

IN FOCUS

Jack Anderson Falls

By Michael Satchell
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Jack Anderson, as he might put it himself, has finally been caught with his pants down, and with some very strange bedmates.

The Washington media muckamuck, who helped charter the Diplomat National Bank, learned to his chagrin that secret bank stockholders included Tongsun Park and Pak Bo Hi, key figures in the congressional influence peddling scandal, and Sun Myung Moon, the religious leader.

Conflict of interest. Guilt by association. Two and two make five. That's what some of the news stories have charged. And last week, crying foul

and denying everything, Anderson was forced much against his will to sever his association with the bank.

To some, there is a delicious irony in the fact that Anderson — nemesis of official wrongdoers, baiter of bungling bureaucrats, muckraker *extraordinaire* — has finally been hoisted by his own petard.

For Anderson to be trapped — much like one of the subjects of his column — in a situation in which there is the mere appearance of conflict of interest, leaves many friends and former employes wondering just what has happened lately to the dean of America's investigative reporters.

IS JACK ANDERSON getting soft

'I'll eat any story I ever

and complacent? Too successful? Too confident of his own infallibility? Has the comforter of the afflicted and afflicter of the comfortable become one of the privileged fatcats himself?

The answer, with qualifications, seems to be yes. Jack Anderson, once the lean, hungry scourge of official Washington, the terror of the Federal Triangle and Embassy Row, has fallen victim to his own enormous success.

Said one former Anderson reporter: "Something has happened to Jack in recent years that's very dangerous. It worries me because I'm deeply

Victim to His Enormous Success

wrote promoting banks'

fond of him. He thinks that what's good and bad for Jack Anderson is good and bad for America and the more outlets he has to spread his gospel, the better he likes it.

"He's like some politicians. Pretty soon the pursuit of success transcends the ideal from which it's all founded. Jack has lost perspective on himself. He believes his own bull — and he believes it passionately."

Bob Owens and Jack Cloherty, two young reporters who worked for Anderson for several years but quit in September to begin their own column, agreed with that assessment.

"Jack now sees himself in the role as the guardian of America, as the champion of freedom, and he feels he can do no wrong," Cloherty said. "He's become one of the pooh-bahs that he himself ridicules."

Added Owens: "His judgment has been warped. There was no reason for Jack to stay in that bank. But even though he knew there might be an appearance of conflict, he wouldn't get out until he absolutely had to. He developed a moral blindspot on the Korean stuff."

EASING BACK in his leather office chair, slipped feet up on a desk that might grace a GS-15's office, his chipmunk wattles and ice-cream paunch visible, evidence of his major vice,

Anderson seemed genuinely puzzled by the criticism that his involvement with the bank has generated.

"I didn't anticipate there would be conflict: there was nothing wrong with what I was doing," he protested. "I'll eat any story I ever wrote promoting banks. My only aim in helping to start the bank was to help the Asian-American community."

But why, when friends counseled resignation from the board of directors when the Moon-Park-Hi involvement became apparent, did he remain?

"Knowing what I know now, I would have gotten out earlier," he said. "What was not reported was the

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fact that I tried to keep Moon out. The stories portrayed me as being in business with Moon and Tongsun Park, which wasn't true. And I don't even have a financial interest in the bank."

Denial on record. But does he feel just a bit like some of those people skewered in his columns in the past? Isn't there a little poetic justice working here?

"I know my motives were pure, but others don't see it. Yes. I've been tarred with my own brush. I said to the staff, this experience should teach us one thing: We've got to be fair about whom we write about, and treat them as we would like to be treated ourselves."

Jack Anderson. Contrite? Yes. And there's more.

In July and August he wrote to Rep. Donald Fraser whose House subcommittee was investigating the Diplomat bank after uncovering Moon's involvement.

Anderson, who is a rich man thanks to leaks and loose-mouthed bureaucrats, protested that a Fraser assistant, Richard Mauzy, had been guilty of "irresponsible news leaks" concerning the bank.

