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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 Lalty 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.

## Book Information

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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 can't believe I never heard about the true-life character Eric Erickson before today. And kudos to the author for crafting a terrific short read about this sly genius who made his way from Brooklyn to Texas to Stockholm to ply his trade. Not sure whether to call it a classic whodunnit... thrilling Nazi exposé... or one-of-a-kind character study. I still can't believe it's TRUE. My favorite part? When Eric the spy is brought before the diabolical Himmler himself, who happens to be sitting down for a manicure at the time. Crazy stuff indeed!

Eric Erickson. East Coast Ivy League college man, Texas oil field roughneck, globe trotting Gary-Cooper-type American high living American, savvy Swedish businessman, Nazi Lover, Nazi Hater, greedy oil man, coward, spy, patriot | what was he? All of the above. Remember the scenes in WWII movies like Patton and Battle of the Bulge where the German tanks stop moving forward because they've run out of gas? Why did they? The Germans had developed the ability to manufacture synthetic petroleum and oils that were two decades ahead of Americans and allies. And the Germans had developed the ability to craftily hide these production facilities. The Allies had no idea where they were, nor any intelligence resources to find out. Except for one man. A man who boldly, and openly in his actual persona as a American oilman toured all the most secret facilities, welcomed at them by the highest Germans, under a personal pass from Himmler himself. A bold, high-living partying American among the Nazi elite. The best friend of the Swedish black sheep crown prince. The man? Eric Erickson. Newly available Swedish archival materials have shed new light on Erickson's long-public, yet still little known tale. There's a lot more left for a narrative

biographer to mine -- the story of the Beaumont Texas oil fields, of the international oil business in the 1930's, of the response of the European royal families to the rise of the Nazis, and how the Nazis related to those royals. The chemistry of synthetic oil. The depth of Western spy craft during the war. The narrative is fast paced and quickly moves through the events of Erickson's life and his spy career. Eminently readable and enjoyable. Very good!

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.

Stephan Talty has uncovered a little known story about a WWII double agent. Nothing was as it seemed with this intriguing figure from history. The author has really dug up a story which needs to be told about the complex motivations of this wartime "hero". I highly recommend as an informative, fast read!

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.

Story is one that you will not want to put down until finished. This man should have been more praised by our population in bringing WWII to an end. A MUST read to anyone interested in knowing about how much a man can give for his country.

I finished only three chapters of this potentially interesting story before closing the book for good. The reason: besides the several spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors, the author made various historical and geographical mistakes, specifically "USAA bomber squadrons began releasing their 500-pound bombs ... warheads appeared in the night sky ..." (In WWII, Americans

bombed Germany during daylight hours, the British bombed at night), as well as the locations of Stuttgart and Aschaffenburg (Stuttgart is in the South of Germany, and Aschaffenburg is on the Main River, not the Rhein). I can't maintain interest in a historical book or novel if I know that the author didn't research his material. If an author is this uncaring about accuracy, or too lazy to fact-check, he shouldn't waste his time - or ours - with sloppy writing!

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