario of medical personnel frantically moving equipment into place around the body on the treatment table. But this view was from above. Looking down, I saw that it was me on the table...but could still hear. "Clear!" I saw my body convulse, chest heaving upward. "Clear! We have a pulse!" My eyes opened to faces etched with expressions of relief and concerns in their eyes.

Chapter – 9 - Survivor

I squandered the good health inherited when I became infected with HIV in 1989. At the onset of the disease, I experienced no symptoms. I began medications in 1995, as a participant in a one-year double-blind monotherapy clinical trial. It would determine the efficacy of Crixivan, a medication in the new HIV antiviral category of protease inhibitors. The concept of combination therapy, commonly referred to today as the "cocktail" protocol for HIV treatment, was yet to be understood.

Since that point, I have experienced 26 medical complications related to HIV, requiring 50 different medications. And from those, six different combinations have coursed through my body to keep the virus at undetectable levels. In 2006, I became HIV/AIDS symptomatic with Kaposi's sarcoma, a related opportunistic infection. Chemotherapy infusions began in 2007. That first-year treatments were three weeks apart. It was ineffective. Infusions were increased to every other week. It was in May 2011 that I stopped treatment since its efficacy was limited and my energy was debilitated. This was followed by cryosurgery surgery, radiation therapy and surgical procedures, including amputations. These modalities were effective on individual sites but proved ineffective in the prevention of the continued systematic wide tumor growths.

Depending on my energy level, I worked out as part of my treatment regimen. Due to lipodystrophy, a side effect of the medications to control HIV, I am unable to accumulate body fat on my face or frame. I need to continually keep building muscle mass as an energy bank account. When I am ill, my body depletes the muscle tissue since body fat is not present. At the gym, comments have been made about me being ripped. That is when I take the opportunity to talk about the facts behind the image they see: my genetics, regular exercise, a good diet and having AIDS. I encourage them to adapt the factors mentioned and stress the importance of preventing themselves from becoming infected with HIV through safe sex practices.

Living with AIDS has made me appreciate the beauty of each day with its common challenges that make life what it is. I know that I have no control over what HIV will do to me. I have chosen to approach each health crisis within an open attitude of appreciation for what I am able to do, rather than focus on what no longer can be done.

When Griffith Park was ravaged by fire in 2007, the area burned was my favorite hiking trail. I was devastated the first time I slowly walked the burnt hillsides and saw up close the blackened and denuded branches jutting from trunks of trees. This timeframe coincided with when I was beginning my chemotherapy treatment. Over the years, I would walk the same trail and find joy as I saw new foliage emerge from the forest ashes. It was part of my coping mechanism. How I would continue to adapt and thrive with AIDS, was a lesson I have learned by taking my cues from nature.

Presently living where I can view Echo Park and Lake, I observe three fountains of water that jet nearly 15 stories into the sky. The fountains are never at the same level. Due to the force of the high winds at times, the waterfalls from each of those fountain sprays intermingle and fall back into the lake as gentle waterfalls of water. This water then circulates back up into the fountain and the process continues all over again.

When asked by others how I have been able to sustain myself living with AIDS, I respond with the following. Keeping the equilibrium of my body, mind and spirit is an ongoing balancing act, just as the fountains of Echo Park. Assuring that I eat properly, giving myself the necessary rest and exercise along with taking the required HIV medications has become my treatment protocol. Learning and continuing to meditate has strengthened my spirit. I recognize that each of these factors will simultaneously always be in flux and never at the same levels of intensity. At times, one or the other is at a heightened level, another may be at a medium level, and another will be at an exceptionally low ebb...just go with the flow!

Chapter 10 - Soulmate

My survivability has only been possible through the support of Juan. The first time Juan brought me to meet his family in Gretna, Louisiana, I knew our relationship was a serious commitment. Juan's depth of his love and concern for me, has often been at the expense of his own potential to experience life enriching opportunities.

Over the 44 years Juan and I have shared together, our relationship has transitioned through continual physical intimacy, including sharing phases encompassing deeper emotional and intellectual development. It was not always a simultaneous maturation process and at times it was imbalanced and unstable. Emotional roller coaster rides exemplified our relationship at times. There were long gradual inclines to a joint apex of jubilation that could quickly plunge into solitary valleys of despair. It meant the experience of mutually or individually having to grapple for emotional handholds and solid footing.

