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THE ENDURING MYTHOLOGICAL ROLE OF THE
ANONYMOUS SOURCE DEEP THROAT

by

Shana Lyris Hamilton

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

THE ENDURING MYTHOLOGICAL ROLE OF THE ANONYMOUS SOURCE DEEP THROAT

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Master of Arts

Deep Throat is one of the most famous anonymous newspaper sources in American journalism. He is known for helping *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein uncover the Watergate scandal that led to President Richard Nixon's impeachment and resignation in 1974. Deep Throat's identity was a source of curiosity until he was revealed in 2005 as the former number two figure at the FBI, William Mark Felt.

This thesis will show that, despite Felt's notoriety, Deep Throat was not an indispensable part of Woodward and Bernstein's Watergate coverage, speaking with Woodward 16 times about Watergate during the reporters' coverage. Deep Throat was important to the Watergate story because he kept it alive.

Deep Throat inspired numerous publications, which all served to create his mythic status. Many attempted to guess his true identity, although Woodward and Bernstein

refused to confirm most guesses. An enduring Deep Throat legacy is that his nickname has become synonymous with deep background – a source that cannot be quoted or named.

There was no clear consensus as to how people felt about Felt's role as Deep Throat. There were many negative and positive reactions when he revealed himself. His family sided with him; Nixon associates were unhappy with him. However, more than 30 years after the Watergate scandal, Deep Throat was still big news. No matter what people thought about him, they paid attention and they knew the story.

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Chapter 1

Research Problem

Introduction

Deep Throat is one of the most famous anonymous newspaper sources in American journalism, known for helping *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein uncover the Watergate scandal that led to President Richard Nixon's impeachment and resignation in 1974. Deep Throat's identity was a source of curiosity until he was revealed in 2005 as the former number two figure at the FBI, William Mark Felt. A character identified as Deep Throat first became a public man of mystery in 1974, with the book release of *All the President's Men*, which forever branded him with his famous, albeit unfortunate code name.

Despite Felt's notoriety, Deep Throat was not an indispensable part of Woodward and Bernstein's Watergate coverage. While he was useful in boosting the reporters' confidence in their groundbreaking stories, he gave minimal information. In fact, a thorough reading of Woodward's tell-all book about Deep Throat, *The Secret Man*, shows Deep Throat spoke to Woodward 16 times about Watergate, often giving little to no information.¹

Rather, Deep Throat was important to the Watergate story because he kept it alive. The public demand for investigative reporting was high during Watergate, and a mysterious source in an underground garage, shown in the movie version of *All the President's Men*, fascinated people for 30 years. Woodward and Bernstein were "two journalists famous for protecting a confidential government source"² and, arguably, wouldn't have been well-known without Deep Throat. According to Johnston and

Rosenbaum, Watergate “might have died as a news story had it not been for W. Mark Felt.”³ More than three decades after the Watergate break-in, Deep Throat’s true identity captured media and public interest. Newspapers ran front page stories on this anonymous source who spoke to a young reporter in 1972 and 1973.

News cannot be understood simply by its functional role. Encounters with news can be personal. News has a dramatic role in society. It is modern mythology, promoting social order.⁴ Myths are the stories of a culture, archetypes used to model ideals. Stories are how people understand the world around them. The media produces an abundance of myth and, although myths are everywhere, they are not labeled as such.⁵ Journalism uses myths to illustrate collective principles and draw people together in understanding. Myths become eternal “because they address fundamental, timeless aspects of human existence,” Lule said.⁶ Facts become stories when they are made into narrative, eventually morphing into collective memory and myth.⁷ “Myth explains origins and history, Myth affirms values and beliefs. In this view, the central role of myth is to proclaim and promote social order,” according to Lule.⁸

I believe without the Deep Throat character, there is no Woodward and Bernstein – without a shadowing, mysterious anonymous source hiding in a dark garage, there isn’t a compelling story. Without the continuing mystery of Deep Throat, Watergate reporting would not have reached mythic proportions.

Journalism was forever affected by Watergate and, according to Schudson, journalists gained more power in the aftermath. “People are measured by their clout, and after Watergate, rightly or wrongly, the clout of journalists has been judged greater than ever before.”⁹ According to Schudson, the Watergate myth is fundamental to journalism,

giving the profession greater responsibility, but also making it a target for foes. Furthermore, Watergate was instrumental in helping journalists shape their craft. Zelizer described how journalists used their collective memory of John F. Kennedy's assassination to form an interpretive community.¹⁰ Similarly, stories about Deep Throat and Watergate – both within journalism and in the culture – shaped the American conception of the role of journalism and anonymous sources.

Felt's unveiling caused a stir among those involved in the Watergate scandal, something documented in the days following.

Background

Since 1974, the Watergate scandal has defined American journalism. Richard Nixon was the first President of the United States of America to resign his post. The events leading up to his resignation involved substantial investigative journalism into the break-in at the Watergate complex two years earlier. The Watergate story began when five men were caught burglarizing the Democratic National headquarters at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C., on June 17, 1972. These men were connected to the White House and, it was eventually discovered, President Nixon.

Woodward, who was introduced to Felt from a chance meeting, called to talk about Watergate for the first time on June 19, 1972, two days after the break-in. Felt didn't offer information, but said he would not let Woodward stray from the truth. After four telephone calls and one desperate meeting at Felt's house, Felt said he would no longer publicly talk to Woodward. Felt arranged a system by which they could meet in an underground garage at 2 a.m. to talk about Watergate. Woodward could put a flower

pot with a red flag in a certain spot on his apartment balcony to signal he needed a meeting with Felt. If Felt needed a meeting, he would draw a clock inside Woodward's copy of the *New York Times* to indicate a meeting time. Woodward had to take two separate cabs and walk the last part of the distance to the garage.¹¹ Woodward and Bernstein's investigations for the *Washington Post* found the motives behind Watergate were political. Nixon admitted his knowledge of the affair later, and said he'd tried to stop the FBI from investigating the matter, something Felt mentioned in his book as well. Former Nixon counsel John W. Dean testified before a Senate committee that not only did several White House staffers approve of the burglary, Nixon approved of its cover-up.¹²

When special prosecutor Archibald Cox discovered Nixon had been tape recording conversations in the Oval Office, he sued to obtain the tapes. After Nixon fired several people who refused to fire Cox, Cox was fired. Nixon appointed Leon Jaworski to take Cox's place and gave the judge on the case, Judge John J. Sirica, the tapes Cox had wanted. Sirica was "widely credited with breaking open the Watergate cover-up thanks to his harsh sentencing of the Watergate burglars, who began implicating higher-ups after 'Maximum John' imposed maximum prison terms," Feldstein wrote.¹³ In April 1974, Nixon gave the judiciary committee edited transcripts of his taped conversations concerning Watergate. The House Judiciary committee adopted three articles of impeachment from July 27-30, 1974. The first charged the president with obstruction of justice. On August 5, Nixon "admitted that he had been aware of the Watergate coverup shortly after the break-in occurred and that he had tried to halt the Federal Bureau of Investigation's inquiry into the break-in."¹⁴ Nixon resigned from the presidency on

August 9, 1974, leaving it for Gerald R. Ford, who eventually pardoned Nixon of all crimes committed while president.

Understanding the basics of the Watergate scandal is necessary to understanding Deep Throat's role. Nixon hid information; Deep Throat helped bring it to light. However, it is significant to understand how much information Deep Throat gave out and how he is still received in modern culture.

Research Questions

1. What was the actual narrative framework of Deep Throat's contribution to Woodward for his and Bernstein's Watergate stories?
2. What narrative framework of Deep Throat evolved after the Watergate scandal?
3. How did Deep Throat's unveiling affect the narrative of Watergate participants, the press and the public?

Organization of Thesis

My thesis is organized into six chapters:

Chapter 1 will introduce the research problem and the Watergate scandal. It includes my research questions and methodology.

Chapter 2 is about the theoretical underpinnings related to journalism, narrative and myth. It also includes a review of the literature.

Chapter 3 takes an in-depth look at Mark Felt as a person and as Deep Throat. It discusses the Deep Throat legend.

Chapter 4 will examine the roles of Nixon, Woodward, Bernstein and the *Washington Post's* Watergate coverage.

Chapter 5 answers the question of Deep Throat's significance to the Watergate story and what was said about him between the Watergate scandal in the 1970s and outing of Deep Throat in 2005. It discusses Watergate's importance over time.

Chapter 6 includes data about how people reacted to Mark Felt's revelation that he was Deep Throat. I will organize the positive, negative and neutral quotes from *The New York Times* and *The Deseret Morning News* to show the differing opinions about Felt's role as Deep Throat.

Chapter 7 draws conclusions about how Watergate has affected politics and journalism and the importance of anonymous sources.

Methodology

My primary documentation comes from the Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers, a collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas Austin. In an unusual move, the school purchased the Watergate papers for \$5 million in 2003. There is more to come – Woodward and Bernstein held onto information that could compromise the confidentiality of their sources during Watergate. Living sources won't have their information compromised.

There were more than 100 boxes full of letters, press releases, original news articles, the reporters' notes and other materials. The archive was an important source of information because it allowed me to research Woodward and Bernstein's personal Watergate collection without having others' interpretations of the events; I had an

unvarnished view of the information. Because of the University of Texas Austin's agreement with Woodward and Bernstein to make available only non-confidential information, there were no specific notes on Woodward's meetings with Deep Throat. However, there were still a few references to Deep Throat in the material and a reference to Felt, although not in connection with his alter ego. Now that his identity is no longer a secret, the information about him should be available in the near future.

I will be gathering and interpreting other information through textual analysis. McKee said this methodology helps researchers understand the world. "When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text."¹⁵ A text is anything – book, newspaper, movie, clothing, furniture – from which we create meaning. Textual analysis is used in order to understand a society, either our own or someone else's. This is an important methodology because it helps a researcher to "obtain a sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them," McKee wrote.¹⁶

Not every interpretation will be the same and there is no right or wrong. "The ways in which members of different cultures may make sense of a text will vary just as much as the ways in which they make sense of the world around them . . . Doing textual analysis, we're interested in finding out likely interpretations, not in deciding which of them is the most correct one," McKee said.¹⁷ However, that does not mean any interpretation is suitable for the text. It is important to remember the context of a situation in order to interpret a text.

Textual analysis is a methodology that cannot be replicated in the same way as an experimental design or other scientific methodologies – different researchers will come up with different answers to the same questions. “This methodology is part of the humanities more than the sciences . . . It’s generally accepted that there is a value in the more intuitive work that happens in the humanities.”¹⁸ McKee also argued science is subject to the same cultural implications as the humanities. Lule said, “conventional counting and content analyses may miss the social, symbolic power of the words and that journalism may be fruitfully understood from the perspective of myth.”¹⁹

What was the actual narrative framework of Deep Throat’s contribution to Woodward for his and Bernstein’s Watergate stories?

In order to answer my research questions, I will use information given by Woodward and Bernstein in their books. In *All the President’s Men*, Woodward and Bernstein detailed their work on the Watergate scandal, and this was the first time the two reporters revealed they had a clandestine source helping them. Woodward wrote about specific meetings with Deep Throat, going into greater detail in his tell-all, *The Secret Man*, published after Deep Throat was identified as W. Mark Felt. I will focus on the number of times Woodward met with Deep Throat to talk about Watergate, drawing most of my information from *The Secret Man*, as it details Woodward and Deep Throat’s meetings together. I will count the number of meetings about Watergate between Woodward and Deep Throat. If Deep Throat and Woodward were meeting daily or weekly, Deep Throat’s importance to the Watergate coverage would be significant. However, the meetings were few and far between, which made Deep Throat less important. Woodward acknowledged Deep Throat began his agreement to meet with

Woodward by saying he would confirm information rather than offer anything new.

Although he occasionally offered information, Deep Throat made a small contribution.

What narrative framework of Deep Throat evolved after the Watergate scandal?

