

**Roderick Lemonde MacFarquhar
1930-2019**

**William C. Kirby
Remarks at Memorial Church
September 7, 2019**

This is an occasion at once pensive and festive, as we remember and celebrate our colleague, our teacher, our friend, Rod MacFarquhar.

Rod had a distinguished career before joining Harvard's faculty: in journalism, in scholarship, and as founding editor of *The China Quarterly*. He was a major figure in our field when he leapt into politics as a Labor MP in 1974. We at Harvard have always been grateful to his British constituents, who threw him out of office in 1979, leaving him at the mercy of his academic kidnapper, John Fairbank, who brought him here. He was soon Director of our Fairbank Center.

Rod centered at the Center an extraordinary cadre of colleagues: Paul Cohen, Merle Goldman, and the intellectual heart of our center, Ben Schwartz. Lunch was a scholarly salon, with cafeteria food. Friday seminars gathered China faculty, across dynasties and disciplines, for colorful debate in the faded old hotel that was Coolidge Hall.

Rod was a field builder, raising professorships to bring others into the fold: Woody Watson, Jean Oi, Iain Johnston, and Liz Perry, among them. His students would take positions across the land.

Rod was a host. He welcomed to the Center scores of itinerant academics from across this country; Europe; Japan and Taiwan; and of course China, for his directorship coincided with the high point of scholarly freedom in post-Mao China. Unlike the man he studied, 他的朋友真滿天下。

After Tiananmen, Rod made the Fairbank Center a home abroad for independent and dissident thinkers from China. And, having years earlier unleashed our remarkable librarian, Nancy Hearst, to gather materials on contemporary China, she and he compiled an archive of Tiananmen: testimony to a turning point in history where history failed to turn.

He was ecumenical in his welcomes. He invited a member of *liangxiao*, a "think tank" for the Gang of Four, named Fan Daren. When his appointment was up, Fan did not want to go back to China. His wife, I recall, was China's Ambassador to that great ally, Albania. And for *some* reason, *Lao Fan* did not want to join her.

Rod generously arranged for him to stay, off site, in Vanserg Hall, where Stuart Schram was working on the writings of Mao. Fan was no Stuart Schram, but he was a man of his times. He embraced the era of "opening up" by opening up in Vanserg what he called the *Fairbank Qigong Institute*. He did very well until we found out and packed him off to Tirana.

As an MP Rod had lived politics. As a scholar he analyzed leaders, followers, factions and cliques, and, above all, power. He studied languages and cultures different from his own.

This was his apprenticeship for becoming chairman of Harvard's Government Department, with its multiple intellectual geographies; its different and differing disciplines—a place, unlike China, without a *putonghua*, a common language, but with many scholarly dialects, mutually incomprehensible.

Yet, in my time as Dean, Rod was *primus inter pares* among department chairs: an honest broker of his faculty's interests; a compelling propagandist; and an irresistible negotiator. He left the Department, as he had left the Fairbank Center, stronger than it had been.

Rod could be an intimidating presence: imperious, in a colonial sort of way. Oblivious—as when his eyes closed shut during seminars—yet always awake. This was largely a façade for the warm man underneath, the mentor of several generations of talent, and above all the loving husband of two wonderful women, Emily and Dalena.

The scholarly community will remember Rod as *the* narrator of the promise, the power, the betrayals, and the cruelty of Chinese politics in the Communist era. He was Professor of History and Political Science at Harvard, but he was above all a historian of politics, one of the great narrative historians of our time. He was not a theorist. He was not didactic. Here I am reminded of the words of Ranke:

"To history has been assigned the office of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. To such high offices my work does not aspire: It wants only to show *what actually happened*."

In a scholarly world overwhelmed with theoretical constructs, Rod was a Rankean committed to show *wie es eigentlich gewesen*."

Here at Harvard, a place seldom overflowing with sentimentality, we remember Rod as one of our own. Born in India, educated in Britain, he came to be at home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He became a *Red Sox* fan (not easy in his first years). He became a *Patriots* fan (that became easier). And he was, above all, a fierce Harvard Loyalist. He loved this old university, and, like his good friend Peter Gomes, the longtime minister of this church, he became one of its modern institutions. We miss him.