



AP Wirephoto

HELEN GANDY
Hoover's secretary

'Personal' Hoover Files Destroyed

Washington

J. Edgar Hoover's long-time secretary told Congress yesterday that when the FBI director died in 1972, she systematically destroyed his personal files, "as Mr. Hoover indicated he wanted."

Helen W. Gandy, 78, told members of a House subcommittee that she and another secretary went through all the files in Hoover's inner offices, destroying every one that was marked "personal."

Conflicts — between Gandy, and former acting FBI director L. Patrick Gray III, between former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst and John P. Mohr, once the No. 3 man in the FBI, and others — developed as the subcommittee tried to determine whether some key files were destroyed.

Representative Andrew Maguire (Dem-N.J.), a member of the subcommittee on government information and individual rights, concluded his questioning of Gandy with the comment: "I find your testimony very difficult to believe. I have no further questions."

"It's your privilege," the witness shot back.

Gandy, who served as Hoover's personal secretary from 1919 until his death in May, 1972, was

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regarded inside the FBI as one of Hoover's closest and most powerful aides.

The ex-secretary testified that she destroyed Hoover's files with the approval of Gray.

She said Gray leafed through the personal files before telling her it was "perfectly all right" to destroy them.

Representative Anthony Moffett (Dem-Conn.) told the witness her testimony was contradictory to what Gray had told the subcommittee staff.

Moffett asked if she thought Gray was lying.

"Do I have to answer that?" Gandy asked.

"Your testimony is he (Gray) looked at . . ." Moffett said.

"You heard it . . . and I have no reason to lie," the witness said.

Representative Bella Abzug (Dem-N.Y.), the subcommittee chairman, recalled that the Senate Intelligence Committee had determined that a crucial FBI memo on illegal "black bag" jobs, or break-ins conducted by the bureau, had been labeled "PF" for personal file.

Subsequently, however, the memo was moved to Hoover's "official and confidential" files, which were retained after Hoover's death.

The Senate committee established that Hoover, before his death, was transferring material from his personal file to the official and confidential category, but that he had gotten through only the letter "C".

Abzug listed eight other files that congressional investigators had determined were once in Hoover's "personal file."

They included files on the bombing at the U.S. Capitol, an unsolved case that has been one of the most vexing for the FBI, bureau recording instruments, an agreement between the FBI and Secret Service on presidential protection, and two batches of material on Fred B. Black Jr.

The Justice Department's admission in the Supreme Court of FBI wiretapping against Black touched off a series of such admissions and eventually resulted in a high court crack-down on the process.

Gandy, however, testified that she and an aide found no other FBI material when they went through Hoover's files, completing the job from the letter D through Z.

Referring to the "black bag"

memo that had been marked personal, she said: "I have no knowledge, but I doubt if there was more than the one."

But FBI assistant director William C. Sullivan contradicted Gandy.

He said Hoover's personal files were filled with political and personal information on public figures.

Sullivan said the distinction drawn by Gandy between personal files and official-confidential files "is kind of meaningless because thousands and thousands and thousands of items were official and confidential."

The conflict between Mohr and Kleindienst developed when Kleindienst, acting attorney general when Hoover died, testified that he ordered Hoover's offices locked and secured upon learning of Hoover's death because he "did not want any records left in a situation where no one was responsible."

Mohr, who followed Kleindienst to the witness chair, testified that Kleindienst instructed him only to secure Hoover's office and to write him a memorandum saying he had done so.

Gandy earlier said the files were not kept in Hoover's office, but in nearby rooms.

"I didn't have time to pursue every minutiae of direction," Kleindienst said.

"It's not as though we're asking you what you had for breakfast," Moffett said. Hoover's death was "not minutiae. It was maybe one of the most important things that happened while you were there."

Asked whether he thought Gandy's action violated his order, Kleindienst replied:

"I'll just have to leave that up to you to draw your own conclusions."

Los Angeles Times