

Cory's Final Journey

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rito, and we really want to thank everyone," she said in a GMA-7 interview. "Nakaka-touch. Some people said they'll walk for mom to Sucat."

"Salamat, salamat sa inyo," said Sen. Benigno "Nonoy" Aquino III, when he came out of the family's bus, at the request of Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, who was then in the crowd when the cortege reached the Manila Hotel and the Luneta Park. The cortege moved inch by inch as the crowd continued to swell.

At the Luneta, hundreds of students and teachers waving Philippine flags or sporting yellow ribbons organized by the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) waved goodbye to the former president. Early after the death of President Aquino, CEAP proposed the inclusion of a "Cory History" in the curriculum of Catholic schools in the country.

By 1pm, the National Capitol Region Police Command (NRCPC) placed the crowd density at Roxas Boulevard at 100,000. It still thickened as the cortege inched its way into its route that spanned five national roads and three Metro Manila cities. Observers could not help but compare it to the 1983 funeral march of Ninoy Aquino. "Halos ganitong-ganito rin," said singer Mitch Valdez, who joined Korina Sanchez and Ted Failon in ABS-CBN's marathon coverage.

Around Quirino Avenue, a group of devotees of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo joined the contingents. Just like during the January fiestas, they walked on foot while joining the cortege. Sociology expert Randy David told ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC) that this is just one testament to her rather "saintly" life. "Para siyang poon dito," David added. At the time of her death, parties expressed their desire to open the cause of her sainthood, aside from a flood of congressional awards and resolutions.

At 3pm, it reached the City of Makati as the cortege turned to Osmena Highway, en route to South Luzon Expressway (SLEX), where a sea of umbrellas keep people getting drenched with the rains. The southbound lane of the expressway was virtually closed to traffic because of people who waited for Cory. NCRPC reported by this time that around 200,000 lined up from Manila Cathedral to Manila Memorial Park.

It rained incessantly and peo-

ple wept as they paid homage to President Aquino. As the cortege reached Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, the shuttle that carried the Aquino family suddenly opened its windows. The Aquino siblings, who never had lunch yet, greeted the crowd who had been waiting for hours.

In interviews inside the shuttle, grandson Jiggy Aquino-Cruz, remembers her doting *lola* and also thanked the Filipino nation for the outpouring of support to the family. "Lola ko lang siya, she's the most simple person in the world," he said. Outside, families trooped bringing with them their young, as if introducing them to the legacy of Cory Aquino.

Hours before the start of the procession, the Aquino Mausoleum at the Manila Memorial Park has been set up. A flowerbed of stargazers was laid on top of the conjoined tombs, with the niche of the former president standing at the mouth of her open tomb. A full brigade of soldiers led by Chief of Staff Victor Ibrado awaited their former commander in chief, to pay her full military honors and a 21-gun salute.

The memorial park has been cleared of bystanders and TV screens had been placed outside the periphery for people to witness the burial ceremonies. About 598 seminarians stood in to become funeral rites marshals, making sure that security is enforced. Only family members and friends, as well as high profile personalities had been invited to join the Aquino family in laying President Aquino to her final resting place.

The funeral was a gathering of personalities from showbiz, politics, media and business. Former Ambassador to the United States Ernesto Maceda was among the earliest to arrive in the tent that housed the guests in front of the mausoleum. Sen. Jamby Madrigal, Parañaque Rep. Roilo Golez, and Partylist Reps. Riza Hontiveros and Walden Bello also waited for hours in the tent. Showbiz friends like beauty queens Ruffa Gutierrez and Miriam Quiambao were also spotted in the burial. Timor Leste President and Nobel Laureate Jose Ramos Horta also joined the dignitaries who sent off the former president.

As the cortege reached SLEX, crowd estimates reached 300,000. In interviews, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay reported that the procession might take another two hours because of

crowd. At around 5pm, Police already expressed their concern regarding crowd control. "Mada-li lang naman iyan, mapapakiusapan iyan," said Binay, in another ANC interview.

At 6:30pm, the crowd became jubilant as the flat bed truck entered Sucat exit. At the Manila Memorial Park, which is a few hundred meters away, the seminarians guarding the mausoleum started to sing *Bayan Ko*. At 7pm, the journey of almost 9 hours finally ended as the crowds that had been gathering since morning at the Manila Memorial Park greeted the arrival of the cortege.

The rains disappeared as the country watched and waited.

A promising life

Corazon Cojuangco Aquino was born on January 25, 1933 to affluent sugar-growers Jose Cojuangco and Demetria Sumulong. The sixth among eight children, Cory grew up in luxury. She married Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. and had five children:

Maria Elena Aquino, Aurora Corazon, Victoria Eliza, Senator Benigno Aquino III, and Kristina Bernadette (aka Kris Aquino) who became a TV and movie personality.

In 1946, Cory left for the US to enroll at Ravenhill Academy in Philadelphia. She finished her junior and senior years at Notre Dame College in New York. In 1949, she went to Mount Saint Vincent College in New York City where she earned a degree as a Bachelor of Arts, major in French.

In 1953, she returned to the Philippines to take up law at Far Eastern University, but then abandoned further studies in 1955 to marry Benigno 'Ninoy' Aquino Jr., who was then a promising young politician.

When Ninoy was elected senator, his supporters saw his capabilities of becoming president, a fact that threatened then president, Ferdinand E. Marcos. In September 1972, Marcos declared martial law and jailed hundreds of his opponents and critics, including Ninoy.

