

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Cory's Final Journey

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It rained incessantly and people 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 *Iola* 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. "*Madali 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

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A nation reunites for 'Icon of Democracy'

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printed on it and written was "We love Cory." Many others pinned yellow ribbons on their clothes, some were tied on cars, and even on the lamp post or trees on the streets.

This yellow ribbon was a symbol of waiting for a loved one. For the Filipinos, it is a symbol of waiting for freedom, for democracy and for peace.

At the Quirino station, there were a lot of policemen but they were not there to disperse ralliers. They were one with their countrymen. From the station the people waited and looked for a place to get a better look of the late president for one last time.

As early as 11am, the crowd started to thicken. And at the nearby fastfood restaurants, people had their early lunch as they waited for Cory's funeral procession to pass

by. They watched the live telecast of the mass held at the Manila Cathedral on their phones and got emotional as Lea Salonga sang *Bayan Ko*.

Supporters stood under the rain and waited patiently, barely noticing the time that slowly passed by. There were both laughter and sadness in the crowd, and it was Cory who brought these people back together.

There was even the miracle of sharing as a couple gave away burgers to the multitudes of people waiting in the streets for the procession. It was as if the Filipino people, who have been divided by their political beliefs, were once again brothers and sisters, sharing the grief of losing a mother.

Everyone was doing the "*Laban*" sign, from the expectators to the vehicle drivers

who drove pass the Quirino Avenue, raising their arms up high. It was a gesture that everyone understood, like a language that everyone spoke.

The number of people multiplied. And as the procession entered Quirino Avenue, the rain stopped and the sun suddenly 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 as it will go on passing through Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, to South Luzon Expressway, and to its final stop at the Manila Memorial Park where Cory will be once again united with Ninoy. ■

Yee, advocates announces bill to save domestic violence shelters

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\$16.3 million (a 20 percent cut from last year) to 94 domestic violence shelters and centers throughout California.

"It is absolutely vital that we keep domestic violence shelters open," said Yee, who voted against cuts to the domestic violence program. "The Governor's veto increases health care, law enforcement and other costs to the state, but more critically, it puts victims of domestic violence and their children in grave danger."

"We are appalled to see the Governor eliminate funding to vital programs that save lives," said Tara Shabazz, Executive Director of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV). "The Governor is balancing the budget on the backs of our state's most vulnerable citizens. Funding must be restored by any means necessary; together with Senator Yee, CPEDV has found a potential solution to these disastrous cuts."

Yee's legislation—supported by statewide and local domestic violence prevention agencies—allocates \$16.3 million from the victims' compensation fund (which has a current balance of \$136.2 million) to the Domestic Violence Program. Yee will also introduce a second bill to allow domestic violence agencies greater flexibility in how they allocate their funds.

"This is a bipartisan issue that Californians care about," said Beverly Upton, Executive Director of the San Francisco Domestic Violence Consortium and Partners Ending Domestic Abuse. "We must bring these dollars back to the domestic violence shelters and those who work in the trenches everyday to keep California safe."

The Domestic Violence Program funds allow local agencies to provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, and legal advocacy, as well as assistance with restraining orders, counseling and other vital support services. Domestic violence shelters are often the only thing standing between victims and grave physical danger, and California's communities cannot sustain their loss.

According to a national census of domestic violence services, in just one day, over 7,700 requests for services went unmet due to a lack of resources. When the resources do not exist for victims to receive domestic violence services, they are often left with no choice but to risk their own lives by returning to their abusers.

If you are a victim of domestic violence, call the 24-hour-a-day toll-free National Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), 1-800-787-3224 (TDD) or the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence at 1-800-524-4765. ■

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