

# A Time for Sadness

By William Randolph Hearst, Jr.  
 Editor-in-Chief, The Hearst Newspapers

NEW YORK—Even though I have been something of a peripatetic salesman this past week, flying from New York to Los Angeles to San Francisco and home again, it's column time, so I will set down a few comments on two major events that have saddened our country. One was the passing of my great friend, J. Edgar Hoover. The other is the deteriorating military situation in South Vietnam.

News of Edgar Hoover's death reached me on the West Coast just as I was beginning a whirlwind schedule of speaking, visiting our newspapers, attending business meetings and talking over breakfast, lunch and dinner with old friends and associates.

It was a shocker. Only a few days earlier I had sat next to him in New York, where, as was his



W. R. Hearst Jr.

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custom of many years, he was our guest at the annual Banshees Luncheon given by King Features Syndicate for the American Newspaper Publishers Association.

As also was his custom, Edgar wrote me a warm letter of thanks and that letter arrived only hours before his death. When I saw him, he appeared to be in the pink of health, and we talked of his indulging in his single vice—watching and getting an occasional two dollar bet down on the horses.

Few men in the history of this nation have given as selflessly of themselves for as long a period as Edgar Hoover. Although I was just a teenager when he began his fantastic law enforcement career, nothing has happened over the years to diminish my respect for him in any way.

It may be true that as Edgar grew older he also grew more conservative and, therefore, less interested in social causes like civil rights. It also may be true that he was not as diligent in investigating corruption in labor unions or in pursuing organized crime as in some other areas.

But, as President Nixon said in his eulogy, Edgar Hoover became a legend while still a young man and remained a legend until he died. Our President was also correct in describing Edgar as "one of the giants" of our nation's history.

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WHEN HOOVER was interviewed by Nation's Business three months ago, he was asked to list his most important accomplishments at the FBI. I think it worth recalling those accomplishments now.

First of all, Edgar said his most important achievement, back in the 1920s, was cleaning political hacks out of the bureau. As his second greatest accomplishment, he listed establishment in 1924 of the FBI Identification Division, whose fingerprint records are utilized by every law - enforcement official in every community in the United States.

The other accomplishments he pointed to were establishment of the FBI Laboratory and National Academy, capture of the Nazi saboteurs who landed here by submarine in World War II, conviction of Communist leaders after the war, the investigations of the Rosenberg and Col. Rudolf Abel spy cases and convictions of persons who perpetrated the murders of civil rights workers in the 1960s.

That is a pretty impressive record. But it becomes even more astounding when you consider the role played by the FBI, under Hoover's direction, in breaking the Lindbergh kidnap case and in tracking down such gangsters of the 1930s as John Dillinger, "Pretty Boy" Floyd, "Baby Face" Nelson, Ma Barker, and Alvin "Creepy" Karpis.

But Edgar could have achieved nothing had he himself not been a strong disciplinarian, a devoted public servant and a dedicated patriot. It was those traits that made him a hero to more than two generations of young Americans.

The FBI agent, as he emerged under Hoover, was a very different fellow from the old cop on the beat, who had until the 1930s personified the law enforcement officer. Instead of being a homey, hulking guy in a uniform, the FBI agent came on as a young, neatly-dressed, well-educated master of derring-do — an idol for youngsters to emulate.

President Nixon did not exaggerate when he said Edgar had built the FBI into the finest law enforcement agency in the world. Everyone in America owes a great debt to this man, who fully understood that peace cannot be maintained without peace officers to enforce it.

What finer tribute could there be to Edgar than that which President Nixon quoted from the Psalms: "Great peace have they that love Thy law"?

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