The untold story: how the National Enquirer covers the capital
By Randy Fitzgerald

YOU probably saw it on your way through the supermarket checkout counters last month. One could hardly miss it, poking up like a miniature billboard and screaming for attention. JOIN OUR NATIONWIDE TAX CUT DRIVE, it read, streaming for attention. JOIN OUR NATIONALWIDE TAX CUT DRIVE!

JOHN-WIDE TAX CUT DRIVE, it read, streaming for attention. JOIN OUR NATIONALWIDE TAX CUT DRIVE!

The National Enquirer these days—hadn't you noticed?—is trying to get serious again. Its editors periodically engage in this self-therapy. They desperately want to be respectable. They want everyone in Washington to realize that down there in Florida at the home of the French Foreign Legion of American Journalism there's a stethoscope fixed on the pulse throes of lower and middle America.

Tabletops are always searching out, as good surfers do, an opportunistic ride on the most promising waves of public opinion, and the Enquirer is an old hand at the surfing game. Its cover trumpeted "The Amazing Appeal of Jews" and "The Amazing Appeal of Roots" a month after those topics suddenly became fashionable. This does not necessarily mean, however, that one should greet with a home-laugh the Enquirer's appointment of itself to "champion America's growing tax revolt" or its threat to run out of office sit "falcate and fire the pots at will. It may even be right, for the American proletariat, it finally have access to a newspaper that with a circulation of 8 million a week (7,000,000 in the Washington metropolitan area) and a reputation as titillante for the American proletariat, it finally has accumulated enough political clout to hire and fire the pols at will. It may even be right.

"So get scared, Mr. Politician," warned an editorial in that July 11 issue, "CUT ... CUT ... CUT or we'll give your champion America's growing tax revolt" or accompanying editorial in that July 11 issue, "CUT ... CUT ... CUT or we'll give your champion America's growing tax revolt."

Although Dorman was viewed with scorn by some Johnson administration figures, he appeared to have a ready entree to other prominent Washington politicos. "He has a sense of theater about everything," said a one-time Enquirer board member, describing the way Dorman operates. "There aren't many guys that go around in white Panama in the summer and homburgs in the winter, wear chintz coats and ride in papal limousines. He trades on people and professes to know everybody."

In 1969, Dorman phoned up his friend Hubert Humphrey, who was at that time out of office. Humphrey agreed to act as intermediary between the Enquirer and the National Association of Food and Supermarket Chains. Through the association the tabloid hired food brokers and consultants. Working with the Nixon administration, Dorman arranged White House tours for visiting supermarket executives. At cocktail parties, administration officials and Washington movers-and-shakers were duly impressed with Enquirer political connections.

"For the 1971 Supermarket Institute convention in Florida," recalls William Hall, then Enquirer marketing director, "Dorman got Hubert Humphrey, Sen. Bob Dole, Sen. Fritz Hollings and Sen. Charles Percy. How Dorman did it, I don't know. There was an honorarium. He acquired these guys around the Enquirer. A bunch of them was around the Enquirer."

But that day we made sure he got to ride in the limousine with Sen. Humphrey. We got into Red Owl stores shortly thereafter."

The most effective sales job was yet to come. "We were thinking of getting national advertising," Dorman related. "We needed something that would help the image of the Enquirer. So I was able to get Chet Huntley to narrate a film. We were able also to find a number of people to appear in the film who felt well about the Enquirer."

Here are some excerpts of the star-studded cast's remarks:

Sen. Mark Hatfield—"The growth in circulation of the National Enquirer as a national weekly newspaper points out the importance of maintaining free and accessible information over a wide range of subjects for the American citizen to be able to exercise his rights of citizenship more adequately."

Rep. Shirley Chisholm—"The new National Enquirer's growth in circulation is a clear indication that the Enquirer has become very involved with the issues and problems of concern and interest to the American people today. It shows a clear attemint and sensitivity to many of the things that Americans are talking about and want to know more about."

Sen. Frank Church—"The emergence of the Enquirer as a provocative national publication is evidence of the changing tastes and attitudes in American life during the decade of the 70's."

Sen. Barry Goldwater—"I like the new Enquirer. I think that Enquirer has established a reputation for fairness and it's more read and more here on the Hill because the people who read it know they're getting impartial reporting and very accurate reporting."

