

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE LUNCH IN CELEBRATION
OF CHIEF PRESIDENTIAL LEGAL COUNSEL JUAN VALENTIN F. PONCE ENRILE'S
100TH BIRTHDAY**

[Delivered at Malacañang, Manila | 14 February 2024]

...Very distinguished guests who are here this afternoon to help us celebrate this great event, ladies and gentlemen, we have two former presidents here, President GMA and President Erap. *[Applause]*

Which just--- I suppose manifest the scope of the life of our celebrant here today. To all of you, I know that it is a happy day for all of us as we have all had the privilege of working with--- everybody calls him Manong Johnny, I call him Tito Johnny, he's my--- or Tata in Ilocano.

So, we had the privilege to work with him. So, we're all very happy to be here today to celebrate--- and I must say it is a distinct and singular pleasure to be able to host Tito Johnny here on his centennial birthday.

It really is a more remarkable not just--- you know, people who have survived a hundred years, we already applaud them just for surviving a hundred years.

Di' ba sila nakatagal ng 100 years. But to have had a life of 100--- to have a life that has reached 100 years that is full of achievement, that is full of purpose, that is full of service, that is full of duty makes this celebration a much more remarkable one than it would normally be.

And because our celebrant here is a remarkable person. He has attained the status of an icon, in the pantheon of Philippine history.

Although it was not true that he was a member of the Malolos Republic. *[Laughter]* Some of the memes have been trying to spread.

He will be able to explain to you hour-by-hour what happened in the Malolos republic because of his continuing study and his continuing dedication to increase his knowledge and understanding of Philippine history, of Philippine politics, of the world in general.

And I have been the beneficiary of that. There was a time when I was still protesting the vice-presidential election and I would often go to see Tito Johnny and I would say "what do you think I should do?", "what advice can you bring me?" and he would provide me of--- of course the best advice that I could get.

But before I would leave he always left me a reading list, it was like I was back in Oxford that they were giving me a reading list, mga limang libro. "Basahin mo ito and if you read all of these books, you will be ready to be president", I said, "well, we're not thinking of that", "basta basahin mo". And hindi mo pwedeng sabihing--- hindi mo pwedeng sabihin na "yes, tito, binasa ko na. Okay na" Ah hindi, may examination, may quiz. *[Laughter]*

Kung talagang binasa mo, "what was it? What part of it did you think was the most important?" And he has kept, and he has--- that just exemplifies really his commitment to gaining wisdom.

Another favorite story of mine of Tito Johnny was we were--- I was in the Senate, he was the SP and I caught him one day with a book of poetry, and I ask him, I said "Tito, I didn't know that you were interested with poetry" and he said "ah, I know nothing about poetry" and I said, "why are you walking around with a book of poetry?" "Because I want to use parts of my brain that I do not normally use" and that is why Tito Johnny continues to be a fond of sage advice, a fond of knowledge, a source of an understood experience over a lifetime of all that he has done.

And so, it is a--- he is a remarkable person and I'm just so happy to have known him. First through my father and now as we have found work together--- I must admit to have him in my corner, gives me--- allows me to sleep better at night than if he were not there.

But you know, after all these long speeches, I know what all of you are thinking, "Tito Johnny, what's the secret?";[laughter] "tell us, what we have to?", "I ant to be as smart as you, as clever as you, at 100 years old. And as active as you are at 100 years old, continuing to provide service to your country, continuing to give good advice, continuing to guide the way the Philippines can go".

And I asked him earlier when we were having lunch and I asked him, "Tito, ano ba talagang sikreto?", he says, " I don't know because I don't feel like 100. I still feel the same."

So, I guess that's the secret, that you don't think about it very much.

I have another example of that actually hearing my mother who is approaching her mid-90s. *[Applause]*

Another one who did not get the memo that she is actually supposed to be an elderly person. So, I guess we've [taken] our guidance from that.

And once again, thank you.

[Sorry, na-excited ako]

So, once again, thank you all for coming to join us in this very important celebration and I think it would be most appropriate to offer a toast to our birthday celebrant.

There is a toast in Italian which is cent' anni which stands for 100 years.

So, tito Johnny cent' anni and more. *[Applause and cheers]*

[Happy Birthday po.]

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