



In April, our Wellesley College class of 1959 officers designated current class officers, past presidents and vice presidents to be invited to Madeleine “Maddy” Albright’s funeral at the Washington National Cathedral and the private reception at the United States Institute of Peace. I fell into both categories, but had several reasons not to accept — my health, my budget, and my unease with flying alone across country at age 84.

Whether to say goodbye in person and pay tribute to our star Wellesley College classmate was not decided by me but by my younger sister, Sarah, in Georgia, who helped with transportation and all of the details of travel. She understood my admiration and respect for Maddy, an extraordinary American hero who served her country and the world with class, dignity and style as its 64th U.S. secretary of state from 1997 to 2001. Sarah said, “You must attend for our family.”

The actual ceremony and reception were meticulously and beautifully orchestrated. The eulogies told of the gifts which Albright brought to her life, work and her family of three daughters. The speakers pointed to her North Star — Albright’s passion to bring as many countries as possible into the circle of democracy. Until her death in March she warned us about the fragility of our democracy in her beloved America where the currents of autocratic, fascist ways and leaders were surging.

During the funeral and the reception, I realized Madeleine’s other North Star was her own family, immediate and extended. Because of her work, charisma and brilliance, she attracted oh so many friends from across the world while keeping her longtime friends, many of whom were from our Wellesley community.

My memorable experiences in Washington D.C. from April 26 to 28 gave me insight into Madeleine’s devotion and commitments to at least six institutions: Wellesley College, the Albright Institute, the Washington National Cathedral, motherhood, the United Nations, and the U.S. Department of State. While these institutions benefited from her leadership and energy, she could not have accomplished her intent and goals without the love and support of her family and friends.

Madeleine and I, to a lesser extent, had fearsome, if not terrifying, childhoods during World War II. She and her family fled Czechoslovakia and eventually came to America. My dad served on submarines, and even when I was 4 and 5, I sensed some bad guys were out to get my family and my country, as we pulled down the dark shades at night in our New London, Connecticut home and rationed food. Daddy was gone all the time to shoot the bad guys with his submarine.

Madeleine and I served America in our fathers' respective careers, the diplomatic corps and the U.S. Navy. Over time, we came to understand what threat analyses and "in the national interest" meant. Were Albright alive today, she would continue to raise her voice for a democratic and free America. She would say it's time for the millennials and other age groups to fight for freedom, equality and security which is inherent to democracy in action. and relieve the "perennials" (near-elders like me and others who, according to Maddy, "keep on blooming") from their leadership.

To younger Americans, look to the dream that Madeleine kept up front and personal. As the "The Sound of Music" by Rogers and Hammerstein II goes: "Climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow, till you find your dream. ... A dream that will need all the love you can give, every day of your life, for as long as you live." May you lift up her values and give your love and energy to democracy and family.

I will miss you, Maddy, and keep you in my heart and soul. It was a blessing and honor to be able to be with you and your friends and our classmates in Washington.

Fair winds and following seas. *Beth*

*Retired Commander Beth F. Coye, U.S. Navy lives in San Diego and is the daughter of the late Rear Admiral and Mrs. John Coye. She is a former professor of political science and international relations at several colleges and universities including the Naval War College.*