Deep Throat has become synonymous with deep background – a source cannot be quoted or named – because of the book and movie versions of *All the President's Men*.

As this thesis will show, there have been numerous articles and books written to guess Deep Throat's identity. This is important because it shows Deep Throat's popularity, increasing his mythic status.

How did Deep Throat's unveiling affect the narrative of Watergate participants, the press and the public?

My text to study reaction to Mark Felt's disclosure will be articles in *The New York Times* and *The Deseret Morning News*. I will use *The New York Times* because it is considered a standard for other newspapers in the journalism world. I will use *The Deseret Morning News* in order to get the local point of view concerning Deep Throat's coming out. Although there were national stories published in multiple papers, the *Deseret Morning News* also had a number of local stories about the issue. I will look at articles published the week following Felt's disclosure to the public, from May 31 through June 6, 2005. These publications had front page stories about Deep Throat's true identity, gave historical summaries and gauged reaction from former members of the Nixon administration, members of Nixon's and Felt's families, journalists and others. I want to know whether people viewed Felt positively, as a hero, or negatively, as a villain. Daynes wrote about Martin Luther King's legacy as a hero, saying King "acted locally and nationally to seek moral, political, and economic change."²⁰ Nimmo and Combs

wrote certain elements in stories, including that of heroism, can be emphasized, such as in Superman, in which the character's adventures aren't as important as his super hero status. His heroics include an emphasis on "Truth, justice and the American way."²¹ Villains, according to Nimmo and Combs, are apparent in their contrast to good. Their acts becoming meaningful bases on the character's purpose.²²

I will analyze the quotes based on several factors.

1. The quote is about Felt/Deep Throat
2. The quote's overall tone is positive, negative or neutral
 - a. Positive quotes will praise Felt/Deep Throat for his role in Watergate, saying he did the right thing, was a hero, contributed to a greater cause, etc.
 - b. Negative quotes will say the opposite about Felt/Deep Throat. They will say he chose the wrong path to bring information to light, was selfish in his method, etc.
 - c. Neutral quotes will either be people declining to offer an opinion, saying Felt's choice was both negative and positive or that they feel in the middle.

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3. David Johnston and David E. Rosenbaum, "Reporters Credit Felt with Keeping Story Alive," *The New York Times*, 2 June 2005.
4. Lule, *Myth and Terror on the Editorial Page: The New York Times Responds to September 11, 2001*, 275-293.
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16. Ibid., 1.
17. Ibid., 63.
18. Ibid., 118-119.
19. Lule, *Myth and Terror on the Editorial Page: The New York Times Responds to September 11, 2001*, 276.
20. Gary Daynes, *Making Villains, Making Heroes: Joseph R. McCarthy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Politics of American Memory* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 120.
21. Dan D. Nimmo and James E. Combs, *Mediated Political Realities* (New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1990), 15.
22. Ibid.

Chapter 2

Theory & Literature Review

This research will examine Deep Throat's importance as a source for Woodward and Bernstein, the part he played in the re-telling of the story of Watergate reporting and how he was received in 2005 when his identity was revealed.

This chapter will discuss journalism, narrative and myth as well as include a review of literature published about Deep Throat and the Watergate scandal. The chapter includes a brief analysis of the history of investigative journalism, up to the time of Woodward and Bernstein's reporting on the Watergate scandal. It includes a discussion about myths in the news, and the importance news organizations play in creating mythologies in society. There is also information about narrative, and the way in which history is turned into a story, to create a narrative of events.

The literature review includes information about Watergate and Deep Throat, showing the pervasiveness of Deep Throat stories adding to the mythology of Watergate.

Journalism, Narrative and Myth

Humans craved news long before the advent of 24-hour news channels. "The desire to pass on tales of current events could be found even in cultures that did not have writing – let alone printing presses or computers – to whet or satisfy their thirst for news," Stephens said.¹ The first news was spoken, appearing hundreds of thousands of years ago, in the beginning of language development. Stephens wrote, "At its most basic, the exchange of news requires only the simplest of indicative or declarative statements.

And the dissemination of news accomplishes some of the basic purposes of language: informing others, entertaining others, protecting the tribe.”²

Symbols on clay tablets from 3100 B.C. are the earliest evidence of a writing system. Tablets from the middle of the third millennium B.C. had state treaties written on them. About 1,000 years later, there are tablets discussing official corruption, something Stephens characterized as a subject recognizable to present news consumers. However, the tablet was most likely written after people had heard the news. Syrian and Palestinian Canaanites had an alphabet by 1500 B.C., modernized by the Greeks’ addition of vowels 750 years later. A Chinese eunuch, Ts’ai Lun, is credited with inventing paper in A.D. 105. Johann Gutenberg re-invented the printing press with movable type in the fifteenth century. Not surprisingly, his first printing was the Bible, which Prickett called one of the world’s most influential pieces of writing. “Coming to consciousness within our apparently secular world, it is not always easy for us to see the ways in which it has been shaped by that longwinded and somewhat quirky product of an ancient Semitic people we call by our generic word for ‘book’, yet the fact remains that the Bible, simply in cultural terms, has been the most important single book in the history of Western civilisation, if not of the world.”³ The Bible shapes the way people read and write religious and popular texts. “What began as ‘the books’ had, literally and physically, become ‘the book’ – and in the process a new dimension had been added to the notion of narrative . . . The concept of narrative that was to evolve with the novel assumed the possibility of many parallel stories – sometimes apparently unrelated; it took for granted sub-plot and main plot; stories within stories; parallel, complementary and

even contradictory stories that may link thematically rather than by direct influence,” Prickett wrote.⁴

With the invention of the printing press, news and other printed information could be distributed on a larger scale than ever before. “News was published before it was printed, but print would transport news to a larger public, at faster speeds than it had ever before known. (Printing is so effective a means of publication that the words would become synonymous),” Stephens said.⁵ The first American newspaper, *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestick*, was published once on September 25, 1690.⁶ Publisher Benjamin Harris wrote about prisoner abuse and a sex scandal in France, causing the British authorities to shut him down. In 1735, John Peter Zenger was charged with seditious libel for accusing the New York colonial governor of corruption. After the American Revolution of 1776, newspapers became mouthpieces for political parties; the government funded them with printing contracts, making it impractical for journalists to be independent. By the end of the 1800s, newspapers found objectivity profitable, relying on circulation profits and attracting advertisers. A trend to expose scandal found muckrakers at their finest from 1902-1912. “These muckrakers soon became famous: Lincoln Steffans, exposing municipal corruption in *The Shame of the Cities*; Ida Tarbell, documenting the crimes of John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil in *McClure’s* magazine; and Upton Sinclair, working undercover in Chicago meat-packing plants to write his epic work, *The Jungle*.”⁷

The muckrakers were becoming the fourth estate in the United States. The idea of the media as the fourth estate comes from the English idea that the first estate is the Lord’s spiritual people, including clergy.⁸ The second estate is made up of the Lord’s

temporal people, including hereditary members of the House of Lords. The third estate consists of the House of Commons, which is the lower house in government. The media is the fourth estate, acting as a guardian for the public, keeping its interest in mind when being a government watchdog. “Depending on one’s perspective of the media, or more accurately, who the owner is of the particular media in question, that is either a fairly floss naivety, or an important contemporary safeguard of democratic society,” according to Australian Politics.⁹ In the case of the muckrakers, investigative reporting led to social change. Ida Tarbell’s stories strengthened anti-trust laws and Lincoln Steffans improved local government.

Although muckrakers are credited with bringing about important social changes, there were few of them in the time leading up to the Vietnam War. They began to emerge again in the 1960s. “Some investigative reporters – Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, Mike Wallace – became household names,” Feldstein wrote¹⁰ In fact, many consider the Watergate coverage journalism’s high point.¹¹

Kilmer compared newspaper writing to storytelling, saying they share the same elements, including characters and plots.¹² Nimmo and Combs posit that journalism as stories emotionally affect readers. Zelizer suggested journalists form interpretive communities based on what they communicate with the audience and each other. Journalists become the authoritative voice on a subject, even though they may not have witnessed it.¹³

In writing these stories, journalists also create myths of society. This thesis adds to idea of news as myth by examining Deep Throat’s role in the Watergate story, with the knowledge of his true identity. Archetypal myths are in the news on a daily basis and,

along with storytelling, are fundamental to journalism.¹⁴ Charles Kuralt's *On the Road* series began broadcasting during Walter Cronkite's newscast on *CBS Evening News* and created a mythology of America. Kuralt wandered around the United States, finding "slices of Americana [that were] like a two-minute cease-fire" compared to other news stories, Ehrlich wrote.¹⁵ Kuralt's mythmaking showed Americans are different than news stories suggested. "You can't travel the back roads very long without discovering a multitude of gentle people doing good for others with no expectation of gain or recognition. The everyday kindness of the back roads more than makes up for the greed in the headlines. Some people out there spend their whole lives selflessly," Kuralt said.¹⁶

Myths in news stories "most often serve and preserve social order" and "have the capacity to change the social order," Lule wrote.¹⁷ Myths are meant to keep social order,¹⁸ much like Kuralt's mythmaking maintained the status quo while advocating for change.¹⁹ Journalism accomplishes the goals of unifying readers, affirming group values and building collective memory by telling stories that stand for something large, "something that is cultural and historical rather than personal and momentary," Kitch wrote.²⁰ Routine news coverage has mythic characters and events.

Michael Schudson said Watergate created its own mythology of two journalists who brought down the president. Rosen asked, "Who cares if journalism in Watergate was generally lazy. Or if Judge Sirica or some FBI agents were as vital to Nixon's undoing as were Woodward and Bernstein? That does not matter, because the Watergate myth is sustaining. It survives to a large extent impervious to critique. It offers journalism a charter, an inspiration, a reason for being large enough to justify

constitutional protections that journalism enjoys.”²¹ Journalism students are brought into this myth, learning about being heroes and making history.²²

Journalists can create mythologies by the way they tell their stories. These stories are narratives, a way to help people understand the news. Watergate, more than a political scandal, became a story, narrated time and again. “Narration is a common mode of communication. People tell stories to entertain, to teach and to learn, to ask for an interpretation and to give one,” Czarniawska wrote.²³ Journalists narrate, using storytelling to help the public understand societal problems and force officials to take action.²⁴ “Even before the advent of writing, news was cast in dramatic stories told in tribal gatherings or town squares. Early journalists understood news as story with roots in drama, folktale, and myth,” Lule wrote.²⁵ News is real life presented as a drama, according to James Carey.²⁶

Writing in narrative style is part of newsroom training. Robert Karl Manoff said journalists are aware they are creating narratives. “Although newswriting operates according to an objective canon that emphasizes the facts, it does so within the requirements that it represent the events it reports in the form of stories . . . Narrative brings order to events by making them something that can be told about; they have power because they make the world make sense,” Kitch said.²⁷ Watergate was a consensus narrative, showing that journalism can save the American people by “chasing stories, exposing corruption, giving voice to the downtrodden: that’s what we in journalism do, the myth says. We do it for the American people. And they understand because they know from legend – from the movies – how it was when the country was in the dark about Nixon and Watergate,” Rosen wrote.²⁸

Social science uses narratives in research. “Everything is a narrative or at least can be treated as one. Usually, however, a narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/ action or series of events/ actions, chronologically connected,” Czarniawska said.²⁹ French semiologist Roland Barthes is often quoted on the subject of narratives, including by Czarniawska:

The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances — as though any material were fit to receive man’s stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting ... stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives ... Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.³⁰

Hayden White said historical events must be made into stories, much in the way Woodward and Bernstein made Watergate into a story, and Deep Throat’s influence as a mysterious character drew people’s interest. “The events are *made* into a story by the suppression of subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like – in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or play,” Ettema and Glasser wrote.³¹ These stories are similar to popular fiction in that they promote virtue by highlighting vice. They also wrote, “Although the focus of investigative journalism is more civic than

cosmic, it does tend to affirm conventional interpretations of right and wrong by applying them, with little analysis or critique, to the situation at hand.”³²

