

## Clyde A. Tolson

(22 May 1900 – 14 Apr 1975)

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**Tolson, Clyde A.** On Monday, April 14, 1975, at Doctor's Hospital, Clyde A. Tolson, brother of Hillory A. Tolson of Washington, D.C. Friends may call at Joseph Gawler's Sons, 5130 Wisconsin ave. at Harrison st. n.w., (parking on premises), Tuesday, 2 to 9 p.m., where services will be held on Wednesday, April 16, at 2 p.m. Interment Congressional Cemetery.

*The Washington Post, April 15, 1975, p. C6*

### **FBI's Clyde A. Tolson, 74, Dies**

*By Richard M. Cohen, Washington Post Staff Writer*

Clyde Anderson Tolson, for years both the number two man in the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover's alter ego, died yesterday of heart failure -- until the last a steadfast defender of the FBI he had helped build and its director who once called him "my strong right arm."



The former associate director, 74, had been in ill-health for about the last 10 years since suffering a stroke in 1964. He was admitted to Doctors Hospital here last Thursday and died at the hospital yesterday morning.

For nearly 20 years, Mr. Tolson and Hoover were inseparable friends. They took turns dining at each others' homes, went to the race track together and even vacationed together -- usually near a race track. In the morning's, Hoover's bullet-proof limousine would stop at Tolson's apartment to pick him up and often the two men would get out on Constitution Avenue NW to walk part of the way to the Justice Department together.

So close were the two that the grief-stricken Mr. Tolson submitted his resignation May 3, 1972, the day after Hoover died, and refused to accept a condolence call from the man appointed as Hoover's temporary replacement, then Assistant Attorney General L. Patrick Gray, III. Gray later was appointed acting director of the FBI.

Mr. Tolson lived out his retirement in the house Hoover had willed to him at 4936 30th Pl., NW, among the antiques and paintings Hoover had collected. In all, he was willed the bulk of Hoover's \$551,500 estate -- yet another reflection of the relationship between the two men.

But while Hoover was the out-front -- and frequently outspoken -- FBI director, Mr. Tolson was the seldom seen and nearly anonymous alter-ego. His name surfaced in the press only rarely, and then frequently in letters to the editor in which he defended either Hoover or the bureau. He kept at it even after the death of Hoover and his own retirement. In 1973, for instance he wrote *The Washington Post* saying there was "not the slightest truth" to a statement by former FBI Assistant Director William Sullivan that Hoover "was not of sound mind" in his later years.

In some of his letters, Mr. Tolson reflected his and Hoover's deep-seated views on what they said dangers of the international Communist conspiracy and the threat it posed o American institutions.

Mr. Tolson's contemporaries in the bureau credit him with an acute sense of "public relations timing," as former FBI assistant director Cartha DeLoach put it yesterday.

DeLoach recalled that Mr. Tolson possessed a photographic memory, and was able to read a memorandum in a flash and virtually recall its contents word for word.

As a result of his ability to speed-read and remember everything he read, DeLoach said Mr. Tolson's desk was always clean -- never a paper on it.

But while Mr. Tolson and Hoover were close friends and alike in many ways a close friend of both said they had strikingly different personalities.

"He had more warmth than Mr. Hoover," said an old associate of both men. "I think he enjoyed life a great deal more. He had a twinkle in his eye for the girls and Mr. Hoover never condescended to that."

But essentially, Tolson was a shy man, in many ways the perfect civil servant. He was born in Missouri and grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. At the age of 18 he accepted a position in the old War Department where he eventually used his stenographic skills to become confidential secretary to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker.

Mr. Tolson remained to serve two other secretaries of War, but in the meantime put himself through college and law school at night. He received both degrees from George Washington University.

It was about that time that he met Hoover, a native Washingtonian, and struck up what became a life-long friendship. In 1928 -- four years after Hoover became FBI director -- Mr. Tolson joined the Bureau, and was assigned to the Boston field office where his work caught Hoover's attention. With that came a transfer to Washington and a close association with Hoover.

