

Merry-Go-Round

The FBI's Fading Crime Fighters



— Jack Anderson

THE FBI is run by two fading old crimefighters, J. Edgar Hoover and Clyde Tolson, both bachelors, both in their 70s. Both deserve to retire to a place where the pace and weather are kinder on the bodies of old men whose work is completed.

Tolson is so feeble, in fact, that Hoover had to use a loophole in the law to keep him on the job without taking a physical. Our investigation indicates that Tolson belongs in a nursing home, not at the helm of the FBI.

Edgar and Clyde, as the pair are known irreverently in law enforcement circles, are inseparable companions. They not only quarterback the FBI together; they also lunch together, dine together and spend their leisure together.

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THE 76-YEAR-OLD Edgar has survived the years better than the younger 70-year-old Clyde. We have learned that Tolson has suffered a series of minor strokes and has received delicate aortal surgery.

We not only had access to the medical evidence but, in FBI fashion, we interviewed Tolson's friends, neighbors and associates. Neighbors told how his brisk step has now slowed to a painful shuffle as he climbs into his car to go to work every day.

Associates said his steel-trap mind now sometimes seems vague, and he has occasional speech lapses. At times, his voice

becomes no more than a tremulous rasp.

When Tolson reached the mandatory retirement age of 70 last May, Hoover performed some bureaucratic sleight of hand to keep his friend by his side.

A Presidential waiver to stay on the job, such as Hoover has received was out of the question. This would have required Tolson to take a vigorous physical examination to make sure age hadn't sapped his vitality. He never could have passed.

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SO HOOVER, with the concurrence of Attorney General John Mitchell, simply allowed Tolson to "retire," then to return as a "reemployable annuiant." This is a technical term used to describe a retired specialist whose services are so urgently needed that he is brought back to complete a vital mission.

As a "reemployable annuiant," Tolson is technically retired, and, therefore, needn't submit to a physical. He draws his government pension, and the FBI pays him an additional amount to make up the difference between his pension and full FBI salary.

From FBI agents, both active and retired, we found that Hoover is still widely revered. But the enfeeblement of Tolson has caused a morale problem inside the FBI. Agents question whether he is competent to handle his heavy responsibilities.

More than one former FBI official has quit in despair over ever reaching the top.

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