

A Native American Hero in the OSS and CIA

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As a paramilitary specialist, O’Jibway was one of the few American Indians in the CIA during the Cold War.

Although little remembered today, Louis Austin O’Jibway, who served with an Office of Strategic Services (OSS) amphibious unit along the Burma Coast and then won a Bronze Star for heroism with an OSS paratrooper operational group against Japanese forces in China, was one of the few Native Americans to serve in the OSS in World War II.¹ Later, as a paramilitary specialist, O’Jibway was one of the few American Indians in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the Cold War.² After O’Jibway was killed in Laos in 1965, CIA posthumously awarded this highly respected officer medals for his meritorious service in Southeast Asia.

A Michigan Chippewa farm boy whose father died when he was only three years old, O’Jibway had struggled for a better life, ultimately achieving prominence as an athlete and then as a decorated combat veteran in World War II and paramilitary officer in the Cold War. The story of this modest Native American hero is noteworthy in part because of his achievements and the roles of the OSS in Asia and CIA in Laos. His life also demonstrates the possibility that a Native American could achieve social mobility, on his own merits, through sports and military service.

Still, the years of secrecy that surrounded his death in August 1965 illustrate the challenges that the covert nature of the operations in

which clandestine service members are involved pose in providing the full recognition they are due for their service to the nation.

O’Jibway’s Struggle for Success

Big, ore-loaded ships still ease through the locks connecting Lakes Superior and Huron near O’Jibway’s birthplace in Soo Township, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. His ancestors included chiefs among the Chippewa, also called Ojibwa, a Native American people praised by Longfellow in his “Song of Hiawatha.” O’Jibway’s grandfather, a landowning chief, married a French-Canadian woman, a fellow Roman Catholic, in 1880. Thirty years later, one of their children, Joseph E. O’Jibway, owner of a hay and dairy farm and skilled dredge operator, married a Scots-Irish baker, Helen (“Nellie”) Brander. Louis Austin, born November 3, 1918, was the fifth of the couple’s seven children.³ Although his mother and grandmother were white, O’Jibway identified throughout his life with his Native American heritage.⁴

O’Jibway was nine years old when his mother remarried, and a hostile white stepfather arrived at the family farm. Soon, Louis and most of the other children were sent away to Indian boarding schools.⁵ As he grew older, O’Jibway excelled at sports,

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Football Star: University of New Mexico’s Louis A. O’Jibway was named to NBC sportscaster Bill Stern’s national “Little All-America” team in 1940 in *Life Magazine*. From the Louis A. O’Jibway Papers, courtesy of Teresa O’Jibway Cook.

earning him scholarships that helped pay his way at Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas; Bacone Indian School in Muskogee, Oklahoma; and the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. The six-foot, 195-pound Chippewa demonstrated his strength and agility, placing first in the shot-put and javelin at Bacone and starring as a football tackle in the days of leather helmets.⁶

O’Jibway also became a champion heavyweight boxer. In 1937 and 1939, he won state and regional Golden Gloves amateur boxing championships, the first of the Bacone “Braves” to reach nationals. *The New York Times* called this “Indian from Bacone, Oklahoma” one of the “formidable entrants” in the heavyweight class. He also reached the national boxing finals in the

Catholic Youth Organization.⁷ Sports writers tagged the tall, barrel-chested, copper-skinned fighter “Big Honey O’Jibway” and “The Battling Chippewa.” Perhaps because he lacked “a killer punch,” O’Jibway never won a national championship, but, as the press observed, he had “class” and “a fighting heart”—a “game, aggressive youngster who . . . never takes a backward step.”⁸

Although sports won him scholarship money, boxing took its toll: he broke his nose, his front teeth, and his right hand. As for his other expenses, he worked summers as a “rough neck” in oil fields and steel yards.

The University of New Mexico recruited O’Jibway with a sports scholarship, and he spent two academic years there.⁹ O’Jibway’s agility and footwork helped make him the university’s star tackle in the fall of 1939 and 1940 and winner of the state Amateur Athletic Union heavyweight boxing title for the school in the winters of 1940 and 1941. The yearbook tagged him “New Mexico’s greatest lineman in recent years,” and NBC’s leading sportscaster of the day, Bill Stern, named him to *Life* magazine’s national “Little All-America” team in 1940, recognizing O’Jibway as one of the top college football players in the nation.¹⁰

Boxing with Joe Louis

At the beginning of his senior year at the University of New Mexico in September 1941, the 22-year-old athlete and petroleum engineering major was drafted into the US Army.

College was over for O’Jibway, but boxing and football were not. Arriving at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, he was recognized by a former West Point football coach, who convinced O’Jibway to extend his one-year commitment to three years in the regular Army. O’Jibway was quickly promoted to corporal and assigned to the physical training unit at First Cavalry Division headquarters. Predictably, he soon became a star of the division’s football and boxing teams.¹¹ In 1942, after completing a 90-day course at officers’ candidate school, O’Jibway received a commission as a second lieutenant and an appointment as athletic director at the giant Cavalry Replacement Training Center at Fort Riley, Kansas.¹²

In addition to physical training, the Army encouraged football, boxing, and other sports to help turn new recruits into hard-fighting soldiers and help instill pride in their service. O’Jibway, by now a first lieutenant, led the cavalry team to victory over the infantry footballers and Midwest Army champions in 1942 and 1943.¹³ Even more notably, O’Jibway headed the cavalry’s successful boxing training and exhibition program. *Ring* magazine called O’Jibway’s program at Fort Riley, “one of the outstanding service ring outfits of any army camp.”¹⁴

Boxing brought O’Jibway a celebrity connection he would recount for the rest of his life—his ties to world heavyweight champion Joe Louis Barrow. The 28-year-old “Brown Bomber” from Detroit, a former Golden-Glove amateur champion himself, had enlisted in the Army and was assigned to O’Jibway’s boxing unit at Fort Riley from 1942 to 1944. The African American and the Native

American worked together identifying and training Army boxers and taking exhibition trips.¹⁵ O’Jibway sometimes acted as one of Joe Louis’s sparring partners, he would tell friends and relatives.

Enlisting in the OSS

In 1944, O’Jibway volunteered for “hazardous duty with small combat teams” in what he soon learned was William J. “Wild Bill” Donovan’s clandestine Office of Strategic Services, which sent spies and saboteurs behind enemy lines. OSS, a predecessor of CIA and Special Forces, was looking for bright, able, and daring individuals for a new amphibious unit OSS planned for the Pacific.¹⁶ Major Lloyd E. Peddicord, Jr., an Alabamian who had risen through the ranks and had won a Silver Star in the North Africa landings in

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November 1942, was an expert in night amphibious reconnaissance and landings. He signed up O’Jibway as one of his first recruits.¹⁷

On April 27, 1944, O’Jibway became the first member of the new unit to arrive at OSS Training Area F, the former Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland. A few days later, when Lt. John C. Hooker, Jr., an infantry officer from Atlanta, Georgia, arrived as the next recruit, the cavalryman was delighted: “Boy, am I glad to see that there is someone here other than me,” O’Jibway told Hooker. “I’ve been here for three days and am the only ‘secret agent.’ I was thinking that I was going to be on a one-man mission.”¹⁸

When the rest of the 60 men arrived, they soon began the demanding testing and training for commando operations, including practicing ju-jitsu, learning how to overcome an enemy while unarmed, and handling seven-man rubber boats on the Potomac River. A month later the unit was down to its planned strength of 40 men, organized into six small-boat teams. One night in June, 1944, they moved to OSS Training Area A, a large, wooded area today known as Prince William Forest Park near Quantico, Virginia.¹⁹ There, they loaded, fired, and field-stripped weapons from a dozen countries, assembled and disarmed booby traps, learned how to use the latest explosives and fuses, live off the land, and engage in nighttime hit-and-run operations. Their training ended with a Fourth of July celebration, at which a boxing match became so brutal that O’Jibway had to step in and bring it to a halt. The next week, the group learned that Gen. Douglas MacArthur had refused to allow the OSS men into his South West Pacific Area Theater, and their mission was shifted to the China-Burma-India Theater/South East Asia Command. They left on 14 July 1944 for the West Coast, and then Asia.²⁰

Lieutenants O’Jibway and Hooker bunked together on board ship, as they had in camp. Both were former Golden-Glove boxers, but the strong, tall Native American, weighing more than 200 pounds compared to his 140-pound companion was, Hooker recalled, a man of quiet strength who was treated with respect, as an



Champion Boxers: Golden Gloves heavyweight, 1st Lt. O’Jibway, left; Sgt. Joe Louis Barrow, world champion heavyweight, center; and Cpl. Sid Marks, former Canadian lightweight champion, right, in 1942. Under O’Jibway’s command, they became a prize-winning G.I. boxing training team at the US Army’s Cavalry Replacement Center, Fort Riley, Kansas, 1942–44. Louis A. O’Jibway Papers, courtesy of Teresa O’Jibway Cook.

equal. Unlike many Native American enlisted men in the armed services, no one called O’Jibway “chief”; most of his colleagues called him “Jib.” He did not discuss his background more than needed. “[Talk of] our personal lives, if discussed at all, was very brief,” Hooker remembered. “Jib was very, very quiet, like many big men are.”²¹

For several months in 1944 to 1945, the OSS waterborne Operational Group roared forth from bases on the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal on high-powered swift boats operated by the OSS Maritime Unit. From a home base named Camp Ritchie, they probed the islands, mangrove swamps, tidal creeks, and jungles of the Arakan coast of Japanese-occupied Burma, operating first under OSS Detachment 404 and subsequently under Detachment 101.²²

O’Jibway personally headed “Operation Rugby,” a successful landing that revealed the Japanese abandonment of a strategic island.²³ He also led his amphibious scout- and raider-team as part of several other reconnaissance operations, some of which resulted in fire fights. At night on Ramree Island, OSS probes triggered fire from Japanese machine guns and heavy weapons, causing several casualties and revealing that the enemy was there—in force. It took an entire British Indian Army Division and British Marine Brigade to capture Ramree Island in January 1945, on the way to liberate Rangoon.²⁴

Yanking the Arakan Field Unit from coastal reconnaissance in the spring of 1945, OSS Headquarters flew the OSS commandos “over ‘the



