

# Essays pay tribute to Pacific Northwest Filipino community

After being the first in his family to graduate from college, Peter Bacho launched a career as staff attorney for the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Now he's decided to devote his life to writing and teaching.

In "Uncle Rico's Encore," a collection of autobiographical essays, Bacho writes about being a first-generation American, the son of Filipino immigrants and the nephew of a colorful crew of uncles. His essays tell of growing up in a redlined, multiethnic neighborhood of Seattle in the 1950s and 1960s.

As blue-collar Filipino Americans, called "pinoy," Bacho and his family were expected by teachers and employers alike to stay in their own lane. The men took on the hard, low-paying jobs that nobody else wanted, like field labor or work in canneries.

Meanwhile, Filipino kids stuck to simple pleasures within their own communities, like jigging for shiners off of the public dock or playing pickup basketball in a church parking lot. Male teens signed up for military service and a ticket to Vietnam right out of high school, rather than waiting for the draft.

As a kid, Bacho wasn't blind to the inequities. He entertained futile dreams about buying the fishing gear displayed in the family's much-thumbed-through Sears catalog.

And while playing on the junior varsity basketball team for O'Dea High School, a school that served working class families, he grew to despise the opposing team at a predominantly white preparatory school. "The privileged and smug sons of doctors, lawyers, business leaders... For them, the teenage years were easy. And life beyond high school? No sweat. Decades of success? It's in their DNA," Bacho writes.

But the author also bore witness to changes that were beginning to happen in Seattle and throughout society. His favorite baseball team, the Brook-

## This week's book

'Uncle Rico's Encore' by Peter Bacho

University of Washington Press – 176 pp – \$24.95

lyn Dodgers, was an integrated team, and even the Seattle Rainiers had Bobby Balceña, "the Filipino flyer," playing center field.

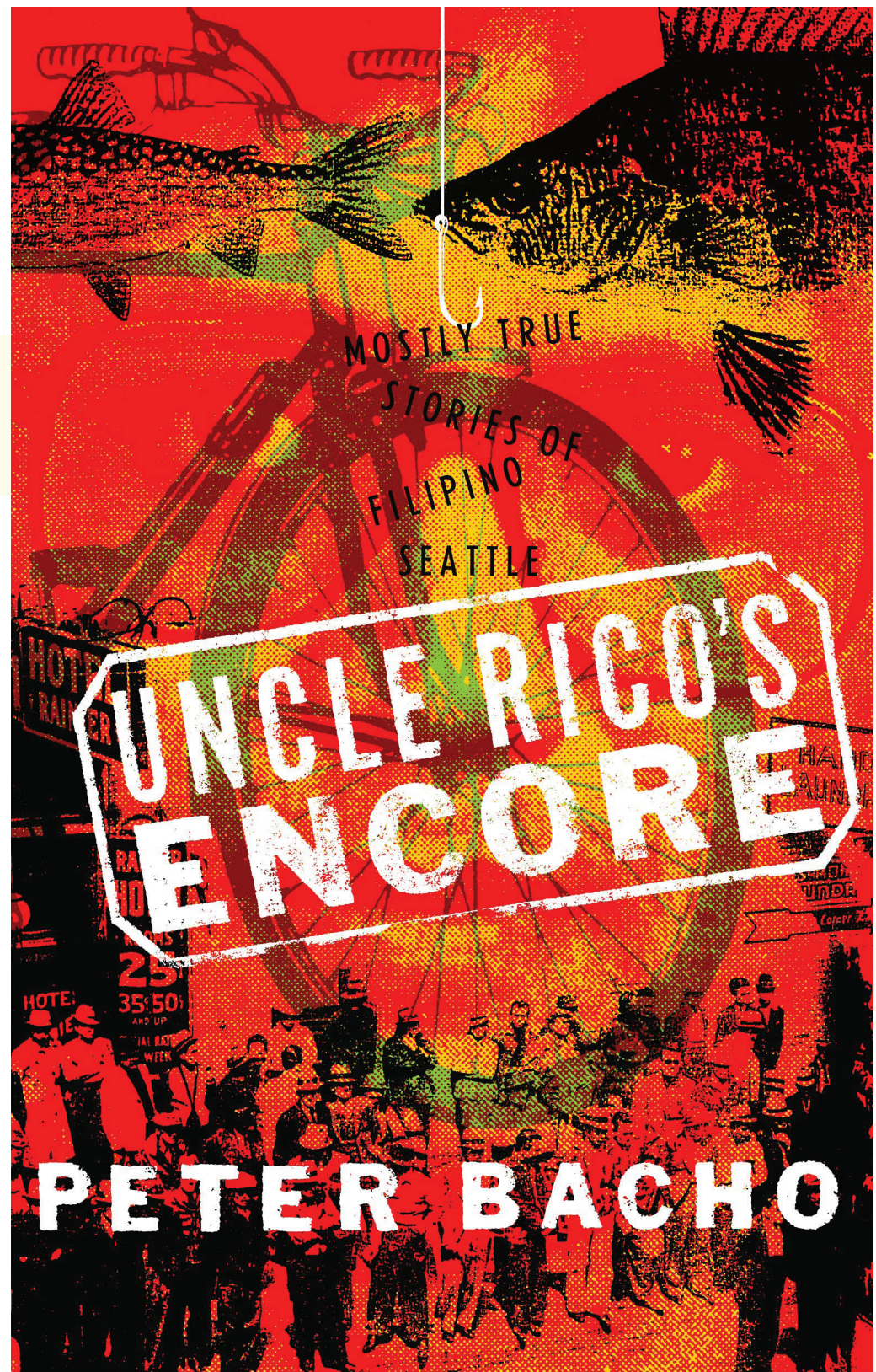
Bacho's Uncle Vic was responsible for getting a major bridge and adjoining park in Seattle named after José Rizal, a national hero of the Philippines. This made Seattle's Filipino community more visible.

Redlining was dismantled, and his family moved into a new neighborhood with more amenities. But Bacho didn't forget his roots. When his old stomping grounds in Chinatown were threatened with gentrification and the building of the kingdom, the author was one of those who mobilized Filipinos and other Asian American allies.

They pressured the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop federally subsidized housing and services within that community for low-income residents who had been threatened with displacement.

"Uncle Rico's Encore" knits together everyday routines and decisive moments that have shaped the life of one Pinoy. These subtle essays, a teaspoonful of words at a time, explore the universal human experiences of love, loss, mistakes made and wisdom gained. Over 70 years, Bacho has borne witness to, and participated in, significant shifts in society. But he'll always be his uncles' nephew, his parents' boy.

*The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [barbaralmcm@gmail.com](mailto:barbaralmcm@gmail.com).*



'Uncle Rico's Encore' is by Peter Bacho.

**THESE SUBTLE ESSAYS, A TEASPOONFUL OF WORDS AT A TIME, EXPLORE THE UNIVERSAL HUMAN EXPERIENCES OF LOVE, LOSS, MISTAKES MADE AND WISDOM GAINED.**