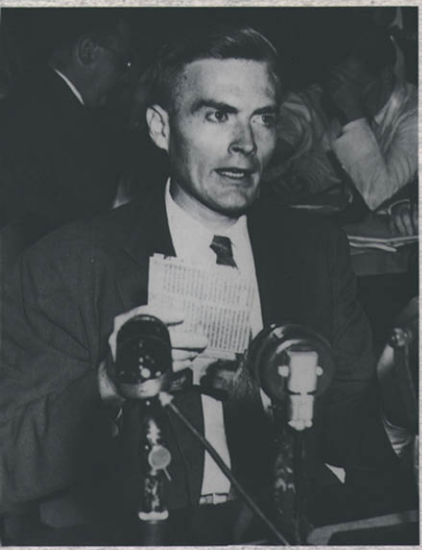
UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES



The Trials of William Remington

GARY MAY

In 1948, William W. Remington was one of the bright young men in the Truman administration. He was tall and handsome, a product of Dartmouth and Columbia. From 1940 on, he had risen through government ranks, serving on wartime boards, the President's Council of Economic Advisors, and eventually as a major official in the Department of Commerce, with a promising future ahead. By 1954, however, Remington was dead—assassinated in his cell by a team of inmates in a high-security Federal prison.

In *Un-American Activities,* historian Gary May tells the fascinating story of William Remington—a story of intrigue, injustice, government corruption, and anti-Communist hysteria. May labored for eight years in reconstructing Remington's case, searching through FBI files and government documents, and waging an epic battle against then-U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani to become the first historian to obtain access to grand jury records. The result is a brilliant account of one man's tragic odyssey and a government run amok. Remington's future collapsed in 1948, when he was charged with being a Communist and a Soviet spy. The accuser was Elizabeth Bentley, an admitted ex-Communist herself and a former courier for Soviet spymasters. Remington's life fell into a whirlpool as he fought government improprieties, illegalities, and the assumption he was guilty. Cleared by government loyalty boards, he was indicted by a grand jury—whose foreman was secretly helping Elizabeth Bentley prepare her memoirs. Remington suffered through two trials for perjury, and the chief witness against him was his own embittered ex-wife. He was convicted and sentenced to the federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where his reputation as a Communist preceded him. But May's account also offers fascinating insight into the depth of Soviet penetration into wartime America: As he follows Remington's life from the radical circles at Dartmouth and the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1930s

through his Washington career, he finds that Remington may well have been guilty of the charges against him.

Gary May is one of the leading historians writing about postwar America. His first book, *China Scapegoat,* won the Allan Nevins Prize and was hailed as being "as well-written as a novel, as powerful as a good film" by *The Los Angeles Times.* Here he brings his analytical and narrative skills to bear on one of the forgotten stories of the McCarthy era, uncovering a gripping tale of espionage, corruption, and personal tragedy.

Joanna May

About the Author:

Gary May is Associate Professor of History at the University of Delaware. He is the author of *China Scapegoat: The Diplomatic Ordeal of John Carter Vincent,* which won the Allan Nevins Prize of the Society of American Historians.

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FOR

Gail, Joanna, and Jeffrey, with love and gratitude

AND DEDICATED TO

my father and the memory of my mother
"More precious was the light in your eyes
than all the roses in the world."

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Preface

Alger Hiss. The Rosenbergs. Owen Lattimore. John Carter Vincent and the old China hands. Dalton Trumbo and the Hollywood Ten. To students of the post–World War II Red Scare, all familiar names, their cases still clouded by controversy. But the name of another—today almost forgotten—deserves to be elevated among these: William Walter Remington. "Never a brighter light appeared on the horizon," recalled a boyhood friend.

Born in New York City in 1917, educated at Dartmouth College and Columbia University, Bill Remington seemed to have it all—as handsome as a matinee idol, brilliant and ambitious, he appeared destined for a distinguished government career under Harry Truman. College friends even thought for a time that he might become President. Then, in 1948, came the accusations that destroyed Remington's career. Charged with being a Communist and a Soviet spy during World War II by ex-Communist Elizabeth Bentley, Remington spent the rest of his life fighting to clear his name. His days became an endless series of appearances before congressional committees, government loyalty boards, grand juries, and, after being indicted for perjury in 1950, judges and jurors during two trials in federal court.

The Remington case is important because it touches on many of the important questions that divided America during the Cold War: why were some of the best and the brightest of the New Deal generation attracted to Communism? what was the nature of membership in the American Communist Party and its ties to Soviet espionage? and how did the American political and judicial systems function during a time of acute crisis?

It is also the fascinating story of one man's journey from a conventional middle-class home in affluent Ridgewood, New Jersey, into Communist circles when in college and while working with the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1930s; marrying a troubled young woman whose Communist connections brought him into contact with Soviet spies; and, finally, being pursued by a vengeful FBI and Justice Department bent on his destruction. Remington's life ended in a way not even his worst enemy could have imagined.

My examination of thousands of government records (most never seen before by a historian) and interviews with Remington's family, friends, and enemies suggests that the Remington story is not a simple morality play, reassuring neither those on the left who believed him the innocent victim of government repression or those on the right who were convinced that he was a Soviet agent brought to justice fairly and honorably. This book, I hope, will rescue Remington from historical anonymity and encourage others to explore this complex and intriguing case, to determine who truly was guilty of un-American activities: William Remington or the government of the United States.

Newark, Delaware G. M.
January 1994

Acknowledgments

When I began to research the William Remington case, I expected, in my youthful arrogance, that it would be a relatively easy task. Now, eight years later, I am no longer young or arrogant, and the completion of this book proved to be the most complex, frustrating, and demanding work of my life.

First, locating documents was difficult. By accident or design, many of the records of the case were mislaid, misfiled, or reported destroyed. Repeatedly, I was told by rude and impatient government bureaucrats that the files were gone and that I, too, should go, as quickly as possible. Such treatment only intensified my determination to keep digging, and eventually, with persistence, stubbornness, and no small degree of luck, I uncovered the missing documents.

There were also legal obstacles to my gaining access to important records. Questions of illegality surrounded Remington's indictment for perjury by a grand jury in June 1950, so I was naturally interested in how that jury had reached its decision and requested the records. A Justice Department official happily informed me that the *Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure* protected grand jury minutes from public scrutiny—forever; only a federal judge could break the seal that kept them secret. I refused to accept this restriction; what possible reason could there be to deny scholars documents almost forty years old? Fortunately, I found members of the legal community who shared that view and agreed to help me win access, despite the absence of legal precedent and unlikelihood of success. With the indispensable help of the Public Citizen Litigation Group's Patti A. Goldman, a petition was drafted, marshaling legal and historical reasons to support the opening of the records, and filed with the United States District

Court for the Southern District of New York, where the grand jury had held session. Unfortunately, U.S. attorney Rudolph Giuliani opposed our request and a two-year struggle ensued, until the Honorable Whitman Knapp, a courageous federal judge with a reverence for history, rejected the government's call for continued secrecy and ordered the records released. Thus, my first and greatest debt is to Public Citizen, and especially to Patti Goldman, whose brilliant counsel won me the transcripts and, more important, established a partial precedent that other scholars can use to obtain similar records pertaining to other controversial cases of the McCarthy era. New York attorney Andrew Levander also worked with us, and I thank him for his efforts on my behalf.

There were others whose help was essential in reconstructing Remington's life and times. Chief among them were Remington's two wives—Dr. Ann M. Remington and Mrs. Jane Abramson, who kindly and frankly shared their memories of the man and the case. Mrs. Abramson also gave me access to records she had retained and the permission to quote from them. I am forever in her debt.

Many of Remington's high-school and college friends (and enemies) also agreed to be interviewed. I am grateful to Mr. John R. Scotford, Jr., Dartmouth '38, who volunteered to be my "man in Hanover," locating records and men who knew Remington at Dartmouth. These included L. P. Baldwin, Stephen Bradley, Dr. David Bradley, William Bronk, Colonel (retired) Robert Davidson, Samuel Dix, W. Atherton Fuller, William Goodman, Nicholas Jacobson, Asher Lans, Charles Livermore, Dexter Martin, William A. Martin, Donald H. Miller, Jr., John Parke, Irving Paul, Professor Jack Preiss, Alan Rader, Richard Sherwin, Professor Page Smith, and Budd Schulberg. Others, cited in footnotes, corresponded with me.

