

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Hoover, Aides Ignored Strict Rules

Post 11/7/75
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and Les Whitten

The FBI has always required its agents to toe the line. The standards are strict, the rules rigid. Agents have been disciplined for accepting a football ticket or a free meal.

Yet top FBI officials haven't always obeyed the regulations they have imposed on the rank-and-file.

The late J. Edgar Hoover accepted race-track vacations from Texas tycoon Clint Murchison and used FBI agents to write books for him. His successor, L. Patrick Gray III, took to flying about the country in Air Force planes and staying at fancy hotels.

Now we have learned that the present FBI director, Clarence M. Kelley, was wined, dined and hosted for a weekend at New York City's posh Waldorf Astoria by the insurance company that underwrites health insurance for FBI employees.

Not only Kelley but two of his deputies, Thomas Jenkins and Thomas Feeney, got the full treatment from the Prudential Insurance Co. Their wives also were guests of the company.

Aside from the Waldorf incident, Kelley has kept himself clean. An associate said this was the only time a

question of a conflict of interest had ever been raised about Kelley.

Although FBI employees aren't supposed to accept such expensive favors from firms with which they do business, the FBI insurance program theoretically is independent of the FBI. The agents run it, however, with Feeney as president and Jenkins a board member.

In explaining the Kelley junket, the FBI said: "The primary purpose of the trip was for Prudential executives...to meet with Mr. Kelley and key members of the (health insurance program). During this meeting, items of mutual interest...were discussed."

The FBI said Prudential didn't pay travel expenses for the FBI party, only hotel and related bills. Kelley's transportation costs were picked up by the FBI because he consulted with his New York office head during the visit.

Far more flagrant were the abuses of that stern old disciplinarian, Hoover and his sidekick, Clyde Tolson. Here are a few examples we have obtained from sworn statements and old-time FBI sources:

—Hoover and Tolson used an FBI inspector, Albert Gunsser, to fill out their tax forms and so metimes to advise them on their oil investments in Texas, Louisiana and Kansas. Gunsser must have been an investment genius, for Tolson left an estate approaching \$750,000, much of it bequeathed to him by Hoover.

—At one time, Tolson was drawing \$4,000 a month from oil investments. After he retired in 1972, recalls former FBI bigwig John Mohr, "people in the oil business would call (Tolson) on the phone and tell him, 'We've got a good one going here, do you want to get in on it, Clyde?' And I guess he would get in on it."

—Despite his wealth, the aged Tolson demanded \$4,500 from the J. Edgar Hoover Foundation for some books Hoover had willed him. When the foundation's director complained bitterly, Tolson retorted: "Pay the \$4,500 or forget it."

—When Tolson's mother was sick, he didn't hire nurses with his own money but assigned a special agent "who spent a great deal of time taking care of Clyde's mother." The agent's wife also helped with the nursing.

—Tolson excluded from his will a nephew he had installed as an FBI agent. The nephew upset Tolson by running off with a woman from a local police department, Mohr alleged. Yet Tolson used an artifice, himself, to stay at the FBI long after his health had failed.

—A bachelor, Tolson dated a model in New York City "a long time ago" and frequented race tracks where he had a "special arrangement," Mohr said.

—Tolson had his erstwhile aide, Mohr, draw up a series of wills and codicils. Mohr wrote himself in for a \$26,000

legacy plus perhaps an equal amount in executor's fees. For a lawyer to write himself into a client's will is a breach of legal ethics. Mohr explained that he was acting for Tolson as a friend, not as his lawyer, and that Tolson specifically ordered him to write himself into the will.

Mohr denied emphatically, meanwhile, that he took the mysterious "Hoover papers" out of the late FBI chief's old house where they reportedly had been stored. All he removed, said Mohr, were "several boxes of spoiled wine," a half-dozen boxes of trash and "15 or 20 jars of honey" which he said were "thrown out."

He also took some other innocent items, he said, including some "loose papers" which Mohr said he turned over to his attorney for safekeeping.

PURINA POSTSCRIPT—In an earlier column, we reported that the Humane Society of the United States found cats used by Purina for its commercials were from a facility where mistreatment of animals occurred.

We can now report that Purina is no longer using the facility and has taken measures to make sure its cats are as well-cared-for as they look on TV. The firm avows that it has "initiated periodical unannounced inspections of all facilities" used for its TV and other ads, a practice that other firms might well follow to insure humane care of TV animals.

(1975, United Feature Syndicate, Inc.)