

THE BUREAU

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It was a blustery March evening when I arrived home at our fourth floor walk-up, my penthouse so to speak, in East Walnut Hills, in 1982. I climbed the long flights of steps in the old building, arrived at our front door, mildly out of breath, hung up my coat, and in a few moments wandered off to the bathroom. I shouted to my wife, Val, "what have you done with my most prized possession?" For there hanging above the toilet was my autographed picture of J. Edgar Hoover. She scurried in, laughed a bit, and chuckled "that's where he belongs."

My career with the FBI began in the summer of 1956. I was hired as a clerk in the Cincinnati Field office as a summer job, between my sophomore and junior years at Xavier University. I wanted to be an FBI agent and this was the entry level job for any aspiring candidate. I quickly learned two words of reverence: "The Bureau" and "The Director." The former, designed to strike fear in the hearts of criminals, spies, and miscreants of any type, while the latter struck the same kind of fear in all employees of the Federal Bureau of Investigation itself, and as we have since come to know, Presidents, Prime Ministers, and politicians.

The Cincinnati field office of the Bureau was located at Government Square, downtown Cincinnati, in the old Federal office building on Fifth Street between Main and Walnut. The Bureau occupied the second and fourth floors while Federal courts and other US Government offices occupied the remainder of the building, not the least of which was the Post Office.

The hours were eight to five, mandatory punctuality, and praise or points for VOT, the Bureau word for "voluntary overtime." The mid-fifties were a time before computers. Everything was manual, typed, filed, and highly supervised. After a couple of days of orientation; that is, seeing where the alphabet was stored, where various offices were located, and who was who, I began running errands, collecting papers, and filing in earnest. Filing pieces of paper in an FBI office is very serious stuff. They grade the clerks, the office manager, and the agents on file maintenance, where the holes were drilled, how things were chronologically arranged, overall neatness, and timeliness. Teams of inspectors regularly descended upon the office to perform these oversight tasks.

After mastering the alphabet, I then was introduced to local FBI politics, both inside and outside the office, what went on in various cubicles, and the overall structure and mission of the FBI.

The FBI was then, and is still now, an "investigative" organization under the Justice Department reporting to the Attorney General. It gathers data - thus "investigators" and prepares evidence. It is not particularly "action-oriented" and is

involved in Federal law enforcement whereas most criminal and civil crimes or actions are under State or local law jurisdiction.

The high profile crimes of the 30's wherein Mr. Hoover and the FBI gained prominence were actually under "Interstate Transportation of 'this or that'" kinds of violations or Federal statutes, not the crime itself. Therefore, the criminal mindset to "not cross a State Line."

The structure of the Bureau was exacting and exciting. It was very highly-structured, disciplined, and full of esprit de corps. There were 46 Federal Bureau of Investigation field offices in the United States each of which had multiple branch or local offices. For instance, Cincinnati was a field office with branches in Dayton, Athens, Lima, Columbus, Springfield, Portsmouth, and Yellow Springs, yes, Yellow Springs Ohio. More on this later. Each field office had a Special Agent in Charge, known as the SAC, and then three Assistant Special Agents in Charge, naturally known as ASACs. Each field office had three divisions: criminal, accounting or financial, and security and these divisions were headed by an ASAC who reported to the SAC.

The criminal division was what we normally think of as the "G-men" with bank robberies, bootlegging, murders, and the general "bad guy" stuff doing the stupid "crossing of a state line." This must have been where Elliott Ness and Melvin Purvis resided.

Accounting and financial were the white collar crimes, embezzlement, fraud, criminal violations of security laws, and consumer scams. These guys were hardly what one expected of a typical FBI agent. They were business school graduates and generally required to be Certified Public Accountants.

The third division was security. This was communists, anarchists, subversive activities, and spy kinds of things. As I mentioned earlier, the Cincinnati field office had a branch office in Yellow Springs, Ohio to infiltrate and/or monitor the goings-on at Antioch College, which was then a pretty liberal place and I believe the headquarters of the Young Socialist League. Some of these kinds of groups later became the Student Non Violent Coordination Committee, better known as SNCC, and Antioch was both a breeding and training ground. The agents in the security division tended to be quite cerebral, they read a lot, then there were others who were somewhat sleuths responsible for following people or infiltrating suspected subversive organizations.

