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Investigative reporter to speak

By Carolyn Lamberson
Emerald Associate Editor

When Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jack Anderson speaks in the EMU on Sunday, he will discuss "News Behind the Headlines," an area Anderson knows very well.

Anderson, a syndicated columnist with the Washington Post, said in a recent interview from his Washington, D.C. office he receives information from a large network of sources, much of which is usually not released to the press. And while some may criticize Anderson and other journalists for using secret or sensitive information, Anderson said he does it because he believes the public is entitled to know what is really going on.

Anderson was largely responsible for breaking the Iran/Contra affair in the United States, even though he sat on the story for about seven months. He first published the story in April

1986. The issue did not reach the forefront of the American media until November of that year.

"I sat on it (the story) because President Reagan personally, and high government officials persuaded me that they were trying to get our hostages free and that premature disclosure of their attempts and their dealings with Ayatollah Khomeini could disrupt the negotiations and could even lead to the death of the hostages. I didn't want that on my conscience, so I sat on the story," Anderson said.

He eventually released his information because of moral concerns. Anderson believed "the Reagan administration was deceiving the American people about what was going on. And I thought the time had come to tell the whole story — to tell it because the American people are the real sovereigns and are entitled to know what's happening," he said.

"When the government misleads, when the government lies to the people as the government did in the Iran/Contra affair, then I believe my obligation must be to the people and not the government," he continued.

While Anderson is sure the White House didn't like his publishing the story, it hasn't affected his flow of information, he said.

"My sources are my sources, they do not belong to the White House," Anderson said. "I call the White House, not to find out what's happening, but to tell them what's happening and ask them to comment."

In the wake of controversy surrounding their treatment of Sens. Gary Hart, Joe Biden and Judge Douglas Ginsberg, the media have come under fire as being unfair and prying too far into the private lives of public officials.

"I think America's reporters are the most objective in the world. They are trained to be objective and they are trained to be accurate," Anderson said. However, he does admit that journalists have some biases, which may influence what they write. That's a human quality and reporters are human, he ad-

ded. "I think it's almost impossible to write stories completely aloof from your own background, and your own beliefs and your own convictions," he said.

As for prying into public figures' private lives, Anderson sees the press as having an important role in screening potential candidates and public officials.

"The flaws and misdoings of public officials should be exposed. People who seek high office — the president of the United States, or Supreme Court justice — must be screened," Anderson said. Because a candidate is asking to be a leader, the American people have a right to know if his or her record is clean, he continued.

If the press makes a poor judgement call or reveals something that is too secret or sensitive, Anderson said public response is often enough to curtail that kind of reporting.

"The public will respond and will respond with such anger that the press will behave, but I don't want to give the government power to suppress the press," he said.

Freedom of the press is the Constitutional right that helps preserve all others by enabling the press to expose when those rights have been violated, Anderson said. It is this aspect that draws the most criticism from people who want to curtail that freedom, he said.

Anderson has a staff of about 12 reporters who work for him and dig up stories that become material for his daily column, which is read by an estimated three million people. The reporters receive some training from Anderson on how to get reluctant sources talk, he said.

"We specialize in getting the stories that others cannot get," Anderson said. "And some of my reporters have more guts than others," he added.

Anderson's speech is sponsored by the Cultural Forum. He will be in the EMU Ballroom at 8 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are available at the EMU Main Desk at a cost of \$3 for students and \$5 for the general public.

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