In the nineteenth century, Nelly Bly and Elizabeth Bisland raced to make it around the world in less than 80 days. Their newspaper articles showed the community’s shared stories about a woman’s place, allowing writers to change the “plot” of traditional female roles.³³ Kilmer compared newspapers to fiction, both of them creating pictures for readers. “All writing, including journalism, tells a story built upon character, plot, action, dramatic unity, and purpose,” Kilmer wrote.³⁴

George Herbert Mead said news is like drama, with characters in different story-like situations. “For Mead most journalism was not information journalism, which deals with facts and truth, but story journalism, which gives us accounts of events we find emotionally exciting, aesthetically pleasing, and personally meaningful in our daily lives,” according to Nimmo and Combs.³⁵ Lull and Hinerman also advocated the idea of journalism stories, saying a scandal occurs when private acts go against the morality of the general public. The media then narrate these acts. “The scandal story aroused the curiosity of a substantial audience who encourage the media to continue ‘telling the story.’ The scandal continues as long as the public remains interested in the story. Closure requires some kind of social consensus, which often demands a final ‘truth,’ ‘moral lesson,’ or ‘justice served.’ Terms of closure rest ultimately with the public.”³⁶

The characters in these stories are essential to political decision making, as the public usually does not know enough about the specific policies of a politician, therefore basing voting choices on the character of a person. “Matters of character (*ethos*) are central to the public construction of politics and political leadership, especially now, in

the era of a mass-mediated public sphere so characteristic of late-capitalist, large, industrialized societies,” Lull and Hinerman said.³⁷

Zelizer argued journalists have a collective memory, which they pass to the public, which remembers events via journalism. She wrote about this collective memory in the context of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination in November 1963; this also applies to the story of the Watergate scandal. The media coverage of Watergate created memories of the event, both in the minds of journalists and the public. Woodward and Bernstein’s coverage, especially once translated into book and movie form, kept the story alive, both for people who lived through the scandal and for future generations. Zelizer “explores how journalists have established themselves as the story’s authoritative spokespersons.”³⁸ Basically, journalists make up an interpretive community, in which they define themselves. Their authority “exists in narrative, where journalists maintain it through the stories they tell. By varying who tells these stories, how they tell them, and what they do or do not tell, journalists enact their authority as a narrative craft, embodied in narrative forms.”³⁹ Journalists validate themselves through the re-telling of an event, thereby throwing to the wayside another group’s interpretation. “Through shared narrative lore, reporters are able to espouse collective values and notions that help them maintain themselves as an authoritative interpretive community.”⁴⁰

Nimmo and Combs wrote dramatic elements are present in mass communication. “The political world that unfolds daily before our eyes is presented in group and mass communication in melodramatic ways.”⁴¹ A series of events in real life draws the attention of people and then, using the elements of drama, must be logically presented in order to be understood. These elements include actors, actions, style, plot, setting,

motives and justification or conclusion of the drama. Nimmo and Combs wrote the characters in the drama are “frequently portrayed as heroes, villains, and fools.”⁴² Paul Lucey wrote in Baym, “good dramas are built around compelling characters, whose life histories, personal relationships, and inner-most emotional states are revealed for the audience.”⁴³

The floodlight journalists use to expose a story is similar to “a dramaturgical illumination that understands politics to be drama, publicity to provide the stage, and political actors to be just that – actors who star in the theater of politics.”⁴⁴

Literature Review

Woodward and Bernstein’s investigative journalism was not the first of its kind, nor was it the last. There are abundant sources of scholarship on investigative journalism. Baym said the press acted as a searchlight during Watergate, “an apersonal and disembodied agent of surveillance which illuminates the political in a rational-institutional light,”⁴⁵ as opposed to the floodlight used during the Monica Lewinsky scandal of President Bill Clinton’s administration. “Watergate may have been the apex of . . . professional journalism: the product of a high-modern inclination, structured by an ideology of public service and its concurrent faith in objectivity, rationality, and universal truth.”⁴⁶ This searchlight ensured political responsibility; balanced argument led to political decisions and facts and journalists weren’t prejudiced.⁴⁷ However, “for all its democratic intentions, the searchlight of Watergate contained a significant measure of exclusion, naturalizing the particularity of patriarchal, dispassionate methods of inquiry,

and implicitly marginalizing alternative identities and more affective forms of political reasoning.”⁴⁸

McKay wrote about the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, which rose out of disputes during Watergate. The committee impeded Nixon in his attempts to keep documents from the public. It still guards journalism rights.

In 2005, Feldstein wrote about reporter Les Whitten being arrested in 1973 for stealing government documents. Whitten’s case was the first in a line of other cases, which eventually determined what journalists can publish from stolen documents.

Scholars have written about the role of investigative reporting, or “journalism of outrage . . . a form of storytelling that probes the boundaries of America’s civic conscience.”⁴⁹ Investigative reporting is based on supply and demand, according to Feldstein.⁵⁰ He said the cycles of muckraking fit into four categories:

1. Supply and demand for muckraking is high.
2. Demand is high but supply is low.
3. Supply is high but demand is low.
4. Supply and demand for muckraking is low.

Feldstein believed Watergate reporting fit into category 1, with the public wanting the information and the media supplying it. During category 1 times, there has been “demand for information about societal ills from an alienated, literate population of consumers; and a fiercely competitive national media that sought to supply it.”⁵¹ In addition to Watergate, public concern about civil rights and the Vietnam War revived investigative reporting.⁵² This demand for reporting can explain Deep Throat’s popularity – people wanted information and paid attention.

Woodward and Bernstein continued writing stories about the Watergate scandal when other news outlets chose to focus on other stories. They believed their discoveries were important for the public to know. Ettema and Glasser said journalists are moral agents, deciding society's values, and giving the public its sense of morality. Lull and Hinerman and Thompson wrote about scandals both in politics and the media, which are often intertwined. Lull and Hinerman said the media tell stories when they report on scandals, putting forth a plot that draws in the audience. The scandal isn't over until the public is sick of it or there is an ending, such as a lesson or punishment. Thompson included Watergate in his discussion of political scandals, writing that the entire incident affected people immediately and in the future.

Billig and Macmillan explored the history of the phrase "smoking gun" as well as the use of "-gate" appended to the end of any scandal name, in reference to the Watergate scandal. They wrote the first use of "smoking gun" can be traced to Watergate, when a congressman said the discovery of Nixon's tape-recorded conversations in the Oval Office was a smoking gun.⁵³ "A complex event, such as the Watergate scandal, has come to stand for a class of events that can be said to resemble the original event. 'Watergate' then passes from the name of a particular hotel to the name of a particular political scandal (the Watergate scandal) and then it comes to denote the generic category of events that resemble the original one."⁵⁴ Watergate represents a presidential cover-up. "The categorization of a political crisis as a '-gate' implies that the accused powerful figure is guilty and the proof of the guilt might be found."⁵⁵ Watergate established a rivalry between politicians and the press, changing journalism and its functions.⁵⁶

The addition of “-gate” is a proof that Watergate is its own mythology, as shown throughout this paper. Lule studied mythology in the pages of the *New York Times* following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. He found the *New York Times*, treating the attacks as a local story, used four mythological archetypes to explain the effects on New Yorkers in the weeks after: The End of Innocence, The Victims, The Heroes and The Foreboding Future.⁵⁷

Kitch wrote about mythology in the context of the Kennedy family, focusing on the death of John F. Kennedy Jr. in 1999. Journalists spoke about Kennedy’s death with mythological language, including the subjects of family and nation, tragedy and hope, and sacrifice and redemption.

Watergate was an important event in the history of the United States, as evidenced by the literature published about the scandal. Deep Throat became a part of the scandal, included in writings about it for years afterward. However, something not apparent in all this literature, is how much Deep Throat actually contributed to Watergate. This thesis will as take a deeper look at the writings that came out of Watergate answer the question of the anonymous source’s contribution and how his unveiling was received.

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Chapter 3

Deep Throat & Mark Felt

Felt was born August 17, 1913 in Twin Falls, Idaho, to Mark Earl Felt and Rose Dygert. In his memoirs, Felt said little about his parents, calling his father “a moderately successful building contractor” and saying his mother encouraged him to take piano lessons.¹ He wrote well of himself, mentioning the only criticism of his childhood would have been that he did not live up to his potential. After graduating from the University of Idaho in 1935, Felt attended George Washington University Law School, graduating in 1940. He married Audrey Robinson while a law student, in June 1938. After graduating, Felt worked in a legal position at the Federal Trade Commission. He felt bored with his assignments, saying a task involving asking people about toilet paper brand recognition caused him to search for a new job.

Felt began working at the FBI in 1942, starting with three weeks of training in Quantico, Virginia. After that, he moved frequently around the country between assignments, slowly gaining status at the Bureau. Felt had a lofty view of the FBI role, especially during the reign of J. Edgar Hoover, FBI director from 1924 until his death in 1972. Felt gradually worked his way through the ranks until he reached the spot of the number two man in the Bureau.

All the President's Men started the Deep Throat infatuation, with Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein revealing a secret source helped with their Watergate reporting. When Woodward told *Washington Post* managing editor Howard Simons about his deep background source, “Simons dubbed him ‘Deep Throat,’ the title of a celebrated pornographic movie. The name stuck,” Woodward and Bernstein wrote.² Deep Throat

took on a new meaning and, instead of being pornographic, the term became synonymous with deep background. Woodward's protection of Deep Throat encouraged other sources to open up to him. "Deep Throat, or the concept of rigid source protection, became the unstated part of the conversation . . . The Deep Throat legacy was a foundation of establishing the compact: I would never tell."³

In his 2005 book, Woodward wrote about 16 Watergate phone calls or meetings with Mark Felt, some in an underground garage. He met with Felt as Felt, not Deep Throat, once during the Watergate coverage. Another reporter at the *Washington Post* suggested Felt as a source for a story about the money trail in the Watergate scandal. Afraid he was being set up, Woodward arranged the meeting at Felt's FBI office.

A most uncomfortable charade proceeded. I said I wanted confirmation on some matters that Carl and I had discovered. I don't even remember what they were. Felt was proper. He wouldn't answer anything. I don't think he was rolling his eyes but mine were spinning. Even in the most useless interview with the most tight-lipped person, a reporter can generally get something, even if it's a negative. Never has so little being said. I can't even find if I took notes. Felt and I never discussed the meeting, but he mentioned it in his 1979 book as evidence that he had never helped me.⁴

There were a few interviews after the Watergate coverage, when Woodward said his relationship with Felt was poor. The interviews were about Felt being charged with breaking into homes of people connected to the Weather Underground Organization, described by Felt as a domestic terrorist group.⁵ Woodward called Felt after his indictment on April 10, 1978, but Felt groaned and the conversation was unsuccessful.⁶ Felt reminded Woodward of his promise to keep Felt's role in the Watergate stories a secret in a November 1980 phone call, despite Woodward cajoling him to come forward.⁷

The Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers show Woodward had several handwritten pages covered in source names and telephone numbers. There is no clear organization to the pages and, about five lines up on the bottom left side of one page, is a source named Felt with the telephone number 573-3216 written next to it.⁸ There were many sources involved in the *Washington Post*'s coverage of Watergate, "far broader than all the pre-Felt sleuthing about Deep Throat has suggested," Greenberg wrote.⁹ However, Deep Throat's role was popularized in the movie version of *All the President's Men*, as discussed by Rosen, who wrote that journalism was like a religion: "The scenes where Woodward meets his highly-placed source in a darkened garage are among the most potent the religion has to offer. The truth is hidden. But we have a source and bring it to light. This is the temple of secrets. This is myth," Rosen said.¹⁰

The early drafts of *All the President's Men* showed how Woodward and Bernstein's ideas for the Deep Throat character evolved. On a to-do list in their personal notes, they mentioned the need to describe how Deep Throat interviews were written as memos and to double-check his introduction in the book. Woodward has a crossed-out note, presumably meaning he decided not to do it, saying he should include a paragraph "on stroking Deep Throat to keep him as a source."¹¹

