

Rebelmind: Past revisited

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I saw ABS-CBN's Probe Team feature last Sept. 20, 2006 on the successful exhumation in Sitio Amaga, Barangay Bonbon, Cebu City of the bodies of suspected deep penetration agents (DPAs) killed in a purge in the middle '80s. It was the second digging after the bodies of Jess and Nida Libre and Ben Valmoria were recovered in Sitio Bocaue, Barangay Pamutan also in Cebu City last Nov. 4, 2005.

Those dug were among what the Peace Advocates for Truth, Justice and Healing (PATH) is calling the "Cebu 13" victims of the anti-infiltration campaign of the underground movement some two decades ago. Like in the first exhumation, relatives of those dug up were there to get back the bodies of their loved ones.

Watching the coverage, including the footages of the first and second diggings and Probe Team's "reenactment," conjured ambivalent feelings in me. Even if I am a media person, my view has always been to keep media people away. Those involved in that sorry episode in the revolutionary movement's history are better off making the closure without the glare of the cameras.

My point is that it would be difficult to put in its proper context a one to two minutes report on a very complicated issue. Either the anguish suffered by the victims will be downplayed or the actions of the abuser magnified—which is unfair to both sides. I know, and felt, the situation prevailing at the time of the purges in Cebu, and I could not help but be understanding of the actuation of the victims and the victimizers.

I squirmed watching Probe Team's reenactment, for example, because it really wasn't like that, at least with regards to the Cebu experience. Some of Prof. Jerome Babilan's initial findings also were not right on target. I agree, however, that the report failed to depict fully the pain that the victims felt.

Anyway, I don't know the exact place where the bodies supposedly of Luz and Herculano Laguna were buried, but I know Sitio Amaga in Barangay Bonbon, Cebu City. When I set foot there for the first time in 1981, I was a clueless cadre quarantined in a hut waiting for deployment. I cried after a few days of being left alone with cooked banana for food.

The area would later become the base of the propaganda staff that I headed, and was the scene of many of my triumphs and failures, of my ups and downs as a peasant organizer. I haven't been there in, I think, two decades. But I really want to go there if given the chance: to reminisce and dig up more lessons from that youthful rebellion.

I have heard stories about how the suspected DPAs (they were called zombies) were interrogated and killed in that area, but it's difficult to recall them now because of the years that I tried to suppress the memories of that episode in my life. I think it's enough that some of the bones have been returned to their relatives, and for that I doff my hat to the PATH members for their effort to locate the burial sites as well as the relatives.

An interesting sidelight, at least for me, in that Probe Team report was the showing of the face of a

familiar face from Mandaue. I could not recall her name but I lived for a few days in their house, which was in a community not far from City Hall. Since they didn't have a toilet, I ended up doing my thing at the still vacant Mandaue reclamation area.

I always had difficulty adjusting to the life in the city that was why I stuck it out in the countryside for years, until my arrest in 1987 and my re-arrest in 1988.

Meanwhile, the story of Luz and Herculano, their son Herlo (who was killed by members of a fraternity in 2005) and their grandson Aaron Heaven will not be forgotten. If I have the time, I will be writing about their story, probably in fiction form, in the future.

P.S.

* From cebuano.wordpress.com/ and Path website.

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