*OSS Amphibious Team at “Camp Ritchie” on the Bay of Bengal, 1944-45: 1st Lt. Louis A. O’Jibway, front row, far left; his friend, 1st Lt. John C. Hooker, Jr., back row, third from left; and other officers of the Operational Group and Maritime Unit section of the Arakan Field Unit.*²⁵ Photograph courtesy of Troy J. Sacquety.

hump,” the Himalayan Mountains, to China for a daring new mission. There they would join experienced OSS teams from the European Theater to train and advise the first Chinese paratrooper commando groups for raids behind Japanese lines. But first, the amphibious raiders had to become paratroopers themselves, earning their British parachute wings in India and their American parachute wings in China.²⁶

O’Jibway and Hooker joined the 10th Chinese Commando, one of 20 planned units, each to include nearly 200 Chinese troopers and their officers, plus their American OSS advisers. With little enthusiasm for the project, the Chinese Army sent many illiterate, malnourished, and reluctant Chinese peasants as recruits to the OSS experiment. O’Jibway, Hooker, and the other Americans did their best to build up, energize, and train them. At night in their tent, Hooker

recalled, he and O’Jibway discussed “the failings of the Chinese troops, and how we could motivate them.”²⁷

When a major Chinese offensive began in July 1945, the six OSS-trained commando units deemed ready were sent into action to seize airfields and bridges to disrupt enemy communication and supply lines. The 10th, 9th, and 8th Chinese Commando units, grouped together as the “Blackberry Mission” and headed by Capt. Arthur P. Frizzell, who had led an OSS operational group in France, were sent to help the Nationalist Chinese Army’s 265th Regiment in the 89th Division. Their first mission was to capture a Japanese-held airfield in Southeast China that had been built on the grounds of a US Maryknoll (Roman Catholic) Mission.

But when the paratroopers attacked, most of the regular Chinese Army officers and enlisted men remained in position instead of



OSS Operational Group in China: American officers and NCO’s who trained and helped lead the 10th Chinese Commando unit into action against the Japanese. O’Jibway is standing just behind the kneeling officer and the unit’s mascot, Trex. This photograph was taken in Kunming, China, in July 1945.²⁸ Photograph courtesy of Troy J. Sacquety.

advancing. In the 10th Commandos’ sector, O’Jibway and his US sergeants, supported by Hooker’s mortar unit, led their Chinese paratroopers in storming a hill and then firing down on the Japanese. When they began to run out of ammunition after suffering from heavy enemy counter-fire for several hours without any reinforcement, O’Jibway and Hooker had to withdraw their units. Three dozen Chinese paratroopers had died in the action, but the Chinese and their OSS advisers had killed more than 160 enemy soldiers. During the night, the Japanese withdrew from the airport and the town, so US forces had achieved their objective, although without the help of the regular Chinese troops. The Maryknoll priests came down from their hiding places in the hills and welcomed the Americans, who hung a parachute in the mission’s chapel as a memento.²⁹

With the Japanese surrender in mid-August 1945, O’Jibway and most of his colleagues returned to

Washington, DC. Many of those, like O’Jibway and Hooker who had lived in the field in China, were underweight and debilitated from dysentery, malaria, or jaundice.³⁰ Promoted to the rank of captain, O’Jibway received almost a year’s back-pay and was credited with 50 months of military service, including 15 months of combat duty in the Far Eastern Theater. At Donovan’s recommendation, the War Department awarded him the Bronze Star for meritorious service behind enemy lines in China from 21 July through 15 August 1945. Especially cited was his leadership of the assault on the Japanese airfield.³¹ Having served since September 1941, the 27-year-old hero declined an offer to remain in the service and left Army active duty for civilian life in December 1945. He retained his commission as a reservist and would continue to wear captain’s bars on his shoulders and numerous campaign ribbons on his chest, alongside the Bronze Star

for bravery, as a member of the Army Reserve Officer Corps.³²

OSS veterans were sworn to secrecy, and the clandestine organization’s records remained classified for more than half a century. Not until the 21st century were O’Jibway’s achievements in the OSS made public.³³

After the War

Like many veterans returning from the war, O’Jibway looked for a job and a wife. He found the latter first: a fellow cavalry officer, former UCLA football star lineman Martin “Whitey” Matheson took O’Jibway home to Los Angeles and introduced him to Mary Louise Ratcliff, a vivacious, green-eyed, southern California beauty who worked at the Douglas Aircraft Plant in Santa Monica. They married in January 1946 and moved into an apartment in Pasadena, near his uncle. Her family welcomed him. Despite his large size and deep voice, O’Jibway was a kind and gentle man. “Austin was really wonderful. He was so sweet. Everybody loved him,” said Louise’s younger sister, Gladys. “You could feel it right away when you met him. You could trust him, rely on him. You would be safe with him.”³⁴

As a civilian, O’Jibway first turned to sports to earn a living. In his captain’s uniform with cavalry breeches and boots, he strode unannounced into the office of a leading Los Angeles boxing promoter. Stephen H. “Suey” Welch was sufficiently impressed with O’Jibway’s record in the ring and his performance in the gym to send him to a training camp at Ojai and enter him in the *Los Angeles Times* Golden

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Gloves tournament in March. O’Jibway’s billing was, “Austin O’Jibway, 26, an Indian, former Army captain, at 215 pounds and recommended by Joe Louis.” At Olympic Stadium that spring, O’Jibway scored a TKO in the second round to win the tournament’s heavyweight championship.³⁵

Professional football came to Los Angeles in the fall of 1946, and O’Jibway became one of the many returning veterans and former star athletes hired to play for the newly organized Los Angeles Dons in the fledgling All-American Football Conference, a short-lived rival of the National Football League, which brought the Cleveland Rams to Los Angeles that year. Unfortunately, O’Jibway suffered a serious injury during training with the Dons that summer and never recovered enough to play professional football or box professionally.

Sports would no longer be a means of advancement for O’Jibway; instead, he joined one of his wife’s brothers as a security guard at the Douglas plant.³⁶ Louise went into labor three months early, and on August 7, 1946 delivered twins—Teresa Karen “Tee” O’Jibway and Louis A. “Buddy” O’Jibway, Jr.³⁷ In 1949, the O’Jibways bought a house three miles from the ocean in Redondo Beach.³⁸

Working for the US Army and CIA

As a student in the 1930s, O’Jibway had joined the Kansas National

Guard while at Haskell, and the Oklahoma National Guard while at Bacone, in order to supplement his income.³⁹

In the fall of 1951, in the middle of the Korean War and at the beginning of a major US military build-up as part of the Truman Administration’s policy of containing communism worldwide, O’Jibway left his job as a security guard and went to work for the US government as a clandestine paramilitary officer at CIA.⁴⁰ O’Jibway was one of many special operations veterans of the OSS that CIA recruited for its operational component as new Deputy Director for Plans Allen Dulles, a former OSS desk officer himself, shifted emphasis from intelligence gathering to covert operations.⁴¹ When it could, “the Agency hired people who had already been trained,” said Caesar J.

Civitella, a former member of the OSS, Army Special Forces, and CIA. “They hired from the OSS and from the military.”⁴²

About working for the clandestine agency, O’Jibway only told his family that he had a civilian job with the federal government and that it required them to move east. Renting out the Redondo Beach house, they relocated to southern Virginia to be close to a CIA training facility. During 1952 to 1954, presumably on his first assignment, he was stationed in Taiwan.⁴³ Louise, who did not like to travel, reluctantly joined him there with the twins. According to his family, O’Jibway met occasionally with Chiang Kai-shek.⁴⁴

“My husband and I always suspected that he worked for the CIA, but he never said anything,” recalled Louise’s sister, Gladys Ratcliff Miller. “He was always being sent away to different places and then especially when he was sent to Taipei with my sister and the children, we



Newly Weds: Louis O’Jibway and his bride, Louise Ratcliff O’Jibway in early 1946 at a boxing training camp in Ojai, CA. The recently wedded Army and OSS veteran was training for a boxing match in Los Angeles. Photograph courtesy of Gladys Ratcliff Miller.

were told to write to him via an import-export company in New York City. Well, *Life* magazine exposed that company as CIA. Then we knew.”⁴⁵

Although he became a CIA officer in 1951, O’Jibway also remained an officer in the Army Reserves and was periodically called to active duty between 1952 and 1959, usually for relatively short terms. With his “top secret” clearance, he served in Army intelligence and operations and was sent several times to the Far East; CIA also sent him there.⁴⁶ His daughter recalled that her father “was often away from home, often for some time. I knew he worked for the government, for the engineers or the Department of Defense, but I never knew [until later] that he worked for the CIA.”⁴⁷

Pressures on the Family

Working for CIA took its toll on the family. “Louise and the children could have gone on some of his trips,” Gladys Ratcliff Miller recalled, “but my sister did not want to go. She did go to Taipei, but she hated it. She was so happy to get back to Redondo Beach when they returned.”⁴⁸ Louise and the twins lived in Virginia during the school year, but the southern California native objected to living through the East’s cold and snowy winters. In the spring of 1955, when a smoky fire broke out in the attic and damaged much of their house and furnishings, Louise shouted, “That’s it! I’m never leaving California again!”⁴⁹

Pulling the eight-year-old twins out of school before the end of the term, Louise returned immediately to Redondo Beach. O’Jibway joined her but also rented an apartment in

“Across the board, I learned a great deal from him. For a young officer, just entering the service, Jib was someone to emulate.”

