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Remembering Boone

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I am honored to pay tribute to Daniel Boone Schirmer. Others already mentioned Boone's important role during the Martial Law period, especially his critique of US policies in support of the Marcos dictatorship and the role of U.S. military bases. I will use this occasion to share some personal stories about Boone for those who did not know him personally.

The most enduring image in my mind of Boone comes from when he and his wife Peggy moved to Washington, DC around 1979 to work in the national office of Friends of the Filipino People (FFP). He was about 65 then, a retired professor. I was a graduate student in North Carolina and would drive up to DC on weekends to volunteer in the office. We would print human rights alerts or newsletters at a time when there was no internet and no word processing. What I remember most is Boone hunched over a table, stuffing envelopes and licking stamps late into the night at the FFP office. His dedication was an inspiration to all of us.

Boone was tall and had a powerful voice, so much so that when he spoke, you could feel his strength and intensity. But physically, Boone was thin and frail; he was often beset by health problems. I remember I invited him for speaking engagements in Michigan in the early 1980s. An elderly couple, Wesley and Jean Gould, hosted him in Detroit. Wesley was a retired law professor and his wife Jean was active in the anti-martial law work. Their son, Frank Gould, a freelance journalist, disappeared in Mindanao in 1974. Frank's body has never been found but it is widely believed he was executed by the military. That night in Michigan, I found Boone and Wesley deep in conversation in the living room. They looked so serious and so intense that I figured they must have been talking about Frank's disappearance or perhaps discussing political strategy. I wanted to join the discussion so I listened in. That's when I realized that they were not talking politics at all – they were busy discussing their prostate problems and how they were coping.

There are some things that few people know about Boone. One is that he was an actor in the classic movie *Paisan* by the Italian filmmaker Rossellini. Around 1981, I dug up a copy of *Paisan* and showed it, much to Boone's surprise, during the FFP national conference in Peekskill, New York. We had a contest to see who would first recognize Boone. One scene showed a very old, tall, thin monk, and many immediately shouted: "There's Boone!" They had forgotten that the movie was made in 1946 when Boone was only 30 years old; he did not always look 65 as he was then. Boone fought in the Italian campaign during World War II and was tapped by Rossellini for the film. In *Paisan*, Boone plays an American officer working with Italian partisans and is identified as "Dan" in the credits. After the showing, Boone told us that during the McCarthy era, the censors deleted one important scene wherein Boone is confronted by another soldier who refuses to fight with the partisans because some of them were communists. Boone answers: "It doesn't matter if they are communists or socialists, we have to work together to defeat the fascists." That scene is missing in US versions of the movie. By the way, at the end of the movie, Boone is captured, executed and his body is dumped into the sea.

Another thing that few people know is that Boone ran for Congress in 1940 in the state of Vermont. His slogan was: Peace, Security, Jobs, and Civil Liberties. He did not win.

When Boone was given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association for Asian American Studies a few years ago, Boone used his acceptance speech to talk about what is happening today—in Iraq, Afghanistan, other parts of the Middle East, in Asia, about military bases, the power of corporate interests, and US foreign policy. That is what Boone would want us to do.

In an article in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* in 2002, Boone is quoted as saying: “The present Bush administration represents the most extensive and heavily armed empire in history. Guarding ... [‘its towering economic capacity’] ... is an unparalleled military establishment of global reach and frightful nuclear potential. Under the cover of ‘The War Against Terrorism,’ Washington carries on its hegemonic policy I support the cooperation of democratically-minded Filipinos with like-minded citizens of the United States to further policies of peace and justice in both countries and throughout the world.”

This is what concerned Boone in his final years; this is what should concern us today.

by Jorge Emmanuel

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