

Quezon Opening Ceremony Speech

Welcome to President Quezon History Day. Historic Saranac Lake was founded 44 years ago to preserve and present area history and architecture to build a stronger community.

I want to thank generous sponsors of this event:

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Today we have come together to commemorate the first democratically elected president of the Philippines, Manuel L. Quezon. President Quezon was one of tens of thousands of people who came to Saranac Lake from around the world seeking treatment for tuberculosis. 80 years ago, President Quezon lost his battle against TB here in Saranac Lake. This is history we have known about at the museum, but we have never fully explored or recognized.

Five years ago a small group of people appeared on the steps of our museum to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of President Quezon's death. Some of those people are here with us today. If you were part of that small group five years ago. I would like to ask you to please stand so that we can give you a round of applause.

From that little group, look how we have grown! You have come here today because

- You care about the history and culture of the Philippines
- You support the Filipino community of North America.
- You believe in Saranac Lake's welcoming spirit.

I think you all deserve to be recognized for being a part of the 80th Anniversary celebration. I would like to ask you all to please stand and give yourselves a round of applause.

Today is a dramatic example of how history brings people together. The little celebration on the steps of the museum five years ago got our attention. This spring, we visited the camp where President Quezon died. We met with scholar Luis Francia and with President Quezon's grandson Manuel Quezon the third to

learn more about the history. We have visited Filipino celebrations in NY City, Albany, Vermont, and the North Country. We have developed a wonderful special exhibit at the museum about this history. My thanks to my colleague Alex Krach for all your hard work on the exhibit. It's turned out beautifully, and I hope you will come see it today!

Through this project, we have gradually come to understand a bit about the complex history and vibrant cultural diversity of the Philippines and the 5.5 million Filipino people who live in the United States and Canada. We now count as friends some of the Filipino Americans who proudly call the Adirondacks home. When we pay attention to history, a door swings open. We peek through and marvel at the wide world that lies beyond the here and now. We begin to grasp that we are all members of an amazing, global community.

This event would not have come together without the incredible effort of one special person. I have to admit that early on, I wondered if we would be able to pull this event off. But then I met Sol Kapunan. A deeply respected leader of the Filipino Community in Albany, Sol and his wonderful wife, Mary Ann have worked tirelessly to bring the community together to make this day a success. Sol, I am so grateful for your energy, your enthusiasm, your commitment, and your friendship. It is my pleasure to introduce Sol Kapunan, founder of the Kalayaan 1521 Council.