Arlington, Virginia, near CIA Headquarters in Langley. The couple remained together for several years. “I think it was because she was against his being moved around every couple of years,” her sister explained. “She was a California girl.”⁵⁰ As teenagers, the twins went to school in California but spent summers with their father and his relatives in Michigan and Texas. Their parents finally separated in the 1960s.⁵¹

Periodically, O’Jibway served as an instructor on paramilitary operations and escape and evasion techniques, a job that would reveal qualities often hidden. “He was not very talkative, either in or outside the training sessions, but when he had something to say, we learned to listen carefully,” said James Glerum, who was one of his trainees in 1956. O’Jibway knew how to harvest wild foods and live off the land, and when he discovered Glerum was interested, he spent several weekends teaching him how. “On these field trips, I discovered that, hidden behind his ‘no-nonsense’ approach, he had quite a sense of humor. Across the board, I learned a great deal from him. For a young officer, just entering the service, Jib was someone to emulate.”⁵²

A powerful man in the ring, on the football field, and in combat, Louis Austin O’Jibway was a man of considerable empathy and deep religious faith. He was a Roman Catholic and a Democrat. “My father wasn’t very interested in politics, but he did vote,” his daughter said, adding, “and his religion meant a lot to him.”⁵³ A former CIA colleague who worked as his intelligence officer in Laos in

the early 1960s agreed: “He was a very caring person. He was almost too nice to be in our line of work,” recalled Gary Erb. “When you get into intelligence [and paramilitary] work, you are asking people to possibly get killed. He was not that kind of guy.”⁵⁴

For a period of 18 months from 1957 to 1958, O’Jibway, then 39 and an Army major, served on active duty at US 8th Army Headquarters in South Korea. He spent most of his free time there assisting a Maryknoll mission project for homeless lepers run by Father Joseph A. “Big Joe” Sweeney, whom he had first met in China in 1945. More than just driving priests around on their visitations, O’Jibway solicited from his fellow officers money, food, clothing, and medicine for the lepers. When he returned home, he convinced the World Medical Relief organization to provide additional assistance for them. When the secretary of the Army learned about this, he awarded O’Jibway a citation praising his work, which reflected “great credit on yourself and on the United States Army.”⁵⁵

Participating in the American “Secret War” in Laos

In the early 1960s, CIA sent O’Jibway to help in what became known as the “secret war” in Laos. The initiative started small, but after O’Jibway was gone, it eventually became the largest covert operation in the agency’s history. The operation involved clandestinely arming and supplying thousands of Hmong and other indigenous mountain people in

Laos, with the aim of helping them limit the control of North Vietnamese communist forces that had invaded the small but strategically important southeast Asian kingdom, much as the OSS had used indigenous mountain tribesmen in Burma against Japanese invaders during WWII.

All major regional parties had agreed to the neutralization of Laos and the withdrawal of foreign military forces there, but when North Vietnam retained 10,000 regular troops there and resumed the offensive in 1962, President John F. Kennedy authorized CIA to secretly launch “Operation Momentum” supporting a guerrilla army of mountain tribesmen to block the communist advance. From the administrations of Presidents Eisenhower to Ford, US policy sought to prevent collapse of the neutralist, coalition government in Laos while simultaneously avoiding direct and open US military intervention and full-scale war, in what Washington considered a theater of war secondary to Vietnam.⁵⁶

CIA’s “secret war” involved expanding resistance to foreign communist forces by using primitive tribesmen led by a charismatic Hmong leader, a young, French-trained officer named Vang Pao. The agency used helicopters and short take-off-and-landing (STOL), fixed-wing aircraft belonging to Air America and Bird & Sons, two thinly disguised, CIA-subsidized airlines, to fly in arms, food, medicine, and funds from Thailand to mountain villages in Laos.⁵⁷ But in spite of the lifeline CIA represented, Gen. Vang Pao would not allow CIA officers to command his Hmong forces, which initially numbered fewer than 7,000.⁵⁸



In Southeast Asia, 1962–65: O’Jibway on the left, apparently with members of Thai Border Patrol Police (kneeling on the right) and with Lao guerrilla fighters. Photograph in the Louis A. O’Jibway Papers, courtesy of Teresa O’Jibway Cook.

Some of CIA’s best officers were sent to Laos or neighboring Thailand, from where the agency was directing operations.⁵⁹ Among the senior case officers was Louis Austin O’Jibway.

O’Jibway arrived in Thailand in 1962, after completing a course at the US Army’s then-new Special Forces Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 1961, and then helping to update paramilitary training for CIA’s new Special Operations division. Soon after his arrival in Thailand, he helped the US Army Special Forces Group run a six-month guerrilla warfare course for high ranking Thai and Laotian officers. He advised the Thai Border Patrol Police (BPP) commandos CIA had helped to create and was now supplying with helicopters, short-wave radios, and weapons. Since the Thai police commandos could not be as easily identified as foreigners, CIA sent numbers of them into the Laotian mountains to work

with guerrillas there in support of the CIA effort.⁶⁰

Primary focus had been on the northeastern area of Laos that bordered North Vietnam, but when President Kennedy decided to expand the guerrilla operation, CIA extended the area to include northwestern Laos and its borders with China, Burma, and Thailand. CIA officers James W. (“Bill”) Lair and Lloyd (“Pat”) Landry ran Operation Momentum out of a nondescript building on the huge, Royal Thai Air Force base at Udorn, Thailand, 50 miles south of the Laotian capital of Vientiane. They sent O’Jibway to manage the project in the northwest provinces, and he arrived in mid-1963 at his new station in Chiang Khong, Thailand, in the northwestern corner of Laos across the Mekong River.⁶¹ As the senior CIA case officer in the region, “Jib” or “Lou,” as he was known, was responsible for paramilitary

activities and intelligence collection in the area.

The assignment came with problems. His predecessor, William (“Bill”) Young, a youthful UCLA graduate and son of local missionaries, had combined a freewheeling, independent operation with a hedonistic lifestyle, and he remained in the area. “In contrast, Lou O’Jibway was a very cautious and methodical individual,” recalled Terrence M. (“Terry”) Burke, a former Marine serving as a CIA paramilitary field officer in Laos, who came to know and admire the Native American supervisor. Burke described O’Jibway, by then 45 years old, as “very conservative, Roman Catholic, and older; he had a very difficult time with Bill Young.”⁶² O’Jibway had learned Thai and used interpreters for the various dialects of Laos, but he also had to deal with bitter rivalries among the tribes, meddling by Laotian generals, and increasing US military demands for more offensive-oriented guerrillas to help interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail in eastern Laos.

Despite such problems, O’Jibway handled the situation well: “Jib was a quiet and reserved individual, not overlaid with ego, as some of the younger Agency paramilitary types were prone to be,” recalled a senior pilot.⁶³ “He was a nice guy, a typical American Indian kind of guy—calm, quiet, unflappable,” said a helicopter crewman. “I never saw him drink or get excited or upset; he was well respected.”⁶⁴

Joy and Tragedy in California

In the summer of 1964, O’Jibway returned to the United States for his twins’ graduation from high school.

O’Jibway and his field operatives continued to build and expand a guerrilla network among the mountain people in northwestern Laos.

After the graduation and celebration of their 18th^h birthday, on August 14th he left for the airport, to begin the long flight back to southeast Asia.⁶⁵ As his flight made its way over the Pacific, O’Jibway’s wife (from whom he was by now separated) was killed in an automobile accident in Redondo Beach.⁶⁶ “The car crashed at 6:30 [pm], only two-and-a-half blocks from our house,” Teresa O’Jibway remembered. “I was taking a bath, and I heard the sirens. Someone came and told me not to go out to the accident . . . my mother died a week after my 18th birthday.”⁶⁷ Funeral services were held six days later.⁶⁸

After Louise’s death, O’Jibway’s son Buddy started spending more time with him. Buddy ended up accompanying O’Jibway back to Thailand, taking a job at Udorn Air Base as a baggage handler for Air America.⁶⁹ “He was a nice kid, like his dad,” recalled Gary Erb, O’Jibway’s intelligence officer. “He was well-mannered and well built.”⁷⁰ Buddy spent almost a year there.

Recruiting and Training Guerrillas

O’Jibway and his field operatives continued to build and expand a guerrilla network among the mountain people in northwestern Laos and to help with a USAID program to implement health and hygiene improvements in the region. He enlisted recruits from various tribes and built a training camp near his headquarters. During the dry season in the winter of 1964–65, he established a forward base (L-118A) in

Laos near the village of Nam Yu, in a tight mountain valley 40 kilometers north of his headquarters across the Thai border.

The small, rustic compound at Nam Yu, staffed by CIA paramilitary officers, an intelligence officer, and several Thai radio operators and English-speaking Burmese Shan bodyguards, was later expanded into a guerrilla training camp. “I stayed up there in a grass hut and established a cornfield landing strip,” Gary Erb, the intelligence officer, recalled. “He stayed at Chiang Khong and did the major support work. He handled the money, the payroll for the troops, supplies, and the like.”⁷¹ In addition to supervising the intelligence and paramilitary resources and operations, O’Jibway gladly followed CIA directives to help bring Western sanitary, health care, and agricultural techniques to the mountain tribes.⁷²

O’Jibway made helicopter trips into Laos on payroll, inspection, and other missions, including, on some occasions, missions to save his people’s lives. Although the main battles occurred in northeastern Laos, there were also running gun fights with the communists in O’Jibway’s northwest region by 1965. On 21 May, he personally saved the life of paramilitary field officer Terry Burke. With the North Vietnamese regulars chasing Burke and the mountain tribesmen through the jungle, O’Jibway arrived in a helicopter and rescued Burke and the wounded, among whom were guerrilla tribesmen and a Thai Border Patrol Police commando—allowing the rest of the tribesmen to escape.⁷³

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When President Lyndon Johnson began sending US ground troops to combat in South Vietnam in 1965, he also ordered CIA to increase Vang Pao’s guerrilla forces in Laos. Despite concerns voiced by Lair, Landry, O’Jibway, and others, the original operation of limited hit-and-run raiding would be supplanted by larger-unit ground offensives, run by the expanded guerrilla forces now supported by US airpower.⁷⁴ Arriving in spring 1965 to assist enlarged paramilitary operations, Jim Sheldon was impressed by O’Jibway’s very presence, recalling later: “He was a very big guy, 220 to 230 pounds, with hands as big as Virginia hams.” Describing O’Jibway’s leadership, Sheldon explained: “He was an experienced leader, gave people the lead. Told them what to do and let them do it. He could be creative. Without authorization or funding, he set up a PX where tribal leaders could obtain little things that were valued back at the village—flip-flops, sarongs, combs, and brushes and things—and he paid for it by selling extra barrels of gasoline that our helicopters did not use. This kind of creativity also helped us upgrade the guerrillas’ weapons.”⁷⁶

Under new orders, O’Jibway in the early summer of 1965 moved beyond defensive village militias in his region and began to prepare an offensive force to be sent to join Gen. Vang Pao in the northeast. O’Jibway’s first 500-member Special Guerrilla Battalion, too large to be trained locally, was flown several hundred miles south to the major

base at Hua Hin, Thailand, for three months, beginning training in July of 1965. Countrywide, such escalation of the “secret war” produced more casualties on all sides, including some US pilots and CIA operatives who were killed or captured.⁷⁵

