

# PREFACE

Hemingway said that nobody ever lives their life “all the way up” except bullfighters. He was wrong.

Spies do as well.

Their existence is an admixture of drama, intrigue, danger, and double-dealing. In most cases, a spy cannot survive without being a consummate liar.

What are we to think, then, about those World War II spies who went on to write memoirs or give interviews for biographies? Were they lying? After all, they had proven during the war that they were skilled at creating an alternate reality. For many war buffs, the testimony of spies is presumed false until proven true. If they really did that, the thinking goes, if that really happened, it would be in the files of the intelligence agency. The problem is that most of the things spies did and saw, and conversations they had, were never recorded. That should be common sense, since the last thing a spy would want is to be caught with something in writing. Even in their post-war debriefings, spies generally did not recount the details of their missions.

The historian’s job, then, is essentially one of jurisprudence: applying the rules of evidence to ascertain what is credible, what is in-

## PREFACE

admissible hearsay, what is circumstantial, and so on. This is done by comparing what the spy claimed with the testimony of other primary sources (i.e., eyewitnesses), and with files found in intelligence archives.

Typically, since former spies are restricted by oaths of secrecy and classification, they don't produce memoirs until thirty or more years after their active service. And over such a stretch, memories—particularly regarding dates and details—fade. In many instances, their recollections are inaccurate, sometimes with evident embellishments.

Accordingly, many of the heroic deeds performed by Allied spies during World War II—agents who risked their lives—have been challenged by historians. And that is certainly the case with Aline Griffith, whose extraordinary experiences working for the OSS I have tried to capture in this book. A few years ago a friend mentioned her name to me and I was intrigued: a thriller-type story about an American woman who had been a spy in Spain. But there was a caveat: he wasn't sure if her story was true. I could dig into her file at the National Archives, of course, but I started with what she had written about her own life.

Aline wrote about her experience as a spy in five books—*The History of Pascualete* (1963), *The Spy Wore Red* (1987), *The Spy Went Dancing* (1990), *The Spy Wore Silk* (1991), and *The End of an Epoch* (2015)—as well as in an article (“The OSS in Spain During World War II”) she submitted for inclusion in *The Secrets War: The Office of Strategic Services in World War II*, a book published by the National Archives and Records Administration in 1992.\* *The History of Pascualete*, Aline's first memoir, mainly concerned her time refurbishing a historic Spanish estate owned by her husband's family. She began the book, however, with a brief introduction of how she, an American, had ended up in Spain. She had been an OSS spy in Madrid during World War II, she wrote, and it was there that she

---

\*She also published a sixth book in 1994, *The Well-Mannered Assassin*, but this was a purely fictional work.

## PREFACE

met her husband, Luis Figueroa, a member of one of Spain's most aristocratic families. What is significant about this first book is that Aline accurately stated when she had arrived in Lisbon (the layover stop en route to Madrid)—February 1944—and that her code name was BUTCH.

In 1987, after many documents relating to wartime Allied espionage in Portugal and Spain had been declassified, Aline told another version of her story in *The Spy Wore Red*, albeit with countless alterations, additions, and embellishments. In her preface she wrote that she had changed many names to protect the identities of individuals who remained active in intelligence, to avoid embarrassment of certain persons or their families, or because that person had requested anonymity.

The most important name change was the person who had recruited her, Frank Ryan, whom she refers to as “John Derby.” And her boss in Spain, Madrid station chief H. Gregory Thomas, she refers to as “Phillip Harris,” changing his code name from ARGUS to MOZART.

One might find it peculiar that she also changed her own code name—from BUTCH to TIGER—even though she had disclosed that it was BUTCH twenty-four years earlier in *Pascualete*. Aline explained the reason for the change in an interview: her editor wasn't crazy about “BUTCH,” a less than appealing code name for a beautiful young woman operating in high-society Madrid.

Strangely, Aline also changed the date of her arrival in Europe. Hotel registrations show that she arrived in Lisbon on February 8, 1944, as she had stated in *Pascualete*, but twenty-four years later in *The Spy Wore Red*, she wrote that she arrived in late December 1943. Did she forget? Did she not consult her own prior book to make sure she had the dates correct? Apparently not.

