

Biography of ninoy aquino

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Biography of Ninoy Aquino He smiles, but his eyes look wary. Aquino walks out onto the tarmac of the Manila International Airport, while uniformed men prevent his companions from following. Suddenly the sound of a shot rings through the plane. Aquino's traveling companions begin to wail; three more shots sound. The western cameraman filming the event captures the image of two bodies lying on the ground, shot to the head. Soldiers hustle one of the bodies onto a luggage cart. Then, the soldiers come at the cameraman. Ninoy Aquino was dead at the age of 50. Beside him, Rolando Galman also lay dead. Ferdinand Marcos's regime would blame Galman for killing Aquino - but few historians or citizens of the Philippines give any credence to that claim.

Ninoy Aquino's Family History: Benigno Simeon Aquino, Jr., nicknamed "Ninoy," was born into a wealthy landowning family in Conception, Tarlac, the Philippines on November 27, 1932. His grandfather, Servillano Aquino y Aguilar, had been a general in the anti-colonial Philippine Revolution (1896-1898) and Philippine-American War (1898-1902). Grandfather Servillano was exiled to Hong Kong by the Spanish in 1897, along with Emilio Aguinaldo and his revolutionary government. Benigno Aquino Sr., aka "Igno," was a long-time Filipino politician. During the Second World War, he served as Speaker of the National Assembly in the Japanese-controlled government. Following the expulsion of the Japanese, the U. S. jailed Igno in Japan, then extradited him to the Philippines to be tried for treason. He died of a heart attack in December of 1947, before his trial could take place. Ninoy's mother, Aurora Aquino, was his father Igno's third cousin. She married him in 1930 after Igno's first wife died, and the couple had seven children, of whom Ninoy was the second.

Ninoy's Early Life: Ninoy attended several excellent private

schools in the Philippines as he was growing up. However, his teen years were full of turmoil. Ninoy's father was jailed as a collaborator when the boy was only 12, and died three years later just after Ninoy's fifteenth birthday. A somewhat indifferent student, Ninoy decided to go to Korea to report on the Korean War at the age of 17 rather than moving on immediately to university. He reported on the war for the Manila Times, earning the Philippine Legion of Honor at 18 for his work. In 1954, when he was 21, Ninoy Aquino began to study law at the University of the Philippines. There, he belonged to the same branch of the Upsilon Sigma Phi fraternity as his future political opponent, Ferdinand Marcos. Aquino's Early Political Start: The same year that he started law school, Ninoy Aquino married Corazon Sumulong Cojuangco, a fellow law student from a major Chinese/Filipino banking family. The couple had first met at a birthday party when they were both nine years old, and became reacquainted after Corazon returned to the Philippines following her university studies in the United States. Just a year after they married, in 1955, Ninoy was elected mayor of his home town of Concepcion, Tarlac. He was only 22 years old. Ninoy Aquino went on to rack up a string of records for being elected at a young age: he was elected vice-governor of the province at 27, governor at 29, and secretary-general of the Philippines' Liberal Party at 33. Finally, at 34, he became the nation's youngest senator. From his place in the senate, Aquino blasted his former fraternity brother, President Ferdinand Marcos, for setting up a militarized government, and for corruption and extravagance. Ninoy particularly took on First Lady Imelda Marcos, dubbing her the " Philippines' Eva Peron," although as students the two had dated briefly. Ninoy the Opposition Leader:

Charming, and always ready with a good soundbite, Senator Ninoy Aquino settled in to his role as the primary gadfly of the Marcos regime. He consistently blasted the Marcos's financial policies, as well as their spending on personal projects and enormous military outlays. On August 21, 1971, Aquino's Liberal Party staged its political campaign kick-off rally. Ninoy Aquino himself was not in attendance. Shortly after the candidates took the stage, two huge explosions rocked the rally - fragmentation grenades hurled into the crowd by unknown assailants killed eight people and injured about 120 more. Ninoy immediately accused Marcos's Nacionalistas Party of being behind the attack. Marcos countered by blaming "communists" and arresting a number of known Maoists for good measure.