In the initial phase of the new program, CIA’s guerrilla operation in northwestern Laos suffered a tragic, major setback on 20 August 1965: O’Jibway and several other important figures from the United States, Thailand, and Laos, were lost in a helicopter crash. Traveling from the forward base at Nam Yu to the CIA control center at Udorn, their chopper went down in the Mekong River, near the Laotian capital, Vientiane.⁷⁷

Down and Missing in the Mekong

Maintaining the façade of US non-intervention in Laos, CIA avoided any reference to itself and its role there in the information that was released after the helicopter crash. The first press report of the crash appeared as a small story two days afterward in the *Bangkok Post*, an English-language newspaper in the Thai capital. The article reported that a US Air Force helicopter had gone down near Nonghai, Thailand. Four days later, on 24 August, an Associated Press story printed in the *Bangkok Post* and picked up by the *Washington Post* and other newspapers cited the US embassy in Thailand as having identified two Americans missing in the crash: a “Lewis [sic] A. O’Jibway of Redondo Beach,

California, and Edward Johnson of Washington, DC.” The Bangkok newspaper erroneously identified them as employees of the Bird & Sons airline.⁷⁸

A subsequent Associated Press report out of Vientiane was a composite of some accurate statements, some half-truths, and some outright falsehoods. It declared,

*A helicopter carrying five Americans and a Laotian colonel fell into the Mekong River on Sunday. Three of the Americans managed to swim ashore, but the other two and the Laotian colonel apparently perished in the swift current. The copter was coming into Vientiane, Laos, on a flight from Thailand. US military officials in Bangkok said all Americans on board were civilians. Bangkok newspapers reported the helicopter belonged to the US Air Force, but officials there said it was a charter craft.*⁷⁹

CIA and other US government agencies thus contributed to the obfuscation of the US role in Laos: there was, in this report, no mention of the Thai army captain; the helicopter was not coming in to Vientiane—it was actually heading in the opposite direction, from Laos to Thailand; the individuals named in the reporting were not civilians—they were working for CIA or its subsidized airline; and the helicopter did not belong to the US Air Force.

CIA policy in the region was to fly the bodies of dead employees out of the area as soon as possible, usually within a day or two, and also whisk any family members there back to the United States. No memorial services

A Monsoon Tragedy

From the Air America report and subsequent interviews, including some conducted by the author, a fuller picture of the fatal flight comes into view. It had begun as a routine flight by an Air America utility transport helicopter, a Sikorsky UH-34D, a former Navy/Marine (“Seahorse” or “Dog”) version of the Army’s more widely known UH-34 “Choctaw.” After delivering supplies to O’Jibway’s forward base (L-118A) at Nam Yu, the crew of the UH-34D started to return to the CIA facility at Udorn Air Base in Thailand, normally about a three-and-a-half-hour trip. Air America pilot Capt. Robert J. (“Bobby”) Nunez, 30, and crewmen Stephen I. Nichols, 24, were well on their way to Udorn when O’Jibway radioed them to return north to pick up a downed pilot whose small, fixed-wing aircraft had just crash-landed at another mountainous dirt landing strip.

After picking up the downed pilot, Nunez flew to Nam Yu to refuel. It was a Friday, and during the refueling, O’Jibway and several of his colleagues decided to go with the empty chopper to Udorn. “It was a spur-of-the-moment thing,” recalled Gary Erb, who was there. “Now Jib and the others said, ‘We’ll all go to Udorn and have a good meal at the club. Hell, we’ll all go back, have some good meals, sleep in a good bed, and talk to Bill [Lair] and Pat [Landry].’ Even though the weather was getting bad—it was the rainy season—they climbed aboard for their own reasons.”⁹⁹

When Nunez took off, he and the rescued fixed-wing pilot, George Calhoun, sat in the pilot positions in the upper level, forward cabin. Below and aft of the cockpit, in the cargo hold, were crewman Nichols, O’Jibway, Edward Johnson, and two close associates, leaders of the Thai and Laotian militaries, Col. Tiao Syborravong and Capt. Ruang Ramrut. As the craft proceeded, the sky darkened and it began to rain—first showers, then heavier and heavier, monsoon-season rain. By early evening the sky was black; fuel was running low and the windshield wiper was not working. Nunez put on his landing lights and began to follow the bank of the Mekong River, at what he thought was 50’ or so above the water, hoping to land at Vientiane. Around 7:30 p.m., just north of Vientiane, he strayed away from the riverbank. The chopper had descended to three or four feet above the river, which is approximately a mile wide at that point, but, unknown to Nunez, the helicopter’s altitude warning system was inoperative. When he banked the aircraft, its right wheel and rotor blades dug into the water, stopping the aircraft immediately and flipping it onto its side into the dark, surging waters of the Mekong.¹⁰⁰

The cargo compartment door was underwater and stuck,



UH-34 helicopter in Thailand sometime between 1960 and 1975. Image No. 1-CA2-9-PB19, photographer unknown. Clarence J. Abadie, Jr., Collection, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

and the turned over helicopter was sinking fast. Nichols, the crewman mechanic, worked his way toward the back, squeezing through a small emergency hatch and bobbed to the surface. Nunez and Calhoun escaped through a sliding window in the cockpit. In the dark, the three heard two other persons surface, sputtering. Nichols testified later, “I believe I heard Captain Nunez call, ‘Jib!’ and was answered by, ‘Yeah.’” Whoever it was, two of the four passengers who had escaped from the cargo hold were quickly swept away.¹⁰¹

As Nichols and Calhoun swam toward opposite sides of the mile-wide river, Nunez, who could not swim, grabbed driftwood and was carried 60 miles downriver. At daybreak, a major search-and-rescue operation began; all three Air America employees were found soaked but alive. The search for the four passengers and the wreckage went on for three weeks, involving Air America, the US Air Force, the Royal Laotian Army, Royal Thai Border Patrol Police, and CIA boat teams.¹⁰²

Several days after the crash, CIA officer Edward Johnson’s body was discovered on the riverbank near Vientiane. The corpse of Thai officer Ramrut washed up 20 miles downriver. Both had drowned. The bodies of O’Jibway and the Laotian prince, Colonel Syborravong, were never found, nor was the wreckage of the helicopter—all were presumed swept away. For a year, CIA carried O’Jibway on its rolls as “missing.”

were held in Laos or Thailand for CIA training officer Edward Johnson, an African American and former Marine, when his body was found the day after the crash. Johnson’s remains were flown back to Washington, DC, where his family lived and where William Colby, then chief of CIA’s Far Eastern Division, attended his funeral. Louis A. O’Jibway’s body was not found, nor was the body of the Laotian colonel. Both were presumed to have been carried down the Mekong, which also swept away the wreckage of the helicopter. There was no mention of the Thai army officer who drowned, but whose body had been found.⁸⁰

Terry Burke, O’Jibway’s friend and former subordinate, had returned from Laos to CIA Headquarters a month before the crash. When news of the tragedy reached the agency, CIA immediately flew him to California. It was 3:00 in the morning when he appeared at Teresa O’Jibway’s door to deliver the news.⁸¹ “We wanted to tell them fast,” Burke recalled, “because we assumed the press would be on it quickly. I stayed with them for a week; Headquarters was feeding me information as they received it.”⁸²

Because the helicopter crash into the Mekong had occurred during the escalation of the war in Vietnam where US aircraft were being shot down, many of O’Jibway’s friends and relatives thought that communists might have shot down his aircraft as well, and that he might be a prisoner. “We always thought that the official story of him drowning in a crash might not be the truth, and that he might be a captive somewhere . . . since he was never found,” said his sister-in-law.⁸³ O’Jibway’s good



Receiving Their Father’s Medals: O’Jibway’s twin children, Louis, Jr. (“Buddy”) and Teresa (“Tee”), then 20 years old, received their father’s medals from Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms at CIA Headquarters in the fall of 1966. Photograph courtesy of Teresa O’Jibway Cook.

friends, the Maryknoll priests in South Korea, certainly thought he had been shot down. Father Joseph A. Sweeney, the leader of the Korean leper project who had known O’Jibway since 1945, wrote a letter to hundreds of their mutual friends. Noting that O’Jibway had been doing a “hush-hush job” for the Defense Department, training the Thai Border Patrol “in tactics against the Reds,” Sweeney wrote, “He must have been a marked man by the Reds. Did they shoot him down?? . . . Please say a prayer for our best friend, who has gone to the Happy Hunting Ground.”⁸⁴

Even though O’Jibway was presumed dead, CIA listed him as missing for a year. Finally, in the fall of 1966, CIA Headquarters notified his two children that since all efforts to find his body had failed, the agency was preparing a death certificate and

asked them to come and receive it. “We went to Washington and were given his medals and all,” recalled his daughter.⁸⁵ In a private ceremony, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms handed them the certificates and their father’s medals, awarded posthumously: a gold Intelligence Medal of Merit, and a silver Exceptional Service Medal.⁸⁶ An official photograph shows the slightly balding Helms handing over a small case of items to Buddy O’Jibway as Teresa O’Jibway looks on.⁸⁷

“That’s when I decided that Dad was dead,” she declared later, “although I still have some doubts about the truth. They didn’t tell us much.”⁸⁸ O’Jibway’s two younger brothers, who had been fellow boxers and were WWII army combat veterans, were not satisfied, either. Philip, a banker in Lubbock, Texas, and Joseph, a worker in Barbeau,

Minnesota, probed for more information. In October of 1966, Joseph wrote to a man whose name and contact information Louis had given him two years earlier. “As far as we were concerned as a family,” Joseph wrote, “everything seems quite vague as to what has happened. We feel we are due some sort of explanation, as a family.”⁸⁹

The family received some detailed information about the crash, but not from CIA. “One of the things we got is a handwritten letter on thick paper,” Teresa O’Jibway recalls. “I don’t know who wrote it, but they knew a lot.”⁹⁰ Located among the papers of the late Joseph O’Jibway is that anonymous letter, undated, written in penciled capital letters on a page torn from a notebook. It provided a detailed, technical explanation of the flight and the crash, and information on the unsuccessful efforts to recover the wreckage as well as O’Jibway’s body.⁹¹

Teresa O’Jibway also recalled that, in 1966, “the military sent us two trunks of Dad’s stuff to our house in Redondo Beach [after he was declared dead].”⁹² The trunks contained mostly old papers, scrapbooks, awards, and mementos from his school days and WWII, as well as some clippings about the Catholic leper project in Korea. There was nothing about his CIA service, the secret war in Laos, or details about his death.

