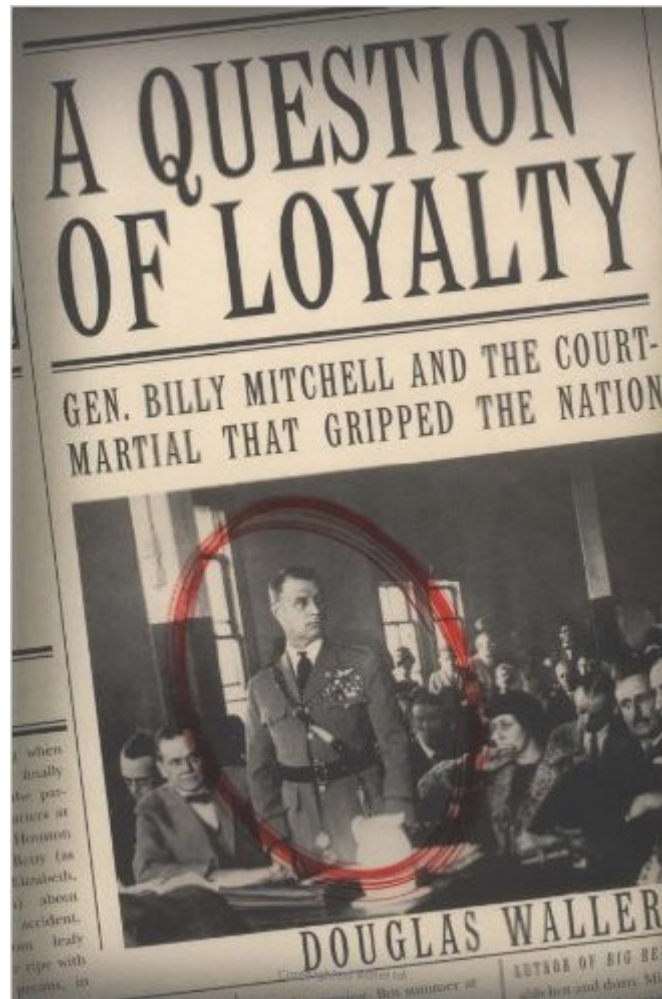


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A Question Of Loyalty: Gen. Billy Mitchell And The Court-Martial That Gripped The Nation



Synopsis

It had all the ingredients of a movie drama: a scandal that grips Washington and touches the White House; bitter battles and backroom intrigue at the highest levels of the U.S. military; glamorous women who make or break the careers of powerful men; a high-stakes trial with a celebrity defendant who captures the nation's attention ... *A Question of Loyalty* plunges into the seven-week Washington trial of Gen. William "Billy" Mitchell, the hero of the U.S. Army Air Service during World War I and the man who proved in 1921 that planes could sink a battleship. In 1925 Mitchell was frustrated by the slow pace of aviation development, and he sparked a political firestorm, accusing the army and navy high commands, and by inference the president, of treason and criminal negligence in the way they conducted national defense. He was put on trial for insubordination in a spectacular court-martial that became a national obsession during the Roaring Twenties. Douglas Waller has crafted a compelling new biography of the daring Billy Mitchell, a larger-than-life figure remembered as much for his outspokenness as for his innovations in the use of airpower. Waller has uncovered a trove of new letters, diaries, and confidential documents that have enabled him to capture in detail the drama of the court and to build a rich and revealing biography of Mitchell, one of the army's most controversial and flamboyant generals. Born to a millionaire Midwest family at the end of the 1870s, Mitchell joined the military at the age of eighteen and became one of its rising stars. During World War I, he led the largest armada of airplanes ever to attack an enemy force and returned to the United States a dashing young general with a chest full of medals and a radical vision of airpower as the only decisive instrument for future wars. But as the military shrank in the postwar years, Mitchell became increasingly impatient and vocal, lashing out at bureaucratic enemies he accused of impeding airpower's progress. After a tragic airship accident that shocked the nation, he publicly blasted the War and Navy Departments for their handling of aviation and was put on trial for it. *A Question of Loyalty* is a story about Washington politics, about love and betrayal, about heroes in battle, about determined lawyers and powerful military men pitted against one another in a courtroom.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Air Force is the brashest arm of the armed forces. It is far newer than the Army or Navy, and more reliant on the latest in technology. There is an image of the flyboy as handsome, heroic, and rule-bending if not rule-breaking. The archetype of such an image is General Billy Mitchell, whose most famous act was getting a court-martial in 1925 for speaking up about how he felt air power ought to be developed. His is a story that has been told before, even (badly) in the movies, but in A Question of Loyalty: Gen. Billy Mitchell and the Court-Martial that Grippped the Nation (HarperCollins), Douglas Waller has retold the story with a wealth of new information and the help of the Mitchell family. Mitchell's story was a sensation during his trial, and as part of the universal drama of the iconoclastic genius against the system, presents issues for current times, besides being a lesson in how big organizations change or resist change. The trial was the climactic event in Mitchell's life, and Waller has told it in lengthy detail, interspersing facts of Mitchell's earlier life and career within it. Mitchell didn't think his trial was the most important event in his life; he would have listed his role in WWI and his successful demonstration in 1921 that aircraft could sink a ship. Mitchell loved being a populist, skillfully using the media to enlist the support of the public for his causes. In September 1925, the Navy's dirigible Shenandoah crashed in a thunderstorm, killing fourteen of its crew. Mitchell wrote a 6,000 word statement and issued it at a press conference, listing the Shenandoah's demise specifically and other general ailments that he said "...

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