



Ambassador Adolph "Spike" Dubs

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matthew 5:9

A man of deep faith and compassion, committed to peace and the building of a global *beloved community*, the late United States Ambassador to Afghanistan Adolph "Spike" Dubs (1920 – 1979) is Eden's best known son. Dubs was born in Chicago to ethnic German immigrants from the Volga River region of Russia (Volga Germans). His deep spirituality and personal ethics were

rooted in the Lutheran faith teachings and values he learned at Eden.*

Following his graduation from Beloit College in 1942, he served as a Lieutenant Commander in the Marines during WWII. Dubs entered the United States Foreign Service in 1949 and steadily rose through the diplomatic ranks through a series of foreign and state-side posts. He was widely regarded as a Soviet/Russian expert.

Ambassador Dubs was universally described as gregarious, casual, intelligent, athletic, and unflappable in stressful situations. He possessed a genuine curiosity about the lives and thoughts of others that endeared him everywhere he went. A natural leader, he inspired and encouraged subordinates to try to always do their best, remain optimistic, and to build connections with government officials and average citizens, alike, wherever they were.

Dubs was appointed the United States Ambassador to Afghanistan in the summer of 1978. This was a sensitive assignment for several geo-political reasons, especially coming in the immediate aftermath of a pro-Soviet coup. On Valentine's Day 1979, Ambassador Dubs was taken hostage on his way to work by Afghans with murky political allegiances. He was murdered later that day during a botched rescue attempt led by the Afghan government with the support of the Soviets. More than 40 years later, details and motives for the ambassador's abduction and death remain a mystery.

Eden United Church of Christ honors Ambassador Adolph Dubs' memory and service to our country with a flagpole and plaque on the grounds of the church. It is believed to be the only memorial devoted exclusively to Adolph Dubs in the United States. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Many of his papers and letters have been donated to the collection at the newly created National Museum of American Diplomacy at the U.S. State Department in Washington, DC.

*Eden honors its Lutheran heritage, but has been known as Eden United Church of Christ since 1957 when the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches merged to create the United Church of Christ, one of the largest mainline Protestant denominations.

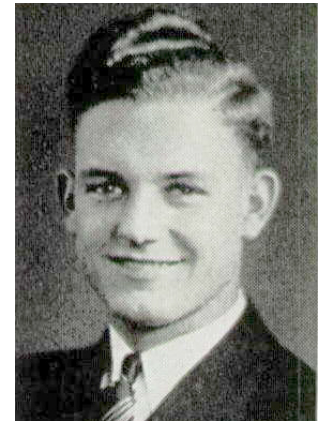
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Early Life and Faith Foundation

Adolph Dubs, along with his older brother Alex, Jr., and younger sister Wilma, was born and raised in the Jefferson Park neighborhood on Chicago's Northwest side. His parents, Alexander and Regina Dubs, were ethnic Germans who had been born and raised on the meadow side of the Volga River near Saratov, Russia. They, like many Volga Germans, as this group of immigrants were colloquially known, emigrated to the United States prior to World War I. His father became a machinist.

Dubs attended Beaubien Elementary School and Lane Technical High School before transferring to, and graduating from, Carl Schurz High School in 1938. His yearbook notes that he was voted "Most Dependable" and distinguished himself academically, as well as an athlete, musician, and leader.

Outside of school, Dubs was heavily involved with the church his parents had helped to found in 1914, Eden Evangelical Lutheran Church, now known as Eden United Church of Christ. Like many immigrants to America, the Volga German families who built Eden sought ways to create cultural and spiritual continuity between their former lives and the loved ones they'd left behind, and the new lives and families they were creating. The church became, therefore, more than a house of worship where they could practice their cherished Lutheran faith, it also became the center of the members' social and cultural lives; a place to help instill in their children their values, language, and cultural traditions.



Young Adolph was bilingual, like other first-generation Volga Germans. Worship services, Sunday School, and Confirmation classes at Eden were conducted exclusively in the German language throughout the first two decades of the church's existence. During this time, Eden's pastors also conducted a German-language religious school after public school classes concluded each day. The weekday religious school was eventually replaced with a six-week German summer school. The summer school was phased-out prior to the beginning of WWII.

As Dubs entered high school in the fall of 1933, Eden retained a young pastor with a fresh outlook and lots of energy to shepherd the congregation. Under the new pastor's dynamic leadership, the English language was embraced in all areas of church life and greater emphasis was given to youth and teen ministries. The new minister made a very deep impression on all the younger members of the church, especially the teenage Dubs, who gave serious consideration to entering a seminary and becoming a pastor.

Adolph Dubs ultimately opted not to pursue a career in the church, but his daughter, Lindsay Dubs McLaughlin, states that there was a strong, direct line connecting her father's years at Eden to how he interacted with people, his moral values, compassion, ethics, and how he lived his entire adult life.

Family lore also reveals that young Dubs had a cheeky side. He loved to sing so he used beloved hymns to teach himself to play a used piano gifted to his family. Whenever he found himself in trouble with his parents, he would race to the piano and start playing hymns until his parents got so caught-up in the music that they couldn't bring themselves to discipline him. Years later, as he rose through the diplomatic ranks, Dubs love of sacred music prompted him to volunteer to play the piano or organ for worship services at the various embassies and consulates where he was stationed. He took great pleasure in his participation in the worship services and never thought it beneath him, no matter what his official title.