Although later a pre-eminent Washington bureaucrat and he retained his shorthand skills, Mr. Tolson was no slouch with a gun. In 1936 he accompanied Hoover when he personally arrested Alvin "Creepy" Karpis, a murderer and bank robber. The case made headlines coast to coast and did much to enhance the G-Man image of the FBI.

Later that same year, Mr. Tolson shot it out in New York City with Harry Brunette, a gangster and bank robber. In addition, Mr. Tolson played what the FBI later called "a prominent part" in the investigation and apprehension of eight Nazi saboteurs who landed in 1942 on Long Island and Florida.

It was on such exploits -- later grist for countless radio and television shows -- that the FBI built its image and Mr. Tolson his career. By 1947, Hoover created a special title for Mr. Tolson -- associate director.

In that capacity he was number two to one of the most powerful men in Washington -- the keeper of the files. Yet Mr. Tolson's associates found him soft-spoken and self-effacing, a man, they recall, who never lost his temper. And for all his closeness to Hoover, it was understood that Mr. Tolson could never succeed him. He was too old.

In 1970, Mr. Tolson reached the mandatory retirement age of 70, in too poor health to remain with the Bureau and get an exception to the retirement policy. Hoover retired his friend -- and then rehired him, saying he was needed to complete work already under way.

In the end, Mr. Tolson became Hoover's principal heir, receiving the house stocks, bonds and Hoover's personal belongings. But according to John P. Mohr, the now retired assistant to Hoover, Mr. Tolson received none of the celebrated personal files that Hoover reportedly kept.

"He had no files from the Bureau," Mohr said. "I can't think of anyone who was less inclined to have Bureau files than Mr. Tolson."

While his associates describe Mr. Tolson as a man dedicated to the FBI, he somehow found time to tinker with inventing. He sought and received a patent, for instance, on a bottle cap after he cut his finger on one. In addition, he invented -- and had installed -- electrically operated windows, one of which was used by Lyndon Johnson in the White House and one by Hoover himself. The device automatically shut the window at a certain time so a person could go to sleep in a cool room but wake up in warm comfort.

Mr. Tolson, who like Hoover never married, is survived by his brother, Hillory, the executive director of the White House Historical Association. A friend said yesterday it is likely that Hoover's former house would be put up for sale.

In a statement, FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley, said the death of Mr. Tolson left a "great void in the law enforcement field ..."

"As the close associate and confidant of former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, Mr. Tolson devoted his life to the service of the American people and to effective law enforcement throughout the country."

The FBI announced that services will be conducted Wednesday at the Joseph Gawler's Sons Funeral Home, 5130 Wisconsin Ave. NW, with burial later at the Congressional Cemetery.

*The Washington Post, April 16, 1975, p. C6*

### **Correction**

A picture accompanying a story in yesterday's editions of The Washington Post on the death of Clyde Anderson Tolson, former No. 2 man in the FBI, was not one of Mr. Tolson.

The photograph was of Louis B. Nichols, who ranked third in the FBI at the time of his retirement in 1957 and who now lives in Virginia.

A correct picture of Mr. Tolson is shown here. The Post regrets the error.

*The Washington Post, July 11, 1975, p. H10*

### **Tolson Will Is Challenged By Brother**

*By Leon Dash and Douglas B. Feaver, Washington Post Staff Writers*

Clyde A. Tolson, who was J. Edgar Hoover's closest friend and deputy for decades at the FBI, disinherited his own brother to the benefit and at the suggestion of yet another long-time FBI official, the brother has charged.

In a petition challenging Clyde Tolson's will, brother Hillory Tolson accused John P. Mohr of using "fraud and deceit" to exclude Hillory Tolson from the \$500,000 estate, Mohr, generally described as the No. 3 man at the FBI, retired from the bureau June 30, 1972, about two months after Hoover died and Clyde Tolson resigned.