Air America Investigates the Crash

Privately, however, CIA was irate at its subsidiary, Air America, for the loss of agency officers and important allies in the crash of 20 August 1965.⁹³ While concealing details from the public, CIA internally demanded

During the secret war in Laos, CIA lost eight case officers and several other employees; four died in aircraft accidents and four were killed as the result of enemy fire.

an investigation and a full report. Air America quickly established an investigating team, which took testimony from survivors and others. Three weeks after the crash and after appraising the investigating team’s report, an Air America review board at Udorn Air Base concluded that the crash had been primarily due to pilot error. In the heavy rain and darkness, pilot Robert Nunez had misjudged the “altitude, allowing the aircraft to strike the water.” Other contributing factors included an inoperative windshield wiper and the malfunctioning of both the aircraft’s automatic stabilization equipment and its minimum altitude warning light.⁹⁴

But there was more than pilot error and bad weather involved: Air America and Bird & Sons were both working with old equipment; many of their helicopters were used surplus equipment from the armed forces. Two months after the crash that killed O’Jibway, CIA lost two more case officers in another Air America helicopter crash. This time the chopper went down in the jungle due to mechanical failure; all aboard were killed, including the pilot, crewman, and two young CIA operatives under State Department AID covers—Michael Maloney, 25, and Michael Deuel, 28, both second-generation CIA officers.⁹⁵

Years later, reflecting on time as CIA’s acting chief of station in Laos, James R. Lilley, later US ambassador to China, remembered the loss of these younger men: “We had coups d’état, floods, all kinds of things to deal with,” he emphasized. “We saw some of our people ‘crack up’ who

could no longer take it. We saw some of our young guys killed in helicopter crashes.”⁹⁶ During the secret war in Laos, CIA lost eight case officers and several other employees; four case officers died in aircraft accidents and four were killed as the result of enemy fire.⁹⁷

O’Jibway’s helicopter was not downed by enemy fire, despite the suspicions of his friends and relatives. “Nunez would have loved to be able to say they had been shot down,” Terry Burke told the author. “The survivors would have said if they had been hit . . . there was no enemy activity there at that time, and nobody could have seen the aircraft in that horrible weather. There were some communists in Vientiane, but this was upriver.”⁹⁸

A Within-House Legend

Within CIA, Louis Austin O’Jibway remained a legend both for his ability and reliability and for the way he died. “A number of us who knew and missed Jib later joked that, although he had undoubtedly died in the crash, he had pulled an old Indian trick,” recalled Mike Lynch, a CIA case officer and provincial adviser in Laos. “Since his body was never found, his heirs—his two children—continued to receive his pay for a full year, until he was officially declared dead, and then receive his death benefits, whereas Ed Johnson’s heirs only got death benefits.”¹⁰³

Tony Poe, the legendary ex-Marine and guerrilla trainer in Laos who considered O’Jibway a “true hero”

was furious with Nunez for O’Jibway’s death. Still, Poe joked that “Jib was smart enough to carry a pocket full of rocks to make sure he sank on impact [instead of slowly drowning].”¹⁰⁴ A year after O’Jibway’s death in the Mekong, the river rose to an unusual 20 to 30 feet during the 1966 monsoon season, and the flood waters washed away the little bamboo house he had built at Chiang Khong. The local Thai natives, Buddhist animists, declared it was O’Jibway’s spirit, returning to claim his home.¹⁰⁵

CIA eventually honored O’Jibway, but privately. Historically, the covert operations branch deplored releasing any details about its officers even within the agency. But public criticism and a congressional investigation of CIA in the early 1970s led to reforms, one of which was a decision to create a memorial to fallen officers, and later an annual ritual of ceremonially reading each of their names.¹⁰⁶

In 1974, the agency ordered 31 gold stars etched into a white marble entrance at CIA Headquarters, accompanied in a nearby *Book of Honor* containing the names (when declassified) and year of death of CIA officers who had died in the line of duty. Louis A. O’Jibway’s was among those first 31 stars on the wall, and his name was among the first inscribed in the *Book of Honor*.^{a, 107}

For many years, few outsiders knew of the memorial, since CIA Headquarters remains inaccessible to the public. It was not until 1990 that non-agency family members were

a. The year of death given was the year he was officially declared to have died, 1966.



Book of Honor: The page on which O’Jibway’s death is commemorated.

invited to the annual reading of the names of the fallen. Joseph O’Jibway, the brother who had pressed for more information since 1966, was invited in 2000, but Teresa O’Jibway has never received an invitation.¹⁰⁸

Because the Directorate of Operations opposed the release of information, families were kept in the dark about details of the deaths of their loved ones, including any information concerning the clandestine activities that led to the death and sometimes even the loved one’s affiliation with CIA. “Families who lose loved ones who were covert not only had to endure the loss—they were also tethered to bogus stories for years and years,” wrote journalist Ted Gup, author of *The Book of Honor: The Secret Lives and Deaths of CIA Operatives* (Random House, 2000). “They had to raise their children without any details or specifics as to what their mothers or fathers gave their lives for.”¹⁰⁹ Teresa O’Jibway agreed: “My dad was very patriotic, and he gave his life for his country.

I think they could have told us more. It seems like he was used and then forgotten.”¹¹⁰

In many ways, the Hmong and other mountain tribe people were also used and ultimately forgotten. In 1966, the year after the crash of O’Jibway’s helicopter, as the United States increased forces in Vietnam, it also expanded the size and offensive role of the guerrillas in Laos. Ultimately, Gen. Vang Pao commanded an airmobile force of nearly 40,000.¹¹¹ But North Vietnam countered with 70,000 troops, and in 1975 after defeating South Vietnam, Hanoi achieved victory in Laos. For the previous 15 years, the mountain tribes, covertly aided by the United States, had restricted the North Vietnamese army and prevented communist control of Laos. But that achievement had been obtained at great cost to the mountain tribes, particularly during the escalation after 1965. By the end, perhaps 35,000 guerrillas had been killed and nearly a third of Hmong civilians had died from starvation and

disease. Refugees in their own land, the remainder fled, including some 200,000 who followed Vang Pao to the United States.¹¹²

O’Jibway Barely Known Outside CIA

It took 20 years for even cryptic references to begin to emerge about Louis A. O’Jibway in the secret war in Laos, and then only in highly specialized publications.¹¹³ Not until the dawn of the 21st century was his name mentioned in a few popular books—publications about the secret war in Laos, about CIA’s *Book of Honor*, and a history of CIA—but even then with simply passing references to his having been a CIA officer killed in a helicopter crash in 1965.¹¹⁴

Louis A. O’Jibway largely vanished from history. His alma maters—Haskell, Bacone, New Mexico—failed to list the champion athlete and war hero on their rolls of honor.¹¹⁵ Nor is his name among

The life and attainments of this modest but remarkable man, one of the few Native Americans in the OSS and in the CIA, are worth remembering and commemorating.

those on the Special Operations Memorial at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida.¹¹⁶ Although it is included in CIA’s *Book of Honor*, the agency’s headquarters remains closed to the public. Only the unofficial Special Forces online roll of honor celebrates Louis A. O’Jibway—and then only briefly.¹¹⁷

Yet the story of the big man with the big heart is worth remembering. The fatherless youth’s struggle for a better life reads like a “Horatio Alger” story. Louis O’Jibway battled his way up, through achievements in the boxing ring and on the football field. His combat actions with the OSS against the Japanese in World War II merited his ribbons and medal. His humanitarian campaign to aid lepers in South Korea reflected his admirable character. Like these, his efforts with CIA in the early 1960s to improve the health and fighting efficiency of primitive mountain tribes

in Laos against North Vietnamese invaders were noteworthy attempts to halt the aggressive spread of communism—an effort that cost him his life.

Scholarship on Native Americans in World War II has emphasized the major impact the war had upon American Indians and their society. Tens of thousands migrated from isolated reservations to serve in the military or work in the cities. Many learned to live and move ahead in mainstream America.¹¹⁸ Although not brought up on a reservation, Louis A. O’Jibway, a Chippewa from rural Michigan, certainly learned to live and succeed in mainstream American society. He did it through sports, the US Army, the OSS, and the CIA. The life and attainments of this modest but remarkable man, one of the few Native Americans in the OSS and in the CIA, are worth remembering and commemorating.



The author: John Whiteclay Chambers II is author of a dozen books, including *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II* (National Park Service, 2008), published in paperback as *Bang-Bang Boys, Jedburghs, and the House of Horrors: A History of OSS Training and Service Abroad in World War II* (Uncommon Valor Press, 2016).



Endnotes

1. Louis A. O’Jibway and Leonard Iron Moccasin, a Lakota/Sioux from South Dakota who served as a communications branch radio operator in the European theater of operations were the only two Native American Indians in the OSS the author has been able to identify in his research and via inquiry on the OSS Society discussion group, ossociety@yahoogroups.com. Furthermore, O’Jibway and Iron Moccasin were the only two obviously Native American Indian names in the nearly 24,000 names in the National Archives online roster of individuals in the personnel files of the OSS (Record Group 226). Although Lt. Donald V. Jamison, whose father was a Seneca-Cayuga from New York and mother was a Luiseno from the Rincon Indian Reservation in California, claimed to have been an OSS Special Operations saboteur in the Philippines in 1944 (Lillian Cox, “San Diego Paper Reports an OSS American Indian in Philippines,” *OSS Society Newsletter*, Fall 2005, 16), Jamison’s name is not listed on the OSS personnel records, and Gen. Douglas MacArthur refused to allow OSS personnel into his theater of operations.
2. On O’Jibway’s being one of the few Native Americans in the CIA, see Keith Quincy, *Harvesting Pa Chay’s Wheat: The Hmong and America’s Secret War in Laos* (Eastern Washington University, 2000), 321.

