

***THE DEEDS OF MY FATHERS:***  
***How My Grandfather and Father Built New York***  
***and Created the Tabloid World of Today—***  
***Generoso Pope, Sr., Power Broker of New York and Gene Pope, Jr.,***  
***Publisher of the National Enquirer***

By Paul David Pope

“A richly detailed tale of businessmen, mobsters and politicians that reads like a soap opera written by Mario Puzo.... Readable and revealing, and the vividly re-created scenes cry out for a film treatment.” — *Kirkus Reviews* a starred review

"Powerful . . . Crowded with presidents, celebrities, and mobsters. . . among the best portraits of Italian-American life." —*Publishers Weekly*, a PW “Indie Sleeper Hit”

The pending 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The National Enquirer*; the origins of New York City’s famed Italian-American celebration, the Columbus Day Parade; and the influence of organized crime in both politics and media all come together in the engrossing new family saga, ***THE DEEDS OF MY FATHERS: How My Grandfather and Father Built New York and Created the Tabloid World of Today—Generoso Pope, Sr., Power Broker of New York and Gene Pope, Jr., Publisher of the National Enquirer*** (A Philip Turner Book, with Rowman & Littlefield, October 11, 2010, \$24.95) by Paul David Pope, grandson and son of the book’s two patriarchs. Early readers are already praising the book, such as bestselling author Nicholas Pileggi who has declared the Pope family history “the story of the century.”

Beginning with young Generoso Pope’s humble beginnings east of Naples, Italy, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the book chronicles how this immigrant and his family go on to

literally “construct” the greatest landmarks of New York City’s infrastructure, and create tabloid media coverage as we know it today. The 15-year old arrives in America, in 1906, with ten dollar’s worth of lire in his pocket and no English in his vocabulary. He finds work in the sand pits of Long Island, just as sand, mixed with cement, is becoming New York City’s key building material; within a few years he is president of Colonial Sand & Stone, selling sand and cement to the city for the construction of such landmarks as Radio City Music Hall and Rockefeller Center. From this position of rising influence, he galvanizes New York’s Italian-American community with his chief media holding, the weekly newspaper *Il Progesso*, as men ambitious to be mayor, governor, and even president seek his endorsement and financial contributions.

Generoso and his wife are the parents of three sons, though the elder Pope thinks little of the two eldest. In failing health, he tells the youngest, Gene, that he will leave him complete control of the empire. Gene implores his father not to do so, fearing turbulent repercussions. Generoso follows Gene’s wishes, granting equal control among the three brothers and their mother. Then, in a stunning twist, Gene is pushed out in a family coup soon after Generoso’s death in 1950.

Gene is more angry than hurt, and determined to make good outside the family nest. With barely \$5,000 to his name, and his wife newly pregnant, Gene spots a newspaper he wants to run: the *New York Enquirer*. Remembering what his father had told him—“if you get in trouble, go see Uncle Frank”—he calls on Frank Costello, one of the most notorious organized crime figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his real-life godfather. Costello is eager to back his late friend’s son, and provides him \$75,000 in cash for the deal. With barely a working typewriter to its name, Gene buys the moribund rag, ultimately renaming it *The National Enquirer*. He drives the tabloid to many publishing and circulations successes, peaking with the seven million copies he sells of the 1977 exposé on the drugs addiction that had contributed to Elvis Presley’s death.

“I initially intended to write only the life story of my father,” writes Paul David Pope in his foreword. He soon realized, though, that his grandfather’s life was profoundly linked with that of his father. “Their stories encompass immigration, ambition, wealth,

power, ruthlessness, crime, punishment, betrayal, and redemption ... all providing singular insight into the corruption that fueled urban and national politics for so many decades.”

It is a rare family history that is told by a third-generation member of that clan, though the younger Pope hardly goes soft on his own tribe. In fact, he writes in candid and unvarnished fashion, about matters licit and illicit, displaying the inside knowledge only he could have, and letting all the chips fall where they may.

**THE DEEDS OF MY FATHERS** reveals startling tales—many that could have been pulled from the pages of *The National Enquirer*. Among them are:

