

**The Langley Files: A CIA Podcast**  
**Episode 5**  
*The Greatest Museum You'll Never See*

**Host #1 – Dee**  
**Host #2 – Walter**  
**Guest #1 – Rob**  
**Guest #2 - Janelle**

(music begins)

**Narrator:** Decades ago, a quote was carved into a marble wall at headquarters. “And ye shall know the truth,” it reads, “and the truth shall make you free.” At CIA, there are truths we can share and stories we can tell. Stories of duty and dedication. Stories of ingenuity and mission. Stories beyond those of Hollywood scripts and shadowed whispers. Today we're taking a step out from behind those shadows, sharing what we can, and offering a glimpse into the world of the Central Intelligence Agency. This is The Langley Files.

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**Dee:** Imagine you're standing in a wide corridor of white marble. To your left is a row of tall windows, and to your right, a line of large, framed portraits.

**Walter:** Ahead, you see a wall shimmering with color and light – lines racing between words like “CLANDESTINE COLLECTION,” “ANALYSIS,” and “PARTNERSHIPS.” Beyond is a shadowed space in which mysterious items glow in glass cases and a ceiling embossed with codes stretches out of sight.

**Dee:** You're standing at the entrance to what's been called the greatest museum you'll never see. Over six hundred artifacts—many of which can't be found anywhere else—from across 75 years of intelligence history, from the pre-World War II era until today.

**Walter:** It's the CIA Museum, the preeminent national archive for the collection, preservation, documentation, and exhibition of intelligence artifacts, culture, and history. First pitched by former CIA Executive Director William Colby as “a very selective accumulation of truly unique items,” over the past two years, it has been extensively modernized to include never before seen objects just recently declassified and entirely new, state of the art exhibits.

**Dee:** The CIA Museum is located here, at the heart of CIA's headquarters campus in Langley, Virginia, and it is open to CIA officers and official visitors only. And so you might be wondering: what exclusive artifacts are in the space? What stories do they tell? And why does CIA have what's been described as “a secret museum” in the first place?

**Walter:** Well stay tuned. Because the CIA museum might be closed to the public, but this podcast is your ticket to a special behind the scenes tour.

**Walter and Dee:** Care to join us?

(music ends)

**Dee:** Welcome back to The Langley Files. I'm Dee, joined by my co-host Walter.

**Walter:** Hey everybody.

**Dee:** And Walter, just curious, have you had a chance to check out the new museum?

**Walter:** So it's actually on the way to my office, and every time I have a couple minutes to spare I go and check out a new artifact.

**Dee:** It's incredible, right?

**Walter:** Oh yea.

**Dee:** I mean, they totally transformed it this year.

**Walter:** 100 percent.

**Dee:** And so from the very beginning of this podcast, Walter, I know you and I wanted to find a way to give people—most of whom will never unfortunately set foot here at CIA Headquarters—a look into this incredible space. And there are really two guests who could do that better than most anyone else. Walter I feel like we've both eavesdropped probably too many times on their tours of the museum...

**Walter:** We definitely have...

**Dee:** But today they've kindly made time to sit down with us and share their insights into the CIA's museum—why we have it, how it came together, and most of all, what exactly is in it. We're joined here by the Director of CIA's museum, Rob, and the Deputy Director of the museum, Janelle. Rob, Janelle, welcome to The Langley Files.

**Rob:** Glad to be here.

**Janelle:** Yea, this is very exciting.

**Walter:** So I think it might be easy to read about episodes from the Agency's history - 20, 50, even 70 years ago, and imagine that this is the same organization operating in all the same ways, but as those of us who have spent time here know, uh, this is an evolving organization, and it's one that does work hard to learn from its past both successes and failures. And I've heard you both speak at length while giving tours the museum about this role that the museum plays. And I was hoping you could tell us a bit about that now.

**Janelle:** So the CIA museum exists for so many reasons. One is for our current officers to learn about their organization so that they can learn about their history. As we learned after 9/11, going back to things that we used to do, say, during World War II in the Office of Strategic Services, it proved vital to the success we had after 9/11.