Young Adult Years

Adolph left Chicago following his high school graduation to attend Beloit College in Wisconsin. As he later noted with gratitude, his mother took a job scrubbing floors to pay for his education. At Beloit, he was a member of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity and an athlete who enjoyed golf and tennis. Early in his college career, as Adolph Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany, began a ruthless military campaign engulfing Europe in a second world war, a friend who couldn't bring himself to continue to call his friend, Adolph, the same first name as Hitler, nicknamed Dubs, "Spike." The nickname took and was used consistently throughout the remainder of his life. Dubs graduated in 1942 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science.

With World War II raging, the freshly minted college graduate enlisted in the Navy as a junior officer. Spike Dubs was a natural leader who ultimately earned the rank of Lieutenant Commander while serving on destroyers in the Pacific theater. In 1944 he was deployed on the USS Caldwell off the coast of the Philippines. The ship and all its crew had survived a fierce encounter with the Japanese a day earlier; the crew was feeling buoyant the next morning and broke into a spontaneous chorus of "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'" from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Oklahoma*. Suddenly the enemy returned, and a kamikaze pilot crashed into the ship, killing 24 sailors. Flying shrapnel hit Dubs in the chest and lodged in the small pocket Bible he carried in his vest throughout the war, sparing him from serious injury and death. (That little Bible remains a cherished family heirloom.) The sudden, horrific death of his friends and crew members that day, combined with some of his other wartime experiences, caused Dubs to be forever committed to the cause of peace.

When he was discharged from the Marine Corps in 1946, he began graduate studies at Georgetown University. He moved to Washington, D.C. with his young wife, Francenia Jane Wilson. Jane, as she was known, had been Spike's college sweetheart at Beloit. They were married when he came home on leave in 1945 at the First Congregational Church in Elgin, Illinois, where her family worshipped.

Foreign Service

Adolph Dubs began his diplomatic career in late 1949 when he joined the United States Foreign Service. His first assignment came in the spring of 1950 when he was appointed

Resident Officer to post-war Kulmbach, Germany. It proved to be a very formative experience, both personally and professionally. In this role, he worked closely with Kulmbach's elected officials, community leaders, and educators to identify and complete projects that restored structures, revitalized businesses, and modernized the local educational system. Equally as important, he focused on reconciliation and healing to help rebuild political and diplomatic connections between the German and American governments and their citizens. He made many friends among the residents of Kulmbach and they adored him, so much so that when he returned as a tourist a few years later, the town organized a parade in his honor!



For each of the Resident Officers assigned to Germany, this post marked their first time abroad in an official capacity. It was an exciting time and extremely rewarding work, but it was not without its challenges and hardships. The Resident Officers and their families banded together, like an extended family, to help support and sustain one another. Not too surprisingly, they became a close-knit group whose friendships lasted a lifetime.

In April 1952, Dubs assumed the position of Economics Officer at the United States Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia in West Africa. His portfolio included advancing a broad range of strategic U.S. interests, requiring significant interaction with the host government on matters of trade, environmental concerns, science and technology issues, and legal problems. He also coordinated congressional visits.

En route to his new assignment at the embassy in Ottawa, Canada, Dubs, his wife Jane, and newborn daughter Lindsay returned to the United States in late December 1954 to celebrate the Christmas and New Year holidays at his brother Alex's home in Arlington Heights, Illinois. Mr. Dubs' parents were now also residents of Arlington Heights. His sister Wilma and her family, along with other family and friends made this visit especially festive and memorable.

Janet Dubs Soderberg, Adolph's Dubs' niece, has nothing but wonderful memories of her gregarious and compassionate uncle's visits as she was growing up. She noted that he had a way of making everyone feel important, irrespective of their age or station in life. If he saw someone standing on the periphery of a group, he made a point of gently approaching that person and engaging him or her in conversation, expressing a genuine interest in getting to know them while drawing them into the group. Dubs' daughter, Lindsay, and some of his foreign services colleagues also noted how this invaluable diplomatic skill allowed him to make a positive impact on people's lives wherever he found himself.

The Dubs family spent the mid-1950s in Ottawa, Canada. At this post Dubs served as a Political Officer. His work entailed interpreting Canadian politics and policies relevant to the

interests of the United States and helping to advise Washington policy makers in their dealings with, and messages to, our close neighbor to the north.

Returning to the United States in 1957, Adolph Dubs entered a two-year Russian language and area studies program through the Foreign Service Institute at Harvard University and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. He was then assigned to the State Department's Office of Soviet Affairs. His work and training were in preparation for his next foreign diplomatic assignment as the External Affairs Political Officer for the United States Embassy in Moscow. Dubs and his family arrived in Moscow in July 1961, a little more than a year after the failed U-2 mission of Francis Gary Powers and his subsequent trial.



The U-2 incident had added to the Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia, making this assignment incredibly stressful and challenging for all the members of the Dubs' family. The October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, however, greatly intensified the stresses between the two superpowers. As the world teetered on the brink of nuclear war, Dubs was tasked with translating messages passed through the Moscow Embassy between President Kennedy and Soviet Chairman Nikita Khrushchev. The stand-off continued for thirteen days, but he could tell from the changing tone and language used

that Khrushchev was ultimately going to back down and that calm would return. In those anxious moments, he was able to reassure Lindsay, then seven-years-old, that all would be okay

Richard T. Davies, a member of the Moscow Embassy's Intelligence Community staff, was invited to the Dubs family apartment for dinner in the middle of the Cuban Missile Crisis when the outcome was still unclear. In a 1979 interview, he shared his memory of that dinner, *He (Dubs) had a deep strain of faith in him that was almost surprising and he said grace in a most eloquent way and recited the 23rd Psalm*. A deep faith and calm strength under pressure are descriptors used by many who knew and worked with Adolph Dubs over the years.

