

A Saddened Witness

Louis Patrick Gray 3d

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 5—
"I came to this town with reputation and integrity and I'm going to take it away, so help me God!"

So spoke Louis Patrick Gray 3d during a particularly emotional moment in the Senate hearings last March on his nomination to head

Man the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He had little
in the reason, then, to
News doubt that he could make good

his promise, but recent revelations of Mr. Gray's involvement in the Watergate scandal have insured that when he finally returns home to Stonington, Conn., the reputation he carries with him will have been tarnished.

His career is not the only one damaged by Watergate, of course. But the story that Mr. Gray began to tell in his characteristic monotone last Friday is a bit sadder than most of those the Senate Watergate committee has heard, because for him the chance to "make it" came so late and ended so abruptly.

A No. 2 Man

Until he was appointed acting director of the F.B.I. at the age of 55, Pat Gray was only one of the solid, crisp, calm and efficient "No. 2 men" who inhabit this town—the deputies and assistants who are permitted access to the chambers of power, but only to take notes.

To have come that far was perhaps an admirable accomplishment for the eldest son of a moderately poor railroad man. The son, born in St. Louis July 18, 1916, managed to eke out an education in the midst of the Depression by dint of brains alone. He gained admission to the tuition-free Rice Institute in Houston, which accepted only honor students, then won a four-year scholarship to the United States Naval Academy.

Mr. Gray had always wanted a Naval career, and the Navy was good to him. It made him a submarine commander in his mid-twenties, and he led the U.S.S. Steelhead on five combat patrols in the Pacific during World War II.

After the war, the Navy selected him over hundreds of other applicants and sent him to the George Washington University law school here. After graduating with honors in 1949 he embarked on a new career as a Naval legal officer.

'I Wanted to Get In'

His last assignment, before he retired as a captain in 1960, was as military assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and special assistant to the Secretary of Defense.

That job allowed him to attend meetings of the National Security Council and the Cabinet, and Mr. Gray was enamored of what he saw of Government policy-making. "I wanted to get in," he recalled last year. "Not on the electoral side; I didn't want to run for office. I wanted to get in on the managerial and administrative side of policy-making."

He would have been "in" sooner if Richard Nixon, whom he has known and admired since their first meeting at a Washington party in 1947 had won the Presidency in 1960.

The friendship between the two men, although never close, remained alive over the years, and when Mr. Gray left the Pentagon he moved to the Vice President's

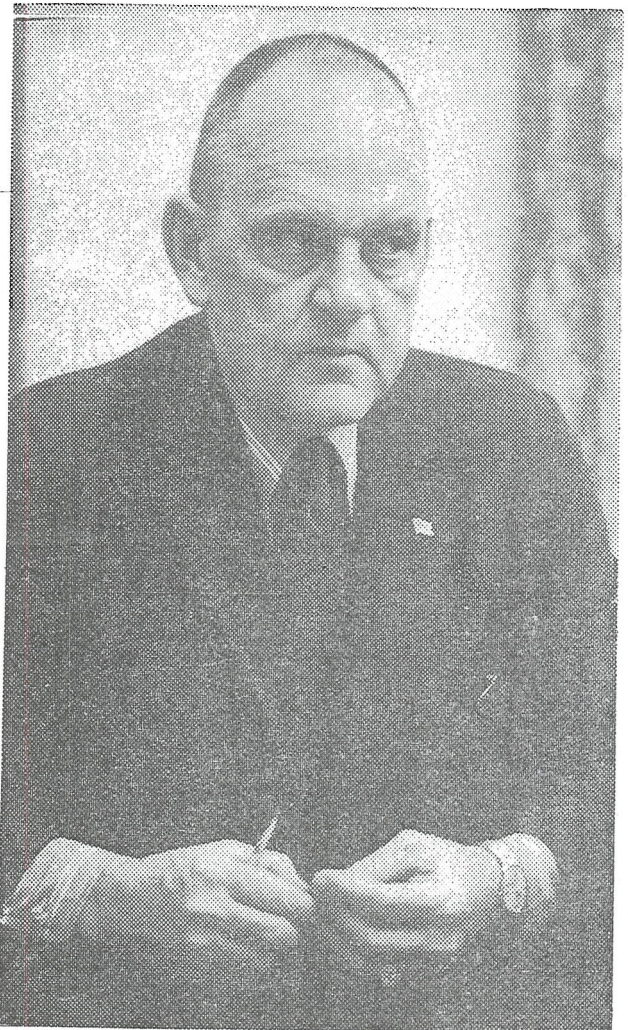
campaign staff, where he established himself as a solid administrator, according to one man who worked with him.

But Mr. Nixon's bid failed, and Mr. Gray moved to Connecticut, which he had become fond of during Naval service there, to practice law and bide his time.

He did well financially, earning a reputed \$70,000 a year, which, with his Navy pension, enabled him to move into a large new home on a hill with a striking view of Stonington harbor.

He kept his political contacts up to date, too, and when Mr. Nixon was elected President in 1968, Mr. Gray joined the new Administration as an executive assistant to Robert H. Finch, then the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, with whom he had worked closely in the 1960 Nixon campaign.

