



EIGHTH DELEGATES FROM ARIZONA WESTERN USA RECEIVE AWARDS AND HONORS OF DISTINCTION

When 16 delegates from the Arizona Knights of Rizal (AZKOR) and KOREV (Knights of Rizal East Valley Chapter) and their respective Auxiliary Ladies for Rizal attended the recently concluded 6th USA Regional Assembly held on Sept. 3-5, 2016 at the Renaissance Hotel in Elizabeth, New Jersey they expected to receive something to remember by. The Supreme Council of the Knights of Rizal, headed by the Supreme Commander, Sir Reynato S. Puno, KGCR, and former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, had approved the awarding of the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) to the following: Sir Ruben Reventar, KCR, Area Commander for Arizona - Western USA; Sir Frandioben "Jun" Saez, Chapter Commander of AZKOR; Sir James Campbell, KOR Deputy Chapter Commander of AZKOR; Lady Fe Rodriguez, Auxiliary Ladies for Rizal of AZKOR; and Sir Mario Binarao, KCR Chapter Commander of KOREV.

Sir Manny Torres, Deputy Area Commander for Arizona Western USA, also a delegate to the 6th USA Regional Assembly received his Distinguished Service Medal ahead of the above-mentioned Knights of Rizal at the 5th USA Regional Assembly held in Cleveland, Ohio on Sept. 5, 2014.

Sir Romeo "Joey" Balasta, former Deputy Commander of AZKOR and now the Archivist and Sir Ernesto "Boots" Echiverri, former Deputy Chapter Commander of KOREV and now the Exchequer - were both exalted to the third degree with the rank of Knight Commander of Rizal (KCR) by Sir Jeremias "Jerry" Singson, KGCR, former Supreme Commander 2014-2016 and Sir Reghis Romero II, KGCR, former Supreme Commander 2012-2014. Sir Boots Echiverri also became a lifetime member of the Order.

The Ladies for Rizal who accompanied their respective husbands were Lady Florita Campbell, Lady Fe M. Rodriguez, Lady Anjela Saez, Lady Carol Torres, Lady Matic Balasta, Lady Chato Echiverri, Lady Tess Binarao and Lady Marlene Reventar.

There were about 325 delegates that came from all over the United States and Canada, headed by Sir Judge Victor Sison, KGOR Chapter Commander of New Jersey and Sir Michael Dadap, KCR, New York Chapter Commander. The Overall Chairman of the 6th USA Regional Assembly was the USA Regional Commander Sir Francis D. Sison, KGOR, who was re-appointed by the Supreme Council for another two-year term 2016-2018.

It is the pride of the Knights of Rizal of Arizona consisting of three chapters, AZKOR (Arizona Knights of Rizal), KOREV (Knights of Rizal of East Valley) and GKOR (Goodyear Knights of Rizal) that one of their leaders, Sir Judge Tom D. Rodriguez, KGOR has been conferred with the highest degree with the rank of Knight Grand Cross of Rizal (KGCR). A KGCR is one who had been conferred the highest degree of the Order. Any Knight of Rizal or any person who has performed an outstanding achievement for the Philippines or for the Order, may be conferred the degree of KGCR by the Supreme Council at a Regular or Special General Assembly called for the purpose.



