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Diplomat-Investigator in Guyana

Richard Alfred McCoy

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 7 — The State Department decided last July to bestow its Superior Honor Award on Richard Alfred McCoy for "exceptional and most exemplary service" as a United States consular officer in Guyana. But

**Man
in the
News**

a strange thing happened to the piece of parchment before it could be presented to Mr. McCoy, and other unpleasant things were to happen to

the 44-year-old Foreign Service officer shortly thereafter.

Officials say that the certificate was forwarded to Guyana in the diplomatic pouch for the signature of Ambassador John R. Burke, but was damaged on the return trip. A replacement was ordered but has not yet been presented.

Meanwhile, in the aftermath of the tragedy that began with the murder of a Congressman and included the killings and suicides of more than 900 Americans, Mr. McCoy found himself accused of laxity or indifference in his investigations of the People's Temple settlement during his two-year tour of duty in Guyana, which ended last August.

Noted for His Energy

For State Department colleagues, it was only one of many ironies involving Mr. McCoy that this charge should have been made against a man noted for energetic dispatch in all his consular duties in Guyana and one who received a medal of commendation for six years of investigatory work in the 1960's as a United States Air Force officer.

Department officials say privately that Mr. McCoy ruffled some of his supporters not by laxity but by pushing beyond a consular officer's authority in his efforts to prod the Guyanese police into a more vigorous investigation of the People's Temple.

"Dick went as far as he could legally go in doing something about it," John D. Blacken, the former deputy chief of the United States Embassy in Guyana, said today. He referred both to Mr. McCoy's interviews in Jonestown, in which he found no People's Temple members willing to leave, and his discussions with Guyanese authorities about the cult's settlement.

His close friends find ludicrous charges that Mr. McCoy had become too closely involved with People's Temple officials and had been compromised by a sexual liaison with a woman



A most unusual kind of career diplomat.

member. Some of these friends are bitter at what they regard as inept department and press handling of the allegations.

A Portrait by His Friends

Eight friends, interviewed about Mr. McCoy, characterized him as a strait-laced, spartan type who neither drinks nor smokes, a devout Catholic whose private life centers almost entirely on his Danish-born wife, Lise, and their sons, Richard, 19, and Douglas, 17, both of whom attend a military academy.

"He's not simply a practicing Roman Catholic, but a male, mass-going Roman Catholic, which is a lot rarer," said a colleague. "He's not only doesn't drink alcohol, he doesn't even drink coffee or carbonated soft drinks. He does emerge a bit like a windup toy, but people don't dislike him for it."

Those who know the official, an intense but boyish-appearing man with unruly black hair, agree that he is a most unusual kind of career diplomat.

Making his way in a profession

heavily populated with Ivy Leaguers, Rhodes scholars and Ph.D's cannot have been easy for a man forced by economic circumstances to quit high school in Lincoln Park, N.J., before he ended his sophomore year.

After working in a delicatessen, at a swimming pool and a bowling alley, Mr. McCoy enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1952. As a marine, he completed the work for his high school diploma.

Bachelor's Degree in 3 Years

While working as a marine guard at the United States Embassy in Copenhagen, Mr. McCoy met his future wife, Lise Andersen, a Danish employee of the embassy, and was encouraged by an embassy official to apply for admission to Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa.

After earning his bachelor's degree in three years, majoring in political science and history, Mr. McCoy enlisted in the Air Force, graduated from officer's candidate school in San Antonio and spent six years in the Office of Special Investigations, rising to the rank of captain.

In 1966, Mr. McCoy joined the State Department at age 32 as a staff officer. He served in the embassy in Costa Rica before joining the select career Foreign Service in 1969. He had tours of duty in Israel, Turkey and Yugoslavia before he was posted to Guyana in the fall of 1976.

Officials say that a measure of the man was the fact that on his return to Washington in August, Mr. McCoy was transferred from consular aide to political officer for Guyana, Surinam and Trinidad.

They say that it is often difficult for one who has spent years perfecting the skills needed for consular work to adapt himself to the quite different job of political officer.

"I think he's done it with his heart in his mouth," said a high-ranking State Department official, "but he's given it his usual enormous effort and enormous concentration, and I think he's been damned successful at it."

"We did something more sensible than we usually do," said another official. "We brought back a man from the field and put him in as desk officer for the country on which he has developed real expertise. It's been invaluable for us to have had him here during this crisis."