But Aline's mix-up of dates isn't really significant. The bigger question I wanted to answer was whether she fictionalized or embellished all or most of her exploits. If she did, I realized, I'd have to find another spy to write about.

During my initial research I was particularly concerned by the

## PREFACE

claims of Nigel West, author of scores of books about World War II espionage, that Aline had made everything up. He asserted that Aline had been only an OSS clerk, and not an actual agent.\*

West's assertion struck me as odd, though. If Aline had lied about being an agent, wouldn't a number of her OSS colleagues have refuted her story? And why would two of her books have carried endorsements by two former CIA directors? It's unlikely that both William Casey (himself a former OSS agent who had known Aline during the war) and William Colby would have been supportive if they suspected her books were pure fiction.\*\* Casey, in fact, seemed to go out of his way to assure readers of the veracity of Aline's story: on the inside cover of *The Spy Wore Red* he wrote, "Her narrative reflects sensitively and accurately the clandestine intrigue and strategic maneuvers that marked the struggle between the secret services . . . in wartime Spain."

After poring over OSS records—including every word in Aline's files—during a four-day marathon at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland, and reviewing published and unpublished memoirs and letters from Aline's Madrid station colleagues, I came to four conclusions:

1. Aline had in fact trained at The Farm (an OSS school for prospective agents), was a code clerk in the Madrid station from February 1944 until August 15, 1945 (when the OSS office closed), and was a field agent from February 1945 to August 15, 1945.
2. She was a highly productive and valuable agent, producing some fifty-nine field reports, far more than any other Madrid agent, and had more subagents working for her than anyone other than possibly the station chief, Gregory

---

\*Nigel West, *Historical Dictionary of Espionage*, 326.

\*\*Casey was CIA director from 1981 to 1987. Colby was director from 1973 to 1976.

## PREFACE

Thomas, or Larry Mellon, who was supervisor of the French-Spanish escape chains.

3. She imagined numerous events and murders in her three espionage memoirs.
4. Her overall story was quite legitimate, and one killing she mentioned was not only true (I confirmed it with the person who actually handled the corpse), but shocking in its violence.

So there's no question that Aline was an active, highly valued operational agent, but her spy books must be regarded as historical fiction; some parts are true, many others not. What you will find in *The Princess Spy*, then, is what I believe—based upon OSS records and other historical sources—actually happened in wartime Madrid.

And as with all of my books, every word of dialogue found in the text is a direct quote from a primary source, all of which are documented in the endnotes.

Larry Loftis  
February 1, 2020



# PROLOGUE

It was probably the wind.

Gusts seemed to be blowing all the time in Madrid. Besides, Aline told herself, no one knew where she lived. While her apartment was on the list of safe houses for agents coming through the French-Spanish escape line, no one had yet used it.

She glanced at herself in the mirror, pleased with the way she looked in her red silk dress. Edmundo was picking her up at ten for a cocktail party, and then they were going to La Reboite for dancing. Flamenco would probably start around eleven, and her dress was perfect for all the spinning and turning.

*But what about that man who seemed to be following me on the street a few days ago?* she asked herself. *He certainly knows where I live.*

She twisted out her lipstick and began to apply it. Yes, that man was disturbing, as were the footsteps she'd heard echoing behind her several times when she'd come home late from the office. Then again, she'd only seen the man's back, and the footsteps the other nights could have been those of the neighborhood night watchman. Besides, it would be impossible for anyone to get on the roof and—

*There it is again.*

The shutters.

LARRY LOFTIS

Aline froze for a moment and listened. Everything was still. She was imagining things. Wind blows, shutters creak. She put her lipstick in her purse.

*And again.*

No doubt this time. Shutters don't creak like that from the wind. Someone was prying them open.

Quietly, she eased back the vanity drawer and removed her pistol. This was precisely the reason for all those endless exercises at The Farm—the shooting in the dark and around corners. She was a good shot, too, although she'd never practiced with this much adrenaline surging through her veins.

The window was in the adjoining salon and she'd have to be careful not to be silhouetted by the moonlight streaming in from her bedroom window. She flipped off the gun's safety and tiptoed into the hallway.

