

The People of the CIA ... A CIA Trailblazer: Eloise Page

Eloise R. Page was a prominent and well-respected Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer, who shattered several glass ceilings during her remarkable intelligence career. Her journey began in May 1942 when she worked as a secretary to Gen. William J. Donovan, the head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—the predecessor agency to CIA. Page worked for Donovan for several intense and exciting years, learning the business of espionage. It was during this time she developed a passion for intelligence work.

Reaching Top Ranks Overseas

Toward the end of World War II, Page worked as an administrative assistant to the director of a new division within the OSS called X-2, which focused on counterintelligence. In this position she moved to Brussels, Belgium, in 1945 and helped open the first post-war station.

After World War II, the OSS was dismantled. But it was not long before President Harry S. Truman recognized the need for a postwar intelligence organization. In 1947, he created the CIA. Page became one of the Agency's first employees.

With the creation of the CIA, Page worked in the directorate that later became the Directorate of Operations (DO), now known as the National Clandestine Service (NCS).

Throughout her impressive career in the DO, Page rose through the ranks, eventually becoming the directorate's No. 3 officer. It was through her hard work and dedication that she became a case officer and later, the first female Chief of Station (COS)—the highest job for case officers abroad. Page assumed this COS position in the late 1970s. She also became one of CIA's experts on terrorist organizations.

Page was the first woman to serve as the Deputy Director of the Intelligence Community staff and Chairman of the Critical Collection Problems Committee, responsible for allocating collection assets on critical problems facing the United States. She became such a well known expert on terrorism and collection issues that the Defense Intelligence College invited her to join their faculty after she retired from the CIA.

A Southern Lady, A Fierce Fighter

Page, a native of Richmond, Virginia, was a true southern lady who believed that dressing to go out always included white gloves. She spoke with a drawl and preferred to be addressed as "Miss Page," not "Ms. Page."

But contrary to the gentle image she portrayed, Page was a fierce fighter in the workplace. Officials at the Defense Department called her "the iron butterfly." A CIA colleague referred to Page as "a perfect southern lady with a core of steel."

In addition to her passion for intelligence work, she also was active with the Christ Episcopal Church in Georgetown where she taught Sunday school, served on the vestry, and directed the altar guild and flower committee. Page never married nor had any children, but she treated her golden retrievers like family members—bringing them with her to all assignments, even those overseas.

Page retired from the Agency in 1987 at the age of 67.

An Everlasting Inspiration

Page was recognized as one of the Agency's 50 Trailblazers during the CIA's 50th anniversary celebration in September 1997. The Trailblazer award recognizes CIA officers who by their actions, example, innovations, or initiative take the CIA in important new directions and help shape the Agency. Page served as a role model for many at CIA because of her operational skills and exceptional management capability.

On October 16, 2002, then CIA Director George Tenet issued a statement upon her death at the age of 82, "From her earliest days of service with OSS, she was a source of inspiration to others. She will be forever."

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