

*Eulogy at Coffin
Funeral at Arlington
7/14/98*

LUCIEN E. CONEIN

Each of us has his own memories of Lou. I was perhaps more privileged than most to have known him up close in roles so different as that of a father and the legendary man of action about whom some of the stories are understatements.

Like a lot of his generation he often hid his sensibilities behind a mask of cynicism. He would not admit openly to loving anyone, except Elyette, yet he cared deeply for his children, his grandchildren, his friends and for the Vietnamese. When he was mad at the latter, which could be fairly often given his very low boiling point, they were always the "blankety blank Vietnamese". That was when you knew he really cared. He detested any show of sentimentality. He insisted there be no centerpiece of flowers on the family table, with the rejoinder, "I'm not dead yet" !

If you knew him well, you could see through his impatient, ornery, irascible and occasionally explosive ways. One of the great things about Lou was that he always called it just as he saw it, or as the Vietnamese told it to him. Some were big enough to listen even if they didn't like what they were hearing, others would let their own sense of importance get in the way. For being completely frank with one four-star General, who was also the ambassador, he was sent home. Another time he was exiled to the isolated Vietnamese Province of Phu Bon, which he promptly labeled "Phu Elba".

He wasn't above tweaking his superiors if they seemed to undervalue his help. When open warfare was about to break out between the Vietnamese Army and the infamous Binh Xuyen in Saigon in the Spring of 1955, Colonel Lansdale held an emergency meeting of his staff. Lou was the last to be asked for a report. He said, in a casual way, that he had recently learned from his Corsican friends about a plot to blow up President Diem with a

bomb already planted along the route of a car trip which was scheduled to come off in a few hours. Lansdale turned pale and rushed off to the Palace to warn Diem. Why didn't you tell me about this sooner he wanted to know. "Well", Lou said, "you didn't ask".

He couldn't stand verbosity. In the early sixties, he accompanied the Vietnamese Minister of Interior on countless trips around the countryside. The Minister at every stop would make speeches of interminable length. Finally, an exasperated Lou slipped him a note which said, "Declaration of Independence - 500 words, Gettysburg Address - 200 words, keep it short".

Lou was always a presence to be reckoned with. When something was important he wouldn't dissemble and he wouldn't lie even when pressured by emissaries from the highest office in the land. Elyette, Laurent, Philippe, Caroline, Bernard, Serge, Cecil and Chip you should take enormous pride in the courageous service he rendered to his country. When the chips were down he was the bravest, truest man I knew.

Rufus Phillips
Bastille Day, July 14, 1998