Jeanne Dixon—"I feel that The National Enquirer, former Enquirer reporter, is co-author with Chris Toren of Give Me the Minda of Peasants, an as-yet-unpublished book about the National Enquirer."
The Enquirer employees on assignments in the Washington area submit article ideas and stories to editors based in the office, but presumably a greater incentive to produce the scandal and titillating trivia on which the tabloid thrives. Dozens of free-lancers in the Washington area submit article ideas and stories to editors based in the office. Since only one out of three completed stories is ever reprinted from the National Enquirer, and the did so that for any publication. Several days later, after conferring with Goldwater, Smith elaborated: "He has absolutely no recollection of the film." In one instance he thought he could do it for the National Observer or National Review.

Gene Pope personally approves story ideas and, without exception, every completed story before it goes into print. Usually four or five Washington stories appear in each issue. In that July 11 tax cut edition there were an unprecedented 15, five on the tax revolt and government spending, others attacking retired military "fascists," a National Science Foundation study, government lawyers and one by Morton Free-lancer Adele Brecher criticizing

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President Carter for appointing a lesbian to a national commission. That is the serious side of the tabloid. You're just as likely to see stories portraying public servants as the playmates of Enquirer reporters, together out for a stroll in a thimble of the absurd.

"Enquirer Reporter Hoaxes Oil-Hungry Washington . . . Phony Sheik Gets VIP Treatment From U.S. Senators," a recent headlines stated. An Australian free-lancer for the tabloid, former Toronto Star reporter Brian Hogan, wrote that he had posed as Sheikh Ophna Biran, ruler of Halat Al-Bhudi, a fictitious oil-rich state on the Persian Gulf, to gain entrance to four Senate offices where his interpreter told tall tales about the sheik's vast oil supply.

Sen. Henry Bellmono (R.-Okl.), after bowing, shaking hands and back-slapping with the sheik, asked about the location of Halat Al-Bhudi: "Is this one of the Trucial States?"

"No," said the interpreter, Enquirer reporter Patrick Wilkins, "It's independent. And I'm sure that you'll want to stress that the U.S. has a very firm relationship with the Arab countries."

"Right," Bellmon snapped.

Bellmon did not learn of the hoax until the Enquirer story appeared. "He thought it was ridiculous," commented Andrew Twington, Bellmon's press secretary.

"The first dignitary to fall over himself trying to befuddle the phony sheik," the tabloid reported, was Sen. James Abourezk (D.-S.D.).

"I am of Arab heritage myself and I am very happy to greet the sheik," said Abourezk. But when he began chatting in fluent Arabic, the sheik and his interpreter quickly had to excuse themselves. Abourezk later refused to comment on the incident, but it is known to have been furious. Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D.-Wis.) and Sen. John Danforth (R.-Mo.) were also shocked into the box, bowing and hand-shaking with the Enquirer reporters. Danforth even took time to explain how the U.S. government works.

Thirty-year-old Jay Gourley undertook the assignment that several other freelancers couldn't stomach—going through the Russian embassy's garbage in search of scandal.

"I wasn't stupid enough to think there was anything important in there," says the reporter who made headlines three years ago rummaging through Henry Kissinger's trash.

"The Russians take their garbage seriously. And even if I found plans for a sneak attack on the United States, who would believe us anymore?"

He tried convincing the Enquirer that the story was a waste of time. They wouldn't listen. Someone at the tabloid, probably the publisher himself, wanted an inventory of Russian garbage, no matter what the cost. At $150 a day plus expenses, Gourley wasn't too particular about whose eccentric curiosity he was satisfying.

For seven days, eight to ten hours at a stretch, Gourley sat reading philosophy and formal logic in a housing unit whose pickup parked illegally across from the embassy on 16th Street. Executive Protective Service guards periodically asked for his press credentials or told him to move backward or forward.

"I'll always remember Caylor's words after I'd proved myself under fire six years ago. He asked when I was going to get smart and double my salary by joining the Enquirer. I recalled the stories I'd heard of the publisher's mercurial editorial vision. I thought of the formula about stories of the occult, health and government, the pressure to outdo someone else for information. And I thought of the desperation in Caylor's voice the first time he phoned me. I decided I was a hungry young reporter, but not that hungry."