3. Birth Certificate, Louis Austin O’Jibway, Soo Twp., Chippewa County, Michigan, November 3, 1918, recorded on April 19, 1920, with a certified copy made on September 6, 1977, Louis A. O’Jibway papers, packet no. 3. Unless otherwise noted, all of Louis A. O’Jibway’s papers are owned by and used courtesy of his daughter, Teresa O’Jibway Cook. On genealogy, “Joseph Keche Ojibway [sic],” by Denise Ojibway Goldberg, an unpublished, typed genealogy [c. May, 2000] complete with documentation from census records, annuity payment rolls, land records, and baptism certificates, Louis A. O’Jibway papers, plus the online genealogy at <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/o/j/i/Trevor-Joseph-Ojibway-Inkster/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-0029.html>.
4. On his and his children’s self-identification and formal registration as members of the Chippewa Indian nation, Teresa O’Jibway Cook interview with the author, September 14, 2014.
5. Obituary, “Helen Gauthier,” undated, unidentified clipping in O’Jibway papers, packet no. 3; Laverne Saneske O’Jibway, widow of Joseph I. O’Jibway; interview with the author, June 30, 2009.
6. Bacone College High School Department, diploma, Louis Austin O’Jibway, May 30, 1938, diploma in Louis A. O’Jibway papers, box 2; and his civilian education record included in his officer qualification record, form DD 66, November 6, 1964, in his military records file, obtained October 2, 2009, by his daughter and the author from the National Personnel Records Center (hereafter NPRC), St. Louis, Mo.; currently in O’Jibway papers, packet No. 3.
7. “A.A.U. Boxing Stars Set for Title Tests,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1939, 28; Charles Payment, “Sports Mirror: O’Jibway Co., [sic] Austin Set Pace,” undated [December 1938], unidentified clipping from a Michigan newspaper in scrapbook of boxing and football clippings, Louis A. O’Jibway papers.
8. Charles Payment, “Sports Mirror: A Second Glance,” undated [February 1938] clipping from a Michigan newspaper and Herman Schaden, “All Things Considered,” unidentified, undated clipping, both in Louis A. O’Jibway’s scrapbook.
9. Louis Austin O’Jibway, transcript, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1939–1941. I am grateful to Prof. Aaron Taylor at the University of New Mexico’s Spanish Department for obtaining O’Jibway’s transcript from the registrar and for also sending me the link to the UNM yearbooks below.
10. University of New Mexico yearbook, *Mirage 1941*, 141–42; see also *Mirage 1940*, unnumbered pagination, pdf pages 177–79, <http://repository.unm.edu>, accessed August 11, 2014; “All-America: Bill Stern, Top NBC Sports Announcer, Picks His Annual Team from Country’s Best Players,” *Life* magazine, December 2, 1940, 79.
11. “Ex-Lobo Tackle Joins First Cavalry Eleven,” clipping from the [Albuquerque] *Herald-Post*, October 24, 1941, 14 in packet no. 1, Louis A. O’Jibway papers.
12. Enlisted record, Louis A. Ojibway [sic] October 3, 1942, his military record binder, Louis A. O’Jibway papers.
13. “Centaur’s Whip Tiger ‘B’ Team, 13–6” *Fort Riley Guidon*, October 23, 1942, in O’Jibway’s scrapbook; “CRTC, Midwest Army Champs, 1943, Lt. Louis A. O’Jibway, Tackle,” undated, unidentified clipping in O’Jibway papers, box 2.
14. Frank Godsoe, Jr., “Sportively Speaking” and “O’Jibway Promoted to First Lieutenant,” undated [1943?] unidentified newspaper clippings; quotation from William McNeany, “They Fight for Sports and War,” undated, unidentified clipping [*The Ring*], all in O’Jibway papers, packet no. 1.
15. Photos of O’Jibway with Joe Louis Barrow—one glossy photo with date “1942” on the back, plus other photos and references to the two of them in several undated, unidentified newspaper clippings, including “Two of the Fort Riley Boxing Coaches,” William McNeany, “They Fight for Sports and War,” [*The Ring* magazine?], “Another Louis Protégé,” *The Ring*; “Joe Louis Visits the Reformatory [in Hutchinson, Kansas, February 2, 1943], and accompanying glossy photograph of O’Jibway and others with Louis, signed by Joe Louis, all in Louis A. O’Jibway papers, packet no. 1. On Louis’s boxing exhibitions for the troops in the United States and abroad, see Truman K. Gibson, Jr., with Steve Huntley, *Knocking Down Barriers: My Fight for Black America* (Northwestern University Press, 2005), 236; and Joe Louis with Edna and Art Rust, Jr., *Joe Louis: My Life* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 177, 184.
16. Completed OSS Requisition by Name Form, April 3, 1944, Louis A. O’Jibway personnel file, OSS Records (Record Group 226), Entry 224, Box 570, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland. On the OSS, see, for example, Michael Warner, *The Office of Strategic Services: America’s First Intelligence Agency* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2000) and Patrick K. O’Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of WWII’s OSS* (Free Press, 2004). Although the US Army Center of Military History does officially recognize OSS, a civilian organization, as a direct precedent to Special Forces, the OSS is widely considered a forerunner of today’s Special Operations Forces; see Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *US Army Special Warfare: Its Origins: Psychological and Unconventional Warfare, 1941–1952*, rev. ed. (University Press of Kansas, 2005), 23–25.
17. On Peddicord, I am grateful to Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, a historian with the US Army Special Operations Command, for sharing information about this officer from his forthcoming book on OSS Operational Groups. See also Robert W. Black, *The Battalion: The Dramatic Story of the 2nd Rangers Battalion in World War II* (Stackpole Books, 2006), 28.
18. Quoted in Col. John C. Hooker, Jr. (US Army, Ret.), “Biography,” typescript, chapter “1944.” I am grateful to Colonel Hooker for a copy of his manuscript. John C. Hooker, email to the author, June 27, 2008.
19. On OSS training areas, see John Whiteclay Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II* (National Park Service, 2008), 138–80, 40; Chambers, *Bang-Bang Boys, Jedburghs, and the House of Horrors: A History of OSS Training and Service Abroad in World War II* (Uncommon Valor Press, 2016), 55–205, 293–94; and Chambers, “Office of Strategic Services Training During World War II,” *Studies in Intelligence* 54, no. 2 (June 2010): 19–35.
20. John C. Hooker, Jr. (US Army, Ret.), “Biography,” typescript, chapter “1944.”

21. John C. Hooker, Jr., email to the author, July 3, 2008; for similar, Joseph E. Lazarsky, formerly OSS in Burma, interview with the author, June 5, 2009.
22. Camp Ritchie was initially located at Cox’s Bazar, India (today Bangladesh), and then Akyab, Burma (today Myanmar). Troy J. Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma: Jungle War against the Japanese* (University Press of Kansas, 2013), 192.
23. Lt. Louis A. O’Jibway, “Operation ‘RUGBY’” [February 22, 1945], Box 1, Folder “Misc. Mission Reports from SE Asia,” Dr. Christian Lamberts collection, US Army Special Operations Command History Office, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I am grateful to Troy J. Sacquety for this citation.
24. Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 190–99; and Troy J. Sacquety, “The OSS . . . Detachment 404, 1944–1945,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 3, no. 4 (2007): 49; Hooker, “Biography,” chapter “1945;” Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War, 1941–1945* (Phoenix Press, 1984).
25. Possible additional identities of others in the photograph: the black-shirted officer in the left front may be the unit’s commander, Maj. Lloyd E. Peddicord, Jr.; the officer squatting behind him to his right, may be his operations officer, Capt. George H. Bright; directly behind them are an unidentified British naval liaison officer and a tall American naval officer, possibly Lt. Cmdr. Derek Lee, Petticord’s deputy.
26. “Parachute Training for Operational Group,” April 19, 1945, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 190, Box 45; Sacquety, *OSS in Burma*, 198; and Hooker, “Biography,” chapter “1945.” Britain and the United States used different parachute arrangements; the British did not use secondary chutes.
27. John C. Hooker, Jr. email to the author, July 3, 2008. See also Ellsworth (“Al”) Johnson, “One Small Part,” typescript recollection of OSS in France and China, http://oss-og.org/france/patrick_johnson.html; and Office of Strategic Services, *War Report of the OSS: Overseas Targets* (Walker and Co., 1976), 454.
28. All Americans in the photograph: Rear Row: Cpl. Olin B. Starkey, T/4 Robert Abee, T/5 J.M. Self, Pfc. George H. Porter, S/Sgt. Alfred C. Krueger, 1st Lt. Glen A. Ganow, and Cpl. John E. Armer. Front Row: T/4 Charles Y. Matsunaka, 1st Lt. John C. Hooker, Jr., 1st Lt. Arthur H. Logue, Jr., 1st Lt. Louis A. O’Jibway, Capt. George Gunderman, Jr. (commanding officer), T/4 Robert T. Reppenhagen, 1st Lt. Rollie W. Cain, and Cpl. Joseph M. Devereaux. Kneeling: 1st Lt. John D. Long, and Trex. Identifications by John C. Hooker, Jr.;
29. Hooker, “Biography,” chapter “1945,” and emails to the author June 27, 2008 and July 3, 2008; Arthur P. Frizzell (in overall command of the “Blackberry Mission”), interview with the author, June 23, 2009, and June 23, 2014; Office of Strategic Services, *War Report of the OSS: Overseas Targets*, 456.
30. Hooker, “Biography,” chapter “1945,” and email to the author June 27, 2008.
31. “Citation” for Bronze Star for Louis A. O’Jibway in his personnel file, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 224, Box 570, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.
32. Louis A. O’Jibway, Separation Qualification Record, Army of the United States, effective February 16, 1946, in his military record binder, Louis A. O’Jibway papers. Service in the US Army Reserves began February 17, 1946, USAR service record, Capt. DD. Shultz to Commanding Officer, US Army Records Center, January 12, 1965, in Louis A. O’Jibway military record file, NPRC, St. Louis, Missouri. O’Jibway’s achievements were later noted in two histories of aspects of the OSS (see Chambers, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Overseas*, 400–401, 453–60; Sacquety, “The OSS . . . Detachment 404, 1944–1945,” *Veritas* 49; and Sacquety, *OSS in Burma*, 195. Although O’Jibway’s name is not included among the donated black tiles at the Special Operations Memorial created in 1999 at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, FL, it is included on the electronic Special Forces Roll of Honor created in 2009 (see www.specialforcesroh.com).
33. See also John Whiteclay Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad*, 138–80, 400–401, 453–55, 460; and Troy J. Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 195.
34. Gladys L. Miller (nee Ratcliff) interview with the author, June 29, 2014.
35. Ned Cronin, “Sports Editor” column, Los Angeles *Daily News*, March 26, 1946, in Louis A. O’Jibway’s scrapbook; and miniature metal glove engraved, “Golden Gloves Heavyweight, 1946, Louis Austin O’Jibway,” in O’Jibway papers, box 2.
36. Gladys L. Miller, interview with the author, June 29, 2014; Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, June 30, 2014; Richard L. Russell, Nevada Sports Enterprises, to Austin O’Jibway, September 28, 1947, and undated, unidentified newspaper clipping, “Broncos Name Playing-Pilot,” in O’Jibway papers, packet no. 1.
37. Teresa K. O’Jibway birth certificate; and Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, August 2, 2014; Gladys L. Miller, interview with the author, July 26, 2014.
38. Gladys L. Miller, interview with the author, June 29, 2014.
39. National Guard Service, 114th Cavalry Regiment, Kansas National Guard, February to September 1936; 180th Infantry Regiment, 45th Division, Oklahoma National Guard, September 1936 to September 1939, Record of Assignments Louis A. O’Jibway’s officer qualification record, DD 66, form, Nov. 6, 1964, in his military record file, NPRC, St. Louis, Missouri.
40. Although O’Jibway’s record with CIA remains classified in the agency’s files, the initial year of his employment can be deduced from an entry in his officer qualification record, form DD 66, which O’Jibway filled out on November 6, 1964. After listing his years of service as an officer in the Army of the United States in World War II and the US Army Reserves since 1945, he then wrote, under entry Number 28 —“Main Civilian Occupation: Title and Industry”—the word “Classified,” under “Principal Employer,” “U.S. Govt.,” and under “Months Employed,” he wrote “156.” Louis A. O’Jibway, officer qualification record, form DD 66, November 6, 1964, in his

