

**TRIBUTE TO ROD MACFARQUHAR**  
Harvard Memorial Church, September 7, 2019

**LINCOLN CHEN**

Marty and I were introduced to Rod and Emily by mutual Indian friends, Raj and Ramesh Thapar, journalists who knew Rod when he produced a program on India for the BBC and Emily when she reported on India for The Economist. Over the decades, we met frequently with Rod and first Emily, then Dalena for dinners, movies, the weddings of each others' children, Christmas gatherings in Jaffrey, and traveled together on nearly a dozen overseas trips. Rod was a great traveling companion, ready to "go with the flow" but also keen for adventure. Rod had the gift of genuine friendship; he was full of fun!

On a trip to Tailour, France with Rod and Emily, we spotted a sign advertising *para-gliding*. Rod immediately said, "let's go!" We all enthusiastically agreed, but when we got to the top of the mountain, three of us "chickened out"! Unstoppable, Rod strapped himself into the harness with the instructor behind him and ran downhill until the two of them were airborne over Lake Annacey. The three of us "chickens" drove to the lakeside in time to witness a smooth landing. Rod was totally relaxed and made light of his bravery - after all, he had served in a British military tank battalion!

Rod loved fine wine and always with pride ordered for the 4 of us. On the same trip, Rod sniffed a newly opened bottle and declared "this wine is corked!" Without hesitation, the waiter brought out a new bottle! When I asked how he could tell that a wine was corked without tasting it, Rod declared "you just know!"

On multiple trips to Asia - along the Silk Route in China; on an overnight boat ride down the Mekong from Thailand to Laos; to Ankor Wat, Myanmar, Hong Kong and India, we benefitted from Rod and Dalena's knowledge of Asia. Dalena worked with the US congress on Southeast Asia and has a forthcoming book on British-Chinese negotiations over the 1997 return of HK to China. As a former British MP, Rod knew most of the HK Governors, including Chris Patton.

Travelling on China's Silk Road from Urumqi to Kashkar, Rod was modest about his knowledge of Chinese. He would quietly read all of the road and store signs in Chinese, not bragging about his command of the Chinese script, perhaps to avoid embarrassing me, an illiterate Chinese-American. At a road-side stall selling trinkets, Rod was amazed and delighted to find a mug with a picture of *Lin Biao*, who had been disgraced and photo-shopped out of Chinese history! He thought that the mug must have been left over from the Cultural Revolution and immediately purchased it as a historic relic! As we continued shopping, we saw dozens and dozens of Lin Biao mugs! Seems that politics could wipe out Lin Biao but he had been resurrected by private enterprise!

While Rod's life's work was on China, his roots and heart were to India, a special bond he shared with Marty, as both grew up in India as third-generation members of a British colonial family and an American missionary family.

## MARTY CHEN

Our first trip to India with Rod was on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's Independence from the British. We hired a driver and a white Ambassador car to take us to the Parliament building in New Delhi, where we joined Indian dignitaries and listened, at the stroke of midnight, to a scratchy recording of Nehru's famous speech "A Tryst with Destiny." Outside after the ceremony, we were surrounded a *sea of white Ambassadors* – 50 or more cars looking exactly like the car we had arrived in! At that time, the white Ambassador was the official government car. Fortunately, our driver spotted us – as we were among the few foreigners at the celebration.

Our most memorable trip to India with Rod and Dalena was in search of Rod's roots in the Princely Kingdom of Orcha and the Holy City of Amritsar. Rod's grandfather, an engineer, designed an irrigation system for the Maharaja of Orcha. His granduncle became a drinking buddy of the Maharaja. Together, they built a house out of empty beer bottles. As a 7 year-old, Rod was taken to see the bottle house. In his late 70s, Rod wanted to see it again. So we set off to find the bottle house – first to Gwalior, the capital of a neighboring state. Because I speak Hindi I was assigned the task of finding the bottle house. A guide at the Gwalior Fort informed me that, yes, he had heard of a bottle house in Tikamgarh, the capital of Orcha state. So we set off the next morning on a three hour drive to Tikamgarh. Once there, we were directed to the Maharaj's orchard beyond the royal palace. When we reached the orchard, the gates were locked. I asked the watchman whether we could visit the bottle house – only to be told that there had been a murder at the palace a couple of days before and that all of the Maharajah's properties had been sealed off by the police. Fortunately, as if on cue, the manager of the Maharajah's orchard appeared. I told him about the relationship of Rod's family with the Maharajah and Rod's wish to visit the bottle house. Fortunately, the manager agreed and unlocked the gates. A few minutes later down a dirt road, lo and behold, there stood the bottle house glistening in the noonday sun. It was built of green beer bottles laid on their side with the bottoms facing out secured by a bit of mortar. Rod, a broad smile on his face, was clearly delighted to be back.

Our next stop in search of Rod's roots was the Holy City of Amritsar, on the border with Pakistan. Rod had lived there as a child when his father was the local commissioner. Rod had been told that the colonial bungalow where they lived, now the official residence of the police commissioner, still bore the name MacFarquhar. So we set off in search of the "MacFarquhar House" and found the name MacFarquhar etched on the gate posts. But in front of the gate was a police turret with two armed guards looking down at us. I looked up the barrel of a machine gun to explain to the guards that Rod had once lived in the bungalow. The guard called the caretaker of the bungalow who called the police commissioner who gave us permission to visit the bungalow. As we walked around the bungalow where he had lived as a child, Rod – clearly moved - pointed to the spot in the garden where his Mother once grew roses.

Dearest Rod - beloved friend, generous, kind, humorous, adventuresome.  
Thank you for your gift of friendship!  
Lincoln and I admire you; we love you – and we miss you dearly!