"Sure!" Caylor asked, before adding seductively: "Listen, let me tell you something. The mouthwatering sure is great down here."

—Rudy Maxa

a few yards. On a Thursday Gourley finally targeted his prey. "I'm not usually very excited when I see a garbage truck," he says, recalling that moment when a private trash collection truck pulled up to the embassy compound. Two cars were rolled out, the garbage dumped in the truck, and away the truck sped down 18th Street with Gourley in pursuit.

He signaled the driver over in front of the State Department. "You want to pay me for that trash?" the sanitation worker stammered, when Gourley offered $40 for the entire load. They transferred about a half-ton of trash to the pickup. "He was the happiest garbage man I'd ever seen," Gourley recalled.

With his girlfriend helping, Gourley separated and catalogued the garbage on the RFK stadium parking lot. They found lots of empty vodka bottles, ashes and melted metal, cheap Russian consumer goods and what you would expect to find. Scoring a few items so trivial he doesn't remember what they were, Gourley mailed the inventory to Enquirer headquarters. The story never ran.

More recently, Gourley picked up four or five bags of garbage from the homes of presidential aides Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell. He pieced together several suspicious campaigns. They never read; they would spend 10 convictions hearing room for the benefit of an Enquirer photographer, Van Deering played along according to script: "My God," he exclaimed, "this is incredible. I'm shocked and amazed." The completed story never ran because Gene Pope feared someone in the Enquirer would call us with startling regularity," Dick Drayne, "or "Surely yea won't deny . . ." Then if the victim answers a simple yes or no, the reporter quotes them as having said, "Yes, I believe . . ." and "I can't deny . . ." always adding, of course, that the victim was "shocked" or "outraged." I negotiated for quotes with staff assistants to Rep. John Murphy (D-N.Y.) and Rep. Robert Bessman (R-Md.). They never complained when I attributed quotes to them that I or an Enquirer editor had concocted in a moment of feverish inspiration.

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week's front page headline: "Exclusive New Evidence: Lee Harvey Oswald Did Not Kill JFK." "Here's all the secret nonsense that we had yesterday," said Badham scornfully, referring to information in a House Assassination Committee report, April 30, 1977, used to justify further funding of the JFK investigation.

Badham complained that the Enquirer article contained "the same type of unsubstantiated rumors" as the assassination report. He proposed that instead of moer, members of the Assassinations Committee be given subscriptions to the Enquirer. The motion died for lack of a second.

Two weeks later, at checkout counters in every major grocery store chain, millions of readers learned how the "Enquirer's New JFK Assassination Evidence Is As Good As Anything The Government Has." Badham's sarcastic remarks had been cleverly twisted to make it appear he was praising rather than ridiculing the nation's most widely read newspaper.

Self-promotion is an integral function of editorial policy at the Enquirer. Manipulating the news appears to be the logical extension of Gene Pope's philosophy that any publicity, no matter how disparaging, will serve to benefit the tabloid's quest for readers.

When Enquirer free-lancer Jay Gourley confiscated Henry Kissinger's garbage one hot July night in 1975, the resulting firestorm of media attention was manipulated to make Kissinger, rather than the Enquirer, the butt of a national joke.

"Are there any senators you can talk to?" asked editor E. G. Martin, formerly of Copley News Service, asked two of his reporters one morning the week after Gourley's trash haul. Martin's face had the waxy pallor of a man who had spent the night locked in a closet with a horde of rats. His reportert rattled off the names of their favorite trashed seals.

"Good. Now drop everything you're doing and go get them up. See if they will say the Enquirer did a public service in exposing the security leak in Kissinger's garbage!"

There was a moment of stunned silence. The "security leak" consisted of a few dozen routine Secret Service working papers wadded up amidst the empty case of Cadillac dog food, two unopened jars of Mott apple sauce, Nancy Kissinger's mascara-smereed tissue, and assorted personal goop. Nothing even remotely spectacular had been found.