We never looked more like the OSS than we did after 9/11. We have pictures of our first team, the Alpha team that went into Afghanistan, and they're riding around on horseback and they're meeting with locals, the Northern Alliance and local tribal leaders. And they're gathering intelligence, and they're wearing clothes that help them blend in more not like military style uniforms. And that's exactly what we were doing with the OSS. So you had somebody like William Colby, who was in the OSS. He was on a Jedburgh team. The Jedburghs were paramilitary. They would jump in behind enemy lines to conduct missions. And so you have someone like him during World War II who is taking very small teams into places like Norway. And he is there being chased by German troops, but his mission is to conduct sabotage, right? His team is

supposed to blow up bridges, rail systems, anything that the Germans are using part of their supply chain to get supplies and people in and out of the country. And so they're going to blow these up in advance of major operations. They could have done this on their own, but it would have taken a lot longer to find these targets, right? But by working with the locals, they can get this information in real time and be very effective very quickly.

When we're getting into Afghanistan after 9/11, we look very similar, right? We're taking in very small teams. Um, they want to make sure that they're working with these locals so that they can find the people, they can save the time before they move, right. We've learned from past experiences at the CIA that if we wait too long, someone we're trying to find might move because they're getting word that CIA or U.S. government is in the area. So we're looking at this and working with the Northern Alliance, and we're finding out who's tied to whom. Um, who's supplying Al Qaeda members with different things that they need, where are they hiding, where are they recruiting, where they're training. So we're doing all this and it's just going so much quicker. We're looking like the OSS in that case so you can kind of take all of this. All of what the OSS was doing was in support of military operations that would come in the same thing with our teams in Afghanistan. They're sort of opening the door for the U.S. Military gathering all that intelligence so that the U.S. government military specifically can be very effective and expel Al Qaeda and the Taliban from Afghanistan in the matter of months.

**Dee:** So it may be surprising to some, but the museum doesn't just highlight successes from the CIA's history, it also covers some key failures. So can you maybe speak to this a little?

**Janelle:** The museum is here truly as a learning tool. And I think I mentioned that you can learn a lot from your mistakes and your successes. And so we have a whole section that dives deep into both of those things. So you have a deep dive on the Cuban missile crisis which is considered one of the greatest intelligence successes of this organization right next to the Bay of Pigs. And so you can take a look at where are the gaps in intelligence gathering. Were there issues with the processes or programs? How did they fail? Why did they fail? So that we can avoid things that went wrong in the future and maybe repeat things that went right on other missions in the future as well.

We also have an artifact. It's one of my favorites because it relates back to the office I started with here at CIA. It is an artifact from the embassy built in Moscow, and it really changed how the U.S. government or the CIA would build overseas. There was a new embassy being built and the local Russians were allowed to build it. U.S. government was concerned about all the normal bugging that they might do - clocks and typewriters, HVAC systems. We had no idea they were turning the whole building into a listening device. Um, and so obviously an artifact like that is a huge learning tool for offices like mine when it comes to how they're going to conduct their mission in the future.

**Walter:** I feel like a lot of people listening now, um, will be wondering what kind of special considerations or sensitivities or idiosyncrasies there are to running the CIA museum. So could you speak a little bit about what it's like working in a museum that's so unique? Is that tough?

**Janelle:** For me I think the hardest part is when I'm giving a tour and I have to make sure I don't say anything that's classified. A lot of our artifacts, just because they're declassified doesn't mean everything a part of that mission has been declassified. We protect our successes like no other, right, because we want to keep doing them. Um, and that's going to keep the country safer for national security reasons. It's also going to help with saving money, right. If we develop something and we can keep using it for 20 years because it's so successful you want to keep that kind of under wraps, and so it's hard in the museum because so much of the artifacts that we have are still classified. And someday, you know, it's interesting to look at two years from now, five years from now, 10 years from now. What are going to be the success stories that

we can finally tell the American public about, and, that they can learn more about how the work of this organization via the artifacts really has such a positive impact on national security and safety of our country.

