Clyde Anderson Tolson Biography

Clyde Anderson Tolson

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Contents

Clyde Anderson Tolson Biography.....1

Contents.....2

Biography.....3

Biography

Clyde Tolson, whose career with the Federal Bureau of Investigation spanned 44 years, was as much a fixture there as was the boss, the legendary J. Edgar Hoover. Tolson was in charge of the FBI's administrative operations and its budget. He was also Hover's closest friend and advisor.

Born near Laredo, Missouri, in 1900, Tolson spent a year at business school before heading to Washington D.C. and joining the staff of the U.S. War Department. For the next decade he served as confidential secretary to the Secretary of War. He attended Georgetown University at night, earning a bachelor's degree in 1925 and a law degree in 1927.

In 1928, Tolson joined the FBI as a field officer, but Hoover moved him up to assistant director in 1930. He became assistant to the director in 1938 and associate director in 1947. Hoover and Tolson became friends, and the two spent much of their time together. They drove to and from work together, dined together, and often vacationed together. Tolson was Hoover's closest confidante, no doubt in part because Hoover knew that he could trust his reserved and publicity-shy friend.

Tolson's health began to fail in the 1960s, but he continued to work until his retirement in May of 1972, two days after Hoover's sudden death. Hoover's funeral was one of Tolson's last public appearances. Tolson inherited the bulk of Hoover's estate, including his home in Georgetown. He died of natural causes in Washington in the spring of 1975, just before his seventy-fifth birthday.