Juan cares about the person's needs and whether he agrees with those concerns or not, he provides support. Simultaneously, he recognizes that in our relationship, differences of opinion do exist. At the onset of our cohabitation, Juan preferred an open orientation to engage in sex

with other men. I preferred a monogamous relationship... That is until years later when I realized that Juan had been having discrete liaisons with other men.

I resolved not to deprive myself of the opportunity to also have sexual liaisons with others when chance encounters were presented. Since then we have experienced a range of sexual activities individually or together with others. While acceptance of individual sexual encounters with others in theories is accepted, jealousy on my part has emerged in the past.

With my HIV infection in December 1989, a critical juncture for our relationship was encountered. I had returned to Hawaii for vacation and went on a drinking and cocaine binge on the last weekend there. My promise to Juan not to get intoxicated was ignored. His disappointment in me was profound. There was a 50% chance that we would part ways as so many HIV-sero divergent couples had done.

Recognizing the dubious outcome for my long-term health survival necessitated me to make compromises on my lifestyle treatment and care. My life expectancy at that time was just seven years.... I would be fortunate to celebrate my 50th birthday.

Without a doubt I have regrets about becoming HIV-positive and converting to an AIDS diagnosis. Transforming regret into action, I spoke at the 1987 Second National March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights and Liberation representing the National Association of Black and White Men Together, as the Board Member- At-Large. The impact of my HIV infection on Juan and our relationship was underscored, when his youngest brother, George Junior died from AIDS. Struck down before his prime of life at 28 years old, he was a vibrant, handsome, and athletic young man.

During the 1993, March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights and Liberation, Juan and I presented a handmade quilt by his family to honor George. It was put in place on the Washington Mall, with thousands of other quilts laid side-by-side and end to end of the thousands who died from AIDS. This project was sponsored by the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt.

SECTION IV - THE WINGS

“Know thyself. A maxim is pernicious as it is ugly. Whoever studies himself harassed his own development. A Caterpillar who seeks to know himself would never become a butterfly. “– Andre Gide

Chapter 1 -Grandpa

Grandpa was recruited by the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Association (HSPA) to work on the Big Island of Hawaii at the Papaikou pineapple plantation in the camp kitchen. The HSPA were white Protestant plantation owners. They welcomed the presence of missionaries from the Holiness Church, Assembly of God, and the Foursquare Church Pentecostal denominations onto the plantation fields. They would regularly conduct religious services at the plantation camps on Sundays. It was through those ministries that grandpa converted from Catholicism to Pentecostalism.

Years earlier while working in the plantation fields of Hawaii, Grandpa Julian converted from Roman Catholicism to Pentecostalism. His conviction was so deep that he would devote his future life’s work to bring other Filipinos to accept his new -found religious perspective. Grandpa had a dream in which he saw Filipinos scattered throughout the State of California, worshipping in many different churches. By his own account, “One evening I prayed all night, because of my concern for the spiritual well-being of my fellow brothers.” This culminated in a vision, in which the Lord told him to “Call for a convention of Filipino brothers, first in Stockton and then in Fresno.”

During the next eight years (1924 to 1932) in California, grandpa would begin pioneering steps establishing the first Protestant religious institution among Filipinos in the United States. He did so with other Filipino Pentecostals he knew from working in the agricultural fields of Hawaii and California. They established a church organization whose primary congregants were Filipino nationals and their non-Filipino wives and family. The founding convention was held in Stockton, California’s “Little Manila” district on June 29, 1933. Filipinos from all over the State were in attendance from many Pentecostal sects: Holiness Church, Assembly of God, and Foursquare Full Gospel denominations. As parishioners of these white congregations, Filipinos were never allowed to have positions of authority in those organizations. Grandpa’s intent was to enable Filipinos to worship where they wanted, with whom they wanted and governed by their own principles. This was the inspiration for the name for this organization: “The Filipino Assemblies of the First Born, Incorporated” (FAFB, Inc.). It was headquartered in Delano, California.

Throughout my childhood and teenage years, the FAFB church was a dominant force that shaped our family values. Fundamental religion became the guiding thought. Growing up in this environment, I was taught the Judeo – Christian tenets that God is love and Jesus loves you. Prayer was an essential element that became the common precept ingrained into my childhood psyche. Actions were either right or wrong, black, or white. There was no compromise or in between choices.

The offering of prayers was a daily ritual done before eating. But also, when someone visiting was leaving the house or if a family member was going on an extended trip. Virtually any situation that needed resolution resulted in a prayer said on the spot. But those prayers were not the recitations of the Rosary usually heard in a Filipino family.

