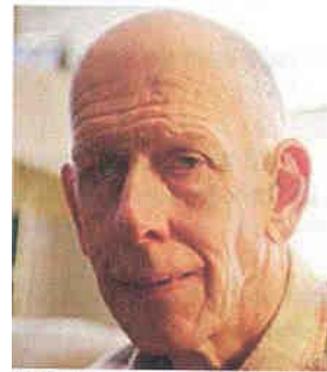


**NEWSDAY Article**  
**February 18, 2002**  
**By: Samuel Bruchey, Staff Writer**

**A Patriot's Cold-War Tale**  
**Long Island man recalls role as a U.S. counterspy**



**Bill Van Zwienen, 71**

His encounter with Markelov could not have come at a worse time. In 1969, Van Zwienen had returned from Seattle, where he gave up a promising engineering job with Boeing to salvage a fractured marriage. Four months prior, he had enthusiastically accepted Boeing's offer to develop wing flaps for the 747 aircraft, believing his wife, Gwendolyn, and their four young children would join him.

All that arrived, however, were letters from Gwendolyn, suggesting that Van Zwienen remain in Seattle alone.

He packed his cream-colored 1960 Mercury Monterey, and headed for Bay Shore, making it back in three days. Gwendolyn, however, was not interested in reconciliation. The two later divorced.

In early 1970, though, Van Zwienen landed a spot in Grumman's Mechanisms Group in Bethpage. One month later, he found a furnished room on Ardmore Road in Bellmore, costing him \$15 a week.

"I think she gave me a break because she knew my situation," Van Zwienen said, referring to his land-lady, Rita Henry.

With most of his evenings free, Van Zwienen stopped by an engineering conference on a Friday night in September. He was not a member of either society sponsoring the event, but was anxious to join some engineering society and was curious about the evening's topic, air-cushioned trains.

Unsatisfied with the fish dinner that night, he and Markelov agreed to meet for a steak a week later at the Dugout Restaurant in Amityville.

When he arrived, Markelov was waiting at a table by the window, facing the entrance.

Markelov, then 30, had extensive engineering training in Moscow, having spent 10 years at the Bauman Higher Technical School. After, he attended a school for translators, then accepted a five-year contract with the United Nations, earning \$18,600 annually. He lived with his wife and young daughter on West End Avenue in Manhattan.

He did not share these details with Van Zwienen.

What he said was that he was conducting scientific research on aerodynamics. Supersonic flight was still a "black art," he said, so wind tunnel data was not reliable. For this reason, he told Van Zwienen, he was hoping to obtain drawings or reports from Grumman.

Of course, Markelov assured, Van Zwienen would be paid for anything he provided.

"I ... did not want to indicate shock," Van Zwienen wrote about the meeting in a diary, "since I felt that scaring him away would kill any chances of preventing him from carrying out his espionage with some [one] else more gullible, greedy or loyal than I was."

When he returned to Grumman on Monday, Van Zwienen called Robert Wilson, a security official, and said he had something to tell him that should not be discussed over the phone.

The two spoke briefly, then met with Harry Volz, Grumman's director of security.

"He seemed so real," said Volz, who is retired and lives in Massapequa. "The guy was so genuine, so open, and so detailed that it convinced both of us right away."

The matter was to be kept quiet, Volz decided, with only Grumman president Lew Evans, the FBI and the U.S. Navy

involved. Federal officials declined to comment.

After all, Volz explained, the F-14 was Grumman's gem. It was to revolutionize air combat, designed to have wings that could change angles during flight, a 200-mile radar, the ability to track 24 enemy aircraft simultaneously, and the ability to fire missiles six at a time.

In January 1969, Grumman signed a contract with the Navy to build more than 700 F-14s, at a price of \$12.5 million each.

All drawings, test results and reports on the aircraft were kept with individual engineering teams, Volz said. But only document coordinators were allowed to access the files.

Van Zwienen, who had no special security clearance, could not have easily obtained classified documents. Even so, he was instructed by officials not to explain the company's security measures to Markelov.

He was only to pass along materials - mostly unclassified reports or press releases - cleared by the FBI and the Navy. And, keep the Russian convinced that he was acting alone.

In 1971, as the two met in such places as The Seascape Restaurant in Islip, Pietro's in Freeport and the Sunset Inn in Sayville, their relationship became more structured, businesslike. On different occasions, Markelov gave Van Zwienen payments of \$50, \$400 and another \$50 as a Christmas gift. Van Zwienen turned each payment over to federal agents.

