

JUL 15 1996

11 July 1996

LCDR Mark D. Chester

Home
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Admiral,

I trust this letter finds you and your family well. It was an honor to meet you and your wife at the Texas Tech Symposium and I enjoyed listening to your conversations about the Vietnam War. The Symposium was certainly a success. I am still in disbelief of the tragedy that occurred to Mr. Colby. I followed the daily news coverage of the search and hoped for a happy ending. Things like this just do not seem to have an answer. I know he was a good friend of yours and please accept my condolences. I have enclosed an article I wrote on Mr. Colby that I sent to U.S. News & World Report (that unfortunately was not published) but I hope you find it enjoyable. Additionally, I have enclosed a few photographs from the Symposium.

Hope to see you again, my best to your lovely wife.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M.D. Chester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William Colby, an Exceptional Man

by: Mark D. Chester

I only recently met Mr. Colby at the 1996 Vietnam Symposium on April 18th at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. Mr. Colby was a keynote speaker and one of the VIPs of the Symposium. Also attending the Symposium was Admiral Zumwalt and Vice Admiral Tidd, both key figures in the Vietnam War. I am a Navy Lieutenant Commander working for the Office of the Secretary of Defense on Southeast Asia POW/MIA issues. Meeting such historical figures was indeed an honor.

My first encounter with Mr. Colby occurred at a luncheon/speech. Being the only naval officer in uniform, Vice Admiral Tidd and his wife "Muggs" motioned me to sit at the head table. After I had sat down, Mr. Colby took the seat next to me. Mr. Colby was dressed conservatively; slacks, stripped shirt, polka dot tie, and a blue blazer. He wore rounded, wire-framed glasses and looked to be in excellent physical shape. He appeared more like a man in his early 60s than 76. He was soft spoken and immediately started a conversation with me inquiring about my role in the Symposium. The stories and recollections told by Mr. Colby and the two Admirals at the table were fascinating, first-hand accounts of the Vietnam War. Mr. Colby also described his experiences in World War II, how he had parachuted behind enemy lines in France. I was struck by Mr. Colby's poise and good-natured wit.

The next evening I attended a dinner with Mr. Colby as the keynote speaker. I sat at Mr. Colby's table with others who had been involved in the Vietnam War. Once again, I was treated to amazing stories of the Vietnam War from those seated at the table and most of the stories ended with an amusing twist. Mr. Colby was introduced by one of the Professors from the Texas Tech department of history who had served in the Foreign Service. He recounted a story of the first time he, as a new recruit to the Foreign Service, had met Mr. Colby. A group of young recruits were given a mission and briefed by two senior FSO officers, one of which was Mr. Colby. The Professor stated that after he left Mr. Colby's office, each and every one of the new recruits felt like the mission they were assigned was the most important in the world and the fate of the U.S. depended on it. Another example of the type of man Mr. Colby was. The professor also described how he had persuaded Mr. Colby to donate his material and documents from the Vietnam War to the Texas Tech archives. He had contacted Mr. Colby and requested the material, which Mr. Colby agreed to. However, after several months, the professor decided to send a few bottles of the best Lubbock wine as reminder of his agreement. The card attached read, "We haven't forgotten you, hope you haven't forgotten us". Needless to say, the Colby Vietnam collection soon followed. Mr. Colby's speech at the Symposium was captivating. He used few notes and gave year by year accounts of the Vietnam War highlighting what he called "Turning Points" of the war.

Mr. Colby was involved in a profession that required difficult decisions during turbulent times for the United States. The world has lost a man who quietly did great things for the country he loved. Although I only knew him for a short time, he is one of the few people I have met that it was obvious was someone special. I am honored to have met him. Farewell Mr. Colby, you were an exceptional man.



E. R. ZUMWALT, JR.
ADMIRAL, U.S. NAVY (RET.)

July 15, 1996

LCDR Mark D. Chester

Dear Mark:

Thank you for your good letter of July 11. I enjoyed your article about William Colby and will send it together with a copy of your letter to Mrs. Colby. I know she would like to have it. I will also send a copy to his son, Paul, whom I know would also want it.

Sincerely,

E. R. Zumwalt, Jr.
Admiral, USN (Ret.)

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cc: The Honorable Sally Shelton
Paul Colby