Martial Law and Imprisonment: On September 21, 1972, Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in the Philippines. Among the people swept up and jailed on fabricated charges was Ninoy Aquino. Ninoy faced charges of murder, subversion and weapons possession, and was tried in a military kangaroo court. On April 4, 1975, Ninoy Aquino went on a hunger strike to protest the military tribunal system. Even as his physical condition deteriorated, his trial continued. The slight Aquino refused all nourishment but salt tablets and water for 40 days, and dropped in weight from 54 kilos (120 pounds) to 36 kilos (80 pounds). Ninoy's concerned friends and family convinced him to begin eating again after 40 days. His trial dragged on for years longer, however, until November 25, 1977. On that day, the military commission found him guilty on all counts. Ninoy Aquino was to be executed by a firing squad.

People's Power: From prison, Ninoy played a major organizational role in the 1978 parliamentary elections. He founded a new political party, called the "

People's Power" or Lakas ng Bayan party, LABAN for short. Although the LABAN party enjoyed huge public support, every one of its candidates lost in the thoroughly rigged election. Nonetheless, the election proved that Ninoy Aquino could act as a powerful political catalyst even from a cell in solitary confinement. Feisty and unbowed, despite the death sentence hanging over his head, he was a serious threat to the Marcos regime. Ninoy's Heart Problems and Exile: Sometime in March of 1980, in an echo of his own father's experience, Ninoy Aquino suffered a heart attack in his prison cell. A second heart attack at the Philippine Heart Center showed that he had a blocked artery, but Aquino refused to allow surgeons in the Philippines to operate on him for fear of foul play by Marcos. Imelda Marcos made a surprise visit to Ninoy's hospital room on May 8, 1980, offering him a medical furlough to the United States for surgery. She had two stipulations, however; Ninoy had to promise to return to the Philippines, and he had to swear not to denounce the Marcos regime while in the U. S. That same night, Ninoy Aquino and his family got on a plane bound for Dallas, Texas. The Aquino family decided not to return to the Philippines immediately after Ninoy's recovery from surgery. They moved instead to Newton, Massachusetts, not far from Boston. There, Ninoy accepted fellowships from Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which allowed him leisure to give a series of lectures and write two books. Despite his earlier pledge to Imelda, Ninoy was highly critical of the Marcos regime throughout his stay in the U. S. Return to the Philippines: Early in 1983, Ferdinand Marcos's health began to deteriorate, and with it his iron grip on the Philippines. Aquino worried that in the event of Marcos's sudden death, the

country would descend into chaos and an even more extreme government might emerge. Ninoy Aquino decided to take the risk of returning to the Philippines, fully aware that he might well be re-imprisoned or even killed outright. The Marcos regime tried to prevent his return by revoking his passport, denying him a visa, and warning international airlines that they would not be allowed landing clearance if they tried to bring Aquino into the country. Starting on August 13, 1983, Aquino flew a meandering, week-long flight route from Boston through Los Angeles, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan to his final destination of Manila. Because Marcos had cut off diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the government there was under no obligation to cooperate with his regime's goal of keeping Ninoy Aquino away from Manila. As China Airlines Flight 811 descended in to Manila International Airport on August 21, 1983, Ninoy Aquino warned the foreign journalists traveling with him to have their cameras ready. " In a matter of 3 or 4 minutes it could all be over," he noted with chilling prescience. Minutes after the plane touched down, he was dead. Ninoy Aquino's Legacy: Before the open-casket funeral, Ninoy's mother Aurora Aquino insisted that her son's face be left bare of makeup so that the mourners could clearly see the bullet wound. She wanted everyone to understand " what they did to my son." After a 12-hour-long funeral procession, in which an estimated two million people took part, Ninoy Aquino was buried in the Manila Memorial Park. The leader of the Liberal Party famously eulogized Aquino as " the greatest president we never had." Many commentators compared him with the executed anti-Spanish revolutionary leader, Jose Rizal. Inspired by the outpouring of support she received after Ninoy's death, the formerly

Corazon Aquino became a leader of the anti-Marcos movement. In 1985, Ferdinand Marcos called for snap presidential elections in a ploy to reinforce his power. Cory Aquino ran against him. In the February 7, 1986 elections, Marcos was proclaimed the winner in a clearly falsified result. Mrs. Aquino called for massive demonstrations, and millions of Filipinos rallied to her side. In what became known as the "People Power Revolution," Ferdinand Marcos was forced out of office and into exile that same month. On February 25, 1986, Corazon Aquino became the 11th President of the Philippine Republic, and its first female president. Ninoy Aquino's legacy did not end with his wife's 6-year presidency, which saw democratic principles reintroduced into the politics of the nation. In June 2010, his son Benigno Simeon Aquino III, known as "Noy-noy," became President of the Philippines. Thus, the long political history of the Aquino family, once tarnished by collaboration, now signifies open and democratic processes today.

