

# for Enquirer

*Love, laughs, UFOs  
spark spunky tabloid*

By Robert Cross

Chicago Tribune Press Service

LANTANA, Fla.—Harried men and women barked into telephones and pounded typewriters. Intense editors scribbled instructions on reams of copy. Somewhere, presses roared and circulation trucks sped for distant points with fresh news and headlines from the National Enquirer.

"Jeane Dixon predicts the Next President," "Baby Girl Falls 20 Floors—And Lives," "Black Belt Karate Expert—At 8," "Barbra Streisand's [never before revealed] Unloved Childhood," "Andy Williams Croons: I'm in Love With a Wonderful Girl. . ."

Oh, oh. As bad luck would have it, Andy Williams crooned his devotion to girlfriend Laurie Wright on the Enquirer's copyrighted front page during the very week that Williams' ex-wife allegedly shot her boyfriend. Well, that's the sort of embarrassment a weekly "good news" publication risks when it works several days ahead of time to put 64 pages of gossip and "human interest" into virtually all of the nation's supermarket checkout newsstands.

THE NATIONAL Enquirer isn't an ordinary newspaper. While metropolitan dailies are covering crime, wars, government scandals, presidential primaries, and such, the news hawks here in Lantana are tracking down stories that fit into their paper's rigid, "reader-oriented" tabloid format. The Enquirer insists on looking at the brighter side of things—from a movie star's latest romance to the latest "cure" for cancer.

"We have different categories than the dailies, but we feel they're the types of things people like," says the Enquirer's 49-year-old publisher and sole owner Generoso Pope Jr. "Unless a story has an upbeat ending, I won't run it."

Pope's positive attitude is supported by the Enquirer's circulation figures. In January, when psychic Jeane Dixon's predictions for the year were front-paged, the nation's best-selling periodical hit an all-time high sale of 5,300,000 copies for a single week. Even in ordinary weeks, circulation regularly tops 4,500,000, and some members of the staff wear "6 [million] in '76" buttons when they go out to cover their stories on UFO sightings, flagpole sitters, and sculptors of pinheads. Ultimately, Pope hopes for 20 million weekly circulation and widespread foreign distribution.

HE BOUGHT THE Enquirer for \$75,000 in 1952 when it was little more

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than a New York City tout sheet. A former Central Intelligence Agency agent and son of a prosperous sand and gravel contractor, Pope got a smattering of publishing experience when he worked on his father's Italian-language newspaper, *Il Progresso*. Experimenting with his own paper, he soon hit upon a formula to build circulation: Gore.

Pope has denied rumors that mobster Frank Costello, a friend of the family, got him over the lean years with cash loans. Anyway, soon after the *Enquirer* launched its bloody decade on the mayhem beat ("Madman Cut Up His Date and Put Her Body in His Freezer," screamed a typical headline of the early '60s), the publisher became financially independent.

"We ran a lot of gore purely because I noticed that people used to congregate around accident scenes," Pope says. "That's not something we're proud of."

WHEN CIRCULATION got stuck at one million and corner newsstands were closing at an alarming rate, Pope began hiring what is now a field force of 172 full-time and 700 part-time "salesmen, checkers, and job-racking guys" with supermarket experience. These aggressive men and women put the *Enquirer* near the checkout counters of every major grocery chain and most independents.

Pope realized that supermarkets prefer to confine butchery to their meat counters, and so in 1968, the *Enquirer* swept out the gore and became wholesome. The current melange of exposes [government waste is a favorite theme], celebrity gossip, psychic phenomena, inspirational messages, and bizarre adventure is put together by a staff of 180 which is liberally sprinkled with experienced tabloid hands from the United Kingdom and Australia.

"WE LOOK FOR angles all the time, which is, perhaps, British tabloid journalism," said executive editor Ian Calder, a native of Slernannan, Scotland, "but it's also American tabloid journalism. The New York Daily News always looks for angles."

Although all of the 50 reporters and writers are American, the executive level is thick with British accents. High salaries [as much as \$44,400 a year for the equivalent of an assistant city editor] do tend to attract top talent from Britain, where journalism is considered more of a craft than a noble profession.

"Pope runs this place with an iron fist," one editor said. "People are always going around with the fear that they will not deliver what the boss wants."

POPE SPENDS freely on his product—\$14,000,000 a year for the editorial department alone—and thinks nothing of sending a reporter around the world in search of Paradise or up the side of Mt. Everest looking for the Abominable Snowman.

**ENQUIRER** Your 26 Best Food Buys in February

## U.S. ARMY HELICOPTER TAILED BY FLYING SAUCER



Doris Day, 51, & Barry Comden, 41: We're in Love

National Enquirer's page one.

Then, likely as not, the story might be killed for lack of an angle, an upbeat ending, proper documentation, or simply because Pope doesn't feel good about it. He recently spent \$150,000 for serial rights to the book being written by Judith Campbell Exner, who claims that she was an intimate friend of President Kennedy.

AS FRIVOLOUS as much of the *Enquirer's* content seems to be, Pope and his staff insist that all stories must be thoroughly documented. Reporter Frank Zahour was sent to Rio early this year to inspect a statue of Christ that reputedly bled and performed miracles.

"An Associated Press guy down there was amazed at all the leg work I had to do," Zahour said. "I tracked down the guy who diagnosed the blood and got a signed statement. I even went through medical records."

Finally, Zahour and his editors were convinced that the "Bleeding Christ" was legitimate, and the *Enquirer* published a story about the alleged phenomenon.

YET WHEN REPORTER Mike Wallace of CBS's "60 Minutes" recently confronted Calder with a doctored front page photograph of Raquel Welch and Freddie Prinz, Calder readily admitted that separate photos of Welch and Prinz had been blended together. Calder claimed the gaffe was unprecedented and wouldn't happen again.

But another staff member inadvertently indicated that the *Enquirer's* passion for accuracy might not always rule out its thirst for sensation. Jules d'Hemecourt, a former articles editor now working in the executive suite, was marveling about the *Enquirer's* lavish photo coverage of Aristotle Onassis' funeral. Someone had caught Jackie Onassis with a smile on her face.

"It was a terrific photographic coup," d'Hemecourt said. "I couldn't believe it. I thought it was gimmicked when I first saw the front page."