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# Clyde Tolson, Former F.B.I. Official, Is Dead at 74

By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

Clyde A. Tolson, former associate director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and, for more than 30 years the closest friend and associate of its director, J. Edgar Hoover, died yesterday at Doctors Hospital in Washington.

A spokesman for the F.B.I. said death resulted from natural causes. Mr. Tolson was 74 years old and lived in recent years in the \$100,000 Georgetown home bequeathed to him by Mr. Hoover, who died on May 2, 1972.

Throughout his long association with Mr. Hoover, Mr. Tolson generally managed to avoid publicity, but many people—among them other officials of the F.B.I.—believed he was the only person privy to the details of Mr. Hoover's activities.

## Given Hoover Flag

Like Mr. Hoover, the tall, broad-shouldered Mr. Tolson was a bachelor. The two men dressed alike in conservative fashion, lunched and dined together almost daily, vacationed together, and enjoyed the race track together.

Typically, Mr. Hoover began each day by picking up Mr. Tolson in his chauffeured, bullet-proof limousine at the latter's home at about 9 A.M., and before Mr. Tolson's health began failing, they frequently strolled together for a few blocks along Constitution Avenue before beginning work.

Mr. Tolson's tenure at the F.B.I., which began in 1928, four years after Mr. Hoover became its director, survived Mr. Hoover's death by only two days. Citing ill health, Mr. Tolson submitted his resignation on May 3, 1972.

On May 3, 1972. The following day, it was accepted by L. Patrick Gray 3d, who had been named acting director by President Richard M. Nixon.

That was the day when Mr.



Associated Press, 1965

Clyde A. Tolson

Tolson, appearing bewildered and enfeebled, had attended funeral services for Mr. Hoover and was given the flag that had covered Mr. Hoover's coffin while he lay in state in the Capitol rotunda. Mr. Gray accepted Mr. Tolson's resignation in a long letter in which he expressed his "deepest regret."

"I had looked forward to working with you, and to having the benefit of your counsel and your vast knowledge of the Bureau," wrote Mr. Gray, who was to resign from the F.B.I. after it was disclosed that he had destroyed papers related to the Watergate scandal.

## Sought Private Practice

"Under your capable leadership," he wrote, "the F.B.I. reached new heights in achievement and in service to the American people, and you can take justifiable pride in this."

On May 22, 1972, when details of Mr. Hoover's will, filed for probate in the Federal District Court in Washington, were made public, it became known that he had left almost his en-

tire estate of \$551,000 to Mr. Tolson.

Clyde Anderson Tolson, whose parents were James William and Joaquin Miller Anderson Tolson, was born on May 22, 1900, near Laredo, Mo. After attending the Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Business College for a year beginning in 1917, he entered Government service as a clerk in the War Department.

Between 1919 and 1928, he served as confidential secretary for three Secretaries of War—Newton D. Baker, John W. Weeks and Dwight F. Davis. At night, he furthered his formal education, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1925 from George Washington University and a Bachelor of Laws degree from the same institution in 1927.

When he joined the F.B.I. in 1928, it was reported, he indicated that he hoped to use the job as a stepping stone toward a private law practice in Cedar Rapids.

But, after serving in F.B.I. field offices in Boston and Washington, he was brought to Washington as chief F.B.I. clerk, and, according to his biographical sketch in Who's Who in America, was named an assistant director in 1930 and an assistant to the director in 1938. In 1947, Mr. Hoover named him associate director, with responsibility for administrative and budgetary operations.

Even after he reached the mandatory retirement age in 1970, Mr. Tolson was kept on the job by Mr. Hoover.

Mr. Tolson was also something of an inventor, holding patents on a bottle cap to keep soft drinks carbonated after their bottles had been opened; on a device to open and close windows automatically, and on equipment to operate emergency windows and exits in aircraft and space vehicles.

In 1966, he was awarded a

gold medal by President Johnson for distinguished Federal civilian service. He was cited for being "a vital force in raising the proficiency of law enforcement at all levels and in guiding the Federal Bureau of Investigation to new heights of accomplishment through periods of great national challenge."

Mr. Tolson is survived by an older brother, Hillory A. Tolson, executive director of the White House Historical Association.

A funeral service will be held at 2 P.M. tomorrow at the Joseph Gawler's Sons funeral home at 5130 Wisconsin Avenue in Washington. Officiating at the service will be Dr. Edward L. R. Elson, chaplain of the Senate, who also officiated at the funeral of Mr. Hoover.