**Rob:** We have a phrase around here. We share what we can and we protect what we must. This is an unclassified museum about a very secretive organization and for good reasons. People are at risk if the wrong information gets out and operations can even be imperiled. We have to be extremely careful, and that is why everything is vetted through various equity holders. That, by the way, is an incredible relationship that was forged in the fire of making sure over 600 artifacts and their labels would be approved in time for the opening of this museum.

So we're always working very hard to make sure that even though this information is going to be available to the public that it won't, um affect our sources or methods so that our officers can still do the job they need to do and make sure they're safe in doing it.

**Walter:** So those of us who have seen the old version of the museum and the newly modernized one, um, have seen how different the two are and how, how striking the upgrade was. Can you elaborate a little bit, um, on why we pursued this upgrade?

**Rob:** Well, I just had a tour today, and the people on the tour said it was the best museum they've ever seen.

**Danielle:** Nice, there ya go.

**Rob:** So that's a good reason for an upgrade.

**Dee:** Absolutely.

**Rob:** I like feedback like that. But the first gallery for CIA museum opened in time for the 50th anniversary of CIA, in our hallway that we have the museum in now. Uh, three galleries followed, with the last one installed in 2007. At that point, we had a gallery on CIA's role in Afghanistan after 9/11. That original gallery from the Agency's 50th showing artifacts related to Soviet and East German espionage, uh, a gallery on analysis, and the last one focused on our Cold War spy gear created by our scientific wizards at the Directorate for Science and Technology. While each of these galleries was fascinating, they showed a stovepiped view of the Agency. Today, CIA is defined by mission centers that bring together all five directorates of the, of the Agency in order to get the mission done. For that reason we needed an upgrade, and we centered the museum around the five core mission threads: partnerships, covert action, clandestine collection, analysis, and counterintelligence. As you go through the new museum, we let you know what section or mission is related to specific mission threads. It's a unifying way to look at the museum and the Agency itself.

**Janelle:** And then I think, as far as new exhibits - why we chose the artifacts we did, um, I think a lot of it had to do with classification, to be quite honest. There are so many cool things that we have in our collection that are years—you know 25, 50 years away from being out on display. So we really had to take a look at what's in our collection that we actually can talk about, and what stories do we want to tell and we wanted, as we've mentioned, we wanted to make sure that we weren't just telling our successes that we were leaning into our failures as well. Missions like ARGO. Everybody's seen the movie, but if it hadn't been declassified, we wouldn't have been able to put out for the first time ever all of these new artifacts related to the ARGO mission - we've got the business cards from Studio Six that we set up. We have this amazing script and the concept art that went along with it and the art was done by Jack Kirby of the Marvel Universe. Those wouldn't be on display had the mission not been declassified. We also wanted to make sure that the

artifacts just weren't something cool, right, that the stories behind them really talked about the mission and the people. Our greatest asset at the CIA is our people.

**Dee:** So I was going to say, though, that even though you don't want to just choose something because it's cool, I would kind of buffer back and say, actually everything in there is cool, so you didn't even need to take that into consideration, so.

**Janelle:** That's probably true.

**Dee:** Right? I mean, at the end of the day, right, they are all cool.

**Rob:** There's some pretty cool stuff in there, that's for sure.

**Dee:** I have heard a rumor that people just randomly show up at the front gates here at Langley on a weekend just hoping to get into the museum to take a tour. Can you confirm, deny?

**Janelle:** For once, we can confirm.

**Rob:** Definitely.

**Janelle:** So we are definitely not open to the public.

**Walter:** But folks can go online to see many of the artifacts and exhibits, I believe.

**Janelle:** 100%. We have a good majority of our collection from the old museum is online currently, and we're working on updating it to get more of the artifacts out. And there's also things like The Debrief, which is a video series that is housed on CIA YouTube and CIA Facebook page where we dive deep into 2 to 3 minutes or less videos about an artifact - why it was made, how it was used, so you can get a much better understanding of sort of the tide of the mission of our artifacts via that show. We do find ways of getting the exhibit out to the public since you cannot enter our building.

**Dee:** Actually, in addition to The Debrief: Behind the Artifact, I believe you guys are doing kind of behind the museum kind of mini tours. If you want to tell us a little bit about those.