When grandpa would pray before the family would eat, the offering of thanks usually became a mini sermon. I would open my eyes to see if my younger brother or older sister had their eyes open too. They did. Rolling eye gestures between us would be exchanged as if to say, “grandpa, hurry up we’re hungry and want to eat.”

Since grandpa had founded the FAFB, Inc., it was expected that anyone born into our family would become Pentecostal. He was an ordained minister under the auspices of the FAFB, as was mom and my father held an exhorter’s license. Weekly, there were church services on Wednesday and Friday evenings. Then there was Sunday School, followed by morning and evening worship services. Additionally, monthly Saturday exchange fellowship services were convened with FAFB affiliated congregations in Northern California, the annual general convention in Delano and Summer church youth camps.

I resented having to attend all those FAFB religious activities. I was ashamed to acknowledge that I was Pentecostal. I did not know what that meant. As I became older, I began to recognize the contradictions. It was between the preached words of compassion and doing good for others and the lack of church activities to improve the lives of those in society who are less fortunate. This observed and confused religious theocracy undermined my spiritual growth. When I was 18, I told my parents that I was no longer going to any FAFB activities. I rejected spirituality as a fabricated illusion.

In Fresno 1924, as pastor of the local FAFB congregation, Grandpa Julian would convene worship services in their home, under tents in the agricultural fields or at sidewalk locations in the streets of Chinatown where their home was located. Grandma Marie, now in her mid-20s, was drawn to the social excitement during this era of the Fresno “Roaring 20s”. With three children under the age of 10 and the daunting realization that being the wife of a pastor who could not find steady employment yet offered a near-starvation existence, was not the vision she expected of her life in the mainland United States. In 1932 having the opportunities to start a new way of life from her present existence, she chose the financial security and socialite glamour lifestyle offered by an enterprising man. He owned the Chinatown Bataan Café.

Grandpa was my role model in so many areas as the source of inspiration in the development of who I became. His perseverance and struggle to provide for those dependent upon him was always paramount. He left the Philippines as a young man so his family would have one less mouth to feed, emigrating to Hawaii. After starting his own family then moving them, his mother-in-law, and her children to finally settle down in Fresno, CA.

It was his deep religious conviction and vision which were the driving forces propelling his creative intellect, coupled with fearless confidence that enabled him to build the religious organizational institutions to further his goals, i.e. the Filipino Assemblies of the First Born, Inc. (FAFB) and its non-profit subsidiary the Brotherhood Fidelity Association. Those experiences of Grandpa, while not fully comprehended, during my childhood and teen years, would later

influence my sense of the importance to define goals, its purpose, and the development of a process and organizational structure with procedures to accomplish such objectives.

Unknowingly, Grandpa showed me the example and importance of community organizing and coalition building. He worked with other first wave Filipino immigrants affiliated with different religious denominations, to form a unique Filipino religious institution i.e. the FBA and FAFB, their hierarchical structures.

It was that influence which I intuitively drew upon and applied in my professional work experience as a social justice and equality community organizer over the decades. This was evident in my work with the KDP and in the health arena with the Asian Health Services in Oakland, Life Foundation/AIDS Foundation of Hawai'i, AIDS Project Los Angeles, and the Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team in LA.

Chapter 2 – Mom

My mother Florence Villanueva Bernabe, was born on the plantation camp of Papaikou, near Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii on October 24, 1920. Her given name was Florenda Villanueva Bernabe, she later changed her given name to Florence.

At the age of 11, mom, having been abandoned by her mother, suspended her education to become the “woman” of the Bernabe household, attending to her father’s needs and raising her younger brothers. They had chosen to stay with their father.

Mom too, was initially influenced by the perseverance of her father to succeed rather than succumb to obstacles. She interrupted her education to raise her brothers who decided to remain with their father and take care of the household, when their mother chose to start a new family. When mom’s siblings were in their teens and capable of caring for themselves, she resumed her goal of finishing her education at a parochial college with the intent of practicing a ministry in child evangelism. It included a music curriculum that led to her composition of the lyrics for the FAFB, Inc. anthem the “Messengers of the Cross”.

Frugality was a value ingrained in me during my developmental years at home. Growing up during the Depression Era of the 1930’s was a daily struggle of survival for the Bernabe family. Three meals daily for Grandpa, mom and Uncles Benjamin and Nathaniel were not always a guarantee. Mom learned to budget wisely and cook basic, nutritious one-pot meals, but with little variety...spaghetti, macaroni and cheese, ground beef and spinach, lima beans, and ham hocks, etc. It was Grandpa and Dad who were the real cooks of the family preparing traditional Filipino dishes from the regions where they were born in Piddig, Ilocos Norte and Aringay, La Union respectively....chicken/pork adobo, arroz caldo, sinigang sea bass, pinakbet, igado, etc.

