

Andrew Gilbrook

is

**An Unknown Spy,  
Operation Saponify**

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## **saponify** in British English

verb **Word forms:** -fies, -fying or -fied chemistry

1. to undergo or cause to undergo a process in which a fat is converted into a soap by treatment with alkali
2. to undergo or cause to undergo a reaction in which an ester is hydrolysed to an acid and an alcohol as a result of treatment with an alkali



# Contents

Preface.....	7
My Beginning .....	9
Secrets and Lies.....	13
The Alleged End to Adolf Hitler.....	35
Operation Paperclip and Overcast.....	42
The Honeys and the trap .....	47
Clean Up.....	78
The Spanish Incident.....	85
Don Ángel Alcázar de Velasco .....	86
The Spanish Incident continued.....	88
The Don Ángel Alcázar de Velasco Story .....	155
CIA Riddles.....	198
Chile .....	219
Inalco House.....	244
Operation Saponify .....	254
Let There Be War.....	290
Into the fight.....	295
Sources .....	299



## Preface

Karen, my secretary, died in 2014 of cancer. I learned of her death while on holiday in Spain and I was unable to attend her funeral. We had not seen each other at all since I left the Intelligence Service in 1988, we hadn't properly said goodbye due to the circumstances of my leaving. My greatest regret in all this is that I lost her without seeing her again and I am saddened friends and contacts in the Service never thought to tell me we were losing the most professional beautiful lady this and any other world could have.

Without Karen, I would never achieve what I did, she made my career possible. Both my books about my time in MI6 I hope, demonstrate her humanity, her skill, and most importantly to me her sense of humour. While not specifically about Karen, I write with a sad heart knowing her light no longer shines on this earth. Only in 2014 when she died I realised I no longer wanted to keep my life to myself, I spent the years from 1988 keeping everything inside me, alone in my secrets, our secrets. Her loss inspired me to write my first book because verbal explanations were never enough, merely talking to people it seemed impossible to tell of my past in a believable enough way for others to understand our history.

This book, based on real events, is dedicated to Karen, my inspiration and memory in everything...

Some events have been enhanced to improve the dramatic effect. Many names changed for the security of the individual and in some cases to save their embarrassment.





# My Beginning

## Timeline - 1971

My career beginning has already been told in my first book "An Ordinary Guy, An Unknown Spy", but some background is needed here for those that haven't read it.

I started work with MI6 in 1971 at the age of 16. I had not passed through any university system. I was asked if I'd like to consider working for my government the day I quit school by my headmaster Mr Morrill at Rickmansworth Grammar. I believe he was associated with someone within MI6, an educated guess would be Sir John Rennie, the head of MI6 in 1971. Rennie was tasked with changing the service. I also believe he was against such changes and I was his experiment to prove the system was better as it was.

In the beginning, I felt like a fish out of water, I believe I am still the only person to ever join the service as an Officer with little education. I guessed I was "to lower the tone of the place" after it became a bit of an 'old boys' network. After the Cambridge five debacle, none of the traitors were ever prosecuted and that proved in a way that there was a degree of protectionism. The USA began to lose confidence in the UK's security within the Intelligence community.

Everything I know I have learnt from the service, an advantage and disadvantage. I never enjoyed a network of contacts that those that went through university

created. Nor had I come from a family with contacts in influential places.

I wanted to find my own position, I think I managed very well, and I taught them a thing or two in my time.