A 1976 news article about Woodward giving a speech poked fun at the Deep Throat phenomenon. "Our source, whose code name was 'Shallow Nose,' said Woodward looked very tired and that before he took the podium at 8:30 for his lecture, he went in and brushed his teeth. That's what our source said. And never mind about the identity of 'Shallow Nose,'" Martin wrote.¹² Students questioned Woodward about Deep Throat's identity, to which he sarcastically replied he had never been asked. "Well, that's

a code name for a source who perceives that he either has or had a career in government. We have not and will not reveal his name until he gives permission. But I'll tell you he is a male between the ages of 15 and 85 and that he perceives a career for himself in government or some other profession. I think that covers about most of us," according to Martin's news article.¹³

In a 1974 interview Woodward said he used sources anonymously to protect their careers. "In the case of Watergate, these were people in privileged positions who saw or knew about things that were illegal or improper. They were willing to help reporters learn what had been going on in the government. But they wouldn't talk unless their names remained confidential, and understandably so. Otherwise they lose their jobs!"¹⁴

The time between Watergate and Felt's name being revealed brought about many guesses as to who he was as well as people analyzing the scandal. A story published in *Washingtonian* magazine two months after *All the President's Men* said Felt was Deep Throat, a fact refuted in a *Wall Street Journal* article shortly thereafter. Felt denied it, both in June 1974 and again, five months later, in November for a *Los Angeles Times* story.¹⁵ In a 1974 letter to the *Washington Post* editor, a Los Angeles man was angry about being pinpointed as a Deep Throat candidate:

This speculation is not only libelous, it could never possibly have happened during the period of time under discussion. I was not even in Washington during most of this period and I am not acquainted with Messrs. Woodward and Bernstein and have never communicated with them in any way. I am fully aware hysteria is on the loose in our nation's Capital, but someone must begin to place some premium on the impact and integrity of the written word.¹⁶

Bernstein interviewed the man, Robert Finch, two months later, although his notes available to the public don't include the subject of the interview.¹⁷

An Australian living in Singapore wrote Woodward and Bernstein to compliment them on the book version of *All the President's Men*. He acknowledged the numerous secrets Woodward and Bernstein must have about the coverage, including Deep Throat's identity. "I would suspect that Deep Throat was a female," he wrote.¹⁸ San Francisco lawyer John Anderson guessed Nixon Deputy Assistant Alexander Butterfield was Deep Throat. Anderson wrote to Woodward, saying Butterfield was the type of person who would be dramatic in the same way as Deep Throat. He also said the implications to the democratic process "make me want to vomit."¹⁹ Anderson wrote if Butterfield was involved in the CIA, the agency had too much influence. "I used to be a person who pooh-poohed any conspiracy view of history. That was something of which the nightmares of the paranoid right and left were made. I believe now that I, and others who thought as I did, were naïve schlemiels. In fact, the distrust and disillusion has become so deep-seated that I wonder how you – some nine months on the Washington Post staff, Navy veteran, Yale graduate, four-square Republican Wheatonite, middle of the road political activist (at least in your Wheaton years) – how you somehow became the recipient of deep throat's information – fortuitous coincidence, or what?"²⁰

A former colleague of Woodward's at the *Washington Post*, James Mann, wrote an article for *The Atlantic Monthly* in May 1992, saying Deep Throat had to be someone at the FBI. Woodward complained to Mann that, although he didn't discuss Deep Throat's identity with him, newsroom discussion should be private.²¹ Bebow wrote about a professor, who thinks he's discovered Deep Throat (he didn't). Ben-Veniste compared Watergate to modern political scandals, and said things hadn't improved. Brennan wrote about how *All the President's Men* gave journalism an ideology, and

helped people understand the role of the press. In 2002, Giuffo called Watergate one of the biggest news stories ever.

Both Benjamin Bradlee, the *Washington Post* managing editor during the Watergate coverage who knew Deep Throat's identity, and Bob Woodward participated in online forums on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the break-in, discussing their roles in the newspaper coverage and answering questions from online readers. Both touched on Deep Throat and his contributions but would not budge when asked his identity.

After some years with no contact, Woodward called Felt on January 4, 2000 at Felt's home in Santa Rosa, California, where he lived with daughter Joan Felt. Woodward was surprised to discover Felt's memory was fading, and he did not remember details about his role as Deep Throat.²² Woodward met Felt at his home on February 28, 2000, this time recording a conversation with him about Watergate. Felt suffered from dementia and could not recall many details despite Woodward prodding him. Woodward wondered whether the Deep Throat he had made a promise of confidentiality to was the same Felt living in Santa Rosa and without much memory of his historical role.²³ Woodward tried to jog Felt's memory in a phone call on May 10, 2002, after Felt's son said Felt had disclosed his secret identity to the family. However, Woodward was not convinced Felt had valid memories about being Deep Throat.²⁴

Felt's first discourse to the world came in his book about the FBI, *The FBI Pyramid: From the Inside*. His purpose in writing the book was to depict his experiences as an FBI agent moving up the ranks as well as to cast light on the agency's problems and who he considered its greatest leader, J. Edgar Hoover. Felt mentioned the Watergate scandal in connection with Woodward and Bernstein's secret source about two-thirds

through his book, when he wrote FBI acting director Patrick Grey told him White House staff members thought Felt was Deep Throat and wanted him fired. Felt denied it and Grey, saying he believed him, told Felt he wouldn't fire him. To readers, Felt vehemently denied being Deep Throat, going so far as to say, "I never leaked information to Woodward and Bernstein or to anyone else!"²⁵

In his 2006 book, Felt said he worked outside regular FBI parameters and hoped the FBI would someday understand. "People will debate for a long time whether I did the right thing by helping Woodward. The bottom line is that we did get the whole truth out, and isn't that what the FBI is supposed to do?"²⁶ Felt leaked information that was impeding his investigation when the Justice Department tried to stop him. "While he saw the Watergate break-in as part of a broad spectrum of violations, Justice ordered him, in effect, to stick to the break-in."²⁷

After a colleague heard an interview with Ben Bradlee, hinting that someone "could identify Deep Throat by databasing all possible clues about all possible suspects,"²⁸ University of Illinois professor Bill Gaines embarked on such a research project with his students, Bebow wrote. Gaines and the students searched more than 16,000 pages of FBI reports, all the Woodward and Bernstein Watergate stories for two years and early drafts of *All the President's Men* to find variances.²⁹ The researchers trusted Woodward had been honest in the small amount of information he gave concerning Deep Throat. John Dean helped Gaines and his students, although he believed no matter who they uncovered, that person would deny it. Gaines concluded the source was Fred Fielding, Nixon White House deputy counsel.³⁰ Upon hearing the news of Deep Throat's true identity in 2005, Gaines questioned whether Woodward and

Bernstein were “careless or misleading.”³¹ In the days following, Gaines received hundreds of e-mails and phone calls. He told a reporter that people laughed at him “as if we had run the wrong way with the football.”³²

In one of many lists of the five most-likely candidates, Felt appeared last with the following description by Feldstein: “A longtime top FBI official, he also had access to secret information that Throat passed on to Woodward. Felt also had a motive: Nixon passed him over for the FBI’s top job. By one account, reporter Carl Bernstein’s young son once spilled the beans that Felt was indeed Throat, but both Bernstein and Felt denied it.”³³ Stanley Kutler, who Feldstein called the leading historian on the Watergate scandal, went so far as to say Deep Throat’s true identity wasn’t important, because many government officials leaked information from the time the Watergate burglars were captured.³⁴

Woodward, Bernstein, and Bradlee kept their promises not to identify Deep Throat’s identity despite numerous requests for clues. In his twenty-fifth anniversary conversation with online *Washington Post* readers, Woodward explained to a 10-year-old boy that he couldn’t give information because he had given his word to Deep Throat.³⁵ When questioned in 2002, after Gaines’ University of Illinois project, Woodward said, “You’re going to get a kind of deep silence from us on this subject. It’s about keeping our word for 30 years.”³⁶

Garment wondered about Deep Throat’s identity five years before the truth would come out, identifying John Sears. Sears was “an obscure political operative who had worked in the 1968 Nixon presidential campaign and, briefly, in the Nixon White House” during Watergate.³⁷ In writing his book, Garment described the pathway he took in

identifying Sears. After his book was published, Woodward and Bernstein denied his claim.³⁸ Researchers made incorrect guesses because of “some things in the book [*All the President’s Men*], as well as other statements by Woodward over the years . . . Researchers were also sent in the wrong direction by a 1989 *Playboy* interview with Woodward. In that story, the reporter said Deep Throat was not part of the ‘intelligence’ community, which could be interpreted to include the FBI,” Memmott wrote.³⁹ Interestingly, in a thirtieth anniversary article published shortly before Gaines and Dean revealed their guess of Deep Throat’s identity, an online article by Noah said Felt was “the default assumption of any serious Deep Throat scholar, and has been for nearly 20 years”⁴⁰

In response to a question about Deep Throat’s motivations on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Watergate, Bradlee said he thought Deep Throat “had a strange, passionate devotion to the truth and a horror at what he saw going on.”⁴¹

In a May 31, 2005 article that shocked many, including Woodward and Bernstein, Felt family lawyer John D. O’Connor revealed Felt was Deep Throat. There was only one quote from Felt concerning his secret identity in the article – “I’m the guy they used to call Deep Throat.”⁴² O’Connor reviewed the Watergate scandal and Felt’s previous denials, referring to Felt’s *The FBI Pyramid*. O’Connor wrote a reporter from the *Globe* tabloid said Felt was Deep Throat in an article published “possibly in anticipation of the 30th anniversary of the Watergate break-in.”⁴³ Until that moment, “identifying Deep Throat has been an American cultural pastime since 1974,” Bebow wrote.⁴⁴ The night before the article’s release, various news organizations announced the magazine’s revelation. Newspapers, both on a national and local level, carried the news of Deep

Throat's true identity. Disagreement emerged over Felt being a hero or a traitor, opinions coming from journalists and people involved in Watergate.

The *Washington Post* initially had no comment on the story. The October 2005 issue of *Vanity Fair* published an article by Bernstein that discussed the shock waves they felt at the revelation and the back and forth he, Woodward, Bradlee and the *Washington Post* went through trying to decide whether to confirm the *Vanity Fair* story before realizing they were free from their responsibility to keep Felt's name a secret. "In the end, it was like the beginning. Confusion. Then consultation. Then calm. Then the wait to see where the chips would fall. And, in the end, the editors probably had it right. Woodward and I went along with the greatest reluctance, with Bradlee casting the deciding vote."⁴⁵ Woodward and Bernstein issued a statement late in the afternoon, saying, "W. Mark Felt was 'Deep Throat' and helped us immeasurably in our Watergate coverage. However, as the record shows, many other sources and officials assisted us and other reporters for the hundreds of other stories that were written in *The Washington Post* about Watergate."⁴⁶ Woodward and Bernstein admitted Deep Throat's information was not the only information they used. In fact, Woodward has been quoted several times saying he was important, but not vital to the coverage. In his twenty-fifth anniversary interview, Woodward said Deep Throat provided a road map to the scandal, letting Woodward know the burglary was only one of the many offenses being committed. "The interlocking nature of the crimes gave it weight and provided the context, and in fact one of the incentives for us to continue our investigations."⁴⁷ In his 2005 book about Felt, Woodward said Felt "had played no small part" in the Watergate disclosures.⁴⁸ Bernstein wrote that "people will and should debate the significance and

role of any of the sources. But the essential point is rather simple. It was the convergence of all sources, not just a single one, but these firsthand witnesses at all levels, that enabled us to penetrate the secrecy of the Nixon presidency.”⁴⁹

In a 2006 *Larry King Live* appearance, King asked the reporters how important Deep Throat was to the story. Woodward said Deep Throat was part of the Watergate coverage, but there were many sources. “He was somebody, number two in the FBI, who guided us and, as the movie accurately shows, he wasn’t dishing out documents or explaining the whole story. He was subtle and paranoid as often good sources are and so it was just a piece that he provided. I think it was very comforting to Bradlee at the *Post* knowing that we had a source who was high in the Justice Department so it wasn’t just a bunch of kids or disgruntled people at the Nixon committee or at the White House. So it was critical but only part.”⁵⁰ Woodward said the same thing when interviewed for the DVD special release of *All the President’s Men* in 2006. In his 2005 book, Woodward thanked Felt saying “it was a tug-of-war at times, but he came through, providing the kind of guidance, information and understanding that were essential to the Watergate story.”⁵¹ John Dean agreed Deep Throat wasn’t important in his e-book, saying he didn’t “matter at all” except as a comfort to Bradlee that his reporters had a high-up source.⁵² However, that didn’t stop Dean from looking for Deep Throat. In a June 16, 2002 appearance on CBS’s “Face the Nation,” Dean said he’d narrowed his search for Deep Throat down to a small group, but couldn’t name names until he found more clues.⁵³

Woodward quickly prepared a manuscript for publication, *The Secret Man*. Woodward struggled to understand Felt’s motives for giving information to Woodward. Woodward had two tape-recorded conversations with Felt in his 80s, but Felt’s memory

is faded and he cannot give satisfactory explanations although daughter Joan Felt said Felt remembers Woodward. Woodward expressed thanks and admiration for Felt although he is frustrated he didn't ask Felt about his motivations before it was too late.

