By Joseph C. Schott

In 1948 the author began his 23 years with the FBI. Although only a clerk, he soon learned that the first rule of survival was the demonstration of loyalty—to the Bureau and its omnipotent director, J. Edgar Hoover.

Manifestations of loyalty were numerous. During my era as a clerk the assistant director who handled public relations for the Bureau was a big, dark man called "Nick the Greek" by the clerks and supervisors. Like most of the truly dedicated men of the inner circle he demonstrated his dedication to the Director by spending long hours in the office and creating the appearance of working himself to death. Occasionally he would fall out of his chair with a crash. The assistant director was a large man, so the crash was always loud enough to attract witnesses: clerks, stenographers, and underlings who enjoyed the show as a break in dull routine. The FBI nurse always hurried in with smelling salts and soon had the Greek propped up at his desk again, faking away at his papers.

On one occasion The Washington Post printed a story especially disturbing to the Director. The Post printed so many stories that disturbed him it would probably be impossible to identify the particular one at this late date. Whatever it was, the story was printed, and the Director summoned Nick the Greek. Since the editor was beyond his reach, the Director attacked the Greek for failure to prevent its appearance, as though he had some control over it.

"Mr. Hoover," Nick the Greek allegedly said, "If I had known that they were going to print those subversive, Communist-inspired lies about you, I would have gone over there and hurled myself bodily into the presses."

That answer, according to the grape-

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vise, pleased and even amused the Director. "Nick may not be very smart, but nobody can doubt his loyalty," he is supposed to have said.

The Last File

I began doing a lot of file-chasing for supervisors of the Special Inquiry section. Most of the special inquiries came from the White House and were considered "hot" because they had short deadlines. They were expedited to the point of hysteria. A hundred or so supervisors were jammed into the offices of the Special Inquiry section, and from dawn until dusk they set behind piles of files trying to compile, from information in the various files, memoranda on the individuals inquired about. Many of the names came in without sufficient identifying data, and sometimes the inquiries were duplicated—two or more requests would come in on the same person—in which case two or more supervisors would be simultaneously doing the same work and fighting each other for the same files. Even when different individuals were involved, so many of the names being searched appeared in the same files that it was not unusual for several supervisors to need the same ones at the same time. They continually hid them from each other, because each was worried about his own deadlines and no one else's. I brought files in by the cartload and took them back when the supervisors finished with them. I also had to try to keep track of who had which files and referee fights between supervisors who wanted the same ones at the same time.

Extra desks had been jammed into the rooms, and everyone fought his private deadline battle behind his file stacks, scuffling viciously at anyone who tried to remove any from his desk. The reviewers thumbed through the volumes and hummed into dictaphones, transcribing the bones from one graveyard to another, so to speak. On those rare days when there were only a few names coming in, the reviewers hid behind their stacks and read newspapers. To read a newspaper at SOG (Seat of Government: FBI headquarters in Washington) unless it was some assigned task like reading the Daily Worker for Communist Party intelligence or reading the New York and Washington newspapers for derogatory or inflammatory references to the Director, was a punishable offense. But the supervisors were so isolated behind their files that on one occasion one died and no one else in the room knew it for a long time. He just put his head down on his desk and never lifted it up again under his own power. A friend came by at lunch time to see if he was ready to go across the street for a sandwich and found him face down on his desk, dead from a heart attack. He had been dead for more than two hours. His passing had gone unnoticed because the others were so busy pumping paper to the White House.

The Pinhead

There were a lot of nagging, worrisome jobs in the Bureau, but being a New Agents counselor was one of the worst. Some of their problems were unbelievably whimsical.

One of the most whimsical I ever heard arose from the presentation of a New Agents class to the Director. In those days it was part of the training ritual of the classes—each 30 to 40 strong—to file quickly through the Director's office be favored with a sharp glance, a brisk handshake, and a nod before being hustled out the other door. Since the individual's time under Directorial scrutiny amounted to only a few seconds, this particular incident illustrates The Man's acute powers of observation and capacity for quick decision. It also illustrates the ability of those around him to improve upon his instructions.

The New Agents, clad in their dark suits, white shirts, and subdued neckties, flitted by in front of the Director, shaking hands and bowing jerkily like marionettes on strings, and hurried on. The entire class passed before him in a minute or two.

As the last one disappeared through the exit, the Director said to the counselor of the training class, "One of them is a pinhead. Get rid of him." Then he went into
his private office and closed the door behind him.

Of course, the counselor did not dare ask the Director for additional information to identify the pinhead. He dared not ask the Director anything. Instead, he went to the classroom where the New Agents were assembled and addressed them for a time on some pretext or other, peering at each, trying to identify one whose head looked unusually small. He was unsuccessful. Then the solution struck him. He would check their hat sizes. In those days all agents were supposed to wear hats while on duty, and naturally this rule was strictly enforced at SOG. New agents kept their hats in their individual clothing lockers while taking firearms training at the FBI Academy at Quantico. A day or so later, while the class was on the firing range, the counselor and one of his assistants checked the hats in the lockers. They found that the smallest hat size in the class was six and seven-eighths. But the hell of it was, there were three members of the class with that size. There was no help for it: All three sizes six and seven-eighths were fired.