- military records file, NPRC, O’Jibway papers, packet no. 3. The entry of 156 months of employment suggests O’Jibway’s CIA employment began in the fall of 1951.
41. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (Doubleday, 2007), 11, 24, 53–60. Frank Wisner, former OSS chief in Romania, was chief of covert operations. During the Korean War, the agency began major operations to train and infiltrate Korean and Chinese paramilitary agents for missions into communist China and North Korea, most of them unsuccessful.
 42. Caesar J. Civitella (former member of OSS’s Italian Operational Group, and officer in Army Special Forces from 1952 until retirement in 1964, and with CIA from 1964 to 1983), interview with the author, April 25, 2008.
 43. I am grateful to Kenneth Conboy for confirming the years that O’Jibway spent in Taiwan and that O’Jibway had not been connected with CIA’s projects in Tibet or Indonesia. Ken Conboy, email to the author, October 14, 2014.
 44. Gladys L. Miller, interview with the author, July 5, 2014; Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, August 2, 2014; and Joseph I. O’Jibway, notes on the life of his brother, Louis A. O’Jibway, March 8, 2000, in Louis A. O’Jibway papers.
 45. Gladys L. Miller, interview with the author, June 29, 2014.
 46. Louis A. O’Jibway, record of service with NGUS, AUS, USAR, 1936–1964, Capt. D.D. Shultz to Commanding Officer, US Army Records Center, January 12, 1965, Subj: Request for Information, O’Jibway file, NPRC, St. Louis, Missouri. See also certificate of training, survival training, December 13, 1952, at a USAF base in Japan; certificate of honorable discharge from the Army of the United States, April 1, 1953; orders for active duty training, January 10, 1957; promotion to reserve commissioned officer, grade of major in the Army of the United States, effective July 13, 1957, O’Jibway papers.
 47. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, January 17, 2009.
 48. Gladys L. Miller, interview with the author, July 5, 2014.
 49. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, April 5, 2009; Gladys L. Miller, interview, June 29, 2014.
 50. Gladys L. Miller, interview with the author, June 2, 2014, who remembers that her daughter, Suzanne, had not finished the school year when Louise and the twins returned to the Redondo Beach house the Millers had rented from the O’Jibways.
 51. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, January 17, 2009.
 52. Jim Glerum, email to the author, June 30, 2009 and July 1, 2009. On Glerum’s role with the agency, see William M. Leary, “Foreword” to James E. Parker, Jr.’s memoir, *Codename Mule: Fighting the Secret War in Laos for the CIA* (Naval Institute Press, 1995), xix; See also Jim Dunn email to the author, June 30, 2009, for similar praise by another 1956 trainee.
 53. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, September 1, 2014; and Laverne Saneske O’Jibway, widow of Joseph I. O’Jibway, interview with the author, June 30, 2009.
 54. Gary Erb, interview with the author, August 11, 2009.
 55. Secretary of the Army Wilbert Marion Brucker, quoted in Joseph A. Sweeney, M.M., “The People Nobody Wants: A Rugged Indian Boxer Offered the Outcasts His Helping Hand,” *Maryknoll Magazine* undated [1959?] clipping, pages 20–22, quotation on page 22. See also Earl B. Dowdy, “Army Major ‘Adopts’ Korea Leper Colony,” August 6, 1959, clipping from a Michigan newspaper in O’Jibway papers, packet no. 1; and letters May 6, 1959 and July 22, 1959, Father E. J. (“Moff”) Moffett, M.M., to “Jib,” in O’Jibway papers, box 1.
 56. Timothy N. Castle, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: US Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government, 1955–1975* (Columbia University Press, 1993); Kenneth Conboy with James Morrison, *Shadow War: The CIA’s Secret War in Laos* (Paladin Press, 1995); Randall B. Woods, *Shadow Warrior: William Egan Colby and the CIA* (Basic Books, 2013), 213–45.
 57. On the airlines, see William M. Leary, *Perilous Missions: Civil Air Transport [the original name of Air America] and CIA Covert Operations in Asia* (University of Alabama Press, 1984), 100–112; Martin Best, “The CIA’s Airlines: Logistical Air Support of the War in Laos, 1954 to 1975,” 3, in the Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/airamerica/best>; and Christopher Robbins, *Air America* (Avon Books, 1979), 124.
 58. Douglas Martin, “Gen. Vang Pao, Laotian Who Aided U.S., Dies at 81,” *New York Times*, January 8, 2014, A19.
 59. Woods, *Shadow Warrior*, 230.
 60. Louis Austin O’Jibway appears as having completed 15 day course at US Army Special Warfare School, 1961, officer qualification record, November 6, 1964, military service record from NPRC; Terrence (“Terry”) Burke, a former Marine who had joined the CIA for paramilitary work, saw O’Jibway during Burkes’s training from 1961 to 1962; Terry Burke, interview with the author, June 29, 2009; Lt. Col. Laurence S. Browne (team chief), to Mr. Louis O’Jibway, US Operations Mission, Bangkok, Thailand, January 14, 1963, Subject: Token of Appreciation, located in packet with photographs of the training sessions, O’Jibway papers; Conboy, *Shadow War*, 135.
 61. Authorities differ over when O’Jibway arrived at his new job. Conboy, *Shadow War*, 135, contends it was in the summer of 1963; Terry Burke, in an interview with the author, June 29, 2009 believed it was 1963; Gary Erb, in an interview with the author, August 11, 2009, thought it was late 1964. O’Jibway probably arrived in Chiang Khong in mid-1963.
 62. Terrence M. Burke, interview with the author, June 29, 2009; for more on the differences between Young and O’Jibway, reference John Wiren (Air America pilot), interview with the author, June 29, 2009.
 63. Wayne Knight, email to the author, June 29, 2009.
 64. Stephen I. Nichols, interview with the author, July 1, 2009.
 65. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, August 2, 2014; Gladys L. Miller interview with the author, June 29, 2014.