This book would not exist without the assistance of Remington's principal attorney, the late Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. He gave me unrestricted access to his legal files, which also contained correspondence with Remington's other lawyers—Bethuel Webster, William Chanler, and John M. Minton, whose own records were destroyed after their deaths. While he may not have agreed with my ultimate conclusions about Remington, I hope this work does justice to his brilliance, compassion, and generosity. He was truly a great man, and I deeply regret that he did not live to see the completion of this work. My thanks also to Richard G. Green, Esq., who permitted me to examine his records on the case.

A number of archivists and librarians were also extremely helpful: Kenneth Cramer and his staff at Dartmouth College's Baker Library; Howard Gottlieb at Boston University's Mugar Memorial Library; Mrs. Erica Chadbourn at the Harvard University Law School Library; and Tony Fantozzi and Michael Goldman, of the National Archives and Records Service. Dr. Susan R. Falb, Mary Profitt, and Roger Cronden at the Federal Bureau of Investigation helped me obtain the Bureau's voluminous records on Remington, Elizabeth Bentley, and others involved in the Silvermaster case. Mrs. Patricia Hatfield of Grundy,

Virginia, located obscure records on George McCoy. Professor Gerald Gunther, of the Stanford University Law School, took time away from his own research to locate important records in the papers of Learned Hand. And there were government officials who *did* go out of their way to help: John W. Jackson, David Essig, C. B. Faulkner, and Gary Roberts of the Federal Bureau of Prisons; Adele Fry, clerk of the U.S. district court in Scranton, Pennsylvania; Mel Hoover, Ed Kosheba, and Hank Sadowski of the United States Parole Commission; Charles S. Webb, chief probation officer of the Eastern District of Kentucky; the Honorable William J. Nealon, chief judge for the United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania; and the Honorable Eugene Siler, Jr., chief judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

I am also happy to acknowledge the financial aid given to me by the University of Delaware General Research Fund and an award from the Delaware Humanities Forum.

At Oxford University Press, Sheldon Meyer, Brice Hammack, and Scott Lenz helped transform this work from a long, unwieldy manuscript, into a better organized, more readable book. Steve Matlack, computer genius, came to my rescue a number of times, and I am grateful for his help.

Finally, to my family—who endured my absences and frequent bouts of discouragement and depression—I offer my thanks and love. This book belongs to them.

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Present in the Flesh

"In delicate balance" was the way one official described life at the federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1954. Perched atop a hill overlooking the Susquehannah River, Lewisburg was undergoing a transition from a minimum-security facility that originally housed Prohibition violators to a maximum-security facility for men found guilty of rape, assault, murder, and lesser crimes. Guarding an overcrowded prison population of twelve hundred was a custodial staff of just a hundred eighty-seven men, who considered themselves underpaid, overworked, and physically at risk.[1]

Events beyond the walls also affected the institutional climate. The Supreme Court's recent *Brown* decision ordering the desegregation of public schools seemed to many of Lewisburg's southern inmates a threat to the prison's segregated housing system.[2] Another problem bedeviled prison officials—the Communist issue. In the eating hall, at daily chapel, or exercising in the yard, were men whose names were notorious to Lewisburg's killers, rapists, and thieves. Daily they saw David Greenglass and Harry Gold, associates of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who were convicted of atomic espionage and executed in June 1953. Most infamous was Alger Hiss, whose imminent release on November 27 enraged some who faced longer sentences than the three and a half years Hiss served for perjury. Also, there was 37-year-old William Walter Remington. "Brilliant of mind, handsome in appearance, engaging in manner," noted the *New York Herald-Tribune*. "Remington was a rising young government economist of outstanding promise in 1948 . . . when Communist accusations against him blasted his career and started him on his road to prison. . . . "[3] Men like

Remington and Hiss "weren't merely newspaper headlines or academic figures," said James V. Bennett, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, "they were constantly present in the flesh," a dangerous irritant to the more unstable inmates.[4]

No one was more aware of the tense atmosphere at Lewisburg than William Remington. Committed to Lewisburg in April 1953, Remington's first year and a half was uneventful. A blast from the boiler-house whistle routinely awakened him in his fifty-man dormitory quarters at 6:45 A.M. Countdown was at 7:00, so he quickly washed, shaved, and dressed in the standard prison uniform of blue shirt and slacks. By twos, the prisoners were then marched to the mess hall for a breakfast of cereal and pancakes plus sweet rolls and coffee. Then, Remington reported to the chief clerk's office, where he worked—typing, tabulating, proofreading, and doing "all the little things which take so much meticulous care—and some intelligence." Midday dinner was at 11:30 A.M.: meat, vegetables, salad, and dessert. "Food really excellent, for an institution," Remington thought. Afterwards, there was an hour and a half of leisure time. This he spent reading or playing handball in the yard (the outside recreation area). He returned to the office at 4:30 p.m. Supper was followed by more free time until 10:00 p.m., when his day ended.[5]

He was a model prisoner, reliable, quiet, industrious. He readily admitted to the warden that he had made serious mistakes in the past and hoped that he could begin a new life; so, he shunned Communist inmates like Greenglass, Gold, and, especially, Hiss.[6] Remington was also cool toward others because of a desire to avoid potentially dangerous relationships. He once told his wife,

> . . . I never ask a question . . . that shows any curiosity. . . . What I'm guarding against is a reputation for being too curious (though no one could ever regard me as an FBIer in disguise after what has happened to me). . . . If a fellow were to get into trouble over a fact or a incident, and remembers he told me, my position would be embarrassing. So I'm guarding carefully against excessive confidences.[7]

Remington's strict adherence to prison regulations was rewarded in August 1954, when he received a desired transfer to the hospital night shift (midnight to 8:00 A.M.) and assignment to honor quarters in I Dormitory—four- to six-man rooms, without locks, designed for the more stable, well-adjusted inmate, as well as those who worked at night. He found the patients more interesting than the men he had met in the clerk's office. "New experience for me to see genuine psychos . . . ," he wrote his wife on November 14. "I'm now seeing for the first time how an addict bluffs for drugs, etc. Give me horses, cows, pigs, even chickens, any day! None of them capable of human degradation."[8] Others suffered from more normal illnesses or injuries—accidental or planned. Admitted in late October was seventeen-year-old Lewis Cagle, Jr., who, according to his medical chart, had fallen down a flight of stairs, receiving a severe scalp laceration. Officials were unaware that Cagle's wound was actually caused by his roommate

George McCoy, an illiterate Virginia mountaineer, who had struck Cagle with a steel bed rod.[9]

Both men were familiar to Remington; they were quartered in I-39—the room located across the hall from his own. They, too, worked the night shift, in the power house, where they fired the great boilers that provided heat for the prison. But they were hardly the type of inmate for whom the honor system had been created.