*Picture 1. Century House, then Headquarters of the British Intelligence Service, MI6.*

I went through 'Spy School' and qualified adequately as an Officer, then left to my own devices 'to see what I could do'. On my initiative, without any instructions, I began raiding any company I thought useful by copying the hard drive inside photocopier machines in offices all over the country. I used a device built by a friend who was

working at an electronics company in Watford. I had realised in those days photocopy machines had a fault, in that every photocopy was stored and not deleted on a storage drive inside the machine. I posed as a service engineer, paperwork and credentials supplied by my first agent recruit Janice, who worked at Xerox in Uxbridge. The information gleaned by downloading that stored 'picture' from copies of copies was transferred to a database created by Karen my secretary, who was kept busy transferring hundreds of thousands of bits of information that I was stealing. Imagine the amount of information one can glean from letters and documents from banks and international businesses. Names, addresses, who is doing what, who is selling what to who, it was all good stuff after the chaff was filtered out by Karen. She was a very busy lady indeed. We became an amazing source of information for MI6 colleagues, who had no idea where or how I was obtaining this useful stuff for them. The sort of stuff needed in MI6 to make contacts, bribe, recruit agents, blackmail and all the dirt one needed to do the job. Or at least that's how I saw it. When I began work I'd never been abroad, so I was given a simple task in Rabat, Morocco in King Hassan II's palace. Simple but useful, because I also liaised with a CIA agent which created a link for me with the American Secret Service too. That was my initiation into the world overseas and I am indebted to Maurice Oldfield who was "C" from 1973 to 1978, when I qualified and started working at Century House, London, MI6 headquarters at the time. His gentle treatment was appreciated when I was

a 'newbie' and for his confidence in my abilities while I was completely green when it came to working abroad. So, initially feeling like a complete outsider, with the barest of education, no qualifications, probably the youngest ever recruit, green as green gets, I was always going to be different. I liked that. I didn't want to be the same as those toff types from Oxbridge anyhow. I did make my mark and I had a sense of satisfaction that these people were coming to me and asking if I had anything on certain people or companies, and often Karen would find something in her database. She had created a separate system from the service network, as I always felt that it was illegally gained information we should have the capability of quickly disposing of the entire lot, should the need arise. I needn't have worried, it turns out most information the Intelligence Service holds is obtained in that way.

The work became more and more challenging as I gained experience, then, in 1988 I was given a task in Angola. Things didn't go according to plan and following capture, torture and escape, my career ended. What followed was years of keeping my secret, suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Until 2019, when I wrote and published my first book.

This story, begins in 1976, let's start there.

## Secrets and Lies

### Timeline - February 1976

Most Officers in MI6 have a cover, usually a small business or something to provide the deception of normality while they do their darker business. I worked with my father, the only person in my family that knew what I did. He'd cover for me whenever I needed to go away somewhere, I could use a telephone at work, not secure but I worked that way for years. At that time I had no girlfriend or wife, so things were quite easy should I need to go off somewhere. Of course, given the choice Karen and I would be together, but sadly it was never to be. There were security issues if we became a couple. One day I was at my father's business, a printing company near Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The phone rang. I took the phone call in the general office. I recognised the voice immediately as Karen's.

"Andy, could you come in please," that was all I needed to know it was a request to go to Century House, 100 Westminster Bridge Road, London, MI6. The line wasn't secure, I wouldn't ask any questions to clarify, I'd find out what this was about when I got to London.

"Tomorrow OK?" I replied

"Yes not urgent," was the brief reply and I hung up. The next day was Saturday, so it was a little quieter on the Metropolitan train line from Rickmansworth into London, 39 minutes and a change onto the Bakerloo Line, a few stops and a quick walk to the MI6 building.

It was very unusual for me to go to London, I never thought it a wise thing to do, but I guessed there must be a good reason to be asked. I wasn't worried about the request, there was no point in worrying, worry and stress isn't my thing.

Through security and up to my office, I found Karen busy at her desk, did she ever go home! As there was almost no one around on the floor where my office was, I kissed a greeting on her cheek, "Good morning Karen, you are looking gorgeous as always," she smiled back happy to see me again. "Morning Andy, good to see you too, your visits are too rare," Karen looked immaculate as always, she was a beautiful lady her blonde hair tied back in a ponytail, dressed less formally, I guessed as it was Saturday and fewer people were around, I never minded how she dressed and my heart rate always went up when I was in her presence.

