

Hoover's Letters to Washington Widow

By Jack Anderson

Our FBI-style field investigation of J. Edgar Hoover has uncovered a batch of personal letters, signed "Affectionately" and "With Love," to an attractive Washington widow.

This is one of our discoveries about the FBI's bachelor boss who today celebrates his 76th birthday and, in May, will mark his 47th anniversary at the FBI.

He has become such an awesome figure that Presidents, members of Congress and newsmen alike have hesitated to criticize him. With occasional exceptions, the press has been filled with outpourings of praise for him. We thought it was time, therefore, that someone pried into his private life in the FBI manner.

Hoover is such a stickler for conventional morals that he ordered an exhaustive investigation of an FBI clerk who was accused by an informant of spending a night with his girl friend. The girl was subjected to an FBI grilling, and the clerk was fired for unbecoming conduct.

Hoover himself treats the ladies with 19th century courtliness. The only hint of a romantic interest is found in his personal letters to the late Muriel Geier who, according to local legend, was the inspiration for Muriel cigars. In

her youth, she was a stunning beauty who resembled the girl on the Muriel cigar label.

The cigar people have heard the story that Muriel's father ran the cigar concession at the old Willard Hotel and that a cigar maker on a visit was so captivated by Muriel he named his favorite stogie for her. But the favored legend is that the Muriel cigar got its name from the daughter of a Little Rock, Ark., colonel.

Hoover's Letters

There is no reason to believe that Hoover's relationship with Muriel Geier was anything but platonic. His letters were personal but proper with affectionate endings. When she was preparing for a European tour, he offered to arrange special treatment for her with the U.S. Embassy in Paris.

Later, he wrote that he would send two FBI agents to escort her from New York City's Kennedy Airport to the Waldorf. He hoped to see her in New York, he added. In another letter, he wrote that he was "sorry to hear" about her son's difficulties and offered to be of assistance.

The son, Paul Geier, said Hoover had been a close friend and patient of his foster father, the late Dr. Fred Geier. Young Geier acknowledged that Hoover had written letters to his mother signed

"Affectionately" and "With Love" but insisted this was a routine complimentary close for gentlemen of Hoover's generation. Asked why letters were written only to Muriel even before Dr. Geier's death, Paul Geier explained that his mother had handled all the social correspondence.

Hoover was born in Washington, youngest of three children, into the home of a career civil servant and christened John Edgar. His parents, Dickerson and Annie Hoover, were God-fearing folk who taught him the fundamentalism that still dominates his philosophy.

After his father died, Hoover brought his invalid mother into his home and for years provided her with devoted care. Yet curiously, he contributed scarcely a cent to the care of his sister, Lillian Robinette, who also spent her last years as an invalid. He left all the cost and worry to her son Fred, then a lowly agent on the FBI payroll.

When Fred's wife became pregnant, Fred went into debt to hire a nurse for his mother. An attorney, who loaned him \$2,500, told us Robinette had tried to borrow the money from Hoover but had been turned down.

But Fred, who quit the FBI in 1951 after staying long enough to win his 10-year pin, had no complaints. He told us

that he neither sought nor expected financial help from his Uncle Edgar. For Hoover had carried the full financial burden of his own mother's care.

It cannot be concluded that Hoover is tightfisted. On occasions, he has reached into his own pocket to help out FBI agents in need.

Clyde Tolson

His closest confidant and constant companion has been Clyde Tolson, long the No. 2 man at the FBI. At 70, Tolson unhappily isn't as durable as Hoover and is in failing health. Neighbors say the two men appear to take turns eating dinner at one another's homes.

The Hoover image and the FBI have become so intertwined that the public can no longer easily distinguish between the man and the agency.

But J. Edgar Hoover is, after all, still human. The time has already passed when the nation should have paid Hoover his final measure of praise then, perhaps sadly, replaced him.

When this day arrives, as ultimately it must, Hoover will have to give up his bulletproof Cadillac and his files with the intimate details about so many lives. But he will also leave the FBI with a reputation unmatched by any law enforcement agency in the world.