

New Orleans States-Item
'Untouchable' Legend
J. EDGAR HOOVER DIES

2 May 1972

WASHINGTON (AP) — J. Edgar Hoover, embodiment of the FBI and focus of law enforcement achievement and controversy for a half century, is dead.

The 77-year-old director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation died of natural causes in his home Monday night, the Justice Department announced.

The District of Columbia attributed the death to "hypertensive cardiovascular disease"—an ailment linked to high blood pressure. The coroner, Dr. James L. Luke, said after examining the body that the immediate cause of death might have been a heart attack. He said an autopsy was not indicated.

President Nixon, upon hearing of Hoover's death, called him a "truly remarkable man who served the coun-

try for 48 years under eight presidents with unparalleled devotion to duty and dedication." Nixon spoke emotionally of his "profound sense of personal loss."

Hoover was a virtual legend in the United States, an "untouchable" who

building to house the FBI is under construction.

Even before Hoover's death, there had been continuing speculation about whether the new building would be named for him or perhaps might even house his final resting place.

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died in office despite efforts by critics in recent years to have him retired.

He had shaped the FBI into a massive, powerful federal agency during his career. Across Pennsylvania Avenue from the office where Hoover worked, a massive powerful federal

SPECULATION on a successor to Hoover also began long before his death as political pressure to retire Hoover alternately waxed and waned.

It had seemed almost certain he would retire or be retired if the Democrats beat President Nixon in the No-

vember election. Nixon now will be able to pick a successor. Washington, D.C. police chief Jerry Wilson, a recent Nixon law enforcement favorite, had been prominently mentioned as a possible successor before Hoover's death.

Also among those mentioned: Associate Justice Byron R. White of the Supreme Court and Robert C. Mardian, former assistant attorney general who headed the Justice Department internal security division.

The White House announced last month that Mardian had left the government to join the committee coordinating President Nixon's re-election effort.

The White House declined to discuss who would succeed Hoover. Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren told reporters because "this sad develop-

ment came rather recently," he had no information to relay.

Warren did disclose, however, that President Nixon had telephoned former President Lyndon B. Johnson at his Texas ranch to tell him personally of Hoover's death.

Asked whether Hoover himself had



—AP WIREPHOTO.
J. Edgar Hoover

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given Nixon a recommendation on his successor, Warren said: "I have no information on private talks the President may have had with Mr. Hoover." Hoover's No. 2 man in the bureau was

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Clyde A. Tolson, the associate director. The two were long-time colleagues who spent much time together. Tolson, 71, has been in ill health.

Accolades for Hoover flowed almost immediately from Capitol Hill and other locations of government. Even former Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark, who feuded with Hoover while Hoover's nominal boss, said "I am saddened to hear of his death. He has been a major figure on the American scene for a long time. He loved this country and we shall miss him."

Acting Atty. Gen. Richard Kleindienst issued a one paragraph statement in which he said Hoover's body was found by his maid at approximately 8:30 a.m. today.

"It is with profound personal grief that I announce that J. Edgar Hoover passed away during the night at his residence," Kleindienst said. "His personal physician informed me that his death was due to natural causes."

The jut-jawed FBI head was permitted by presidential order to continue in his \$42,500-a-year government job after reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70.

Hoover, unmarried, dominated the bureau during his lifetime like no man in any other federal agency. Wielding vast power, he was said to lavish on the FBI the pride and possessiveness of a stern and watchful parent.

HE JOINED the bureau as its acting director in 1921 after several years as a \$990-a-year Justice Department law clerk, and became director three years later. Born in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 1, 1895, Hoover received his law degree from George Washington University and lived all his life in the District of Columbia.

He had a fondness for dogs, for his garden and for horseracing, confining himself to two-dollar bets. But nothing transcended his devotion for the FBI.

As much as he loved the bureau, Hoover hated communism. He reduced the Communist Party in the United States to a shell, riddling the organization with agents so that members never were sure who they were talking to.