All 46 Federal Bureau of Investigation field offices reported to Washington. It was supreme headquarters and there sat The Director, J. Edgar Hoover. He was never known as anything other than "The Director" or perhaps "Hoover." The mentioning of either one of those words struck fear into the heart of everyone from the Agent in Charge down to the newest file clerk. Under Hoover in Washington there was an Assistant to the Director Clyde Tolson, second in command, and four Assistant Directors. This small group of people were the inner circle and supervised the entire FBI network. The Director reported to the Attorney General and he to the President. Thus there were always

political undertones to various Bureau goings-on, an issue about which Hoover was acutely aware and tried to judiciously avoid. I doubt that this organizational structure was one approved of or created by Alfred Sloan or Pete Drucker.

There were about 80 agents in the Cincinnati field office, 30 in Cincinnati, and the other 50 spread out in those branch offices in Dayton, Columbus, Yellow Springs, and the like. I think 40% of them were in the criminal division, 30% in security, and 30% in financial and accounting. The office had about seven or eight clerks, an office manager, and an assistant office manager, 20 women in the typing pool, and about six private secretaries for the SAC, ASAC, and a few other related management types. There were also six night or seven security patrol clerks as the office was kept open and maintained 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The FBI was much like an elite military organization comprised of extremely dedicated men and women with great loyalty to and respect for one another.

I quickly mastered the filing task as having the requisite skill of knowing the alphabet greatly aided my performance. However, I was for the moment the new kid on the clerical staff so whichever mistakes may have occurred in putting alphabetical things in chronological order were certainly mine as far as Harry Sachs, the office manager, was concerned. As an investigative organization, always gathering data or information, this "filing thing" was very serious stuff. Cases, issues, and names of individuals were cross-referenced and linked, much like today's data based file systems, but in my day in the Bureau it was all manual, 3x5 cards on every subject or person, main files, and sub files. Agents interviewing, dictating, girls typing, and me filing. There were a whole lot more of them than me, so we file clerks were very, very busy.

I gradually got to know the routine in the FBI, office procedures, who were the productive agents, which areas were off limits, and the overall organization. Each field office was for practical purposes its own standalone law enforcement, marshal kind of organization. Not unlike a field command in a military environment. We had a motor pool, a firing range in the basement of the Federal Building, fitness facilities, a communications room, a special or secret room which contained decoding or encrypting equipment and, of course, interrogation rooms. Just the talk about "training at Quantico" gave me a rush. I felt well on the way to my goal of becoming an FBI agent.

However, the first test of my FBI credentials came out of an errant social situation. I was a college student with a relatively active social life. One Saturday evening I had the pleasure of escorting a young woman to the Sacred Heart Academy Senior Prom. Her father was a prominent judge, the Honorable Simon Leis, Sr. We had a fine evening; after the ball we went to a party at another judge's daughter's home, that of Ralph Konnen, Sr. I took Margaret Leis home late that night or early morning only to be stopped by the Cincinnati Police on Columbia Parkway for a speeding violation. Actually my first.

A few days later I informed Harry, the FBI office manager, that I had to take an hour off in the morning to go to Traffic Court. Well, one would have thought that all of

the secrets of the FBI crime lab were to be laid open to public scrutiny by Harry's reaction to my traffic violation. He rapidly informed me that any FBI employee who received any citation, violation, had to make a court appearance, or any other such thing that might be in public scrutiny, needed to inform the Bureau immediately so proper action, whatever that may be, could be taken.

Thus, I as a 19 year old file clerk with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, went to Cincinnati Traffic Court accompanied by two FBI agents. They went behind the scenes somewhere or other and my case miraculously came up third on the docket, took about three minutes for me to plead guilty, be fined, and then to appear in some office behind the judge's chambers wherein my license was given back to me, the violation which had been stamped on the back was crossed out and initialed, and my fine refunded. How all this happened I do not know, I did not complain. The two agents who accompanied me then, either on their own or at Bureau instructions, took me to the County Jail for, shall we say, a tour. It was a ghastly place, tiny cells, bad smelling, all the kinds of things that make a jail a jail. Without ever saying a word, the agents gave me the lesson that I never wanted to be in that place again.