"Submariners are unflappable," he once said, but despite the extraordinary self-control, bordering on stoicism, that he exhibits both in public and private, those who know him well say he is compassionate and sensitive. In the year that Mr. Gray spent at Health, Education and Welfare, says a former Administration official, "A lot of liberal stuff got slipped in through him. You'd take him aside and say, 'Pat, here's a good one for the old folks.'"



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A calm and efficient "No. 2 man"

Closer to Inner Circles

Mr. Gray's self-discipline and administrative talents at the department won him a reputation that finally began to move him progressively closer to the inner circles of Government.

He was named an Assistant Attorney General in December, 1970 and, little more than a year later, was nominated by Mr. Nixon to become the Deputy Attorney General, the second most important office in the Justice Department.

Three months later the string of No. 2 jobs was broken when, on May 2, 1972, J. Edgar Hoover died in his sleep. The next day, the President named Mr. Gray to replace Mr. Hoover in an acting capacity, explaining that he would not nominate a permanent director until after the November election, to prevent the confirmation hearings from becoming a campaign issue.

Mr. Gray would have liked nothing better than to finish his career in public service at the head of the F.B.I., but Mr. Nixon had promised him only that his name would be among those considered.

Made Innovations

Mr. Gray set out immediately to capture the nomination with all the energy and imagination he could muster. Conscious of criticism that the bureau, under Mr. Hoover, had grown archaic and insular, he tried to establish himself as an accessible, innovative administrator, making speeches, accepting reporters' telephone calls, permitting agents to wear longer hair and colored shirts, opening the bureau's ranks to women.

The speech-making and frequent travels to F.B.I. field offices were seen as a public relations campaign by some of the Hoover loyalists in the bureau's headquarters. They resented it, and some retaliated by leaking confidential F.B.I. files to the press, a warning to the White House that Mr. Gray could not control the bureau as Mr. Hoover had.

Mr. Gray, who has a well-developed sense of bureaucratic politics, praised his

predecessor in public, while he quietly dispersed many of the old Hoover men to other F.B.I. offices around the country, or forced them into retirement.

But for Watergate, Mr. Gray's hopes of becoming J. Edgar Hoover's permanent successor might well have been realized. He did receive the nomination, but the confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee proved disastrous to him.

Some Democratic Senators accused him from the outset of being a political appointee, too closely tied to the White House to head a traditionally nonpartisan agency, and as the hearings progressed they buttressed their assertion with examples of laxity in the bureau's Watergate investigation.

Mr. Gray conceded that he had sent raw F.B.I. reports on Watergate to the White House, for example, but explained that he been acting on the belief that there should be "a presumption of regularity" about the men close to the President, and that he had simply followed their orders, which had come to him "down the chain of command." It was the old submarine captain speaking.

To demonstrate his impartiality, Mr. Gray began to drop facts about Watergate unfavorable to the Administration, such as the revelation that Herbert W. Kalmbach, Mr. Nixon's personal lawyer, had financed a Republican campaign sabotage effort last year. Incensed by the headlines he was producing, the White House ordered him to stop providing investigative data on Watergate to the committee. He obeyed, and angered the Senators even more.

Forced to Resign

By the time Mr. Gray was forced to resign from the F.B.I. in April, following the disclosure that he had destroyed papers taken from the safe of a principal suspect in the Watergate bugging case, the nomination was already dead, withdrawn by the President at Mr. Gray's request a month earlier after it had become clear that he could not be confirmed.

Mr. Gray is a thoroughly

disciplined man who exercises daily and does not smoke or drink; a Roman Catholic who attends early mass every day, "a great square," as one friend called him, a principled and idealistic man who kept a copy of "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" on a coffee table in his office at the Justice Department and commended its wisdom to his top officials.

But after John W. Dean 3d, Mr. Nixon's former counsel, told Federal prosecutors what had happened to the papers taken from the safe of E. Howard Hunt Jr., a Watergate conspirator, Mr. Gray did a most uncharacteristic thing.

He lied. He told a high Justice Department official that he had not read the files before burning them, when he had read some of them. He told Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., the Connecticut Republican who had been one of his most enthusiastic supporters, that he had destroyed the papers immediately, when he had actually kept them intact for months.

Signs of Strain

He told Senator Weicker and the other members of the Watergate committee on Friday that he was ashamed, not of what he had done, but of having been untruthful.

His appearance before the committee marked the first time since March that he had been seen in public, and the revelations of the last few months have taken their toll.

He seems fragile now. His bulldog face, which resembles to a degree a younger Mr. Hoover's, is tired and thinner now, and his voice has lost much of its forcefulness. The strain of his preparation for his Senate testimony is evident, but he must also be concerned by reports that his name was among those recommended for indictment to the special prosecutor's office by the United States Attorney.

If he escapes indictment, he will return to his old law firm of Suisman, Shapiro, Wool, Brennan & Gray, which has made him a partner, and his beloved home in Stonington, where his wife, Bea, four sons and two grandchildren are living now.