The bureau grew from a small government investigative arm—founded in 1908 after demands by President Theodore Roosevelt that something be done about political and business frauds—to a massive organization of some 15,000 employees, including 6,700 special agents. When Hoover took command in 1924, the number of agents totaled less than 500.

And the bureau Hoover joined was badly organized. Politics played an important role in its functioning and violations over which the bureau had jurisdiction were few.

Within the government, there were growing reports of corruption and scandal among high officials. Even the Bureau of Investigation was said to be touched.

Atty. Gen. Harlan F. Stone picked Hoover to clean house, and Hoover did so—writing his own ticket.

OVER THE YEARS there have been demands from critics that Hoover step out as FBI chief. Sen. George S. McGovern, D-S.D., in his current campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, has said he would replace Hoover.

Only this week Columnist Jack Anderson told a congressional committee that Hoover prepared dossiers on prominent Americans not accused of crime. Anderson said he had seen copies of FBI reports on sex activities, and said some of these were given to President Lyndon B. Johnson during his term in the White House for bedtime reading.

Hoover groomed no one for his shoes, but he often expressed the wish that the next director come from within the FBI ranks.

During the years of Hoover's reign there never was a known case of scandal inside of the FBI and Hoover's stock remark about his agents was: "They can't be bought."

Hoover's parents were Dickerson Naylor Hoover, a Coast and Geodetic Survey employe, and the former Anna Marie Scheitlin, niece of the first Swiss consul general to the United States.

Most accounts say Hoover's mother ruled the household—and her youngest son John Edgar—with a strict discipline.

AS A YOUNGSTER, Hoover sang in a church choir—he was a boy soprano—and taught Sunday school.

He played baseball, and it was during a game that a ball smashed his nose, giving him the famous tough-as-a-bulldog look.

Hoover attended Washington's Central High School. When he was turned down by the football team—he was too small—he turned his energies to the high school ROTC, and to debating. He scored 12 straight victories arguing "The fallacies of woman suffrage."

Hoover graduated from high school in 1913, and worked at the Library of Congress while going to school nights to obtain his law degree. He authored three books, published in 1938, 1958 and 1962.

When Hoover entered the Justice Department in 1916, John Lord O'Brian, a special assistant to the attorney general, placed him in the department's Alien Enemy Registration Service.

Hoover, who in high school days had been known as "Speed" because he liked to get things done in a hurry, quickly gained a reputation for attention to detail.

At age 26, he was named assistant director of the Bureau of Investigation, the beginning of his long association with what later was to become the FBI.

SCORES OF stories circulated about

Hoover, but many of these incidents possibly were more fancy than fact. It is said he disliked intensely to shake hands with clammy-palmed individuals. And since each new agent met the director at least once during the initial FBI training course at Quantico, Va., some said they were told to pat their hands dry with a handkerchief before meeting him.

Hoover's standards dictating an agent's mode of dress were well known.

One former agent recalled that when he first met Hoover, the director was flanked by then Associate Director Clyde A. Tolson.

"Hoover would check your haircut and Tolson would check your heels," he recalled.

And among FBI agents beards were out, moustaches barely tolerated, and clothing was subdued and conservative.

Hoover also watched his weight, and as a result, an aide said, "you just didn't run across any overweight FBI agents."

The director was awarded, over the years, hundreds of plaques, medals, other awards and tributes. On the occasion of his 40th anniversary as FBI head, he received 114 plaques, scrolls and engraved resolutions in a single day. He had a total of 19 honorary college degrees.

In the face of occasional demands that he retire, Hoover firmly resisted pressure, saying last year he would not retire "as long as I'm healthy."

One recent scrape with public criticism came last year when he disclosed at a congressional hearing an alleged attempt to kidnap presidential adviser Henry Kissinger and an alleged plot to blow up Washington steam-heating tunnels. Hoover's allegations preceded any indictments in the matter.

Eventually the Rev. Philip Berrigan and several others were tried on conspiracy charges. The jury failed to reach agreement on the conspiracy charges but convicted Berrigan and Sister Elizabeth McAllister of transmitting letters from a federal prison.