Dubs was selected to attend the National War College (NWC) in the late summer of 1963 which meant a return to the Washington, D.C. area. The mission of the NWC is to prepare rising military and career civilian government leaders to assume high-level policy, command, and staff responsibilities and to encourage intra-agency decision-making on national and international security and policy matters. By June 1964, Adolph, Jane, and Lindsay Dubs again found themselves abroad, this time in Belgrade, Yugoslavia where he became Counselor for Political Affairs at the embassy.

Dubs was a people person who enjoyed meeting people from all walks of life. This was much

easier to do in Yugoslavia with its more relaxed version of Communism. The farmers, shop workers, laborers, and Yugoslav government leaders he met on and off the job, appeared to sense his genuineness and friendships were forged.

Warren Zimmerman worked for Adolph Dubs, first in Yugoslavia and later in Moscow. His memories of *Spike* formed the basis for an op ed piece which ran in the Washington Star on February 19, 1979, five days after the Ambassador's assassination. What follows is a touching anecdote which well reflects Dubs' compassionate and caring nature for all people, including those with opposing views, politics, philosophies, and religions.

Once in Belgrade a contact of Spike's, a consultant to Tito's Communist Party Central Committee, suffered a tragedy. His wife was killed in an automobile accident. The man went into an emotional tailspin. Spike quietly set about getting him a year's research fellowship at an American university to take his mind off his grief. It was no mean achievement. The man was, after all, a Communist official – but Spike did it. He didn't ask for thanks. In fact, I'm not sure he even bothered to tell the man that he'd been the reason for this piece of good fortune.

In 1968, Dubs was named the recipient of a Superior Honor Award. These awards are given by the Department of State *in recognition of a special act or service or sustained extraordinary performance covering a period of one year or longer*. If you asked anyone who had ever worked with or for Adolph Dubs, they would have told you that the award was well-earned for years of exemplary service on behalf of the United States government.

Betty Forrester, a staff writer with Paddock Publications in Arlington Heights, Illinois, informally interviewed Dubs in July 1966 while the Dubs trio was home visiting family in the Chicago area. Much of the conversation focused on Dub's work as a Foreign Service Officer. The article makes clear that he loved his work and the opportunity to make a difference, but it also reveals his sensitivity to the hardships endured by his wife and daughter, along with all the other wives and children of Foreign Service Officers.

(Dubs) said that he admired the families of foreign service officers. Often water and school facilities are bad in the foreign countries and it is hard on both the wives and the children to move every two, three or four years.

(Prior to 1972, being the spouse of a member of the U.S. diplomatic corps meant that the husband and wife were required to work as a team to advance the mission of the U.S. government and the career of the husband. Jane Dubs, like the spouses of all career Foreign Service Officers, was expected to live abroad for extended periods, endure frequent relocations, forsake all hopes of an independent career, and be a gracious hostess, engaged community volunteer, pleasant dinner companion, and a second set of eyes and ears for her husband. Moreover, the State Department actually graded each wife's efforts and skills, and these evaluations were factored into their husband's annual performance reviews. In short, a spouse could make or break a career.)

Following the completion of Dub's second two-year tour in Belgrade, the family returned to the States in 1968. Dubs was named Director of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs at the State Department. He held this influential position during a very volatile time in U.S. / Soviet relations which notably includes the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and negotiations, the tense diplomatic protests against the construction of a Soviet submarine base in Cuba, and negotiations with the Soviets leading to the signing of a United Nations treaty banning seabed nuclear weapons.

In August of 1971 Dubs was tapped to participate in the prestigious Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy at the Foreign Service Institute along with 29 other senior career policy professionals and military officials. This nine-month program is regarded as the most advanced professional development program in the United States government. The overarching goal of this program is help enhance the executive and leadership skills of the participants in preparation for positions of even greater responsibility to their nation.

Dubs was appointed Deputy Chief of Mission at the Moscow Embassy in the fall of 1972. This role meant that not only was he was the most senior foreign service professional at the embassy, he was also the second in command at the embassy. He even served as the Charge d'Affaires (head of the embassy in a temporary capacity during a transition in ambassadors).

The Moscow Embassy was the most important in the State Department's constellation of diplomatic outposts at that time and the problems Dubs confronted while leading it were daunting as revealed by the following examples - he defended the United States position on the security of Europe against the toughest of Russian negotiators; kept a focus on the benefits of a newly emerging bilateral relationship with the Soviets; shepherded, admonished, and supported the many Americans who flooded into Russia as a result of the improved relations; was clear and direct in expressing the official feelings of the United States government, along with his personal thoughts, when the Soviets expelled dissident author, historian, outspoken critic, and former political prisoner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn; created a strategy for getting Jewish dissidents past the KGB guards outside the embassy's gates; and providing the United States government with accurate insights into potential Russian military and diplomatic actions on the international stage.

Meanwhile, Dubs also had an embassy to run and personnel to lead. Those who worked with him in Moscow marveled at how well he did at keeping morale high under some extremely adverse conditions.

In Warren Zimmerman's profile of his former boss at Embassy Moscow, he stated that:

(Dubs) was the ideal man to have in Moscow during a period of détente. It was simply a part of his character to believe that accommodation was always possible. Not that he couldn't be tough. Just that, if there was a way to advance the American interest without confrontation, Spike would find it.

Another Moscow associate, William Shinn, told the New York Times:

He was exceedingly pragmatic about the Soviets. He was hard when he had to be hard, and soft when that was appropriate. They seemed to respect him.

