



Washington Interfaith Committee Award mirrors Hoover's religious interests.

J. EDGAR HOOVER

(Continued)

A few months later, Hoover faced another test of physical courage. Louis Lepke Buchalter, notorious killer and extortionist, had sent word he would give himself up if he and the top G-man could meet alone. Hoover, according to instructions, was to walk down New York City's Fifth Avenue—alone. Lepke would approach him somewhere along the route. A perfect setup, warned FBI advisers, for an assassination of gangland's most hated man. A trick. But Hoover decided to take the chance. It paid off when Lepke stepped out of a doorway and surrendered meekly. But nobody questioned the FBI chief's courage after that.

John Edgar's father died in 1921, but the lawman continued to live with his mother in the house where he was born. He has never married. Each Sunday, for years, he and his mother sat together in the family pew of the First Presbyterian and then the National Presbyterian which succeeded it. After her death in 1938, he bought a two-bedroom brick Colonial-style home in the suburbs and filled it with books, many by such inspirational writers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Norman Vincent Peale, and Rabbi Joshua Liebman.

The softest place in his heart has always been reserved for young people. He is a leader in the Boy Scout and Boys Club movements. He is an insistent advocate of Sunday schools, recalling the juvenile court judge who, over a period of eight years, had some 8,000 boys and girls under 17 years of age brought before him. "And of those 8,000 delinquent children, only 42 regularly attended Sunday school," Hoover says.

His fiercest anger is against Godless communism. "Communism and belief in God cannot peacefully coexist because God's truth is communism's mortal enemy," he says. "Communists and communism are hostile to God. It is a battle between the forces of God and the forces of evil in which there can be no truce."

LAST WINTER, a small ceremony took place in the Hoover home. Doctor Elson, his pastor, made his annual pastoral call on his distinguished parishioner, and they exchanged small gifts as is their custom. The minister gave Mr. Hoover a New Testament, the popular new Phillips translation. Mr. Hoover gave his pastor a leather-bound first edition of the Presbyterian Articles of Faith.

If you had visited his home along with Doctor Elson, you would have seen Hoover place his New Testament on top of several other books on a reading table. On another table, very probably, you would have seen another Bible on top of other books. If you were a cynic, you probably would have considered this display somewhat ostentatious and perhaps specially arranged for this visit. You would have been wrong.

"As a youth, I was taught basic beliefs," J. Edgar Hoover explains. "For instance, I was taught that no book was ever to be placed above the Bible."

No book above the Bible. No flag above that of the United States. This is the text of the Hoover credo.

The question has been asked of Hoover, "Have you ever regretted not going into the ministry?"

In response, he tells of a visit he made several years ago to a small Southern city. "I decided in the afternoon to take a short walk," he says. "I passed a little church whose white steeple gleamed brightly in the rays of the setting sun. Drawn by its picturesque beauty, I saw on the announcement board near the door a phrase which I have remembered. It was the topic for Sunday's sermon, and it said, 'Do what you can, with what you have, wherever you are, for God and America.'"

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