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¹² Ua ‘ike au, ‘a‘ohe mea maika‘i i loko o ia mau mea, ke ‘ole e hau‘oli [ke kanaka,] a e hana maika‘i i kona ola ‘ana. ¹³ A ‘o kēlā kanaka kēia kanaka e ‘ai, a e inu ho‘i, a e ‘ike i ka maika‘i o kāna hana a pau, ‘o ia ka ha‘awina a ke Akua.- Ke Kahuna 3:12-13

¹² I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one’s lifetime; ¹³ moreover, that every person who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—this is the gift of God.- Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

Every once in a while, you will come across someone who is comfortable in his/her own skin, at peace in this world, who is so eager to do anything for you. I’ve had the pleasure of having known such a person in a most unlikely place. This individual faced so many challenges in his life but when I met him, he saw only the good. His name was Clarence Kahilihiwa, more commonly known as Uncle Boogie. retired painter with the State Department of Health and manager of the Kalaupapa Bookstore. He was a founding member of Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa and was elected to the first Board of Directors, serving as president in 2011. He passed away on Friday, March 5. He was one of the few remaining patients living in Kalaupapa.

Over the last twenty-one years, I have been fortunate to lead 22 mission trips to the settlement, serving the community and its patients, meeting the various kōkua (State and Federal workers), and finding the beauty of the place. The early trips revealed a bustling town with lots of activity. I quickly found out that there was a lot of teasing of the “fresh meat”. Naia yelling at me, “Eh, you took my picture?” (You were supposed to ask permission before taking a patient’s picture.) It was the giggles after my embarrassing apologies that I found out he was pulling my leg. Another was when I was mowing Aunt Catherine’s yard and a shout went out from the neighboring hale, “Eh, watch what you doing. You going break my window!” That was Uncle Boogie. At first, I thought he was angry, but later found out that he too was teasing me.

As the years went by, the pilina with the patients grew stronger. They openly shared their life stories and the lessons they wished to impart with the ‘ōpio. Uncle Boogie, and his wife Aunt Ivy, were among those who welcomed us with open arms, even sponsoring part of our group at times. The bookstore was always open to us, even if it was after hours, for Uncle Boogie was the keeper of the keys. It was in that place that he and I would chat about things- what he’d been up to, when was the last time that he went fishing on his boat, or what sports he was following. One of the haumāna was surprised at how much Uncle Boogie was into sports. He wrote in his reflection of his time there, “I realized how sharp these patients still are. I was just talking to him about Wahine Volleyball and he knew exactly what I was talking about- from the plays to the people on the team. Also, the passion we talked about volleyball was so enormous that it just filled me with joy and love.” As I shared of his passing, a number of folks had the same response, “I am grateful for the time I spent in Kalaupapa and I always looked forward to going to the bookstore to see Uncle Boogie. He was such a warm, friendly man full of so much aloha. The time spent is truly a treasure.”

If there was anything that I learned from Boogie, it was that we must always live life to the fullest by being other centered. It was the life that Iesū lived and became the model for all of us. He showed us how we are to put aside our own interests and look to the interests of others. Boogie did that by always sharing his joy and aloha with others. He committed his life and energies to do good and he can now take his rest. A hui hou Uncle Boogie, may your love live on in us and may we too, strive to continue the good work ke Akua started in you, and in us, to share his aloha to the world, always looking to build others up, to provide inspiration and hope.