Her breathing was shallow and fast and she prayed her hand would be steady.

Slowly, she began sliding along the wall, edging closer within the shadows.

As she approached the opening to the salon there was another creak and then she saw it.

A man's hand pushing back the curtain.

She raised the gun.



CHAPTER 1

## DYING TO FIGHT

*May 24, 1941*  
*Estoril, Portugal*

The American checked in and surveyed his luxurious surroundings. Estoril's Palacio, Portugal's finest, was everything he had heard: an opulent five-star hotel and resort with a golf course, spa, and Europe's largest casino, all situated alongside the gleaming Tamariz Beach. Royalty often visited here, creating Estoril's reputation as the Portuguese Riviera, and with Portugal's neutrality during the war, many were here now, enjoying the town's safety, beauty, and amenities.

The clerk mumbled in broken English about a form for foreign guests and asked his occupation. Thinking of something generic, he said "businessman" and watched as the clerk wrote *comerciante* on the form.

Stepping away from the registration desk, he could see the pool and terrace tables through the full-length windows. To his right was the Palacio bar, small but handsomely appointed. If the rumors were true, many of its patrons were spies, which meant he'd have to frequent it nightly.

His cover was sound as he had no ostensible reason to be here; America wasn't in the war, after all, and he couldn't be suspected of being a spook since the US had no intelligence agency. He wasn't even in the military. For all practical purposes, he was a ghost.

## LARRY LOFTIS

His name was Frank T. Ryan.

What he was up to was off the record but vitally important to US national interests. And his timing couldn't have been better. British Naval Intelligence officer Ian Fleming had checked in to the Palacio four days earlier. German press attaché Hans Lazar—the most powerful Nazi in Spain—would arrive two weeks later.

**BOLETIM DE ALOJAMENTO DE ESTRANGEIRO**  
 Para os efeitos do Art.º 6.º do Decreto N.º 15.884 de 24 de Agosto de 1928, declara que fornece alojamento ao estrangeiro cuja identidade consta do verso deste boletim.

**PALACIO HOTEL**  
**ESTORIL**  
 data 24 de 5.º de 1941

*Nota: O nome e endereço podem ser substituídos pelo carimbo aposto nesse lugar.*

Este espaço só será preenchido na policia

**BOLETIM INDIVIDUAL** 802  
 Para os efeitos do art.º 1.º do Decreto N.º 16.386 de 18 de Janeiro de 1929 (Aprovado pelo Decreto lei N.º 26.327 de 30 de Maio de 1934)

Nome completo / Nom et prénom: *Frank Timothy Ryan*  
 Nacionalidade / Nationalité: *Americana*  
 Local de nascimento / Lieu de naissance: *OH Groj*  
 data / date: *27 de Maio* de 1907  
 Profissão / Profession: *Comerciante*  
 Domicílio habitual / Domicile habituel: *U. S. A.*  
 Passaporte / Passport: *Passaporte nº 680797*  
 Expedido em / Délivré à: *Washington*  
 Data / Date: *22 de Março* de 1941  
 Assinatura / Signature: *Frank T. Ryan*

Frank Timothy Ryan's Palacio Hotel registration, May 24, 1941. *Cascais Archive*

Meanwhile, an ocean away in rural New York, a tall young woman who had just graduated from the College of Mount Saint Vincent was searching for employment. She had the good looks of a model or actress, but her small town didn't offer those kinds of jobs. Born May 22, 1920, in Pearl River, New York, Marie Aline Griffith was the eldest of six children. Her mother and father also had been born in Pearl River, a hamlet located twenty miles north of midtown Manhattan.

Founded in 1870 by Julius Braunsdorf, a German immigrant who had relocated his Aetna Sewing Machine Company there, the town began to flourish some twenty-two years later when Aline's grandfather, Talbot C. Dexter, moved his Dexter Folder Company into Braunsdorf's building. Dexter had invented and patented a ma-

## THE PRINCESS SPY

chine that changed the way that books, newspapers, and magazines were assembled.