"So, what have we got?" I asked. Karen reached into her desk drawer and handed me a folder, there were maybe a hundred pages inside. The front had the inscription "TOP SECRET" and someone had handwritten an unusual addition "ULTRA" to the left of it. I had never seen this category level of secrecy, it wasn't official, Top Secret being the highest level, I wondered if this was just graffiti.

"Go read, I'll bring some tea, and have a talk to you about this,"

"Okaaaay," I said intrigued by the mystery.

I turned to check the office door to the corridor was closed and made my way through the adjoining door to my office and sat at my desk so I could easily open and arrange the

file contents on the top. My office was bright, light and a good place to work, it was business-like yet comfortable with a desk and a sofa where more informal talks could take place, though in my case that would rarely happen here, I'd prefer a hotel or one of the many private clubs that we had membership to.

The first thing I noticed was that the folder hadn't been signed out, or for that matter in. Inside the folder should be a Routing and Record Sheet, a form where anyone wanting to review the folder would have to sign for it, giving their name, department, a short reason for the review, and then signing back in. This is a permanent part of the folder so it has a history as to who has seen it. I looked at the front again and noticed in small type at the bottom right the address, Hanslope Park. This place, basically a secret storage building, was near Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and I believe it is run by the RAF to appear to look like a small base that few people would question if they even noticed it. I had heard of this place, "Q" division, I knew the place contained thousands, if not millions, of highly sensitive documents and files. I had never been there, but I heard that the place was huge and contained files that were supposed to *never* be released after the 30-year rule came up. The 30-year rule is the period before papers can be released on request under the Official Secrets Act. I had heard some documents could be 200 years old and their existence never to be admitted should anyone request any files on whatever subject they contained. Britain is very good, or very bad at hiding secrets from its people.

So what was this file doing here? This was highly improper.

“So, where is this from and why have we got it?” I needed to raise my voice so Karen could hear in the adjoining room.

“It came from Jenny,” Karen came back

Jenny was Karen’s flatmate and the two were best friends. To live with Karen, you had to share her wicked sense of humour. Karen owned a nice flat quite near to Century House, one underground stop away at Elephant and Castle. I had been there a few times, beautifully furnished a gift from her banker father. Jenny was a sweet girl about two years younger than Karen. She also worked at Century House in the secretarial department doing admin work. She was pleasant and very attractive.

I flicked through some of the papers in the file, they seemed to be mostly American CIA documents, some had been redacted, which means they had probably come from the public domain. Redaction is when papers requested by the public are censored by blacking out names or information that could be sensitive to release, what’s left is a readable document, but all the best stuff is covered up.

I started to read some of the pages,

“JEEZ,” I exclaimed under my breath, this stuff was shocking. I’d seen some secrets before, created some secrets before, but this was shocking. If what I was reading was true history books would have to be altered. Karen came through with two teas and sat with me at the desk, her beauty was a distraction, I loved her so much and she loved me.



“So, come on fill me in, what’s the story? This is shocking to read I have to say, have you read all this too?” I asked her.

“I’ve read some of it not all,” and she began to recount how the folder had found it’s way to my office. “Jenny has been seconded to the digitalisation department for a while,”

“What is dig-i-tal-isation?” I said the word in struggled syllables as it was a new word for me, although we used computers and today it’s a commonly used word, this was the first time I’d heard it, I wasn’t a technical person.

“There’s a team converting secret paper files onto the new computer system. Files are delivered to her desk, they are photographed and entered into a database, it’s huge, and the work will take years,”

“Sounds quite boring work, unless she has time to read some of this stuff, I don’t think I’d have the patience for that work,” I said and added “Dig-i-tal-isation, is difficult and long-winded to say, I think I’ll call the department Double D it’s easier,”

Karen smiled at my simple ignorance,

“So, this file passed over her desk, and it has concerned her,” Karen informed me.