Ninoy Aquino — The Greatest President We Never Had
NINOY AQUINO: A HERO FOR ALL SEASONS
Privilege Statement of Sen. Nene Pimentel at the Senate
August 13, 2008

The great French dramatist Jean Anouilh (1910-87) incisively categorized human beings into two classes. He said: "There are two races of beings. The masses teeming and happy - common clay, if you like - eating, breeding, working, counting their pennies; people who just live; ordinary people; xxx. And then there are the others - the noble ones, the heroes. The ones you can quite well imagine lying shot, pale and tragic; one minute triumphant with a guard of honor, and the next being marched away between two gendarmes." I am sure that the Frenchman Anouilh had not met the Filipino Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Yet, he could have very well spoken

those lines in reference to him. Indeed, our people watched with awe the incredible feats of Ninoy, the Wunderkind, from the '50s at the start of his teenage life all the way to his mid-life. Then some 30 years later, in horror they witnessed TV footages and still pictures of Ninoy "lying shot, pale and tragic" on his arrival at the tarmac of the Manila International Airport. To be more precise, the tragedy played out on August 21, 1983 at the Manila International Airport. Under house arrest On the afternoon of that day, I was in my study in my house in Cagayan de Oro where at the time I was under house arrest on charges of rebellion against the martial law administration. The phone rang and the voice at the other end said that my friend, Ninoy, had just been shot dead at the tarmac of the Manila International Airport. Although I had previously warned Ninoy about that tragic possibility should he come home from Boston where we met in 1982, now that it happened, the incident left me completely shattered and shocked beyond belief. What a waste of talent, I told myself. I knew that Ninoy did not have to come home at the time or at all while martial law ruled the land. Solitary confinement He was among the first to have been arrested upon the proclamation of martial law by President Ferdinand Marcos in September of 1972. In fact, five years after its proclamation, a kangaroo military court convicted and sentenced him to death by firing squad in 1977. The martial law regime, however, did not or to put it, perhaps, more accurately, could not, execute Ninoy. Executing him would have had the effect of tempting the fates against the martial law ruler. And so in lieu of executing him, his solitary confinement was continued for more than seven years – the duration of his detention under martial law – in an attempt to break his spirit. But Ninoy's spirit would

not simply cave in to the coercive repressions imposed on him by the martial law regime. Hunger strike In fact, before the military kangaroo court sentenced him to death, Ninoy did a hunger strike in 1975 that lasted for 40 days – some people say longer than the immortal Mahatma Gandhi ever did in his hunger strikes against the British Raj. In any case, the hunger strike weakened him to the point of death. Only the pleadings of his wife, Cory, their children, Maria Elena, Aurora Corazon, Victoria Eliza, Benigno Aquino III (who is now our colleague in the Senate) and Kris, and Jaime Cardinal Sin convinced him to end the hunger strike so that he could fight again another day for the people. The hunger strike did not dull his fighting spirit but it probably led to a heart attack that he suffered in March 1980. The ailment called for an operation. But Ninoy told those who had access to him that he would rather die in prison than allow doctors who were under the control or influence of the martial law ruler to do the operation here. Fearing that he might die in prison, the martial law authorities allowed him to go to the US for a heart by-pass operation that was successfully done in May 1980. Enemy of the regime Soon after the operation, Ninoy was once again visible in the anti-martial law forums in the US. He had marked himself as an implacable enemy of the martial law administration. It was, thus, too risky for him to go home then. Extra mile But as the fates would have it, in 1983, three years after his heart surgery, he made public his decision to go home. His family and his friends in the US ranging from the businessman Jose D. Calderon and the anti-Marcos activist Heherson Alvarez advised him not to do so. Even the wife of President Marcos said in the media that it was not advisable for Ninoy to come home because as she had put it bluntly he might be killed upon

