

PART TWO

1962 - 1974 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

"Life that dares send a challenge to his end,
And when it comes, say, welcome, friend."

Richard Crashaw

1613 - 1649

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When Cordier joined the School of International Affairs as its Dean in July 1962 at sixty-one years of age he had no idea that his second university career would turn out to be as charged with excitement as it eventually was.

During his first year at Columbia University I knew very little about how things were going with him at the School for I was in Nepal although I did hear from him from time to time and shortly after his and Dorothy's visit to Nepal an aspect came up about my United Nations assignment in which he became directly involved. I had not been long in Nepal before I came to the conclusion that from a career point of view, as well as for family reasons, I should not remain there for a full two year assignment and informed headquarters in New York about my decision. It was my intention if I could not find another suitable post at the United Nations in New York to return to Canada and to seek a position with the Canadian Government. This came to the ears of Andy Cordier in New York and unknown to me he worked out an arrangement with the United Nations whereby I could,

on my return, be on loan to the School of International Affairs for an unspecified period of time if I so wished. This plan never did materialize for I remained in Nepal for a year but in any event I still felt that if I was to continue to live in the United States I should remain with the United Nations until retirement. I am sure that in taking these steps Andy told himself he was helping me out but I feel he had in mind his eventual book too and it illustrates just how determined he could be in the pursuit of an objective.

When I finally returned to the United Nations in New York in 1963 I joined the Office of Public Information as an Information Officer and remained with that Department until my retirement in 1972. During this time I was able to add considerably to my knowledge of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies because I was obliged to teach and write about these subjects. This background, although in a way peripheral to the political and administrative activity which I had witnessed in the Secretary-General's office, constituted a rounding out process and later proved helpful when I commenced working with Cordier on his United Nations memoirs.

After I was back in New York I was able to follow his career at Columbia University more closely. Once in a while he and

Dorothy would invite me to social events at the University or to their home for a visit and we kept in contact by phone. Andy Cordier was still one to use the phone a great deal and he did it now to keep in touch with his former colleagues and friends at the United Nations. Naturally these contacts were reassuring and important to him for he was after all still in the field of international affairs. But he never forgot any of us and his associations of the United Nations days meant a great deal to him. At first I think he was rather lost at Columbia University but even after he became established there he still maintained that interest. He was by nature very steadfast and loyal in his friendships.

When I first returned to New York and became Chief of the Guided Tours at the United Nations I was having difficulty with those working with me in supervisory capacities as they all seemed to want things done their way. In a mood of desperation one day I decided to consult "the master" about how I might handle the situation. There was no long dissertation from Andy Cordier on what should or should not be done. He merely said, "Give in to them on the little things that don't really count but hold fast on the major issues." I found this to be very good advice.

Changes were taking place in him. For instance in 1964 I began to notice that his voice was becoming slightly "reedy." On one occasion that year he was invited to give an address in one of the United Nations conference rooms to an African group and I went along to listen. He was late and he looked fatigued when he arrived -- he did not walk with his usual buoyancy. When he spoke he sounded tired and his voice was thin in quality which struck me as strange because his voice had always had such resonance.

Several years elapsed before I heard him speak again. Once was at a Commencement exercise in 1968 when he was President of Columbia University at the height of the student riots. The other occasion was in 1971 at the dedication of the new School of International Affairs. Both events were held outdoors. During the latter, a number of dissident students were leaning from nearby windows harrasing Andy as he gave the major address. However he went right on in a rather sonorous voice, but managing at the same time to inject a few comments aimed directly at them. In other words he was taking them all on, weary but unafraid. He was the same old fearless, unflappable Andy. But on both occasions, I was disappointed in the quality of his voice. It seemed to have become reedier, almost plaintive. This was puzzling because he was not yet an aged man. However I put it down to a combination of nerves and

fatigue due to the tremendous pressures which he had been subjected to for several years.

Later when in 1974 I went to work with him at Columbia University and learned about his liver condition it struck me that the change in him in the previous years might have had something to do with the liver problem because I noticed then that when his body chemistry was out of order, as so often happens with this illness, his voice would become very high pitched, but when the doctors were able to adjust the chemistry his voice would drop a few tones again.

Cordier became a legend during his two years in the presidency of the university for the manner in which he tackled the campus disturbances, and once again became a favourite of the press. His lifestyle underwent a dramatic change for he and Dorothy took up residence in the President's house on Morningside Drive which had been occupied by his predecessors, Butler, Eisenhower and Grayson Kirk. In their efforts to improve relationships and contacts on the campus the Cordiers used the house and its amenities to the utmost, opening its doors to all phases of university life. They accomplished this by a vast amount of entertaining of the campus community. It was an Herculean effort on his and Dorothy's part. This was a strategy of Andy Cordier's in order to provide a wider basis of understanding

and communication between the President, the faculty, the administration and the students. In later years Cordier used to like to tell just how many thousands of guests had gone through those doors while he was President.

I attended two formal social events at the President's house, one a large reception, the other a formal dinner. On another occasion I was one of the guests at a dinner which Cordier gave for a few of his former United Nations friends. Another time I dined with Dorothy and Andy in the private suite which they occupied. It was Dorothy herself who prepared the meal that evening. As we sat down to dinner they informed me good humoredly that we were eating at the same table at which Ide and Mamie Eisenhower had often played cards. This was the first time I had visited with the Cordiers alone since they had come to live on Morningside Drive. I remember there was something Andy needed typed and I did it for him. It was a very relaxing and friendly evening.

