

PRESS RELEASE

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SAN FRANCISCO CELEBRATES “DAY OF VALOR”

In honor of the Filipino and American soldiers who fought in Bataan and Corregidor during the Second World War, the Philippine Consulate General in San Francisco and the Veterans War Memorial Commission successfully hosted “The Day of Valor” at the War Memorial Veterans Building in San Francisco last Saturday, 07 April 2007.



Special guests celebrate Day of Valor at the War Memorial Veterans Building in San Francisco

The event was attended by hundreds of people who crowded the main lobby of the War Memorial Building to honor the heroism and sacrifices of these soldiers who later joined the resistance movement against the Japanese forces in the Philippines.

Ambassador Willy C. Gaa led a distinguished group of speakers who participated at the event, including Rear Admiral Tom Andrews of the United States Navy; Mr. Edward Cadwallader and Ms. Sascha Jean Jansen, children of American civilian workers who were interned at Sto. Tomas prison camp during the war; Mr. David Tejada who represented the Filipino World War II veterans; Bay Area Fil-Am community leader Dennis Normandy, whose father was a survivor of the Bataan Death March and a martyr; representatives of US Congressmen George Miller, Ellen Tauscher, and Tom Lantos, California State Assemblywoman Fiona Ma and San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom; and young Fil-Am Sarah Moore, a high school student whose documentary film on the war: “*Making A Stand in World War II: The Filipino American Resistance*” was shown during the program and touched the hearts of the audience.



Ambassador Will C. Gaa delivers the keynote address before distinguished guests and leaders of the community

In her opening remarks, Consul General Sanchez said that the Filipinos and Americans who fought in Bataan and Corregidor “represented the best of their generation, a generation which chose to make a stand during a difficult period in world history.”

In her speech, young Sarah Moore said that “making the film enabled me to develop a deeper appreciation of my Filipino American heritage. My hope is that the Filipino Veterans Equity Bill is passed, and that Filipino World War II veterans will receive the full benefits they deserve.”

Ms. Moore’s remarks were echoed by Ms. Sascha Jean Jansen and Mr. Edward Cadwallader, representatives of the American internee community in the Philippines, who were young children when the war broke out.

“The Filipino soldiers are absolute heroes. The Philippine Scouts in particular are among the best troops, the best fighters who fought the Japanese Army in Bataan and Corregidor and later as part of the resistance movement,” said Ms. Jansen.

Mr. Edward Cadwallader added: “I thank the Filipinos who sneaked in food and provided us supplies throughout our captivity at Sto. Tomas prison camp. I also believe that the Rescission Act of 1946 is a disgrace to the United States and to these brave Filipino soldiers.”

Rear Admiral Tom Andrews of the United States Navy poignantly narrated the story of his father, then a 32-year old naval aviator who saw action at the Battle of Leyte Gulf. “My father never told me stories of his participation in the war. I only overheard him telling these stories to his fellow veterans. We should regularly hold these events to honor the men and women who fought to preserve our freedom and to remember their important contributions to world history,” he told the audience.



Ambassador Gaa and RAdm Andrews place the wreath in honor of Filipino and American WW2 veterans

San Francisco-Manila Sister City Chair Mr. Dennis Normandy shared his family’s experiences during the war. “My grandfather, a businessman, was incarcerated at the Cabanatuan prison camp in Nueva Ecija and later liberated by a combined force of Filipino guerrillas and American soldiers. My father, a doctor by profession, served in the USAFFE, was captured in Bataan but escaped the infamous Death March. He later joined the underground movement and was executed together with other resistance fighters by the Japanese during the Battle for Manila in 1945,” he said.

As the Keynote Speaker, Ambassador Gaa said that “it is high time that justice be given to the dwindling number of Filipino World War II veterans who valiantly heeded the call of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to become defenders of democracy in the Pacific. With the support of the Filipino American communities in the U.S., we hope to reinstate to the old soldiers of Bataan, Corregidor and the Philippine campaign, their dignity and honor, and give them the victory that has eluded them all these years.”



Ambassador Gaa (Center) with WW2 Veterans at the Day of Valor celebration in San Francisco

Ambassador Gaa also said: “We have conveyed to the US House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs during its public hearing on the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, our fervent desire to see the passage of HR 760 and its companion bill in the Senate, S. 57. We firmly believe that Filipino veterans fought and served under the US Army in World War II, and hence are US veterans under existing laws who are also entitled to the benefits due a US veteran.”

Among the major highlights of the event was the presentation of the proclamation issued by San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom designating April 9 as the “Day of Valor” in San Francisco and other certificates and letters of special recognition by members of the US Congress and the California State Assembly. The event was extensively covered by the local media, including the various Filipino American newspapers in San Francisco, ABS-CBN and the Bay Area’s mainstream television news channels KTVU 2 and KRON 4. END.