

Ingat, Tito Bill
(Take Care, Uncle Bill)

Dana Osborne
 Assistant Professor in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
 Ryerson University



Figure 2. Bill Longacre is ready to dive into the interview and is discussing final details with Diane Austin. Photo by author.

I came to know Bill Longacre back in 2011 when he still had an office in Haury. His space was packed to the gills with papers, books, posters, art, and pottery and I squeezed inside with my video camera and audio recorder to gather his thoughts and condolences for the young family of his former student, Hecky Villianueva, who had passed away unexpectedly in the Philippines late in 2010. Hecky built bicycles out of bamboo and sent *balikbayan* boxes full of books to students back in the Philippines; he was one of Bill's many protégés. Bill sat behind his desk amidst the piles of academic ephemera and spoke with great compassion and pride for Hecky as a close family member would. Amidst the clutter, Bill's words carried a hidden gravity of interpersonal connection that I had not anticipated. When

I began fieldwork in 2012, I delivered the raw footage to Tammy, Hecky's widow, in Manila; I carried it with me on the 20 hour plane ride as precious cargo alongside my passport.

A few years later in the summer of 2015 after I had returned from the field, I found myself working on the School of Anthropology's Oral History Project. The team (myself, a few interns, and Diane Austin) approached Bill to propose a recording session of his favorite autobiographical memories to add to the School of Anthropology's Oral History collection. It was August and the summer heat had baked the Tucson Basin for many months. The day that we decided to caravan to Bill's house on the west side of Tucson was especially memorable because Mount Lemmon was on fire, eerily smoldering in broad daylight. Smoke had started to billow from multiple sites along the range and the flames were visible like incandescent flecks on a goldfish moving beneath the water. Diane Austin sat in the passenger seat of my dusty Corolla and we called Bill over the speakerphone to tell him that we would be late. He was gracious, but did not miss the opportunity to make fun of Tucson drivers for being insufferable lookie loos and universally terrible drivers. He giggled at the absurdity of it all, his laugh contagious over the airwaves.

We arrived at his house late and he had set up the place in anticipation of our arrival (Figure 2) – the humble bungalow had been cleaned and the swamp cooler ran at full tilt; there were fans everywhere. At this time, it was relatively difficult for Bill to move around (he was using a walker), but he had made the time to set out snacks and drinks for our team, a true host. Bill's well-worn snare drum sat prominently by the front door (Figure 3) and he perched on a Lay-Z-Boy in the living room surrounded by books of every topic and paintings, including a copy of *The Far Side* calendar from 1988-1989 signed by Gary Larson (Figure 4). "To Bill," it read simply, and featured two canoes passing one another in some imagined Amazonian location; a white couple waived naïvely at what appeared to be a threesome of headhunters, their canoe decked out with the skulls of (presumed) former captives. It was clear that Bill found the implications of this scene to be deliciously



Figure 3. Bill's well-worn snare drum sits by the living room door—his analysis: "I think my neighbors must love me! A testament to the drum's timbre." Photo by author.



Figure 4. Bill's signed copy of Gary Larson's The Far Side 1988-89 calendar featuring naïve tourists engaging with potentially unfriendly locals. Bill was delighted to share this scene with our team and one got the distinct impression that part of the hilarity was derived from an autobiographical recognition of the chain of potential events. Photo by author.

hilarious, and I can imagine that he likely spent a good deal of time envisioning the potential before-and-afters of the situation, framing it proudly in his living room.

Bill knew that I worked with Ilocano, an ethnolinguistic minority language in the northern Philippines, and greeted me immediately as I entered the house:

"Naimbag nga malem mo, adingko!"

(Good afternoon to you, little sister!)

I had not prepared for a conversation with Bill Longacre in Ilocano, but we co-constructed some basic greetings together, talked nerdy about language, and reminisced about Ilocano food that we both loved: *pinakbet* (a vegetable dish), *bagoong* (fish sauce), *basi* (sugarcane wine), and of course *lechon* (roasted pig, not regional to Ilocos but delicious). We talked about the Philippine public transportation system, the government, and of course, the pottery – all this before we even turned the cameras on.