**Janelle:** With the new museum, we wanted to give people an opportunity to see the whole museum, as opposed to just getting a little look at the artifacts. And so, with the Behind the Museum Debrief series, you have the opportunity to take a really close look at some of our ceilings, which are fantastic, and I hope to go in more detail about them. And then, you know we've got Behind the Museum Debrief episode that will give you a look at some of the special exhibits on some of the people who really made a mark here at CIA and left an impact, a positive impact on our future. And then there's also going to be some behind the scenes sort of mini tours of some of our more detailed missions that a Debrief episode that is focused on one artifact wouldn't be able to connect everything together.

**Dee:** Both of you. Do you have a particular favorite artifact or exhibit from the museum?

**Rob:** So actually, one of my favorite missions is Project AZORIAN - the raising of a Soviet submarine from the bottom of the ocean. And one of our newest declassified artifacts is the model of that actual submarine at the bottom of the ocean, basically, our target. And it is very detailed. It gives, it helps the preparation for that entire mission. Uh, really incredibly detailed and haunting. We were just able to get it declassified this past year, um and like I said, it's used to help prepare one of the CIA's most, um, amazing

operations ever. So raising a submarine from the bottom of the ocean is actually listed as one of the top five engineering feats of the 20th century. It had an incredible cover story. Howard Hughes, the eccentric billionaire, would build this huge ship called the Glomar Explorer. Uh, it would sail to the Pacific Ocean, mine the ocean floor for manganese nodules, and we know it was such a great cover story because when he announced this, all of a sudden there's a boom in deep sea mining, so we know the cover story is working well. But we need that cover story because you have to put into place all these sort of scientific and research and development into raising this submarine because no one had ever done this before. Um, this is totally new territory for a heavy lift operation. And although this operation might only be considered a partial success due to the fact that as the submarine was being lifted up by the Glomar Explorer, two of the capture vehicle arms, uh, broke and a piece of the submarine fell back to the bottom of the ocean. We were still able to get a piece of the submarine and get a lot of information, most of which is still classified to this day.

And it's got the best epilogue because even though the story leaked to the press, you know, that that led to a lot of people filing Freedom of Information Acts. Journalists, they wanted to know more information, and FOIA had just become law the past year. So CIA needs to thread the needle between upholding the law, FOIA, and giving information, and the other is national security, making sure we keep our secret safe. So I know you've heard this phrase before, but this is the first time it's used in the English language. This is where it comes from. The CIA Public Affairs says we can neither confirm nor deny the story. And even if we could, this story is classified, and we couldn't tell you anyway. This is known as the Glomar response. Glomar was the name of the ship. The Glomar, the Hughes Glomar Explorer was a gigantic ship that the claw was inside. And so now, whenever there's a FOIA request that would maybe infringe on national security, uh, that's when the Glomar response is used. So it's a great artifact that we have in the collection and an even better story. I'm just hoping James Cameron will make a movie of this. I'm always hoping for a major motion picture.

**Dee:** Can I ask two follow-ons to Glomar?

**Rob:** Sure.

**Dee:** How deep was the submarine?

**Rob:** Oh, it was basically what, like 12 Empire State buildings down below the surface of the ocean.

**Dee:** Right. That is very intense.

**Walter:** Mind-bending.

**Dee:** Really.

**Rob:** Um, and basically it was going all the way down. You imagine all of that. And imagine if you're at the top of the Empire State Building, 12 times up, and then you're lowering a cable and basically going to pick up a car with filled with gold. Imagine. That's basically what they did.

**Dee:** Um, my follow-on question. What is a manganese nodule?

**Rob:** So that is a great question.

**Dee:** Ok, I thought so myself.

**Rob:** Now, There are these, um, basically rocks rock formations formed over thousands of years. And so, um, luckily, it fit into the cover story perfectly because they were down so low and, you know, formed over thousands of years that people immediately thought oh, well, maybe there could be something to this.

