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He 'Makes Waves'

George McMurtrie Godley

G. McMurtrie Godley, the United States Ambassador to Laos, has been called one of a new breed of American diplomats; men as much at home in jungle fatigues as in striped pants; men as conversant with guerrilla infiltration as with diplomatic nuances. "He's a real field marshal," an admiring friend said. "He runs the war in north Laos just like his predecessor, Bill Sullivan, used to do while Abrams and Bunker pretty much run the war in south Laos out of Saigon."

Man
in the
News

The problems in Laos have intensified, and Mr. Godley's embassy is evacuating American civilians from the area of the royal capital, Luang Prabang. Heavy fighting was reported yesterday.

The fast-moving, 54-year-old Ambassador is one of the youngest career ministers in the Foreign Service—a living contradiction of the adage that to rise in diplomacy you "don't make waves." Mr. Godley's friends say he has been making waves since he joined the Foreign Service in 1941.

Judging from his two first ambassadorial posts — the tension-ridden Congo from 1964 to 1966 and Laos since June, 1969 — his superiors value him highly.

Indifference to Rank

"He has an instinct for doing the right thing," one said. "Some of us will go first through intellectual turmoil to reach a decision, but Mac intuitively senses what to do over two Scotches and a half a pack of cigarettes."

Stories abound concerning

his energy and his indifference to rank. One friend says that when Mr. Godley's Volkswagen tipped over in Washington, he righted it himself with a massive heave.

His penchant for trotting—not walking—in the State Department led waggish friends to put a sign on his desk: "Flaps down, Godley; curve ahead." Yet they recall that he often snatched a five-minute nap while waiting in some superior's anteroom.

"He's totally objective about life and himself," a colleague related. "He has a fantastic philosophy. He's one of the few men I've ever heard tell a Secretary of State, 'You're wrong,' to his face."

Edmund Gullion, now dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, was Mr. Godley's predecessor as Ambassador to the Congo as well as his friend.

"Mac was a good field general," Mr. Gullion said recently. "After Hammarskjold's death in a plane crash in the Congo in September, 1961, the United States had to help muster the U.N. troop contingents to keep order. The Congo was coming apart. Mac has a real sense of moving troops."

After two years as Ambassador in his own right, Mr. Godley asked to be recalled, a move described by a colleague as showing great courage and great sensitivity. Reports at the time said that he had come to feel that another American envoy, perhaps one with a calmer temperament, might be able to



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*"An instinct for doing
the right thing."*

avoid clashes with Gen. Joseph D. Mobutu, the proud but inexperienced 36-year-old head of state.

Born in New York on Aug. 23, 1917, George McMurtrie Godley was educated at Hotchkiss and at Yale (class of 1939), where his father was a professor of architecture. He has had 30 years' diplomatic experience in Europe, Africa and Asia as well as service in the Navy and the Marine Corps Reserve during World War II.

The Ambassador has been married twice. His first marriage to a member of a prominent Swiss family, ended in divorce in 1966 while he was in the Congo. His present wife, the former Elizabeth McCray Johnson, was his secretary. She has some Greek antecedents, and the Godleys have adopted two Greek children, who are with them in Vientiane.