

THE MOUNTBATTEN VISIT

In November of 1970, Earl Mountbatten visited the United States where he was wined and dined royally by many people. I first joined him at a dinner hosted by many of his World War II comrades at the Alibi Club. There were some 30 of us in attendance, my classmate Jim Calvert and I were the two youngest there. During the cocktail before dinner I commented to Earl Mountbatten he was the only speaker who had come to the Naval Academy during my tenure as a Midshipman whom I could even remember, and credited him with having the charisma and stage presence that really put himself across to a young and generally disinterested group of Midshipmen in that era. During the dinner, after the host toasted Earl Mountbatten and said some favorable things for him, he got up and gave a long and brilliant speech about the ties of World War II comradeship, and then went around the room and with a remarkable feat of memory referred to each person at the table by his name and gave a short summation of his relationship to them. He had already put in his computer and sorted out that he should comment on the fact that Zumwalt and Calvert had been midshipmen when he spoke there in 1942. A few days later I was invited to a stag dinner given by the President in the White House for Earl Mountbatten, attended

by many of the leading dignitaries in Washington. After a very formal dinner and proper exchange of toasts, we proceeded to the entertainment room where instead of the usual concert, Earl Mountbatten showed films and gave a running commentary on one of his current major interests, a college, the name of which eludes me. I guess it is a high school combination for international students, that is, he has high schools in several parts of the world (I need to get the name of the school), but he made quite a strong pitch for financial support for this institution. When he got completed, one of the Cabinet members turned and spoke to another and said, "He's the only man in the world who could practice salesmanship in the White House at a formal dinner."