As a linguist, I spent a year and a half in Ilocos Sur, working with the question of language contact and change among Ilocano speakers in the northernmost region of Luzon. In Ilocos Sur, local artisans craft *burnay* (large pots) by hand; Bill had spent a good deal of time in the Ilocos region studying *burnay* production, special in part because of the incredible consistency of the pots within and between artisans. Indeed, in conjunction with the skill required to produce them, *burnay* allowed Ilocanos to make some of their most important and locally distinguishing comestibles: *suka* (sugarcane vinegar), *basi* (sugarcane wine), and *bagoong* (fermented fish sauce), idiosyncratic to the Ilocano diet and markers of a distinctive culinary identity among over 170 ethnolinguistic groups. Talking with Bill, I came to understand his work in the Philippines as an ethnoarchaeologist as unique – material objects like *burnay* were dynamic and dialogical, linked over time and space through processes of production.

Bill had known about the interview for a few weeks and had taken the time to prepare, writing all his talking

points on his trusty tablet computer. As Kacy Hollenback once assessed in an interview after Bill's passing, he was "anachronistic – firmly committed to the old school and also fascinated by new technology." His use of the tablet computer to stir memories from half a century before exemplified this apparent incongruity. Bill recounted the day he was hired by Dr. Emil Haury in the early 60s when the Old Boys' Club was unapologetically in full swing, the fateful phone call in which Haury and Ray Thompson declared his hire at the University of Arizona, his first days at Grasshopper in his red Mustang convertible, Lady Bird Johnson and the Secret Service, the doghouse field cabins, and the general shenanigans when you mix booze (aka: "ginger ale"), archaeologists, dirt, and lax supervision after workhours. We talked about the changes that he made to the field school and archaeological practice at theoretical and methodological levels as part of a new way to do archaeology and to understand the past: modifications that changed the way that archaeologists approached sites from moving lots of dirt with quick processing times to painstakingly studying the tiny details and interconnections of a place and the objects within it. And Bill Fash's birthday? I still don't know what this is, but it was apparently epic.

Bill recounted his time in the Philippines and spoke at length about his interactions with locals and his students. One of the most memorable stories came from early on from his time in Kalinga, where he had traveled by foot into a remote part of the Cordillera Mountains to the site of a village that produced special ceramic pottery. The people did not yet trust him, speaking in their dialect of Kalinga about how he might not be who he said he was – at the time, residents had few experiences with foreigners outside of the missionaries who looked down on ceremonial *basi* consumption and circulating stories of unscrupulous *Americano* spies recounted by the local guerrillas. At some point during one of the initial trips, a child tragically passed away after swallowing a safety

pin and locals gathered to mourn the loss and drink *basi* – during the event, a respected member of the community approached and began interrogate Bill to determine his intentions in their community. The elder, after a few drinks, asked a series of increasingly pointed questions, which culminated in the following interaction:

ELDER. They tell me that Americans have gone to the moon, landed, walked around, and came back. How in truth do you know that really happened?

YOUNG BILL. I know it happened because they brought back pieces of the moon and I not only saw them, I actually touched one...

COMMUNITY MEMBERS. [*clicks of approval*]

ELDER. [*considered pause*] Although you look young, you seem quite wise. You are welcome to come back to study our pottery.

With that, young Bill passed the test and was allowed back into the community where he worked side-by-side with many Kalinga residents for years in the development of the Kalinga Ethnoarchaeological Project, which continues in different permutations to this day. Rewatching the video from this interview, Bill's excitement from this encounter is still visible, 40 years after the event.

After Bill passed late in 2015, the people he touched sent hundreds of messages, pictures, vignettes and stories of the big and small ways that he impacted their lives. While I did not know Bill like many of his students, friends, and colleagues I came to understand him and see him through the eyes of others as a filmmaker and ethnographer, and later in a sense as his informal biographer. Even after Bill's passing, he continues to sow the seeds of humor, kindness, compassion, and curiosity in the minds of those directly and indirectly impacted by the vibrant ecosystems that he helped to nurture both here in the US

and in the Philippines. In this way, in the interstitial space between mourning and celebration, we can draw from a shared *burnay* of *basi* to remember the enduring legacy of Bill Longacre.

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