

When Lt. Commander Bobby Thompson surfaced in Tampa in 1998, it was as if he had fallen from the sky, providing no hint of his past life. Eleven years later, investigative reporter Jeff Testerman visited the rundown duplex Thompson used as his home and the epicenter of his sixty-thousand-member charity, the US Navy Veterans Association. But something was amiss. Thompson's charity's addresses were just maildrops, his members nonexistent, and his past a black hole. The USNVA, it turned out, was a phony charity where Thompson used pricey telemarketers, savvy lawyers, and political allies to swindle tens of millions from well-meaning donors.

After Testerman's story revealed that the nonprofit was a sham, the Commander went on the run. US Marshals took up the hunt in 2011 and found themselves searching for an unnamed identity thief who they likened to a real-life Jason Bourne. When finally captured in 2012, Thompson was carrying multiple IDs and a key to a locker that held nearly \$1 million in cash. But, who was he?

Eventually, investigators discovered he was John Donald Cody, a Harvard Law School graduate and former US Army intelligence officer who had been wanted since the 1980s. After reporting on the story for CNBC's *American Greed* in 2014, Daniel M. Freed dug into Cody's backstory—uncovering new information about his intelligence background and the evolution of his con.

JEFF TESTERMAN is an investigative reporter now retired from the *St. Petersburg Times*, where he was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize five times. The newspaper's investigation exposing the US Navy Veterans charity scheme earned the Investigative Reporters and Editors top award for public service.

DANIEL M. FREED is a senior producer for CNBC's white-collar crime documentary series *American Greed*. His television and print work has been aired or published by PBS, Current TV, Amazon Prime Video, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

MARC VIETOR, an AudioFile Earphones Award-winning narrator, is an actor working with the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Royal Shakespeare Company, the Old Globe, and many others. His film and television credits include *Asylum Seekers* and *Law & Order*. He is a graduate of Yale University and the Juilliard School.

READ BY MARC VIETOR

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