- Generoso purchased the nearly bankrupt Italian American weekly newspaper *Il Progresso* in 1928 for \$2,052,000 (one thousand for each week of the year) and soon declared his loyalty to Benito Mussolini on its front page.
- “For Generoso, politics was just a matter of handicapping races,” Pope writes, “and one of the things his two-decade immersion in it had made him really good at was picking winners.” In 1925, he single-handedly organized Italian-Americans into a voting bloc and helped elect New York’s next mayor, Jimmy Walker, aka “The Mayor of the Jazz Age.” In 1929, two of Pope’s newspapers, *Il Progresso* and *Bolletina della Serra*, reaching 200,000 Italian Americans in the New York area, threw their support behind the Irishman Walker for re-election over a young Fiorello La Guardia, himself an Italian-American. In 1932, Walker resigned over corruption charges and that same year Generoso supported winning candidates La Guardia for mayor, and New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt for President.
- Pietro Parini, Mussolini’s Secretary of the Bureau of Fascism Abroad, reported to il Duce that Generoso Pope had promised him that *Il Progresso* “could get Rome’s message across to America’s four million Italian-American citizens without anyone ever realizing that it was, in fact, an organ of Fascist propaganda. Based upon that belief, a secret cable service from the Palazzo Venezia directly to the offices of *Il Progresso* had been created. Since the creation of this covert channel, the cables had given Pope exclusive news from Rome that other Italian papers, and even *The New York Times*, couldn’t get.”
- Generoso Pope saw the crash coming and got out of the market at the first hint of trouble in March 1929, urging his friends to do the same. He lost nothing when the market fell. That same year, he brought electricity to every home in the Italian village of his birth. Throughout the Depression, he laid off no workers and

continued to buy up real estate and competitors in both sand/stone and Italian-American media.

- “In 1937,” Pope writes, “Grand Marshal Generoso Pope, head of the Columbus Citizens Committee (in reality a committee of one) led the Columbus Day Parade down Fifth Avenue ... ten-year-old Gene holding his hand.” This made several occasions since 1929, its first year, that Generoso Pope had led the parade. The following week in 1937, the elder Pope made a triumphal trip to Italy, bringing his entire family to meet Mussolini. He returned with bland assurances for both Congress and President Roosevelt that the Jews of Italy would be safe from the terrors of anti-Semitic legislation; these were soon shown to be false promises.
- Generoso’s wife was already embittered by his public infidelities when she became pregnant with her third, and unwanted, son, Gene. She once told the young man, “You are the abortion I should have had.”
- At Horace Mann, a private high school in New York, Gene Pope became best friends with classmate Roy Cohn. He mightily impressed Generoso, so much so that Generoso paid the teenager a commission when he brokered the Pope empire’s acquisition of their first radio station, WHOM. Years later, when Cohn was admitted to the bar, Generoso and Frank Costello set the wheels in motion to get Cohn a post in the U.S. Attorney’s office in New York, where he helped prosecute Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and came to the attention of Sen. Joseph McCarthy.
- Unable to repay Frank Costello’s covert support all at once or in kind, Gene threw the *Enquirer*’s support behind Costello when he was trying to overturn a contempt of Senate charge that would bring him 18 months in jail.
- Gene modeled his new acquisition after the London *Daily Mirror*, featuring crime, scandals and celebrities. The mayor of Newark declared the *Enquirer* obscene and had it ordered off the shelves. Sales spiked.
- Gene’s first wife threatened to kill herself and their first-born son, was committed to a mental institution, and diagnosed a schizophrenic. Later, a pregnant girlfriend of Gene’s became hysterical, threatened to kill herself and was forcibly taken to a clinic by two of Gene’s employees where she had an abortion. Granted a quickie divorce from his first wife in Mexico, Gene coveted the wife of a fellow Florida vacationer and married her five minutes after his divorce, and hers. After that second marriage ended, he married the author’s mother.
- Describing his father’s outlook on the media world, Pope writes, “It distressed Gene that the mainstream press never talked about *Enquirer* stories like **GENEROUS ENQUIRER READERS GIVE A HAPPY LITTLE BOY A NEW LIFE** on page 10, or **WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER IGNORE A COUGH** on page 123, or **SCIENCE TAKES A NEW LOOK AT LONELINESS** on page 31.

Or the paper's column devoted to finding families for hard-to-adopt children, which resulted in homes for hundreds of them. Or the "Tales of True Courage" column that sent readers running to their wallets to donate to hard-luck cases. What the other 'respectable' media did talk about was the way Gene paid for information—'checkbook journalism,' they sniffed.... As far as Gene was concerned, the *New York Times* paid for stories all the time, maybe not by spending money but by making side deals. As the *Enquirer* increasingly moved onto grocery store checkout counters, "he demanded that the facts behind a story be rock-solid and beyond attack by media critics."

- Gene purchased a story alleging that Mary Jo Kopechne was pregnant when she died in Ted Kennedy's car in 1969—only to kill the article. Another time, an *Enquirer* photographer caught Teddy with a woman not his wife in the Bahamas. Instead of running the story, Gene used it to get an exclusive interview with the Senator about raising his brothers' children. According to the book, Gene was inching his way toward the "Holy Grail of the tabloid world": Jackie and her children. Similarly, Gene's scoop of a Howard Hughes-CIA connection was used for influence with sources at the CIA and never appeared in the newspaper.
- Gene spent more than \$200,000 on sources to get the story that changed everything: Elvis Presley was addicted to prescription drugs leading to an enlarged liver and a heart attack that caused his death. Gene paid a cousin of The King an additional \$30,000 to get the famous shot of Elvis in his coffin published in the *Enquirer*.

