

Report on FBI's Odd Jobs for Hoover

Washington

The late FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, used his bureau's exhibits section and laboratory division to improve and maintain his home in Washington, according to sources formerly in the two offices.

Tasks ranged from repairing the pump in his backyard fish pond to building the front steps and landing. They were performed during working hours by bureau personnel using government material, the sources said.

Their descriptions add detail to previous reports that Hoover, who died in 1972, and other top officials used employees for personal chores. It has been reported, for

example, that during working hours bureau agents wrote books that appeared under Hoover's name and that the FBI lab worked on a new bottle opener designed by FBI associated director Clyde A. Tolson, who died in 1975.

A scientist with a doctor's degree in chemistry, who formerly worked in the laboratory division said that one time he was sent to repair a pump in the fish pond in Hoover's backyard.

"A call would come in saying the old man wanted something fixed," the ex-lab official said. "What do you say? Go get it done commercially?"

Another former official said that several of the scientists, engineers and craftsmen in the bureau resented the menial tasks. "But we had no tenure, no real job security," the official said. "No one was about to make a stand on running over and fixing Hoover's television."

According to sources, much of the work on Hoover's house was supervised by Leo J. Gauthier, director of the exhibits section, which builds trial and promotional exhibits.

"Gauthier was known as the carpenter because he built the front landing on Hoover's house," one former FBI official said, "but

he was really responsible for most of the odd jobs around the house. One time when Hoover's dog destroyed a patch of grass by urinating on it regularly, Gauthier had to send a man out to put in new sod."

Gauthier said he had no comment on his work in the FBI.

Aside from maintenance work on Hoover's television, radios, washing machine and kitchen appliances, the ex-official recalled an assignment to install a powerful fan in Hoover's kitchen because Hoover had complained of the smell of bacon in the morning.

The source said that records were not kept of the work. "Helen

Gandy (Hoover's personal secretary) would call down and tell us what was needed," he said.

The ex-lab official said that the lab often worked on gifts that Hoover enjoyed giving his friends.

In the early 1940s, he said, an agent brought back 100 ball point pens from Argentina as a gift for Hoover. They were called Biro Pens and were among the first ball point pens in the United States. Hoover proudly distributed them to select friends, the former lab official said.

"The pens really didn't work well," he said, "and for months we were getting them back in at the lab to fix or refill with ink."

Another gift developed by the lab was an automatic window opener and closer that Hoover installed in his own home and gave President Johnson.

The automatic device, activated by a button, and patented under Tolson's name, was installed in Mr. Johnson's White House bedroom window, sources said. President Johnson who died in 1973, had complained to Hoover that he disliked having to close his window on cold mornings, the official said.

Tolson's bottle cap opener was never patented, but some of the devices were gold-plated and given as gifts.

Washington Post