While growing up, our family had little extra money. Living in San Francisco’s South of Market neighborhood in the 1950s, the “go to food source” was the neighborhood fish vendor who went door to door of the alleyway tenements, selling his fresh catch from the San Francisco Bay. Or it meant shopping at the “Dented Canned Food Outlet” warehouse that sold products removed from supermarket shelves due to damaged packaging. The Outlet was next to the day-old Wonder Bread bakery where items were sold at discount. Having a beef roast or steaks for dinner

was not on the menu. Even today, I am hesitant to pay exorbitant prices at high-end food markets and opt for the neighborhood supermarket where reasonable priced nutritious products are offered.

I was fortunate to have been raised in an environment where music was ever present. Mom's studies at the San Diego Brea Bible Institute included piano and voice. She was often requested to sing during weddings, funerals and would lead the local congregation in singing hymns or perform at the talent contest during the FAFB annual convention. During our toddler years, Mom taught my siblings and I to sing; most of the time we would perform as a trio or duet but never as solos...that we left to Mom. Dad taught himself how to play guitar as I did; he sang too. Rodney and I played the trumpet taking lessons in middle school. During worship services our family would provide the music to complement the congregational singing. If Mom were not playing the piano, most often it would be Lisa at the keyboard.

Chapter 3 - Dad

My father Guillermo Dulay Mangaoang, was born on June 14, 1910 in Aringay, La Union Republic of the Philippines. At 17 years old, he came to the United States in 1927 following his father to San Francisco who migrated 3 years before. Dad would tell us that it was common when walking down the streets for Filipinos to be called "monkey" as they spat in your face. Dad talked about sleeping in shifts sharing the same bed with roommates who worked either at night, during the day or in the evening. While finishing high school, he supported himself as a waiter. He graduated from Commerce High School on Van Ness Avenue

After serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II, Dad went on to complete a political science degree at Fresno State College. As President of the Filipino Club on campus. He was introduced to mom by her cousins. They married in 1942 and moved to San Francisco following the War. By 1949, Dad had three children and a wife to support while doing his master's thesis work at UC Berkeley. His research work was deemed academically deficient by his sponsor; it would later be published by this individual.

Although I seldom interacted with Dad since he worked two jobs to support his young family, by his example, I understood the importance of work at an early age that would enable me to buy what I wanted. I was reminded of this fact every afternoon after elementary school, selling the San Francisco Examiner outside the Southern Pacific train depot to commuters on the way home from their jobs in the financial district to suburban communities on the peninsula. Eventually I stopped hawking the Examiner and replaced it with a News-Call Bulletin newspaper delivery route since I wanted more money for my projects.

Each newspaper would be folded into a "tomahawk" making it easier for me to throw the paper to my customer's house doorstep or walk-up flats in the South of Market with its alleyways and crooked sidewalks...that is unless I had to deliver directly to those living in walk-up single room occupancy hotels on Sixth Street. Oftentimes, my customer lived on the top floor and the only elevator was the old-style accordion gate cargo elevator. It always made metallic thumping sounds as it rose higher and higher. Once on the floor where my customer lived, the hallways were always dark and smelly. Whenever it was time to collect the monthly subscription from that

specific customer, I dreaded the experience. The customer kept a dog for personal security. A ferocious growl, then a menacing bark would vibrate through the closed door when I knocked.

Chapter 4 - Lisa

Flordelisa Bernabe Mangaoang was the first child of my parents. She was born on January 13, 1947 at Children's Hospital in San Francisco. My mother would also give birth to my brother and I there.

Four years separated Lisa and I, yet her influence in my childhood development laid the foundation to appreciate classical and jazz music particularly during my teens. Since the age of 7 until 14 years old, she had weekly piano lessons. She would practice daily and the familiar compositions of music by Bach, Chopin, Mozart, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, etc. would flood the living room. And their music heard today always reminds me of Lisa.

