

The Dead Guy Interview

J. Edgar Hoover
(1895-1972)

WITH
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John Edgar Hoover was named director of the FBI (then known as the Bureau of Investigation of the Justice Department) in 1924 and maintained the post until he bit the dust in 1972. His long tenure was due to his ability to organize the FBI into the best law enforcement unit the world had ever seen ... and because nobody had the nerve to mess with him. Hoover had a reputation as a ruthless, lawless strongman—and it was well deserved. Not above using illegal wiretaps and hidden microphones, “The Director” collected damaging, blackmail-worthy information on anyone who got in his way. Holding onto the most seedy reports for his own personal use, Hoover kept massive files on the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., John Lennon, and Frank Sinatra, not to mention every sitting president along the way (just in case someone got the urge to can him).

MF: I gotta ask about the cross-dressing.

JEH: [pause.] I can have you killed.

MF: I thought you’d say that, which is why this interview is being recorded. So I ask again, what’s up with the reports of you wearing an ill-fitting cocktail dress?

JEH: You have no proof! There are no photos.

MF: Fine. We’ll chalk that one up to urban legend. But it does seem that Clyde Tolson {an FBI associate} was your boyfriend.

JEH: What’s your Social Security number?

MF: Says here Mr. Tolson was your companion for more than 40 years. He took vacations with you, was named the beneficiary of your life insurance policy, and is buried in a grave next to yours.

{Hoover sputters for some time.}

MF: Today, we call that a “homosexual partner.” Not that it matters. Still, you clearly took this secret to the grave.

JEH: I said **KILLED**.

MF: Any final thoughts?

JEH: I have a philosophy. You are honored by your friends, and you are distinguished by your enemies. I have been very distinguished.

MF: Well said. By the way, your bra strap’s showing. 🙄

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mental_floss: What was your first job at the FBI?

J. Edgar Hoover: I was a special assistant to Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer.

MF: What’s with all the first initials? Can’t you just say his name?

JEH: Mr. Alexander Mitchell Palmer. He was responsible for removing “undesirable elements” from America after World War I. [Hoover winks suggestively.]

MF: Right ... the Palmer Raids. You helped him round up and deport suspected communists and liberals. You were pretty much strong-arming folks right from the get-go, huh?

JEH: Lest you forget, young man, I also turned a rag-tag organization into a top-notch unit. By age 29, I’d created the bureau’s centralized fingerprint file and established its scientific crime lab. I also started the FBI National Academy, where cops from

all over the country were sent for special training.

MF: Eleanor Roosevelt called your FBI “an American Gestapo.” Thoughts? Comments? Criticism?

JEH: I never liked her.

MF: You really had a thing about commies, huh?

JEH: If you’re talking about communists and fascists—individuals who wish to overthrow our government and way of life—then, yes, I had a “thing” about them.

MF: How’d that all start?

JEH: In the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt gave me a directive to investigate both foreign espionage and left-wing activists in the United States. We needed to stop what I like to call “the mad march of Red fascism.”

MF: You mean communists—people like Charlie

Chaplin, Albert Einstein, and Marilyn Monroe?

JEH: I also investigated the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis.

MF: How’d you establish your moral compass?

JEH: I was taught by my mother that ...

MF: Oh boy, here it comes ...

JEH: ... the middle-class Protestant morality is the core of the American value system. Anything that calls those values into question should be distrusted, and possibly eliminated.

MF: What was your problem with Martin Luther King Jr.? {FBI files indicate Hoover had an obsession with King. He led near-constant efforts to bring King down, including mailing tapes of King’s sexual affairs to King’s wife and encouraging King to commit suicide.}

JEH: He was a dissenter—a left-wing activist who may well have been a communist.