

**REMARKS OF H.E. ALBERT DEL ROSARIO,
PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES,
AT THE 36th ANNUAL INDUCTION OF OFFICERS OF
THE FIL-AM SOCIETY OF
KENTUCKY AND SOUTHERN INDIANA
24 April 2004, Louisville, Kentucky**

Ms. Angie C. Eugenio, President of the Fil-Am Society of Kentucky and Southern Indiana;

Other Officers and members of this august organization;
Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my honor and privilege to join you tonight on the occasion of your organization's 36th Annual Induction of Officers. It is indeed a great pleasure to continue the Embassy's tradition of interacting with your organization as manifested by my predecessors in previous years.

I also heard that it is also an exciting opportunity to be in Louisville at this time of year because of the Kentucky Derby. Though I am not necessarily a fan of thoroughbreds, the Derby Festival, I understand, is Louisville's largest single annual event so it definitely would add a special memory to my visit here.

As I travel in the United States to meet and interact with the Filipino community, I am continually impressed by the quality of our compatriots who reside in the different corners of this vast country. I never fail to meet Filipino doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers and other professionals, and your organization is no exception. I think it is important to highlight that it is really the Filipino-Americans, now estimated to number more than two-and-a-half million, that form a dynamic human component of the Philippine-American partnership.

The Philippines and the United States have a long-standing history of friendship, and just like how any other relationships go, it has its ups and downs. Because of our shared values that uphold democracy and international peace and security, we fought many wars together – from World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Cold War, to the current war on terror. After a short period of stagnation in our relationship due to the closure of the American bases in Clark and Subic, we are now back on track and our cooperation is now more active than ever. In a span of only six months last year, we have seen an exchange of state visits by President George Bush and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, a strong and clear indication of how the current cooperation between our two countries is regarded and pursued.

The Filipino-American community is a big pool of human resource that we can all tap to further the growth of this relationship. As the leading and united Filipino voice in the Kentucky and Southern Indiana areas for close to four (4) decades now, we need the prestige of your association as the Government continues to campaign for policies that would benefit the Philippines.

Our first experiment on this has already been successful in the case of the tuna lobby a little over one a half years ago. Apart from its own lobbying efforts at the Capitol Hill and several federal agencies, the Embassy was amazed at the generous response it has gotten from a number of Filipino American community groups who wrote and met with their legislators to appeal for fair market environment for Philippine canned tuna.

Just this week, the Philippine government case for the country's restoration to the CalPER's list of permissible emerging markets won with a strong support of Filipinos in California who turned out in full force in the public hearings conducted by the largest pension fund system in the United States.

Indeed, you occupy a unique position to enhance the dialogue on Philippine issues. It is said that the international community in Louisville now account for fifty percent of its total population growth over the last ten

years. I gather that there are more than fifty (50) languages now being spoken in this city. Your strong participation and involvement, therefore, in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of your adopted country not only would promote visibility for the Fil-Am community but also would create immeasurable goodwill between the Philippines and the United States. As I used to say, there are really 2.5 million Filipino Ambassadors in the United States and not just one.

And so, I hope you would join the Embassy in a unique collaboration. Together let us continue to build a strong sense of community and live up to the full potential of the Philippine-American partnership.

Thank you and once again, congratulations on your 36th annual induction!