As an adult Lisa showed me the tenacity and the importance of never giving up even when the circumstances were dire. When divorced, she single-handedly raised three children all under 10 years of age while working full-time. As the sole family breadwinner, she worked for the Bay Area Rapid Transit system as a station agent. Often alone, some mornings she would open the station or close it late at night. She often faced the ire of the public when problems emerged in the system, protected only by the safety of a glass booth. Over the years her assignments would take her to a different station each year since bidding was based on seniority. While caring for the needs of her family, Lisa also made time for herself on weekends participating in motorcycle road rallies with friends or fitting in a vacation on an ocean cruise.

Chapter 5 - Rodney

Laurel Bernabe Mangaoang was born on March 9, 1949. The family called him "Laurie" but on the advice of relatives, his name was changed to include Rodney. The way to forestall any teasing in school by other children. He was always the cheerful one, quick to make jokes and just fun to be around. I remember everyone would come up to him when we were little and pinch his cheeks. He was a little butterball.

Rodney also exhibited the family traits of tenacity and determination. While attending Balboa high school. He encountered problems with both faculty and student attitudes towards him. It became impossible to finish his high school until the family moved to Daly City, where he graduated from Westmoor High School.

My brother and I shared a repressed sexual identity as gay men. For Rodney, it was particularly difficult, since he lived at home through his early adult years. It was not until he became financially independent and sequentially own property in Concord and Goleta, California then finally in The Colony, Texas, that he was able to express his true sexual identity.

While employed with the APAIT, I attended national and international conferences focused on HIV/AIDS. One such conference was held in Dallas and I arranged to get in touch with Rodney while there. Knowing that there was a large established gay presence in Dallas, I made plans to visit the gay section of town. To my surprise, Rodney said that he would go with me. I was

shocked by the reception he received whenever we entered a gay establishment be it a bar, restaurant, café, or boutique...each proprietor knew Rodney by name. He explained that responsibilities for Electronic Data Systems senior staff of the

Corporation were required to sponsor and work with a specific community in the Dallas metropolitan area. I was delighted that he had picked the Gay community. He also let me know that he hosted a radio talk show entitled "IMRU", a National Public Radio broadcast affiliate. And as one of his guests, Rodney interviewed the Olympic gold medal swimmer, Greg Louganis.

To my knowledge, Rodney never had a long-term relationship with anyone. However, throughout his lifetime he did have the companionship of four legged animals, usually a dog or cats.

Chapter 6 - Confidence

As I grew through my adult years up through the present, I was self-conscious that people always stared at me. It was surprising to me that my appearance was found to be attractive to others.

The racial and ethnic composition of the congregations comprising the FAFB was a virtual "United Nations" resulting from the intermarriage between Filipino men and Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, African American and Caucasian women. Their children resulted in a cohort of individuals who emerged as strikingly beautiful females and handsome males. At the monthly FAFB fellowship service that rotated between congregations in Northern California and the annual State-wide convention in Delano....it was hard to physically identify with them. They were peers of mixed blood. I felt like the odd man out since both of my parents were Filipino. This complex inferior self-comparison was reinforced by the fact that I wore glasses since elementary school which over time grew thicker with each new vision prescription. During the annual conventions, there were youth social activities. It was easy to pick on me since I appeared different from the others and got singled out to be humiliated during games.

Being conscious of my physical appearance was patterned after both parents who were immaculate dressers and influenced my own fashion choices. Growing up I observed Dad's sartorial style which corresponded to the trends of the period. The frequent times when the family would enjoy a Sunday afternoon drive around the City....not a T-shirt, shorts and sandals on him, but instead he was decked out in matching slacks, shirt jacket, belt and shoes plus tortoise shell sunglasses with tinted green lens. There are photographs showing him in double-breasted suits carrying a briefcase during his political science master's program at UC Berkeley.

Mom's influence on my clothing choices was based on how she appeared during special occasions (weddings, graduations, fine dining). She reminded me of a socialite dressed in a color coordinated ensemble of a maroon-red (her favorite color) knit suit with a fitted Bolero jacket, pencil skirt, pillbox hat with black netting, white gloves, matching black patent leather handbag and shoes. Casually thrown across her shoulder would be a fox fur piece. This was the old style with the pelt of four animals including the head, limbs and tail of each animal held in the mouth of another animal to create a cape effect.... quite dramatic.

With fashion conscious parents, it was secondary nature for me to become a “clothes horse” in my life journey through the decades. And eventually create my unique fashion style that blends en vogue, traditional and classic couture usually in bright and contrasting colors. The striking physical beauty of both parents often made me feel ugly.

Chapter 7 - Juan

Juan Joseph Lombard was born in Gretna, Louisiana on March 1, 1946. His parents were George Lombard and Velma Osborn. Juan was the first of five siblings.

