



Sisterhood of Spies

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America's first female secret agents were debutantes, Ivy Leaguers, wives of wealthy men, and movie stars. Bravely answering their country's call, they risked their lives in daring missions to help the Allied cause. Told here for the first time, these breathtaking stories reveal the bravery of "Code-Name Cynthia", "The Limping Lady", "Maria", and other female legends of espionage.

Sisterhood of Spies Details

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From Reader Review Sisterhood of Spies for online ebook

Pam Venne says

Reading like a historical documentary McIntosh recreates the endeavors of the women of the OSS. I had not realized how widely used, nor how immensely talented and educated some of the women were. A number of them were recruited from embassies, military, east coast universities and friends of friends. Most all were multi-lingual and were tasked with some of the world's most intimate secrets at the time.

A number were famous names I recognized, even today!

Thanks to the author, Elizabeth McIntosh, for taking the time to compile the women and their stories and current status. Fifty years in the making, I take my hat off to you and all the other women who served. What a fitting finish for the 4th of July weekend!

L Greyfort says

Rather entertaining story of the formation of the OSS, and in particular, the women who got involved from the start. It's lots of fun to read about people one knows, like Marlene Dietrich and Julia Child (who was in an office in the Far East; not doing Mata Hari work, but definitely carrying out duties of importance to the war effort). It's just as interesting to read of the many other, less known women who helped bring about a successful ending, through many types of work - both dangerous field assignments, and crucial administrative achievements.

This book is also somewhat less portentous than others on this subject. It takes seriously the work done by all these women, but seems to have less of a chip on its shoulder about the world of espionage.

Natalie says

This is the ultimate version for this book. I kind of like the unpretentious, dry but detailed writing. It fits the extraordinary but hard nosed exploits of these women perfectly. No unnecessarily excessive enthusiastic chorus of praise by McIntosh which would diminish these women's heroic deeds, by making them sound fabulous, but slightly too good to be true to believe!

StoryTellerShannon says

There's some very interesting information in here about the formation of the OSS and particularly the women who were in it, including field agents and even a couple of celebrities like Julia Childs and Marlene Dietrich but the presentation is vapid and ponderous at best. It got to the point where I found myself skipping chapters and skimming others until I realized it was more interesting to dig this information up on Wiki. The patriotic tone may turn off a few people. And, before an Amazon troll steps in and tells me I can't rate something if I haven't read it the whole way through, well, you're just flat out wrong. It isn't my job to read through

something if it's boring. That's the job of the author to get me to want to turn the next page.

OVERALL GRADE: D plus to C minus; WHEN READ: March to April 2012.

hedgehog says

Leaning toward 3.5 stars. Written in a breezy magazine-article style that I felt suited the snapshot glimpses of the many women/jobs covered over the course of the book. This isn't a comprehensive look at any one person or operation; look elsewhere for that. Appreciated this one for the interviews from the women who were featured (this was published in 1998 and I'll guess that many of those women aren't here to share their stories anymore, so am glad the author - herself employed by the OSS - took the time to gather these first-person accounts), and for covering even the "routine" jobs that the majority of the female employees held. I dig mundane historical details, so I wasn't bored by them. The stories about filing information and driving generals around also, to me, served as a sobering reminder that even something so horrifying as war is eventually broken down into tasks like filing index cards.

Teri says

I read this book for my community book club.

This was an interesting, compelling read. I knew about the British women who played vital roles in Bletchley Park and other places during the war, but I never had any idea that American women were just as active as their British counterparts.

The writing was a bit dry in places, but when I'd find myself getting bogged down, I'd remind myself that these were stories of real women, and not all they did was glamorous all of the time.

I'm glad I read the book, and I may look for more books on this same topic.

Paul says

I have seen some of the negative reviews. They are entitled to their opinion. I first want to say that the date of writing of this title is 1998. That said, I believe the author recently celebrated her 100th birthday at the CIA. I look at the book as a jig-saw puzzle piece to the larger history of both military and intelligence operations of WWII (and beyond). It is non-fiction so is not intended for entertainment. I just appreciate that the author got around to saving information from the period in her 80s.

The Library Lady says

Fascinating material could have made a compelling book. Instead, McIntosh's style is so dull and prim that even the most exciting stories seem flat, merely a recitation of the facts. What a pity.

A.L. Sowards says

Probably about 3.5 stars.

