

The very private life of L.

By Kathy Begley
Knight News Service

NEW LONDON (Conn.) — Every 10 days, Louis P. Gray shows up in Garde's Barbershop here precisely at 8 a.m. and gets his hair trimmed exactly the same way he did during his 20 years in the Navy, one-quarter inch from the head.

Then Gray climbs two flights of stairs to the law offices of Suisman, Shapiro, Wool and Brennan and begins a day of work usually interrupted only by a brief lunch at the Mohican Hotel, a half block down the main street of this seaside town of 30,000 residents.

Precisely at 5 p.m., the 58 year old lawyer walks three blocks to the \$1-per-day municipal parking garage and gets into the compact car he bought recently to save gas on the 10-mile trip from town to his home in suburban Stonington. He and his wife, Beatrice, rarely go out in the evenings.

There is little about Louis P. Gray's mundane lifestyle as a smalltown lawyer in southeastern Connecticut to suggest that he and L. Patrick Gray, onetime Nixon aide and powerful acting director of the FBI in Washington, are one and the same man.

Which is exactly the way Gray wants it.

It had been almost a year now since Gray, one of the earliest victims of the scandals surrounding President Nixon's administration, returned to practice law in this hauntingly beautiful town along the Atlantic seacoast.

Once under consideration for a variety of jobs, including deputy attorney general, U.S. Court of Appeals judge and permanent FBI head, Gray last April asked that his nomination as successor to J. Edgar Hoover be dropped when it became virtually certain that he could not win Senate confirmation after testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee that he had furnished White House counsel John Dean with voluminous FBI inves-



L. P. GRAY
Subject is taboo

tigative files on the Watergate break-in.

Since returning to New London, the onetime submarine commander has done his best to blend into the community. Keeping a low profile hasn't been easy. He firmly refuses to grant interviews.

Townpeople have a lot of sympathy for Gray's explanation to the Senate Watergate committee last August that he read and then destroyed Watergate-related documents belonging to former Nixon aide E. Howard Hunt and then lied about it to Sen. Lowell Weicker (R.-Conn.) out of loyalty to his White House superiors.

"He was a good Navy man, used to taking orders," said Doris Edmond, tax collector manager for New London. "And the feeling around here is that the White House used him as a goat."

Gray's law partners refuse to discuss how their old friend is bearing up under the burden, and the knowledge that he may yet be indicted for destroying the Hunt files.

Gray apparently has dropped all political activities and gone back to the strictly disciplined lifestyle of his military, pre-Washington days.

Always known as an early riser, Gray continues to arrive in his office each day as early as 7:30 a.m., having

already completed some early morning jogging.

Inclined to be rather burly, the leathery faced ex-Navy man now tries to keep his weight down by limiting himself to a hamburger or roast beef sandwich at lunch, according to Roberta Banta, the waitress who serves him almost daily at the Mohican's Rob and Embers Room.

Gray also maintains a lifelong habit of personal fastidiousness, by having his clothes specially made at an exclusive tailor shop in nearby Groton.

Even Gray's methods of relaxation are a carryover from his old military days.

He regularly swims and occasionally goes boating at the yacht clubs in Mystic Seaport, usually alone or with a few close friends.

Since he doesn't drink, and never has, he rarely goes to the cocktail parties frequently thrown, especially in spring and summer, by seasonal residents of the shoreline resorts here. Although he used to attend the events which usually draw large crowds to the Stonington Community Center, he

hasn't been seen there all year.

As for discussing the Watergate case with his day-to-day contacts, well, Gray just doesn't.

Russell Granata, the barber who gives Gray a \$3 haircut three times a month, says the onetime Washington insider usually silently reads legal papers while in the shop.

When he does initiate a conversation, it's usually about the high price of gasoline or the family's weekend travels, Granata said, but never, never about Richard Nixon.

"I'm really curious, but it's not my business, it's Mr. Gray's," Granata said. "It's funny isn't it—I used to call him 'Pat' when he was doing so well. But with all his troubles, I figure 'Mr. Gray' is more respectful."

P. Gray