



A look at presidential cars in Philippine history

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More than just service vehicles, these cars hold several stories about how Philippines' top leaders spent their years in power.

Here are Philippines' presidential cars, remnants of the past that tells two stories, as National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) Chairman Maria Serena Diokno would like to put it.

"One is the obvious one: the story of the car itself—who made it, what was the process of production, things like that, which are of immense interest to car enthusiasts," she said.

But on the other hand, it also paints the story of the regime of the president who owned it.

"They tell you something about the person who rode in it, who occupied it. For me, it's a lens. It's just a lens: through the car, you can tell a story," said Diokno.

NHCP temporarily houses the most complete collection of presidential limousines in a private warehouse in Pampanga before the vehicles are transferred to their new home at the Quezon City Circle, where a brand new Presidential Car Museum will rise.

They currently have the presidential cars used by Presidents Emilio Aguinaldo, Jose P. Laurel, Elpidio Quirino, Ramon Magsaysay, Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino, Fidel V. Ramos, Joseph Estrada, and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The cars of Presidents Manuel L. Quezon and Manuel Roxas will be joining the pack, soon after they are restored.

However, the collection is missing the cars of Presidents Carlos P. Garcia, Sergio Osmeña, and Diosdado Macapagal. The commission will also soon ask President Benigno Aquino III to add his presidential vehicle.

Motoring journalist Iñigo Roces, who helps the NHCP in their research, said that the preservation of these cars, whose general appearance already show the "art of arrival," may be reflective of the nostalgia and fascination with the past.

"If you pull up into one of these, it's like you're really descending into the red carpet, ready to see a premiere. These vehicles really made in the art of arrival," he said.

Touring the warehouse, Roces first introduced General Aguinaldo's car.

Aguinaldo's massive seven passenger Packard limousine (1924 model), which bears the presidential plate, was acquired after his presidency because Aguinaldo used a horse carriage in 1898.

Roces said Aguinaldo's Packard "is one of the cars that started" the limousine of today.

"This is one of the precursors to the limousine format as we know it now. There's a solid divider between the driver and the passengers, which is something that is standard on most American limousines like the Lincoln," said Roces.

But a simple Jeep stands out among the limousines in the garage, and it is no wonder that it belongs to President Magsaysay who is known to be close to the people.

"In a way, this is very symbolic of his administration—straight to the point, no frills. That's exactly what this Jeep is," said Roces.

The Jeep was once owned by General Douglas MacArthur and was given to Magsaysay who was then serving as the Defense Secretary.

When he ascended into the presidency, Magsaysay's official vehicle also stepped up into a Cadillac.

Roces explained that people of that era were into space travel, which was their new frontier, and the designs of spacecrafts trickled into the design of land vehicles.

"A lot of chrome. People wanted their vehicles shiny. They looked like they can take off. That's exactly what you have here. You practically got torpedoes on the bumper," he said.

On the flipside of tales about Magsaysay's image as the simple president are tales of the ostentatious lives of the Marcoses.

President Marcos had a customized Lincoln Towncar or Continental, which Roces said was one of the most powerful and luxurious then.

The stretch limousine belongs in the Lincoln's Signature Series, the top of the line from the luxury car brand, said Roces.

"Above the top of the line, you have the special line called the Signature Series. You can actually tell by the interior, where you have the stitching on the seats—that's the logo of the Signature Series. It's a special line created for the most discerning clients of Lincoln," he said.

Though he is known to be closely linked to the Americans, it was Marcos who introduced European brands like Mercedes-Benz to the Malacañang.

First Lady Imelda Marcos herself had a rare Rolls-Royce Phantom 5, the same kind owned by Queen Elizabeth II, the Shah of Iran, Hong Kong's British governor, and Yugoslavian dictator Josip Broz Tito.

After the Marcoses were removed from power, over the top luxury in Malacanang was taboo, and a utilitarian ethos prevailed in the Palace. Presidential cars became much simpler.

Aquino and Ramos were chauffeured in a no-frills Mercedes-Benz S-Class which carried the presidential plate, while Estrada had a S600 Benz.

Estrada's vehicle was part of the armored S-Guard series, and was an upgrade in size, comfort, and passenger protection technology from Aquino and Ramos'.

His successor, Arroyo, went one step further literally with a stretch limousine S600 Pullman, which is full 45 centimeters longer than the standard model.

President Rodrigo Duterte is yet to reveal his choice of official vehicle, but has said in an interview before his inauguration that he plans to use his [personal pick-up truck](#) as his official presidential vehicle.

This does not come as a surprise to many.

"In a way, the car serves as sort of a projection of what kind of an administration they want to have or what kind of administration they want people to think, and the era they belong to," said Roces.

Duterte wants to use pickup truck as official presidential vehicle

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Presumptive President Rodrigo Duterte, the outgoing two-decade mayor of Davao City, wants to be dubbed "Mayor of the Philippines" once he takes the highest post of the land.

In a press briefing on Sunday, Duterte explained that he wants to bring Malacañang closer to ordinary Filipinos.

He added that the presidential palace will be open to the public under his administration.

Duterte is also bent on banning the use of luxury cars among his Cabinet members.

The "Mayor of the Philippines" plans to use his personal pick-up truck as his official presidential vehicle.

- DZMM TeleRadyo, 16 April 2016

Both descriptions:

Ref.: <http://news.abs-cbn.com/life/07/12/16/a-look-at-presidential-cars-in-philippine-history>

Look also here: www.heritage-transport.aboutphilippines.ph