In the decades before the silicon chip and internet revolutionized human communication, international phone calls were outrageously expensive, so people wrote letters. Adolph Dubs was an especially prolific letter writer. He routinely wrote letters to family and friends, sharing his thoughts and experiences and keeping-up with whatever was going-on in their lives. When his only child, Lindsay, entered St. Lawrence University in Upstate New York in the fall of 1972, he began penning her letters to help maintain their close relationship. He told her of events in his life, kept her up-to-date on family matters, shared theological and philosophical ideas, and included greetings from her mom and their Spaniel Rainy. He also offered fatherly advice before concluding with the words, "Love, Daddy."

In one such letter dated March 3, 1973, Dubs thoughtfully reflected on the then recent assassination of the United States Ambassador in Sudan, Cleo Noel, and his Deputy Chief of Mission, Curtis Moore.

I knew Cleo slightly. He was really a gentle and nice guy. I must have run across Moore at one time or another, although I can't picture him in my mind. In any event, I agree that we cannot afford to give in to the ransom demands made by thugs who direct such organizations as the Black September Group. I personally don't like to think of being any kind of a martyr; but if I were ever taken in a situation such as that which occurred in Khartoum, I would want Washington to understand that I would rather sacrifice my life than to have someone capitulate to the demands of terrorists. I recognize, of course, that this a pretty safe place from which to make such a comment. It's difficult to imagine a group such as the Black Septemberists taking a chance of doing something in a place like Moscow.

The fall of 1974 brought a completely different assignment for Adolph Dubs. He became Diplomat-in-Residence at Southwestern University (now known as Rhodes College) in Memphis, Tennessee. This renown liberal arts college has a strong international studies program and Political Science Department with a focus on real world experiences through internships – local, national, and international.

Another excerpt from Warren Zimmerman's profile notes on the then recently deceased Ambassador Dubs indicates that Dubs was a natural teacher who most likely enjoyed his stint at Southwestern University.

Had he chosen teaching instead of diplomacy, (Spike) would have made a great success of it. He loved the company of young people and he readily identified with their feelings. I suspect that one of the reasons he never felt comfortable with our Viet Nam policy was that it was opposed by so many young. He applied the teacher's

craft to his subordinates – giving us the freedom to make mistakes but making sure we learned from them. When one of us did something worthwhile, Spike took even more pride in it than we did it ourselves.



Overlapping with his time at Southwestern University, Dubs was called upon to use his diplomatic and language skills to advance a quite different type of international diplomacy. He was tasked with facilitating and negotiating some nuanced and sensitive interactions between the American and Russian crews slated to participate in the first international space mission. He helped the crews work-out interpersonal and cross-cultural protocols to guide their interactions while working together on two-days of joint projects following the

docking of the American and Soviet space crafts in July 1975. The grateful Apollo-Soyuz crews took time from their scheduled activities to write and sign a note of thanks to Dubs on a graphic of the mission.

The note reads: *To Spike with appreciation for the many things that you have done to support our mission! With best wishes – (U.S. Astronauts) Thomas Stafford, Donald Slayton, Vance Brand and (Cosmonauts) Alexey Leonov and Valery Kubasov.* (Image Courtesy of the Janet Dubs Soderberg Collection)

Needless to say, the Dubs family continues to cherish this treasured memento of a little-known chapter in the late Ambassador's career.

From mid-1975 through mid-1978, Dubs held the title of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asia Affairs (Middle East, North Africa, and Asian nations wedged between the then Soviet Union and the Middle East). In this influential senior executive position at the State Department, he and his staff dealt with U.S. foreign policy in the region and U.S. relations with each of the specific countries in the region. It provided Dubs with the opportunity to become deeply knowledgeable about a part of the globe where he had never served.

With the end of the War in Viet Nam in the spring of 1975, people of conscience began to focus on the U.S. involvement in Latin America. Lindsay Dubs, the only child of Adolph Dubs, was by this time working and living with the fledgling, radical Christian Sojourner Community headquartered in the impoverished, Columbia Heights neighborhood in Washington, D.C. The group was comprised of committed Christians from a variety of faith traditions and those

who were embarking on personal spiritual journeys. They lived a communal life – living, worshipping, and serving together. They were committed to non-violence and advocated for social justice for the poor and oppressed. Group members worked to resolve neighborhood issues while also organizing national events on peace and justice. They also published a magazine that eventually took the name of their organization, *Sojourners*.

Some of the group's noisy, but peaceful, protests even brought them to the entrance of the State Department headquarters where Adolph Dubs worked. Lindsay recounts that even though her father was a senior executive there, he would not hesitate to come down from his office to speak with her and her fellow protestors. He was warm and friendly and never discouraged them from following their consciences, even though it must have been awkward for him to acknowledge to his superiors that his daughter was among the protestors.

Loving father that he was, Dubs often visited his daughter and the other members of the Sojourner Community on Sundays. He'd attend worship with them and afterwards he would engage in deep, heart conversations about their viewpoints, plans, and beliefs. He had a generosity of spirit that conveyed respect, acceptance, and a sincere desire to learn from people whose lives and perspectives were vastly different than his own.

Adolph and Jane Dubs divorced in January 1976 after more than 30 years of marriage. A few months later, in April, Adolph Dubs married Mary Ann Parsons in Virginia. Mary Ann was the Editor of the Congressional Record.