George McCoy was thirty-four years old, short and stocky with receding brown hair and dull blue eyes so closely set that they gave his face a perpetual scowl. On his left biceps was a tattoo of a naked woman named Rosie Kidd. His right biceps bore another tattoo, his social security number; with an I.Q. of 61, he found it necessary to burn it permanently into his flesh in order to remember it. He was "a real McCoy" and proud of it, a member of that large and violent family, which, in the decades after the Civil War, feuded with the Hatfields of Kentucky and Virginia. Beginning in 1947, he ran afoul of the law and began to serve time in a number of state and federal institutions on charges ranging from public intoxication to car theft.[10] Sent to Lewisburg in February 1954, he managed to stay out of trouble. One reward for his good behavior (and the fact that he worked at night) was assignment to honor quarters; in August he moved to I-39.[11] McCoy was perceived by prison officials as quiet and passive, a mild-mannered little moron. Only one report noted a quality of viciousness in McCoy's character; it was this for which the prisoners knew him. While administrators were extolling his virtues, it was well known inside the walls that McCoy regularly carried a knife, and he had the reputation of being a killer.[12]

Lewis Cagle, Jr., was so afraid of McCoy that he armed himself with a brickbat, a one and a half pound brick stuffed in a white sock. Being a victim of violence was a new experience for young Cagle; he was accustomed to being the man who sent others to the hospital. Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in December 1936, Cagle was a runaway and car thief by the time he was fourteen. He was incarcerated first at the National Training School, a reformatory for juvenile delinquents in Washington, D.C., from where, in July 1953, he was sent to the Federal Reformatory at Chillicothe, Ohio, for terrorizing younger or weaker delinquents and trying to escape. At "Chilli," Cagle quickly became known as one who intimidated other inmates, and he almost caused a serious disturbance when a gang of angry toughs, tired of such treatment, sought revenge. After "a real bad fight with another prisoner" in June 1954, Cagle was sent to Lewisburg.[13]

Within days of his arrival, he was caught stealing milk, then was found brawling with another prisoner and was put in punitive segregation. In September, he was sent to the power plant, where he would work from midnight to 8:00 A.M. Because he was required to work the night shift, he was moved to honor quarters—I-39.[14]

When Cagle had lived alone at the National Training School and

Chillicothe, he had been relatively well behaved; however, records indicated that problems had occurred when he had been exposed to other prisoners. Now, bureaucratic negligence had put Cagle in the one place where, given his personality, trouble was almost inevitable. His roommates, in addition to McCoy, were Robert Hoosier, a young car thief and escapee from the Indiana State Farm; Robert Carl Parker, twenty-one, car thief and escapee from the State Penitentiary at Richmond, Virginia; and Frederick Nichols, a criminal since the age of thirteen.[15] Cagle and his roommates had much in common. All were products of broken homes; all were illiterate or almost so; all had records of juvenile delinquency; all had stolen cars or trucks and were prone to violence—a dangerous group on the lookout for a victim. It was not long before they found one—living just across the hall in I-32—William Remington.

To the men of I-39, Remington seemed a person both to envy and despise. Cagle and McCoy were short, dark, and unattractive. Remington, at six feet two inches, was almost a foot taller than the little Virginian and also towered over Cagle. He was blond and handsome, even in his dull prison garb. Cagle and McCoy had received only the most primitive of educations and could barely read and write. Remington was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Dartmouth College with a master's degree from Columbia University. He acted "high hat," McCoy, Cagle, and Parker later said. They, the most coarse and ill-mannered of men, thought Remington's walk awkward and claimed that he "ate like a pig in the mess hall. He put his elbows on the table and just shoveled the food in his mouth. That offended them," one official was later told.[16]

Then there was the question of Remington's politics. Some months earlier, McCoy had learned from another inmate that Remington was "a Communist—one of the Big Shots in the Party." "I hate Communists," McCoy said later. " . . . I would like to line up a bunch of Communists and shoot them down with a machine gun just like cutting wheat."[17] These feelings were shared, with varying degrees of intensity, by the others. Remington's roommates were also called obscene names and accused of being Communists themselves or Communist lovers because they lived with him.[18]

Such hatred for Remington led to a war of nerves. One late October day, while I-32 was empty, Parker and Hoosier rummaged around, opening lockers and stealing anything that interested them: candy, cigarettes, matches, razor blades. At this point, Remington did not feel personally threatened and dismissed the likelihood of violence as "99 percent hokum." Later, Lewisburg's warden would characterize Remington's attitude as naive.[19]

The thieves struck again on Monday, November 8, while Remington and his roommates were having supper. Pipes and candy were taken and, this time, two pens belonging to Remington. Harry Guthrie, a convicted murderer, called the raids "spite jobs" and was glad that Remington had been victimized. Two nights later, Parker sneaked into an empty I-32 and set fire to the bed of Andrew

Danton, Remington's closest friend. When they returned to their room, they found "the sheets and mattress . . . blazing merrily away." Again, Remington appeared curiously detached from the event, calling it, in a letter home, interesting. That night, he

> tuned in on the [prison] grapevine . . . and discovered that the whole floor is irritated at the fire incident. It "puts on the heat." . . . the officers will be more apt to discover and crack down on the various illicit activities normally in process. . . . Some fellows have a good idea of who's doing the stealing and who tossed the match, but naturally they won't say. However, they are emphatic that no one is in any physical danger. . . . If the situation doesn't improve I'll apply for separate room honor quarters as two roommates already have.[20]

During the next few days tensions lessened, after Remington's roommates were moved out. He interpreted this as a good sign, continuing to believe that the others were the real sources of irritation. "The shocking thing is that the Administration has either so little knowledge or such inadequate means of control that such 'bad' cliques take over effective sway even in 'honor' quarters," he observed. "Ordinarily any man detests [the idea] of being under surveillance. Here, in many quarters, the relatively decent element often wishes to goodness there were more."[21]

On November 21, Remington wrote his wife, "Things have quieted down nicely in our dormitory."[22] In part, his analysis may have been designed to comfort her, for while he was writing such words, he was still trying to mend the rift with the men of I-39. His ally was a sympathetic inmate who had roomed briefly with his adversaries. "During our conversation Remington expressed concern for his personal safety because Hoosier and Parker were always making threats against [Danton] and him . . . ," the inmate later said.[23]

That night, as Remington was writing his letter, McCoy, Cagle, and Hoosier left I-39, walked to the power plant, and began their midnight shift. Hoosier and another inmate quarreled and were removed to segregation. Around 4:00 A.M., McCoy began to complain to Cagle about Remington. "He seemed to be beside himself with anger . . . ," Cagle later noted. "Remington is a no good bum," McCoy told him, "a spy, [a] traitor." McCoy wanted to "mess up his head, straighten him out," and he invited Cagle to join him.[24] At first, Cagle thought McCoy was joking; he was accustomed to hearing McCoy talk about his hatred for Communists, but his actions had never gone further than making obscene remarks and petty theft; however, McCoy was deadly serious. "Let's see if you're a man or a chicken," McCoy taunted. If Cagle would hit Remington with his brick-bat, McCoy would slug him, too. Cagle later claimed that he had refused to join McCoy. His sentence was due to expire in just fifteen days, and he desperately wanted to go home. But "to be called 'chicken' was . . . the worst thing

that could happen to me. . . . I would do most anything to display my courage." Finally, Cagle said, "O.K."

"I believe that you will do it," McCoy replied.[25]

At around eight o'clock the next morning, Monday, November 22, Robert Parker crossed the hall into I-32. He searched until he found hidden commissary items, which he carried away: five packs of cigarettes, several bars of Nestles chocolate, and packages of peanuts that had been hidden in the sleeves of the mens' bathrobes. He stole the bathrobes, too. Returning to his room, he placed his booty proudly on display atop a table and hung up the bathrobes. McCoy, Cagle, and Nichols soon returned after a quick breakfast in the mess hall. Nichols, a solitary man, went directly to sleep. McCoy asked Parker where he got the candy and cigarettes.

From Remington's room, Parker said.

Shouldn't we return the bathrobes? Cagle asked.

"Just let them hang where they are," Parker replied. The men were silent for a while—outside the room they could hear the janitor sweeping the corridor; the only sound, the swish of his broom. Then they discussed returning to I-32. If Remington awoke during their burglary, McCoy and Cagle agreed "to hit [him] in the head with the brick." (Parker was unaware that they had earlier agreed to strike Remington whether he awoke or not.) Parker said he would check to see if anyone was there. " . . . I don't give a damn if [Remington] is in the room," McCoy said. "He is nothing but a damn Communist and he tried to sell us all out. Let's go and get Remington!" The men armed themselves—Parker with a knife he had stolen from the mess hall, McCoy with his bed rod and Cagle with the brick-bat.[26]

They moved swiftly across the hall and rushed into I-32. Remington was alone, sleeping. As Parker moved toward the bathroom, he heard a sound " . . . like a thump on a hollow drum and saw Cagle swinging the sock. . . . I saw blood on the side of Remington's head and face and saw him put up his left arm to ward off the blow. Cagle was hitting him fast." Cagle struck Remington four times; "blood spurted from his head and flew everywhere."