About July 1, after a month on the job, I was awarded my first important assignment. Having been such a dependable employee, in spite of my traffic violation, I was given a position on the Emergency Air Raid Attack Team. If war started, and Cincinnati were to be bombed, my assignment was to cover the windows of the Federal Office Building with special black shades so as to diminish the visibility of this key structure from enemy air attack. I spent hours practicing with the shades, mastering the quick deployment of these covers, and scored well in my preparedness. This air raid team had drills from time to time, on weekends or at night, so when such procedures were activated those of us on the team had to remain in constant touch with the office or when we left home, provide one number for another, phone in to let Cincinnati Command Central know where we were in the event of an emergency. Classic! Here I was a 19 year old, junior in college, going out on a date, with the thrill of calling the FBI office to let them know that I was going to Coney Island to Moonlight Gardens and would be in touch in 20 minutes, it was exhilarating. Even more so, to go to the office at Moonlight Gardens, flash my credentials and say that I was an FBI person and I might be receiving an important phone call, was awesome. My mother thought I was nuts, but all the same proud of her little agent. The call never came, there was never an air raid, and outside of occasional practice, the shades were unused. Such did, however, nicely impress whomever I was dating at the time.

Again, data gathering, report writing, and filing were the main theme and function within the Bureau. Such begat "typing." Our field office had a giant "typing pool," a big room, desks, dictaphones, typewriters, and staffed by some 20 young women typing away all day.

The administration area was housed in another big office on the second floor with row upon row of file cabinets, office management people, and a group of us as the file clerks. We picked things up from the agents, dictation tapes, reports, correspondence,

organized such, distributed it to the typing pool, other routing, and then the filing. Certain things were filed in our office, others sent on to Washington, and invariably copies to a variety of people or entities. It is no wonder that one was able to frequently refer to the very well known "FBI Memo" which disclosed some criminal, securities, or political secret, sooner or later leaked to the press.

The typing pool, by the way, staffed by these 20 young women typists, was a very important place to the file clerks. Pretty young women, dedicated to the Bureau, all in quest of marrying a young agent, and of course each of us as file clerks aspired to being just that young agent. Rather like the movie "An Officer and A Gentleman." A new girl in the typing pool or a new clerk in the file room were big news, but only for a day or two.

The really big news, which of course started as a rumor, happened in late August of that first summer of my FBI career. A little background is perhaps necessary. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was highly disciplined, as I have cited in the past, well-trained, and given to keeping data, rankings, and statistics on itself, as well as everyone else in the country. Each office was regularly inspected, critiqued, and ranked. Competition from one office to another, among the Special Agents in Charge, and among the aspiring agents themselves, was common.

There were 46 Bureau field offices throughout the country, all reporting to Washington. A few in the west encompassed many states, and a number of states had two field offices. They were generally established along population lines. In the mid-fifties, the Cincinnati field office ranked 43rd or 44th in FBI offices. It was a "fun place to work," but not one out of which there were going to be any upward meritorious promotions.

One day in late August, a coded teletyped message came clicking in on this electronic communications device, high-tech for the day, a teletype machine, which we as clerks maintained. Coded messages were rare. It was immediately delivered to our Special Agent in Charge, James Gale, an almost perfect or stereotypical FBI agent, tall, muscular, handsome, reddish-blond hair, imposing figure, but bear in mind, a guy running the 44th office out of 46 in the FBI chain. Special Agent in Charge, Gale, took his coded teletype message to the secret room off of his office, and I suppose got out his decoding ring and read the message. Then the rumors began to fly. Changes in personnel, promotions, demotions, Hoover coming to town, all kinds of things. This was more exciting than an air raid. Of course, the rumors soon turned to a meager amount of factual information, and then to fact itself. Our special agent, James Gale, was being promoted to Agent in Charge in the Honolulu office, a real "cushy job" and one much sought after by every executive in Bureau hierarchy. While that was important news, the really big stuff was that Edmond G. Mason, an Assistant Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, was being sent to the Cincinnati field office as the new Agent in Charge. Awesome! However, as it became more clear in this peculiar series of events, everyone began to wonder "why?" he was being sent from Washington, an Assistant Director, to Cincinnati which was tantamount to being an Executive Vice-

President of General Motors in Detroit, living in Bloomfield Hills, being sent to manage the Fisher body plant in Norwood.

