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TRAINEES DURING A LECTURE SESSION AT THE FBI ACADEMY

The Life and Times of the FBI Man

ALMOST all of them are white, middle class and solid. Usually, they are married and own \$35,000 to \$45,000 houses in stable, often suburban neighborhoods. They tend to avoid taking public stands on political issues and rarely become involved in social causes. Most wear their hair short, dress neatly in business suits and are physically trim. They are the special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and there are now 8,500 of them. Generally conservative, FBI agents believe in a strict adherence to bureau rules.

To qualify for the FBI, prospective agents must be college graduates between the ages of 23 and 40, and at least 5 ft. 7 in. tall. In 1970, FBI employment figures showed that 22.3% of the agents held law degrees, and 9.1% were accountants. Trained accountants are valuable in tracking embezzlement and other financial crimes. Teachers, former military men, scientists and local law-enforcement men are also heavily

recruited by the bureau. Applicants must survive a grueling written test and stiff personal interviews and submit to a penetrating investigation of their background. A close relative with a criminal record or a few bad raps from neighbors can eliminate the applicant.

The majority of agents are Protestants from colleges and universities in the South, Midwest and West. Catholics usually come from Fordham, Boston College and similar sectarian institutions; Ivy League universities have only token representation in the bureau. Under J. Edgar Hoover, only a few Jews made the ranks of the FBI. Old Hoover supporters contend that the director distrusted Jews not because of their religion but because of their supposed liberalism. Today only about 120 agents are black, Spanish-surnamed or Oriental, and two are women.

The first four months of an agent's life in the FBI are split between learning self-defense and the use of firearms

and studying federal criminal statutes. Starting pay for agents is just under \$13,000 a year. Veteran agents with ten years in the field get from \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year. Special agents in charge of the bureau's busiest offices can get more than \$40,000, the top FBI scale. Agents are not protected by federal civil service, and thus can be fired easily. Failure to abide by FBI rules against public drunkenness, adultery or otherwise unethical or embarrassing behavior can lead to dismissal.

The day-to-day working life of an agent depends largely on where he is stationed. If he is lucky enough to be assigned to a big-city office, his hours are apt to be as regular as a stockbroker's. But assignment to a small city can mean excessive travel, irregular hours and unplanned schedule changes. The ideal assignment is in a middle-sized city like Madison, Wis., or Boulder, Colo., where as agents say, "You can pretty much be your own boss."

Agents can leave at age 50 with half pay, if they have completed 20 years of service. Quite a few have used the job as a step to much better positions. FBI alumni number about 10,000; they include about a dozen Congressmen, several federal judges, New Jersey Governor William Cahill, state and county attorneys, sheriffs and many security directors of large organizations like the National Football League and TRW Inc. The Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI Inc. last year reported that their members' average yearly pay was \$19,750 and climbing.

FBI men speak little these days about the probable future of the bureau. "This is not the time to be talking about the FBI," says J. Davidson Jamieson, special agent in charge of the Los Angeles office. But it seems clear that despite recent changes in leadership and some attempts to liberalize FBI rules, the bureau will continue to turn out agents strikingly similar to their predecessors.