When Juan and I began our relationship, my phase of gay sexual exploration was only beginning. It was my decision to remain monogamous in the early years of my relationship with Juan, but subsequently I experienced casual relationships with other men. Simultaneously, my political responsibilities organizing in the Filipino community placed me in direct contact with individuals who would not necessarily accept my chosen lifestyle. I did not want to jeopardize the goals and objectives of organizing work with those people, by being open about my sexual orientation.

Seven years into my relationship with Juan, I experienced a political crisis since my paradigm for social change based on Marxist-Leninist principles had been shattered with the demise of the Soviet Union. My entire life had been dedicated to the objective of creating a socialist society. The opportunity to move to Hawaii presented itself through the transfer from the KDP Executive Board to the Hawaii Regional Executive Board in 1985. This also coincided with my uncertainty as to whether I could commit to a long-term relationship with Juan. As a result, we agreed to a temporary physical separation with my move to Hawaii. This decision was underscored with the understanding that when I turned 40 years old, I would decide regarding the nature of our relationship; to either go our separate ways or reunite.

My insecurities and conditioning to think of “love” as being merely physical motivated me to seek affirmation of who I am from others. It was not until I forgave myself from becoming infected with HIV, that I learned to love me for who and how I am. And, in so doing, my capacity to share my love for Juan continued to grow.

Together we have gone through traumatic life-changing experiences; the joys of becoming boyfriends, domestic partners and eventually husband and husband. Juan and I have pledged to make the remaining years of our lives the best of our journey together, yet we know that at one point, either he or I will no longer have the companionship of the other in the future.

EPILOGUE

In January 2020, the physical symptoms related to Kaposi's sarcoma were intolerable. I felt that the quality of my life had deteriorated. Incessantly, the multiple tumors on my lower limbs, particularly the toes, soles of the feet and ankles were so painful that it was difficult to wear regular shoes, much less walk without the assistance of a cane.

There was no reason for me to live with these circumstances. In reviewing my life through memoir writing, I realized that it has been a tapestry rich, with exhilarating experiences that contributed hopefully to the well-being of others, including myself.

In February, I began to prepare for a grand soirée, orchestrating my own celebration of life. This would be a party to be remembered by all in attendance with no expense spared. The event was scheduled in the community room of the Parkview Living complex where Juan and I moved to after selling the Silverlake condominium in 2012. A guest list was created with a finite number based on the capacity of the

venue. Only a specific number of people could be invited. I drew from the various communities of which I was linked to. This included family, political associates specifically through my work with the KDP HIV/AIDS colleagues and APAIT staff, artists, writers, and my Parkview neighbors. The event took place on March 21, the day before my birthday.

The program presenters provided testimonials, musical performances, and poems. As guests would arrive, they were greeted with a 15-minute presentation that was selected from photographs representing various stages of my life. It was a looping video. This event was a fully catered sit-down banquet in the Filipino tradition with the expected dishes. The community room was transformed into a banquet Hall decorated in turquoise with gold accents. There were coordinated table settings and floral centerpieces for each table. On every table there were 2" x 6" strips of linen on which guests were asked to write a message for Gil, using turquoise magic markers. Those would be collected and sown together into one continuous ribbon. It would be wrapped around my corpse prior to cremation. An 8' x 8' "Step Up and Repeat" backdrop was erected with a gold Art Deco motif set against a turquoise background. This would provide a backdrop for photo opportunities with myself and among the guests. Ending the celebration, Juan and I danced to the strains of Gladys Knight's, "Best Thing That Happened To Me". As a finale, guests were invited to parade across the street to the Echo Park and Lake where one by one each person would release a balloon into the air. Juan and I would have our hands-on top of their hand holding the balloon. Together, it would be released simultaneously as that guest would express one word of how they will remember me.

The following Monday, March 23, I had an appointment with the palliative care doctor and explained my rationale for choosing to exercise the option of euthanasia. Much to my consternation, the doctor refused to provide the necessary life termination medical prescription. Instead, I was given a pain narcotic and anti-anxiety medications. I was angry and frustrated that the doctor did not provide me with the remedy I had sought. However, at my discretion, the quantity of pain medication given to me could be taken all at once and terminate my life. I began

to have second thoughts, particularly after Bruce Occena said to me following the Celebration, “You know you don’t have to do this.”