"That's enough," McCoy said, taking the sock from Cagle; "You're a man. I'll finish the job." McCoy hit Remington once, "a good blow," Cagle thought—Remington kicked "like a hog." Cagle went into the bathroom to wash the blood off his hands, then the three started to leave the room. They saw Remington struggle to rise and heard him snort. Remington's nose was filled with blood.[27]

Back in their quarters, Cagle and McCoy burst out laughing. "I think I did him pretty good," Cagle said.

"I think I killed him," McCoy boasted. Next they disposed of the evidence of their crime. Parker cut the bloody sock away from the brick, and McCoy flushed it down the toilet. Disgusted, Parker dropped his knife and said "to hell

with it." McCoy told him to get rid of the brick, so Parker left the room with it, walked down to the end of the corridor, and threw it out the window. He returned to find Cagle and McCoy still joking. "Knock it off," he yelled, probably angry that what he thought would be a search for more cigarettes and candy had turned into an assault, possibly with the most serious consequences for all of them.

"What are you so sore about?" McCoy asked him. "He was no good anyway."

"Go to bed and shut up," Parker said.[28]

A short time later, Hoosier, released from segregation, returned to his room. He chatted with the men for a while and then left to go to the control room, two floors below. As he started downstairs, he discovered Remington, bleeding profusely and clinging to the railing. "I can't figure it out," he was mumbling to himself. Horrified, Hoosier turned and ran for help. Two flights above, McCoy, Cagle, and Parker could hear his screams echoing through the stairwell.[29]

"A spy," "a traitor," "a damn Communist [who] tried to sell us all out," McCoy had said of Remington. Such accusations were commonplace in America in 1954, but were they justified in Remington's case? To Fred J. Cook, a journalist who has written extensively about him, Remington was an innocent man sent to prison because of "a betrayal of justice at the highest levels. . . ."[30]

Innocent or guilty? Spy or victim of government repression in a time of national hysteria? Who was William Remington, and what brought him to that stairwell in Lewisburg Prison, his skull shattered and dripping blood?

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In the spring of 1934, the graduating class of New Jersey's Ridgewood High School selected certain seniors to be memorialized in *The Arrow*, the campus yearbook. Surely no one would forget Chester Newkirk's "Bulldog Look" or Helen Martin's "Sophistication." Unforgettable, too, was sixteen-year-old Bill Remington. His Characteristic: "Incongruity"; Favorite Occupation: "Impressing People"; Saving Grace: "Cerebrum"; Aspiration: "Union Soap Boxer"—this was a remarkably accurate description of William Remington, unconventional and ambitious, brilliant and politically outspoken.[31]

Remington was born in New York City on October 25, 1917, the only child of Frederick and Lillian Sutherland Remington. Fred was almost forty-eight years old; Lillian, twenty-nine. The difference in their ages was not the only thing that separated them. Lillian was born in Granville Ferry, a small village in Nova Scotia and was by temperament and training an artist and intellectual. She grew to be tall and red-headed and was charming, intelligent, and a very impressive and forceful personality. The Sutherlands had once been very wealthy, having earned their fortune in the ship-building trade. But when Lillian and her younger sister, Nan, were growing up, the age of the great clipper ships had passed, so their parents lived frugally on the remnant of the family fortune and whatever small salary their father, an Episcopal minister, could earn.

It was during a visit to New York that Lillian met Fred Remington, a handsome and polished man. Born in 1870 in Massachusetts, the eldest of three children of a middle-class family, he grew up and was educated in Brooklyn, New York. Not long after graduating high school, he went to work for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, where he would spend the next forty years of his professional life. Fred is remembered as cautious and conservative. The cause of his conservatism may be partly explained by an incident that his daughter-in-law believed had a profound impact on his personality. When Fred was young, his best friend contracted syphilis and committed suicide. As a result, Fred became obsessive about protecting his health (he would rub his skin daily with salt in the hope of toughening it) and also avoided physical intimacy with women, to the point that the first time he made love was on his wedding night in 1914, when he was forty-four years old.

It was not the happiest of marriages. Lillian felt little respect for Fred, according to her daughter-in-law. She thought that she had been misled about Fred's social standing and finances. Since he was always extremely well dressed and associated with wealthy people, she was later shocked to learn that he had no money. Furthermore, Lillian had wanted more children and believed that, somehow, Fred prevented her from conceiving again and felt quite bitter about it. Fred was untruthful and deceitful, Lillian believed, and she treated his efforts at physical fitness with scorn. Bill came to share her views, telling friends later that he was ashamed of his mediocre father.

Fred also experienced disappointments, especially with his career at Metropolitan Life. At corporate headquarters in Manhattan, he frequently seemed on the verge of becoming a top executive but time after time was passed over for promotion. His failure was intensified by the success of his younger brother, Will, who became quite wealthy as vice president of the American Woolen Company. While Fred seemed cowed by Will, Bill would later openly clash with his rich, ultra-conservative uncle.[32]

Home for the Remington family was Ridgewood, New Jersey, where Fred first settled in 1889. Rural and provincial in the late nineteenth century, Ridgewood, when Bill was born in 1917, was fast becoming an affluent, conservative community, a bedroom town for people on the rise in the New York City area. Executives, bankers, and Wall Street brokers lived there as did millionaire J. J. Newberry. Every morning, a rattletrap bus, nicknamed the "Toonerville Trolley" drove around the town, picking up commuters for the local station, from which the Erie train would take them into Manhattan.[33]

William Remington grew up in a modest Victorian house on East Ridgewood Avenue, the "poor relations in the very rich community of Ridgewood. . . . " "Birth normal," his mother later wrote. "Breast fed. Perfectly healthy." Everyone who knew young Bill, from the old German woman who helped out around the house to the librarian who gave him his first job, considered him an

honest and obedient child. If he was peculiar, his mother thought, "it was in general goodness. Never a showy boy nor a leader but always in the top rank picked for dependability." When Lillian was not teaching art to supplement the family income, she and her son would spend their days at Christ Church, where Bill sang in the choir, often served as acolyte, and was baptized and confirmed.[34] His mother also introduced him to the Oxford Group, an affiliate of the Episcopal church committed to social and economic reform. "Through the Oxford Group I developed a complete dedication to a personal God," Remington once said. "I tried to place all my thoughts and acts at God's service, and I became more than usually concerned in that way to helping the underdog as part of my religious philosophy."[35]

His parents also expected that he become physically strong. When he was just four, his mother ordered him to climb a tree in their backyard, and when he refused, she pushed him up, "switching his legs as he cried and resisted."[36] His father would frequently take him hiking on Mount Torin and taught him how to shoot in the small shooting range he had built in his cellar and in the New Jersey mountains. Hiking, camping, and boating on the Bay of Fundy near his mother's birthplace in Granville Ferry would also remain lifelong hobbies for Bill.[37]

Years later, when Bill married, his wife formed "the impression that he never had much fun in his life—that he'd always been under these family strictures: 'be the ideal Christian'; 'work hard'; 'do without.'"[38] Eventually, as many children do, Bill Remington began to rebel against these family rules, but in his case, the rebellion would outlast childhood and adolescence and continue into adulthood. Indeed, one close friend later claimed that Bill's interest in radical politics was, in part, a rebellion against "the rigid discipline of the Remingtons."[39]

Intellectually, he was precocious. He entered Kenilworth Elementary School in September 1922, a month before his fifth birthday. He did well and a few years later was allowed to skip the fourth grade.[40] For Remington, learning was always a serious responsibility; his friends dubbed him "Gloomy Gus." Although he tried to relax, the nickname followed him to junior high at the Beech Street School. At thirteen, he became a Boy Scout but unhappily remained a choir boy—"the oldest and biggest in Christ Church."[41] He was still obedient but was growing increasingly restless as he prepared to enter Ridgewood High School.

