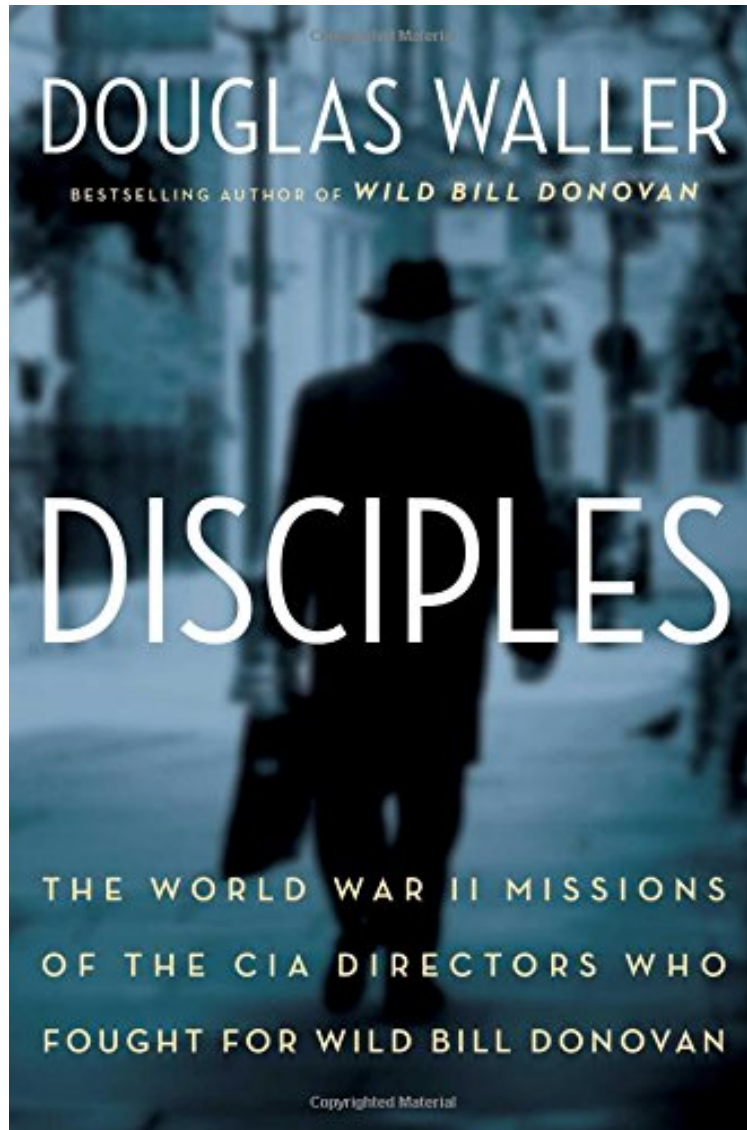


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## Disciples: The World War II Missions of the CIA Directors Who Fought for Wild Bill Donovan

*Douglas Waller*

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**Douglas Waller : Disciples: The World War II Missions of the CIA Directors Who Fought for Wild Bill Donovan** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Disciples: The World War II Missions of the CIA Directors Who Fought for Wild Bill Donovan:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A great WWII spy book well worth telling By W. R. Nelson I found this a very good book. Based on what I've read elsewhere about the principal characters (Dulles, Helms, Colby Casey),

these are perhaps sympathetic, but overall very even-handed presentations. The major focus of this book is the time each man spent working for the OSS during WWII; if you're looking for a history of the CIA or an in-depth study of any of these men's tenure as Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), this is not that book. What the book does, and does very well, is tell the story of how each character came to work in the OSS, how it impacted them, and how they ended up at the CIA afterwards. Four different stories; all are interesting. Allen Dulles was an international lawyer who started out his career in the State Department (rather easy to do, when your uncle is the Secretary of State). Richard Helms started out as a reporter stationed in pre-WWII Berlin. William Colby was an "army brat" who volunteered for service and was frustrated that his poor eyesight was keeping him out of the action. Finally, William Casey was a brilliant research analyst with a gift for organization that Donovan's OSS clearly needed. Of the four, Dulles was really the only "active" spy, and a pretty good one. Based in Switzerland, he wasn't shy about letting it be known he was interested in information and willing to pay for it. Helms and Casey were generally based at OSS's London office running spy operations. Colby's was a true "shooting war", as he ended up doing commando duty in both France and Norway. For each of them, serving in the OSS was, for them, a "Good War". The book only spends about 30 pages (in the hardcover version) discussing each man's turn as DCI. In that brief space, it does a pretty good job explaining the controversies (some self-inflicted, some not) that marred their service, and in three of the cases, ended up getting the Director fired (Casey resigned for health reasons, but was up to his neck in Iran-Contra when he resigned). I found the last paragraph of that chapter was the best summary of what went wrong for each of these men as DCI; why, it was that doing what was deemed "good work" in the OSS seemed to go so terribly wrong at the CIA. One of the themes talked about in other books I've read about the CIA is the basic issue that outside of spying against a known enemy in a hot or cold war situation, Americans aren't comfortable with having a spy operation. Add to that a penchant the CIA has for moving beyond pure intelligence gathering and analysis into clearly illegal operations, getting caught up in the mess might be part of the job of DCI. This book doesn't try to solve that riddle, but it's one I thought about when I was finishing it. Douglas Waller writes a good book. I enjoyed the topic, and I enjoyed how it was written. I recommend this to anyone interested in the "spook" careers of these men before there was a CIA.