"Before June, 1972, and many years prior to then," Hillory Tolson's petition states, "Tolson suffered physical and mental debility." Tolson, according to the petition, was often incoherent and confused and was unable to walk without aid.

"As a result of (Tolson's) weakened condition, physically and mentally, (Mohr) and those in collaboration with him prevented others, including (Hillory Tolson)," the petition said, "from seeing (Clyde Tolson), who became a virtual recluse.

Hillory Tolson and his two children are Clyde Tolson's only living relatives. The contested will says, "To my brother, Hillory A. Tolson, and his children, James Walter Tolson and Pamela Tolson Holst, I leave nothing by this will."

Tolson's holdings -- \$430,000 in cash and stocks, \$70,000 in oil and mineral leases in the Southwest and Hoover's house on 30th Place NW -- are left to 13 beneficiaries and two nonprofit associations.

Much of the estate presumably came from Hoover, who left Tolson almost all of his holdings, estimated at \$551,500 when he died on May 2, 1972.

Hillory Tolson, a one-time FBI agent himself, a former official with the National Park Service and now the executive director of the White House Historical Association, referred all questions to his attorney, Rolland Lamensdorf.

Lamensdorf said he knew of no specific event or long-standing grievance that would have caused Clyde Tolson to disinherit his brother. "It's surprising to me that what occurred did occur," Lamensdorf said.

Only Mohr is named in the petition and coercion" on Clyde Tolson, although there is the suggestion in the petition that other unnamed individuals participated. Lamensdorf would not list other names.

There are two Tolson wills that Lamensdorf knows of, he said, one dated in June 1972, and the other the following August. Clyde Tolson died in April of this year. Both specifically exclude Hillory Tolson.

Lamensdorf said that the Tolson brothers had not been close in recent years. "Frankly," he said, "I think Clyde Tolson was an extremely dedicated man to the FBI. He restricted himself during and after hours to the FBI . . . He was a very sick man over the last three years of his life."

*The Washington Post, March 27, 1973, p. B3*

### **Selling to the Highest Bidder**

*By Maxine Cheshire*

Clyde A. Tolson, the lifelong friend who was J. Edgar Hoover's sole heir, has been quietly selling off the late FBI director's belongings at Sloan's auction gallery here.

One batch of valuable paintings and art objects was sold several weeks ago. Another 40 boxes of miscellany, including bar supplies and four pairs of binoculars, were unpacked for bids this past weekend.

The high-powered glasses, one pair of which bore Hoover's name, were presumably used for viewing horses at the racetrack, not spying on people.

There has been nothing in Sloan's catalog to associate either Hoover or Tolson with the items sold. Officials of the gallery refused to confirm the ownership of the items. The "consignee" had insisted on keeping the transaction private, one spokesman said.

Hoover's connection came to light after one group of paintings by American artist Lucien Powell, who died in 1930, was sold on March 3.

Two views of the Grand Canyon brought \$2,200 and \$1,500. Another, titled "Mountain of the Holy Cross," brought \$1,500.

A prominent journalist who purchased the canvases decided to find out more about the artist by contacting another famous painter of the Western scene, Peter Hurd.

According to Hurd, the two most prominent collectors of Lucien Powell paintings in the U.S. were J. Edgar Hoover and the late President Franklin Roosevelt.

All three of the paintings in the earlier Sloan auction this month are listed in the inventory of Hoover's estate, filed by Tolson with the District Court.

Also sold in that auction were a jade bowl of Hoover's which went for \$1,500 and a Pueblo Indian bowl by a well-known wife-and-husband team of potters, Maria and Julian Martinez. It brought \$600.

Hoover was a collector who regularly attended Sloan's auctions himself. The bibelots and artifacts in his household furnishings were valued for tax purposes at nearly \$70,000.

An unspecified amount has come on the market in recent months, but most buyers did not know what estate the items came from.