

John Cole Cool

November 7, 1926 – April 6, 2017

A Life of International Service

Dedicated to Improving the Human Condition

It is impossible to write a dispassionate or short obituary about John Cole Cool. He was never a man short on impact, meaning or words. None who knew him will disagree.

John crossed over to the other side, as he would say, on April 6th, 2017 in Fairfax Virginia; his last heartbeat at 6:44 AM, the exact moment of sunrise, as if making the crossing on the day's very first ray of light. He was 90 years and 5 months old to the day. He had fought a valiant and difficult battle against multiple myeloma for more than two years and was ultimately overcome by congestive heart failure, a subdural hematoma, kidney failure and, finally, hospital acquired septicemia in his last two months.

He is survived by his loving wife of 65 years, Catharine, and his devoted children, Jennifer, Jonathan and Christopher. He will be forever missed.

Professional Sketch

John Cole Cool was an American diplomat, anthropologist, international development agent, philanthropist, and a naval officer with a career spanning 55 years, 4 continents, 10 countries and had a meaningful positive impact on a great swath of the world's population. He served in the U.S. Navy at the end of WW II, the Department of the Interior in Samoa, the State Department in Laos, Nepal, and India, the Ford Foundation in India, Pakistan and the Philippines, the Agricultural Development Council and Winrock International in Nepal and Thailand and the Aga Khan Foundation in Pakistan.

He was unwavering in his devotion to the service of humanity and to addressing systemic social problems, including the establishment of participatory rural and community development, local self-government, management of human population

growth, reforming archaic agricultural and land tenure systems, management of natural resource systems (especially watershed management, sustainable agriculture and the environment), advocating the need to educate and mentor visionary leadership in countries where he served and addressing problems arising from ethnicity and access to resources.

His was never a short 'to-do' list and he accomplished a great deal of what he set forth to do in his lifetime.

Early Life, Education, Navy Service.

John was born in Ohio, the son of Mary Louise (nee Cole) a high school teacher and social worker and William Leslie Irvin Cool an engineer. He was raised in the small steel town of Beaver in western Pennsylvania. His father was bedridden with *encephalitis lethargica* from the time John was 5 until he died when John was 15.

His mother worked to support the family, and John sold vegetables from their small garden patch on the back of a toy wagon he pulled through the neighborhood when he was 9 and 10 years old. The 1930's were hard times for all.

His mother was an active member of the Episcopal Church and ensured her two sons, William and John, were as well. William went on to Yale's Divinity School and became a priest in the Episcopal Church.

John was active in the Boy Scouts of America and became an Eagle Scout by his junior year of high school. As he approached graduation with the Beaver High School class of 1944, he and his classmates were engulfed by the urgent desire to serve the nation at war.

Upon starting his senior year in the fall of 1943 he took the Navy's tests for acceptance into the V-12 Naval Officer training program (a program to supplement the force of commissioned officers in anticipation of, among other things, the possible invasion of Japan). He did well on the tests and was told by the Navy he could leave high school, join the Navy, and start college in March 1944. That spring, at 17, he left home and high school and went on active duty for the U.S. Navy starting at Yale University.

Over the course of the next two years he studied and trained under the V-12 program at Yale, Bowling Green (Ohio), and ultimately Northwestern University where he earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in Naval Science and Engineering and became a Commissioned Officer in the U.S. Navy in 1946.

He served as an Ensign and then as a Lieutenant (jg) aboard the destroyer the U.S.S. Agerholm (DD 826), as well as the minesweeper U.S.S. Triumph (AM 323) and the ammunition ship U.S.S. Lassen (AE 3), completing his active duty and entering the Navy Reserve in 1947.

Initial International Adventures

Upon leaving the Navy, John travelled with his mother to American Samoa where he helped establish the first secondary school on the island, the High School of American Samoa, in Pago Pago. There he spent two years as the Feleti Barstow Memorial Foundation Teacher teaching history and social science and coaching athletics including the first high school basketball team to beat Hawaii and win the South Pacific Boys Basketball tournament in 1948.