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating look at espionage history. By Toe Tag. This book is an interesting comparison of four men who served the United States in times of peace and conflict with one thing in common. They were spies who reached very high levels within the Central Intelligence Agency. The author divides the book into sections to make the comparison easier to understand. Especially since it details such complicated matters as starting a spy agency, gathering intelligence, sorting material and reporting information back to the United States. Of particular interest is the role espionage played in Switzerland during the second world war. The author goes into great detail regarding the members of the Austrian and German underground and the information they brought the allies. In particular, this section of the book details the American knowledge of the attempt on Hitler's life known as Valkyrie. Allen Dulles was the man in charge of the Switzerland operation and quite frankly, I think it sounds like he enjoyed every moment of his work during the war. He was a master spy whose operations gathered intense information about the fall of Germany. Also quite interesting were the training of the Jedburgh. This complicated training led to men, and sometimes women, who volunteered for some of the most dangerous missions in World War Two. Among these men was William Colby who led commando missions in France and Norway. The Norway history is quite fascinating and an area I've not read much about. But anything to do with commandos on skis is bound to be interesting. Colby was clearly possessed of great courage. Richard Helms and Bill Casey will complete the history book. Anyone interested in the history of 20th century espionage will clearly recognize these names. I will leave the rest of the details regarding their actions in World War Two and Vietnam to the reader of this book. But needless to say, it is as interesting as anything that was done by Dulles or Colby. This book is expertly researched and is fairly easy to read. It makes for a wonderful introduction to fine history regarding espionage and the kind of men who choose this line of work. I enjoyed it tremendously and would recommend reading the book *Counter Spy* by Richard Cutler as another perspective on World War Two. The book *A Drop in the Night* by Royce Fulmer for more information about the methods of delivering spies. Finally, if you are interested in behind-the-scenes action in Normandy I would recommend reading *Bailout over Normandy* by Ted Fahrenwald.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Superbly Chosen and Thoroughly Described Profiles and Work Histories of Four Veterans of Wars Hot, Cold and Political. By James D. Litton. This quadruple biography is a great service, to both casual and committed students of WWII and Intelligence history. The wealth of relevant detail, which must have taken prodigious, targeted research in both documents and with remaining witnesses and descendants is just that...relevant. I found myself, very unusually, eager to read even the minor facts provided. Waller does a great job of tying the details together, so that even the administrative activities in London help to illuminate the biographical narratives. He selects the right quotes from the principals to reflect both their personalities and their times. Their self-assessments in or near retirement reinforced one's sense of their individual strong personalities which had such a strong effect on their destinies as DCI. The political buffeting each took, both the earned and undeserved portions were like the exigencies of their wars; uncontrolled event-driven but strongly affected by those unusual personality traits and intrinsic competencies. I knew one of them a tiny little bit after retirement but in a work-related context and while there was little opportunity to

observe very much, that little bit was quite consistent with the image of him projected by Waller.