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Among the few who were elected Supreme Commander of the Order and had been conferred with the highest degree of KGCR are Sir Juan F. Nakpil, the country's first National Artist for Architecture; Sir Teodoro Evangelista, the president of Far Eastern University from 1952 – 1971; Sir Vitaliano Bernardino, the Undersecretary of Education in 1966; Sir Jose Ma. Paredes a Supreme Court Associate Justice; Sir Claudio Teehankee, Justice Secretary and in 1968 was 16th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; Sir Jose S. Laurel III, who served the Philippine government in various capacities; Sir Justo P. Torres, Jr. Associate Justice of the Supreme Court in 1996; Sir Conrado M Vasquez, Sr., Associate Justice of the Supreme Court in 1982; Sir Filemon H. Mendoza, Justice of the Court of Appeals in 1992; Sir Lamberto C. Nanquil, practicing lawyer; twice elected president of Cubao Merchants Association and was assistance instructor in law and social sciences at the Polytechnic Univ. of the Philippines from 1977 to 1975; Sir Rogelio M. Quiambao, Assemblyman for Quezon City from 1978 to 1984 and elected Supreme Commander for five consecutive years; Sir Jesus B. David, an accountant and was elected to the Supreme Council in 1997 and held different positions until finally Supreme Commander in 2003; Sir Carmelo T. Gempesaw a lawyer and businessman who served as City Secretary of Davao City from 1989 to 1995, then City Civil Registrar in 1996-1998; Sir Elias B. Lopez, of Davao City - chosen as the Most Outstanding City Mayor of the Philippines for 3 consecutive years (1968, 1969, 1970) and later on became a Congressman and Asst. Minority Floor Leader of the House of Representatives; Sir Jose D. Lina, at age 35, was the youngest Senator and reelected in 1992 and Governor of Laguna in 1995 and re-elected in 1998; Hilario G. Davide, Jr. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and Philippine Ambassador to the United Nations in 1997; Sir Virgilio Esguerra, longest serving Provincial Administrator of Rizal province under four governors; Sir Pablo S. Trillana III, delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention, Undersecretary of Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources (1995-1996) and Chairman of the National Historical Institute (1999-2002); Sir Reghis M. Romero II, founded R-II Builders, Inc. and steered it to become one of the top corporations in the Philippines; his company transformed the Smokey Mountain in Tondo into a Harbour Center with an industrial park, residence and shopping complex; Sir Jerry C. Singson, former Provincial Board Member and now Vice-Governor of the province of Ilocus Sur; and Sir Reynato S. Puno, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines; and King Juan Carlos of Spain.

When former President Benigno Aquino III delivered his speech at the 19th International Assembly of the Knights of Rizal held at the Manila Hotel on February 17, 2011, he said: "You are Knights; complete with ranks and insignia, which are recognized by the Honors Code of the Philippines as official awards of the Republic xxx." The Honors Code was established by Executive Order #236, s. 2003 by the then President Gloria Macapagal- Arroyo on September 19, 2003. The Order of the Knights of Rizal was created by an Act of Philippine Congress, Republic 646 on June 14, 1951.



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The ranks and insignia are recognized in the Honors Code of the Philippines as official awards of the Republic and is the Seventh Class Rank in the order of precedence of civilian decorations of the Orders and Medals of the Republic.

The Order has members and international chapters around the world, including Belgium, Canada, Bahrain, Czech Republic, France, Australia, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, Netherland, United Kingdom and the United States.

The Supreme Council and the Council of Elders of the Knights of Rizal had approved the nomination of Sir Tom D. Rodriguez for the conferment of KGCR for the reason that he has proven his active role as the Regional Commander for USA when during the two years of his administration from 9/2/12 to 8/30/14, the USA Regional Council was able to organize new eleven chapters resulting to the Supreme Council's determination to create four new area commands in the United States. The four area commands organized under his leadership and inspired by the then Supreme Commander Reghis Romero II, KGCR, were California Western USA, Nevada Western USA, Arizona Western USA, and Ohio Eastern USA.

The eleven chapters are California Knights of Rizal, Historic Filipino Town Knights of Rizal in L.A. California, Knights of Rizal Artists in Las Vegas, Henderson Knights of Rizal Chapter in Nevada, Goodyear Knights of Rizal in Arizona, Knights of Rizal East Valley in Arizona, Knights of Rizal Columbus, Ohio Chapter, Elyria Knights of Rizal Chapter in Ohio and Youngstown Knights of Rizal Chapter in Ohio, St. Louis, Missouri Knights of Rizal Chapter, Union County Knights of Rizal in New Jersey. There are now about 50 chapters in the United States.

Tom D. Rodriguez was born in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. He attended high school at the Central Luzon Agricultural College (now Central Luzon State Univ. – the first science city in Munoz, Nueva Ecija, Philippines). He was the recipient of CLSU Alumni Scholarship. He won first prize in oratorical contest, "I Speak for Democracy," held at CLSU.

He took up pre-law at the University of the Philippines and received his Bachelor of Law degree from U.P. in 1963. He earned his Master of Arts degree in Government and Education from Columbia University, New York City in 1972.

He was an associate attorney in the Bermudez Law Office in Quezon City, then became the Associate Editor of two lawyers publication, The Philippine Law Decisions and the Philippine Tax Journal. For three years he was the managing clerk of the litigation department of the Wall St. law firm of Curtis, Mallet-Prevost, Colt & Mosle, New York City, an international law firm with branch offices in London, Paris, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Mexico City, Washington, D.C., and Miami Florida, and Beijing where he rose to become an associate attorney that handled corporate, litigation and real estate transactions.



