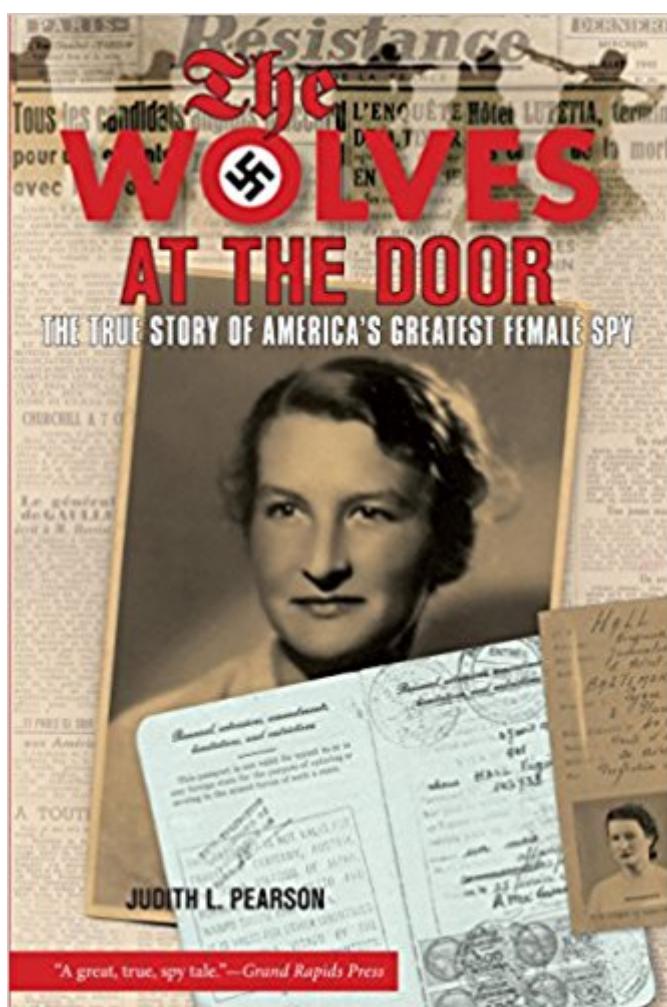


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# Wolves At The Door: The True Story Of America's Greatest Female Spy



## Synopsis

Virginia Hall left her Baltimore home in 1931 to enter the Foreign Service and went to work for the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) when Hitler was building toward the peak of his power in Europe. She was assigned to France, where she helped the Resistance movement, escaped prisoners of war, and American Allied paratroopers. By 1942 she was considered so dangerous to the Gestapo that she had to escape over the Pyrenees mountains—on an artificial leg, no less. When she got to England, she was reassigned to France by the OSS, disguised as an old peasant woman. She helped capture 500 German soldiers and kill more than 150, while she sabotaged Nazi communications and transportation. Hitler's forces were hot on her trail, however, and her daring intelligence activities and indomitable spirit defied the expectations of even the Allies until the very end of the war. Her story was ignored for more than fifty years, and this book now brings Virginia Hall's story to patriots young and old.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although Pearson's chronology wobbles early on and her prose is less than elegant, her account of Virginia Hall's work as a secret agent in German-occupied France is nevertheless riveting, thanks to the inherent drama of the time. Gifted with languages, Hall sought a career in Foreign Service in 1930s Europe, but a physical handicap (she had one wooden leg), her gender and her outspoken political views stymied her diplomatic ambitions. She escaped to London shortly after Germany's 1940 invasion of France and came to the attention of a secret British intelligence group that trained her in non-traditional sabotage techniques, cryptology and radio communication. As a newly minted

secret agent, she returned to France, where she passed on information about German positions, transported downed Allied pilots and escaped prisoners to safety, oversaw the retrieval of supply drops and organized resistance fighters. Hall's espionage career ended with the allied victory and the dawn of the cold war, for which the CIA wanted a different breed of agent. Though commendable for its portrayal of Hall's unflagging courage and energy in dangerous and desperate conditions, the story is told in bland prose that fails to live up to the exceptional times it chronicles. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"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*"A great, true, spy tale."--Grand Rapids Press Praise for Judith Pearson's *Belly of the Beast: A POW's Inspiring True Story of Faith, Courage, and Survival aboard the Infamous WWII Japanese Hell Ship Oryoku Maru*"An inspiring look at one of WWII's darkest hours."--James Bradley, author of *Flags of Our Fathers*"Captures an experience almost too terrifying for words. To follow one man's ordeal in a Japanese torture ship is to travel through the bowels of hell."--Iris Chang, author of *The Rape of Nanking*"[A] searing tribute."--Senator John McCain"Recommended for any public library with readers interested in World War II."--Library Journal

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 arrived 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 Hitlers 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 the 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 unremitting, 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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