“A fantastic book, one of the very finest accounts of wartime spookery...a hell of a good tale.” —The Wall Street Journal The author of the critically acclaimed bestseller *Wild Bill Donovan*, tells the story of four OSS warriors of World War II. All four later led the CIA. They are the most famous and controversial directors the CIA has ever had—Allen Dulles, Richard Helms, William Colby, and William Casey. *Disciples* is the story of these dynamic agents and their daring espionage and sabotage in wartime Europe under OSS Director Bill Donovan. Allen Dulles ran the OSS’s most successful spy operation against the Axis. Bill Casey organized dangerous missions to penetrate Nazi Germany. Bill Colby led OSS commando raids behind the lines in occupied France and Norway. Richard Helms mounted risky intelligence programs against the Russians in the ruin of Berlin after the German surrender. Four very different men, they later led (or misled) the successor CIA. Dulles launched the calamitous operation to land CIA-trained, anti-Castro guerrillas at Cuba’s Bay of Pigs. Helms was convicted of lying to Congress about the CIA’s effort to oust Chile’s president. Colby would become a pariah for releasing to Congress what became known as the “Family Jewels” report on CIA misdeeds during the 1950s, sixties and early seventies. Casey would nearly bring down the CIA—and Ronald Reagan’s presidency—from a scheme to secretly supply Nicaragua’s contras with money raked off from the sale of arms to Iran for American hostages in Beirut. Mining thousands of once-secret World War II documents and interviewing scores of family members and CIA colleagues, Waller has written a brilliant successor to *Wild Bill Donovan*.

"*Disciples* is a fantastic book, one of the very finest accounts of wartime spookery I've seen. . . . it's a hell of a good tale, aided immeasurably by Mr. Waller's skill at disentangling the knotted story lines of his protagonists and his dexterous straightening of the often contradictory accounts of the shadow war's dauntingly complex machinations. . . . his eye for journalistic color (honed by his stints as a correspondent for *Time* and *Newsweek*) turns his solid research into taut narrative. . . . *Disciples* is a remarkable work of synthesis." (The Wall Street Journal) "Entertaining and richly detailed . . . a textured adventure story that emerges from Waller's command of the archival material and his fluid writing style. That latter gift helps Waller overcome what could have been the cumbersome task of weaving together four distinct war experiences . . . Waller moves among these biographies with ease." (The Washington Post) "Entertaining and enlightening . . . absorbing . . . [Waller's] story of Dulles' tortuous dance with a German informant while running the OSS activities in Switzerland is worthy of John le Carré. His tales of Colby's paramilitary operations in France and Norway include riveting episodes of heroism (and a possible war crime that got lost in the Allied victory) that would fit in the best war novels. . . . [Waller] makes the case that these four men's wartime actions deeply colored what they did as CIA directors. Their zeal in fighting the Nazis, and their acquired love of intrigue, escalated during the battle against communism. Ardor became audacity. And each fell from grace. It's a messy business." (The Charlotte Observer) "Waller has clearly mastered the material and tells each man's story with verve and energy. Based on extensive research in original sources, which he lays out in endnotes, the chapters are literal page-turners." (Studies in Intelligence) "Eye-opening . . . Waller keeps the interest high and the pages turning in one of the more interesting spy books this year." (Kirkus) "Meticulously researched...Waller's easygoing writing style and extensive use of primary sources make this work worthwhile for those interested in espionage history." (Publishers Weekly) "Douglas Waller knows the world of spies and he knows how to tell a story. The World War II adventures of these future spymasters are fascinating and instructive about the moral ambiguities of espionage and covert action. A gripping read from the pen of a master." (Evan Thomas author of "Being Nixon" and "Ike's Bluff") "Waller reintroduces us to the legendary spymasters who fought in World War II. In his gripping book, Waller gives us the little known backstories of the future intelligence chiefs and their cunning use of espionage and sabotage. Decades later, accused of bungled operations, crimes, and abuse of power, they would all go to war again, but this time just across the river in Washington." (James Bamford, author of *The Shadow Factory*) "Allen Dulles, Bill Casey, Bill Colby and Richard Helms became symbols of the CIA's worst Cold War failures and scandals. Waller vividly chronicles their accomplishments as young OSS operatives who put their lives at risk during World War II. This is an enthralling story of patriotism, courage, dedication, and at times reckless panache. Given the trajectory of their postwar lives, it is also a tragedy—a true American tragedy." (Andrew Nagorski, author of *Hitlerland* and the forthcoming *The Nazi Hunters*) "Meticulously researched . . . Waller's easygoing writing style and extensive use of primary sources make this work worthwhile for those interested in espionage history." (Publishers Weekly) "Douglas Waller follows up his best-seller *Wild Bill Donovan* . . . with a ripping WWII sequel, *Disciples* . . . Waller . . . drops a discerning dime on a series of backstories of espionage and sabotage provoked by Donovan's 'disciples' . . . Allen Dulles, Richard Helms, William Colby and William Casey, [who] later became CIA directors." (The Buffalo News) "This book will make a dandy holiday gift for the spy story buff who eats up yarns about the dark side of the world of intelligence and those masters of intrigue who exist inside the web. This is an authoritatively researched and smoothly written tale. . . . *Disciples* will make good reading for your favorite spy buff." (The Washington Times) "Waller's *Disciples* offers the reader a thoroughly researched and highly detailed history of these influential

spies who ignited the covert action industry of the late twentieth century." (Military) "Disciples is a lengthy but marvelous work—assiduously researched and richly written—that actually delivers on its subtitle." (International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence) About the Author Douglas Waller is a former correspondent for Newsweek and Time. He has authored five previous books on the military or foreign policy, including the bestsellers, *The Commandos* and *Big Red*, and the critically acclaimed biography of General Billy Mitchell, *A Question of Loyalty*. He lives in Raleigh, North Carolina. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

### DISCIPLES

## PROLOGUE

The Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle on Rhode Island Avenue was among the capital's most impressive churches, shaped in the form of a Latin cross, its interior walls covered with shimmering Italian Renaissance-styled murals, its large copper dome in the center atop an eight-sided lantern rising two hundred feet. Appropriate for Washington, D.C., Matthew was the patron saint of civil servants. Funeral masses for Catholics who had risen to the highest levels of the U.S. government had been celebrated inside its nave, which could seat about one thousand. On this Wednesday morning, February 11, 1959, as light from the chilly day outside streamed through translucent alabaster windows, nearly every space in the pews was filled with veterans of the two world wars, captains of New York finance, lawyers with Washington's power firms, barons from publishing, high clergy from the archdiocese, Georgetown and Virginia horse country matrons, senior officers from the Pentagon, representatives from the White House—and spies. Many spies. The body of General William "Wild Bill" Donovan rested in the flag-draped coffin before the white marble table of the Eucharist in the sanctuary. The funeral home had dressed him in his tailored Army uniform with his rows of combat ribbons pinned to it. Donovan's had been the life of "medieval legend," an editorialist wrote: an Irish kid who escaped the poverty of Buffalo's First Ward, who quarterbacked his college football team, graduated from Columbia Law School with Franklin Roosevelt, was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism in World War I, and who made millions as a Wall Street attorney. At the dawn of America's entry into World War II, Roosevelt had made him his spymaster—the director of what became known as the Office of Strategic Services. Donovan, who had earned his nickname "Wild Bill" as a hard-driving commander in the First World War, assembled for the Second a force of more than ten thousand espionage agents, paramilitary commandos, propagandists, and research analysts, who waged battle in the shadows against the Axis from stations all over the world—a remarkable achievement considering he began his intelligence organization with just one person. Wild Bill. When the choir from Catholic University had finished singing and the rustling in the congregation had quieted, Monsignor John Cartwright climbed the steps to the ambo to deliver the eulogy. "The citizen and soldier of whom we are taking leave today filled an exceptional role in the lives of multitudes of people," he began in a booming voice that echoed through the nave. "This gathering testifies both by number and character how great a role that was . . ." Allen Dulles sat near the front on the left side with a contingent of his clandestine officers in the pews around him. The CIA director's secretive nature, even with the obvious, could be maddening to outsiders—"you ask him if it was raining outside, he'd laugh at you," said one—but his agents revered him. Dulles had a talent for getting men and women to risk their careers and lives for him. He had become an international celebrity by 1959, his Central Intelligence Agency popular among Americans and a formidable instrument of foreign policy. Dulles could pick up the phone and call leaders and secret service chiefs all over the world, many of whom he had known personally for years. (Although, technologically inept, he