



Name in English: Richard F. Hum
Name in Chinese:
Name in Pinyin: Use Pinyin for the Chinese name
Gender: Male
Birth Year: 1924-2011
Birth Place: Butte, Montana
Current location: Yountville, California
Philanthropy: Yes

Profession(s): Air Force Officer

Education: Reed College, 1943; Yale University, 1944; Bachelor of Arts, Physiology, 1945, University of California-Berkeley; Master of Arts, Physiology, 1950, University of California-Berkeley; Air Command and Staff College, 1959; Defense Intelligence School, 1965; Air War College, 1966; Master of Arts, International Affairs, George Washington University

Awards: Legion of Merit – five awards, United States Government; Cloud and Banner Award, Republic of China; 1966, Outstanding Graduate Award, Air War College; 1976, Honorary Ph.D. Military Science, American Cornerstone University; 1977 National Intelligence Certificate of Distinction, Office of the Director of National Intelligence; 2001, Hall of Fame, Veterans Home of California - Yountville

Contribution (s): Colonel Richard Hum is a rare survivor, a three war United States Air Force veteran of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, who excelled in the Cold War not in combat but in the use of information. Born in Butte, Montana in 1924, he was raised in San Francisco and graduated as the valedictorian of George Washington High School in the summer of 1941. In the wave of patriotism following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 he wanted to volunteer for military service but at 17 he had to get parental permission. With memories of the cruel and short lives of Qing Dynasty era soldiers in China still fresh in his mind, Hum's father initially refused. Confronted with the knowledge that his son would either volunteer or be drafted once he turned 18, he signed the permission papers while weeping, thinking all the while that he was signing his own son's death warrant. In any event, and doubtless to his father's relief, Hum didn't see combat service during the war. He became an officer in the Army Air Corps then left active service at the end of the war, earning a B.A. and M.A. in Physiology from UC Berkeley. Hum was a doctoral candidate in Physiology and Histology at Berkeley when he was recalled to active military service because of the Korean War and never went back for those degrees.

As a young officer he recalled instances of deliberate discrimination when he'd be told to attend an important meeting and shown up only to discover that the meeting was already over. He made it his practice to always show up first at all meetings fully prepared. Gradually, through sheer competence and hard work, he started winning support and assignments. Among the most important of the assignments was to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs which included service

during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. To minimize news leaks President Kennedy authorized the Defense Department as the only official source of information surrounding the crisis. Only four men could take the president's calls at the Pentagon on the special "red phone" that was setup; Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, his assistant and later General and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colonel George Brown. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Arthur Sylvester, and his assistant, Major Richard Hum. In early morning calls from the White House it was sometimes Major Hum that advised the president on what to say to the American people to make the US case through U2 reconnaissance photos.

Lieutenant Colonel Hum was assigned as the air attaché to the US Consulate in the British colony of Hong Kong and Portuguese Macau in 1965. Hum was the first American of Chinese descent to be assigned to that title with diplomatic accreditation by the US Foreign Service. His appointment caused some controversy among the British authorities as they didn't want to recognize an ethnic Chinese diplomat as an equal, lest this cause them problems with the Chinese they ruled in Hong Kong. However, both the State Department and the Pentagon staunchly insisted on the appointment until it was allowed. It was during this assignment that he met and was very impressed by ex-Vice President Richard Nixon. In an informal discussion in his hotel room, the future president talked with the commander of the US 7th Air Force about the Vietnam War and to Colonel Hum about China. Both Nixon and Hum had come to the independent conclusion that the next leader of China would be Deng Xiaoping. Nixon immediately brought up Deng and reaffirmed this belief again the next year in 1966 in a private meeting with Colonel Hum at the Air War College. Deng was purged from power at the start of the Cultural Revolution that same year but became undisputed leader of China in 1980.

Colonel Hum's next assignment was to the politically sensitive post of Defense/Air Attaché to the Republic of China in Taiwan. This encompassed the period of upheaval caused by US recognition of the People's Republic of China and the downgrading of relations with the Republic of China. His astute handling of the relationship won him honors from both sides. By special request of the State Department, retired Colonel Hum later returned to Taiwan and worked for two years at the American Institute of Taiwan in the sensitive area of military sales. Colonel Hum met with then California Governor Ronald Reagan on a state trade delegation visit to Taiwan in 1972. They talked about China of course.

His last Air Force assignment was head of Human Intelligence at the Pentagon. His greatest coup came in 1976 when his group handled the debriefing of a defecting MiG-25 pilot who'd landed his plane in Japan. The CIA at first insisted their people have exclusive access to the pilot then suddenly realized that nobody at the CIA had the technical and language skills to understand "pilot talk" in Russian. Success led to the award of a National Intelligence Certificate of Distinction in 1977 after Colonel Hum's retirement. In total, Colonel Hum was awarded the nation's second highest non-combat award, the Legion of Merit, five times in recognition of his outstanding service over the years.

Philanthropy:

In 1996, Colonel Hum and his wife, Jane, moved to the Veterans Home of California in Yountville. Colonel Hum volunteered and worked as the Donations and Acquisition Manager. Because of their work on behalf of veterans they were inducted as a couple into the Home's Hall of Fame in 2001. Colonel Hum himself was responsible for raising over \$2 million in donated furniture, funds, and equipment.