

**Remarks by Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr.
Baseball Philippines' "Fil-Am Friendship Day"
Ayala Alabang Country Club in Alabang
July 4, 2010, 8:30 a.m.**

Representatives of the Philippine Sports Commission and the Philippine Olympic Committee,
Representatives of the different baseball organizations in the Philippines,
Representatives of our gracious host for this morning, the Alabang Country Club and the local
officials of Muntinlupa City,

The exceptional baseball players of Baseball Philippines—you are all All-Stars to me,
The fans who have come out here today,

- “You have to have a lot of little boy in you to play baseball,” said the Brooklyn Dodgers Roy Campy Campanella.
- “It ain’t over till it’s over,” said the NY Yankees Lawrence Peter Yogi Berra.
- “Let’s play two,” said the Chicago Cubs Ernie Banks.

The best sayings come out of this game that has defined America for over 100 years because our national pastime has given opportunities to all. We are pleased that it is played in the Philippines and wish to partner with you to expand it.

I am honored to join you this morning for Filipino-American Friendship Day. I’m particularly excited to be here because this is the first game of baseball I will see since arriving in the Philippines as the U.S. Ambassador.

Today is a special day in America and in the Philippines. We celebrate America’s independence today, and the enduring friendship, ties, hopes, and dreams that bind our countries together. A symbol of that historic bond is the endurance of baseball in the Philippines. We like to say in the United States that baseball is America’s national past-time. And indeed, it is. But the story is incomplete without acknowledging that, today, baseball has become an international sport. There are over 100 National Baseball Federations around the world. Baseball is broadcast into homes in every part of the planet. Kids all over—from my hometown of Queens, New York, to my new hometown of Manila—can be seen swinging a bat and rounding the bases, sharing the same joy for the sport regardless of the language in which they express it.

Baseball is my first love. If it were up to me, I would have played centerfield for the Mets. But I couldn't hit the curve ball. Or the slider. Or much of anything. As a boy, my heroes were baseball players. The Mets' Tom Seaver, the Braves Hammering Hank Aaron, and the best I ever saw the Giants' Say Hey Kid, Willie Mays. I remember when my dad took me to see the Mets play the Dodgers in New York and first told me about Jack Roosevelt Robinson, who was a man of unquestioned courage.

Jackie Robinson showed us what was possible, what was inevitable, and changed sensibilities – which changed America. Jackie Robinson said that “a life is not important except for the impact it has on others,” and in many ways he was right, as our duty is to serve as role models for the Filipino and American youth. There is no better way to do that than to teach teamwork and individuality through baseball.

In the United States, nearly 1 in 3 professional players were born outside of the United States, representing many countries. You see, as baseball's popularity continues to grow, you are part of a global community of players. *Mabuhay!*

So, today, on our independence day—on this Filipino-American Friendship Day—let us renew our enthusiasm for this sport. But let us also remember the words of the great Babe Ruth, who once played in Manila: “Yesterday's home runs don't win today's games.” The great moments in our countries' shared histories are important, but we recognize that these bonds of friendship are to be celebrated not just for what we have shared in the past but for the great moments that our nations will continue to share in the future. Let's work to make every day Filipino-American Friendship Day.

I now declare these games open! *Ini-imbilihan ko kayong mag-saya at sana manalo ang nararapat.* I invite you to have fun and may the best team win. Let's play ball!