On August 21, 1983, against the advice of friends, Ninoy flew back to the Philippines from exile in Boston to seek an audience with the ailing Marcos. He was gunned down and killed on the tarmac.

An icon of democracy

A self-proclaimed housewife, Corazon Cojuangco Aquino led Filipinos to step up in the fight against the autocratic rule of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Corazon Aquino kept the opposition alive, speaking on behalf of her husband and demanding

change. She became known as "an icon of democracy," the beacon of hope that sparked the 1986 People Power revolution. She became the 11th president of the Republic of the Philippines, the first female president of the country and the first woman president in Asia

In 1986, after being drafted to run against Marcos and winning through the support of a peaceful People Power revolution, Corazon Cojuangco Aquino ended 20 years of dictatorship and took over the ropes through a snap election. She became the 11th President of the Philippines, the first female executive head of the country and Asia's first woman president.

Aquino easily became TIME Magazine's Woman of the Year that same year. After her term, she has remained "an advocate for democracy, women's empowerment and religious piety."

In March 1986, President Aquino appointed a commission to rewrite the Constitution. The revised Charter was ratified by a landslide vote in February 1987.

The economy started to recover from the slump when she assumed office, with the gross domestic product rising progressively and reaching 6.7 percent two years later. However, the contraction of the US economy in 1991, along with a series of coup attempts against her and 10-12 hours of blackouts during her last few years, crippled the Philippine economy.

In her final State of the Nation address in July 1991, Aquino seemed to speak more to her failures than to her successes.

"God knows, we have made mistakes," she said. "I hope that history will judge me . . . favorably . . . because, as God is my witness, I honestly did the best I could."

After her presidency, Mrs. Aquino settled for a private life. She joined various art exhibits to raise funds for her advocacies: the Senator Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Foundation, PinoyMe, ASA Foundation, and People Power People.

But she remained an influential figure in Philippine politics, lending her presence to political causes that needed her iconic stature.

In January 2001, she participated in the second EDSA Revolution that brought down the popularly elected President Joseph Estrada, who was accused of plunder, and installing his vice president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo into power.

Mrs. Aquino later expressed regrets for supporting EDSA II due to the controversies hounding the Arroyo administration, and apolo-

gized publicly to Estrada.

In 2005, Mrs. Aquino supported the group of cabinet secretaries that resigned in the wake of the "Hello Garci" wire-tapping scandal, and joined opposition figures in calling for the resignation of Arroyo over allegations of vote-rigging in the 2004 presidential elections.

She remained active in social and political causes in recent years, publicly supporting Marine Col. Ariel Querubin during a stand-off at the Marine headquar-

ters in 2006 and NBN-ZTE whistleblower Jun Lozada last year.

Despite her weakened state, in the heat of demonstrations against the Constituent Assembly recently, Cory made a most powerful and most applauded statement: "Subalit narito muli tayo, sa gitna ng walanghiyang pang-aabuso ng mga makapang-yarihang nagnanais na sirain ang mga pinakayakap sa ating mga batas."

(With reports from AP, AFP and Inquirer.net)

Aquino will always hold a place in the hearts of Filipinos

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materials on the historical event and the woman who made history, becoming the first woman President in Asia.

Like most Filipinos, she felt she lost a close family member when she learned of the news of Cory's demise. She made certain she got a chance to pay her respects by going to Cory's wake held at the La Salle Greenhills gymnasium over the weekend.

As the crowd got bigger and bigger, more interesting sights in the crowd started to emerge and taking a quick look, one can't help but think how one woman could bring people from all walks of life together like this. There was a bunch of people who were carrying Cory posters and bouquets of chrysanthemums and daisies, all in glistening yellow, as if to say "Cheer up!" The color yellow have long been associated with Ninoy and Cory. Apparently, their penchant for the color was inspired by the 1973 song Tie a Yellow Ribbon by Dawn featuring Tony Orlando about a man wrongly imprisoned for three years who is coming home to his wife, pleading her to "tie a yellow ribbon round the ole oak tree" to show if she still loved him (this was based on an old practice in the US where wives of those serving in the US Cavalry—the insignia of which bears the color yellow—wore yellow ribbons in their hair to signify their devotion).

Indeed it was a bittersweet and somewhat surreal moment for all when the funeral cortege finally passed by. As the convoy drove, we spotted Sen. Mar Roxas, ZTE scandal whistleblower Jun Lozada, former Sen. Rene Saguisag, Tingting Cojuangco, Mikee Cojuangco and Jackie Aquino, among others. And when people saw the truck carrying the casket where Cory's remains laid, it became like a scene made for film—people held up their "Laban" signs, shouting "Cory! Cory!" while waving yellow ribbons.

Some were fighting off tears, perhaps trying hard to come into terms with the grief of such a great loss; some were letting all the tears roll by, perhaps overwhelmed that they got to be a part of this historical event while some frantically tried to get as near as possible to the truck.

A truly heartfelt moment occurred when the coaster where Cory's immediate family rode in passed by and Kiko Aquino Dee, one of Cory's grandsons, held up a sign which said "We love you all! Maraming salamat!" But we all know it is us, the Filipino people, who will be eternally grateful to Cory for the great things she has done for the nation, and for this, she will always hold a dear place in all our hearts. ■

A nation reunites for . . .

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shined, as if God Himself wanted to pay His respects to the former President. People started shouting "We love Cory." This orphaned nation shouted her name continuously as the casket drove pass the crowd.

The crowd at Quirino Avenue joined the parade through Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, to South Luzon Expressway, and to its final stop at the Manila Memorial Park where Cory was once again united with Ninoy. ■



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