After Felt revealed his secret identity in 2005, theories as to why he spoke to Woodward were tossed around. They included one saying Felt was angry with Nixon for appointing L. Patrick Gray III as the interim FBI director from May 1972, after J. Edgar Hoover's death, to April 1973, something Felt denied in his 2006 book. "Gray was reportedly so loyal to Nixon – and so anxious to be appointed the permanent FBI director – that he eagerly volunteered to do the dirty work for the White House," Feldstein said.⁵⁴ In a 1973 hearing, Woodward quoted Gray in his handwritten notes as saying, "I was over there being called on the carpets 'for the leaks'" and "I resented it because I don't think there were leaks within the FBI."⁵⁵ Although Nixon nominated him for the permanent director position, Gray eventually withdrew his name from the process.

Bernstein discussed Felt's motives almost a year after his public outing. Felt didn't seem to want to reveal himself, but his family did, and Felt was tormented. However, Bernstein said Felt made the best choice in sharing secret information with the reporters. "I think he was heroic in that the moment that he was tested, he did the right thing for his country and that he's owed a great debt because of it."⁵⁶ In Felt's 2006 book about his Deep Throat role, attorney John O'Connor said Felt's intention in becoming Deep Throat was to further the FBI's investigation:

Mark Felt's actions that summer as Deep Throat, he suggests in this book, were intended to throw a spotlight on the White House so that it could not impede the FBI investigation. Such motives are common in Washington. What began as garden-variety leaking, though, soon evolved into something much riskier. In October 1972, Felt and Woodward began the daring, courageous

collaboration that became a crucial element in the toppling of a presidency.⁵⁷

Larry King interviewed Felt in April 2006, Felt's first interview with the press since his outing in 2005. Felt was 92 and, as King pointed out, his memory was failing "but to see and hear him is to get a unique sense of the man behind the mystery of Deep Throat."⁵⁸ King asked Felt his reasons for speaking to Woodward during the Watergate scandal. Felt denied doing it for revenge, saying he helped because he thought Woodward was doing a good job. He later added there had to be someone helping from the inside. "They had to be honest and they had to be reliable and if I could do that and fit into that category, that was fine. That's what I wanted."⁵⁹

Felt was indicted April 10, 1978 for authorizing break-ins into people's homes. The FBI believed these people were connected to the Weather Underground organization, a radical anti-war group of domestic terrorists. He wrote about it in his book, mentioning the large group of FBI agents who stood on the court steps to support him when he appeared in court. He did not write about the outcome as his book was published before his legal issues were resolved. One of the ironies of the case is that Nixon testified in his defense, Dobbs wrote:

The former president had come to testify at Felt's illegal break-in trial. Interrupted by shouts of 'liar' and 'war criminal' from spectators, who were swiftly bundled out of the courtroom, Nixon made clear that he believed that Felt had acted properly in approving the break-ins. A few days later, Felt received a copy of Nixon's latest book, 'The Real War.' On an inside page, he found the following inscription: 'To Mark Felt. With appreciation for his years of service to the nation. Richard Nixon.'⁶⁰

A woman whose apartment was broken into during this time believed Felt should not only be remembered as Deep Throat, but also as someone who violated the basic

constitutional rights of American citizens by authorizing the break-ins. In June 2005, Jennifer Dohrn was interviewed by *Democracy Now*, a television program offering an alternative to mainstream media corporations. Dohrn said her apartment was broken into multiple times, both because she was an anti-war protestor and because her sister was a prominent member of the Weather Underground. “What was happening was great surveillance and breaking of the law, illegal acts, directed, authorized, built, engineered by Felt against the entire movement of protest. I think it’s important, especially when I hear the earlier clips, it’s being billed as Watergate brought down Nixon. My view is that the victory of the Vietnamese people and the vibrant movement in this country brought down Nixon. And the whistleblowing to have Watergate be exposed was critical, but we have to set the record straight historically. And in fact, what was done to me, which was severe and continual, was small compared to the strategy that was implemented by Felt against other movements in this country.”⁶¹

Felt began his memoirs by writing about the Weather Underground case, saying the United States was fighting a civil war against domestic terrorists in the 1960s and 1970s. “The Weather Underground, Cuban-taught, self-proclaimed Communist Revolutionaries, publicly declared war on the United States. Claiming credit for scores of bombings and boasting of their ties to Fidel Castro, these young anarchists actually believed they could overthrow our Federal Government by force and violence.”⁶² Felt cried foul when he pointed out how he helped the federal government fight the Weather Underground and now the federal government was fighting against Felt. He claimed innocence of any wrongdoing, saying he was always acting within his power and by FBI standards.

Felt wrote about the wrongs of the Weather Underground, including his knowledge of their terrorist activities and its most powerful members. He explained J. Edgar Hoover said in 1970 to use “any means necessary to locate and apprehend these dangerous fugitives.”⁶³ Hoover stopped the use of surreptitious entries, known as Black Bag Jobs, in 1966. Felt wrote it was clear from statements made by L. Patrick Gray, he intended to reinstate them.

Felt authorized five Black Bag Jobs without Gray’s permission, because, as Felt wrote in his memoirs, Gray was often away on business and had given Felt operational authority. Felt wrote the FBI was able to give the country a reprieve from the Weather Underground organization:

I offer no apologies for what I have done. I admitted responsibility for actions taken against the Weather Underground and I am ready to accept the consequences. I did what I thought was right and my professional obligation. I am willing to stake my honesty and loyalty and dedication to my country against that of anyone. For many years I worked long hours, faced criminals ready to kill and, to the limit of my ability, did what I thought was in the best interests of the United States. So far as the WUO bombers were concerned, I had no criminal intent. My intent was to save lives and property. Looking back over the years, I know it was worth it. I would do it all again, even with the foreknowledge of the parting gift which may be in store for me.⁶⁴

Felt was convicted for authorizing the break-ins but, while he and fellow FBI agent Edward Miller were appealing the case, President Ronald Reagan pardoned them in 1981. Nixon sent a bottle of champagne to Felt to celebrate his victory.

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3. Woodward, *The Secret Man: The Story of Watergate's Deep Throat*, 184-185.
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5. Ibid., 128-129.
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15. Woodward, *The Secret Man: The Story of Watergate's Deep Throat*, 116-119.
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24. *Ibid.*, 199.
25. Felt, *The FBI Pyramid: From the Inside*, 226.

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Chapter 4

Major Players

Richard Nixon

Richard Milhous Nixon was born January 9, 1913 in Yorba Linda, California, to Francis Anthony Nixon and Hannah Milhous Nixon. They were members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers. Nixon wrote fondly of his parents in his memoirs, saying his father showed particular interest in his son's political career. While working in Congress, Nixon sent home daily copies of the *Congressional Record*, and his father read them from cover to cover.¹ After graduating from Duke University Law School in 1937, Nixon worked as a lawyer for five years then joined the Navy, where he stayed until 1946. He married Thelma Catherine Ryan, better known as Pat, in 1940. Nixon served in Congress from 1947-1952. In 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower chose Nixon as his running mate in Eisenhower's bid for the presidency. Nixon was the 37th president of the United States from 1969-74, elected seven years after completing his two terms as vice-president for Eisenhower. He rose from modest beginnings to sit as the most powerful man in the White House. He demanded a lot from others, accomplishing more in less time than most people.²

According to his official White House biography,

His accomplishments while in office included revenue sharing, the end of the draft, new anticrime laws, and a broad environmental program. As he had promised, he appointed Justices of conservative philosophy to the Supreme Court. One of the most dramatic events of his first term occurred in 1969, when American astronauts made the first moon landing. Some of his most acclaimed achievements came in his quest for world stability. During visits in 1972 to Beijing and Moscow, he reduced tensions with China and the U.S.S.R. His summit meetings with Russian leader Leonid I. Brezhnev produced a treaty to limit strategic

nuclear weapons. In January 1973, he announced an accord with North Viet Nam to end American involvement in Indochina. In 1974, his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, negotiated disengagement agreements between Israel and its opponents, Egypt and Syria.³

Nixon had a reputation for punishing those who spoke ill of him. He saw the media as foes. His “antagonism toward the news media developed many years before he reached the White House,” Feldstein wrote.⁴ He targeted the *Washington Post* during the Watergate scandal, telling Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, “the *Post* is going to have damnable, damnable problems out of this one . . . the game has to be played awfully rough,” according to Feldstein.⁵ McKay said there was a “serious distrust between the Nixon Administration and the media,” calling the time period, “the angry days”⁶ and “the dark days”⁷ of Nixon’s reign, filled with “emotional and confrontational press-shield issues.”⁸ During Watergate, the press treated Nixon “as an institution and an office, but rarely an individual . . . throughout the coverage, the White House, not Nixon, is positioned as the central actor in the story,” Baym said.⁹ Nixon was apprehensive about the press, and the press was “wary of Nixon and the others” in the White House,” McKay wrote.¹⁰

In 1973, reporter Les Whitten, working under reporter Jack Anderson, was charged with stealing government documents from the Bureau of Indian affairs in Washington D.C. Although not involved in the theft, Whitten was helping with the return, and was arrested for possessing the documents. His case resulted in rules about what journalists could print from stolen documents. “The Nixon administration tried to create, in essence, a legal loophole that would have allowed the government to retaliate against critical reporting by punishing newsgathering rather than publication,” something

Feldstein called “the government’s naked abuse of prosecutorial power for political purposes.”¹¹ Nixon’s loathing toward the press reached into multiple aspects of his administration¹² and he had White House aides create stories that Jack Anderson was homosexual.¹³

Woodward said no presidency has been so thoroughly examined, and many of Nixon’s former associates spoke against him in later years. “Virtually everyone in Nixon’s inner circle finally turned on him – testified or wrote a book, telling about his bitterness and anger and his efforts to break the law and to use his presidential power to settle new and old scores with his enemies, real and imagined.”¹⁴ One Nixon staffer turned author, William Safire, wrote about Nixon’s animosity toward the press in 1975.¹⁵ He said Nixon truly thought of the press as an enemy. McKay wrote, “In that vein of vengeance that ran through his relationship with another power center, in his indulgence of his most combative and abrasive instincts against what he saw to be an unelected and unrepresentative elite, lay Nixon’s greatest personal and political weakness and the cause of his downfall.”¹⁶

Others spoke positively of Nixon. Bernstein interviewed the president’s barber, Milton Pitts, who saw Nixon the morning of his resignation speech to the country. When Nixon came into the room for his haircut, “he flashed a smile and said, ‘Hello, Mr. Pitts, how are you?’ (He always called me Mr. Pitts),” Greenberg wrote.¹⁷ Before leaving, Nixon promised to visit Pitts’ barbershop: “I’ll call you for an appointment, just like anyone else – I won’t just drop in on you.”¹⁸

Nixon’s discussion of the Watergate break-in in his memoirs made it appear he had no previous knowledge of it and did not know why it happened. He wrote about his

activities the day of the break-in as well as the days after, saying, “The Watergate break-in was still the furthest thing from my mind.”¹⁹ In his diary entry, he said he hoped “none of our people were involved for two reasons – one, because it was stupid in the way it was handled; and two, because I could see no reason whatever for trying to bug the national committee” adding that he hoped the story wouldn’t be publicized as “a clumsy attempt on our part to get information illegally from the Democrats.”²⁰ Nixon claimed in his memoirs he did not try to hide anything, saying “as certain as I was that we had done everything we could to contain the scandal, I was equally as confident that we had not tried to cover it up.”²¹ He questioned several times why people would have broken into Democratic National Committee headquarters, as it would be a useless place to find relevant political information. He said the main problem with the Watergate affair was Democrats would use it against him in the 1972 presidential campaign.

