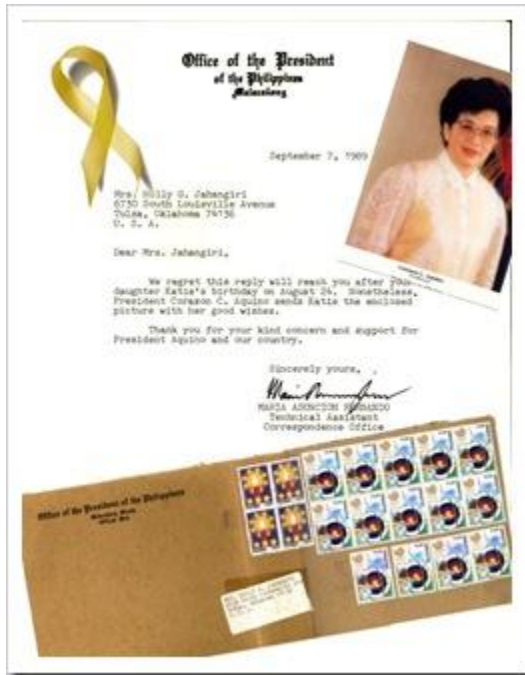


# Memories, Prayers, and a Yellow Ribbon for Corazon Aquino

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by Holly Jahangiri



Corazon Aquino, viewed by many as a hero and a beacon of hope in the Philippines, died on Saturday, August 1. Millions worldwide prayed for former Philippine president Corazon Aquino, hospitalized since July due to stage-four colon cancer, which she had been battling since March 2008. Mrs. Aquino’s supporters and friends, led by her former appointments secretary, Margie Juico, urged the public to display yellow ribbons to show their support for the ailing leader.

The color yellow became a symbol of resistance to longtime dictator Ferdinand Marcos after the assassination of Mrs. Aquino’s husband, opposition leader Senator Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino at the then Manila International Airport (MIA) on August 21, 1983. In 1986, the People Power revolt toppled Marcos, who fled in exile to Hawaii.

In mid-1989, I wrote to nearly 160 prominent people – celebrities, politicians, outstanding athletes, doctors, astronauts, judges, musicians, and businessmen – and asked them to help me celebrate my daughter Katie’s first

birthday by creating a gift that would mark the occasion and help her to remember it in years to come. Over half of them wrote back, sending autographed photos, hand-written notes, even a t-shirt. Some, I really never expected to hear from at all, and as time went by, I assumed I’d received all the replies I was likely to get, and I put it out of my mind.

I will never forget the day the postman rang my bell and hand-delivered a huge brown official-looking envelope from the “Office of the President of the Philippines” in Manila, its whole upper right corner covered in postage stamps. Katie’s birthday had passed nearly a month earlier; for a second or two, my brain refused to function and make the connection. Why was the president of the Philippines writing to me? And why such a large and official envelope? I could tell the postman was wondering the same thing. “Wow. Th-thanks,” I stammered, taking the thing from him and shutting the door.

President Corazon Aquino (her correspondence office, of course) had taken the time to do as I’d asked, and had even apologized for sending it late, as if one-year-old Katie would ever know the difference. I was thrilled; the photo, the letter, and the top of the envelope hold a special place in a very special album of first birthday greetings. So a yellow ribbon for Mrs. Aquino? You bet – it’s the least I could do, when I heard the request. She and her family are in my prayers.