

[manilatimes.net](https://www.manilatimes.net)

# Criminal Cases 10010 and 10011–Closed

*THE MANILA TIMES*

5-6 minutes

---



LARRY V. SIPIN

The other day the Supreme Court banged the gavel, closing “with finality” Criminal Cases 10010 and 10011: People of the Philippines v. Brig. Gen. Luther Custodio et al. for conspiring to kill Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino and Rolando “Rolly” Galman “with evident premeditation and treachery.”

Finally, after 20 years, all doors for the reopening of the case have been locked, the keys thrown away.

DAILY GRIND. The closure of the Aquino-Galman double-

murder case brings flashbacks to the opening on February 1, 1985, of what was dubbed as the “Trial of the Century” with the arraignment of the 26 accused, led by the Armed Forces chief of staff, Fabian Ver. (The cases were not captioned “PP v/s Gen. Fabian Ver, et al.,” because while Ver was the highest ranking among the military accused, he was indicted as a mere accessory).

As justice reporter of my newspaper, I covered the trial for 10 months, from arraignment to promulgation, spending practically all my waking hours at the Sandiganbayan.

On arraignment the words “not guilty” rang 52 times in the jam-packed court room of the Sandiganbayan First Division, professed twice by each of the 26 accused—one “not guilty” for Ninoy, another for the alleged communist hit man Galman.

All-day hearings, daily, were conducted at the courtroom of Presiding Justice Manuel Pamaran and Associate Justices Augusto Amores and Bienvenido Vera-Cruz at the old Congress Building along Luneta. The sessions started promptly at 8:30 a.m. A stickler for punctuality, Pamaran barred any entry to his sala after banging the gavel to declare the Court in session. Latecomers would have to wait for the afternoon hearing.

Noon break, I would rush to the press office of the Department of Justice on Faura, working area of JUCRA (Justice and Courts Reporters Association) to draft my report of the morning proceedings, to which I would later add developments in the afternoon session.

By 1:30 p.m., I would be back at the courtroom, with the afternoon session normally running up to 5 p.m. In at 8:30 a.m.

and out by 12 noon, in again at 1:30 p.m. and out by 5 p.m.

Such was my daily grind from the February 1, 1985, arraignment to the December 1, 1985, promulgation finding the accused “not guilty.”

“NOT GUILTY.” I set forth to cover the trial without any objectivity whatsoever, totally agreeing with the Aquino and Galman families who didn’t entertain the slimmest hope that justices would be served under Marcos.

The “not guilty” verdict didn’t surprise anyone. On the other hand, a “guilty” verdict would have shocked everyone. The justices—Pamaran, Amores and Vera-Cruz—reinforced the perception that they were beyond dispensing justice by acting more like defense lawyers than judges all through the trial.

Ten days after the arraignment, what the public knew all along—that the shooter could only be one of the soldiers who escorted Ninoy out of China Airlines Flight 811—was confirmed in an eyewitness account of Rebecca Quijano, who deplaned from the same flight in hysterics, sobbing, “Pinatay na nila siya, hindi pa kayo umiiyak.” Quijano became known as the “Crying Lady” after that.

Quijano’s lawyer, now Justice Secretary Raul M. Gonzalez, gave me the scoop of a lifetime—that Quijano has executed a sworn statement stating that from its window, she saw a soldier gunned down Ninoy at the emergency stairway of China Airlines.

“I saw escort shoot Ninoy,” bannered the February 11, 1985, issue of my newspaper. On reading the banner, Gonzalez ran to the Sandiganbayan with a manifestation denying the story. My newspaper stood by the story.

My talk with Gonzalez boiled down to just one question: “Is she [Quijano] positive that she saw a soldier shoot Aquino??”  
Gonzalez’s answer: “Yes. She is positive she saw a soldier shoot Ninoy.”

The future congressman and justice secretary would, later, sheepishly explain that he meant no offense to the writer and the publication when he filed the denial of my story, saying he only did it to protect himself and the newspaper.

The denying lawyer would later play defining roles in the “Trial of the Century,” at the end of which the Pamaran court would tag Galman as the assassin.

WE KNOW. “Weather-weather lang yan.” With Marcos gone, the Aquino-Galman double-murder case was reopened, with nobody doubting what the verdict would be.

Indeed, the verdict, handed down in 1990, was as expected. The 1985 trial was adjudged a mistrial; 16 among the 26 accused were found guilty as charged for double-murder conspiracy.

Subsequent legal maneuvers to once more reopen the case were thwarted by the Supreme Court. The latest petition for a new trial resulted in closure, “with finality.”

But how can a case be declared “closed” when the mastermind has not been identified, charged and punished?

Kayo naman . . . we don’t need that, do we? We know.

And, yes, the mastermind has been identified, charged and punished.