At the invitation of Eddy, I went to stay with her on Maui for the entire month of May. Juan was with me during the first week then returned to Los Angeles. A change in my physical environment was necessary for me to be able to re engage my spirit and mental outlook. To enable my body to survive, new eating habits were adjusted to include a broad variety of foods. This also meant dining out in local restaurants, cafés, and sweet spots. Also, an exercise routine was established for daily exercise, which included walking through Kapiolani Regional Park. This approach was supplemented with recreational trips to various locations on the island to appreciate the beauty of nature. Certain inspiring locations were ideal for doing writing on the manuscript.

My intent was to write the prologue while in Maui. Each day was spent working on the essay, if not writing, then just thinking about related experiences. And how the topics would flow in relation to other sections of the manuscript. Through this approach, multiple essays were written. It became obvious that much of what was written had to be placed into the body of the manuscript and not the prologue. However, by the end of May, the original prologue multiple page document had been reduced to one page.

While in Maui, I connected with my extended family living nearby. Cousin Eddie Alves, Kapuna, visited me and shared historical facts of our lineage to the Hawaiian Kingdom. After he left, I went to take a nap while Edna hung up laundry in the lanai. She went to my room and woke me saying, “You have to see this!” With curiosity I followed her. “Do you hear something?” A soft grinding sound imposed itself above that chirps of birds. I was puzzled. Edna pointed to the shelf where a tiny Nepalese prayer wheel was turning. She said that it was activated by sunlight; but there was no direct sunshine on the object. I can only surmise that a spiritual power greater than I made these sacred objects spin. Here I was experiencing a force unknown. It was as if I had been given the opportunity to complete a generational cycle of spirituality that began with Grandpa.

My original death by euthanasia had been instead supplanted with a rejuvenation of physical energy and a mindful clarity in how to approach the completion of my memoir. Most significantly, was the recognition and acceptance of a higher spiritual power which has constantly been with me. I attribute this condition to the “Lazarus syndrome”, about the Judeo-Christian parable. Jesus Christ had brought forth Lazarus back from death, who had been buried in his sepulcher.

Caregiving has been the innate quality of Juan ’s character. From the time when I became infected with HIV, he constantly reminded me to take my medications. Over the years with the AIDS diagnosis of Kaposi’s sarcoma, the emerging debilitating physical symptoms began to limit my mobility. Juan has guardedly “planned activities” we could enjoy together without jeopardizing my health. When on vacation at various locales, both domestic and international, he would take an exploratory walk of the environment without me. This way, he could determine the easiest ways of getting to such points of interest from where we were staying.

While I have reached relative stasis in managing Kaposi's sarcoma, Juan has been diagnosed with a major health condition. Essential tremors or pre-Parkinson's disease gradually inhibits his mobility and physical capacity. I am angry that he suffers from this affliction and there is nothing that I can do, but silently cry watching him suffer. Now, it is my opportunity to give back loving, compassionate care, and attention as his emerging disease progresses.

When I saw the palliative care doctor, he recognized that I complained of sleep difficulty and constant fatigue. A referral was made to be examined by a neurologist resulting in an overnight sleep study. Typically, the technician would have given the patient test results immediately after the study. Instead, a consultation with the neurologist was scheduled. It was concluded that I am experiencing severe sleep apnea. And without intervention, there is a possibility that I would die in my sleep. What a way to go!

At the time of this writing, the world is experiencing the COVID- 19 Coronavirus pandemic. Statistically those most in jeopardy have been individuals 65 years of age and above. Other cofactors include pre- existing health problems such as those with a compromised immune system. Until a vaccine is developed for worldwide-availability, the likelihood of my infection exists with an uncertain outcome.

As anticipated, on May 21, 2020 I tested positive for Covid-19 infection. My symptoms were mild, and recovery was gradual. Had it not been for a lifestyle based on learning sound principles that engender the practice of cultivating my body, mind and spirit---I would not be here today.

That creature nestled in the trim of the observation car, matured, and took flight at the last train stop. The experience of learning to love and to allow the tumultuous winds of life would continue to take me on to journeys yet unknown. The price of the ticket was worth every drop of blood, sweat and tears shed.

ADDENDUM

GUILLERMO BERNABE MANGAOANG, JR. (GIL) was born to Guillermo Dulay Mangaoang and Florence Villanueva Bernabe on March 22, 1947 in San Francisco, CA where he was raised. Gil's maternal grandmother's family settled the Filipino community of Fresno in 1924. His maternal grandfather, Julian Jacinto Bernabe founded the first Filipino specific religious organization in the United States in 1934, the Filipino Assemblies of the Firstborn, Incorporated. Ernesto Mangaoang was his paternal Third Generation Uncle.