arrival. The advice of his family and friends, notwithstanding, Ninoy came home. He said he wanted to walk the extra mile for peace in the land and convince President Marcos that it was time to end martial law and restore the country to its democratic moorings. Freedom shot But upon landing at the Manila International Airport, burly men, strutting with the harsh mien of unbridled authority went up the plane and brusquely hustled him down the steps of the plane's ladder. Then, a shot rang out and seconds later, Ninoy was seen by his co-passengers lying down on the tarmac bruised and mortally wounded. The shot reverberated throughout the country but instead of scaring the people with the awesome display of martial law power, it freed them from their lethargic acceptance of martial rule and roused them to a fever-pitch revulsion of it. At Ninoy's wake, thousands of people from all segments of society - the rich, the poor, men, women, and children - paid him their last respects. And 10 days later, more two million people walked 12 hours from 9 a. m. to 9 p. m. beside his bier to escort him to his final resting place or watched from the sidewalks more in anger than in sadness at what they thought was a senseless sacrifice of the life of a man who was destined for greatness. Return of democracy In 1986 or three years after Ninoy's assassination, the people had enough of martial rule. And it was, now the turn of the executor of martial rule and his family - public and private - to leave the country and go into exile in Hawaii. Their leaving heralded the return of a democratic government to the land. These are matters of fact that in my mind make Ninoy truly a hero, an instrument of God, of the fates if you like, whose death purchased for the nation the rights and liberties that we now enjoy in this country. A hero made or born? But was Ninoy a hero

made or was he hero born? The question may sound academic but it has a bearing on whether or not Ninoy deserves the accolades that he has been receiving from our people since 1986 when martial law was finally uprooted from the land. Skeptics probably entertain the view that setting aside August 21 of every year is an example of an undue honor for the man who would be hero. I beg to disagree. It is not the setting aside of August 21 to commemorate the day of Ninoy's assassination every year that makes him a hero. To belabour the point, it is rather the sum of his selfless deeds that makes him so and gives meaning to August 21 as a celebratory occasion for the people to remind ourselves of the meaning of his life and especially of his epic death. Not in his case But to go back to the larger question of whether or not heroes are made or born, I am not too sure that there is a neat " either or" reply to it. At least, not in the case of Ninoy. From his early years as a young man, Ninoy had already showed signs of fast tracking his life with heavenly support. He talked fast, worked fast and lived fast. And the heavens apparently complicit to his agenda of speed in everything that he did opened the gates of opportunity for him. Fates' hands Thus, all the people who had touched his life – for better or for worse – were cast, to use a motion picture phrase - in the role of supporting actors. Note the following fortuitous events. In the ' 50s, when Ninoy was 17 years old – the age when many teenagers would rather do the boogie on the dance floor than work out on things of national interest – another great Filipino, Chino Roces, saw the potential of Ninoy for greatness. He provided Ninoy with a platform to show to the nation what he could do as a journalist. Chino who ran the Manila Times, arguably the most widely read daily in pre-martial law days, sent him

to Korea to cover the war between North and South sides of the nation in 1950. Incidentally nobody knows for sure who it was that decreed that North Korea's Kim Il Sung should make war on Syngman Rhee's South Korea. But when the war came, it created avenue for Ninoy to show his courage and grace to live literally under fire even as he was still in his teens. Presidents, too At 18, when Ninoy came home, his reportage of the Korean War earned him the Philippine Legion of Honor medal that was bestowed on him by President Elpidio Quirino. Who moved President Quirino to do so? Maybe some people close to the president. But who motivated the latter to act as they did, nobody really knows. Perhaps, it was the Almighty or the Fates, if you will. Then, before he was 20, President Ramon Magsaysay created another arena for him to prove his mettle. This time he was asked him by the President to act as his negotiator with Luis Taruc, the Supremo of the Huks, the rebel band that upset the peace of the land for so many years since the end of the Japanese War in 1944. Was it sheer luck that impelled no less than the President of the country, Ramon Magsaysay, and the Huk rebel leader, Luis Taruc, to rely on Ninoy to broker the government's search for peace with the Huks? Again, nobody can say for sure. But whatever it was that caused President Magsaysay to ask Ninoy to be his emissary to Taruc, the Huk Supremo to talk peace in 1954, the thing is that Ninoy succeeded in that endeavour. Taruc who had taken the boy presidential agent seriously ultimately returned to the fold of the law. Concepcion townsfolk Two years later, in 1956, it was the turn of the people of the town of Concepcion, Tarlac to propel Ninoy, the boy-wonder, into national prominence even as he had actually only run for a local elective office, that of town mayor. The