Over a decade in the making, based on more than 500 interviews and a mountain of documentary and archival sources, **THE DEEDS OF MY FATHERS** is indeed what the late Dominick Dunne said in one of the last endorsements he offered before his death in 2009: "A true story that keeps you glued to the pages, learning about money, crime, power, and the love of many beautiful women. A real page-turner."

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### **About the author**

Philanthropist and businessman **Paul David Pope**, 42, is a third-generation Italian-American. Throughout his childhood, Paul heard stirring stories from his father Gene Pope, Jr., about their family legacy—especially the remarkable rags-to-riches saga of his grandfather, Generoso Pope, Sr. Gene planted in Paul the seeds of pride in his Italian heritage and encouraged him to keep alive the memory of his ancestors.

Pope was born in New York and raised in Florida's Palm Beach County, where he attended Pope John Paul Catholic High School. He then attended the Royal Academy of the Dramatic Arts in London, where he studied acting and singing. Groomed by his father to run the *Enquirer*, he worked in the paper's distribution, editorial, and business departments, learning the ropes from the bottom up. Following Gene's death in 1988,

when Paul was not named publisher of the *National Enquirer*, and the paper went up for sale, he mounted a bid to acquire it that fell just short. Soon after, he embarked on the writing of this revelatory book.

Pope has also formed his own company, Pope Entertainment Group. He was an associate producer of the Broadway musical *Rent* and produced the critically acclaimed motion picture *Manny & Lo*. He sponsored the U.S. premiere of Quentin Tarantino's *Curdled* for the benefit of the Film Society of Miami.

In the past decade, Pope has undertaken the organization of major events in the Italian-American community. He was chief sponsor of the New York Historical Society's exhibit "The Italians of New York: Five Centuries of Struggle and Achievement." In recognition of his efforts to promote Italian-American causes, he has received awards from the Consul General of Italy in New York, the Italian Apostolate of the Archdiocese of New York, the New York Conference of Italian American State Legislators, the Italian Welfare League, the Columbus Citizens Foundation, and the Order Sons of Italy in America. Pope has given his time, energy and support to such groups as the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Kids in Distress, and Best Buddies, which is dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with mental disabilities. He also has given his support to the University of Miami, the Miami Heart Institute, and the Miami City Ballet. He has received numerous awards from civic and charitable organizations for his philanthropic efforts.

Photographs and documentary materials from the Pope family archives have contributed to such notable volumes as *The Italians of New York: Five Centuries of Struggle and Achievement*, edited by Philip V. Cannistraro and *Big Town Biography: Lives and Times of the Century's Classic New Yorkers* edited by Jay Maeder of the *New York Daily News*.

**Paul David Pope** lives in Weston, Florida, near the towns of Lantana and Manalapan, where his father relocated the *National Enquirer* and his family from New Jersey and New York in 1971.

Additional information on Paul David Pope and **The Deeds of My Fathers**, his first book, is available at [www.thedeedsmyfathers.com](http://www.thedeedsmyfathers.com)

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### **About the Publisher**

During more than three decades in the book business, Philip Turner has operated Under Cover Books, an independent Midwest bookstore chain; served in executive editorial positions with Times Books and Crown Publishing at Random House; Kodansha America; Union Square Press at Sterling Publishing; and Carroll & Graf Publishers, where in 2006 under an imprint in his own name he published books by and about truth-tellers, whistleblowers, muckrakers, and revisionist historians. **THE DEEDS OF MY FATHERS** is the first title in a new, independent launch of Philip Turner Books. Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, Inc. is the host of Turner's imprint for **THE DEEDS OF MY FATHERS**, with its parent, National Book Network, distributing it to the book trade. More information on Philip Turner Books and Philip Turner Book Productions LLC may be found at [www.publishersmarketplace.com/members/philipst/](http://www.publishersmarketplace.com/members/philipst/)

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**Praise For *THE DEEDS OF MY FATHERS*  
A True Story That Reads Like "The Godfather"  
Crossed With "Citizen Kane"**

"The *National Enquirer* is celebrated on the eve of its 60th anniversary by Pope's powerful biography of its creators, the family patriarchs. The book . . . sometimes reads like a straightforward Puzo sequel. . . . Crowded with presidents, celebrities, and mobsters, this bio of ambitious alpha males, in a dysfunctional clan worthy of a soap opera, is among the best portraits of Italian-American life to appear in some time." — *Publishers Weekly*; a *PW* Fall 2010 "Indie Sleeper Hit"