In late January 1978, the Presidential Advisory Board on Ambassadorial Appointments included Adolph Dubs' name on a list of potential ambassador candidates for Afghanistan. He was the only Career Foreign Service Officer of the seven names put forward. Committee notes include the annotation that the National Security Council supported his candidacy. This was considered by the United States government to be a very sensitive diplomatic post in terms of U.S. national security owing to Afghanistan's geographic location – sharing a 1,200 mile border with the Soviet Union, a perception by some State Department leaders, including Dubs, that the nation was the lynchpin to stability in the region, a bloody pro-Soviet coup that had taken place in April 1978 and heightened concerns about Russia's growing interference and influence. Dubs appeared to be the perfect candidate for the ambassadorship as he possessed the necessary political affairs background, along with proven embassy and staff leadership experience, and well-seasoned diplomatic skills honed over almost 29 years in the Foreign Service.

His highest professional aspiration was finally realized when President Jimmy Carter announced his appointment in June 1978. He arrived in Kabul to present his credentials as *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary* (Afghanistan) in mid-July of the same year.

Upon his arrival, Dubs quickly discovered that the Kabul Embassy was one of the best-kept secrets in the U.S. Foreign Service. Katherine Brown, in a 2011 article commemorating the 32nd anniversary of the death of Ambassador Adolph Dubs for the *Small Wars Journal*, writes:

The approximately 150 diplomats and aid workers felt a strong sense of purpose inside Afghanistan. They also saw Kabul as an incredibly home-oriented place for them and their families: housing was generous, the American School was excellent, and they had their own hospital with American medical staff. The diplomats and aid workers often extended their two-year tours. However sinister the political scene in Kabul was becoming, members of the official American community valued their work and their lives there.

Bruce Byers was the Kabul Embassy's press and information officer in 1979. Like his boss, he was a great letter writer who liked to use his correspondence with his mother as his way to process his foreign service experience. He wrote an extremely lengthy and detailed letter to his mother about the events surrounding the abduction and death of Ambassador Dubs as well as the events that unfolded in the immediate aftermath. A section of the letter deals with the Ambassador's life during the seven short months he spent in Kabul.

Ambassador Dubs spent most of his tour here alone. His wife Mary Ann has a good job on Capitol Hill and did not want to abandon it. She came with the Ambassador's daughter for nearly two months in November-December. Despite his separation from his family Ambassador Dubs was not alone in Kabul. He made all of us his family, and he won our respect and love through his fine example of leadership, concern for our needs, support of the school and American community activities. During football season he attended all of the games. He came to the school's plays and to parent-teacher meetings. He was, in a word, here among us.

He was greatly admired by the diplomatic community in Kabul. Everyone we know respected him as a thorough professional and as a warm and generous human being. The officials of the host government also respected him. He dealt with them clearly and fairly, representing U.S. national interests with resolve and dispatch.

He was an optimist, at heart. He demonstrated his belief in the positive side of people and of human nature, though his patience was tried more than once here. He encouraged us to build bridges where we could with our Afghan hosts. This was not easy; it will be more difficult now.

The political officer at the Kabul Embassy, James E. Taylor, noted in a profile of the late Ambassador that:

Memories of Spike Dubs' character and the way he related to people will probably be his greatest legacy to those who had the good fortune, as I did, to know him. A few images of him in Kabul will always linger ... his shoes-off, feet-on-the-coffee-table, after-dinner talks in the homes of his staff; his inviting all U.S. mission employees to a four-hour open house at the residence last Christmas, an event which many non-American employees said they will remember forever as the embodiment of American informality and graciousness; and Spike at the piano,

leading us in singing Christmas carols, during which missed notes prompted an expression on his face as if to say: "Well, maybe the composer was wrong."

The camaraderie among the staff made the long and increasingly difficult workdays at Embassy Kabul more bearable. Afghanistan, prior to the bloody, April 1978 Marxist takeover of the government, had been a Cold War anomaly; the Soviets and the United States enjoyed something of a detente within the country's borders with each super-power having its own sphere of influence. Russia concentrated its interests in the northern half of the nation and the U.S. cultivated its influence through a range of targeted humanitarian aid projects in the southern half. The representatives of these two Cold War adversaries often socialized together and worked together on intra-country projects of mutual interest. Things went on this way for years. The Afghan government saw no reason to rock the boat, but everything began changing following the April 1978 Marxist coup. Members of the United States government were growing increasingly uneasy with the thought of continuing to invest aid and resources in a county growing increasingly friendly with its primary Cold War enemy.

Having dealt with the Soviets in the past, and being adept at cultivating good working relations with the leadership of the host countries where he'd been stationed in the past, Dubs had arrived in Afghanistan filled with his characteristic optimism and hope. He realized, within a month of his arrival, however, that the newly installed President Nur Mohammad Taraki had no intention of keeping Afghanistan unaligned, all personal assurances to the contrary. The staff at the U.S. embassy watched as more and more Soviet advisors poured into the country and aligned themselves with all levels of the government throughout the nation. Soviet troops and military hardware assumed a protective posture around key government buildings and vital infrastructure sites.

American businesses and interests were intentionally made to feel unwelcome as they faced rapidly changing regulations that limited their functionality. The leaders of these businesses and organizations tried to work with government officials, but they found themselves unable to even get appointments with the officials to discuss matters.

Ambassador Dubs assessed the situation and thought that he might be able to build rapport with Hafizullah Amin, a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Amin had previously been an educator in Kabul and had spent significant time in the United States pursuing advanced degrees in education from Columbia University in New York and the University of Wisconsin – Madison. He was fluent in English and understood much about American culture. He also had a well-earned reputation for being hot tempered and unpredictable. Dubs and Amin met together 14 times over the seven months Dubs served in Afghanistan.