always struggled with the switch on the handle of his scrambler phone, which had to be pushed to talk and released to listen.) Dulles understood power, how to play power games, and he loved to play them. An adoring CIA analyst penned a clumsily written poem about the director: So Mr. D. Went by land, air, and sea Round the length and breadth of the world The craft he was in Ranged from choppers at Hua-bin To a yacht that had its spinnaker unfurled Mr. D. worked all day While others would play Yet he seldom let loose his thunder. He's a man that his troupe All felt as a group Mighty glad and proud to be under. To friends, Mister D looked like the headmaster of an upper-class English boarding school, dressed usually in bow tie and tweed sport coat, his wiry gray hair slightly mussed, his mustache carefully trimmed, a pipe almost always clenched between his teeth (sometimes more for effect, they suspected, than for smoking), gray-blue eyes that sparkled with interest behind steel-rimmed glasses, and a soft voice that invited people to pour their hearts out to him. The laugh. It seemed to be with him always—occasionally hearty when he was genuinely amused, but more often a mirthless "ho-ho" he turned on when trying to ingratiate himself with a stranger or deflect a question he did not want to answer. Colleagues could see that the country gentleman routine also masked a fierce competitor not willing to give up a single point on the tennis court, "a back alley fighter" as one put it, a devious man who sized up other men and women based solely on whether they could be useful to him, an introvert at heart whose true agenda could be unfathomable behind the veneer he erected. Dulles, who had been Donovan's station chief in Switzerland during World War II, had had—as many men did—a complicated relationship with the general. That Donovan was a skilled intelligence officer Dulles would never publicly deny. Donovan after the war had hailed Dulles as his top spy, which was the case. But Donovan always suspected that Dulles thought he could have better managed the OSS and that he wanted his job, which was also the case. Yet for all his private disdain of Donovan's leadership, Dulles now ran the CIA much as Donovan would have. Like Donovan, Dulles believed gentlemen behind closed doors could undertake unsavory missions and violate ethical strictures for a higher cause. He had recruited for his CIA, as Donovan had for his OSS, America's brightest, most idealistic, most

adventurous minds—self-assured men and women sent out to the world, with broad latitude from headquarters, to secretly battle communists in the Cold War as Donovan had fought the Nazis in World War II. Like Donovan, Dulles loved to swap stories with his spies in the field, to micromanage the covert operations that interested him, and largely ignore the ones that didn't. Like Donovan, Dulles was willing to undertake clandestine missions others would shrink from as reckless and be unfazed if he met with failure. "If one stops gathering intelligence because some day something should be a little out of place," Dulles once rationalized, "you wouldn't be doing anything." Donovan would have said the same. Dulles looked back on World War II as his best years. Although he never explicitly stated it, his OSS experience shaped his character for life. "General Donovan bore an illustrious part in the two great wars that have filled so much of our century. No less illustrious were the services he rendered in our years of anxious and troubled peace . . ." Sitting with the CIA contingent was Richard Helms, an officer nearing middle age whose rise in the agency had been respectable yet blocked at times by other men Dulles valued as more daring. Helms instead stood out for his administrative skills, an attribute Dulles considered "useful" (always his favorite adjective for Helms) yet boring. As he had been in Donovan's OSS, Helms in the CIA was a purist of the trade, far more interested in quietly collecting and keeping secrets on an enemy than in actually fighting him in the shadows. Unlike Donovan and Dulles, he distrusted covert operations that presidents could deny, believing that if anything could go wrong with them it would. The seamier aspects of clandestine warfare—such as assassination—gave him pause, not for moral reasons but because he thought them crude tools and often ineffective. Helms was the consummate spy with his Mona Lisa-like smile, hair always slicked back neatly, and an aloof personality. He did not make friends easily and when he did he remained deliberate in his friendships, always restrained, rarely letting down his inhibitions. "An open mouth gathers no information," he liked to tell his children. There were plenty of stories circulating in the CIA on its colorful characters. No one could think of a good anecdote about Helms. The consummate intelligence operative, he left no trail behind. Men had to strain to come up with something to say about him because he made so little impression on them. Women thought him tall and handsome, which he was, but little else came to mind. He detested drawing attention to himself, grew furious with relatives who revealed