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Author

Gaerlan, Barbara S.

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Boone Schirmer and the Early Days of the Philippines Information Bulletin, Friends of the Filipino People, and the Philippines Program at Goddard-Cambridge

Barbara S. Gaerlan
Assistant Director
UCLA Center for Southeast Asian Studies

My first large-scale activity with Boone Schirmer was the publication of the journal *Philippines Information Bulletin*.

I honestly don't remember how I met Boone. My recollection is that it came about through Rodel Rodis and the NCRCLP. I had worked with Rodel in San Francisco during the first half of 1972, when he was on the staff of the Kalayaan Collective and I was working with the Pacific Counseling Service. Rodel was (and still is) a history buff, and he probably was the one who brought to my attention Boone's wonderful book, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing, 1972) about the Anti-Imperialist League based in Boston and their opposition to the U.S. annexation of the Philippines in 1898 and the ensuing Philippine-American War.

This book was the revised version of Boone's doctoral dissertation at Boston University. He had become interested in the topic because he was active in the movement to oppose the Vietnam War, and he wanted to research the U.S. origins of anti-war movements. Research on the Anti-Imperialist League was not only relevant but especially convenient because all their records were located close at hand in Boston. Boone had no previous connection to the Philippines.

When Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in the Philippines in September 1972, Filipinos in the U.S. like Rodel who were opposed to the dictatorship sought Boone out and began working together with him in the National Committee for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines (NCRCLP), the large, national U.S. organization opposing Marcos' martial law during its first year. (Boone contributed an article to *Silayan*, the NCRCLP's newsmagazine, which only put out one lone issue in July 1973, before the organization fell apart.) Boone was an accomplished orator and writer and his consistent public voice in opposition to the Marcos dictatorship and its U.S. backers was a great contribution to the Anti-Martial Law Movement.

By Fall 1972 I had moved to New York City and was doing a project with a church program, Frontier Internship in Mission, that had sponsored my work in the Philippines from 1969-71. Another Frontier Intern (FI) from the Philippines, Nelson Navarro, was stationed in New York. He and a small collective of anti-Marcos Filipinos, including E. San Juan, Jr., had begun to publish an anti-martial law magazine designed to educate non-Filipinos in the U.S. about the dictatorship. The magazine was called *Philippines Information Bulletin* (PIB). The magazine cavalierly included in the masthead the

statement that PIB was published by “American Friends of the Filipino People,” even though no such group actually existed. Because they were worried about Marcos reprisals, most of the names of authors and other people used in the magazine were also pseudonyms.

I joined the PIB New York collective in time to help put out the second issue of PIB late in 1972. Then, in January 1973, I moved to Boston to take up a job there with the University Christian Movement of New England. The PIB collective decided it would be a good idea if the magazine could emerge from the murky underground of pseudonyms and be handed over to people who actually were American friends of the Filipino people such as Boone and myself. So PIB moved to Boston (technically Cambridge, Mass.). The Boston editorial collective included at its base Stephen R. Shalom, a doctoral student in Political Science at MIT, and Marjorie Bakken, a returned Peace Corps Volunteer from the Philippines who later became President of Wheelock College, in addition to Boone and myself. We all used our actual names in the publication. Eventually, numerous Filipinos based in Boston aided us in publishing PIB, primarily the students who spent a year in Boston in the Masters degree program at Goddard-Cambridge Graduate Program in Social Change.

As mentioned above, in the summer and fall of 1973, the NCRCLP began to splinter. Three national organizations grew out of it. They would all continue to lead the Anti-Martial Law movement in the United States until the fall of the Marcos regime in 1986. Boone and I attended all three founding conventions: the *Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino* (KDP – Union of Democratic Filipinos); the Movement for a Free Philippines (MFP) – led by former Philippine Senator Raul Manglapus; and the Friends of the Filipino People (FFP) led by Boone and myself, among many others. But the organizing and guiding spirit of FFP was always Boone.

The PIB collective in Boston had not wanted to maintain the fiction that we were a publication of another group, “American Friends of the Filipino People,” so we had dropped that claim and just published as PIB independently. But when the NCRCLP fell apart, everyone recognized that there really was a need for a group that would do outreach to non-Filipinos in the U.S., in addition to PIB. The word “American” was dropped and Friends of the Filipino People was born in October 1973 at its founding conference in Philadelphia. It was reasoned that anyone, including Filipinos, could be a friend of the Filipino people, and in fact membership in FFP was probably always half Filipino, although the target audience for the group’s outreach was always non-Filipinos.

Boone was adamant that FFP should not attempt to advocate for a particular type of political alternative to the Marcos dictatorship such as KDP and MFP, which addressed a Filipino constituency, did. Rather Boone insisted that FFP should have two guiding principles: opposition to U.S. governmental support for dictatorship in the Philippines, and opposition to the U.S. military bases in the Philippines which effectively propped up the dictatorship, in addition to making the world less stable because of military expansion. He stressed that Filipinos should decide their own political destiny and that

the U.S. should keep hands off. He encouraged strong solidarity with the Filipino people, and respect for their ability to chart their own political course.

My UCM office, which became the PIB office in the evenings, happened to be located in Harvard Square, in a wonderful old church at 11 Garden Street. (This also was conveniently located near Boone's home.) This church had a progressive congregation, and they rented office space in their basement to a variety of progressive groups, including MERIP, the Middle East Research and Information Project. At some point in 1973, I learned that MERIP was offering an MA program on the Middle East through the fairly new Goddard-Cambridge Graduate Program in Social Change. Goddard-Cambridge had started out as one of the first academic institutions to give MA degrees in feminist and women's studies, and this was their core constituency. But they began to expand and allow progressive allies to offer a variety of programs related to social change, including international studies.

Boone was at that time underemployed, and so our PIB group encouraged him to offer an MA course through Goddard-Cambridge on U.S.-Philippine Relations. The first group of students (all Filipinos and Filipino Americans from U.C. Berkeley!) arrived in Fall 1974. Boone taught three groups of students, primarily KDP members from the West Coast. As part of their program in social change, many of these students helped with the publication of PIB and the outreach activities of FFP in addition to their studies. Boone was a wonderful, dedicated, inspirational teacher.

A special target of Friends of the Filipino People was the U.S. Congress. From the beginning of the NCRCLP, the Anti-Martial Law Movement tried to reach out to the U.S. Congress to convince them to end U.S. military and economic aid to the Marcos dictatorship. FFP set up a Congress Liaison Office in Washington, DC (staffed by a Filipina) and coordinated lobbying in Washington on behalf of the entire Anti-Martial Law Movement for most of the martial law period. As part of a long string of advocates, in 1975 FFP facilitated Boone's testimony to a Congressional committee regarding U.S. aid to Marcos. The National Office of FFP migrated from New York, to Cambridge (11 Garden Street, of course), to Washington, and finally to Durham, NC, as volunteer staffers agreed to take it. Boone served as National Coordinator for a time in the late 1970s.

I left Boston in 1976 but Boone stayed on, a rock of the Anti-Martial Law Movement, and then of the anti-bases movement, through FFP, all the way up to his death in 2006. I really don't think we will see his like again.