



(Gazette photos by Jeff Leeth)

Hallsville man saw Philippines' first president take office

By JOHN JOHNSTON
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HALLSVILLE — Hugh Clark Jr. stood watching as the American flag was lowered and the Philippine flag was raised in Manila on July 4, 1946, signifying the Philippines' newly granted independence.

It was history in the making, but the 23-year-old Army bandsman, who had spent about a year and a half in the war-torn country, had other things on his mind. Such as coming home.

Over the years, Clark, now 66, has come to appreciate the significance of the event. "It's not often you get to see the birth of a nation," he said.

The turmoil surrounding last week's election in the Philippines rekindled some memories of the retired DuPont worker, who lives on Ohio 180.

Clark, whose stint in the Army began in August 1944, was a mechanic and parts man for a trucking outfit that hauled supplies. He spent time on the Philippine islands of Leyte and Mindoro. He was on Mindoro when the war ended.

Clark then was assigned to the 88th Infantry Division in Manila on the main island of Luzon. A member of the Adelphi Community Band since 1938, Clark became interested in the 88th Division Band he saw marching on the parade grounds. Before long, he had a uniform and a trombone.

"On the third day of July in 1946 our band was assigned to play at the reception for (Gen. Douglas) MacArthur," Clark said. Clark pointed to snapshots of himself marching through Manila in white helmet and khakis.

The United States granted the Philippines its independence the next day and Manuel Roxas was inaugurated president of the new democracy. Clark has saved a copy of the July 8, 1946, edition of *Pacific Newsweek* with Roxas on the cover.

Clark said some half million people lined the inauguration parade route. The mood was one of jubilation, he said.

Still, the fledgling democracy had serious problems, Clark said. The war had ravaged Manila, he said, pointing out post cards he's saved showing battered buildings. Looting was common, he said.

Five weeks after the Republic of the Philippines was born, Clark left for home.

Clark dug out some of his Philippine mementos this past week after seeing the country in the news. Amid charges of vote fraud, it is still unclear whether President Ferdinand Marcos or challenger Corazon Aquino won the election.

"I feel bad about the violence," said Clark. "I always had a lot of respect for the Filipino."

"I had Filipino friends. Which side of this controversy they're on I have no way of knowing."

"They deserve better."

Hugh Clark Jr. sits with some of the mementos of the Philippines he brought home with him after spending a year and a half on the island country during and just after World War II.

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Fri, Mar 22, 2019