His years at Ridgewood, from 1931 to 1934, were among the most important of his life. Coinciding with his adolescence (he was not quite fourteen when school began), it was a time when Remington's rebelliousness would bring him into conflict with his family and many of his peers. Although Ridgewood was considered one of the most rigorous schools in the state, Remington's academic record was superior—he made the "High Honor" role in his sophomore, junior, and senior years. He was also a member of the track team (he ran cross country and threw the javelin) and belonged to the fencing and glee clubs.[42]

With his friend Betsy Hunt, he organized the "inner circle of higher

thought," a group of students who explored religious and cultural topics. "The 'inner circle of higher thought' . . . is getting into good order now," he wrote his aunt in October 1933. "People love to argue . . . , and the more they gas, . . . the more practice and delight I have in trying to refute them." Of particular interest was evolution, which clashed dramatically with his religion's doctrine of divine creation. After listening to one fundamentalist minister preach on the subject, Remington "accosted him and talked (mostly argued I'm ashamed to say) for 55 minutes in the shadow of a stately pulpit." Unwilling to accept the minister's sermon, he visited the Museum of Natural History in New York City, seeking a scientist's more learned advice. "I had a marvelous time," he told his aunt. "Evolution is all I ever thought it was and more; and I can prove it, so my religion can be what I damn well please!"[43]

As the nation sank deeper into Depression, politics and economics became unavoidable topics for Remington and his friends. During the presidential campaign of 1932, they traveled to Patterson, New Jersey, to hear socialist Norman Thomas address an audience of the unemployed.[44] Remington was fascinated and returned home a committed radical. He studied the *Communist Manifesto* and soon afterwards announced, while playing football, that he was a Communist. "There was silence," Ralph Bergstrom later recalled. "Then someone asked what does THAT mean? He then said he'd joined the Communist Party. . . . I had the impression Bill did it more to shock or watch reactions," Bergstrom concluded.[45]

Remington's political views did not endear him to his classmates. The ravages of the Depression were never fully felt in Ridgewood; to be sure, some men lost their jobs or, like Fred Remington, had their salaries reduced, but Norman Thomas won no votes there and Franklin Roosevelt very few. The community remained staunchly conservative and hostile toward those, like Bill Remington, who espoused liberal or even radical ideas. His peers called him exotic and weird, the boy who never fit in.[46]

Physically, he also stood out from his classmates. At thirteen, he was five foot nine; a year later, he was six foot one and a half inches tall and still growing to his eventual height of six foot two. His favorite outfit consisted of green slacks, a plaid shirt covered by a Kelly-green sweater, and, atop his head, a beret. "He was tall with a shock of sandy reddish hair, with an almost gangly spareness," recalled one classmate. "He often seemed to be listening or considering with a slight forward tilt of his head. Withal . . . there was [an] air of abstraction . . . leading to an impression of remoteness." Some, in an attempt to break through what they thought was Remington's icy reserve, started calling him "the Golden Haired Canary," but the nickname did not last long.[47]

It was not just his political or intellectual views that many found obnoxious but also the manner in which he expressed them. Many considered him argumentative and supercilious. "Bill did make other people feel demeaned," said

one friend, "because they just weren't up to his abilities." Another remembered Remington's "quizzical expression—I was never sure whether he was making fun of me or taking what I said with a grain of salt."[48]

His teachers also found him interesting and even mysterious. Newell Gillem, Remington's English teacher, remembered a strange incident that still astonished him fifty years later:

> We were standing in the main hall one day, . . . talking—when suddenly I thought Bill had lost his balance. One foot came up and I grabbed it—to steady him. He said that he had boasted that he could kick me in the stomach! It sounds like he didn't have much respect for me but I'm inclined to think that he liked to be the bold fellow who defied convention . . . "To Heck with you and your customs, I'll do what I please!"

Gillem liked Remington but thought him "too smart for his own good. He tended to be boastful, superior to those around him."[49] Alice Wharton, chairwoman of the English Department, also thought Remington unusual. "He was . . . shy and often ill at ease and, like many adolescents, he covered up his feelings of insecurity . . . with a show of superiority," she wrote in 1948. "He was known as an intellectual snob, and perhaps he was one, for the world of the mind was the only one in which he received satisfaction and attention. He was called a 'radical' because he thought deeply about subjects which other boys of his years were not concerned with."[50]

Remington's unpopularity did not seem to bother him. On the contrary, to be unconventional was Remington's way of winning notoriety and status in the rigidly status-conscious community of Ridgewood. If he was not the wealthiest student or the most distinguished because of eminent parentage, at least he could be recognized as the most bizarre.

His closest friend at school was also his first love—a brilliant and lovely young woman named Helen Martin. They had much in common; both were very intelligent and outspokenly radical and had conservative fathers and intellectual mothers. They fell in love and spent almost every hour together, going often into Manhattan either to enjoy a Broadway show or to attend meetings of the American Civil Liberties Union, where they listened raptly to its founder, Roger Baldwin.[51]

Remington's courtship created a serious family rift. Fred and Lillian thought that at sixteen Bill and Helen were too young for such a serious relationship and feared that it might lead to an accidental pregnancy, followed by an inevitable marriage that would wreck his plans for college. And, although the Martins were financially comfortable, Lillian, a bit of a snob, hoped that Bill might make a match with the daughter of one of her wealthier friends.[52]

Bill's love life was not his parents' sole concern in 1934. Fred was ill. At sixty-three, despite his lifelong effort to keep himself physically fit, he suffered a

serious heart attack and began to prepare for retirement on a pension that could not adequately support a family with a son in college.[53] This meant that Lillian would have to increase her own teaching schedule, and no doubt she felt all the old resentments intensify. Friends of Bill's began to observe hostility developing between parents and son. "There was something lacking in that house," Bill's friend Bob Davidson recalled. "Bill would be the first one to talk and he would be running along on something and his father didn't have too many good things to say to Bill. You could tell there was trouble there all the time." "I don't think Bill ever took up anything that his father recommended," Don Hammond thought. "Bill ignored his mother too. I never saw any real affection crop up anywhere in that family." Bill's relationship with his father had never been good, but now he found himself more and more at odds with his mother. "He had rather conflicting attitudes towards his mother," said a woman who knew them well. "He liked being with her, admired her, but he had to protect himself against her attempts to manage and control him."[54]

Despite his parents' objections, Bill continued to see Helen secretly, but like many a high school romance, theirs began to fade during 1934, their senior year. They were both extremely busy. Helen was managing *The Arrow* and preparing to enter Smith College, while Remington was still an active member of the track team and singing with the glee club and a cappella choir.[55] He, too, had selected a college—Dartmouth, in Hanover, New Hampshire. Although he would receive a partial scholarship, his education would be expensive, and he would have to bear most of the financial burden. His father had decided definitely to retire in September, just as Bill's freshman year began, and Fred's pension was (as Lillian put it) small. But she was confident that through thrift and hard work (Bill would seek part-time employment in Hanover), the family would manage. Bill apparently decided against seeking help from his wealthy uncle Will, who had no children to support; the two frequently argued about the New Deal—the elder William Remington hated FDR, while the younger was a passionate admirer.[56]

Remington graduated in June with "Highest Honors." In *The Arrow*, under a photograph in which he was neatly dressed and looked typically stern, he listed his achievements while at Ridgewood and his "Class Prophesy":

> ASPIRATIONS IN 1934: TO DIE, A GENIUS OF THE FIRST WATER, UNRECOGNIZED.
> REGRETS IN 1954: THAT HIS AMBITION WAS BEING FULFILLED.[57]

2

The New Student—Dartmouth, 1934–1936

"There was nothing outstanding about Bill Remington when he arrived in Hanover during September 1934, with the other 700 Pea Greens that composed the class of '38," noted the college's newspaper, *The Dartmouth*, in 1954:

> The Greenbook showed he compiled an average record at his hometown high school . . . and above his activities there was a picture of a skinny-faced youngster with unruly blond hair and a sheepish grin. If anyone had bothered to check the birth date of the tall, lanky freshman, they might have been surprised to find that he was only 16, but other than that there was nothing out of the ordinary about Bill Remington.[1]

This was probably the only time that *The Dartmouth* described Remington as ordinary. By the time he was a senior, he was perhaps the most controversial man on campus—liked by a few, disliked by many, and a source of irritation, confusion, and, frequently admiration to faculty and administrators. Political scientist Hugh Elsbree thought him "one of the most unusual undergraduates I have encountered in ten years of teaching," while economist Malcolm Kier confessed that, for a time, he "wasn't certain whether this man was crazy or a genius."[2]

At first, he was just one of 708 men who composed the largest freshman class in the history of the college. He arrived in Hanover on September 15, 1934, when dormitories were opened and orientation week began. President Ernest M. Hopkins distributed certificates of registration, while Green Key, the junior

honor society, gave each man a Bible (Dartmouth was founded in 1769 by missionaries hoping to Christianize the Indians). The class also received a set of rules that was supposed to govern behavior during the days ahead. Freshman beanies were always to be worn outdoors; they must walk around—never across—the college green; when visiting the Nugget, Hanover's sole movie theater, they were required to sit in side seats; and all rallies and football games were to be enthusiastically attended.[3] Remington's quarters were in Hitchcock Hall, an old, four-story brick building, whose suites looked extremely comfortable—a large living room with fireplace and two bedrooms. Climbing the stairs to his assigned room—408—he learned that he was not as lucky as others. His single room on the fourth floor was furnished with two beds, two desks, and little else. He also found that he had a roommate, Richard Sherwin, a tall, husky eighteen-year-old from Worcester, Massachusetts.