It was clear that Amin was trying to marginalize President Taraki and had ambition to take over the government himself. He eventually made it impossible for any member of the Embassy Kabul mission to meet with government officials in any ministry. To try and end this impasse, Dubs invited the Director of Afghan Studies at the University of Nebraska Tom

Gouttierre to travel to Kabul and use his reputation as an academic to discretely try to identify Afghan officials who might be friendly towards Americans. Gouttierre was well-known in Afghanistan having previously lived there as a member of the Peace Corps and the Fulbright program. He was best known, however, for having been the head coach of the national basketball team.

Within two weeks of his arrival in Kabul, Dubs had to quickly secret Gouttierre across the border to Pakistan to protect him from arrest, and possible imprisonment, by Afghan authorities. Gouttierre's presence in Afghanistan had clearly raised the ire of someone in or near the Afghan government leadership.

The work and focus of the Kabul mission remain unaltered by the escalating tensions and obstacles they faced. Ambassador Dubs and his team worked to foster and maintain strong connections with staff at the other foreign embassies in town. They attended, and hosted, dinners and cross-cultural exchanges. No one at the U.S. embassy felt unsafe as they traveled around the city or through the countryside on business or personal recreational trips to Afghan cultural sites and tourist spots.

Everything abruptly changed for Ambassador Dubs and Embassy Kabul, without even the faintest hint of warning, on the morning of February 14, 1979. As the ambassador was being driven to work by Gul Mohammed, an American flag flapping on the fender, he was reading a recently arrived, days old edition of the Washington Post. They were a short distance from the embassy when a man in a police uniform flagged them over stating that he was under orders to inspect the car. Suddenly he pushed his way into the vehicle and held a pistol to the driver's head as three other men in street clothes jumped into the vehicle. Gul Mohammed was told to drive directly to the Kabul Hotel. The four carjackers then exited the vehicle, taking Dubs hostage. The ambassador's driver was then instructed to head to the embassy and tell the staff what had happened. The time was approximately 8:40 am.

It was after midnight in Washington, D.C. when Bill Amstutz, Deputy Chief of Mission in Kabul, began sending cables from the embassy to the State Department reporting the abduction. Embassy officials, Political Officer James Taylor and Administrative Officer Bernard Woerz, jumped into action and began frantically traveling from one Afghan ministry to another, begging the Afghan government to negotiate with the kidnappers and not to mount a rescue effort. The police stated that they were not involved and knew nothing of the situation. The Police Commissioner refused to even see Taylor.

Foreign Minister Amin's office staff was shocked to learn of the abduction, but Amin, himself, would not take any calls as he was busy entertaining the Foreign Secretary of Iraq who was visiting that day. The embassy team even reached out to the visiting Iraqi Foreign Minister, but he explained that he had little influence with the Afghan government.

Six other Embassy Kabul officials, Political Counselor Bruce Flatin, Regional Security Officer Charles Boles, Economic Officer Jay Freres, Drug Enforcement Administration Country Attaché

Doug Wankel, Counselor Officer Michael Malinowski, and Political Officer Warren Marik, went to the hotel where Dubs was being held to directly monitor the situation. At the hotel, the men tried desperately to prevail on the Afghan security and police who had assembled at the hotel to remain calm and try to negotiate the release of the ambassador. The number of Soviet advisors with the Afghan troops at the hotel began to increase in number with the Americans becoming increasingly alarmed as they recognized that some of the plain clothed Russians were part of the KGB detail at the Soviet Embassy.

The embassy team assembled at the Kabul Hotel outside of Room 117 where Ambassador Dubs was being held requested that Dr. Lloyd Rotz, the Regional Medical Officer, and Nurse Marjorie Yamamoto from the American clinic, be immediately dispatched to the hotel with a stretcher and medical supplies. They quickly arrived in an ambulance and began waiting with the embassy staff.

In Washington, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance hurried over to the State Department along with several other ranking officials. They began trying to work their contacts at the various foreign embassies scattered across the D.C. area. They wanted them to contact their staffs in Kabul to see what they might know and who they might be able to contact to try and get information that might enable this hostage situation to come to a peaceful conclusion.

The kidnapers issued a changing series of demands involving the release of political prisoners. First, they asked for four and gave a deadline that their demands needed to be met by 1 pm Kabul time or they would kill the ambassador. A short time later, they changed their demand to just one prisoner, but didn't alter their timetable. There was no phone in the room with the kidnapers so communication with them had to be yelled through the keyhole. Eventually the Americans were able to speak through the keyhole with Ambassador Dubs directly. The staffer spoke to the ambassador in German figuring that none of the Afghans holding the ambassador knew the language. In a strained voice Dubs confirmed that he was okay. When the staffer inquired about weapons in the room, Dubs began to give information about the weapons, but the word "revolver" is the same in English and in German. Once the kidnapers realized what was being communicated, they dragged Dubs from the door.

The Americans continued to plead with the Afghan forces gathered to remain calm to avoid any loss of life, but their pleas fell on deaf ears. They told the Afghan police and their Soviet advisors that the United States Secretary of State was instructing them not to rush the room. As the clock ticked down, the Soviet advisors began directing the sharpshooters assembled on the balcony of a bank across the street from the room in which Dubs was being held. They also had a second group of sharpshooters assemble on the ledge of the window directly below Dubs' room. The Soviets helped the members of an Afghan commando unit get into their tactical gear and then, at 12:45 pm, the Soviets coordinated the actions of the sharpshooters outside the hotel with those of the police inside. A 30-45 second intense barrage of bullets entered the room from every direction. There was a brief lull and then a short burst of small arms fire.