During Aline's childhood Pearl River was a Norman Rockwell town, with four Main Street attractions: Schumacher's grocery, Rowan's butcher, Sanford's drugstore, and the First National Bank. There was one school—the Pearl River School—and Aline would see no other classrooms until she left for college.

Aline's father managed the Dexter factory and her mother was a homemaker. Their house, situated less than a thousand feet from the Pascack Valley Line, allowed Aline to see and hear the train as it whistled by, twice in the morning and twice in the evening, on its way to and from Manhattan.



Pearl River as Aline knew it during her childhood. The Griffith home was located in the wooded section about where the center of the north-pointing arrow is located. Directly above "Pearl River" the rendering shows the Braunsdorf-Dexter factory where her father worked, and to the right of "Pearl River" the local train can be seen heading into town.

Even in the 1930s and 1940s, Pearl River felt like a town somehow suspended in an earlier time, and some of Aline's schoolteachers had taught her mother. Crime was virtually nonexistent here, but there wasn't much to do other than stroll to the park or hike in the woods. In an effort to promote business and commercial con-

## LARRY LOFTIS

struction, Pearl River branded itself “The Town of Friendly People.” Indeed, it *was* a friendly town—a nice, quiet place to raise a family—but when Aline graduated from high school, she couldn’t get out fast enough. She was seventeen, yet she knew nothing of the outside world. Life was ticking by, and she was determined to broaden her small-town horizons.

Hoping to attend a university that had football games and dances, Aline was a bit disappointed when her parents chose for her a less exciting alternative: Mount Saint Vincent. It was a Catholic girls’ school with the regimen of the Marines: lights out at ten o’clock. It was also in the Bronx, a less than appealing college town.

The adventure Aline had been hoping for seemed far away.

In the summers she found convenient, mundane jobs. After her sophomore year, she worked as a supervisor at Rockland State Hospital, and after her junior year she worked as a secretary for Manny Rooney, a Pearl River attorney. She wasn’t quite sure what she wanted to do after graduation, but events soon conspired to create the opportunity she was looking for. During her final semester, the winter of 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and her younger brothers went off to war almost immediately, Dexter as a fighter pilot in England and Tommy as a submariner in the South Pacific. Aline knew that as a woman she couldn’t be a soldier but felt that nothing short of joining the war effort in some manner would fulfill her patriotic longing to do her part. Throughout December she searched for a way to help, but without success.

After the New Year she found employment, but it was a far cry from military service. At five foot nine, slender, and beautiful, Aline was perfectly suited for modeling, so she took a job with Hattie Carnegie in New York City. It was a dream job for any young woman, as Hattie was one of the top fashion designers in the country, but it wasn’t Aline’s dream.

While Aline wouldn’t have known it, Hattie Carnegie was an American success story. When her father died in 1902, thirteen-

## THE PRINCESS SPY

year-old Henrietta Kanengeiser commenced her business career as a messenger for Macy's. Two years later she began modeling, and in 1909 she launched her own custom clothing business, having changed her last name to Carnegie, a nod to Andrew Carnegie, the wealthiest man in America. Just a few years later Hattie opened her own store just off Park Avenue and was traveling to Paris annually in search of the latest fashions.

From Hattie, Aline would learn not only fashion, but poise, composure, and how to mingle at high-society events—skills that would come in handy later in situations with much higher stakes.

For eighteen months Aline modeled each season's new dresses, parading down runways as if she'd been trained in Paris. But the fittings, makeup, hair styling, and glitz of fashion were the last things she wanted. She was grateful for the work but there was a war going on, and what she was doing on a daily basis seemed almost sinful compared to the sacrifices others were making.

In August 1943 one of her friends, Amy Porter, invited her to a dinner party. Amy was dating a wealthy young man named John whom she hoped to marry, and she wanted to introduce Aline to John's brother Frank, who was coming to town. Frank was in his midthirties, Amy said, and he was flying in from somewhere overseas.

*Overseas.* Perhaps he'd have firsthand knowledge about the war, Aline thought.