Sherwin was also very bright but was quickly dazzled by Bill Remington. He just sat there dumbfounded the whole year while Bill tried to open his eyes to art, literature, politics, and history.[4] Sherwin, a devout Catholic, also became the object of Remington's caustic wit. W. Atherton ("Athy") Fuller, who lived across the hall, later recalled the mischievous look in Remington's eye when he would needle Sherwin about holding so staunchly to religious beliefs that Remington thought were antiquated. As a result, Remington and Sherwin spent little time together, and except for Fuller, Remington had no close friends in the dorm. "He was not very popular," Fuller said, "because of his supercilious, almost superior way he had of downing people."[5]

After settling in, Remington quickly sought a way to supplement his income; his scholarship and aid from home were not enough to finance his education. Before September ended, he had secured a number of jobs: clerking in the Sanborn Library, selling stationery and books of football tickets to his classmates, and managing a student laundry. That year he also carried a full academic schedule, which included courses in English, French, mathematics, and sociology. His final grade point average for the freshman year would be 3.1, good enough to earn him a place on the "Third Honor Roll."[6]

He also pursued those activities that had won him success at Ridgewood High. He joined the freshman track team and the debating squad, which elected him captain. "He could debate person-to-person on any subject better than anyone I ever heard," recalled Athy Fuller, the team's researcher.[7] He was also an energetic but often difficult athlete. Arising early in the morning, he would don green track shorts and a Class of '38 sweatshirt, and, with his javelin resting on his shoulder, would pedal his bicycle through town to the athletic field. Remington was not the easiest man to coach. "He would cock his head and appear to be paying close attention, but I always had an uneasy feeling that his mind was a thousand miles away . . . ," one of the teachers remembered.[8] Budd

Schulberg, a senior, recalled Remington frequently arguing with his coach about his practice schedule:

> He told the Coach he didn't think throwing the javelin was that important that he should practice every day. "It doesn't work that way," the Coach told Remington. "If you're on the track team you practice when the Coach tells you to practice." And Remington said: "To Hell with it. I won't throw the javelin," and stalked off the field.

But he eventually returned and won his letter. "I remember arguing with him that it would be good for the social movement to be an athlete," Schulberg said, "that you could throw the javelin and still take a stand on social issues, . . . but not Bill—once he'd decided it was a waste of time, nothing would change him. It was both admirable and maddening. He was one of the most stubborn people I've ever known."[9]

Despite his heavy workload—in the classroom, on the athletic field, in the library and laundry—these were lonely days for Remington. Never one to make friends easily, he was uncomfortable among his classmates, especially the many smug, conservative prep-school graduates turned juvenile pranksters who loved to torture freshmen. To junior Donald Miller, who befriended Remington, he seemed "terribly withdrawn, very quiet, lost in that environment."[10] So, Remington set out to find the college's equivalent of the "inner circle of higher thought." Such a group was difficult to find on the Dartmouth campus, a tranquil island in a national sea of student activism.

The Great Depression and the New Deal, the rise of fascism abroad, the example of the Soviet Union as the great socialist experiment of the day—all created great excitement on America's college campuses. "The rah-rah days of the twenties are gone," wrote the editor of the University of Texas's *Daily Texan*. "[The] increased interest of students in politics, . . . and the de-emphasis on fraternities and athletics, show the college man is thinking more and playing less." At U.C.L.A., the editor of the *Daily Bruin* argued that "the Depression killed Joe College. Economic necessity has forced thought into the life of college students." The University of Chicago's *Daily Maroon* noticed "more political and international discussion by students," while the Columbia *Spectator* had fewer articles on "athletic do-or-die spirit" and more "logical criticism . . . which past generations of undergraduates might have resisted."[11]

Sociologists who studied student attitudes in the mid-1930s discovered that a majority now considered themselves liberals. At Purdue, students were more supportive of government aid for farmers, national ownership of railroads, and taxation of large fortunes. A study at the University of Maryland revealed that 75 percent of the students believed it was government's job to regulate hours and wages, while 90 percent felt that relief should be administered from Washington.[12]

Above all, students were opposed to American participation in any future war. From Rhode Island to California, students called war unjustifiable and urged that it no longer be used as an instrument of national policy. In 1934, the socialist Student League for Industrial Democracy and the Communist National Student League organized a national "Student Strike Against War" and suddenly found thousands of students flocking to their banners. On April 13, 1934, twenty-five thousand students—the majority from New York colleges—left their classrooms to cheer speakers "who denounced war, paraded for peace, and adopted resolutions . . . against war." A year later, on April 12, 1935, more than a hundred fifty thousand undergraduates on a hundred thirty campuses demonstrated during the second Student Strike Against War.[13] "A New Student has arisen," concluded *The Student Review* early in the decade. " . . . His school-fed illusions are fading away. He is beginning to realize that his life is inextricably bound up with the social system under which he lives."[14]

Such intense ferment, Remington discovered, was almost nonexistent on the Dartmouth campus. During the 1932 presidential campaign, 90 percent of the Dartmouth student body voted in a mock election to return Herbert Hoover to the White House, while just 5 percent chose Franklin D. Roosevelt. In protest, freshmen Donald Miller and Francis Bartlett organized a Dartmouth chapter of the socialist Student League for Industrial Democracy, but it failed to attract the support of even the few radicals on campus and quickly expired. The handful who considered themselves Communists established an affiliate of the National Student League, but it, too, remained tiny and ineffectual.[15]

Not even the peace issue—which usually appealed to conservatives as well as radicals—had much appeal at Dartmouth. The Green International, a pacifist organization was founded in the spring of 1932 with a hundred members, but within a year, membership dwindled to a dozen students, and the group disbanded.[16] (In contrast, 1933 saw antiwar conferences held at Cornell and Columbia and Berkeley and U.C.L.A.)[17] "Joe College" was alive and well at Dartmouth.

Still, there did exist on campus a group of self-professed Communists, and it was this group that captured Remington's attention during his freshman and sophomore years. It included Francis Bartlett, a quiet, studious intellectual from a wealthy Westchester County family, and Donald Miller, called by one friend a little fireball, as gregarious as Bartlett was withdrawn. Alan Rader, converted to Communism by his boyhood friend Fran Bartlett, was an activist who established Dartmouth's Young Communist League and, in 1936, flunked out of college because of his preoccupation with radical causes. Robert Boehm was, like Bartlett and Rader, a wealthy New Yorker who spent the summer of 1935 touring the Soviet Union. Finally, there was an extraordinary young man from California, Budd Schulberg, son of Hollywood mogul B. P. Schulberg. Brilliant and charming, he was said to be the only man ever to live with a Hollywood

starlet while still a student at Dartmouth. Bartlett and Schulberg would later become members of the Communist Party.[18]

Remington's attraction to these men is easily understood. Like him, they were brilliant and unconventional, personifications of the "New Student" of the 1930s. Their lives did not revolve around football games, fraternity pranks, or Winter Carnival (when special trains brought young women up to Dartmouth). Theirs was a world of ideas and causes. These were passionately expressed in *Steeplejack*, "Dartmouth's Journal of Controversy," which they founded and ran. "*Steeplejack* declares for a New Deal at Dartmouth College," the editors wrote in the premier issue in September 1933, "a birth of opinion and literary creativity, a comprehension of the purposes of the College, an integration of undergraduate life with the activities and culture of the outside world." While *The Dartmouth* remained preoccupied with football, tennis, and crew, *Steeplejack* focused its attention on economics and foreign affairs. One issue featured Robert Boehm's exposé of international arms merchants, debates between socialists and Communists, and a front-page editorial entitled WE HAVE HAD TOO MUCH TALK! WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT WAR?[19] This was the intellectual world that influenced William Remington's own thinking during his first two years at Dartmouth. He later testified:

> During the course of my freshman year my political views moved left quite rapidly. I came to believe in very extensive government ownership and control of industry . . . [,] breaking up big business concerns . . . [,] highly progressive income taxes . . . and I became convinced that labor unions were the answer to a great deal that was unchristian about society.

