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The Wolves At The Door: The True Story Of America's Greatest Female Spy



Synopsis

"Judith Pearson does a remarkable job of bringing one of America's greatest spies back to life. I highly recommend this story of derring-do and white knuckles suspense." —Patrick O'Donnell, Combat Historian and Author of *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*

The remarkable story of one of WWII's greatest spies. Virginia Hall left her comfortable Baltimore roots in 1931 to follow a dream of becoming a Foreign Service Officer. After watching Hitler roll over Poland and France, she enlisted to work for the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), a secret espionage and sabotage organization. She was soon deployed to occupied France where, if captured, imprisonment and torture at the hands of the Gestapo was all but assured. Against such an ominous backdrop, Hall managed to locate drop zones for money and weapons, helped escaped POWs and downed Allied airmen flee to England, and secured safe houses for agents. And she did it all on one leg: Virginia Hall had lost her left leg before the war in a hunting accident. Soon, wanted posters appeared throughout France, offering a reward for her capture. By winter of 1942, Hall had to flee France via the only route possible: a hike on foot through the frozen Pyrénées Mountains into neutral Spain. Upon her return to England, the American espionage organization, the Office of Special Services, recruited her and sent her back to France disguised as an old peasant woman. While there, she was responsible for killing 150 German soldiers and capturing 500 others. Sabotaging communications and transportation links and directing resistance activities, her work helped change the course of the war. This is the true story of Virginia Hall. "Riveting..."

—Publishers Weekly

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Customer Reviews

What a wonderful biography of someone so brave and so determined to 'walk the talk.' While America hem-hawed around trying to decide whether it was going to help our fellow allies in Europe, this woman decided to do something about it. Virginia Hall started out working for the US State Dept and went through all of the usual clerical things assigned to women because it was thought they weren't capable of doing anything else - hah! Virginia paid her dues and tried to progress up the ladder to become a foreign agent, but she could see after she lost her leg that there was nothing they would do to make that happen. Amazingly after she arrive in Europe, doing the 'usual', she volunteers to be an agent/spy for Britain's newly formed SOE. After her training, they sent her to Vichy and other parts of occupied France in 1941. She spent 15 months there helping to coordinate the activities of the French Resistance. The Germans nicknamed her the 'Limping Lady' and put her on their most wanted list. After escaping into Spain when the Germans swept up all of France, she made her way back to London and joined the US OSS and asked to return to France. She mapped drop zones for supplies and commandos from England, found safe houses for the British and Americans until after D-Day and the Allies freed France. Contrary to other reviewers, I found the one on one commentary more personal, as if Ms. Hall were telling me about her life. The author did a great job of weaving in WWII facts around Hitler's invasion and our own D-Day invasion. Many people (I for one) always kinda felt that since Paris was spared the major bombings that other cities suffered (i.e., London) that they people were not as bad off. Only to be informed of the horrible sufferings of hunger, torture and poverty Parisians were thrown into by the Nazis. Even French Jews were not spared the horrors that all of Europe were going through. Thank you Virginia Hall - good ol' American gumption at its best!!

Virginia Hall, an American is considered the greatest female spy of WW2. Her activity was with the French Resistance, and she was good at her work and she was dedicated to the job. She always

wanted to be in the thick of the action. Several times she had the opportunity to return home but she always requested a return to the action. She was well organized and adamant about the secrecy of her life. She barely escaped an arrest by the Nazi's in France. Virginia was brave, and appreciated for the job she did, she was awarded many citations but was not impressed with any of the recognition. Amazingly she once walked across the Pyrenees Mountains from France into Spain and never divulged to her fellow travelers that she had only one leg. Her leg was amputated when she was younger because of a hunting accident, and she struggled with an artificial limb. She met and later married one of her co-workers in the Resistance, and she did live happily ever after.

Virginia Hall grew up in a privileged Maryland family, lived in Europe, spoke several languages, was fluent in French and aspired to work in the foreign service for the U.S. However, because she had a prosthetic lower leg from a hunting accident in her youth, was a woman, had an outspoken nature and could think on her own and had definite political leanings, the only available job for her in the foreign Consulate was of a secretarial nature. While living abroad, WWII began and she was able to escape France and go to London where she was noticed by the British because of her innate organizing talent, her fluency in languages and her connections. She was trained in espionage, explosives, hand-to-hand combat, firearms, Morse code and all the things she had to know to begin her work in sabotaging the Nazi takeover of Europe. When the Nazis began looking for the "Lady with the limp" she escaped through Spain by walking over the Pyrenees mountains in deep snow with a guide and 2 escaping airmen and wound up in prison for 20 days before being released back to London where she begged to be sent back to France. She was instrumental in subverting the Nazi war effort, saving lives of downed fliers and captured Resistance workers and was almost captured herself. Her escapades, the inner workings of the British and American agencies, the beginnings of the OSS and CIA are all fascinating as well as the competition between the FBI and the newly formed CIA. Virginia Hall's patriotism, especially in the day to day presence of unrelenting, in-your-face threat of torture and death to yourself as well as hundreds of others for whom you're responsible, is inspiring especially in this era of "what can I get for free from the government" type of thinking, Virginia Hall's story should be required reading for America's youth.

Great story about a courageous, resourceful, determined woman who didn't let a disability, the fact that she was a woman in the 1930's and 40's, or the Nazis stop her from serving the Allies' cause. She earned the respect and gratitude of three nations and deserved every medal she got! The book was very thoroughly researched and well-written and goes into peripheral explanations when

necessary without overwhelming the central story. A really enjoyable read!

An excellent page-turner of a book! 'Reads more a spy novel instead of a biography. It's a fascinating, true account of a remarkable young American woman working in the clandestine service in occupied France during WWII. Nothing deters Virginia Hall in her fight against the Nazi invasion of Europe; not sexual prejudice, her physical handicap or even the Gestapo. It was interesting to read about the French Resistance and the tactics used by civilians behind the scenes that collaborated in the liberating of France. Ms. Hall is a humble patriot that all of us can admire.

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