

BIOGRAPHY OF PRESIDENT RAMON MAGSAYSAY OF THE PHILIPPINE REPUBLIC

RAMON MAGSAYSAY was born on August 31, 1907, in Iba, Zambales. He is the son of Exequiel Magsaysay, a carpenter and successively blacksmith and schoolteacher, and Perfecta del Fierro. He received his elementary school education under trying circumstances in the town of Castillejos after which he attended high school at the Zambales Academy in San Narciso. In 1927, he went to Manila to take up engineering at the University of the Philippines. He did odd jobs, mostly as a driver, to pay for his board and lodging, but soon the strain told on his health and he became ill for six months. Upon recovering, he decided to give way to his inclination for business and he transferred to the Jose Rizal College. In 1932, he graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Commerce.

Starting as a mechanic in a crumbling bus company (Try Tran), Magsaysay rapidly rose to become manager of the firm and when the war broke out in 1941, he had transformed the company into one of the biggest successful transportation firms.

He was married at this time to a girl from Bataan by the name of Luz Banzon. They now have three children: Teresita, 19; Milagros, 17; and Ramon, Jr., 15.

During the war, he began service as a volunteer with the 31st Infantry Division Motor Pool under Brigadier General Blummel. Shortly before the fall of Bataan in April 1942, he joined Lt. Col. Claude A. Thorpe and a handful of other American officers at Mt. Pinatubo; together they organized the Western Luzon Guerrilla Forces. Magsaysay was appointed overall commander of the Zambales Military District. This put him in command of ten thousand rough, rugged men fighting for survival. The Japs soon put a prize on his head.

In early 1945, Magsaysay and his men led the American forces in the liberation of Zambales; they were subsequently recognized by the U. S. Army as the "Magsaysay's Guerrillas."

On February 4, 1945, Magsaysay was appointed Military Governor of Zambales by General Charles P. Hall of the 11th Corps which had liberated Zambales. He was promoted to the rank of Major on September 23, 1945 by order of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, and honorably

discharged from the Philippine Army on February 8, 1946.

Magsaysay's life in the government service began on April 23, 1946, when he was elected Representative of Zambales by the biggest majority in the political history of that province. In November, 1949, he was re-elected in another overwhelming victory. During both terms, he was chairman of the important National Defense Committee. During his second term, he was also a ranking member of the equally important Committee on Appropriations.

In 1948, Magsaysay made his first trip to the U. S. as head of a veterans' mission and succeeded in securing the approval of the Roger's Bill providing for additional benefits to Filipino veterans. In April 1950, he was again sent to Washington to obtain military assistance for the Philippines. This mission he likewise accomplished with singular success.

Magsaysay assumed the Defense Secretaryship on September 1, 1950, when the Huks were at the height of their power and the fall of the country into Communist hands seemed imminent. He weeded out the army deadwood, whipped the then undisciplined armed forces into line, and sent them out to the mountains after the Huks in a series of relentless drives, employing unorthodox methods that were applauded and subsequently copied in other parts of the globe. At the same time, he won resentful, land-hungry Huks back to peaceful society, by providing them with land and new opportunities through his daring, world-famed EDCOR program.

Magsaysay soon had die-hard Huks on the run, and by the middle of 1952, he had smashed the Communist-led movement, giving Asia its first locally achieved victory over international Communism. His brilliant record of action, honesty and integrity in the Department of National Defense fired the imagination not only of his people but of the rest of the free world as well.

He resigned as Defense Secretary on February 28, 1953, when he disagreed with the policies of the then incumbent President Elpidio Quirino. At the Nacionalista Party national convention on April 12, 1953, he was nominated Presidential candidate by an overwhelming vote. On November 10 last, in a landslide victory unprecedented in Philippine politics, he was elected head of the state - the youngest ever to be bestowed, by popular mandate, the highest magistracy of the nation.

The new President has been variously honored abroad for his accomplishments. When he visited the United States in 1952, San Francisco accorded him the biggest reception ever given to a Filipino. Washington awarded him the U. S. Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit, Degree of Commander, and New York's Fordham University conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa). In the same year, in Mexico, he was the keynote speaker at the Lions International Convention.

His own people have been no less lavish in their recognition of his unparalleled dedication to his country. He has been awarded the Military Merit Medal (PA); Legion of Honor, Officer Class (AFP); Presidential Medal for Exemplary Public Service (having been the youngest to be so honored); degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) from the Quezon Colleges; and many other medals of honor and certificates of merit from leading universities and civic organizations. Earlier in Congress, his public service was distinguished by citations from the Congressional Press Club naming him one of the ten most useful congressmen for the years 1946 and 1949, and one of the 20 outstanding congressmen for the four-year term 1946-1950. He was Philippines Free Press "Man of the Year" for 1950 and 1951, successively, and "Veteran of the Year" for 1952.

As the new President of the Philippine Republic, he will hold office for four years.

February, 1954.