**Dee:** They must be worth something.

**Walter:** That in itself sounds interesting.

**Rob:** Yeah.

**Dee:** How about, you, Janelle?

**Janelle:** Obviously we have some of the coolest artifacts that exist in the world. Personal opinion that I think others might share. But for me one of my favorite parts of the new museum is the ceiling. I don't think you'll find a ceiling like ours at any other museum. Um, we have multiple sections that are in code that we hope the public will break for us, at some point. There's Morse Code. There's Tap Code, Domino, Cipher, and Binary. Um, all of the different ceilings relate back to that exhibit topic. So the Domino Code is in Vietnam because there was the Domino Theory. We have areas of the museum that are in foreign language because that's a skill that is highly, highly regarded here at the Agency. We need people who can translate and watch foreign broadcasts and work with our officers overseas. So I really, really love the ceiling. I think it's very powerful how it ties everything together. And it's fun, right? I mean, only at the CIA would we make codes that we want people to actually try to break.

But then I love any artifact that is related to a specific person, because I really think that, like I said before, it's really the people here at the CIA - it's their stories that are the most impactful. And so whether it's Gary Schroen's knife. Gary Schroen was the leader of the Jawbreaker Team. He took our first team into Afghanistan 15 days after 9/11. This is a man who was in the retirement program here at CIA, so he was out the door. And when 9/11 happened the head of the counterterrorism center called him and said, you know, we need you. Will you do this? And of course, he said yes. And so I think having an artifact that belong to Gary Schroen is very inspiring for our current officers and future officers because it really shows how that sense of duty to country doesn't just stop at 60 or 65.

Um, we have a lot of officers that were on those teams that still are with us today. And then I think some of my favorite artifacts relate back to people who made the ultimate sacrifice here at CIA, that are represented with stars on our wall. We have artifacts that belong to Mike Spann, who was the first officer or the first American really killed in Afghanistan after 9/11. We also have artifacts that are related to Barbara Robbins, who was the youngest to this day, the youngest CIA officer ever killed while on a mission. She was killed in an embassy bombing in Saigon. So having those artifacts that are related to them, I think, really show our officers and the public what it truly means to make that ultimate sacrifice and are very inspiring so that our current officers know when they're coming into this building, right, they're not just doing their best work for the American people. They're doing it to honor those people who sacrifice their lives for national security purposes. So I really like artifacts that have some connection to a specific person, especially when we can talk about those people. I think that it really ties the idea of this Agency as a family. We take care of each other, but we also try to take care of you know, the world, and our country as best we can.

**Walter:** Actually this might be a great time to ask your team oversees not just the museum but also a range of art here at the Agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia. And so, would you be willing to speak to us a little bit about how we honor on our history throughout headquarters in other ways?

**Rob:** We recently installed a statue of Harriet Tubman to highlight Civil War intelligence alongside a statue of Nathan Hale, who represents Revolutionary War intelligence just outside headquarters. As you enter and you'll see them, I kind of think of them as sentries to us as we enter into modern intelligence. It's great to talk about the various missions and exploits of Harriet Tubman and how that relates to our officers today. After all, you're talking about a woman who would sneak into hostile territory and exfiltrate enslaved people to freedom. In the Civil War, she served as a liaison, transmitting information between newly freed slaves and union commanders to help in the war effort. She exemplifies how we need a diverse cadre of officers to do our mission here at CIA.

Also the museum's intelligence art gallery highlights CIA missions that sometimes we might not have an artifact for. I, I really love one of our newest. It's called "Handling the Storm." You see a man walking his dog in the middle of a blizzard, and he looks over his shoulder to see two far away figures walking towards him. He is a foreign intelligence officer who has given us great information over the years. But due to concerns of probable exposure, two CIA officers are coming to get him and exfiltrate him out of the country that day. It highlights the dangers of our mission and what lengths we will go to protect our sources. It's painted by Spencer Lee, a wonderful artist who really captures the feeling of dread and tension in what would otherwise be seen as an idyllic morning walk through a snowstorm. So those are just some of the different ways that we use art throughout headquarters to talk about our mission, to talk about what CIA does, and really, um, is sort of a full force multiplier for the museum so that sometimes, like I said, we might not have an artifact for these moments of CIA history, but through art, we can tell that whole story.

**Walter:** We could probably sit here and talk all day about the museum. I feel like any one artifact or section of the museum could be its own episode.