In 1949, he left Samoa to head to London for graduate study under the G.I. Bill. He made his way by land and by sea, working as he went. From Samoa he went to Tonga, Fiji, New Zealand, and then on to Australia.

In Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, John took up work as an underground gold miner for the Lake View & Star Goldmines digging as deep as the 2800-foot level. In his off hours, he studied Geology at the Kalgoorlie School of Mines.

After pocketing his earnings, John made his way by ship from Geraldton, Western Australia to Singapore. The ship he happened to book passage on had departed from Perth the day before, carrying university students returning to see their parents in the English colonies of Singapore and Malaya. Among them was a bright, beautiful young Australian woman by the name of Catharine Bruce. Shipboard, John and Catharine met and embarked upon their own journey of romance, love and adventure - now legend among family - which filled the rest of their lifetime together. Since Catharine was returning to see her parents in Johor Bahru, Malaya, John sought work nearby to be able to foster their early romance.

He took up a job as a Mining Engineer for the Pacific Tin Consolidated Corporation in Kuala Lumpur and was responsible for the operation of a floating tin dredge in nearby Ampang, Selangor. The location allowed him to travel on weekends to meet Catharine at her parents' home. This was the time of the Malayan Emergency and communists were seeking to foment revolution through violence. So, John shared rides to see Catharine in armored cars courtesy of the British Army. He sported a pistol, though,

never being a man of violence, he diligently left it behind at Catharine's parents home on his first visit.

At the end of her summer break, Catharine returned to Perth to complete her undergraduate degree at the University of Western Australia and John continued his journey on toward London, where ultimately, they would be reunited.

In 1950, he travelled over land by train, bus and sometimes on foot through French Indochina, Thailand, Burma, India, Pakistan (where he was arrested, briefly, for taking photographs at the border), Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Austria, Germany, Belgium and eventually England.

London

In London, John started at the University of London in University College London's Institute of Education where he earned a Postgraduate Certificate in Tropical Education in 1951. He also took up study at the London School of Economics and Political Science (or LSE, also a college of the University of London) initiating work on his doctorate in social anthropology.

Catharine arrived in London shortly thereafter for graduate work at the University of London at University College London (UCL). Their love blossomed and deepened and on the Fourth of July 1952, they were married at the Anglican Emmanuel Church in West Hampstead, London. He was 25.

Based on his experience in Samoa, the U.S. Department of the Interior offered John the opportunity to become the Staff Anthropologist for the civilian Office of Territories as well as to be the Samoan Affairs Officer of the Government of American Samoa.

Following a honeymoon in Scotland, the newlyweds travelled to American Samoa in 1952. There John spent the next five years working to stabilize and strengthen the local government, traveling regularly to villages, learning about the Fa'amatai, the chiefly system central to the organization of Samoan society, and helping to set up the first elections.

In 1954, he was appointed Director of Local Government and Territorial Development Officer continuing his research on traditional social organization and being responsible for implementing the transition from naval to civil administration. This included the organization and conduct of the first elections by secret ballot.

On an ongoing basis, John provided policy advice to the appointed Governor. Often, he was the acting Governor as the office was frequently vacant. He designed the first Samoan development plan, served as Census Commissioner, Secretary to the Constitution Committee and as a member of numerous governmental boards and delegations. From 1953 through 1956 he accepted appointments from the U.S. Department of State as the Advisor to the U.S. Delegation to the South Pacific Commission, as the U.S. Advisor to the American Samoan delegation to the South Pacific Conferences and as a Delegate to the Pacific Science Congress.

Early in 1957, while in Pago Pago, John and Catharine had their first child, Christopher.

In 1958, John returned to London to the London School of Economics to complete his Ph.D. in Social Anthropology. His five years of applied fieldwork in Samoa were the basis for his dissertation on the relation between U.S. administrative policies and Samoan authority structures, which became the model for national programs he later helped establish in Laos and Nepal.

Laos

While still in London in 1958, extending from his service with the Department of State in the South Pacific, John accepted an assignment to Vientiane, Laos as the Operations Officer and the Chief of Field Services for the U.S. Operations Mission (USOM) within the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), part of the U.S. Department of State.