Gil represents the Second of five generations born in the United States. Gil attended Golden Gate, John Swett, Lincoln, and Bessie Carmichael Elementary schools and Everett Junior High then graduated from Lowell High School in 1964. He joined the USAF in 1966 and served as a Junior Engineer stationed at Seward Air Force Base, Tennessee and was discharged as a Staff Sergeant in 1970.

On his return to San Francisco he attended the City College of San Francisco (CCSF) studying Architecture and Design. It was here that he was introduced to social issues present on campus by the Black Student Union, MECHA, Gay and Lesbian Student Union and various National Liberation support movement groups. While Gil was there the first Filipino Studies program was established. It was also at CCSF where he was introduced to Marxist-Leninist Mao Tze Tung politics focused around equal and social justice. This involvement led him to participate in a study group at the International Hotel (IH) in San Francisco.

The movement to save the IH placed him in contact with other Filipino national and Filipino American social justice activists concerned with conditions, both in the Philippines and the United States. He was a founding member of the Kalayaan Collective and layout editor of the "KALAAAYAN" newspaper. This Collective merged with ideologically like-minded Filipinos throughout the United States to form the Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP).

During transfer assignments he worked with the San Francisco, Seattle and Hawai'i chapter and the Northern California Regional Executive Board. Gil was Chairperson of the National Secretariat, the national staff of the KDP, including the Organization and Finance Departments. Also, the Education, Propaganda, and the "Ang Katipunan" Commissions. He became a member of the National Council and was elected to its National Executive Board.

He moved to Hawaii in 1988 and was the first employee of the Life Foundation/AIDS of Hawaii. While there he left the KDP and subsequently moved to Los Angeles to reunite with his life partner Juan Lombard. Gil continued his education at Loyola Marymount University, graduating with a Minority degree in Chicano Studies and an Honors degree in Urban Studies, emphasizing Economic Development in Minority Communities.

Continuing after graduation with his AIDS activism that began in 1985 with the, Gil worked with the Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team as a Treatment Advocate and eventually as Client Services Director. Working with other AIDS activists throughout the United States he was instrumental in establishing the importance of HIV medication adherence protocols. Gil was a consultant with other AIDS

organizations including the National Institute of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Infections as a participant in the first clinical trials for Protease Inhibitors. He retired in 2009 following complications with Kaposi's sarcoma, an opportunistic infection resulting from his exposure to HIV in 1989. Treatment began in 1995, he has had 3 years of chemotherapy, eight radiation treatments on 15 tumor sites, cryotherapy and surgeries including amputations in addition to multiple pharmaceutical protocols involving countless medications.

In 2020, Gil celebrated his 73rd birthday and 44 years of love and commitment with his spouse Juan Joseph Lombard in Los Angeles where they continue to live. They became Domestic Partners on June 16, 2001 their Silver Anniversary and were married on July 3, 2014 legal it became legal in California.

CHRONOLOGY

Date	Event
March 22, 1947	Born in San Francisco
1964	Graduated from Lowell high school
1966 to 1970	United States Air Force
September 1970	City College of San Francisco (CCSF), Architecture and Design
September 1971	Young Filipino People's Far West convention. Withdrew from CCSF Kalayaan Collective formed Martial law declared in the Philippine
1972 to 1975	Fely Anna Maramba National Secretariat chairperson
1976	Michael Jerry Krause
1977 to present	Juan Joseph Lombard
1981	"Ti Mangyuna" - They Who Were First
1982	KDP Northern California Regional Executive Board
1985	Life Foundation/AIDS Foundation of Hawaii
1987	Second National March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights

1988	Reunite with Juan in Los Angeles
1989	Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection. Loyola Law School (LLS), Assistant Registrar.
1989	Bachelors program, Loyola Marymount University (LMU)
1993	LLS resignation March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights and Liberation.
1994	Graduation from LMU
1995	Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team (APAIT), Treatment Advocate. Began HIV medication
1996	APAIT, Client Services Director
June 16, 2001	25th Anniversary and Domestic Partners Commitment ceremony with Juan.

2006	AIDS diagnosis, Kaposi's sarcoma.
2007 to 2011	Chemotherapy infusions
20012	Cryotherapy, radiation treatments and surgeries.
July 2, 2013	Marriage Civil Ceremony.
May 21, 2020	COVID19 Infection

Family Tree

Filipino Assemblies of the First Born, Inc. – organizational structure

Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino – organizational structure