A member of the Watergate Special Prosecutor’s team, Richard Ben-Veniste, wrote in 1997 the break-in was not a minor burglary, as so many media outlets at the time described it. “It was a significant violation of law authorized by Nixon insiders at the highest level -- if not the president himself -- to continue illegal electronic eavesdropping and photographing of confidential records.”²²

In a Monday, December 31, 1973 press release, the Watergate Special Prosecution Team reported its progress, including indictments, convictions and prospects. “The Special Prosecutor also took part in lengthy and successful litigation concerning the production of Presidential documents and recordings where executive privilege was claimed,” according to the press release.²³

The original Watergate burglars were sentenced as follows²⁴:

1. E. Howard Hunt: 30 months-8 years prison and \$10,000 fine.
2. James W. McCord: 1-5 years prison
3. Virgilio Gonzalez: 1-4 years prison
4. Eugenio Martinez: 1-4 years prison
5. Frank Sturgis: 1-4 years prison
6. Bernard L. Barker: 18 months-6 years prison
7. G. Gordon Liddy: 6 years 8 months-20 years prison

On May 25, 1974, its one-year anniversary, the Watergate Special Prosecution Force gave the status of investigations and prosecutions in a press release:

During that year 49 criminal cases have been presented to the courts. Thirty-six men and 13 corporations have been charged with some violation of the United States Code of Criminal Justice. The status of each of these cases is outlined here. A major part of our work this year is not reflected at all in the numbers above. This has included some historic legal arguments over the issues of executive privilege and the court's quest for evidence, as well as the unprecedented instance of the Grand Jury report that, with Judicial approval, was forwarded to the House Judiciary Committee and is now being used by that committee in its impeachment proceedings.²⁵

Attorney-investigator teams discussed overlapping cases to help each other.

“From the beginning, the Special Prosecutor has to balance competing concerns. There was a need for deliberate and painstaking inquiry, and an equal desire for speed in concluding the work,” according to a press release.²⁶

The press release mentioned the discovery of an 18-minute gap in the June 20, 1972 Nixon tape.²⁷ In 1976, Woodward told a crowd of college students the tapes were vital in exposing Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal. “When Woodward was asked if the Nixon tapes had really made that much difference, he replied, ‘If no one had

found out about the tapes, Mr. Nixon would probably still be president,” according to a news article.²⁸

Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein

Robert Upshur Woodward was born March 26, 1943 in Geneva, Illinois, to Alfred E. and Jane Upshur Woodward. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Yale in 1965. After serving in the United States Navy from 1965-1970, Woodward worked as a reporter at the Montgomery County Sentinel in Maryland.²⁹ His application for employment at *The New York Times* was rejected in a May 4, 1971 letter from Assistant to the Managing Editor Peter Millones. “I’m afraid we have no staff openings at the present time, nor do we anticipate any in the near future. Our staff has grown quite large and we are trying to cut its size, not add to it. We do appreciate your interest in The Times and thank you for writing.”³⁰ Woodward’s first contract with the *Washington Post* began on September 15, 1971, less than a year before the Watergate break-in. As a beginning scale reporter with no experience, he received a wage of \$156 per week with a chance of a raise coming one year later, on September 15, 1972.³¹

Carl Bernstein was born February 14, 1944 in Washington, D.C., to Alfred Bernstein and Sylvia Walker. After taking typing in high school, he worked as a copy boy at the *Washington Evening Star*. He dropped out from the University of Maryland to work full-time as a reporter. He started at the *Washington Post* in 1966, eight years before the Watergate break-in.³² After his work at the *Washington Post*, Bernstein worked for ABC News, *Time* magazine and *Vanity Fair* magazine. He authored several books. ““Carl went off and was Carl, much less disciplined, in a lot of ways more

creative,' said John Stacks, a former chief of correspondents at *Time* who hired Bernstein as a correspondent-at-large and has known him since they worked together at the old *Washington Star* in 1964. 'He's always been a spectacular reporter.'"³³

In a July 1974 interview, Woodward said his teaming with Bernstein was accidental. "We're two different people with different points-of-view, and we work well together."³⁴ He said their strengths and weaknesses complimented each other. "One of us would get a clue, and the other would move in to help. We argued a lot, had some rabid fights about things. But the advantages are you have another mind, another set of eyes, ears, and hands, and somebody to bounce things off."³⁵ Later that month, Woodward compared his and Bernstein's writing styles. "He's a much better writer than I am, although he's the college dropout. I can write very fast. No, it's not an amiable arrangement – sometimes we fight like cats and dogs."³⁶ Writer Ken Auletta said in 2005 that Woodward and Bernstein were at war together and they went through highs and lows. "People may have liked to say that Bob was the big reporter and Carl was the better writer. It's just clear to me they were a team," Purdum wrote.³⁷

Woodward and Bernstein's different personalities were evident in their occasional clashes, as illustrated in their files at the University of Texas. A to-do list, created while writing *All the President's Men*, said they should "describe what it means to work [with] someone on a story; the competition among the two of us."³⁸

Woodward's father and stepmother insisted Woodward was funny, and Bernstein's mother agreed. Bernstein's mother "sees the whole business of casting him as straight man to Carl's cut-up as a lot of bunk. 'Bob is not all that straight,' she says.

‘And Carl is not all that far out.’”³⁹ Woodward said Bernstein had “frenetic, jumpy persistence.”⁴⁰

There was also interest in the reporters’ salaries. A 1974 article published before the book release of *All the President’s Men* claimed Woodward and Bernstein were “almost as reluctant to talk about their financial situation as the President is about Watergate. But the two 30-year-old bachelor reporters who broke the Watergate story and developed it over the last two years are heirs to a fortune that’s a-building daily and already includes royalties from hardbound and paperback books, serial rights and movies. An educated estimate puts them in line for more than \$1 million just from Watergate-related work.”⁴¹ Two years later, a reporter wrote that although Woodward “is paid \$29,000 – not an outlandish sum for a journalist of his stature – he is already a millionaire from the books and movie rights he has sold.”⁴²

Schudson wrote in his 1992 book *Watergate in American Memory* that a member of the *Washington Post* team talked about the difficulty of covering the Watergate scandal. “It was hard. It was not glamorous at the time. Later on it was glamorous with movies and movie premieres at the Kennedy Center and so on but at the time it was dirty. People weren’t sleeping, people weren’t showering, Bernstein’s desk was a mess, he and Woodward were fighting all the time.”⁴³

Robert Redford, who played Woodward in the movie version of *All the President’s Men*, described Woodward and Bernstein. “One was colorful and flamboyant, and the other one thought that was absolutely fine. Bob was quite comfortable with Carl being the more colorful, because that helped him do what he did best, which was to have a killer instinct masked by a very cool, Presbyterian presence. I

used to tell him, 'I'm having trouble getting a handle on you; you're kind of dull.' And he said, 'No, I really am.'"⁴⁴

After Mark Felt's secret identity was revealed, Bernstein talked about his and Woodward's relationship over the years. "We see each other a lot. We talk every week or two, and have for 30 years. Every once in a while, there's a little blip. There was a brief period where we had some real tension, right after Watergate, and that repaired itself."⁴⁵

The *Washington Post* was important in uncovering the Watergate scandal, with other media outlets dropping heavy coverage after the initial break-in. "From the break-in in June 1972 until after the election in November, the *Post* frequently felt itself in solitary pursuit of a story that many leading journalists regarded as a figment of active election-year imaginations," Schudson wrote.⁴⁶ A 1974 letter to Woodward credited him and Bernstein with uncovering Watergate: "Although you tended to make light of your efforts, I really think the role you and your colleague have played in bringing Watergate to the surface can hardly be underestimated and that the citizens of this country owe you a great deal."⁴⁷ However, when asked in 1974 whether the truth would have been revealed without the two reporters, Woodward responded, "Who knows? It's an interaction process, complex like dominoes. One fails, but the dominoes are so arranged that it won't necessarily hit the next one. It's a chain of events, and the complexity of historical causation is in it. Our role? I don't quite know how to assess it."⁴⁸ Another reporter in 1974 did know how to assess it: "The departure of Mr. Nixon from the White House found the architects of the uncovering of the Watergate scandal frantically working

to their deadline in the *Washington Post* late last night. Without award-winning journalists Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward Nixon could still be in office.”⁴⁹

Watergate might not have met the criteria of other media outlets. Fister said, “The media have different traditions for establishing which stories are worth telling, traditions shaped by economic as well as organizational, professional, and socio-cultural values. Second, mass media have different processes for establishing credibility or validity of the ‘facts’ related in those stories.”⁵⁰ Fister wrote newspapers are accepted more than other media outlets as “the public expects more objectivity, balance, and fairness in daily news sources than other media, and among the news media, newspapers fill the role of providing the most complete and current coverage of events.”⁵¹ This worked in Woodward and Bernstein’s favor.

However, the media is criticized for its attraction to scandal. News values, used to establish a story’s newsworthiness, include impact, timeliness, prominence, proximity, conflict, weirdness and currency.⁵² Media, being the fourth estate, focus on conflict. Fico and Drager hypothesized the following in a study:

1. The more market competition a news organization faces, the larger its news staff will be.
2. The larger the news staff, the higher the newsroom’s priority for stories about conflict will be.
3. The higher the newsroom’s priority for stories about conflict, the higher the reporter’s priority for stories about conflict will be.
4. The higher the reporter’s priority for stories about conflict, the less imbalanced the stories will be.

By searching through 615 conflict-laden stories in 15 newspapers, the researchers discovered they were fair but received disproportionate space and eminence in the newspaper. “News organizations depend economically on a mass audience attracted in part by the credibility of their claims to report policy conflicts fairly and objectively. In addition, fairness and balance in reporting conflict is central to a democratic society’s ability to make full, informed choices among differing policy priorities and positions . . . Such story structure qualities are also related to the likelihood that readers may perceive bias in the news.”⁵³

The Watergate Papers at the University of Texas illustrate the *Washington Post*’s contribution to exposing the Watergate scandal, including notes showing Senator Sam Ervin requested information from Woodward during an interview “suggesting that he wanted to follow up on the *Post*’s discovery of a broader White House conspiracy,” Greenberg wrote.⁵⁴ Woodward mentioned this meeting with Ervin in *All the President’s Men*. The Watergate Papers support the notion that Woodward and Bernstein’s reporting “helped steer key players to unravel the broader conspiracy when the Justice Department would not,” Greenberg wrote.⁵⁵

Bradlee said the *Post* received too much credit for uncovering the scandal because many government workers and reporters did their part. However, “for the first seven months after the Watergate break-in, *The Post* was alone most of the time, keeping this story on the national agenda.”⁵⁶

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17. Greenberg, *Beyond Deep Throat: Other Watergate Mysteries Remain, and the Woodstein Archives are Full of Clues*, 52.
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22. Richard Ben-Veniste, "Shadows of Nixon, Watergate Still Cross our National Life," *Houston Chronicle*, sec. Editorial, 1997 (accessed November 17, 2005).
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24. First Watergate Special Prosecution Force press release, pages 5-6, Folder 16.3, Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.