With dubious enthusiasm, Chris Toremen and I divided up the senators. We initially had pinned our hopes on colorful senators like Roman Hruska of Nebraska (the defender of mediocrity on the Supreme Court) and William Scott of Virginia (who once called a press conference to deny published reports he was the "dumbest senator"). But even these two refused to be associated with garbage. Finally, after surprisingly little coaxing, the late Sen. Lee Metcalf (D-Mont.) and Sen. Jennings Randolph (D-W.Va.) volunteered statements to Toremen condemning Kissinger for having left trash on a public sidewalk.

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President Gerald Ford found himself sucked into promoting the Enquirer with alarming regularity. On one occasion a photographer caught him in an unguarded moment and thrust a copy of the Enquirer into his hands. As Ford cautiously opened it, the photographer snapped a shot that ran a few weeks later with the headline, "President and Mrs. Gerald Ford belong to the Enquirer's wonderful, ever-growing family of readers."

Two months later, in August 1976, the Enquirer dumped at the White House gate 32 cartons of letters weighing more than 600 pounds from readers demanding that Ford take action to halt the breeding of pedigree dogs for profit. Those that did not meet pedigree standards, so the tabloid alleged, were left to die. The Enquirer promised in its letters: "There were no way I could get all those letters through White House security. So I put them out in my backyard and burned them."

The final break in relations between Ford and the Enquirer occurred when presidential press secretary Ron Nessen refused to allow a dog named Lucky, the Enquirer's mascot, to play on Ford's deck. "We won't lend ourselves to this kind of gimmick," Nessen told reporter Phil Garlington. Six weeks later, Lucky got revenge when the Enquirer published: "Leading Psychiatrists Agree...President Ford Is Accident Prone Because He Feels Guilty About His Job." (Lucky regained his luck in the Carter administration. Through the assistance of the First Lady's press office, Lucky posed on the White House lawn with Amy Carter's spaniel Gracie, a pose duly recorded in the National Enquirer.)

During the 1976 presidential campaign, which was based in part on the Georgians' preferred belief in flying saucers, the Enquirer threw its support...
behind Jimmy Carter. It wasn’t a direct editorial endorse- 
ment. Gene Pope prefers to disguise his opinions as the tabloid’s usual exotic 
publim.

“This was made clear to us,” recalled Dottie Miller-Collie, a for- tner Times editorial 
reporter, at the Enquirer Washington bureau, “nothing unusual about 
Jimmy Carter was going to be published in the En-
quiper.”

On April 13, 1976, more than two entire pages were 
devoted to six stories about Carter, including an analysis of his handwriting, three "top psychiatrists" quoting 
losing “The Secret of His Astonishing Appeal,” and a “truth detector” test that revealed Carter as “The Hon-
est Man Who’ll Never Lie to the American Public.” One 
week later appeared: “Gov. Carter’s Wife, Jimmy and I 
Lived in a Haunted House for Five Years.”

On June 16, 1976, the pa-
per’s cover announced in 
one-inch tall letters: JIMMY 
CARTER: THE NIGHT I 
SAW A UFO... If Elected 
I’ll Make All the Gov’t’s UFO 
Information Public.” Says 
the future president “I am 
convinced that UFO’s exist 
because I’ve seen one.”

Once his nomination was 
secured, Enquirer editors 
began portraying Carter as the 
only human being capa-
ble of putting the fear of God 
in the Russians. Aug. 3, for 
example: “Why Soviet Lead-
ers Are Terrified of Jimmy 
Carter Becoming President.” 
Sept. 21: “Russians Keep 
Trying to Influence U.S. 
Presidential Elections—Now 
They Want Ford to Win.”

No mention of any conse-
quence was ever made of 
Gerald Ford during the cam-
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had the support of the 
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But the Enquirer, as one 
might expect, has turned on 
the president it helped put in 
office. Apparently Jimmy 
Carter has reneged on his 
promise to make public all 
the information on UFOs 
contained in U.S. govern-
ment files. “Carter Broke 
His Promise on UFOs,” 
headed a May 27 (1976) 
headline. 

Fumed an indignant Rep. 
Haugt: “The U.S. government 
is engaged in an outer-space 
Watergate of mind-boggling 
proportions.”

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tunic topped pajama.

Acetate nylon tricot
In a bold floral print.

Hot pink, jade green or
wedgewood blue ground.

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Relax in a button front coat and 
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