

The Little-known J. Edgar Hoover  
By Albert Sayers, 32°, Reprinted from Southern California Lodge of Research

In the years since his death on May 2, 1972, a whole new generation, all adults now, has been led by the news and entertainment media to believe that J. Edgar Hoover was a mean and vicious old man and homosexual to boot.

None of this has the slightest basis in truth.

His was a good character of gigantic proportions, which, from the beginning of our 21-year acquaintance, earned him the position in my estimation as one of the five greatest Americans since the dawn of the republic.

Hoover was one of the most, if not the most, accessible executives of his stature who has ever been in government. Whenever an FBI employee from the hinterlands found himself in Washington on bureau business and requested an audience with Hoover, he was assured Hoover would see him before it was time to return to his office of assignment – if Hoover was not out of town.

But, beware! You had better have something to say, because Hoover memorialized his conversation with you with a memo to the Administrative Division with comments and recommendations. He neither wasted time nor suffered fools. He was one of the kindest and most decent men I have ever known. I have never heard of an instance when a bureau employee went to him with a personal problem or a problem affecting the family, when Hoover did not respond in the best possible fashion.

Hoover was born in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 1, 1895, and like all good racehorses went full bore every day of his life until his demise at the age of 77. He was director of the FBI for 48 years, through the administrations of eight presidents.

Hoover's Masonic career was all in Washington, D.C. He was a member of Federal Lodge No. 1; Justice Lodge No. 46 (charter member); Lafayette Chapter No. 5, R.A.M.; Washington Commandery No. 1; Scottish Rite Bodies, coroneted 33°, Grand Cross; Almas Shrine and was an active member of the International Supreme Council, Order of DeMolay.

Consider the following:

?? Each year of his tenure when he went before the Congress to ask for the FBI's budget appropriation for the forthcoming fiscal year, he got every penny he asked for. This was also true of every special appropriation he asked for during the fiscal year whenever the Congress would charge the FBI with additional responsibilities.

- ?? At the end of every single fiscal year of the 48 years of his directorship, Hoover returned appropriated money to the U.S. Treasury. FBI employees always operated with tight belts and were constantly participating in economy drives in Hoover's days, but the pride and esprit de corps enjoyed by every FBI employee has never been higher than in the period from 1924 to 1972. Furthermore, Hoover's FBI enjoyed the highest salaries and fringe benefits in law enforcement.
- ?? Every year of Hoover's tenure, on the first day of January or the first business day thereafter, Hoover submitted his signed resignation to the president of the United States. The same was done on each presidential Inauguration Day. None of the incumbent or incoming presidents ever picked it up.
- ?? When Hoover died, his body lay in state in the Capitol Rotunda -- one of only 25 up until that time in the nation's history accorded that particular honor.

It is true that John Edgar Hoover was an absolute dictator and a swift and sure disciplinarian.

He insisted that his subordinate administrators be the same. He was just as quick, however, to applaud and reward meritorious work as he was to censure substandard performance. A letter of commendation from Hoover tended to make one walk three feet off the ground for days.

On the other hand, a letter of censure from him made one want to dig a nice, deep hole and jump in. He was merciless with any supervisor who ignored substandard work or overlooked unusually commendable work of their subordinates and failed to censure or commend, whichever was called for.

He was truly a superb leader of men. His precept seemed to be:

Recruit the best you can find: train them to the peak of their particular discipline and demand loyalty, fidelity, bravery and integrity. I don't think there has ever been a leader who succeeded to the extent that Hoover did.

I know a million agents and former agents who believe about him as I do.

(Albert Sayers is a Manhattan Beach resident and member of Former Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Inc.)