

'Fearsome' Hoover image more myth than substance

WASHINGTON — Using the FBI's own methods, we have unmasked the real J. Edgar Hoover, who is neither the hero his admirers believe nor the ogre his detractors charge.

Like the Wizard of Oz in the old Judy Garland movie, the 76-year-old FBI chief has created a fearsome image which still

Jack Anderson

has Washington officialdom cowed. But he isn't really as fierce as he pretends.

He can be a genial host, a generous friend, a boon companion. Old age has also given him a bad case of the jitters. According to one report, he has had bad dreams about people chasing him.

One of my reporters, Charles Elliott, tailed the great G-man intermittently for a few days. Hoover is the only Washington bigwig, except for the President, who is provided a bulletproof limousine by the taxpayers. Yet Elliott confirmed reports that Hoover, despite this armored protection, hunches down in one corner of the back seat with his hat propped up in the other corner.

Hoover picks up the FBI's 70-year-old deputy chief, Clyde Tolson, at his apartment each morning between 8:30 and 9 o'clock. But the bullet-proof Cadillac always pulls around to a rear door where the ailing Tolson is whisked aboard. This daily little drama is executed with such stealth that the doorman at the front entrance not only was unaware of the morning trysts but didn't even know Tolson was a tenant. Elliott clocked the FBI pair, incidentally, doing 30 miles per hour in a 40-mile zone.

Hoover is also nervous, say intimates, about eating in strange places. He and Tolson usually grab a quick, 20-minute lunch at the Rib Room of Washington's fashionable Mayflower Hotel. They have a standing order, which is served as soon as they sit down. Hoover munches on grapefruit-and-cottage cheese salad. Tolson has cream of chicken soup, except on Tuesdays when he orders bean soup and spices it with catsup.

The FBI chief also won't touch the delicacies he receives from unknown admirers, for fear someone might slip him some poisoned food. He donates these delectables to orphanages and other institutions whose inmates, presumably, he considers expendable.

Elliott found evidence in Hoover's trash, however, that he had feasted on Florida citrus fruit from trusted friends. Among the discarded gift cartons was one from the late President Eisenhower's brother-in-law, Col. George Gordon Moore, who now belongs to the Virginia horsey set.

Since Elliott started rummaging in Hoo-

ver's garbage, the eminent G-man has stopped leaving it outside. We haven't solved the mystery of how he now disposes of it.

Perhaps the most startling evidence that Hoover has become fidgety in his old age is the report about his bad dreams. Competent sources told us that Hoover had consulted Dr. Marshall de G. Ruffin, the society shrink, about his nightmares.

The distinguished psychiatrist, whose patients include some of Washington's high and mighty, denied that Hoover has ever consulted him. Indeed, Dr. Ruffin literally shrieked his denial; psychiatrists might say he overreacted.

Of the sources who profess to know about Hoover's visits to Dr. Ruffin, only veteran newsman Duncan Groner, a close friend of the doctor's, was willing to be identified.

Clearly, J. Edgar Hoover isn't the ferocious bulldog of a lawman that he appears. Neither is he the menace his enemies have tried to portray. He is an immensely human, highly nervous master bureaucrat, who has created a formidable law enforcement agency out of what was once a collection of political hacks. But he should have been retired, with the nation's gratitude, 11 years ago.

Headlines and facts

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