Late in 1958, Catharine left Vientiane for Perth, Australia to deliver their second child, Jonathan.

In 1959 John took on the additional role of Chief of Rural Development and Field Operations where he worked closely with the Laotian Commissioner for Rural Affairs in the Prime Minister's Secretariat to design and implement a national rural self-help program operated through provincial and district councils. The work required negotiating a wide range of political and policy challenges at a time when Laos was the cockpit of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. At that time, John managed an extensive field support operation, involving more than thirty aircraft and a widely-dispersed field staff during what he simply called "a period of political instability and military insecurity." Somewhat of an understatement as John was ultimately literally caught in the crossfire of the 1960 Laotian coups, part of the broader Civil War between the Communist Pathet Lao and the Royal Lao Government.

During the Battle for Vientiane in December 1960 John, together with several American and Laotian members of his USOM staff, was captured and held prisoner by the communists. With great instinct, courage, cleverness and extraordinary chance - as war will have it - John and his party were able to arrange for the appearance of the local British Secret Intelligence Service (more commonly known as MI-6) whose agent was, largely through bluster and bravado and with a Land Rover bearing the Union Jack, able to liberate John and the other captives unharmed.

The group quickly crossed to the safety of Thailand where John was reunited with Catharine and the children who had been evacuated to Bangkok and without word of his whereabouts or well-being for some time.

Nepal I

Early in 1961, John returned to Washington, D.C. as the Chief, Far Eastern Branch, Community Development Division, International Cooperation Administration at the Department of State. Later, in the fall of that year, he accepted a new assignment in the Kingdom of Nepal as USOM's (soon to become USAID) Chief of Village Development. In this role, John was deeply committed to building participatory development by combining democratic institutions with the traditional Nepali Panchayat system of governance.

He worked at the national level with His Majesty's Government to plan and establish a broad program of self-help development through more than 3700 elected village councils (panchayats) and 75 district councils. While doing this he also managed the U.S. assistance program in agriculture, forestry, health and population in Nepal and he took a strong interest in and mentored the very first Peace Corps Volunteers in Nepal, guiding their training in cross-cultural understanding and befriending them. Many remained close friends throughout his lifetime.

In 1964 John was appointed Deputy Director of the USAID Mission to Nepal and from 1965 until 1967 he was *de facto* responsible for overall management of the USAID program due to frequent leadership changes. His impact and legacy in Nepal is measurable and felt to this day.

While in Kathmandu, John and Catharine had their third child, Jennifer, albeit she was born in the Philippines at Clarke Air Base whose hospital facilities were substantially better than those in Kathmandu at the time.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

In 1967 and into 1968, John held a faculty appointment as a Visiting Social Scientist at the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology. He worked with Max Millikan organizing programs to foster participatory local development and the emergence of self-governing, autonomous local government systems.

India

In 1968, John accepted an assignment with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as the Assistant Director for the USAID Mission to India. Based in New Delhi, he was responsible for U.S. assistance to the Government of India in Population, Labor and Area Development programs. He worked closely with state and national officials to plan and finance rural works and area development activities, introduce spatial planning concepts and settlement strategies, develop infrastructure investment strategies designed to shape settlement patterns and promote human scale urban growth.

In 1970, John left USAID to some degree due to the increasingly political pressures the Nixon administration was introducing into U.S. foreign aid programs worldwide. The Ford Foundation offered him a job immediately and asked him to stay in India where he has built deep respect and friendships within key networks of Indian officials as well as at USAID and at NGO's. All of which stood to amplify the impact of his professional agenda in India. He joined the Ford Foundation as their Program Advisor in Population and Social Sciences but soon was appointed to be the Deputy Representative of Ford Foundation, for India. From 1970 to 1974, while with the Ford Foundation in India, John was responsible for improving the understanding of cultural factors affecting societal fertility and he developed innovative approaches to family planning and to modifying fertility behavior. Later his responsibilities included the management of the Ford Foundation's 18-person family planning program team working in the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Planning and for the Ford Foundation's program management and support of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. He initiated Ford's Second India Studies to examine the challenges posed by the doubling of India's population by the year 2000 and made grants for capacity building in universities and research institutions.