Upon graduation as new agents, the author's class was given a final harrowing lecture by a top official, one Troutmouth. "Gentlemen," he said, "you are now on your way to the Field where you must bend over backward to live up to the grand traditions of this organization and the splendid rules and regulations and those who were disciplined and thus embarrassed have been suppressed or changed to protect the guilty. Names of places have been changed. Someone may read an anecdote in this book and screech, 'That's me! That's me!' Don't be too sure. Many of the events described were not one-timers; some are composites. In this book the names of all those who did anything grossly contrary to Bureau rules and regulations and those who were disciplined and thus embarrassed have been suppressed or changed to protect the guilty. Names of places have been changed. Someone may read an anecdote in this book and screech, 'That's me! That's me!' Don't be too sure. Many of the events described were not one-timers; some are composites.

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"In the spring," he says, "they're so happy to see life begin anew you could almost kick 'em and not be stung at all. As the season progresses, bees accumulate wealth and they get protective, they feel everyone is out to get 'em. It's the difference between being rich and being poor, and it's the period you get your stinging. After all, it's their whole life. Who wants to be wiped out and have no food for eight months? How do you protect yourself? The bee does it with its stinger. They don't understand us, so we have to understand them. We are the lords, we can see their problems, they can never get to know us."

Smith himself has been stung so many times, many times just at the impossibility of offering an estimate. Like most beekeepers, he uses smoke to calm the hive before removing the honey and claims you can learn to know when the little fellas are in a bad mood and to be avoided. Standing outside by his hives, with hundreds of bees swirling in the air and crawling on his face, Herbert Smith laughs at the thought of all the potential stinging. "The secret is to show no fear," he says. "Like a lion tamer.

More troublesome than the stinging is the amount of hard work required by beekeeping. "People will tell you the bees do all the work," says Smith, adding after the appropriate pause, "No way. Believe me, you don't need to believe that. You do the work or you don't get them to perform. A gallon of honey weighs 20 pounds, half again as much as a gallon of water. Every time you lift two five-gallon cans you're talking about 120 pounds. You can wear yourself out in this business."

But no matter. For small bubbles aside, Herbert D. Smith cannot envision a more satisfying life than the one he chose. "I love this beekeeping," he says, almost unable to believe his own words. "I particularly like the beauty, the natural harmony, I suppose, and the harmony of working with nature. I feel so attuned to life and living, I feel like I've got a close in with the old maker upstairs, almost like a handle on God Himself, and I like that."

With that final horror story fresh on our minds we departed for the Field.

Clod Squad

I t may sound a little kooky, but for us non-instructors this danger of disciplinary action was what made Bureau service exciting. The game was to break or bend the rules without getting caught. Most of us who survived for years in the Field became, by necessity, expert players. Of course, occasionally someone lost and a thunderbolt from SOG landed with a crash on his head. Those nearby who emerged from the smoke unscarred would shudder with relief and marvel at the degrees of overkill.

The Field people were not the only ones to tremble when the thunderbolt landed. Assistant directors, inspectors, and other SOG officials could also be busted. To protect themselves, they constantly had to prove their devotion to him by improving on his orders, making them more strict and the penalties more and more severe, even when their own peers were concerned.

On one occasion at SOG, just preceding the departure of his executive conferences of high-ranking Bureau officials, Mr. Hoover said suddenly, "I have been looking over the supervisory panel at the Secret of Government. A lot of them are clods. Get rid of them." Then he disappeared into his inner office. That statement led to the formation of an investigative panel to identify and expel the clods. The panel became known in Bureau history as the Clod Squad.

Of course no one dared ask the Director to identify any of the clods or elaborate on his observation in any way. That might have proved fatal to the career of the questioner. So the Clod Squad concentrated on finding supervisors with traits known to be despised by the Director, especially complacency, the cowardly lack of burning desire to ascend in the Bureau.

The most common mark of the compliant SOG supervisor was his yearning to stay where he was, in the same job he had held for years, hiding in a cubbyhole. The really courageous and nonconformist supervisors burned with the desire to return to the Field as soon as possible.
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Dread Inspection

The most excruciating times for SACs come when inspection teams arrive to look for dreaded "bugs" (substandard errors). "Arthur" was called to Washington last week to help his kowtowing as Special Agent in Charge of an office that found wanting during an inspection.