What I liked: There were some gripping true stories that I hadn't heard before. The author served in OSS during WWII, so she knew her subject. The book was arranged by area rather than strictly by chronology, and that organization worked well for this project. I also liked that she didn't wait until the epilogue to say what happened to the women she wrote about. Instead, she explained what happened to them right after she highlighted their careers, while their stories were still fresh in the reader's mind.

What I didn't like: Some parts were a little dull. It felt like the author was trying to string together brief statements on all the women she interviewed, even when their work was fairly routine (routine as in important, but not necessarily interesting). I also felt the author spent too much effort highlighting all the OSS officers whose families were broken over the course of the war. Perhaps she was trying to make her situation (she and her pre-war husband both survived the war, but their marriage did not) appear normal.

Roberta says

I picked up this book for a quarter at my library's book sale. I read the introduction and it struck me that the author has exactly the same stilted writing style as Aline Countess of Romanones who wrote *The Spy Wore Red* and several other books about her adventures in the OSS. Then Elizabeth McIntosh actually mentions Aline in the Introduction. I almost fell off my chair when I got to page 218 where the author reveals that Aline's nickname was "Butch!" She then goes on to confirm that the commander of the OSS purposely recruited women who were, or at least looked like, fashion models. It was expected that part of their job would be to seduce men who were in a position to give them information.

When they didn't do it themselves, they hired professionals. One of the women who worked for the OSS bribed German prisoners to give her information by paying for them to spend the afternoon with the local putanazzas.

That same OSS agent wrote propaganda pamphlets to demoralize Czech soldiers by telling them that, while they were fighting at the front, their sisters, wives, and mothers were whoring at home. I thought it was pretty funny that this same OSS agent couldn't figure out why U.S. servicemen kept propositioning her. Apparently it never occurred to her that the Germans were equally good at writing propaganda. Theirs said that women in the U.S. military were being recruited to "service" American service men.

I was brought up short on page 190 when an OSS agent was complaining that she had not been allowed to go on a certain mission in France because women were not allowed in combat zones. Later she heard that Operation Anvil had been "a piece of cake" and that she should have been allowed to go. Wrong on two counts. First, female radio operators, nurses, and a few others with critical skills were being sent into combat zones. Maybe "sexy spy" was not considered a critical skill. Second, Operation Anvil, while a victory for the allies, was not "a piece of cake." There is a whole cemetery in France devoted to American soldiers who did not survive Operation Anvil.

Joan VunCannon says

It was very good. So many ways that women helped in the war effort. They were brave and inventive. Well worth reading.

Shannon says

An interesting series of subjects, though it didn't always sustain interest. The author focused on some of the more salacious details at the outset, but followed up with occasional curiosities that didn't often lead to anything. While the contributions of general administrative staff are commendable, devoting paragraphs to several of them with very similar details made it feel as though the narrative had lost focus at times. However, the more noteworthy missions and research projects were fascinating.

Sally says

A fascinating overview of women in the OSS during WWII written by a woman who was one of them. There's enough material here for a dozen books since many of the women are mentioned in a couple of paragraphs or a chapter, and I'd like to know more. McIntosh looks how women were recruited into the OSS, often because of education and language skills, and how a number of them moved from secretarial work to working with the resistance in Western Europe, creating black propaganda in Burma, and dealing with the shifting political situation in China. Highly recommended.

Lena Donan says

Kus som sa podu?ila. A kus aj sa zmatla. Ve?a informácii, ale za utriedenie to stojí a ako inšpirácia rozhodne vie poslúži?.

Niektó síce obvi?uje z prílišného "patriotizmu", "idealizmu" a pánboh vie ?oho ešte, ale na každom ?itate?ovi záleží, ?o si vyberie, ?o h?adá a ako použije to, ?o nájde.

Ja som dostala, ?o som h?adala... a možno aj viac.

Sugarpuss says

This book had such potential. I thought it was going to be about actual, boots-on-the-ground female agents, but instead, it read like a laundry list of secretaries & file clerks, and whom they married after the war. There were about 2 chapters that were interesting, but the author's inane need for including unneeded, space-filling details (like what color curtains hung in the office, or how bumpy the roads were) overshadowed these chapters too. To me, this book devolved into how many women can we list in a chapter, and who she was related to. Sadly, the author made it sound like the only reason these women joined the OSS was to find a husband. Ugh.

PS: If you were interested in learning about Marlene Dietrich's or Julia Child's exploits in this book, don't bother. Dietrich was reduced to less than 2 paragraphs & according to the book, Julia Childs was nothing more than a highly organized file clerk.
