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The Secret Agent: In Search Of America's Greatest World War II Spy (Kindle Single)



Synopsis

Eric Erickson was the most important American spy of World War II. He also had a secret to keep. In 1942, the Brooklyn-born Erickson was a millionaire oil mogul who volunteered for a dangerous mission inside the Third Reich: locating the top-secret synthetic oil plants that kept the German war machine running. To fool the Nazis, Erickson played the role of a collaborator. He hung a portrait of Hitler in his apartment and "disowned" his Jewish best friend, then flew to Berlin, where he charmed Himmler and signed lucrative oil deals with the architects of the Final Solution. All the while, he was visiting the oil refineries and passing their coordinates to Allied Bomber Command, who destroyed the plants in a series of B-17 raids, helping to end the war early. After the war, Erickson's was revealed as a secret agent and received the Medal of Freedom for his bravery. William Holden even played him in a hit Hollywood movie. For a brief moment in the early '60s, Erickson was the most famous spy in the world. His secret? He hadn't played a Nazi collaborator. He'd actually been one - a war profiteer who'd made millions of trading with Hitler before having a change of heart. Black-listed by the Allies and disowned by his family, Erickson had volunteered for the spy mission in order to redeem himself, and ended up saving thousands of Allied lives. Based on newly-discovered archives in Sweden, *The Secret Agent* is a riveting piece of narrative nonfiction that tells the true story of Erickson's remarkable life for the first time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Stephan Talty is the author of five acclaimed non-fiction books, including *Agent Garbo: The Brilliant, Eccentric Spy Who Tricked Hitler and Saved D-Day*. He's written for the *New York Times Magazine*, *GQ*, *Men's Journal* and many other publications.

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Customer Reviews

When I bought this today, I only allotted myself 30 minutes to start the book. Much to the chagrin of my wife, I wound up reading the book from start to finish in one sitting. It was obvious that the author had done his research but I didn't feel like I was reading a text book. The facts were interweaved with great storytelling to produce a book that was a pure pleasure to read. I'll look for more works from this author in the future.

I'm really not sure why this book would get less than 3 stars. It was a well written book about an actual person, but it read very much like a novel. One reviewer called it "boring." I was hardly bored. This is the true story about American oilman turned OSS spy Erik Erickson. Mr Erickson lost many of his friends who thought he was collaborating with the Germans while living in Sweden, while actually finding oil production assets and clueing in the OSS so the facilities could be bombed. He lost his wife to mental illness and he lost his lover to the hangman's noose. I have studied WWII for many years and cannot believe I have not heard of this man before this. I enjoyed the book thoroughly and I would recommend it to everyone.

The first WW II true espionage story I knew about was when I was just 19 years old in 1962 when the great Bill Holden movie "Counterfeit Traitor" came out based on this fantastic story. I was hooked on the subject since then 50 years ago. This is a great read; short but absorbing. For those of you interested in this subject do see the above named movie; great acting by Holden and the German actress Lilli Palmer. You will also like "Five Fingers" about the same subject, WW II espionage. By the way Five Fingers, story starring James Mason is also a true story and is mentioned in detail in the great book Krueger's Men by Lawrence Malkin available on Kindle. Happy reading.

I knew about Erickson from the Holden movie but this Kindle Single filled in many details. This book is well worth the current asking price of \$2.99 and is a fun read for anyone interested in WWII

history. For a book this short and at this price, one should hardly expect citations (I know, I've done footnotes and intros in some of my public domain works) but they would have been nice. But overall, this was money well spent.

Subtitled "In Search of America's Greatest World War II Spy," this brief biography of Swedish-American oilman Erik Erickson by Stephan Talty lives up to this subtitle's billing. Erickson's courage and his impact on the outcome of the battle against Nazi Germany places him at or near the pinnacle of my pantheon of heroes. He helped cripple the Nazi military...at great personal cost. Erickson's motivation? Growing up in New York City, "We were raised to resist tyrants and dictators---and against any and all that used brutality and force to gain their goals." Add to that the personality of an oil wildcatter and the desire to live up to the example of his heroic older brother, Henry, and you have the makings of an extraordinary man, the subject of an exceptionally fine biography. Teamed with a courageous Swedish prince, the charming and talented Erickson eventually wormed his way into the confidence of those at the highest level of the Nazi hierarchy, including Heinrich Himmler, the monstrously evil head of the dreaded Gestapo and arguably the second highest official in the "Thousand-Year Reich." Erickson's goal? Disrupt the oil and gasoline supplies that fueled the German war machine. Eventually, he became trusted enough by the Nazis that he obtained frequent visits to the refineries and processing plants they used to create gasoline and even synthetic fuels, as their oil and gas supplies were reduced by Allied bombings and land victories. During the beginning years of the war, Allied efforts were focused elsewhere, but by the last two years, it was realized that cutting off gasoline and lubricants could halt major elements of the Nazi military, especially its tanks and planes. These deeply hidden chemical processing sites were ravaged by bombing guided by the information supplied by Erickson. The Nazi air force largely shifted from defending the coasts to defending their oil and gas supplies. Logistical needs trumped territory protection. Erickson was recruited by the Office of Strategic Services, the OSS, predecessor to our Central Intelligence Agency. To carry off his deception, Erickson had to become plausibly pro-Nazi gradually while maintaining industrial, governmental, and social contacts in Sweden, where his own petroleum-based business was centered. This imposture cost him his wife, his lover, his friendships, and nearly his life. The second woman he loved, Anne-Maria---an anti-Nazi German collaborator---was executed by hanging in his presence; neither he nor she acknowledged the other during the gruesome procedure, thus sparing Erickson's life. After the war, he carried her picture with him for the forty years until his own death. Biographer Talty has resurrected Erickson's story with the help of materials he recently uncovered. Decades ago, the spy had been the subject of

numerous journalistic interviews and even a somewhat factual Hollywood movie, his heroism an inspiration. The details newly discovered only make him stand even taller. He was principled, patriotic, persistent, and daring. Where does a country get such brave and dedicated men and women? Will we have them again, if needed? Examples such as that of Eric Erickson will help inspire and encourage them.

First introduction to this author, Stephan Talty, and must say, very pleased and excited to find another excellent writer to add to my reading list. Especially love books that relay historical facts that are otherwise lost to the past. A very good insight to the undercurrent and secret espionage workings of spy danger and intrigue. Mr. Talty brought the post WW2 dangers and the war years to life again, a very sad tale in many areas, but allows today's reader a true insight of just how important these intrepid souls have served their country. Spies, though depending on what side of the battle, have long played a definite role in the changing tides of war. I cannot imagine a more brutal regime than the Nazi forces and strength and power they held during this period. My hat is off to Eric Erickson, I bow before you....my heart aches for the loss of Maria, a love that never matured and was ended so abruptly, viewed by a heavy heart, lost forever in the pages of history, but not forgotten in the heart of Erickson. Yes, Mr. Talty, he was a beloved brother, an American, a decent man. Thank you for all your efforts to bring this wonderful read to fruition.

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