“She shouldn’t let that happen, what the files contain is none of her business, I agree this file is highly controversial but she must be seeing thousands of controversial stuff, why this one in particular? Also, by removing it from the department, she has committed a grave offence, she could be in big trouble if it’s found

missing. Why has this concerned her so much she was prepared to risk her job and everything?" I added.

"The simple answer is – she is Jewish," Karen answered the question.

"This is worrying, that she is letting her religion affect what she does here, is Jenny available to come and chat?" I asked.

"She is at home I'll call her, she is half expecting you to ask her in any way, it won't take her long to get here,"

"OK, do that, while I study this stuff, this is incredible,"

I continued to read the papers one at a time, I couldn't believe what I was seeing, I hadn't heard even the tiniest rumour about this, so I was shocked by what I was reading, and, if it were true it meant the world has been and is continuing to be lied to. One by one I read each document and turned them over to the left, as I'm left-handed, to keep it all in the same order.

What was unfolding on my desk was altering history as I knew it. I'm no historian, I never had much interest at school, because my history teacher was quite possibly the most boring teacher I had. He tried to get me to absorb into my brain names and dates about what seemed to me to be quite irrelevant things. Things from the past that can't be changed, they've happened, nothing can be done to change it, so why worry about it. Now I see how history is important and this file was changing it. We've all been lied to. What I knew then about the Second World War I could write on a matchbox, but since school, and because I'm involved in creating history in my job of Intelligence Officer, I'd taken some interest. I'd watched a few

documentaries on television, but I'd still not read much. I had a small idea of how the war had ended.

What I was reading now meant all history books on this subject had to be thrown in the bin. The files I was reading were some reports of sightings, some reports of witnesses, reports of interviews with witnesses, and a few pictures offering proof, nearly all of which were CIA, one or two were British pages too, which meant the British were for some reason involved in this.

According to these documents, Hitler was alive, alive and living in Argentina, but also having travelled via other countries such as Columbia and Chile. He had not died in Berlin by his own hand as we are told in history lessons, books and documentaries. Hitler and his wife Eva Braun were possibly using the surname Shüttelmayer.

By the time I read most of the stuff in front of me, Jenny had arrived. Karen brought her through into my office. She looked quite cute, dressed in a black tracksuit quite tight-fitting that showed her figure off well. About 5'3" tall, curvy in all the right places, obviously fit from working out, her body was tight and slightly muscular. She was attractive, with short one-inch long black hair, she had an enviable complexion with no moles or imperfections and a slight natural tan that indicated to me there was a Mediterranean heritage in her somewhere. I would be quite attracted to her if I weren't in love with Karen.

After greetings, I invited her to sit at my desk and Karen sat on the sofa to support Jenny.

"Am I going to be in trouble for this?" she asked nervously.

Karen jumped into the conversation before I could speak

“Jenny you can trust Andy,”

“Jenny you realise by removing this file you have committed a crime, you’ve effectively stolen the file even though it’s still in the building. But I want you to know, if you have a concern you can trust me, and if you are asking for my help, if I can, I will, I’ll try to resolve whatever your problem is with this. Nothing said in this office ever leaves this office ok?”

“Ok,” Jenny wasn’t completely at ease with my reassurance. We had met before of course, and we had chatted before, but the poor girl was concerned by her actions.

“Tea or coffee?” I asked her, I continued to try to reassure her that I was on her side, but I was simply trying to get her to tell all she knew and then I’d decide if she was right or wrong.

“No, thank you, I thought I would go down to the gym and have a work out while I’m here, so no,” which explained her outfit.

“So what’s your problem, I have read the contents and I have to say I am shocked myself. What do you want me to do and what resolution are you looking for? How do you want this to end? You are in Double D right?”

Jenny, “What?”

Me, “Double D”

Jenny, “What?”

Me, “Karen told me”

Jenny, “You’ve been discussing my boobs?”

Me, “No”