He was also sympathetic toward the Soviet Union. "I thought Russia a great experiment: they were making great progress toward improvement of living standards and I liked what the Russians were proposing for collective security against Nazism and Fascism." He considered himself a philosophical Communist and made no secret of it.[20]

He also tried to look and act like a radical. "He was a wild man," one friend said, "unkempt, [his] red hair sticking up all the time." He also went around half-dressed, without a coat, and instead of boots wore low-cut tennis shoes, even during the worst Hanover blizzards.[21] Classmate Stephen Bradley remembered "a red-eyed fanatic's look" on Remington's face that reminded him of the abolitionist John Brown. One conservative student later recalled spending

> many hours arguing with Bill in my room. I seldom went to his because it always smelled like rotten apples and was cluttered with Communist books. One time . . . he said that there would come a time during the revolution when he would shoot me down in cold blood.

Others took Remington less seriously—"Oh come off it, Remington," they would

cry, when he said something especially outrageous.[22] Unfortunately, Remington's corrosive personality would not be forgotten by those who had been its target, and his careless, insensitive remarks would later contribute to his downfall.

There was another side to Bill Remington, not fully discernible to his classmates. The man who openly called himself a Communist and frequently acted like a bohemian, also wanted to be a part of the world he and his fellow radicals scorned. For example, he seriously considered joining a fraternity—but only Alpha Delta Tau, because he considered it the most aristocratic. "They go after the football players," he wrote his family in 1935. "Down at the house there was no one without a Big 'D'. But of course I'll have one too."[23] Unfortunately, the expenses of fraternity life made it impossible for him to join. Bohemian or aristocrat—which was the real Bill Remington? His life at Dartmouth and later in Washington would reveal what one friend called "a constant tension between his political beliefs and his worldly ambitions."[24] For now, he chose to live on the periphery of campus life, among those the Alpha Delts would have called the outcasts.

His closest friends among the radicals were Donald Miller and Alan Rader. Miller, whose family was devastated by the Depression, also had to work his way through Dartmouth; like Remington, he sold freshman yearbooks and football tickets and scrubbed dishes in the freshman commons, where they first met. Miller was a veteran of *Steeplejack* and unafraid to express openly his radical views. (After graduating, Miller repeatedly tried to join the Communist Party but was rejected because he was considered too boisterous.) Given their common economic difficulties and similar views, Remington and Miller established a close and congenial relationship.[25]

Alan Rader, the son of an affluent General Mills executive, also moved sharply to the left after entering Dartmouth in 1932. He was one of the first to join Dartmouth's antiwar Green Shirts and the National Student League but found their members, ideas, and methods shallow and disappointing. One day, in 1934, he turned to Miller and said, "We ought to have a Young Communist League, don't you think . . . ?"[26] This casual proposal, and what followed, would eventually have disastrous consequences for Bill Remington.

Not long after his talk with Miller, Rader took the train into Boston and met with YCL organizers to establish a Dartmouth chapter. A charter was drafted and arrangements made for the distribution of membership cards and the collection of dues. Meetings began sometime in the fall of 1934; the original group, according to Rader, consisted of most of the campus Communists, excluding Miller, denied membership because of garrulousness. Its youngest participant was Bill Remington. "Bill was one of the central core people," Rader recalled. "Soft spoken, thoughtful, sincerely concerned with important questions, very good at thinking out loud and saying what he believed." It was an informal group, but most applied for membership, received cards, and paid dues. Was

Remington an official member of the group or just an enthusiastic visitor? No one knows for certain. If he was not a formal member, he did "attend meetings," Rader is certain, "and expressed his being in favor of what we were trying to do. I remember him as being one of the activists. . . ."[27]

Although the Young Communist League was considered a Party training ground, it often existed independently (especially in rural New Hampshire where Party leaders left it pretty much on its own). According to the YCL handbook, a member was expected "to develop . . . both [an] understanding of the Communist movement and an ability to take part in the class struggle, so that when [he or she] becomes of age [they] will qualify to enter the Party." Those who were eventually admitted to these exalted ranks were expected "to accept in full the Communist program and the discipline of the Party. . . . " Party goals included opposing imperialist war, defending the Soviet Union, abolishing ROTC, and ending racial injustice.[28]

In practice, Rader's YCL (and its successor) was, as one who was familiar with the chapter notes, "a study group." Members would read Marx, articles from the *Daily Worker*, and pamphlets that the Communist Party put out, but that is as much as they did. Occasionally, they would pass out leaflets urging people not to buy toys made in Germany and Japan. It was all very harmless; no one was plotting to blow up the U.S. Capitol.[29]

Although it was an innocuous organization that had little impact on campus, YCL meetings were kept strictly secret. Those involved feared that public exposure might damage their reputations with administrators. Such fears were not groundless. In 1936, when Donald Miller, who knew nothing about the YCL, briefly left Dartmouth to work for the *New York Times*, Dean Neidlinger told the paper that Miller was a dangerous Communist who should not be employed; the editors hired him anyway. And when Alan Rader's academic record began to suffer because of his political activities and he flunked out, the dean refused his request for readmission.[30] Therefore, the Communists tried to establish public forums approved by the faculty. Stearns Morse, a member of the English Department known to be politically sympathetic, and political scientist Hugh Elsbree sponsored a Marxist study group in 1935. Morse later remembered Dero Saunders's brilliant analysis of *Das Kapital*, but Elsbree thought "the whole thing was a lot of horsefeathers" and quit; the group dissolved after just a few meetings.[31] Remington later admitted attending meetings of a second Marxist study group in 1935, established by Barney Davis, a chemistry instructor. Approximately twenty students gathered in Davis's room on Sunday mornings to discuss current events. Jack Preiss, Class of '40, remembered that Remington also participated in a third group that met during 1937 and 1938.[32]

Remington was joined in these activities by his boyhood friend William Alonzo Martin, Jr., who arrived at Dartmouth as a freshman in September 1935. Although they had not seen one another for years, they discovered that they still

had much in common. Martin also considered himself a Communist and his views, said his older brother, Dexter, "drove our parents nuts."[33] Each had qualities that attracted and repelled classmates. Those few who genuinely admired Remington, like Athy Fuller, disliked Martin, whom he called "a serious Marxist [with] no fun and games about him."[34] Martin's friends tended to hate Remington and found it puzzling that the two were such close friends. "They were totally incompatible in every way," their friend Page Smith noted. "Martin was short with a very pale face and a quality of exuberance, vitality, and openness. Remington was tall, cool, calculating—constantly expressing the sense of a secret, private life. . . . "[35] Eventually, these differences would destroy their friendship, but in the beginning, they got along splendidly.