25. Second Watergate Special Prosecution Force press release, cover page, Folder 16.3, Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.

26. Second Watergate Special Prosecution Force press release, page 2, Folder 16.3, Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.

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28. *Open Door: Serving DeKalb Community College*, Volume III, Number 7, May 14, 1976, page 1, Folder 34.2, Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.

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30. Letter from Peter Millones to Bob Woodward, May 4, 1971, Folder 34.3, Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.

31. The Washington Post Personnel Department contract with Bob Woodward, September 15, 1971, Folder 34.3, Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.

32. *All the President's Men* press release, undated, Folder 34.3 Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.

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34. "Portrait of an Investigative Reporter: An Interview with Bob Woodward" with *Mass-Comm* editor Janet Soderberg, July 1974, page 5, Folder 34.2, Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.

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38. Greenberg, *Beyond Deep Throat: Other Watergate Mysteries Remain, and the Woodstein Archives are Full of Clues*, 53.
39. “A Portrait of the Investigative Reporter As a Young, Rich, Sexy, Glamorous Star: Fame and Fortune Come to Woodward and Bernstein. And Then What?” by Julia Cameron. Date unknown. Pages 88-91, Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers.
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Chapter 5

Deep Throat Legend

Watergate inspired numerous publications, starting with a book of Nixon's recorded conversations, published the same year as *All the President's Men*. Garment¹ and Hougan² both theorized about Watergate. Garment speculated on Deep Throat's identity five years before the truth was revealed. Although he explained the logic behind his choice, it was incorrect. Hougan described the true reasons for the Watergate break-in, which he claimed had to do with the CIA bugging prostitution clients. He was unable to gather concrete documentation from the CIA to support his assertions. Felt's 2006 book also mentioned the CIA eavesdropping on a call girl ring.

Schudson asked about the press's role in Watergate, including whether it acted as a watchdog, if other institutions were involved in exposing the scandal and whether the coverage was biased.³ Schudson believed Watergate's impact on journalism was overestimated in certain cases. For example, enrollment at journalism schools did not increase when *All the President's Men* was released, rather the increase came during the 1960s. Watergate had immeasurable impact on politics, journalism and the public. "The broader political consequences of Watergate are less easy to document but were, in all likelihood, both far-reaching and profound. The ordeal of Watergate had a discernible impact on (1) the legislative activity and political climate of Congress, (2) the practical conducts of presidential politics, and (3) the political orientation of the media . . . Moreover, many commentators have noted how, in the aftermath of Watergate, the conduct of American presidential politics altered in various ways, as actual and aspiring presidents (and their teams of aides and advisers) struggled to avoid the kind of

catastrophe that had engulfed the Nixon administration.”⁴ Journalism also changed. By 1981, when Ronald Reagan moved into the White House, “reporters were no longer prime-time heroes, and the expansion of soft-news programs on television was changing the public’s perception of the news media and reporters,” McKay wrote.⁵ He said the public no longer rooted for journalists.

Watergate’s importance can be seen in anniversary acknowledgements. In 1997, former *Washington Post* executive editor Ben Bradlee and former reporter Bob Woodward answered questions online for the 25th anniversary of the Watergate break-in. Woodward said a negative result from Watergate was “the unleashing of a torrent of suspicion, doubt and mistrust.”⁶ He said although Nixon was responsible for a number of successful policies, he would probably be most remembered for Watergate.

Bradlee said a little known result of Watergate was “that owners and publishers learned that trusting the newsroom can be rewarding.”⁷ *Washington Post* publisher Katherine Graham supported Woodward and Bernstein by taking possession of their notes in 1973 to prevent jail time for her reporters not sharing them.⁸ However, the *Columbia Journalism Review* wrote the same situation would not happen today. Valerie Plame was revealed as an undercover CIA agent in a 2003 news article, leading to an investigation to uncover who leaked the information to reporters. Norman Pearlstine, editor-in-chief at *Time, Inc.*, turned in reporter Matt Cooper’s notes to a judge instead of allowing for possible jail time. On the other hand, Judith Miller of *The New York Times* chose jail over revealing her confidential sources. In a 1976 book about investigative reporting, Anderson and Benjaminson promoted the use of anonymous sources, writing “an off-the-record interview can provide valuable leads.”⁹ Bradlee said in 2005 the

government had to be careful before jailing reporters because anonymous sources are valuable.¹⁰ “This issue of divergent values is about more than anonymous sources, and it promises to get worse as media conglomerates grow ever larger and more diversified,” according to *Columbia Journalism Review*.¹¹ One newspaper did not publish a story because it had information from leaked documents and another judge ordered reporters to give up notes to avoid jail time. A *Columbia Journalism Review* article stated, “Confidential sources will always be essential to certain types of important stories. To ban them – or to make reporters afraid to use them – is shortsighted. And to rely on them means standing behind the principle of protecting their confidentiality, come what may.”¹²

In 2002, Giuffo said Watergate was one of the biggest news stories ever, one that journalists could point to as something the profession did well. “So legendary are the exploits of Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward that the story they doggedly chased and the crime that started it all have become shorthand for any governmental scandal of any size and shape. Monicagate. Whitewatergate. Filegate. . . It was, in many respects, journalism’s finest hour.”¹³ Michael Schudson called Watergate “an exploding supernova in the sky of journalism, blotting out the record of investigative work during Vietnam . . . Watergate, at least retrospectively, could be accepted as a triumph not only of American journalism but of the American system of a free press.”¹⁴

Watergate also left a negative legacy of “finger-pointing journalism, a cynicism about any and all institutions and those in power,” Giuffo wrote.¹⁵ Gaines said “Watergate resulted in a lasting public distrust of government.”¹⁶

Brennen, writing two years before Felt was revealed as Deep Throat, said a search of Amazon.com showed 229 Watergate-themed books. “Watergate represents a pivotal moment in the history of journalism.”¹⁷ Woodward listened to a reading of *All the President’s Men* on the radio the first weekend it was released in April 1974. The book was number one on the bestseller list.¹⁸ The film version of *All the President’s Men* was released on April 7, 1976, selling approximately 33.1 million tickets and grossing \$70.6 million domestically. It made an additional \$30 million in United States rentals.¹⁹ After adjusting for inflation, *All the President’s Men* was the 188th highest grossing movie of all time.²⁰ It was nominated for and won numerous film awards, including winning four Oscars.²¹ The Investigative Reporters and Editors organization has continually expanded its membership, and Executive Director Brant Houston said Watergate and *All the President’s Men* provided “inspiration for thousands of young people to become investigative journalists who wanted to make a difference.”²² The movie never could have been so influential “without Mr. Felt’s dramatic touches – the coded signals he devised, the secret meetings in the parking garage,” Tierney wrote.²³

The book and movie were popular, drawing attention to Watergate for many years. When *All the President’s Men* was published in 1974, it “was the fastest-selling nonfiction hardback in the history of American publishing. The film version – released in the spring of 1976, during the presidential primaries – won widespread critical acclaim,” Schudson wrote.²⁴ Woodward had 19 speaking engagements from August 28-December 4, 1973, mostly at colleges or universities.²⁵ A program from one of his appearances highlighted Watergate’s importance of Watergate. “This could be THE most explosive story in the political history of the United States. Even though the

investigation is still going on, we are quite fortunate to have someone who was there from the start. Here is one of the men responsible for the awakening of America to the fact that corruption may exist in today's political systems."²⁶ The Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas Austin has several folders full of newspaper clippings written following the release of the book and movie version of *All the President's Men*. In 2005, popular women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* published a Hot/Cold list, saying it was cold "finding out the identity of the *American Idol* winner" and hot "finding out the identity of Deep Throat." Watergate is more than a great story. "It is *the* great redemptive tale believers learn to tell about the press and what it can do for the American people. It is a story of national salvation: truth their only weapon, journalists *save* the day," Rosen wrote.²⁷

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18. Woodward, *The Secret Man: The Story of Watergate's Deep Throat*, 115.
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Chapter 6

Deep Throat Revealed

Mark Felt was praised and condemned in media outlets for his role as Deep Throat. Some said he was a traitor to his country for revealing secret FBI documents to Bob Woodward, while others called him a hero for taking a step few would dare in order to right a wrong. Richard Nixon associates incarcerated after Watergate cast Felt in a negative light. Nixon chief counsel Charles Colson served time in prison for his role in Watergate. “Mark first served this country with honor, and I can’t imagine how Mark Felt was sneaking in dark alleys leaving messages under flower pots and violating his oath to keep this nation’s secrets. I cannot compute that with the Mark Felt that I know.”¹ Another Nixon associate who served time in prison, G. Gordon Liddy, thought Felt should have taken a different route when he came across incriminating evidence. “If he were interested in performing his duty, he would have gone to the grand jury with his information.”²

Felt’s family believed he deserved admiration. At their first press conference, Felt’s grandson, Nick Jones, championed his grandfather. “My grandfather is pleased he is being honored for his role as ‘Deep Throat’ with his friend Bob Woodward. As he recently told my mother, ‘I guess people used to think Deep Throat was a criminal, but now they think he was a hero.’”³

Many current politicians commented on the case, both in favor of and against Felt’s role in revealing administration secrets.

Following is a summary of quotes from *The New York Times* and *The Deseret Morning News* from May 31 through June 6, 2005, the week following Felt's revelation. The quotes were used if they were from someone offering an opinion of Felt's role as Deep Throat. As mentioned earlier, they are organized by positive, negative and neutral statements.

1. Positive quotes praised Felt/Deep Throat for his role in Watergate, saying he did the right thing, was a hero, contributed to a greater cause, etc.
2. Negative quotes indicated the opposite about Felt/Deep Throat. They will say he chose the wrong path to bring information to light, was selfish in his method, etc.
3. Neutral quotes were from people declining to offer an opinion or who thought Felt's choice was both negative and positive.

Although there are different ways to organize the various quotes, I chose the to organize them by whether Felt was seen in a positive or negative light to show the variety of reactions toward him and see how he could still ignite strong feelings in people so many years later.

Positive Quotes

The narrative for Felt's family and those who worked closely with Felt was that he was a hero, who did the right thing by revealing administration secrets to reporters. There were also politicians, journalists and others, who believed Felt had done what needed to be done.