HE CASTIGATED MAUZY for "spreading false, malicious innuendoes" and told Fraser: "We invite you to bring the evidence to us (the bank), if you have any, instead of leaking it to the press." Mauzy, charged Anderson, "actively peddled stories to reporters about Moon's supposed hold on the bank."

"I was angry," Anderson acknowledged, suggesting that maybe he shouldn't have written the letters. "But I had no financial interest in the bank. The stories were false. I didn't do anything wrong."

Outside of Woodward and Bernstein's fame and fortune — based on a single continuing story — Jack Anderson's years of hard work and steady record of news scoops have made him easily the most well known, widely read and probably wealthiest investigative reporter in America.

After laboring for 22 years and not much money in virtual anonymity behind Drew Pearson's byline, Anderson took over the column when Pearson died Sept. 1, 1969. He inherited Washington Merry-Go-Round with some 650 subscribers, a two-room office, Joe Spear, a solid reporter still with him, and Opal Ginn as secretary and office gatekeeper.

ANDERSON BUILT UP a first-class staff that included at various times Brit Hume, now an ABC Television correspondent, Cloherty, Owens and Les Whitten, his principal reporter who now shares the column byline and who enjoys the kind of respect from his media peers that has eroded from Anderson, at least in Washington.

"Jack used to get terrific material because he was the only guy that little government employees could go to," a top New York Times reporter said. "Since Watergate, every major publication's doing this type of story. Jack's sucking wind now and I've never seen a larger proportion of stories in his column that patently serve to curry favor with sources. Some of his stories are stuff that everyone else has checked out and dismissed . . ."

After putting together his reporting team, Anderson led his troops out to rake the muck and they were extraordinarily successful. Bundles of



—Associated Press

secret documents flew over the transom and landed in their front office like the Sunday paper thumping on the doorstep. Anderson had a thousand faceless bureaucrats as unpaid staffers and a cabinet officer or two besides.

The column, aimed more for the "Kansas City milkman" than the lofty thinkers of official Washington, was solidly reported (most times) and hyped, say his staffers, to the absolute limit. It was, and still is, populated with czars, titans, panjandrums and moguls who don't merely speak, comment or answer questions but who grumble, whine, snivel and snort.

It was a pungent mixture of solid, important news beats and titillating gossip of high level shennanigans. The scoops came thick and fast, culminating with the Dita Beard memo in the ITT scandal and the National Security Council's secret minutes showing U.S. duplicity in the Indo-Pakistan war.

The stories earned Anderson the enmity of official Washington, surveillance by the CIA, the personal wrath of Richard Nixon and the Pulitzer prize.

Columnist Jack Anderson talks about his long and colorful career as a Washington insider.

AS ANDERSON'S FAME grew, so did the number of subscribers to his column (he now appears in about 1,000 newspapers.) Gradually he began branching out into radio and television and public appearances. He and his wife also continued investing in land, stocks, real estate, and Chinese restaurants.

With his increasing success, Anderson has devoted less and less time to producing the column, more and more to other interests. Anderson himself says he does maybe 15 to 20 percent of the raw reporting although he puts the finishing licks on each column. What has happened, say his former cohorts, is that Anderson is gradually shedding his role as a fulltime reporter to enjoy the fame and perquisites that accrue to a public personality.

"Jack is really the quintessential American, a guy from a humble background, deeply religious, who has made good," said Brit Hume. "He has become a showman proselytizing his ideas much as he learned to do as a young Mormon missionary. Oh, my God, you should see him when he gives a speech (for \$2,500 or so plus expenses). He's spell-binding. A real Chautauqua performance. But Jack doesn't understand what's happening to him. I've told him that he's now sounding like the people he's been exposing for years."

Cloherly and Owens, like Hume frustrated by having their scoops reported by someone else — as Anderson himself was when working for Pearson — recall that Anderson would sometimes have no time for checking things that only he could check, but would make time for nonessential things.