Because of his age it was not Cordier's intention to remain on as President beyond the crisis period at Columbia and he urged the University to look for a successor. He knew that he still had two years to fulfill as Dean of the School of International Affairs. Then too the completion of the new building was on his mind, as well as the financial concerns about it. He concluded his role as President of the University in August 1970 when Dr. William McGill was appointed to the post and returned to the Deanship of the School.

The Presidency had taken its toll and seemed to lay a weariness on both of them. With Cordier's return to his former role there were a series of adjustments to be made again in their lifestyle. They returned to their house in Great Neck to live. He was again commuting between Long Island and the University, but this time with a driver. A myriad of family problems awaited them in Great Neck and in addition they had difficulty in getting and keeping help. Andy had to make adjustments in the office too. His assistant of eight years, Margaret Farrar, just retired had remarried and she too was in frail health. While this change was inevitable and he realized it, nevertheless it was a difficult period for he had come to rely on her not only as a personal assistant but as a friend. She had been important to him when he first joined the School of International Affairs as she knew the School and the administrative end and she had remained with him as his assistant when he became President.

In 1971 Dorothy Cordier was stricken with cancer of the uterus. She had been ailing for some time, even while they were in the President's house but she had not revealed much about her condition. During that period too the staff in the President's house had detected a deterioration in Andy's health, something that his office staff at Columbia had been observing for several

years. All the more wonder that he was able to fill the exacting role of the Presidency during those two troubled years -- with all the frightening pressures of the campus insurrection.

When I was leaving the United Nations in February 1972 -- exactly ten years after Cordier's departure -- friends there invited Andrew Cordier to come and say a few words at my farewell party. To my surprise he accepted. I had not seen him for some time. He arrived accompanied by his daughter, Louise. Most of those present were from the Office of Public Information but there were old friends too from other parts of the Secretariat, most of whom Andy knew.

I was a little saddened and surprised at his appearance and demeanour when he arrived. I was aware of Dorothy's illness, of course, and that she had recently had a serious recurrence and was in hospital again; also that in recent months both his son and grandson had had depressive episodes. I knew too that his formal retirement from Columbia University was due in the summer. He looked rather heavy and a bit morose as he walked slowly into the reception room with Louise. He did not smile nor did he seem to mingle with anyone. The little talk he gave did not flow easily and I felt that it had been an effort for him to come. He briefly reviewed the course of the United Nations and the days when he was on the 38th floor and I had been his assistant. Then

surprisingly he made an oblique reference to Kissinger who was very much in the news then as President Nixon's adviser for National Security Affairs. He ended the reference with a light touch, saying "I wonder who's Kissinger now?" It was a pun, of course, but I wondered if his comments reflected a deep concern about the trend away from the United Nations to the use of unilateral diplomacy and great power politics in the settlement of disputes -- or could he be comparing Kissinger in his mind with Hammarskjold. And another thought occurred to me, was he relating the phenomenal success of Kissinger, the university professor to his own story?

He and Louise, who is my good friend, left very soon after he spoke. I watched them as they walked away together. It seemed to me that he had a limp and that his legs were swollen. This must have been the "edema" which I was to learn so much about later in 1974.

Some months before my retirement at a reception at the School of International Affairs when the new building was dedicated, Louise talked to me about remaining in New York to work with her father "on his United Nations papers." / (She did not suggest a book). / She said she thought he would likely work at Great Neck -- this was not long before his own official retirement. But the idea was out of the question then as far as I was concerned for I had already made firm plans to return to Canada on 1 March 1972. I had bought

a house there and was looking forward to beginning a new life. Once retired I felt I should the United Nations behind me and look to the future. I left New York on 1 March 1972 without a backward glance and no feeling of regret, except that I was a little saddened to have given a negative reply to Louise, who I felt was speaking on behalf of her Dad.

I did not comprehend then~~that~~ what he had in mind was the writing of his own memoirs of the United Nations. I had never really believed that he would actually settle down to write a book although I recalled the many approaches that had been made to him by publishers in 1961 and 1962. However I knew that he had had a project under ^{way} ~~say~~ since 1966, an eight volume series comprising the public papers and statements of the first three Secretaries-General of the United Nations accompanied by historical commentaries and that his old friend, Wilder Foote was co-editor. My impression was that the commentaries written for those volumes were intended to serve as the "history" that Andy originally had in mind.

The story of his career at Columbia University which he began at sixty-one years of age should be recounted and I trust that it will be done some day by an historian or biographer. He became as famous there as he had been at the United Nations. He

was a man who made an impact wherever he went and who was not afraid of controversial situations or issues. In spite of this aspect of his career it was in the field of progress and education that he left concrete memorials of himself both at the United Nations and Columbia University. Let us remember that he played an important part in making possible the beautiful Dag Hammarskjold Library at the United Nations, and the School of International Affairs building at Columbia stands as a monument to his enterprise and vision. The volumes of the "Public Papers of the Secretaries-General" are a valuable history and reference source about the United Nations.

Andrew Cordier's official retirement came in August 1972 when he relinquished his post as Dean of the School of International Affairs. From now on he would be known as President Emeritus. In the following month of September his wife, Dorothy passed away. This was quite a blow to him. I was in Canada at the time and as soon as I heard the news I sent him a telegram of condolence. It was not until some months later, in April 1973 that I had an acknowledgment from him. He indicated then that he would soon begin work on his United Nations memoirs and that at some stage he would like to interview me to get my evaluation of him as a boss and of his role at the United Nations. He had recently undergone a hernia operation he said and now he was feeling better than he had for some time. He made everything sound just fine. After that I did

not hear from him again for almost year. During this time I was not very concerned as I pictured him living comfortably on his own in his house at Great Neck, probably assisted by a housekeeper, in good health and engaged in his various pursuits at Columbia University as President Emeritus. Except for the latter I could not have been more wrong.