Felt's family was supportive about Felt's role as Deep Throat and his decision to reveal his identity. Felt's grandson, Nick Jones, spoke to the press for the family. During a press conference, held at Felt's residence, Jones called his grandfather a hero, saying he had saved "his country from a horrible injustice."⁴ Jones also said that Felt was "pleased he is being honored for his role as Deep Throat with his friend Bob Woodward. As he recently told my mother, 'I guess people used to think Deep Throat was a criminal, but now they think he was a hero.' On behalf of the Felt family we hope you see him as worthy of honor and respect as we do."⁵

Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, and those who worked with the reporters, praised Felt. The two reporters issued a joint statement saying Felt "helped us immeasurably in our Watergate coverage."⁶ Their editor, Benjamin Bradlee, had never met Felt and said he "would thank him."⁷ Robert Redford, who worked closely with Woodward and Bernstein when he produced the movie version of *All the President's Men*, said the public was in debt to Felt.⁸

Politicians and government employees since Nixon's time praised Felt despite his insubordination. Former President Bill Clinton said Felt had done "the right thing,"⁹ and a former spokesman for the Clinton White House, Mike McCurry, agreed. McCurry said government employees generally have to work within set guidelines, but that Felt "clearly witnessed how the government was tampering with investigations. He believed there were crimes being committed . . . and that his interest in getting out the truth overrode an obligation to work within the system."¹⁰ Former Iran-Contra prosecutor John Barrett also pointed out that Felt had broken some rules, but that he was "a wrongdoer who performed for history, for the country, a function that turned out to be

extremely useful.”¹¹ U.S. Representative John Conyers, from Michigan, said he would introduce a resolution to praise Felt’s “extraordinary service,” saying Felt “helped bring our country back from the brink of a constitutional crisis and an out-of-control White House.”¹² Former FBI agent Lou Bertram said that Felt was criminally in the wrong but morally in the right. He added that most FBI agents would agree with him.¹³ Richard Ben-Veniste of the Watergate Special Prosecutor’s team said it was because of Felt’s allegiance to the FBI that he had to leak information – the Nixon White House showed “arrogance and disrespect for constitutional limitations.”¹⁴ Finally, first amendment lawyer Floyd Abrams said “Felt served the public enormously by breaking ranks and assisting in the exposure of ongoing governmental misconduct.”¹⁵

There was one instance of support for Felt from a former Nixon White House staff member. Stephen Hess said that government employees should obey the rules “but whistle-blowers are appropriate when it’s clear the chain of command is not going to work.”¹⁶

Journalists also supported Felt’s actions as Deep Throat. Former journalist Nelson Wadsworth was a reporter for a Utah newspaper in the 1950s, and said he said he wasn’t surprised that Felt couldn’t stand the “crooks in the Nixon administration.”¹⁷ Wadsworth said Felt was “a man of intense honesty and integrity.”¹⁸ A *Deseret Morning News* editorial said Felt “is anything but dishonorable. He’s a patriot.”¹⁹

Members of the public sided with Felt. A public opinion poll found that 55 percent of Utah residents agreed that Felt “did ‘a very good thing’ or ‘a good thing.’”²⁰ In a letter to the editor, a Utah man said Felt just talked to reporters while Nixon “grossly abused his power.”²¹ Other letters to the editor said Felt “should be awarded the

Presidential Medal of Freedom”²² and that, because of him, “democracy triumphantly prevailed because a corrupt administration was cleansed.”²³

Negative Quotes

The narrative for Nixon associates was that Felt was dishonorable for his role as Deep Throat. Both G. Gordon Liddy²⁴ and Charles Colson,²⁵ who served time in prison for their roles in the Watergate scandal, spoke negatively of Felt, saying he violated his oath to the country and should have given information through the correct channels. Former presidential speechwriter Patrick Buchanan said he had always thought Deep Throat “behaved treacherously,”²⁶ and Nixon was brought down by “a snake in the FBI.”²⁷

Other politicians also thought Felt was wrong in passing on sensitive information to reporters. Republican consultant Greg Mueller said Felt acted because he was upset about not receiving the top position at the FBI.²⁸ Former CIA agent Bernard Barker insisted he knew Felt was not a good man because he had a “weak chin.”²⁹

One Utah journalist said that, just like Nixon, Felt had been exposed for being “a deceiver and a liar.”³⁰

Public opinion polls showed that 24 percent of Utah residents thought Felt’s decision to help the *Washington Post* was wrong.³¹ Several people wrote letters to the editor, expressing their disdain. One Utah resident called Felt “despicable” and “a traitor to the administration because he was passed over as director by the president.”³² Other letter writers said the only lesson learned from the Watergate scandal was that people

shouldn't upset someone who knows their secrets,³³ and that Felt was not a hero because he risked nothing by not revealing his identity.³⁴

Neutral Quotes

The narrative given by present-day politicians seemed to be that of neutrality. There were also a few former Nixon staffers and several others who preferred not to take sides.

U.S. Senator Bob Bennett, from Utah, described Felt as a conflicted man, who felt loyalty to the administration but also saw “something sleazy going on.”³⁵ Felt was not, however, “leaking state secrets. This was not a great spy story where classified information was being leaked to the newspaper.”³⁶ President Bush said he was surprised by the revelation of Felt's identity but did not think it appropriate for the U.S. president to comment.³⁷ Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, formerly of the Nixon administration, said wrongdoing should be reported but he was “not in any judgmental mood.”³⁸

Both Jeb Stuart Magruder and John W. Dean played a part in the Watergate scandal and both chose not to take sides on the issue of Felt's role as Deep Throat. Magruder said Felt hadn't told Woodward “anything critical about us.”³⁹ Dean said he had “mixed emotions,” of empathy for Felt deciding to expose the president and derision if Felt's motives involved anger over not being appointed FBI Director.⁴⁰ Nixon's former law partner, Leonard Garment, simply said, “Every good secret is entitled to a decent burial. It's about time.”⁴¹

A public opinion poll said 21 percent of Utah resident didn't know how they felt about Felt giving information to reporters,⁴² and University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato said "there is no answer" to the question of whether Felt did the right thing.⁴³ In response to the poll, University of Utah law professor Erik Luna said Felt was "neither a villain, nor is he a pure hero. There are clearly mixed motives here. It's hard to categorize him as either a great saint or as a horrific sinner. Certainly, the outcome was right."⁴⁴

Discussion

The people who spoke positively about Felt's role as Deep Throat were connected to him in some way. His family members publicly praised his role and his decision to reveal his secret identity. The people at the *Washington Post* who gave accolades to Felt were the ones who needed Felt during the Watergate scandal. Woodward and Bernstein obviously spoke warmly of Felt, and the people who worked with the reporters also said they held Felt and his decision in high regard. There were politicians and members of the public who said Felt had done the right thing, based on what was best for the country – the end justified the means.

The majority of naysayers came from the Nixon administration. Many people who thought Felt was a villain also had served time in prison because of their roles in the Watergate scandal. If not, they had been close to Nixon, serving in the White House or some other role in support of Nixon. Of course, there were politicians as well, who viewed the role as a government employee to be more sacred than the role of a

whistleblower. They spoke negatively of Felt, saying he should have used proper channels to expose Nixon's wrongdoings.

Present-day politicians preferred to remove themselves from the controversy, perhaps for fear of offending constituents. There were others who saw the problem Felt faced in wanting to be loyal to the government while serving the people, two roles that should not be in conflict with each other.

It was best stated that there probably is not an answer to the question of whether Felt made the right decision. However, it did develop the narrative of Deep Throat, perhaps providing the most satisfactory ending available without knowing what Felt's true motives were.

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Chapter 7

Conclusion

Deep Throat gave Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein confidence and ignited the imaginations of people trying to guess his identity. However, he did not reveal all the details of the Watergate scandal. Deep Throat's 16 Watergate discussions with Woodward were not central to uncovering the Watergate story, because he did not share original information. The small amount of information about Deep Throat in the more than 100 boxes that make up the archive show Woodward and Bernstein had many sources in the Watergate stories, and Deep Throat did not make a significant contribution to the uncovering of the scandal.

Mark Felt was important in the re-telling of the story of Watergate reporting. This research suggests that without the story of Deep Throat hiding in a garage in the middle of the night, Woodward and Bernstein might not be household names. The Deep Throat story is cemented in modern history, about a famous anonymous source in journalism. This is shown by all that has been published about him and the media reaction to Felt's revelation of his identity in 2005. Schudson said journalists became more powerful after the Watergate scandal – they had proven themselves to the public, and Watergate defined American journalism in the decades following.¹ As Zelizer wrote, journalists form an interpretive community to tell a story.² The stories surrounding Watergate and Deep Throat shaped the American conception of the role of journalism and anonymous sources. Deep Throat's myth will endure, keeping the Watergate story alive and reminding the public and its leaders of a president's downfall.

Scholars called Watergate the biggest news story ever and journalism's finest moment. Other political scandals are named after the Watergate scandal. Much has been published about Deep Throat in the time between the Watergate scandal and Felt revealing he was the secret source. Although he initially shot to fame in Woodward and Bernstein's book, *All the President's Men*, Deep Throat would have faded into history without the help of people calling attention to his identity and role in Watergate. The endless sleuthing was tantalizing. Few public scandals are celebrated, but every Watergate anniversary brought special media reports on Watergate and Deep Throat. The name Deep Throat grabbed people's attention – its pornographic meaning replaced with a new definition, that of a secret source. Deep Throat's role was further popularized in the movie version of *All the President's Men*, the scenes with him some of the most intriguing in the movie. Woodward and Bernstein were endlessly questioned about Deep Throat in interviews and speeches.

Deep Throat showed the importance of anonymous sources. Felt was uncomfortable with airing his concerns about the Nixon White House so he let a reporter do it. "This is a case history and a case lesson of why it is so important that we have confidential sources. If you were to look back at the original stories, I think hardly any of them had named sources. There's no way this reporting could have been done, nor is there any way that good reporting at a lot of places can be done, without anonymous sources," Purdum wrote.³ A former *Washington Post* reporter said anonymous sources are overused but the Watergate scandal "would have never come out if we had a rule against anonymous sources."⁴ Using anonymous sources can damage a news organization's credibility but they serve a function. Whistle blowers "play a very

important role in uncovering government abuses, particularly where the executive exerts a level of authority that borders on arrogance and where there is little by way of checks and balances to uncover these kinds of abuses,” according to a news article.⁵ A former news reporter said the Watergate scandal illustrated reporting on influential establishments requires working with anonymous sources.⁶

Comparisons between Nixon’s dishonesty and President George W. Bush were rampant in media outlets, several journalists pleading with readers to remember the Watergate cover-up. Watergate taught the public to be skeptical about their leaders. A journalist for the *New York Times* wrote Bush is trying to destroy government checks and balances and intimidate a free press, both shown to be vital during the Watergate scandal.⁷ In a speech on behalf of the *Washington Post*, Sussman said, “We feel that to a limited extent more and better investigative reporting will help restore public confidence in the news media. But investigative reporting is a threat to government, to its secrecy, to corruption and to institutionalized misuse of power, so there will be strong resistance to it. That is what we fought in Watergate.”⁸

There was no clear consensus in 2005 as to how people felt about Felt’s role as Deep Throat. There were negative and positive reactions when he revealed himself, although my research found slightly more positive quotes. These people thought Deep Throat was a hero, someone who stood for the right thing in America. As a hero, he shared information to help the country, despite the fact he was ultimately speaking out against the president. He became a myth, serving a dramatic purpose in the unfolding of history. He is part of the narrative of United States politics and journalism. The people who thought Felt did the right thing were affirming their own values by affirming his

choice. As Lule wrote, “mythic stories help shape and maintain the structures and forces that keep a society together: its laws and codes, its government and economic system, its assumptions and beliefs.”⁹ Felt’s family sided with him; Nixon associates were unhappy with him. However, more than 30 years after the Watergate scandal, Deep Throat was still big news. No matter what people thought about him, they paid attention and they knew the story. “People and societies of all times make sense of the world through the eternal stories of humankind. In our time, journalism has that mythological role and news is myth,” Lule wrote.¹⁰ Deep Throat is part of that myth.

Limitations

This research does not include previously unknown details about Felt’s life, outside of his role as Deep Throat. Although there has been conjecture as to Felt’s motives for leaking information, his memory is failing and his recent autobiography cannot shed light on the matter. Woodward also professes ignorance as to Felt’s true motives.

This research does not include primary data about Felt’s meetings with Woodward. The Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers did not include such data at the time of this thesis.

The available information concerning Watergate could not fit into this thesis, so some details were excluded. Excluded was a full description of the Watergate Hotel burglary and the effort put into it. Also excluded was a complete account of Woodward and Bernstein’s Watergate coverage and their numerous sources, information described in their book, *All the President’s Men*.

Further Research

When the information on Felt's meetings with Woodward becomes available in the Woodward and Bernstein Watergate papers, a closer look at what was said between the two would shed light on whether Woodward's descriptions were accurate. It may provide clues as to Felt's motivation. It would also show information that Woodward may not have considered important but that could be interesting in historical research.

A more comprehensive study could be done on what modern-day opinions were expressed about Felt's role as Deep Throat. This could cover a longer time period and/or include other news outlets (such as television, radio and magazines). Although more time-consuming, a researcher could contact people to ask their opinions, in order to get exact answers and assemble information from specific people, including key players in the Watergate conspiracy.

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