

No Secrets Behind the Stamp

THE ANDERSON PAPERS. By Jack Anderson with
George Clifford

(Random House. 275 pp. \$6.95)

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Reviewed by
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The reviewer, a former Washington Post reporter, is director of the Washington Journalism Center.

Jack Anderson, the all-American reporter, has written a disappointing book. The jacket has a large red "Secret" stamp on it along with the legend, "From the files of America's most famous investigative reporter," but inside there is only a rather flat rehash of Anderson's ITT, FBI and Bangladesh escapades as well as an apology for his disgraceful role in the Eagleton affair.

There is too much preaching in the book, too. Like his predecessor Drew Pearson, Anderson has a disturbing, often cloying messianic streak which surfaces much more often in his public speaking than in his column. Anderson is a Mormon and Pearson was a Quaker and both of them have wanted the world to know that they are eager to save it.

In trying to explain away, for example, his unsubstantiated report that Sen. Thomas Eagleton (D-Mo.)

had been cited for from six to 11 traffic violations ranging "from drunken and reckless driving to speeding," Anderson writes: "It was not the first mistake I have made. Being an optimist, I hope it will be the last. I have recounted it here in the hope that some who are down on the press will see how much effort and anguish it takes to produce a flop, and find in this failure not a confirmation of their general distrust, but rather a better understanding of the news business and, hopefully, new faith that a free press, in its stumbling way, is the best safeguard for ultimate truth."

Only a man like Anderson with unbounded faith in himself and the goodness of his works could find that kind of comfort in what was a reckless error that not only damaged him but hurt all of journalism in the process.

I don't like to bad-mouth Anderson because both he and Pearson have done much over the years to keep government honest, but the pressures on the Washington Merry-Go-Round column are tremen-

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A Book Stamped 'Secret'

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dous. Published seven days a week, it promises a scandal a day, and not even Anderson and his handful of aides can come up with that many. Often the column is wrong, and sometimes a snippet of information is hoked up because yet another deadline is fast approaching. In addition to the column, Anderson also turns out television broadcasts and lectures around the country.

These same pressures apply to all of journalism, of course, but they are particularly virulent among columnists who must produce on schedule something that at least sounds new.

The largest part of book is given over to a retelling of the ITT affair, the famous Dita Beard memo and the allegations that the Justice Department settled an antitrust suit against the ITT in exchange for a \$400,000 contribution from the corporation to help pay for the Republican National Convention when it was originally scheduled to be held in San Diego. The convention was moved to Miami Beach after Anderson's revelations, which, more importantly, have led now to a thorough investigation of ITT by special Justice Department prosecutor Archibald Cox. The role played by Anderson and

his aide Brit Hume in this case was investigative journalism at its best.

From ITT Anderson moves on to his belabored account of the Eagleton affair and then to a retelling of the arrest by the FBI of his associate Les Whitten on charges of "receiving and possessing stolen property." The property in question constituted records taken from the Bureau of Indian Affairs when the building was looted during the Indian sit-in last fall. Whitten and the two Indians arrested with him said that they were returning the documents to the government, and a grand jury refused to bring an indictment in the case.

In an intriguing footnote to this episode, Anderson writes: "Because one of my reporters had been arrested on the streets by the FBI, I stepped out from behind my typewriter for the first time since taking over the column and helped to line up the Senate opposition to Patrick Gray." Gray's nomination to be FBI director was withdrawn by President Nixon because of his involvement in the Watergate scandal.

The book ends with a reconstruction of the accounts that Anderson published, verbatim from government memos, of the frantic meetings held at

the White House and the State and Defense Departments during the 1971 India-Pakistan war which led to the birth of Bangladesh as an independent state. These were the memos that showed Nixon privately ordering United States policy to "tilt" toward Pakistan while administration spokesmen, including now-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, were publicly proclaiming American neutrality in the conflict. These remain fascinating glimpses into the way government sometime operates.

What I missed most of all in Anderson's book is his failure to go much beyond what I had already read in his columns over the last couple of years. One expects from a book bearing a "Secret" stamp some genuine revelations as to how Anderson operates, and they are missing except in the case of the Eagleton chapters.

Anderson does titillate the reader by mentioning that he secretly met his source for the India-Pakistan documents in a discount drugstore a couple of blocks from the White House, and now every time I go in the Dart Drug at 18th and Eye Streets NW, which I have patronized for years, I look surreptitiously, of course, for Anderson. I haven't seen him—yet. Am I in the right drugstore, Jack?