

# FOR KEVIN, A WAY OF LIFE, AND DEATH

By Philip Taubman, Special To the New York Times

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In the end, they covered Kevin P. Mulcahy's coffin with an American flag. One of his relatives said it was the right thing to do.

They hadn't always thought of him that way, the men and women of the Central Intelligence Agency who came to mourn him at a wake last week after his body was found outside a motel cabin in Virginia's rolling Shenandoah Valley. Even the Mulcahy clan, led by Donald V. Mulcahy, a 30-year veteran of the C.I.A., had questioned the wisdom of Kevin's efforts to expose the activities of former intelligence agents in Libya.

It went against the code of the C.I.A. to turn in former agents, to make trouble for the organization. Kevin himself had worked there, as had his brothers and sisters, some of whom still do. Growing up in the shadow of the C.I.A., the Mulcahy children went to work for the agency as naturally, even inevitably, as the sons of steel workers in Pittsburgh once went to work in the mills and the sons of auto workers in Detroit once grew up to take jobs on the assembly line.

When Kevin left the agency in 1968 and later went to work with Edwin P. Wilson and Frank E. Terpil, two former C.I.A. agents who were selling their expertise and American military hardware to hostile foreign governments, the family was bewildered. What perplexed them most, Kevin said once, was that he had abandoned the family profession. **Aware of Father's Views**

In 1976, when Kevin, troubled by the conduct of his associates, notified the C.I.A. that Mr. Wilson and Mr. Terpil were helping Libya establish a training camp for terrorists, both the intelligence agency and his father questioned his credibility and intent.

It was a blood schism, one still recalled vividly by intelligence officials who heard Donald Mulcahy say that Kevin was drinking and couldn't be trusted. Kevin was aware of his father's views, and said years later that the wounds would never heal.

But Kevin seemed to find in the pursuit of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Terpil the kind of personal crusade that his father's generation found by serving in the C.I.A.

With an intensity and determination that his friends feared was self-destructive, Kevin pushed prosecutors, prodded the press and conducted a one-man investigation of the case that was often months ahead of the Federal authorities.

Fearing retaliation, he disappeared underground for long periods, moving restlessly from place to place, adopting different identities and disguises. His marriage broke up.

But he kept returning to the case, impelled by some inner compulsion that he seemed unable or unwilling to tame. "Kevin needed to be at the center of things, he wanted to be the person everyone had to go to for information," said a Federal investigator who knew him well.

### Disarming Charm

Nearly everyone who dealt with Kevin found him maddeningly difficult. Few men have played so many parts in a major criminal case. At various times, not always distinct, Kevin acted as informant, witness, private gumshoe, news source and pest. He played all the roles with a charm that was disarming and a cyclonic energy that was exhausting just to observe. He considered six cups of coffee and a pack of cigarettes a nutritious breakfast.

His enthusiasm often exceeded his judgment. He boasted how, in 1976, when he bolted from Mr. Wilson, he returned one night to the office where they worked, and, dressed as a janitor, jammed many of the corporation's financial records into an oversized garbage can to take home.

He described how he had secretly tape recorded meetings with Government officials by concealing a recording device in a hollowed out section of his wooden leg. He loved to report that his romantic liaisons with secretaries in key Government agencies produced an abundance of important information.

Clandestine night meetings were routine. "Meet me!" he would demand over the phone, and then provide the name of some restaurant, usually in the Virginia suburbs, where he would survey the faces at surrounding tables before commencing a conversation. Master at Manipulation

To Federal prosecutors, Kevin always seemed a step away from obstruction of justice, though they freely acknowledged that without his help, particularly in the early phases of the case, the investigation of Mr. Terpil and Mr. Wilson would have collapsed. He served as a key witness for the Federal grand jury that indicted the two men in 1980 on charges of illegally shipping explosives to Libya, conspiracy to commit murder and other criminal activity.

Like a hunter stalking quarry in familiar woods, Kevin possessed an uncanny instinct for maneuvering through the corridors of Washington. He played the press against the prosecutors, one newspaper against another. He pitted Federal agencies against each other. He was a master at manipulation. Though he was frequently forgiven because his ultimate goal seemed honorable, the practice cost him many friendships.

He apparently played the game up to the end. When Kevin checked into a small, rural motel in the Virginia mountains 10 days ago, he told the manager that he was a reporter working on a story about migrant workers.

Exactly why Kevin, who was 40 years old, stuffed his belongings and papers in five suitcases and drove to the Shenandoah Valley area is unknown. His friends suggested that personal and financial problems had depressed him. They said he was especially distressed that his role in the Wilson case had diminished in recent months with the emergence of new witnesses and evidence. **Talk of Killing Himself**

Kevin had resumed drinking, they reported, after having stayed away from alcohol since completing a rehabilitation program several years ago, and had talked about killing himself two weeks ago.

He seemed to sense that with the capture of Mr. Wilson earlier this year, the filing of additional charges after the arrest, and the prospect that the first of several trials would soon begin, his crusade had run its course.

Last Monday morning, another guest at the motel found Kevin's body crumpled against the door to a cabin. After several days of investigation and medical tests, the Federal authorities said there was no evidence of violence and appeared satisfied that Kevin, who had suffered from pneumonia and emphysema, had died of natural causes.

In the end, the men and women of the C.I.A. seemed to understand what he had done and they came to the wake to pay their respects. Now graying and retired, the former colleagues of Donald Mulcahy milled about Murphy's Funeral Home in Falls Church, Va., not far from C.I.A. headquarters.

"I hear you retired," one said to another. "Yeah, went into real estate. Jim here, he retired and then went back, didn't you, Jim?" "They called me back. Said they needed good people in operations." Mr. Mulcahy thanked them for coming and remembering Kevin. One by one, they knelt by the flag-covered coffin and said a prayer.