

COLDWELL

Colbert Coldwell died peacefully at his home in Socorro, known as "La Orilla," at the age of 89 in the early morning of Wednesday, May 19, 2010. He was born in El Paso on April 30, 1921 at Hotel Dieu



Hospital, the second child of Judge Ballard Coldwell and Eleanor Eubank Coldwell. He was the grandson of William Michie and Stella Brinck Coldwell, and John W. and Jessie Stanfield Eubank. He was also predeceased by his older sister Katherine Coldwell Slutter and his younger sister Eleanor "Nena" Coldwell Shapleigh.

He attended Bailey and Crockett Elementary Schools in El Paso, and Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, before graduating from El Paso High School. From 1939 to 1943, he attended Texas A&M University, graduating with a degree in agricultural economics, and enjoyed saying that he chose his major based on the shortest line at registration. While a member of the Corps of Cadets at A&M, Colbert met Ida Koen Wesson of nearby Navasota, Texas. Colbert was captain of "C" Troop Cavalry at the then-all-male A&M, but lost his captaincy when he and Ida "late dated" after meeting curfew one night following a dance. They married at St. James Episcopal Church in Houston on March 10, 1945.

During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946, stationed at Fort D.A. Russell in Marfa, and was honorably discharged as a first lieutenant. He was assigned to patrol the border between the United States and Mexico because of his ability to speak Spanish, and later amused listeners with tales of valor at "Ojinaga." He continued to serve in the Army reserves until 1950. After the war, he managed H. Schumacher Oil Works in Navasota from 1946 to 1950, and then he and Ida, with two-year old daughter Carlisle, moved to Clint, Texas where he managed the family farms, cultivating cotton and alfalfa, raising sheep and turkeys, boarding horses and occasionally running cattle with his friend, Woodrow W. Bean. Among friends and acquaintances in the Lower Valley who spoke Spanish, he was known as "Juan," and was often found atop his favorite horse, the English-saddled Captain Cobb, with his dog Mike along for the ride.

In 1957, he began to "read" law under the tutelage of H.L. McCune, Jr., passing the Texas bar exam in 1961 and joining ranks with other fourth-generation El Paso lawyers in his family, William Coldwell Collins and Colbert Nathaniel Coldwell. At various times, he practiced law with the firm of Collins, Langford and Pine and with Bert Williams. In 1965, Colbert was appointed U. S. Commissioner (now known as a United States Magistrate Judge.) Among other notable cases, he presided over the preliminary and detention hearings for singer Johnny Cash charged with smuggling prescription drugs across the border in a guitar case.

He won election as County Judge in 1966, serving on Commissioners Court from 1967 to 1970 with Commissioners Rogelio Sanchez, Sam Blackham, Richard Telles and Clyde Anderson. During his term, the court succeeded in having the first computers installed at the county. As County Judge, Colbert and Ida participated in the October, 1967 ceremonies in which Presidents Johnson and Diaz Ordaz formally proclaimed settlement of the Chamizal dispute, the culmination of a process in which both of his grandfathers had furnished testimony during the 1911 arbitration hearings. He lost his bid for re-election, having alienated one group of voters by providing food

supplements for the children of striking refinery workers and another group by voting to provide birth control information at county health clinics. He also lost a campaign for judge of the 65th District Court, the bench to which his father had been appointed in 1915. Later, he served as city attorney for Horizon City. He was a member of the State Bar of Texas and of the El Paso Bar Association.

He served as county chairman for the campaigns of Ralph W. Yarborough for Governor and U.S. Senate. He was also an alternate delegate to the 1968 National Democratic Party Convention in Chicago, "the rough one where Hubert Humphrey was nominated for President," as he described it, and he was a delegate to several El Paso county and state Democratic conventions. He served as chairman of the El Paso County Democratic Party from 1972 to 1974. He was recognized with the Humanitarian Award by the Black El Paso Democrats in 1991.

Colbert was active in public service. Beginning in the 1950's, he served on the Southwest Rodeo and Livestock Committee and the Clint ISD School Board. He was a member of the Clint Lion's Club. In the 1960's he was a member of the El Paso Public Library Board and was co-chairman with Chuck Brady of the Sun Bowl selection committee which brought UTEP to the Sun Bowl. He was a member of the Downtown Rotary Club. He was on the board of the El Paso County Historical Society for many years, serving as president in 1988-89. In the 1990's, he was appointed to the Board of Managers for R.E. Thomason General Hospital, now known as University Medical Center.

A lifelong Episcopalian, Colbert was baptized at the Church of St. Clement and served as a lay reader and vestry member at St. Christopher's in El Paso and at Church of the Incarnation, later named St. Brendan's, in Horizon City.

Colbert is survived by his beloved and devoted wife of 65 years, Ida Wesson, his son Ballard Eubank Coldwell, his daughter Carlisle and her husband John N. Navidomskis III, grandsons John Navin IV and William Wesson Navidomskis and their wives, Sandra Irene Rubio and Mary Anne Skotak, respectively, and great-grand-daughters Brooke Noelle, Violet Brisa and Katherine Elizabeth Navidomskis, all of El Paso, as well as numerous cousins, nieces and nephews.

His funeral will be held on Tuesday, May 25, 2010, at 12:00 noon at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 300 Riverside Drive, El Paso, Texas, preceded by a viewing on Monday, May 24th, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Martin Funeral Home-East, 1460 George Dieter Drive, El Paso - (915) 855-8881. Pallbearers will be: John N. Navidomskis III, John N. Navidomskis IV, William W. Navidomskis, Colbert N. Coldwell, Ballard C. Shapleigh and Jamie Cardwell. Honorary pallbearers will be Bert Williams and Bill Barton, and all the regulars who rolled for coffee at the Clint Café, the Boll Weevil and Cotton-eyed Joe's.

In lieu of flowers, the family desires that donations be made to the El Paso County Historical Society, P.O. Box 28, El Paso, Texas 79940; St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 300 Riverside Drive, El Paso, Texas 79915; Friends of the Rio Bosque, CERM-UTEP, 500 West University Avenue, El Paso, Texas 79968; or a favorite charity. Buenas noches, Papa. No reproches.

