



Razor's Edge

By
Joe Mari Mercader
Executive Editor
FILIPINO TIMES
New York-New Jersey

Joe Mari Mercader . . .

Ang Taong Gipit Sa Patalim kumakapit

NEWYORK, NY Mar. 29 (PinoyGlobal) - The Tagalog saying: “Ang taong gipit ay sa patalim kumakapit” is pregnant with meaning. In English, it means - he who is in trouble would cling even to a sharp object. This truism vividly depicts the predicament of Money Villaroyo (moniker for Manny Villar) whose candidacy is on course to disaster.

The irony of it is that he is digging his own political demise. Hying his alleged inexhaustible war chest has seemingly boomeranged smack on his face. He may have splurged his fabled wherewithal on bribe-taking voters and politicians whose principles are in the auction block. Lamentably, it has not spiraled his candidacy skyward because until now he still dismally trails behind Noynoy like a turtle trying hard to catch up with speedy Gonzales. In any crystal ball this is bad news: judgment day is at the doorsteps of destiny – less than two months away. If this trend holds until the finish line, Villar is a certifiable dead duck in his debut for the presidency.

Truth to tell, even the level-headed Gilbert “Gibo” Teodoro Jr, whose campaign started slow and which was disparaged by fellow presidential aspirants, has caught up with him in many areas already. Teodoro, as I foresaw early on, would really be the closest rival of his own cousin Sen. Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III in the homestretch of the race. In fact, with a little luck he might even reverse the political landscape of the country by staging an upset in the May polls. Gibo might yet be the next president of the Philippines when the smoke of battle simmers down.

He is admired because he has the assets and qualifications of a good president: brilliant, honest and does not assault political adversaries on personal issues to undermine them.

Gibo remains focused with his blue print of government he offers in his political rallies. He seems to be a fresh breath of air breezing by the length and breadth of the archipelago.

Meanwhile to continue, Money Villaroyo was coined by Malaya columnist Lito Banayo who exposed the Mediterranean tryst of Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Manny Villar Jr. late last year to form the unholy alliance making him her secret candidate for president. I don't have to draw a picture why. Suffice it to say that she wants immunity from prosecution after she steps down. Desperate as Villaroyo is to win, he will do anything, even if he has to bite a flying bullet.

What will thwart his obsession to be president would be if a “military junta” takes over the reins of government in failed elections. Note that this miasma has been sonorously bruited about these past weeks sending chills to presidential aspirants. In such eventuality it can be safely said that what they are doing now is dancing a moro-moro, with the difference that it is very expensive on their pockets, especially to Money Villar. Given Madam Arroyo's passion to succeed herself, the troubling talks of military take over might yet happen.

Villar's mouthpiece - and he has many such lapdogs - says that they won't let Sen. Aquino get out of the Hacienda Luisita issue. The problem is that the matter is not only a sterile cliché but tells of Villaroyo's paranoia of losing in such a huge gamble, which he cannot manipulate as he did with the C-5 road extension project. That realization is tormenting for one who has staked his life's fortune.

The Hacienda Luisita incident is the supposed dark side of

the Cojuangco family of which Noynoy is a scion. A few years back, twelve demonstrating farmers against its management were killed by soldiers guarding it. Even though the scheme is weak against Noynoy who is as innocent about it as his father was when he was murdered by the cutthroats of General Ver, Villar's camp is nevertheless trying hard to nail Noynoy on this issue, having nothing else in the closet of Noynoy which they could slam on him.

That bespeaks of how desperate they want to narrow the distance of Manny to Noynoy by a few digits and not in the scale it is surfacing in the latest poll surveys. Their ploy is quite shallow: to derail the focus of the people on Villar's conviction by his peers for corruption and conflict of interests. In contrast, Noynoy has not been found guilty of anything no matter how hard they try to look around his backyard.

Meanwhile, Villar is at the core of palpable frauds that if he were not a senator with a fabulous bank account to extricate him of any problem with the law, he would be a common criminal today. If the authorities and the media so much as study and verify the veracity of the exposés made by Frank Wenceslao, perhaps the temper of the elections would be more solemn. And these issues were publicized in some newspapers back home.

Frank wrote deploring the press that maligned him: "It behooves me therefore to put in perspective Villar's biggest criminal act that reaches a charge of plunder even without the C-5 extension project and the illegal conversion of a CARP-covered first-class irrigated rice land which is now the upscale Savannah Estate in Pavia, Iloilo. The media hadn't looked into the billions of pesos Villar and wife made under the Unified Home Lending Program through their defunct Capitol Development Bank by originating home mortgages for their real estate companies and selling these to the National Home Mortgage Finance Corp. (NHMFC). Later

on when Capitol couldn't easily sell the mortgages anymore because of stricter UHLP rules, the bank suffered serious liquidity crisis (or did it really?) and asked the Bangko Sentral for emergency loan of P1.5 billion.

"Capitol's eventual collapse and the transfer of its assets and liabilities to the Optimum Development Bank had raised a lot of questions until now the Villars must yet answer that the media seem to have swept under the rug. For instance, how much of the P1.5 billion BSP loan was transferred by Capitol to Optimum which assumed the farmer's liabilities?"

The litany of denunciations is so numerous that the authorities and the media are guilty of condoning Villar's anomalies by turning a deaf ear on them. This is the kind of attitude that creates criminals among men strapped with official stature. There are many more valid issues that are not fabrications, which are just thrown in the archives of anonymous matters. If all the cases are filed one day soon accusing him as principal author of the anomalies he would really end up in the right place—Muntinglupa (Leavenworth Prison).

In contrast, the accusations hurled at Noynoy do not hold water because his only involvement with the Hacienda Luisita is his being a Cojuangco. To this writer's knowledge, Noynoy never held a managerial post in running the business of said hacienda, therefore the issue of the farmers "massacre" would have nothing to do with him. Just the same, he nevertheless categorically promised that within five years he will distribute the lands of Hacienda Luisita to the farmers. On that he has yet to be proven a liar. But as early as now, having no ammunition against him, his enemies in the Nacionalista Party sling arrows at him merely because he is the son of Cory Cojuangco Aquino. Their arrows therefore have flat noses that don't hurt the young Aquino as he proceeds onward to victory.