Mason, as I soon found out, had been in charge of the Training and Inspection Division of the Bureau. This was the department in charge of investigating everyone else's office, ranking them, and promoting, demoting, or affecting the careers of practically everyone in the Bureau. What had Mason done to merit such a demotion? Had others risen above him in spite of his critique? How had he alienated Hoover? Common wisdom amid the rumor mill was that Mason would certainly resign from the Bureau amid this humiliation. He did not.

Edmond G. Mason arrived in Cincinnati in mid-September 1956. He was a giant of a man in every respect, although only about 6'3". Mr. Mason may have been the best, most hard-working executive I've ever met. We file clerks, security patrol clerks, and the girls in the typing pool lived in a combination of fear and awe of this man. Initially, I believe that the agent force had somewhat more fear but such under his leadership grew to awe and admiration.

Just about the time Mr. Mason appeared on the scene, it was the time for return to college and the start of the fall semester at Xavier. Quite obviously, I could not keep up my day job and stay a full-time student. In addition, I had the pleasure or privilege of having been elected President of the Junior Class, so I had extracurricular activities which of course would only compliment my Bureau resume. Hence, I petitioned to work nights. This entailed a promotion, authorization from Washington, and further security classification. Much to my satisfaction, perhaps amazement, it came through. I was now a Security Patrol Clerk. This gave me three privileges: I wore a gray smock with FBI embossed above the left-hand pocket, I was entitled to carry a blackjack, and my security classification was upgraded to be able to file confidential and security informant memos. Perhaps sadly, I had to give up my job on the Air Raid Task Force and turn the black shades over to a mere file clerk.

These confidential informant files were something I had vaguely heard about but never been involved with. They were kept under lock and key. Just as one might expect, the FBI had an elaborate system of informants to whom they paid cash. There were criminal informants, designated "CI," and security informants, of course "SI." The criminal agents met regularly with their informants, usually in a bar, at the race track, or other such Runyanesque places where one might expect to find "my informant." The criminal informants talked about such things as who was running numbers, who was stealing money, where stolen goods were being sold, interstate transportation of various contraband, cigarettes, liquor, and the like, where the gambling was going on, and other nefarious activities all under Federal statutes, mostly being the crime of crossing a state line, not the criminal act itself.

Cincinnati's proximity to Northern Kentucky, even though the territory across the river was not a part of the geography policed by the Cincinnati field office, provided confidential informant gossip or information about goings-on in Newport, the then "sin

city." While filing such information, one could not help but read and retain interesting gossip. When we got off from work at midnight, it was only natural to roar across the river to find out if the den of iniquity was in fact where the informants said or if my government *had* wasted money on such gossip. Most of it was accurate.

The most interesting place we found was the Ace Café located at the corner of 8th and Monmouth in Newport. This corner building was a "mom and pop" cafe or bar. Very normal, store front kind of operation, a semicircular bar, stools, the kind of place one would find in every neighborhood in Northern Kentucky or Cincinnati. Around the side of the building, however, was another door, unmarked, with a peephole latch. Knocking, the latch opened, and nonsuspicious persons like college students were admitted. The door led into a corridor, lined with beer cases, to a right turn and another corridor, and then to a door into a somewhat opulent room actually in the middle of the block, no windows, and surrounded by other buildings. It had a crap table, two or three blackjack tables, a chalkboard for horse race betting behind the bar, and a variety of attractive young women either dealing blackjack or serving drinks. I invariably had a lot of money with me, up to \$25, upon my few visits to the Ace Café. Blackjack was my favorite game and I usually won three or four hands in a row turning my \$25 into \$75 or even \$100. Then, two or three hands later, it was zero. A lesson I'm still trying to learn. I fell in love with a girl dealing at the blackjack table and later in the year tried to talk her into going to the junior prom with me. She found out that I was at Xavier University, somehow or other knew that Patrick Ratterman was the Dean of Men, and that cancelled any possibility of the date. Her name was not April Flowers, but she probably knew of our Sheriff, George Ratterman.

