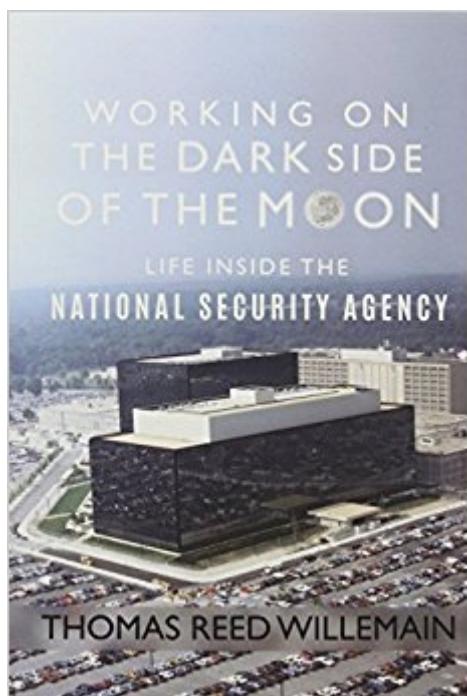


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Working On The Dark Side Of The Moon: Life Inside The National Security Agency



Synopsis

To most Americans, the NSA is an organization shrouded in secrecy, where the most clandestine of operations are carried out in the name of national security. Dr. Thomas Willemain, successful software entrepreneur and statistics professor, spent the equivalent of three years alternating between his life "outside" and working "inside" at the NSA and an affiliated, shadowy think tank. Once inside, Dr. Willemain would be challenged to adjust to life in an intense, complex and sometimes alien organization, while also encountering brilliant and quirky colleagues, the moral challenges of wielding math and statistics as weapons, a charming (if kitschy) gift shop, and ultimately, some of the most rewarding time of his career. A deeply personal account of the years spent within the most secretive organization in the world, *Working on the Dark Side of the Moon* explores the range of emotions an outsider experiences while crossing over to the "inside." It also shows the positive side of an Agency whose secrecy hides dedicated men and women devoted to protecting the country while honoring the Constitution. Thomas Reed Willemain received the BSE (summa cum laude) from Princeton University and the PhD from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His academic career has included faculty positions at M.I.T., Harvard's Kennedy School, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where he is Professor Emeritus of Industrial and Systems Engineering. He is also a founder and Senior Vice President at Smart Software, Inc. in Boston. He served in the Intelligence Community as an Expert Statistical Consultant at the National Security Agency and as a member of the research staff at the Institute for Defense Analyses/Center for Computing Sciences.

Book Information

Paperback

Publisher: Mill City Press, Inc. (May 30, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1629528722

ISBN-13: 978-1629528724

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.3 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #538,279 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #133 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Computers & Technology #148 in Books > Computers & Technology > Security & Encryption > Encryption #156 in Books > Computers &

Customer Reviews

Pretty much worthless book. No information of interest, unprofessional author writing a lot of uninteresting trivia.

Lots of redactions are included. OK. Isn't there anything meaning that could be substituted to enhance readability and not give away the secret farm?

Most readers form an opinion of the NSA based on fictional depiction, and this real life account may surprise you. Humorous, authentic, and honest, Dr. Willemain's memoir lets you peek behind the curtain and imagine what life is like "inside." One thing I did not expect was the level of intellectual freedom and engagement that the agency nurtures. Far from my image of introverts huddled alone in their offices with their computers (although that does go on), Dr. Willemain describes deep conversations on the fundamental math and statistics behind the projects that the agency supports. He contrasts this with the environment of many universities, where the scramble for grant dollars and other easily-measured signs of work output crowd out collaboration and discussion. In fact, the agency is peopled with many who found that university life hampered their intellectual creativity while the NSA supported it. The book is full of amusing and insightful anecdotes. For example, cryptanalysts who study Russia find it a major challenge to break their codes. To keep a researcher from getting discouraged by lack of progress, the agency might switch them over to a poor, under-developed country for a while, where it's easier to achieve success. Besides the satisfaction of a job well done, these researchers might be given internal awards and other recognitions for their accomplishments. Dr. Willemain is a patriot, and is not about spilling America's secrets. His account deliberately avoids any juicy tales that might compromise our intelligence and refers to everyone by pseudonyms. Nevertheless, the powers-that-be at the NSA were even more aggressive at protecting information than he was. The text is marked by enticing blacked-out passages, where you stop and wonder what's missing. NSA has elaborate safeguards to protect Americans' Fourth Amendment rights, which give protection against unreasonable search and seizure. The image of the agency is often a soulless entity that is spying on all our electronic communications, trashing our privacy in the name of National Security. Dr. Willemain disabuses us of this notion. This book is a treasure trove for novelists who want to write about the intelligence community but have never been inside. It's also invaluable for those who are thinking about joining the intelligence community and

wonder what it would be like to work there. Hint: it's better than you might think. Best of all, Dr. Willemain introduces us to the people who are at the heart of the enterprise. He tells us that math can make the difference between life and death for those who defend America. His insightful and candid descriptions of his co-workers show that not all "geeks" are alike, and that simple stereotypes are seriously inadequate. Most of all, Dr. Willemain reveals a lot about himself, and it's hard to find a more endearing geek than him.

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