Markelov established a protocol in the event that he had to send a replacement. The proxy would ask Van Zwienen if he wanted to buy a 1930 Ford, to which Van Zwienen would respond "of course, I would. After all, I was born in 1930." As a double check, the man would extend one-half of a dollar bill, which Van Zwienen would match with the other half.

Markelov also gave Van Zwienen a copy machine, a 35-mm camera to photograph classified material and instructions on how to deliver the film.

He was to store the rolls of film in a Band-Aid tin, then encase the tin in liquid concrete. When the substance dried, Markelov told Van Zwienen, it would look just like a white brick. Van Zwienen was to leave it on the west side of the Tappan Zee Bridge, then send Markelov a signal on a special two-way radio, so he could pick it up.

That plan never materialized, though, because the meeting in which it was discussed - in Van Zwienen's car, parked in front of the Wah Lum Chinese Restaurant in Patchogue on Feb. 14, 1972 - was to be their last.

Throughout most of their meetings, Van Zwienen did not know that FBI agents were watching. This time, however, he did.

On that overcast afternoon, Van Zwienen handed Markelov what he had long been pressing for, several pages of a "marked" document.

As Markelov left the car, Van Zwienen flicked the interior light, a signal to FBI agents nearby. As they pulled up in several cars, his last memory is of watching Markelov throw the documents into the air.

"They put him in the car and drove away," he wrote in his diary. "I did not feel like watching Val's actual apprehension but turned away as I sat in my car."

Three days later, federal agents whisked Van Zwienen through the back entrance of a federal courthouse in Brooklyn, up a freight elevator and into a courtroom to testify before a grand jury.

Markelov was indicted on two counts of espionage and ordered held on \$500,000 bail. Without explanation, however, that figure was reduced to \$100,000. Then, in a court hearing ordered by the Department of Justice that was not listed on the day's court calendar, the charges were dropped.

A few hours later, President Richard Nixon boarded a plane for Moscow to participate in a summit on U.S.-Soviet relations. Without fanfare, Markelov returned to Russia.

U.S. Justice Department officials declined comment on why Markelov was released.

Van Zwienen remained at Grumman until 1975, then worked at Brookhaven National Laboratory until his retirement in 1994. He bought back his Bay Shore home from his ex-wife, and married YanPing Xu, a woman he met at a computer-drafting class at Briarcliff College in Bethpage.

For years, Van Zwienen dutifully collected newspaper articles mentioning Markelov or other incidents of espionage.

"It was a certain friendship. Do I know where he is? No, but I wish I did," he said.

Russian officials told Newsday they did not know where Markelov is today, or whether he is alive.

"It just broke up so quickly," Van Zwienen said. "It went a year and a half and that was the end of it."

Cataract operations last year have made reading difficult for Van Zwienen. So articles were squirreled away and forgotten. In a way, his own memory of the affair is like that. Without recognition, it was as if it happened to someone else or never happened at all.

His final diary entry reads: "The reason for all the precautions in getting me upstairs into the court building that morning ... was to avoid newspaper reporters who may have known the grand jury meeting and hence would be trying to find out the identity of the FBI informer (me).

"Evidently they were not successful."

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Letter to William Henry Van Zwienen, dated September 9, 1972, from L. Patrick Gray, III Acting Director of the FBI, after the Long Islander helped catch a Russian spy.

February 18, 2002



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535

September 20, 1972

Mr. William Henry Van Zwielen  
834 Ardmore Place  
Bellmore, New York 11711

Dear Mr. Van Zwielen:

I wish to take this opportunity to express my personal appreciation for the assistance rendered by you in a matter of great importance to this Bureau.

It is only through the selfless efforts of people such as yourself that we in the Federal Bureau of Investigation are able to discharge successfully the numerous responsibilities under our jurisdiction.

I am grateful for your efforts in our behalf.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L. Patrick Gray, III".

L. Patrick Gray, III  
Acting Director

Bill Van Zwiene, 71, of Bay Shore, worked for Grumman Aircraft as an engineer, and was approached by a Russian spy seeking details of the F-14 fighter airplane. Zwiene conferred with the FBI and helped thwart the Russian plot. The Seascape Restaurant in Islip was one of the places where he met with the Russian.  
(Newsday/ Dick Kraus)

February 18, 2002



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Items collected by William Henry Van Zwiene from his meetings with Valery Markelov, a Russian spy who approached him for information about U.S. defense aircraft designs.  
(Newsday/ Dick Kraus)

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