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Arthur finally got in to see The Boss (Shover) and took his hat. Since the charges were serious, he got a good one. When he stumbled out, he was on probation and could expect another office inspection within ninety days. When he touched base with the assistant directors, they called him to their inner sanctum and treated him as though he had a contagious disease. Even his "rhino" (closest advisor) acted stroffy, trying to find an excuse for not going to lunch. He finally agreed to go but suggested an out-of-the-way place. There they babbled in
out his woes to his rabbi, while the rabbit kept looking over his shoulder and saying, "Kind of keep your voice down, Arthur, won’t you? Try not to get so excited. I’ll do what I can. But you know I’ve got to protect myself too."

Then Arthur went back to his field office and every time the Bureau telephone rang he jumped as though someone had wildly tweaked his genitalia. He was sitting, waiting for the drop of the second shoe—the appearance of the inspectors.

One day he received a long distance call. It was from his rabbi at SOG. "Arthur, I’m admitting he made a mistake in the switchboard at the B. You’re promoting you in the first place driving a rented car, and that got the senior assistant director. 'This is the worst example of misplaced confidence I have ever seen. I could even get the seni—"

"I give him credit," said one of the agents from that office later. "Arthur really fought back. He found where the girl from the steno bureau had slyly tweaked his genitalia. He marched both girls in to confer with the senior inspector. The senior inspector turned pale when he heard the news, but he tried to play it down. Boys will be boys. My God, this might blow his career out of the tub!"

"Arthur picked up the telephone and called the assistant director in charge of the Inspection Division personally, displaying the reckless courage of someone with absolutely nothing to lose. These inspectors of yours are trying to turn my office into a whorehouse,' he yelled at the assistant director. "This is the worst example of misplaced confidence I have ever seen. I can’t even get the senior in—"

"The assistant director said he would be down on the next plane. He instructed the senior inspector and the two fancy slappers to stay in the office until he got there, no matter how late his plane came in. It was after midnight before he arrived, and then Arthur had obtained signed statements from his two stenographers describing the lewd and lascivious advances of the two aides. The senior inspector, smirking sulphur in the wind, took detailed confessions from his two sex fiends.

"After the assistant director had read the statements, he called in the two aides and asked in a disarming, jovial fashion what their offices of preference were. One of them said New York and the other said Los Angeles. 'Fine,' he said, 'the one who wants to go to New York will go to Los Angeles and the one who wants Los Angeles will go to New York, and you will probably stay there for the rest of your natural lives as far as the Bureau is concerned. If you want to resign here and now, I’ll take it.'"

"When do we have to go?" asked the one who wanted the one who wanted to go to New York. "Next plane," said the assistant director. "That’s your problem," said the assistant director, "but you are not to go back to Washington for any reason until given permission. They took off in opposite directions that night. God only knows what they told their wives."

"What about Arthur?"

"Oh, Arthur came out of it smelling like Arpege. The Director decided that a guy with his talent was being wasted in a field office so he was promoted to Number One man in the Inspection Division at SOG.

The Seat

"I would like to say something about the chair you had to sit in, in the Director’s office, and also about the way the Director’s desk was situated," said one former ASAC who had been shot down at such low altitude his sense of humor had not been seriously damaged in the crash. "The Director was sort of short,
destiny called him to Texas.

his interest was Lyndon B. Johnson. So it turned out that

Lone Star seed which excited Proprietor Carter to visit Lyndon Johnson in Austin. The particular

visit of Mr. Tolson goes too." The SAC frowned at Carter. "This is nothing to joke about, Tom. You know how
dead serious anything to do with the Director or Mr. Tolson can be."

"Just kidding, Boss," said Carter. "I'm off the phone."

Mr. Tolson goes too." The SAC said, "There will be no more left turns."

Looking at Sid Bowser, the SAC said, "Sid, you are really keeping everyone on a shoe string."

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"O.K., O.K.," said Sid, making a note. "Four down pillows on each bed. All appliances in rooms, such as ra-
dios and television sets, must have typed instructions explaining how to turn on and turn off. Typing must be neat. Check closely for mis-spelling and typographical er-

rors. Decorative flowers may not be placed in suite living room but in bedrooms. Basket full of fruit may be placed on coffee table of living room. If liqueur placed in suite, Direc-
tor drinks Jack Daniels black label, Sid," said the SAC. "Let's get

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Crypogram

Never are the sands of time revived, for man's life is real and not rehearsed.

Fun with figures

The next number will be 129. If you double any number in this series and subtract one you will have the next number.

Chess

If a visit from Hoover and Tolson was upsetting, working at close quarters as a Tolson assistant was an exercise in dread and drudgery—but sometimes quite illuminating.

The author asked a former Tolson assistant about Hoover's relations with Robert Kennedy.

"Tell me about Bobby and the desk board.

"Well, the Director said that when he and Mr. Tolson went in, Bobby was sitting in his shirt sleeves behind the desk throwing darts and kept on doing it all the time they talked. In other words, he did not give the Director his undivided attention. The Director said he had served under a score of Attorneys General during his time in government and it was the most damnable undignified con-