Security patrol clerks usually worked from 3:30 until midnight two or three days a week, midnight until 8:00 a few other days a week, and an occasional day shift on Saturday or Sunday. We were responsible for maintaining the security of the FBI offices during night and weekend hours. There were guards in the Federal Building and a variety of security measures, but I'm sure that the likes of Bill Sena, in a gray smock, with a blackjack in his pocket would certainly throw fear into the heart of anyone surreptitiously entering FBI offices. There were always two of us on duty, one to maintain the telephones and teletype and the other to do filing, errands, and miscellaneous kinds of work.

The FBI had a penchant for data and keeping statistics on itself as well as crime. Among the employment statistics maintained was VOT which stood for Voluntary Overtime. Offices were given points for the average voluntary overtime for all of its agents. The Bureau in general averaged about 1 % to 2 hours of voluntary overtime per day per agent. That's a 50-hour week. Not unusual for mid-level executives. Ed Mason averaged 4% hours voluntary overtime and drove the Cincinnati field office toward that goal. That's better than 60 hours per week. With him around the office that much, I got to know Mr. Mason quite well. At night or on the weekends, security patrol clerks were there to take care of his every need, from files to coffee to meals. From all that I can remember; he was known to everyone as "Mr. Mason" unless it was someone of a similar rank, such as the Police Chief of Cincinnati, City Manager, or Mayor. Similarly, Mr.

Mason was totally deferential to superior rank, particularly the judiciary, as he often interfaced with Federal Judges, Assistant Attorneys General, or religious leaders. These measures of deference and positioning were my first experience with such protocol or procedure and have had a lasting effect upon me.

I also remember well the decor and configuration of the Bureau offices. They were distinguished, although somewhat Spartan. When Mr. Mason arrived, he brought boxes of pictures and memorabilia which adorned his personal office. Behind his desk was a large, very large autographed picture of J. Edgar Hoover and then on other walls he placed large American Indian paintings or prints, Farneys, Remingtons, or Sharps, I presume. The Agent in Charge's desk was larger than others in the offices and centered on the top in front of his desk was a large, two pen marble desk set. They were blue ink pens so as to establish authority in his signature or notations in the margins on reports. We all came to recognize his initial, a scribbled, almost Western brand like flying "M." The American flag and Justice Department flag were prominently displayed in the reception hall along with a picture of Hoover, the President, and the Attorney General. I cannot recall the order but I believe they were all the same size. The offices bespoke efficiency.

Colonel Stanley Schroetel was the then City of Cincinnati Police Chief and a frequent visitor to Mr. Mason's office and lunch or dinner guest. Their favorite place was carryout from the Wheel Cafe. At the time I thought that the two of them were meeting to share "crime busting secrets," but I know now that a good part of Bureau responsibility was to support local law enforcement agencies, particularly through the famous FBI crime lab, and coordinate local goings-on throughout the country. There were indeed jurisdictional lines, but to the best of my knowledge, in the end result, pretty good cooperation.

The hours at the Bureau, that 3:00 until midnight, or midnight until 8:00 shift, began to wear on me as a college student. I learned such valuable things as how to sleep standing up in a corner, on top of a file cabinet, or while attending the Music Appreciation course which could be somnambulistically absorbed. By mid-year, that is early 1957, I decided to run for President of Student Council figuring that I might rather be governor of the State of Ohio than Agent in Charge of the Cincinnati office and now needed to follow a political career. In the spring of the year, I ran for and won the office. Also in the spring of the year, a new girl came onto the scene in the typing pool at the Bureau, Patty Thompson. Since the dealer at the blackjack table at the Ace Café was not interested in going to the prom, I as a Senior Security Patrol clerk flirted with Patty Thompson, asked her to the prom, and, assured that in 10 or 15 years I would be either a Special Agent in Charge or governor of Ohio, she accepted.

When I resigned from the Bureau, summer of 1957, I wrote to the Director, of course, with the permission of the Bureau Office Manager, and asked for an autographed picture. It arrived a few weeks later inscribed to "William T. Sena with best wishes, J. Edgar Hoover." Such was what I found in the bathroom in my apartment in 1982. Edmond G. Mason remained in Cincinnati for the remainder of his career with the

Bureau. He led the office to excellence and it was accorded the #1 rank of all 46 field offices in 1967, two years before his retirement.