He became the Chairman of the School Board of the American Embassy School in New Delhi and spent a great deal of time as an extraordinary husband and father. Together

with his family, he travelled extensively throughout India spending significant time in Indian villages across the sub-continent. The experiences, friendships and memories from this period remain family treasures.

Harvard

During the academic year 1974 to 1975 John undertook another sabbatical and joined Roger Revelle as a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Population and Development Studies at Harvard University. Here he undertook research on water management and food production in the major river basins of Asia.

Pakistan

In 1975, he returned to South Asia as the Ford Foundation Representative to Pakistan, taking his family to Islamabad. For the next three years, he worked closely with the Government of Pakistan's Planning Commission in the design, negotiation and conduct of a national program of research and development to build Pakistani professional capacity. He also supported rural development education through grants to the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARDA) and education in economics via the Pakistan Institute for Development Economics and the Applied Economics Research Center.

As much as these programs had effect in developing professional capacity and subsequent impact on Pakistan, John felt that among his more important work was improving the sustainability and productivity of the Indus River Basin, with a central focus on increasing food production in the Indus River Basin so that Pakistan might reverse its cycle of poverty and return to being a net exporter of grain. He struggled to persuade Prime Minister Bhutto's government to focus resources on the "great Indus food machine" rather than on acquiring nuclear capacity and an "Islamic bomb."

Philippines

From 1978 to 1981, John was the Ford Foundation Representative to the Philippines. From his offices in Manila, and through extensive travel throughout the Philippine Archipelago, John developed and managed programs in social science capacity building, upland forest stewardship, and user-group water management. His work

strengthened applied social science research capacity and Ford Foundation grants he directed supported minority user-groups managing uplands, irrigation and forestry working groups as well as NGO's in population management.

University of Hawaii, East-West Center

For the academic year 1981-1982, John became a Fellow at the Population Institute of the East-West Center (the Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange Between East and West) in Honolulu, Hawaii. Here he led a center-wide interdisciplinary program committee dedicated to developing programs to help forge better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific through cooperative study, research, and dialogue using the Center as a resource for information and analysis on critical issues of common concern, bringing people together to exchange views, build expertise and to develop policy options.

Nepal II

In 1982, John and Catharine returned to Kathmandu, Nepal where he became the head of the research awards and fellowships program for the Agricultural Development Council (ADC). ADC became Winrock International in 1985. Starting in 1982 he also led the Agricultural Projects Services Centre where he was responsible for the overall direction and conduct of an extensive five-year program of research and training designed to strengthen Nepalese capacity in the social sciences and in natural resource management.

Thailand

From 1987 through 1990, John and Catharine were residents of Bangkok where John assumed the role of Winrock International's Program Officer for Asia and the head of the Thailand Natural Resource Management Program. From a base at Kasetsart University, where he was a Faculty Member in Economics, he established three Master's degree programs in natural resource management. John also successfully established key networks comprised of scholars and governmental officials involved in planning and implementing research awards addressing critical Thai natural resource management issues. These networks built professional connections which linked knowledge to action.

Indeed, throughout his career, John sought to create consensus and to enhance local professional capacity and to stimulate knowledge generation. He sought to establish linkages which insured new knowledge is applied to actions in ways that improved and sustained human well-being and empowered people through participation. He believed education is central to development and to human progress and that a key objective of development is to give individuals increased control of their destinies by increasing their capacities, their options and their freedom of choice.

Washington, D.C.

In 1990, John and Catharine returned to the United States to live full time for the first time since 1948. Still with Winrock International, now in their Washington, D.C. headquarters, he became the Senior Program Officer for the Asia Division and the Development Studies Center and later the Senior Associate, for Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development. At Winrock, he was the social science advisor for the Asian Forestry program responsible for monitoring Forestry/Fuelwood Research and Development (F/FRED) and natural resource management programs throughout Thailand. He also organized the Asian environmental leadership workshops. Further, he served as a consultant to their Environmental Policy and Training Program, to the Leadership and Human Resources Development Division and the Renewable Energy and to the Environment Program.

