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J. Edgar Hoover, American Patriot

TO THE BEST OF HIS prodigious ability, J. Edgar Hoover served his country. His devotion to the United States was, as President Nixon said, unparalleled.

As director of the FBI, Mr. Hoover spanned 48 years of history — some of which he made himself. Dying peacefully in his sleep at the age of 77, he left in his wake supporters and friends, critics and enemies.

His friends lauded his honesty, integrity, and enduring devotion to duty. Even his critics granted him these attributes. For most men, that would be tribute enough.

But Mr. Hoover was no ordinary man. He leaves behind more than words of praise, more than memories for those who knew him to recall at their leisure. He leaves us with the example he set.

He leaves the nation a living monument — not to himself, but to the ideals on which the nation is founded — the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In this imperfect world we live in, Mr. Hoover's achievement is outstanding.

For in a world filled with tyrannies both petty and great, a world where anonymous millions endure repression and live in fear of their own governments and police, J. Edgar Hoover wrought no less than a miracle. With his own two hands he molded a force that none except his country's enemies need fear.

MR. HOOVER HELD an awesome power. He knew it. It did not corrupt him. To his everlasting credit, he used this power to protect, not to oppress.

The FBI's total success in dealing with the threat of Nazi sabotage and spying during World War II, and the amazingly complete infiltration of Communist Party cells in the Cold War of the 1950s, provided ample evidence of Mr. Hoover's efficiency.

Wrongdoers in high places and in low feared Mr. Hoover and his G-men. He and his men could not be bought. And the wrongdoers knew this well.

President Nixon put it best:

"For millions he was the symbol and embodiment of the values he cherished most: Courage, patriotism, dedication to the country and a granite-like honesty and integrity . . . The FBI he literally created and built is today universally regarded as the finest law enforcement agency in the world."

It is a reflection of the man.