66. “One Dead, Two Hurt in Crash,” undated [August 15, 1964] clipping from an unidentified Los Angeles newspaper. A brief Associated Press report of the crash was carried in the *New York Times* on August 24, 1965, page 3.
67. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, January 17, 2009 and August 2, 2014.
68. Newspaper clipping of paid obituary for Mary Louise O’Jibway and a copy of the memorial service program, August 20, 1964.
69. Thomas G. (“Tommy”) Burman, interview with the author, January 27, 2009.
70. Gary Erb, interview with the author, August 11, 2009.
71. Ibid.
72. This directive came particularly from William E. Colby, head of the CIA’s Far East Division; see Woods, *Shadow Warrior*, 232.
73. Terrence M. (“Terry”) Burke, interview with the author, June 29, 2009. Burke later received the CIA’s Intelligence Award for Valor for saving the two wounded members of his team. As a result of another mission, he also received the Intelligence Star for his attempt to rescue downed pilot Ernie Brace. Burke later became deputy and then acting director of the US Drug Enforcement Agency. I am grateful to Terry Burke and to Judy Porter, general secretary, Air America Association, for helping me contact people who had known Louis A. O’Jibway in Thailand and Laos. Burke later recounted the rescue episode and included O’Jibway as one of the persons to whom he dedicated his memoir, Terrence M. Burke, *Stories from the Secret War: CIA Special Ops in Laos* (La Plata Books, 2012), v, 134–35.
74. Woods, *Shadow Warrior*, 238–41; see also Thomas L. Ahern, Jr., *Undercover Armies: CIA and Surrogate Warfare in Laos, 1961–1973* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2006), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/6_UNDERCOVER_ARMIES.pdf. The documented is a redacted version of an originally classified report. The redacted book was released in 2009.
75. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 255.
76. James D. (“Jim”) Sheldon interviews with the author, July 30–31, 2020. At the time, Sheldon was a major in the US Army detailed to CIA.
77. Conboy, *Shadow War*, 136.
78. Clippings from the *Bangkok Post*, August 22, 1965 and August 24, 1965, Box 58, CIA [Air America] Corporate Records, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas; and “Two Americans in Crash Sought,” *Washington Post*, August 24, 1965, A4.
79. “Copter with 5 Americans Falls in River,” Associated Press (AP) Vientiane, undated [August 1965] newspaper clipping, O’Jibway family papers, courtesy of Laverne (Mrs. Joseph I. O’Jibway), Louis O’Jibway’s sister-in-law.
80. John Wiren interview with the author, June 29, 2009, on CIA and Air America practice and no services for Johnson or O’Jibway in Southeast Asia. Tom Fosmire, interviewed by Prof. William M. Leary of the University of Georgia, February 8, 1993, for the unfinished second volume of Leary’s study of the CIA’s airlines, Box 58, Folder 5, “Leary’s notes,” 21, CIA [Air America] Corporate Records, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.
81. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, January 17, 2009 and September 1, 2014.
82. Terrence M. (“Terry”) Burke, interview with the author, June 29, 2009.
83. Gladys L. Miller, interview with the author, June 29, 2014; Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, September 1, 2014.
84. Father Joseph Sweeney to Friends, undated typed letter, with handwritten note “This is the letter I sent to hundreds of our mutual friends upon learning about your brother.” Sweeney also called O’Jibway, “the greatest friend I ever had.” See Father J. M. McLoughlin (a Maryknoll priest in South Korea), to Mrs. Delmar [Ruth O’Jibway] Muir, November 16, 1965, copies of both from Laverne (Mrs. Joseph I.) O’Jibway in Louis A. O’Jibway papers, packet no. 1.
85. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, September 1, 2014.
86. Both medals awarded to Louis A. O’Jibway are in the possession of Teresa O’Jibway Cook. She lent them to the author in their presentation boxes. A full explanation and list of all medals of the CIA is from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-work-of-a-nation/86402%20Factbook-low.pdf>. On Helms, see Thomas Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (Knopf, 1979), 25–26.
87. Official photograph of the ceremony at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, negative and glossy photograph, in possession of Teresa O’Jibway Cook and lent to the author.
88. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, June 19, 2009 and September 1, 2014.
89. Joseph I. O’Jibway to Mr. O’Neil, October 4, 1966, carbon copy, the O’Jibway family papers, packet no. 1, from Laverne (Mrs. Joseph I.) O’Jibway via Teresa O’Jibway Cook. “Sam O’Neil” was the alias of CIA officer George Cave, who was a Middle East expert during that period, according to Richard Secord with Jay Wurts, *Honored and Betrayed: Irangate, Covert Affairs, and the Secret War in Laos* (John Wiley, 1992), 295.
90. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, April 4, 2009.
91. Handwritten, unsigned letter, undated original in Joseph I. O’Jibway papers. The letter was later sent by Joseph’s widow, Laverne O’Jibway, to Teresa O’Jibway Cook, and included in Louis A. O’Jibway papers, packet no. 1. The letter provided the name (slightly misspelled) and address of the flight mechanic, Steve Nichols. Years later, Nichols told the author that he had received a letter from the family, but since the then 24-year old mechanic had signed confidentiality papers for Air America, he turned it over to the base manager at Udorn. Stephen I. Nichols, interview with the author, July 1, 2009.
92. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, February 9, 2009.

93. Helicopter pilot Richard (“Dick”) Casterlin used the term “unhappy” in an email to the author, June 29, 2009; but William Leary quoted Casterlin as telling him that the agency was “pissed” over the loss of the two case officers. Box 58, Folder 5, “Leary’s notes, 20, CIA [Air America] Corporate Records, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.
94. “Aircraft Accident Investigation Report, H-23, Accident at T407/Vientiane, Laos, August 20, 1965,” September 16, 1965, 4, Box 58, Folder 5, CIA [Air America] Corporate Records, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas. H-23 was the aircraft number of the UH-34D that was lost.
95. “The Two Mikes” in Ted Gup, *Book of Honor: Covert Lives and Classified Deaths at the CIA* (Doubleday, 2000), 163–206.
96. James R. Lilley, interviewed by Charles Stewart Kennedy, May 21, 1998, in James R. Lilley Oral History, 27, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, Virginia, www.adst.org.
97. William M. Leary, “The CIA and the ‘Secret War’ in Laos: The Battle for Skyline Ridge, 1971–1972,” *Journal of Military History* 59, no. 3 (July 1995): 517.
98. Terrence M. (“Terry”) Burke, interview with the author, June 29, 2009.
99. Gary Erb, interview with the author, August 11, 2009; the crewman confirmed the spontaneous change in plans, but said it had not yet started to rain when they left, Stephen I. Nichols, interview with the author, July 1, 2009.
100. Local [Air America] Board of Review, “Aircraft Accident Investigation Report, H-23 [Helicopter Number 23] Accident at T407/Vientiane, Laos, August 20, 1965,” Box 58, Folder 5, CIA [Air America] Corporate Records, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas. I am grateful to Thomas Allen, PhD, then curator in the History of Aviation Collection for providing me with a pdf of the 48-page report on the crash. This collection contains documents, notes, and interviews obtained by Prof. William M. Leary, University of Georgia, for uncompleted second volume of his projected two-volume history of the CIA’s Air America. I have also used Stephen I. Nichols, interview with the author, July 1, 2009.
101. Stephen I. Nichols, statement, September 6, 1965, 2; and F.W. Calhoun, statement, that they heard two persons surface and call for help before being swept away, September 11, 1965, 2, both in “Aircraft Accident Investigation Report, H-23, Accident at T407/Vientiane, Laos, August 20, 1965,” Sept. 16, 1965, Box 58, Folder 5, CIA [Air America] Corporate Records, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas. Later, Nichols contradicted his earlier testimony and said that when he and Nunez and Calhoun had yelled out, they had heard nothing. Stephen I. Nichols, interview with the author, July 1, 2019.
102. Daniel Arnold, email to the author, June 28, 2009; Marius Burke, email to the author, June 27, 2009; E. Wayne Knight email to the author, June 26, 2009. Knight was told they were using “state of the art, US Military MAD gear”; undated, unsigned, handwritten, highly detailed account in pencil of the ill-fated flight of August 20, 1965, in the O’Jibway family papers, courtesy of Laverne O’Jibway, widow of Louis A. O’Jibway’s youngest brother, Joseph I. O’Jibway.
103. Mike Lynch, in an account Lynch gave, June 10, 1993, to William Leary, Box 58, Folder 5, “Leary’s notes,” 21, CIA [Air America] Corporate Records, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas. Since the twins were still legally minors, O’Jibway’s paychecks apparently went to Joseph I. O’Jibway, who seems to have noted the amounts in pencil.
104. A “true hero,” Maria Poshepny, Tony Poe’s daughter, email to the author, June 30, 2009. Mike Lynch quoting Tony Poe about “pocket full of rocks,” June 10, 1993, in Box 58, Folder 5, “William Leary’s Notes,” 21, CIA [Air America] Corporate Records, History of Aviation Archives, Special Collections and Archives Division, Eugene McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.
105. Gary Erb, interview with the author, August 11, 2009.
106. Nicholas Dujmovic, “Amnesia to Anamnesis: Commemoration of the Dead at CIA,” *Studies in Intelligence* 52, no. 3 (September 2008), <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol52no3/amnesia-to-anamnesis.html>.
107. “Louis A. O’Jibway, 1966,” in photograph of the Book of Honor open to pages for the period 1950 to 1978, in John Quirk, *The Central Intelligence Agency: A Photographic History* (Foreign Intelligence Press, 1986), 217. On the wall, the book, and the annual commemoration which began in 1987, see Dujmovic, “Amnesia to Anamnesis,” as well as relevant entries on the CIA public website, <https://www.cia.gov>. See also the image of pages covering 1950 to 2005 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CIA_Memorial_Wall#/media/File:CIA-Book_of_Honor_open. Accessed by the author, May 17, 2020.
108. CIA Office of Protocol, to Joseph I. O’Jibway, March 17, 2000, Louis A. O’Jibway papers, packet no. 2; Teresa O’Jibway Cook, email to the author, October 15, 2014.
109. Ted Gup, quoted in Ken Dilanian, “CIA Discloses Names of 15 Killed in Line of Duty [between 1982 and 2012],” *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 2012; see also Ian Shapiro, “Children of Dead CIA Officers Try to Learn about their Work,” *Washington Post*, February 3, 2010, A1.
110. Teresa O’Jibway Cook, interview with the author, September 1, 2014.
111. Quincy, *Harvesting Pa Chay’s Wheat*, 5; Timothy S. Castle, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: US Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government, 1955–1975* (Columbia University Press, 1993).
112. See obituaries for Gen. Vang Pao in *New York Times*, January 8, 2011, A19, and Associated Press in *Newark Star-Ledger*, January 8, 2011, 16; Conboy, *Shadow War*, 419–22; Jane Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret War in*

- Laos, 1942–1992* (Indiana University Press, 1993); Keith Quincy, *Hmong: History of a People*, 2nd ed. (Eastern Washington University Press, 1995), 189–224.
113. Quirk, *CIA Photographic History*, 217; *Conboy Shadow War*, 135, 136, included half-a-dozen references to his work at Nam Yu and the crash; Leary, “The CIA and the ‘Secret War’ in Laos,” 517, simply notes O’Jibway’s death in the crash.
114. Roger Warner, *Backfire: The CIA’s Secret War in Laos and Its Link with the War in Vietnam* (Simon & Schuster, 1995), 173; Gup, *The Book of Honor*, 373; Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 255.
115. There is no reference to Louis Austin O’Jibway at the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame at Haskell Indian Nations University (www.haskell.edu/athletics), Bacone College (www.bacone.edu/alumni/famous-alumni), or the University of New Mexico Athletic Hall of Honor and Alumni Chapel Memorial Wall. My thanks to Prof. Aaron Taylor of UNM for personally checking the memorials at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, in August 2014.
116. See http://www.specialoperationsmemorial.org/directory_listing.cfm?KEY=O.
117. See Special Forces Roll of Honor, www.specialforcesroh.com/showthread.php?37349-O’Jibway-Louis-A.
118. On the Impact of World War II on American Indians, particularly those on or from the reservations, see, for example, the classic work by Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era In Indian Affairs* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 112–17; and more recently Kenneth William Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian* (University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 215–28; plus the chapter on Navajo code talkers in Noah Riseman, *Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers In the Pacific War* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 169–231.