even innocuous details about his job. At parties he was a good dancer and a charming conversationalist, but he rarely drank more than one martini so his head remained clear and was the first to leave early so he'd be fresh for the office the next day. Or, if the gathering was at his house, he would shoo out guests when his bedtime neared. Yet family members could detect a twinkle in his eye. He took teasing well from them and enjoyed the ironies of life. He was attentive to his children when they became adults and they could converse with him on his level. He grew sentimental and teary-eyed delivering family toasts. He always sent handwritten thank-you notes and expected them in return. He had a prodigious memory, an obsession with accumulating the tiniest details in his head (who at a party had crowns in his teeth, who bit his nails), was fluent in French and German, and could be fanatical about proper spelling and punctuation in reports he read. He loved to play a who-leaked-it game with his wife when he read a revealing story in *The Washington Post* on intelligence. He enjoyed spy novels except for John le Carré's, which he found too darkly cynical about his profession. He also had his distinctive features if you looked hard. He smoked two packs of Chesterfields a day for most of his life. Though otherwise a tightwad, he was always immaculately tailored—his expensive suits bought from Lewis Thomas Saltz in Washington, his shoes specially made for his small, high-arched feet at \$700 a pair from Peal Co. in London. He wore his belt with the buckle on the side of his waist instead of at the front. He never left home without a tiepin at the bottom of his tie and a white handkerchief tucked neatly into his jacket pocket. And he strutted out to the tennis court always in long white trousers. As he did with everything, Helms viewed his service in the OSS as a young Navy lieutenant with clinical cool dispassion, never with nostalgia. Donovan's "league of gentlemen," as the general had called them, contained its share of social register misfits and bored Wall Street businessmen looking for action, Helms knew, many of them now hangers-on in the CIA. Helms thought the OSS had only had a minimal effect on World War II's outcome. "The war would have been won without the OSS," he once said. But Donovan deserved credit for being a visionary, if somewhat chaotic, leader, Helms thought. The general had introduced the Pentagon and Americans to unconventional warfare practiced on a global scale. And the OSS had taught Helms how to be a spy. "His record of achievement and honor has been much reviewed since the day of his death and will always be remembered in the pages of our history. But his life of combat and of leadership, of service and example is ended now . . ." In the back of the cathedral with the focal mosaic of St. Matthew's looking down on him, Bill Casey sat numbed by grief, as a son would be over the loss of a father. Donovan had been not just a boss but also a mentor to Casey, who served as his secret intelligence chief for all of Europe during the war when he was only thirty-one years old. The two shared similar backgrounds—descendants of poor Irish Catholic immigrants who had worked their way through law school—and since the war Casey had set out to follow Donovan's path to power, climbing the ladder of Republican Party politics and bankrolling his love of international affairs with a fortune earned on Wall Street. In the fourteen years after the war, Casey was now, as Donovan had been, a multimillionaire. He worshipped everything about the general—his charisma, his drive, his intellect. He kept a miniature bronze statue and photos of Donovan in the study of his Long Island mansion. The two had kept in close touch after the war, dining out frequently, exchanging letters on foreign policy issues, and sharing a love of books. Donovan would send Casey volumes he had read with notations on

the pages. Casey reciprocated with his favorite books, except he rarely ever wrote in the margins. Casey did not have the patience for notating. He once wrote a lengthy article on how to consume a nonfiction book “and save a lot of time.” Casey usually read back to front, starting with the index and source notes to select what he thought he needed to know and to bypass the rest. With a photographic memory, he could retain passages almost verbatim of journal articles he seemed to be just flipping through; he would become incensed with subordinates who wasted his time in meetings repeating what they had written to him in lengthy memos many months earlier. He had always made a bad first impression on others, even more so in middle age—tall and lumpy, with a jowly face, thick lips, eyes bulging, wisps of graying hair on his balding head, an expensive suit always rumpled, his tie often stained from what he had eaten for lunch, and frequently mumbling when he spoke as if he had marbles stuffed in his mouth. The acquaintances he made usually ended up being either lifelong friends who worshipped him or skeptics who could not escape an uneasy feeling that he was a devious operator working business or political deals they would