electorate of Concepcion voted for him as mayor even if he was 19 days short of the age required by the law for that position. He was subsequently disqualified which normally would be a minus factor in the biodata of any politician. But as the fates would have it, in the case of Ninoy, the disqualification became a plus factor because the incident indelibly etched his name in the minds of the voters of the nation as a young man to watch. Governor Three years later, in 1959, Ninoy won election to the vice governorship of Tarlac. Two years later in 1961, through deft political moves that could only be deemed providential, the governor gave way to his assumption of the governorship of the province. His stint as governor afforded him a local theatre on which he manifested his competence for national political leadership. Survivor In 1967, Ninoy ran for senator and won as the only Liberal Party senatorial survivor of the Nacionalista Party rout of the opposition senatorial candidates. The fact that only Ninoy among the eight LP candidates for senator won was momentous enough but the Nacionalistas – dictated by the fates – unintentionally crowned his victory with more sheen. His political opponents in the Nacionalista Party tried to prevent his assumption of the senatorial office on the ground that he was under age. They failed because the fates had other things in mind for Ninoy and the Supreme Court came to his rescue. Precedent-setting The Court said that while it was true he was underage at the time of the election, he was already of age when he was assuming the office of Senator. It was a precedent-setting judgment. And fit for a man who was destined for greater glory. The marvellous mundane achievements of Ninoy in his multifaceted career were but preludes to the greatest performance of his life. And that

was when he met his fate on August 21, 1983 at the hands of assassins alluded to earlier. No reason If one were to look for reasons for Ninoy's coming home, I would say that he had more reasons for not doing so. He was enjoying the comforts, the safety and the freedoms of people who lived in that the bastion of democracy, the United States of America. He could have opted to stay in exile. And he could have justified it with a thousand and one excuses as to why he could not yet come home. He did not offer any alibis. He came home. Heavenly decree I venture the opinion that the reason he succumbed to the siren calls for him to come home was that the heavens had decreed it to be so. He had to come home and meet his fate. " If it is my fate to die by an assassin's bullet, so be it, " he said shortly before a gun in August (1983) felled him. A hero for our times Although the gun of August shot him dead, it also shot him up onto a secure place in the pantheon of our national heroes. In any case, in 1986, three years after his death, our people led by his widow, Corazon Aquino, recovered the liberties we lost under martial law. It behoves us to mention in this connection that the defection from the Marcos government of the then Secretary of National Defence Juan Ponce Enrile - now a colleague of ours in the Senate - and of the then Chief of the Philippine Constabulary Fidel Ramos - triggered the positive response of the people to the call of Jaime Cardinal Sin to support what is now known internationally as People Power, a phenomenon that we can proudly claim as our own. With the toppling of the martial law regime in our country, People Power started a worldwide trend to remove authoritarian regimes bloodlessly. Heroic dimension But to go back to our thesis, the supreme sacrifice of Ninoy presented Philippine society with a heroic dimension that it

sorely needed and at the time when we needed it most. For months before his assassination, foreign wags had started to air scurrilous statements that the Philippines was " a nation of 60 million cowards" who did not have the courage to stand up to one-man rule. That observation, it must be said, was not true at all. There were people who fought the martial law regime in various ways - some peaceful, others violent. But it was the assassination of Ninoy that gave a nationally recognizable face to the heroic dimension of our society. Worth dying for Despite its inherently evil connotations, Ninoy's assassination - as the Fates had decreed it - was, thus, a good thing for the Philippine society as a whole. For as the philosopher Jean Baudrillard asked, " What is a society without a heroic dimension? " Ninoy Aquino offered his life to answer the question and in the process proved the sceptics wrong. He also showed that he was right along with those of us who believed in our people: that indeed, the Filipino was worth dying for.