From 1992 through 1997 John worked as a consultant for the Aga Khan Foundation, spending time travelling throughout the Hindu Kush and northern areas of Pakistan in helicopters as a member of the Joint Monitoring Mission of Human Resource Development, Mountain Infrastructure and Engineering and Mountain Agriculture assessments for the Aga Khan Rural Support Program.

In 1995, together with Elizabeth Moynihan, Milo Beach and Harry G. Barnes, Jr., he researched and co-authored "The Agra Heritage Project - a 2020 Vision" a report of the Joint Indian-American Blue Ribbon Panel for the U.S. National Park Service.

Throughout the 1990's John served on the boards of directors of NGO's including the International Mountain Society, Southeast Asian Universities Agroecosystems Network, The Mountain Institute, and undertook short-term assignments for the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Nepal and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Retirement

Not being one to ever retire, John, a scholar and bibliophile, built a library for his vast collection of more than 20,000 volumes, covering a wide and dynamic range of interests collected over a lifetime in bazaars and bookshops around the world. He constantly impressed and amazed family and friends by the knowledge he could quickly recall from books in his library – almost all of which he had read. The running line at the Cool house was “Who needs Google?”.

John also undertook several of his own research projects including primary research and a paper on the Native American King Shingas who had been of great influence on the European colonization of western Pennsylvania where John grew up.

He also enjoyed his home and garden and maintained a do-it-yourself approach to all things needing repair in the home, even well past the point where it was no longer safe to climb up on ladders.

He and Catharine were avid in their pursuit of fitness right up until the last couple of years. Together they would swim every weekday morning at their local recreation center.

Throughout the first 15 years of the new millennium John and Catharine continued to travel extensively. Frequent trips to their summer cabin at Lily Lake in California brought great joy, as did driving across the United States on multiple occasions. More ambitiously, they travelled to Australia, Singapore, Indonesia, England, Scotland and China during this period as well.

Starting about 10 years ago, John began to transcribe and edit the eleven handwritten diaries of his grandfather, Jay Floyd Cole, which logged Cole’s tour of duty with the U.S. Navy in China from 1882 to 1885 where he was the Paymaster’s Yeoman aboard the U.S.S. Palos, a gunboat in the U.S. Navy’s Asiatic Squadron.

In 2007, he traveled to China in search of an institution with interest in the diaries. The Guangzhou Museum, in Guangzhou, China responded enthusiastically and sent a delegation to his home in Virginia to review photographs and objects Jay Floyd Cole had collected while in China for an exhibition and to begin work on translating the diaries for publication in Chinese. In 2010, the Guangzhou Museum invited John and Catharine to open the special exhibition, “The Diaries of an American Seaman, Paymaster’s Yeoman, J. Floyd Cole, on China Station, 1882-1885,” showcasing the diaries along with photographs, paintings, and artifacts Cole had collected in the 1880s. In that his grandfather’s adventures and travels to China had influenced his own

interests in travel and in Asia, these events in Guangzhou and the publication of his grandfather's diaries brought full circle the stimulus and closing of his own career in Asia.

In retirement, John also took great pleasure in spending time with friends and families with whom he and Catharine had served overseas living locally or whenever they came through the Washington area at dinners, birthday parties and Thanksgivings. He also thoroughly enjoyed attending reunions of the Ford Foundation, the Peace Corp Volunteers he had mentored in Nepal, and the crewmen of the U.S.S. Agerholm, his WW II Navy service destroyer.

John Cole Cool outlived many of his contemporaries, but his loss is deeply felt by a worldwide network of colleagues and friends in international development whom he inspired and mentored.

He is survived and deeply mourned by Catharine, his wife of 65 years and loving, devoted partner throughout all his overseas assignments and adventures, by his son Jonathan and daughter-in-law Erika, of Great Falls, VA, by his daughter, Jennifer, son, Christopher, daughter-in-law Marita, and grandchildren Kaitlyn and Cameron, of Los Angeles, CA.

Fare thee well for eternity John Cole Cool