The dinner was at John's apartment in Manhattan, and along with Frank, Amy, and Aline, two of John's colleagues from Standard Oil had been invited. The oilmen sat to Aline's left, Frank to her right. His suit was immaculate and looked hand-tailored, suggesting Wall Street or Madison Avenue. He had light blue eyes, a square, intelligent-looking face, and thin lips. His neck and jaw were thick like a wrestler's, but he had an easy smile. He was handsome, she reckoned, in a college professor sort of way.

As the night wore on the men bantered endlessly about the war, going back and forth about Patton and Rommel, Hitler and

LARRY LOFTIS

Roosevelt. Aline noticed that Frank was polite but a bit aloof, as if preoccupied with more important matters. He also didn't seem to express any romantic interest in her, which was something of a relief.

When the conversation lulled, Frank turned to her, smiling.

"Are you planning to become a famous model?"

The question caught Aline off guard, but she realized that John must have told Frank that she worked for Hattie Carnegie.

Aline smirked. "Not if I can help it."

"Really? And why is that?"

"I want to get into the war—overseas."

Frank suggested that she could become a nurse, but Aline brushed it off, saying that training to become a nurse would take years. She wanted to get into the war *now*, she said, and in Europe where the real fighting was.

"Now, why on earth would an attractive girl like you, safe and sound here in New York, want to go abroad to become embroiled in a bloody massacre? Someplace where your life could be in danger?"

Aline shrugged. "I love adventure. I like taking risks. All the men I know are eager to get over there. Why should it seem strange that a woman wants to also?"

Frank ignored the rhetorical question and probed about Aline's romantic life. Did she have someone she was in love with? Was she about to get married?

The inquiries were a little personal, Aline thought, but she answered that no, she wasn't in love—not that it should make any difference about what she could or could not do for her country.

"Do you know any foreign languages?"

Aline replied that she had majored in French and minored in Spanish.

Frank flashed his easy smile. "Well, Miss Griffith, if you're really serious about a job overseas, there's a slight possibility I can help. If you should happen to hear from a Mr. Tomlinson, you'll know what it's about."

## THE PRINCESS SPY

Aline returned the smile with a glimmer of hope, but at the same time she didn't expect much. Frank hadn't said who Mr. Tomlinson was, or even taken her number, so how serious could he be?

At the very least, though, she felt she'd made a new friend in Frank Ryan.

About two weeks later Aline's father mentioned that their bank had received an inquiry of some sort about them. Her mother thought it probably had to do with their boys now that they were in the service, but her dad worried the investigation might be connected to business.

But when they heard nothing more about it, it slipped from their minds. Then, on the last day of September, Aline received a long-distance call.

"This is Mr. Tomlinson," the man said in a deep voice. "Can you be free for a few minutes tomorrow?"

Aline said she could.

"Then please be in the Biltmore Hotel lobby, at six o'clock. A man with a white carnation in his lapel will be looking for you. Don't mention this meeting to anyone."

At the appointed hour Aline was at the hotel. Soldiers in crisp uniforms were buzzing in and out, a few at the bar having their last drinks before shipping out. After several minutes a distinguished silver-haired man in an expensive suit—duly adorned with a white carnation—greeted her without mentioning his name. He motioned to a quiet alcove where they could talk.

He said he worked for the War Department, and that they might have some work that could interest her. He couldn't tell her exactly what the work would entail, though, until she had passed some tests. He had a calm, soothing demeanor that put Aline at ease, and he seemed to take it for granted that Aline would be interested.

"Would I work overseas?"

The man nodded. "If you succeed in the tests, yes. Can you come

**LARRY LOFTIS**

to Washington within ten days? It will mean taking leave from your job. You may never go back, if all goes well.”

Aline said she could.

He thumbed through a date book and told her she'd need to arrive in Washington on November 1. Handing her a card with a phone number and address to give to her parents, he explained that she would not be at that location, but that calls and messages would be forwarded to her.

“Tell your family you're being interviewed by the War Department for a job. Bring a suitcase of clothes suitable for the country. Remove all labels. Carry nothing with your initials, nor papers or letters with your name. No one must be able to identify anything about you.”

He gave her a second card with a different address and told her this was where she was to arrive, no later than noon. “Go directly to the Q Building. Give a false name and home address to the receptionist.”

With that he bid her good luck and was gone.