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Fil-Am book on vets fills a void

VETERAN'S LIGHT IN THE TUNNEL: A Book Review of Loida Nicolas Lewis' "How the Filipino Veteran of World War II Can Become a US Citizen"

By REUBEN SEGURITAN

(Reuben S. Seguritan, a New York attorney who has represented Filipino veterans since the mid-1970s has written extensively on the subject, including a law journal article.)

In the heels of the passing of the Filipino veterans law last year, reports pervaded of incidents of shady pseudo legal persons taking advantages of eager veterans. These fly-by-night operators allegedly snared their victims with promises of absolute citizenship.

Even more hurting was the fact that once money changed hands, veterans were left holding the bag. In their jubilation at the success of their long fight for justice, the few left behind were only too eager to follow self-proclaimed redeemers so that they could enjoy long due benefits in their twilight years.

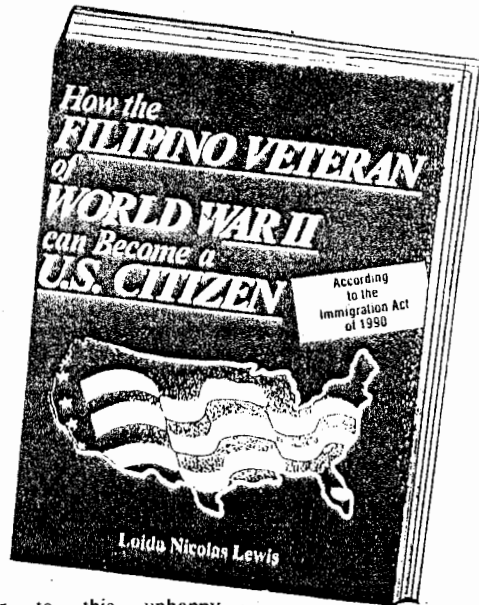
Loida Nicolas Lewis' new book on the basic nuts and bolts of filing for veterans citizenship benefits is the

answer to this unhappy experience. It is the light in the tunnel into which Filipino find themselves being thrust again after just being brought out to the open by the law's victory.

A veteran lawyer who herself has intimate knowledge of the workings of immigration and naturalization operations, having worked as a naturalization examiner at the Immigration and Naturalization Service's office in New York, Nicolas-Lewis has managed to squeeze the law off its legalistic jargon and leave much of the barest substance.

Any veteran who understands English can follow through the guide easily. He will rarely miss an important step as the book guides him step by step and tells him just about everything he needs to know and prepare in filing for US citizenship.

It is a highly readable book as well for those who may only wish to understand the issue. The author fully explores the history that started the Filipino



fighters whose struggles did not seem to have ended with the end of the war. It makes one identify with the cause through her brief but clear account of the bond that developed between the Philippines and the US and the promise made to forge that bond of friendship, only to be ignored and abandoned when the work was over.

The Veterans Law is a significant breakthrough for the Filipino veterans who may taste the fruit of their labors more fully now. It is as well a victory for many Filipino who have long sought justice for them. When the law was passed, everybody rejoiced but many did not know what to do, where to go, how to do it. They had a thousand and one niggling questions, that, for the lack of immediate answers, they became victims of fast acting opportunists or bogus lawyers.

Nicolas-Lewis' book adequately covers basic important areas on the procedures for filing for veterans' benefits. The book fills the void that would have otherwise been occupied by business minded non-lawyers and frauds.



LEWIS: Author

World War II veterans' fight for recognition. She recaptures for us the frustration of our