rather know nothing about. The slovenly appearance, however, covered a body constantly on the go, incapable of sitting down for a long talk over drinks. His mind was insatiably curious. On family vacations in Europe he would vacuum the timetable brochures at train stations and study them in his hotel room at night to recite from memory itineraries for his companions the next morning: “If you’re travelling from Nice to Avignon on a Tuesday at 2 p.m. and miss your train, you’d have to wait for three hours for the next one to arrive at the station.” Little did not interest him. On subjects remote from his daily life he would ask hundreds of questions. James Jolis, the son of a family friend, recalled Casey showing up out of the blue at a nightclub where his rock band was playing; after listening for a set, he walked backstage to interrogate him. “How does this band work?” Jolis recounted him asking. “How do you get paid? How do you store your equipment? In five minutes he had ascertained how to run a rock band better than I could.” As with Donovan, making millions in New York would never be as exciting or fulfilling for Casey as his war years with the OSS. Never again would he know such responsibility at such a young age, commanding scores of espionage agents sent to penetrate the Third Reich. His most cherished friendships had been formed in the general’s organization. His proudest moments had been with the OSS. It was the high point of his life. “He has gone from the scene of his success to meet his final judgment, his final reward, his final destiny . . .” February 8, the day Donovan died and the first day of the Vietnamese celebration of the Tet New Year, William Colby stepped out of the Pan Am Stratocruiser into a blast furnace of heat at Saigon’s Tan Son Nhut Airport. He was soon wilting in his drip-dry suit, bow tie, and polished shoes—although his only concession to Vietnam’s perpetually broiling sun, which he made that day and for the next three years in the country, was to take off his jacket but keep his bow tie in place. Behind him, his wife, Barbara, herded their children, exhausted from the long flight. A CIA officer from the Saigon station shepherded the family through customs in the dirty, faded terminal and bundled them into a staff car. Colby was the new deputy chief of the CIA station, which numbered only forty at that point and was relegated mostly to collecting intelligence on the communist Viet Minh. Barbara and the kids gazed out the automobile’s windows as it sped quickly south on Ngo Dinh Khoi Road, which was lined with teeming squalid shanties interrupted occasionally by high-walled villas where the rich quarantined themselves. Across Saigon’s boundary line, the road’s name changed to Cong Ly, for “Justice,” and more white- and cream-colored tropical houses for the wealthy appeared along the way. The heavily guarded homes reminded Colby of villas he’d seen in the south of France. But he looked up at them only briefly. The lengthy secret cable on his lap now consumed his attention. At the airport, he had been handed the urgent message that bore his first crisis—an informant the CIA had placed in Prince Norodom Sihanouk’s army had been nabbed and the Cambodian leader was furious with the agency and the United States. Past the former palace of the French governor general, now the residence of South Vietnam’s strongman Ngo Dinh Diem, the CIA driver wheeled the staff car into the courtyard of Colby’s new quarters, a high-ceilinged, French colonial-styled villa shaded by tall trees. Inside, the house was filled with servants bowing with their hands together as if praying. In the entrance hall on a table sat another cable, which Dulles had sent out to all his stations announcing that Donovan had died. Barbara could see that Colby, who could be severe about keeping his emotions always in check, was grief-stricken. Before they had boarded a plane in Washington for their flight to Southeast Asia, they had visited Donovan at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and had come away heartbroken. Donovan had spent the last seventeen months in the hospital dying slowly from arteriosclerotic atrophy of the brain, a severe form of dementia. Colby had served as one of Donovan’s commandos in the OSS. The general treasured his special operations guerrillas who parachuted into enemy territory, as Colby had, to fight the Nazis. Colby’s first job out of law school after the war had been in Donovan’s firm as his assistant. Donovan took the couple to professional football games in New York on weekend afternoons and enjoyed flirting with Barbara at parties. Eventually bored with the law, Colby joined the CIA and traveled the world with Barbara and the kids as a covert operative. Donovan, who visited the family occasionally at their overseas posts, was the kind of warrior-intellectual that Colby wanted to be. His months behind enemy lines living by his wits as a paramilitary operative fighting the enemy had been exhilarating. He naturally gravitated to the covert operations side of the CIA where he believed the action was, fighting communism as he had Nazism with a sureness that his cause was righteous. Colby’s secret world of espionage and sabotage, for all the dirty things that went on in it, was a pristine one in his mind. When asked one time for his definition of the best kind of spy, Colby answered with the obvious: “The one you don’t see.” He looked like a man who could be