The Afghan police commandos quickly exited the room. The Americans, accompanied by the doctor, raced in. The smoke from the gunfire created a thick blue haze that hung in the air, making it nearly impossible to see. They stumbled over the bodies of two of the hostage takers as they blindly tried to find Ambassador Dubs. The floor was covered in water from pipes that had been shattered by the gunfire. They found the ambassador in a chair with his head slumped to the right. They quickly put him on the stretcher and hurried to the ambulance. He was dead.

At 3:30 am Washington time, Lindsay Dubs was awakened from a fitful night's sleep by the sound of a ringing phone. It was her father's second wife Mary Ann. She was distraught and emotional as told Lindsay that she'd gotten a call from Cyrus Vance; her father had been abducted and murdered in a botched, attempted hostage rescue. The news of her beloved father's tragic death rendered Lindsay preternaturally calm and detached. Everything seemed surreal as she moved through days of formal events and ceremonies commemorating her late father, his life, and his career.

In the immediate aftermath of Ambassador Dubs' assassination, President Carter issued the following statement:

I am shocked and saddened by the murder of Ambassador Adolph Dubs in Kabul this morning. The act of brutality which took his life has deprived our nation of one of its most able public servants. Throughout his distinguished career in the Foreign Service, Ambassador Dubs took on difficult and challenging jobs, in the service of his country – and the manner of his death redoubles our dedication to the struggle against the kind of senseless violence which took his life. My thoughts and prayers are with the family of Ambassador Dubs.

President Carter, as a special mark of respect to the memory of Ambassador Dubs, ordered all flags to be flown at half-mast on Federal Government properties across the United States and its territories and possessions, including naval vessels and United States embassies and government facilities around the world. Finally, the President sent a special aircraft to Kabul to bring Ambassador Dubs' body back to the United States. Traveling aboard the plane were some government officials, Mary Ann Dubs, and several relatives and friends of the Ambassador. The plane arrived in Kabul in the afternoon of Friday, February 16.

Later in the day, over 500 people, primarily Americans and members of the international diplomatic community in Kabul, gathered at the Ambassador's residence for a memorial service led by leaders of several different faith traditions. Ambassador Harry Barnes, Director General of the Foreign Service at the U.S. Department of State, gave the eulogy. The Ambassador's friends, loved ones, dignitaries, and a cross-section of Kabul residents looked on as his casket was silently loaded on the plane.

Shortly before the plane took-off on its return journey to the United States, the press corps assembled at the airport was given copies of a letter written by Mrs. Dubs in response to the letter of condolence President Carter had received from Afghan President Taraki. It read:

Dear President Taraki:

Thank you for your expression of sympathy on behalf of the Government of Afghanistan.

When my husband took up his duties as American Ambassador to Afghanistan, one of his goals was to represent not only the interests of the United States but also the character of the American people. One of those characteristics is that reasonable men of goodwill can work together to find solutions to common problems, even in times of crisis. Another is compassion and respect for the value of the individual.

Beyond the personal grief which his loss has brought to me, there is a larger sense in which his death is a tragedy – that he should have died in circumstances so alien to the ideals he sought to project in his work here.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Dubs

President and Mrs. Carter, Vice President Walter Mondale, and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and his wife were among the hundreds of people present when the Ambassador's flag-draped coffin was solemnly removed from the plane at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington, D.C. on Sunday, February 18. The officials offered their personal condolences to Mary Ann Dubs and the Ambassador's daughter, Lindsay. After several public comments by the President and others, Secretary Vance posthumously awarded Ambassador Adolph Dubs the State Department's highest honor, the Secretary's Award. Engraved on the bronze plaque presented to Mary Ann Dubs were the words: *For inspiring leadership, outstanding courage, and devotion to duty for which he gave his life. Kabul, February 14, 1979.*

A hearse transported the Ambassador's body from the airfield to the Chapel at Arlington National Cemetery to lay in state for two days before final funeral services were held at the chapel at the Ft. Myer Army Base. A 19-gun salute to Ambassador Dubs closed the ceremony at Andrews.

Reverend Seth R. Brooks, the pastor from Ambassador Dubs' stateside church, National Memorial Universalist Church in Washington D.C., led the funeral service at the Memorial Chapel at the Ft. Myer Army Base. The solemn service was filled with meaningful readings from the Bible and other Holy texts along with traditional Christian hymns. Special Advisor to Secretary of State Vance, and a close personal friend of Ambassador Dubs, delivered the eulogy.

The Ambassador was finally laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery on Tuesday, February 20. A full honor guard gave another 19-gun salute and a bugler played taps. He was 58 years old,

Among the most meaningful condolences the Dubs family received, was a message from his former colleagues in the State Department's Office of Soviet Affairs. It read:

Those of us who worked with Spike Dubs over the years in Soviet affairs feel a special sense of loss. In a business where tension and frustration are a way of life, his even temper and steady hand made him a model to follow. The greatest irony is that this warm man who had no enemies should have fallen victim to an act of violence. We will remember him for his professional ability, his loyalty and most of all for his friendship. To us, Spike was a 'nice guy' who finished first.

Ambassador Adolph Dub's obituaries noted that he was survived by not only his wife and daughter, but also by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Dubs, Sr. of Arlington Heights, Illinois, his older brother, Alexander Dubs, Jr. and his family, also of Arlington Heights, and his younger sister, Wilma Milford and her family of Palatine, Illinois.

Epilogue

More than 40 years have passed since the tragic death of Ambassador Adolph Dubs in a Kabul hotel. Sadly, the events of his final hours are still shrouded in mystery with no clear motives for the actions of both the hostage takers and the "rescuers." The impact of his life and death, on loved ones, coworkers, United States Foreign policy, and historical events reveals how the life of this exceptional man continued to impact others even after his passing.

