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AT YOUR GROCER'S



BY LARSTON D. FARRAR

Author of "Washington Lowdown"

Uncle Sam Knows a Lot About

Here's why and how he has collected the world's greatest

A TAXICAB DRIVER recently brought a beautiful young blonde to a Chicago police station. The driver explained that when he picked her up at a railroad station, she mumbled to him incoherently. After making sure she wasn't intoxicated, he had brought her to the police.

The young woman, staring dazedly at the officers who questioned her, was unable to give her name or address. A search of her handbag produced only one clue—a ticket stub from an Albuquerque, N. M., theater.

On a hunch, a detective placed the woman before a typewriter.

As if working automatically, she slowly typed out the words, "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country," followed by "Albuquerque, N. M.," and "Women Army Corps, U. S. Army."

At a Chicago hospital, doctors agreed that she was suffering from amnesia.

The police department, working on the theory that she was either a present or former employee of the Federal government, sent her fingerprints via speedphoto transceiver to the identification division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, where some 144 million fingerprints are on file.

In a matter of minutes, the fingerprints were reproduced on photographic paper in Washington, and the picture developed. FBI files revealed her name, age, place of birth, and address in 1954, when she had been fingerprinted at the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission in Albuquerque.

The information was telephoned to the Chicago Police Department that same day.

"The Case of the Forgetful Blonde," as this one might be called, was solved in a few hours, thanks to the records kept by Uncle

Sam. It is only one of thousands of instances that take place each year in which information, gathered through the years by the Federal government, is used to help both local agencies and citizens in all walks of life.

How much money did you earn in 1946? Did you join the church in 1942? How can you prove you were born, if you don't have a birth certificate?

There is someone—perhaps a number of someones—who can get the answers to these questions, and very easily. They are employees of the various agencies of the Federal government who are authorized to dig into Uncle Sam's voluminous files to get needed information about citizens in general or a citizen in particular.

If all the files that Uncle Sam maintains were placed in one warehouse, it would be bigger than the island of Manhattan, with perhaps a good part of Staten Island thrown in.

With some 2.4 million employees, Uncle Sam is the keeper of the greatest storehouse of information on his citizens ever collected by any government in history. Fortunately for some citizens, and perhaps unfortunately for some investigators, not all this information is gathered in a central place. Nor is it fed into a giant electronic computer so that every little detail of information about any one person can be studied at one time.

In other words, Uncle Sam's many agencies gather separate information and are precluded, except under certain safeguards, from exchanging data with one another.

The fortunate part of this is that many of us have a tendency to tell "white lies" at one time or another. For instance, a man files his income-tax return, showing his salary as \$4,476 for a certain year. But when