Spy tales: a TV chef, Oscar winner, JFK adviser

WASHINGTON (AP) — Where do you look when you want to recruit spies? Just about everywhere, judging from the formerly top-secret records of the World War II agency that became today's CIA.

There was the young woman who became TV chef Julia Child. And labor lawyer Arthur Goldberg who became a Supreme Court justice. And young scholar Arthur Schlesinger who became a presidential adviser. Not to mention a codes enthusiast who later ran CBS, an Oscar-winning Hollywood director and the sons of Ernest Hemingway and Teddy Roosevelt.

Names and details on nearly 24,000 one-time intelligence workers are included among 750,000 formerly top-secret government records released Thursday by the National Archives. The documents describe a worldwide spy network during World War II managed by the Office of Strategic Services, the intelligence outfit that later became the CIA.

The personnel files, long withheld from the public, provide insights into young agents now known for other careers. For instance, when Julia McWilliams, later the ebullient chef, applied to work for the spy agency, she admitted at least one failing: impulsiveness. At 28 as an advertising manager at W&J Sloane furniture store in Beverly Hills, Calif., she clashed with new store managers and left her job abruptly. "I made a tactical error and was out," she explained in a handwritten note attached to her application to join OSS. "However, I learned a lot about advertising and wish I had been older and more experienced so that I could have handled the situation, as it was a most interesting position." She was hired in the summer of 1942 for clerical work with the intelligence agency and later worked directly for OSS Director William Donovan, the personnel records show.

Some of the others:

- _Acclaimed movie director John Ford, whose skill as a videographer qualified him to manage wartime spy photography._
- _Chicago lawyer Goldberg, whose early legal work with labor unions made him an attractive spy candidate to rally European labor unions to help with the war effort, years before President Kennedy appointed him to the Supreme Court._
- _And Schlesinger, who spent much of his time with OSS working in London as an intelligence officer and writer on the political staff, producing reports on political activities. "His understanding and familiarity with the political history of European countries, achieved by years of study and firsthand observation ... admirably qualify him for this responsible work," one OSS official wrote about Schlesinger, who became a noted historian and one of Kennedy's closest advisers._

The records show that Ford left his successful Hollywood life as a movie director to become a secret agent in 1941, later rising to serve as Donovan's chief adviser. He was cited by his superiors for bravery, taking a position to film one mission that was "an obvious and clear target." He survived "continuous attack and was wounded" while he continued filming, one commendation in his file states. Ford already had won three of his four Academy Awards for films directed before joining OSS, including "The Grapes of Wrath."

Long before Lawrence Tisch took over CBS, he had a fascination with breaking secret codes, working on them as a hobby in his home, one OSS record shows. Tisch was hired as an OSS agent to work on cracking enemy codes because of his skills.

The documents offer other observations, including one about OSS agent Kermit Roosevelt, the son of President Theodore Roosevelt. On OSS official writes: "Sometimes in spite of himself, he finds himself involved in policy matters by superiors who wish to take advantage of his name."

The personnel files from the CIA archives raise questions about another World War II mystery — the role of jailed mobster Charles "Lucky" Luciano in wartime intelligence efforts. An archivist's note that reads "Lucky?" near the name Michael Luciano on a list of OSS agents questions whether this is the gangster.

It's not likely, but it's not clear, said William Cunliffe, an archivist who has worked extensively with the OSS records at the National Archives. Cunliffe said while Luciano's cooperation with Naval Intelligence officers during World War II has been written about, none of the OSS files indicates he served officially with that agency.

Charles Pinck, who leads the OSS Society formed by former agents and their relatives, said Luciano the mob boss was never an OSS agent.

The OSS file for Michael Luciano includes a single page, without any other identifying information. Some of those like Child on the list have been identified previously as having worked for the OSS, but their personnel records have never been made available to the public.

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