In the aftermath of her husband's death, Mary Ann Dubs wanted to find a way to honor the memory of her late husband and his commitment to being an instrument of peace. She felt that her husband would have wanted her to find a way to be giving towards the Afghani people so she joined forces with a former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Bob Neumann, to create the Afghan Relief Committee. The focus of this charity was to aid Afghan refugees who had fled to Pakistan after the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Mrs. Dubs used her considerable networking skills to make contacts and raise money for the charity. In December 1980, Pakistan's President Zia presented Mrs. Dubs with the "Star of the Great Leader" award, the second highest Pakistani honor a foreigner can receive, for her work with Afghan refugees in his country.

Earlier in 1980, Mary Ann Dubs had returned to the State Department as a Foreign Service Officer. She joined her late-husband's department, the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs as a staff assistant to the assistant secretary. Later she was appointed an administrative officer in the bureau's executive office. In July 1983, she began her foreign assignment as a general services officer at Embassy Mexico City.

Mary Ann Dubs died of leukemia at age 40 in 1985. She was laid to rest next to her husband in Arlington National Cemetery.

Jane Dubs, the Ambassador's first wife, found herself penniless following her ex-husband's death. She had been receiving alimony following her divorce in 1976. The alimony stopped when Ambassador Dubs was killed. Government employees do not receive Social Security so she could not claim Social Security. Unfortunately, the way the laws regarding the spouses of Foreign Service Officers were at the time of the Ambassador's death in 1979, she was not entitled to her ex-husband's death benefits or pension. All of Ambassador Dubs survivor benefits went to his wife of three years.

At age 57, Jane had arthritis of the neck and hands. She had no home. She had nothing to fall back on despite the many years she, too, had served her country aboard as a volunteer and supported her husband's work and career as a diplomat. After much soul searching, she decided to do she could do, which was to testify before Congress on a bill authored by Representative Patricia Schroeder, a feminist and tireless advocate for improving the lives of women and children, to change how the wives of divorced and retired foreign service officers were treated following the passing of their former/late spouses. The bill became part of a package of reforms known as the 1980 Foreign Services Act.

Jane Dubs ultimately returned to her native Illinois. She died in December 1993 and is buried in Elgin.

Ambassador Dubs' mother, Regina Dubs, died four months after her son in June 1979. His father, Alexander Dubs, Sr., died two months after his wife in August of 1979. Wilma Dubs Milford, the Ambassador's sister, passed-away in April 1986. His brother, Alexander Dubs, Jr., died in February 2004.

The American educated, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hafizullah Amin, the Afghan official who did nothing to help Ambassador Dubs following his Valentine's Day abduction, overthrew and assassinated President Nur Muhammad Taraki and declared himself President of Afghanistan in September 1979. The Soviets never trusted him so when they took control of Afghanistan in late December 1979, they killed him and all of his male family members (the women in his family were imprisoned), and installed their own president, Babrak Kamal.

Following the murder of Ambassador Dubs, President Carter finally gave in to all the hawkish voices who wanted the U.S. to abandon its humanitarian approach aimed at keeping Afghanistan neutral, if not pro-West. The United States Central Intelligence began providing covert military aid and training to Mujahadin insurgents fighting the Soviets. Within a matter of months, only a skeletal crew was left at Embassy Kabul. The role of these individuals was to act as a *listening and reporting post*.

As history played out, it would be more than 20 years before the United States government posted another ambassador to Afghanistan. The wisdom of the humanitarian aid approach to U.S. – Afghan relations, advocated by Ambassador Dubs, has also been proven over the 40 years since his assassination. The current 1,000+ staff at Embassy Kabul is highly focused on a variety of aid projects aimed at helping the severely impoverished civilian population.

Lindsay Dubs married William “Billy” McLaughlin, had three sons, and became a grandmother. Spirituality and creativity have defined her adult years. She continued working as a journalist and editor for Sojourner Magazine for a few years after her father’s death, and still periodically contributes to the magazine and other publications. She also spent several joyful years as a Montessori educator. Lindsay derives much pleasure from the spiritual and artistic expression found in liturgical dance and continues to share her talents with a variety of faith communities. More recently, she has been a spiritual retreat leader and blogger at the Rolling Ridge Retreat Center in West Virginia, but Lindsay and Billy have recently decided to leave the retreat center and are currently in the process of writing a new chapter in their lives together.

The death of Ambassador Chris Stevens in Libya in September 2012 prompted Lindsay to pen an article for Sojourner Magazine entitled, *Don’t Give Up on Global Friendship*. In the article, she shares her belief that the best way to *honor slain diplomats is to keep the flame of diplomacy alive*. Accompanying the article is the photo below. It is the image she most treasures from the days immediately following her father’s assassination.



The photo depicts some of the Afghani men who worked at Embassy Kabul gathered around a makeshift memorial they had created in the embassy courtyard to honor their fallen friend. Prominently featured is a large portrait of Ambassador Dubs. It is meaningful to her because she feels it shows an authentic and spontaneous outpouring of the men’s deep grief and their fondness for her father. It seems a fitting tribute to the legacy of Ambassador Adolph “Spike” Dubs and his deep desire to be a peacemaker, and builder of a global *beloved community*.

This article has been compiled from a variety of online resources and publications as well as from generous, personal interviews with Lindsay Dubs McLaughlin and Janet Dubs Soderberg. Photos, except as otherwise indicated, are courtesy of a variety of publications.