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Allen Dulles, An Honorable Spy

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ALLEN W. DULLES, who died recently at age 75, looked like a happy college professor. He had all of the affectations of the absent-minded campus intellectual—high forehead, baggy tweeds, rimless glasses and the everpresent pipe.

This facade hid the real Allen Dulles, who was a master spy and eager intriguer. He followed his grandfather and uncle, both of whom had been Secretary of State, as his brother, John Foster, was later to become, into the diplomatic service. But his first assignment was in intelligence, setting his life's pattern.

Dulles resigned from the diplomatic corps in the 1930s over a salary dispute—he was paid an amount equal to his boss' salary. He spent several years with a prestigious New York law firm, working primarily with the firm's German clients, the Thyssen steel trust and the Farben chemical trust. When the U.S. entered World War II, Dulles set up the Office of Strategic Services undercover operation in Switzerland, tapping his German connections for secret information.

In Switzerland, Dulles perfected the habit of silence and the art of drawing others out:

"I have always tried to have important meetings around a fireplace. There is some subtle influence in a wood fire that makes people feel at ease and less inhibited in their conversation; and if you are asked a question which you are in no hurry to answer, you can stir up the fire and study the patterns the flames make until you have shaped your answer. If I needed more time to answer, I always had my pipe handy to fill and light."

Perhaps it was during a fireplace session that Dulles negotiated his major accomplishment of World War II, the early surrender of the German armies in Northern Italy.

In 1950, Dulles helped draft the legislation setting up the Central Intelligence Agency. After a short term as deputy director under Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, Dulles became head of the CIA and directed it for 10 years. The CIA post gave him full vent for his love of intrigue.

He figured there was a 20 per cent chance of overthrowing the communist government of Arbenz Guzman in Guatemala. In 1954, he sold the idea to President Eisenhower. It took 12 days to seize control of the country from Guzman.

Dulles engineered the coup that sent Iranian Premier Mossadegh packing and restored Shah Pahlevi to the peacock throne. He did not always win his battles, however. Two of his losses were colossal.

The Bay of Pigs fiasco brought ridicule to U.S. intelligence and sowed the seeds of doubt about its efficiency, a condition which lingers almost 10 years later. Dulles didn't like to talk about the Bay of Pigs.

One of Dulles' greatest intelligence achievements backfired, setting off an international political furor. He had the U-2 reconnaissance plane designed and built. U-2 flights at 70,000 feet over the Soviet Union provided the U.S. with vital information about the Soviet missile program. When a U-2 was shot down by the Russians, Premier Khrushchev called off a Paris summit talk with Eisenhower and chilled relations between East and West.

Dulles' accomplishments in the service of his nation far outweighed his relatively few boners. In times when the U.S. has to employ a vast espionage and intelligence apparatus, there are not many men who can do the job as cleanly and honestly as Dulles. He was a gentleman spy.