"A richly detailed tale of businessmen, mobsters and politicians that reads like a soap opera written by Mario Puzo. . . . Pope provides engrossing stories about *Il Progresso's* influence in New York and national elections, the long battle to win a place for the sensational *Enquirer* at supermarket checkouts and Gene's tyrannical insistence on concocting gripping articles for the tabloid's millions of readers. . . . Readable and revealing, and the vividly re-created scenes cry out for a film treatment." — *Kirkus Reviews*, a starred review

"The story of the century." — **Nicholas Pileggi**, bestselling author of *Wiseguy*

"The Popes became arguably the most successful Italian-American family ever to arrive on our shores. We do well to remember them today, as America experiences waves of immigration unlike any since the last century. Reading this gripping book, I marveled at their achievements: Generoso, amassing power in New York only a few years after arriving in a new land; and Gene, like Michael Corleone, the youngest son, the favored one, finding an audience of millions in the grocery checkout aisle. This book is a triumph, a true American saga." — **Joe Pistone, the real-life Donnie**

**Brasco**

"Bravo to Paul Pope, who tried for years to find a big-name writer to pen the history of his family and the *National Enquirer*. All he really had to do was look in the mirror to find the best person for the job. Indeed, Paul has handled this tough assignment with

considerable honesty and integrity, painting an important and even exciting portrait of his fascinating family and the remarkable tabloid-publishing empire they created. Say what you will about the *National Enquirer*, Paul Pope is a class act. His father would be proud.” —**Dan E. Moldea**, author of *The Hoffa Wars*

“From the sand pits of turn-of-the-century Long Island to its finale in the Florida newsroom of the *National Enquirer*, *The Deeds of My Fathers* chronicles the extraordinary journey of one Italian-American family and reveals a unique side of the immigrant dream. Horatio Alger, Jr., could never have imagined the Popes and their tabloid empire. Who better to tell the story than Paul Pope who makes good on his promise to let the chips fall where they may.” —Marion Meade, author of *Lonelyhearts: The Screwball World of Nathanael West and Eileen McKenney*

“This engrossing family drama recasts the classic American rags-to-riches immigrant story with an unflinching realism, holding a mirror to the New York of the mid-twentieth century—from the 1920s through the 1980s—as well as the Pope family itself and its unique role in creating today’s tabloid media world. This is an unusually well documented exploration of that seamy, dark intersection of media, politics, and organized crime that has produced so many American icons. A very good read.” —**Kenneth D. Ackerman**, author of *Boss Tweed: The Rise and Fall of the Corrupt Pol Who Conceived the Soul of Modern New York*

“A true story that keeps you glued to the pages, learning about money, crime, power, and the love of many beautiful women. A real page-turner.” —**Dominick Dunne**

“A fascinating ride into the subculture of organized crime. Through the legit businesses that the Pope family controlled—from construction to media—we see how their enterprises intersected with and were nurtured by mob boss Frank Costello, Generoso Pope’s lifelong friend and Gene Pope’s real-life godfather. It is a compelling saga, told bravely and with real candor.” —**Bob Delaney**, author of *Covert: My Years Infiltrating the Mob*

“*The Deeds of My Fathers* has it all: immigrants, moguls, presidents, Mafiosi, sex, success, loyalty, betrayal, and that most outrageous, scandalous, audacious and—as it turns out—imitated of media ventures, the *National Enquirer*. Contained in the pages of this multi-generational saga is the recipe for the great American Melting Pot: take one part Horatio Alger, mix with equal parts *The Godfather* and *Citizen Kane*, stir vigorously, and bring to a boil. Serve while hot. The results are deliciously entertaining and entirely enlightening. There isn’t a bland moment in this entire book.” —**Peter Quinn**, author of *The Man Who Never Returned*

“With a scholar’s attention to good research and a novelist’s skill at crafting page-turning prose, Paul David Pope has delivered a gem. Much more than another successful immigrant tale, *The Deeds of My Fathers* gets to the heart of how business was often conducted in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America. And Pope’s father, Gene, and grandfather, Generoso,

played in the big leagues, where iconic gangsters and shadowy white-collar crooks played hardball. The behind-the-headlines tales from the *National Enquirer*, which Gene Pope rescued from obscurity, are revelatory and worth the price alone. Anyone interested in American commercial, cultural and sociological history *must* own this book!" —**Gus Russo**, author of *The Outfit* and *Supermob*

"Academic historians tend to explain major developments in terms of abstract forces like consumer demand, "grand" strategies, cultural conflict and technological change. Paul David Pope's *The Deeds of My Fathers* serves as a vivid and wonderfully readable reminder that the people who really made things happen saw the world in a way that was highly personal." —**William J. Connell**, Joseph M. and Geraldine C. La Motta Chair in Italian Studies, Seton Hall University

Visit the official website at [www.thedeedsomyfathers.com](http://www.thedeedsomyfathers.com)