"There was always a big scramble and a lot of pressure to get stories out," Owens said. "I once asked him if he would get a quote from Kissinger on a story, but he said he didn't have time. But then he would sit in his office for two hours and talk to some high school editor. Unbelievable."

Said Cloherly: "During the Lockheed affair, we had so many Japanese reporters coming by for interviews with Jack that we got to calling it the 'Rockheed' scandal. People from all around the world call him for his opinions and he loves to give them, even though he may know nothing about a certain subject."

One former staffer recalled: "He flew to Sacramento to testify in the Bee newsmen's contempt trial. He really didn't want to go but he said: 'I am the champion of the freedom of the press and feel I have to go.' That's how he really thinks of himself."

THE CHAMP SAT in his elegantly restored townhouse office on 16th street the other morning (he owns a third interest in the building), looking a decade younger than his 53 years. Those who know Anderson say he has two very distinct and different personalities.

One is the public, buttoned-up Jack Anderson, self righteous, pompous, bombastic, moralistic, stern, stentorian and ludicrously defensive. The other is the private man, just Jack, amiable, tolerant, genial, relaxed, a man with a wonderful sense of humor, a great friend.

This day, Jack had his slippers on, his tie loose, his waistcoat unbuttoned. Some fine Oriental art pieces decorate his office wall. Facing his desk is a

sketch of the Three Wise Monkeys plus a companion. The 4th monkey is saying into a telephone: "Hello, Jack Anderson."

Perhaps the one thing that Anderson fears most as an upshot of the bank affair is the loss of his flagship paper, The Washington Post. Former staffers say that the Post has consistently plundered and abused his column, stealing scoops from it with the four-day lead time, running them on Page One the same day his newsbeat appears on the comic page. Other times they have left his column out of the paper or moved portions around to, say, get a denial higher up in the column.

ANDERSON HAS NOT protested this treatment except on rare occasions and then his response has been uncharacteristically timid, former staffers say. They wonder if the Post's heavy play given to their stories of Anderson's bank involvement and examination of his personal finances is a prelude to dropping Merry-Go-Round, a prospect that reportedly "terrifies" him.

Not surprisingly, Anderson tempers his words carefully on this subject although he does say that the Post stories on his bank involvement were "unfair." His associate Les Whitten was not so restrained, calling one Post story on the subject "the single sleaziest story I've seen in the paper since I began reading it in 1957."

Anderson sits comfortably with his success but denies that the accumulation of wealth motivates him. He estimated his and his wife's personal worth at around \$250,000 but insisted that includes a lot of heavy mortgages. Hume, a close friend as well as former colleague, said he thought Anderson was probably a millionaire.

His column, appearances each morning on ABC's "Good Morning America," Mutual radio network programs, Parade magazine articles and a business newsletter bring in some \$334,000 annually, Anderson said. All of this money, he added, is ploughed back into the combined news operation in order to add more reporters. He currently has a staff of 10.

Anderson said he supports his wife and nine children with the \$100,000 he earns each year from making speeches, and from income on investments. "You want to see my income tax returns?" he asked. "I'll be very happy to show them to you."

A SUGGESTION that he had perhaps become a little too self important, that he had begun to believe his own public relations, drew a hurt look and a pained denial.

"God, I hope not. I used to criticize Drew for that," he said quietly. "I've never promoted myself."

But what about the bicentennial slogan contest? he was asked. What about his national suggestion box? Or his filmed bicentennial theme television interview with President Ford that the networks refused to screen because it smacked too much of self promotion for Jack Anderson.

"After Watergate," he said, "I found people cynical, apathetic. I sensed a breakdown between the governors and the governed. That's one of the reasons I did it."

"This may come out sounding self serving and noble but I believe I must be a voice for the voiceless," he said. "Over the years I've gotten hundreds of thousands of letters from little people who say: 'Nobody will listen to us but you. Please help.' And I've been able to help them."

"The honest truth is that I used to enjoy this job a lot more when I was working for Drew. Now, I really don't like the job all that much."