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The Association of Philippine Lawyers, USA gave him an award for exemplary achievement in being the first Filipino to be associated with a rated top 100 law firms in America. He is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States and before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit.

Rodriguez holds the distinction of being one of the first Filipinos to be named in the eastern seaboard as an administrative law judge, and effective Sept. 14, 2000, the first Asian supervising administrative law judge in the State of New York.

Tom passed the New York State Bar Exam, the Philippine Bar Exam, the New York Civil Service Exam for N.Y. State Adm. Law Judges, N.Y. Civil Service Exam for Worker's Compensation Judges, N.Y. Civil Services Promotion Exam for Mid-Level Managers & Administrators, and the State of Arizona and National Exam for Real Estate Agents (Realtors), and Graduate Realtor Institute. Having retired as New York State supervising administrative law judge, he is on his third career as a Realtor in the State of Arizona, helping people to buy their dream house.

Rodriguez has authored a book, Practical Guide: Procedures in Establishing a New Business in New York, to help Filipino immigrants and Americans as well to enter into business. In addition, he has been a freelance writer for several Filipino publications such as the Filipino Reporter, the Filipino Express, and the Philippine News.

The honors bestowed on Rodriguez include: the Distinguished Service Star of Rizal Award, the Distinguished Service Gold Cross of Rizal Award, Achievement Award in Community/Public Service by the Central Luzon State University Alumni Association, Award given by the New York Chapter for being able to organize the first "Youth for Rizal" in the Eastern seaboard, Outstanding Community Leader Award given by the Philippine-New York Chamber of Commerce (JAYCEES), Inc., Distinguished Service Medal Award as Overall Vice-Chairman of the 10th Knights of Rizal International Assembly held in New York City, Included in the 1994 Filipino Who's Who in the East Coast published by Network Philippines, Inc., Award for Outstanding Performance and Quality Services provided on behalf of the New York City Human Resources Administration, United States Congress Certificate of Appreciation, in grateful recognition to the commitment to Pres. George H.W. Bush and the armed services during the Persian Gulf crisis, Award in the field of law given by the United Filipino Organization, letter of commendation from the New York City Mayor's Office for writing a book, "Practical Guide in Opening a New Business in New York."

He was the Regional Commander for USA of the Knights of Rizal for the year 2012-2014. Previously, he was the Area Commander for Eastern USA-1, and a Special Assistant to the Supreme Commander in the year 2000, Area Commander for Western USA from 2008 to 2010, Deputy Regional Commander for 2010-2012.



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He organized a new chapter (AZKOR), Arizona Knights of Rizal, which was chartered on June 7, 2008 with 21 new members. He also initiated and assisted Sir Farid Baena in reorganizing a defunct chapter in Nevada, the Las Vegas Chapter, which hosted the 3rd USA Regional Assembly on Sept. 3-5, 2010. He is the prime mover and co-founder with Sir Bart Ganon of the Goodyear Arizona Knights of Rizal chapter. He is the initiator/prime mover with Sir Ruben Reventar of the chartering of the East Valley Arizona Knights of Rizal.



Sir Reghis Romero II, past Supreme Commander, is congratulating Sir Tom D. Rodriguez upon his conferment of the highest degree with the rank of Grand Cross of Rizal (KGCR) and looking are his wife, Lady Fe Rodriguez and Ambassador Mario De Leon, Jr., KGCR, outgoing Consul General of New York.



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Back row left to right: Sir James Campbell, KOR, Deputy Chapter Commander of AZKOR; Sir Tom D. Rodriguez, KGCR, Past USA Regional Commander; Sir Jun Saez, KCR Chapter Commander of AZKOR; Sir Manny Torres, KCR Deputy Area Commander for Arizona Western USA; Sir Joey Balasta, KCR Archivist of AZKOR; Sir Ernesto Echiverri, KCR Exchequer of KOREV; Sir Mario Binarao, KCR Chapter Commander of KOREV, and Sir Ruben Reventar, KCR Area Commander of Arizona Western USA.

Front row left to right: Lady Florita Campbell, Lady Fe M. Rodriguez, Lady Anjela Saez, Lady Carol Torres; Lady Matic Balasta; Lady Chato Echiverri, Lady Tess Binarao, and Lady Marlene Reventar.