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You're Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger by Roger Hall. Naval Institute Press (<http://www.usni.org/press/press.html>), 291 Wood Road, Annapolis, Maryland 21402, 2004, 224 pages, \$16.95 (softcover).

According to a time-honored military platitude, "Never volunteer for anything." Apparently, this message was lost on Lt Roger Hall, a young Army officer who volunteers to join the newly established Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to quench his thirst for adventure and find a way out of Louisiana. With deadpan wit, the grown-up Roger Hall details his experiences as an OSS officer in *You're Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger*, which received wide acclaim when it first appeared in 1957. Little wonder. The author's ability to blend humor into the serious business of espionage is unparalleled. Equally appealing is his mastery of the metaphor. Recounting the morning before his first jump at airborne school, Hall describes the somber scene as "being about as colorful as a pound of flour" (p. 53). The follies commence as he checks into OSS headquarters in Washington.

Like any agent-in-waiting, Lieutenant Hall begins his OSS service in 1943 as a trainee. As he soon learns, an agent's training is endless, the majority of it tedious. All the same, Hall excels, gets picked up for instructor duty, and is sent to area F, where he describes his cohorts as interesting as "a flock of birdseed salesmen" (p. 32). Promptly seeking reassignment, he volunteers to instruct students at area B, a similarly dismal stop in the OSS alphabet soup. Escaping area B, however, will require a trip to airborne school. Hall is reluctant to take the plunge, so his boss takes the initiative: "I've volunteered for you. You'll be leaving tomorrow night. I've been. Now you're going" (p. 43). Case closed.

Despite a few rough landings, Lieutenant Hall survives airborne school. Armed with parachute wings and tactical prowess, he catches the attention of his superiors. Impressed by his easy camaraderie, an affable self-confidence, and his "glistening" evaluation report, they allow him to write his own ticket. Eager to join the fight in Europe, he volunteers to join the Special Operations Division, in which his devil-may-care attitude

finds a cordial audience. Before long, the amusingly sardonic lieutenant is bound for England. But is he also bound for the glory he so desires?

First stop is the British airborne school, where he befriends the chief instructor, Captain Leghorn. Here again, the jocular Lieutenant Hall succeeds. In fact he does so well that he'll go back to see his buddy the captain twice more! Yet England is far removed from the fight, so Hall pleads with his civilian boss for an opportunity to prove himself. A few months later, good fortune strikes. At last, the unrelenting Hall is awarded with a parachute, choice of weapons, a British Wimpy bomber, a cyanide tablet (just in case), and a real mission into France—the *raison d'être* for a special-operations type!

Unfortunately for Lieutenant Hall, his mission will not likely transfer to the silver screen. Once he finds himself on the ground, events quickly unfold in a comedy of errors. No one bothered to tell Hall that the Second Armored Division's quick work of the German *Wehrmacht* would land him behind *friendly* lines! He recalls that his reception party "all reeked of wine" and that, with no enemy to harass, he spent his brief time in France sitting in a farmhouse where he "watched it rain" (p. 168). His second trip to France lands him no closer to the fight. Working as an OSS liaison at Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, the only fighting Hall does is with a scrawny, turtle-faced, horn-rims-wearing staff officer named Major Ffoulkes (p. 180). Surviving Ffoulkes, he returns to England and jump school. All the while, the young lieutenant begs for a true cloak-and-dagger OSS mission, one that will land him in the history books. In the spring of 1945, it appears that he finally gets one—an opportunity to jump into Norway and lead a partisan force against the retreating Germans.

Training for the mission in Scotland, he teams up with Maj William Colby, the legendary OSS officer and future head of the Central Intelligence Agency. The two men lead separate elements. Colby, whom Hall considers a "close friend," takes the first team in March. Weeks later the lieutenant departs for Norway via Sweden on, as he calls it, Operation Better Late than Never (p. 207). Here again, events disrupt his quest for grandeur when he and his crack team arrive a day late and an armed enemy short: the Nazis have surrendered.

You're Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger is a laugh-a-minute read with dialogue reminiscent of a Marx Brothers movie. Roger Hall takes a lighthearted look at the dangerous and often dirty business of espionage. This book is not an academic, comprehensive history of the OSS—and Hall did not intend it to be. Rather, he wants to make the reader laugh while introducing a few historical characters. To that end, he succeeds. *You're Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger* will appeal to military-intelligence practitioners and enthusiasts alike, as well as unconventional thinkers who, like young lieutenant Roger Hall, sometimes find themselves volunteering just to be different.

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