

## OBITUARIES

# Clarence M. Kelley Dies at 85; Headed FBI in 1970s

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Clarence M. Kelley, 85, the burly, bespectacled former Kansas City, Mo., police chief who became head of the FBI at a time of turmoil in 1973 and served until 1977, died yesterday at his home in Kansas City.

His wife, Shirley, told the Associated Press that Mr. Kelley had emphysema and had had minor strokes.

Mr. Kelley was hailed as a "cop's cop" when named by President Nixon in 1973 to direct the nation's foremost national law enforcement agency. The job came open after disclosures that documents linked to the Watergate scandal had been destroyed by L. Patrick Gray III. Gray had been acting FBI director for about a year, after the 1972 death of longtime director J. Edgar Hoover. Gray resigned in late April 1973.

Out of about 30 candidates, Mr. Kelley, a 21-year FBI veteran with a reputation for having brought reform and efficiency to the once scandal-plagued Kansas City police, was named director June 7, 1973. He assumed the post in July.

"I have never bowed to political pressure, and I don't mean to start now," Mr. Kelley told the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee during confirmation hearings.

Such statements and Mr. Kelley's reputation as a law enforcement professional proved reassuring to those inside and outside the bureau who feared that its integrity was being



1975 FILE PHOTO

CLARENCE M. KELLEY

... appointed by Nixon in 1973

compromised.

At the time of Mr. Kelley's appointment, one agent told a Washington Post reporter that "Kelley's experience in the business, and that's good enough for me."

One of the tasks he saw before him as the first permanent successor to Hoover was modernizing the agency's operations and restoring its reputation, which had been frayed by reports of burglaries and other abuses.

"I don't see any great difficulties," Mr. Kelley told a newspaper reporter early on. "The people of the United States kind of accept motherhood and the FBI."

Eventually, however, his supervision of the FBI was touched by controversy and enmeshed in the politics of the 1976 presidential campaign.

He admitted in 1976, in what was described in a Washington Post account as an "extraordinary statement," that FBI employees had built furniture and made decorations that were installed in his apartment shortly after he took office. He said that some window valances were made without his knowledge and that the furniture, a cabinet, was FBI property that he planned to return after leaving office. He reimbursed the government about \$335 for labor and materials and said that, if warranted, he would make restitution for other gifts that had become an issue.

President Gerald R. Ford announced that he would retain Mr. Kelley, but during the presidential campaign, Ford's Democratic challenger, Jimmy Carter, said he believed Mr. Kelley should be fired.

In Judiciary Committee hearings on his nomination, Griffin Bell, Carter's choice as attorney general, told senators that he would remove the FBI director. Mr. Kelley retired Feb. 15, 1978.

He was widely regarded as playing a major part in restoring stability to his agency during a difficult period.

"Clarence Kelley represented the best of the FBI," the bureau's director, Louis J. Freeh, said yesterday in a statement. "Because of director Kelley, the FBI is a better organization today."

Freeh said that during Mr. Kelley's tenure, the FBI sought to recruit more women and minorities. He also cited Mr. Kelley for developing a policy that focused the FBI's efforts on three priorities, counterintelligence, organized crime and white-collar crime.

"I think Clarence Kelley has done a very good job," Ford's attorney general, Edward H. Levi, a legal scholar renowned for objectivity and nonpartisan impartiality, said in 1976.

Mr. Kelley was born in Kansas City, son of a utility company engineer, and obtained a bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas in 1936. Shortly after graduating from the old Kansas City Law School, he joined the FBI.

Advancing through the ranks, he handled criminal cases and administrative operations. After Navy service in World War II, he returned to the FBI, becoming field supervisor in Kansas City. He later served in Houston, Seattle and San Francisco, as assistant special agent in charge.

Afterward he was transferred to the training and inspection division

at FBI headquarters and named an inspector. He headed FBI offices in Birmingham and Memphis before resigning in 1961 and becoming police chief in Kansas City.

After leaving Washington, he presided over a private firm that investigated white-collar crimes. He retired about seven years ago.

His first wife, Ruby D. Kelley, died in 1975. They had two children, Mary Kelley Dobbins and Kent Clarence Kelley, both of Kansas City; and three grandchildren.

He married Shirley Dyckes Kelley, 63, in 1976.