

Modern Muckraker

Jack Northman Anderson

By WILLIAM M. BLAIR

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5—
"Sunlight is the best disinfectant." From that premise, Jack Anderson operates as a muckraker to expose what he considers wrongdoing in and out of government, with emphasis on governmental secrets. He conducts his Washington Merry-Go-Round column with "a sense of outrage" he says, because "public office is a public trust" and sunlight on government blunders is the best way to inform the voters of what their elected officials may be up to.

Man
in the
News

The column, which he took over after the death of Drew Pearson in 1969, is regarded as one of the most influential around the country because the 49-year-old, self-styled "investigative reporter" gives it an inside-Washington flavor readily absorbed in the hinterland.

"We carry a big stick," says the columnist, who today disclosed top-secret Government reports on discussions of policy on the Indian-Pakistani crisis. Each week he and his staff of seven turn out seven columns for daily newspapers and one for weekly newspapers, plus a 10-minute radio show and television commentaries. He is also Washington editor for Parade magazine.

— A Mormon Missionary

All this is a long way from his beginnings, the son of Mormons in Utah and his service as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the age of 19.

Jack Northman Anderson was born in Long Beach, Calif., on Oct. 19, 1922. His parents — his father was a postal clerk — took him to Salt Lake City, the church capital, when he was 2 years old.

When he was 12 he became the Boy Scout editor of The Deseret News, a church-owned newspaper, but after two years The Salt Lake Tribune offered him \$7 a week to cover Boy Scout News. He had worked his way onto The Tribune's reportorial staff by the time he was 18.

Then came his missionary work in southern states. Mormon missionaries finance their own way, and his mother became a taxi driver to enable him to fulfill his obligation.

In World War II he entered the Merchant Marine officers' training school. He had served about seven months when The Deseret News, at his urging, got him accredited as a war correspondent. He went to the Pacific and was with Chinese guerrillas behind Japanese lines.

He recalls that the Army was horrified to find that a young civilian correspondent, in search of home-town news, had managed to get to a base operated by the Office of Strategic Services, a forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency. It was arranged for him to go with guerrillas operating along the Hankow-Peking railroad. He emerged with a report that Chinese Nationalist troops were fighting Chinese Communist troops rather than the enemy, but World War II was about over and no one seemed interested.

Caught in the Draft

All the while his draft board was looking for him. The draft caught up with him in 1945, and he was inducted into the Army at Chungking, serving with the Quartermaster Corps. Later he was assigned to the service newspaper, Stars and Stripes.

He headed for Washington in 1947 because friends told

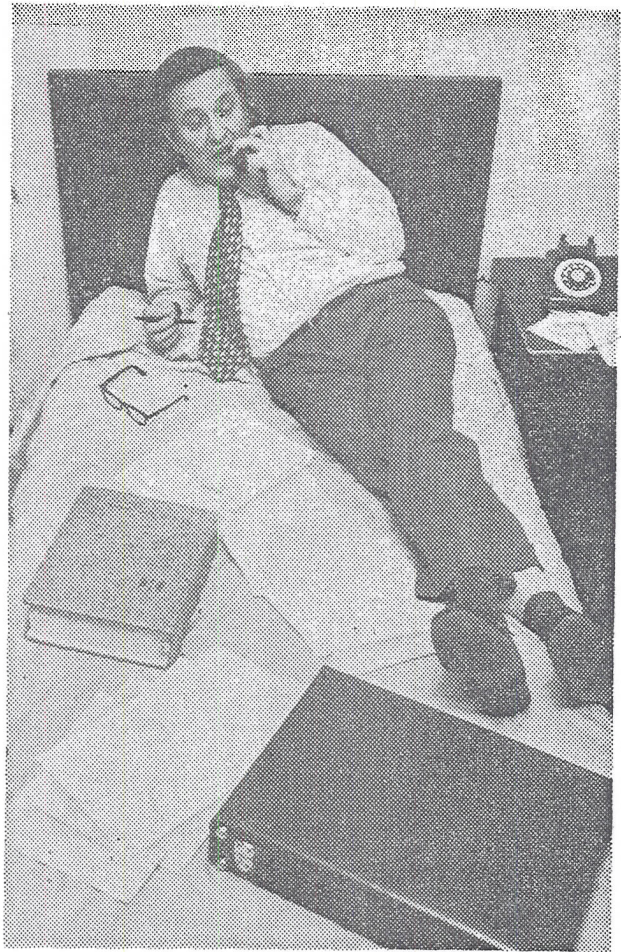
him he should try to get a job with Drew Pearson and find out what goes on backstage in the news capital of the world. Mr. Pearson hired him immediately.

Mr. Pearson was more of a "backroom reporter," Mr. Anderson has said, while he is "more of the muckraker." The column, he added, has become "a court of last resort for the voiceless, the little people." It generates 200 to 300 letters a day, which often contain tips.

Critics of the chunky, sandy-haired columnist have charged that he pays for information. Mr. Anderson denies this, saying, "We don't use the column to blackjack anybody and we don't use the column to enrich anybody."

He also laughs at stories that he runs a "back-alley" shop. Such talk stems in part from his being caught with a Congressional investigator who was bugging a hotel room in connection with the Sherman Adams-Bernard Goldfine case in the Eisenhower Administration.

Mr. Anderson received reams of documents from aides of the late Senator Thomas J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut. Ensuing disclosures led to Senate censure of Mr. Dodd for having diverted to his own use funds received as campaign contributions.



The New York Times/Jack Manning

MAKES PAPERS PUBLIC: Jack Anderson, the columnist, who provided Indian-Pakistani papers, at his hotel here.

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An Abrasive Quality

Friends concede that Mr. Anderson sometimes displays an abrasive quality, particularly when dealing with officials he feels are lying. He believes that as an independent reporter he can do what most reporters cannot: decide who is telling the truth.

Fellow Mormons have criticized the columnist. When Ezra Taft Benson was Secretary of Agriculture under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mr. Anderson aroused the ire of Mormons around Mr. Benson, a church leader, when he discussed what he regarded as shortcomings in the department.

Mr. Anderson has not held a high church position but attends regularly.

Members of his staff who describe him as even-tempered and easy to work with, say they have never seen him really angry. In his frequent lectures he is inclined to be bombastic in the style of an evangelical preacher and laces his speeches with earthy humor.

Father of Nine Children

His column, syndicated to slightly more than 700 newspapers—more than any other Washington column—grosses about \$300,000 a year, which Mr. Anderson splits with Mr. Pearson's widow. His payroll is about \$90,000 a year. He gets \$1,000 to \$1,500 for lectures and averages about one a week; he also draws \$40,000 a year from Parade. In addition, he has real estate and oil investments and an interest in The Annapolis (Md.) Evening Capital.

The father of nine children, he works at home during the mornings to be with his wife, the former Olivia Farley, and family and is seldom seen on the Washington cocktail circuit. Mrs. Anderson, a miner's daughter, was working for the F.B.I. when they met.

A colleague who has known him for years commented that in "Jack's case the guys who scream the loudest are often the ones who leaked a story in the first place." He recalled an instance in which an Army general who had given a Pentagon story wound up in charge of the investigation of the leak.