Remington and Martin moved into Crosby Hall, the oldest, smallest, and cheapest dorm on campus—home of the poorest students as well as football players, members of the ski team, and others who did not mind battling cockroaches. Remington was busy with his various part-time jobs, demanding courses, and new extracurricular activities—working for the Junto (an organization that brought political and literary figures to the campus) and writing for *The Dartmouth* now that the *Steeplejack* had expired. "If I didn't have to sleep I could easily find things to occupy me 40 hours a day," he told his family in October 1935.[36] Two professors were especially influential—Allan MacDonald and Sidney Cox, both members of the English Department and popular with most of the campus Communists. MacDonald, a dapper little man with a carefully trimmed mustache, broke the canons of literary orthodoxy by praising the works of D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot. He was also a practitioner of the "New Politics," encouraging his students to participate in liberal activities, because he thought that "if the average Dartmouth undergraduate does not have enough social responsibility to be an active liberal while in college, he will be so hopelessly conservative in later life that he can in no way contribute to the solution of the world's problems."[37]

"Sensitive and defiantly independent" was how one colleague described Sidney Cox, who gave aspiring writers a supportive atmosphere at his Sunday evening literary gatherings. "All the interesting people on the campus came to Sidney Cox's Sunday nights," William Bronk recalled. "Sidney would read something that one of us had written or something he'd been reading—then we'd all quarrel about it." If Bronk thought the conversation dull or too much dominated by Remington, he would chat with Cox's charming wife, Alice, and eat her delicious cakes. Cox was particularly popular with the Communists (although he was basically apolitical). Over the years, Fran Bartlett, Budd Schulberg, Bill Martin, Page Smith, and Remington gathered at Sidney's. After a particularly stimulating evening, Schulberg recalled, he would run home to "try to practice what Sidney had been preaching."[38]

So did Remington. While his interests had once been exclusively political,

he now became fascinated by literature and even told college officials in 1935 that his career would be a literary one.[39] His first published work appeared in *The Dartmouth* in the fall of 1935 and reflected his interest in art inherited from his mother. Daily, he spent hours at the Carpenter Art Gallery conferring with Gobin Stair, the assistant curator. They talked endlessly about everything from traditional and avant-garde art to the works of James Joyce, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx. Stair thought that Bill's articles on Thomas Hart Benton and Vincent Van Gogh were excellent, while his instructor in Renaissance art, Churchill Lathrop, was "impressed with [his] original insights, observation, and graceful writing"—more typical of a senior than an eighteen-year-old sophomore.[40]

Despite his new interests in literature and art, he was drawn back to politics, as both reporter and participant, when a bitter labor dispute erupted in nearby Rutland, Vermont. It began in November 1935, when some six hundred quarry and marble workers went on strike against the Vermont Marble Company and its owner, the Proctor family. Budd Schulberg, formerly of *Steeplejack* and now editor of *The Dartmouth*, was one of the first outsiders to visit the scene. At strike headquarters in West Rutland, he talked with officials of the International Quarry Workers' Union and the strikers themselves. He found their fury directed against the Proctors. One angry miner said:

> The family are the most reactionary in Vermont. They have a vast estate. . . . For generations they have controlled the politics of our state, the state university, the public utilities and the marble industry throughout North America. They pay the lowest wages in the state and employ the most workers. [They] . . . live like feudal barons, and rule many Vermont towns in such a way that the workers and farmers live like serfs.[41]

If such reports sounded to Schulberg like wild fantasies, he soon discovered that they were close to the truth. In the tiny marble towns of Rutland, Proctor, Florence, and Danby, he found families trying to survive on five dollars a week—and less. He saw children kept out of school because they lacked clothing to protect them from the cruel winter cold. Workers' homes were little more than rotten barns; their daily diet, a bowl of cooked potatoes. Wanting *The Dartmouth* to become truly relevant, Schulberg published his observations on the front page of the newspaper, where once articles about football and fraternities had been predominant. "Here at Dartmouth too many college radicals have attacked campus-lack-of-interest only to withdraw into their own red-ivory tower of social theory," he told his readers on December 3, 1935. "Too many conservatives have been equally guilty, armed with idealistic theories, blind to actual social conditions. Starvation in the quarry area is not a theory but a fact. Members of the Hanover community interested should demonstrate their interest not with theories—radical or conservative—but with actual aid." Schulberg's story electrified

both the campus and the town, and the next day, a committee of prominent college officials and townspeople was established to help the miners. *The Dartmouth* staff volunteered to collect contributions of food, clothing, and money and to deliver them to Vermont.[42]

Remington helped, too. With members of the Dartmouth Union and the National Student League, he organized a campus-wide canvass held on Friday night, December 6. The group met first at *The Dartmouth* office in Robinson Hall, where they received their instructions; then, they piled into cars and drove to every dormitory and fraternity house in Hanover. They encountered some minor resistance—a few students complained that they were *wearing* their old clothes, while others admitted that they had never heard of the strike—but most gave generously. At the end of the evening, their collection included camel-hair coats and suede leather jackets, an assortment of shoes and ice skates, a roast chicken, coffee, and a bottle of cod liver oil pills. Late that night, Remington returned to his room, exhausted but exhilarated.[43]

On Saturday afternoon, cars and a truck filled with clothing, food, and other articles arrived in West Rutland. As Remington and other students unloaded the goods, the workers "danced around . . . like small children at Christmas." "Thank God, my children can go back to school now," one man remarked.[44]

The struggle was far from over. Fur coats and suede jackets could clothe but could not feed the workers and their families, and Rutland's Overseer of the Poor, an employee of the Vermont Marble Company, refused to provide relief to the starving strikers. In January 1936, they sued him, and Remington covered the events for *The Dartmouth*. The courtroom was packed with spectators, many of them strikers who hoped that if the jury convicted Overseer John F. Dwyer of neglecting his duties, they would then be assured of receiving state and local aid. Remington, standing in the back of the room, listened closely and took notes as the union's attorney questioned Mrs. Bujak, mother of six and wife of a mill worker earning three dollars a week. She had no shoes, coats, or warm clothes for her children and nothing to eat but potatoes, cabbage, milk, and sauerkraut, she testified. Six times she had asked Dwyer for help, and each time he had refused. Dwyer's attorney, who was also counsel to the Vermont Marble Company, rejected the union's charges, but after an hour and twenty minutes, the jury found Dwyer guilty.[45]

"The quarry workers are fine," Remington wrote his family following the trial. "Cold, hungry and a little miserable. But quite confident now that they'll win." Dwyer's conviction meant that "now the towns are having to support the strikers' families according to the state and federal laws. So everything is really great."[46]

Remington was too optimistic. The strike dragged on for six more months until a tentative settlement was reached through federal arbitration. In late September 1936, workers returned to the marble quarries, their hourly wage now

increased two and a half cents. In the case of Mrs. Bujak, relief was a long time coming, and when she opened the envelope, she found a check for four dollars.[47]

By the time Remington learned the ultimate fate of the marble workers, he was a thousand miles away—in Knoxville, Tennessee, working for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and involved in another struggle between labor and industry. Taking a leave of absence from Dartmouth after his sophomore year was a difficult decision, dictated by financial necessity and a desire to "work and get knocked about a little." His fascination with politics and economics led him to reject his earlier plan for a literary career in favor of a life in public administration. At Dartmouth he had studied the operations of the newly created TVA and hoped to work with it for a year before returning to college. "My life and study in Hanover," he wrote Dean Neidlinger, "would have more far-reaching purpose and direction if I had a foundation of practical experience on which to base my major studies, centering around applied sociology and regional planning." Working for TVA would help him to evaluate what he had already learned and "make my last two years at Dartmouth more valuable."[48]

He arrived in Knoxville in August 1936 and contacted a college friend named Davis Jackson, a messenger at TVA, who offered him a place to live and an introduction to officials in personnel. "Seems to be a fine young chap, mature, very intelligent," his TVA interviewer noted. He thought Remington would make a good messenger and recommended that he be hired.[49]

The bureaucracy moved slowly and hearing nothing from TVA's personnel department, Remington concluded that he had been rejected and returned to Ridgewood. In September, he was back on campus when he received a telegram from TVA, offering him the position of messenger at a salary of $1,080 a year. He immediately sought out the dean (who assured him that he would be readmitted the next year) and a number of his favorite professors. Nearly everyone with whom he spoke approved of the move—feeling, Remington later noted, "that a year's practical experience would be particularly good for me." He telegraphed his acceptance, rushed home to gather some clothes and books, and, instead of hitch-hiking, took the train to Knoxville "because I was trying to get there in a hurry."[50]