**Dee:** Kind of like this podcast, as we're kind of lifting the curtain, they're slowly opening that door.

**Walter:** Wow. We should have you guys back.

**Rob:** Stay tuned, right?

**Walter:** So would you guys be open to coming back for a future episode or episodes of The Langley Files?

**Janelle:** I would love to talk about the women of, like, the OSS and women of CIA because I think that some of their stories are fascinating.

**Dee:** She's already giving us content. Love it. Noted.

**Walter:** Oh fantastic.

**Rob:** The Directorate of Science and Technology is sort of my favorite bailiwick because you know, everyone in the movies, they all see what the Directorate of Operations does, and it's a little unrealistic. But, um, what the movies don't take into account is what our people at the Directorate of Science and Technology are doing. It's just mind blowing. A lot of the artifacts that we have on display you know, because they're unclassified, we have to go back to the sixties and seventies in order to show what they are. And when you look at these artifacts you go, you have to think, well, what are we doing today? And so, yeah, it's pretty amazing.

**Walter:** Thank you both so much for coming to The Langley Files today.

**Janelle:** Thank you for having us.



**Rob:** It was a pleasure.

**Walter:** Well, it's one thing to talk about continuous learning, and studying the past to improve in the future, and remembering and incorporating lessons learned.

**Dee:** But it's another thing altogether to actually build an immersive museum like this one to allow employees to actually do that during their work days.

**Walter:** But actually, yeah. And it actually is like walking through 75 years of CIA history.

**Dee:** Completely. And as Rob and Janelle both said, if you want to learn more about the story behind the artifacts, and behind this very elusive museum, we really encourage you to go over to our YouTube channel and check out our Debrief series that talks a little bit about these pieces and our history.

**Walter:** Speaking of history, I think it's time we circled back with an answer to the trivia question that CIA's Chief Historian gave us last time.

**Dee:** Indeed. So last time, CIA's Chief Historian, David Robarge, asked us who CIA's longest serving—and shortest serving—directors were.

**Walter:** We... started to look it up ourselves and ended up just calling David Robarge...

**Dee:** So I know that's the easy way out, but he was a good sport about it. And as David explained to us the longest serving director was the famous Allen Dulles, who listeners might remember from our airport trivia question. He served 8 years, 9 months, and 3 days...

**Walter:** And the shortest serving director was Sidney Souers. While Souers clocked in at just 4 months and 18 days, he was also America's very first Director of Central Intelligence in 1946. And that's the twist because keen listeners of The Langley Files will know that CIA was founded in 1947, but the title of Director of Central Intelligence actually preceded CIA, and Souers was head of the Central Intelligence Group, or CIG, which was another of CIA's precursor organizations.

**Dee:** So, thanks again to our Chief Historian for the question, and for fielding our phone call. And Walter that means it's trivia time again. You know we've talked a lot about it being CIA's 75th anniversary, but there's another significant anniversary that's important to the Agency.

**Walter:** That's right, there is. CIA's World Factbook—that resource well-known to students and teachers across the country, and indeed across the world—turns 60 this year. The World Factbook is one of my favorite tools. I remember it fondly as a resource from when I was a student, not only has key information on countries across the world, but it also provides travel tips, wildlife information, and a range of other fascinating facts.

**Dee:** And in honor of the World Factbook, we're going to switch it up a bit. Usually we get our trivia from CIA's history, but our friends over at World Factbook were nice enough to provide us with a question.

**Walter:** Let's give it a shot.

**Dee:** So today's trivia question takes us to Europe. This capital city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with some 320 monuments within just over 0.2 square miles, making it one of the most concentrated historic areas in the world. And all of this resides in what is also the smallest capital city in the European Union. The question is – what city is it?

**Walter:** Thanks again to our friends at the CIA World Factbook, and we'll have that answer next time, here on The Langley Files.

**Dee:** Until then, that's it for this episode – and from all of us here at Langley – we'll be seeing you.

(music begins)

**Dee:** So, do you think we should we go take a walk through the museum?

**Walter:** Let's do it. I have to tell you though, by the way, that place gets really spooky at night.

**Dee:** Was that a spy pun?

**Walter:** From me?

(music ends)