overlooked—slightly built, pale dull eyes behind horn-rimmed glasses, his hair always parted neatly at the side. A private man, he could nevertheless be warm and friendly around friends and strangers. He was unfailingly polite with refined manners. He made a point of serving others drinks at parties, almost never uttered a mean-spirited or petty sentence, and rarely showed anger. He was not a frivolous man. He paid no attention to what he wore, repaired plumbing and performed carpentry work around the house. Yet he had what for him were his guilty pleasures. He enjoyed a good bottle of Sauvignon Blanc, drove a red Fiat sports car on weekends, loved to sail, and appreciated beautiful women (though there is no evidence he ever acted on what he noticed). He was intrigued by classical Greek and Roman heroes. He had three favorite movies: *Lawrence of Arabia* (Peter O’Toole’s portrayal of one of his heroes, T. E. Lawrence), *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (about a British colonel’s misplaced loyalty), and *The Third Man* (a mystery written by Graham Greene). He told a family member he had never had a nightmare—never even dreamed for that matter. His sons—he always called them “sport”—found his inner drive and courage intimidating. He never bragged about the combat he had seen in the OSS; only an occasional aside that let them know it had been intense at times. In fact, during the war he had been coolly analytical about its dangers, willing to take what he called “calculated risks.” He kept his secret world carefully walled off from his family. And even inside the OSS and later the CIA, colleagues recalled Bill Colby as a dedicated soldier-priest, but a loner they never really knew. An informal poll once circulated among nearly sixty retired CIA officers with two questions. If you were shipwrecked on a pleasant deserted island with plenty of food and liquor “and every hope a ship would pass by,” who would you choose to be with? Dulles won handily over Colby because he would be far better company while they were stranded. Second question: If you were stuck on a miserable deserted island with little food or hope for survival and you badly wanted to escape, who would you choose to be with? Colby easily led Dulles because he would know how to build a boat to get them off the island, one voter noted—and he would make sure the boat was big enough for two. “Each of us has his purpose, fulfilled on Earth but planned by God for us, to carry out a human ministry. He who does well serves God and can look for God’s reward.” For all their differences in personality, a common thread ran between Allen Dulles, Richard Helms, William Casey, and William Colby. They were all smart—indeed, intellectuals in one sense because they were voracious readers, thoughtful, curious, and creatures of reason—but they were not the ivory tower types who would sit for long in doubtful introspection. These were strong, decisive, supremely confident men of action, doers who believed they could shape history rather than let it control them. They returned from World War II not emotionally drained or scarred by what they had experienced but rather invigorated and ready for the next battle. The OSS, which had interrupted their lives, now delineated them, they became regulars at postwar reunions of Donovan’s agency, but they talked little about their OSS experience and preferred not to dwell in the past. They were always more interested in the future than in what they were doing at the moment or had done before. Helms, Colby, and Casey would become CIA directors as Dulles was now. Eventually all four men would resign as controversy engulfed their agency. Dulles’s downfall would come after the CIA debacle attempting to land anti-Castro guerrillas at Cuba’s Bay of Pigs. Helms, always the loyal keeper of secrets, would later be convicted of lying to Congress over the CIA’s role in the coup that ousted President Salvador Allende in Chile. Colby would become a pariah among old hands in the agency for releasing to Congress what became known as the “Family Jewels” report on CIA misdeeds during the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. (Helms would reserve a special loathing for Colby because he also turned over to the Justice Department the evidence of Helms’s perjury.) Casey would nearly bring down the CIA—and Ronald Reagan’s presidency—from the scheme to secretly supply Nicaragua’s contras with money raked off from the sale of arms to Iran in exchange for American hostages in Beirut. But that would be in the future. On this chilly February morning in 1959, their thoughts were with the old man whose body lay in repose at St. Matthew’s Cathedral and on the good war they had fought for him. “May his soul rest in God’s peace. And may those whom he has loved and the many whom he has served be worthy to know him again in the communion of saints.”