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Nixon Resigns

The Meaning of Deep Throat

What Drove Him—And Why It Matters Now

By Evan Thomas

Former FBI assistant director W. Mark Felt

PHOTO COMPOSITE; PHOTOGRAPH BY SUSAN T. McELHINNEY FOR NEWSWEEK

UNDERSTANDING DEEP THROAT: Why a source took on a president then, and how Nixon's fall shapes us even now.

A Long Shadow

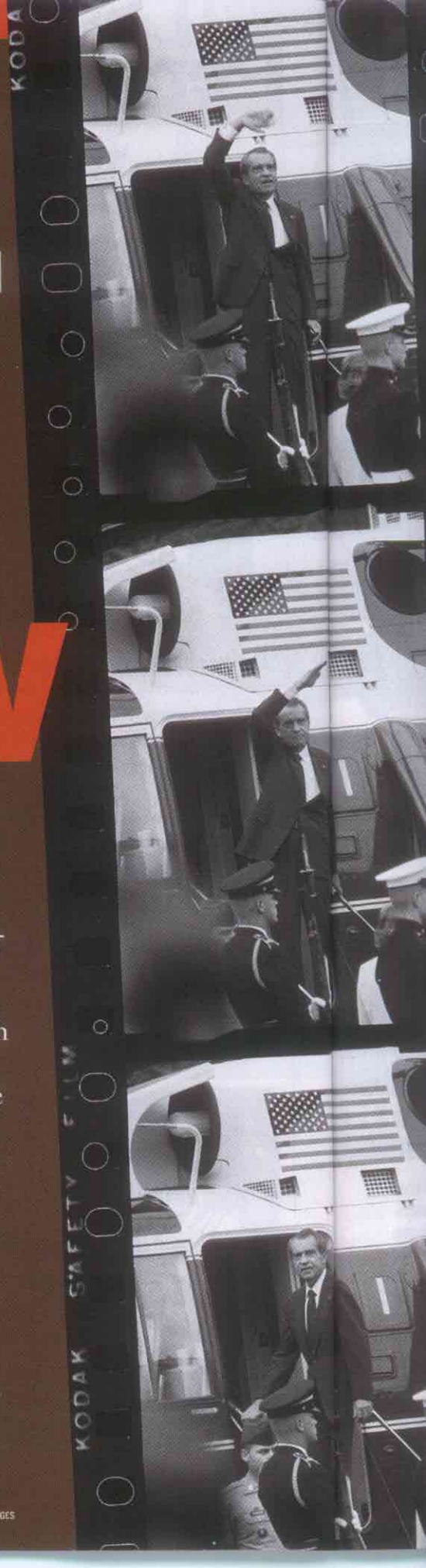
BY EVAN THOMAS

HIDDEN HAND: Felt at the FBI; Nixon bows out

THREE DECADES ON, MANY, IF NOT MOST, Americans know about Watergate from the movie "All the President's Men." Boiled down to its melodramatic essentials, the film is a timeless quest story. It shows two young seekers—newspaper reporters handsome enough to be Robert Redford, cool enough to be Dustin Hoffman, guided by a wizard in a cave (Deep Throat in a garage)—toppling the Evil Empire (Richard Nixon's White House). The filmmaker, the late Alan Pakula, deftly used lighting to enhance the feel of a Manichaean struggle. The newsroom where the reporters work is always bright, open, a place of truth. Almost everything else is dark, shadowy—nests of liars and prevaricators.

How long ago, and how romantic, the story seems. Reporters are not exactly heroes these days. Anonymous sources like Deep Throat are in disrepute, and many large news organizations, including NEWSWEEK, are under fire for their mistakes. What happened to the days when reporters were searching for truth, instead of gabbling on talk shows?

"All the President's Men" was a great morality tale, and true enough



FROM LEFT: POLARIS; DAVID HUME KENNERLY—GETTY IMAGES

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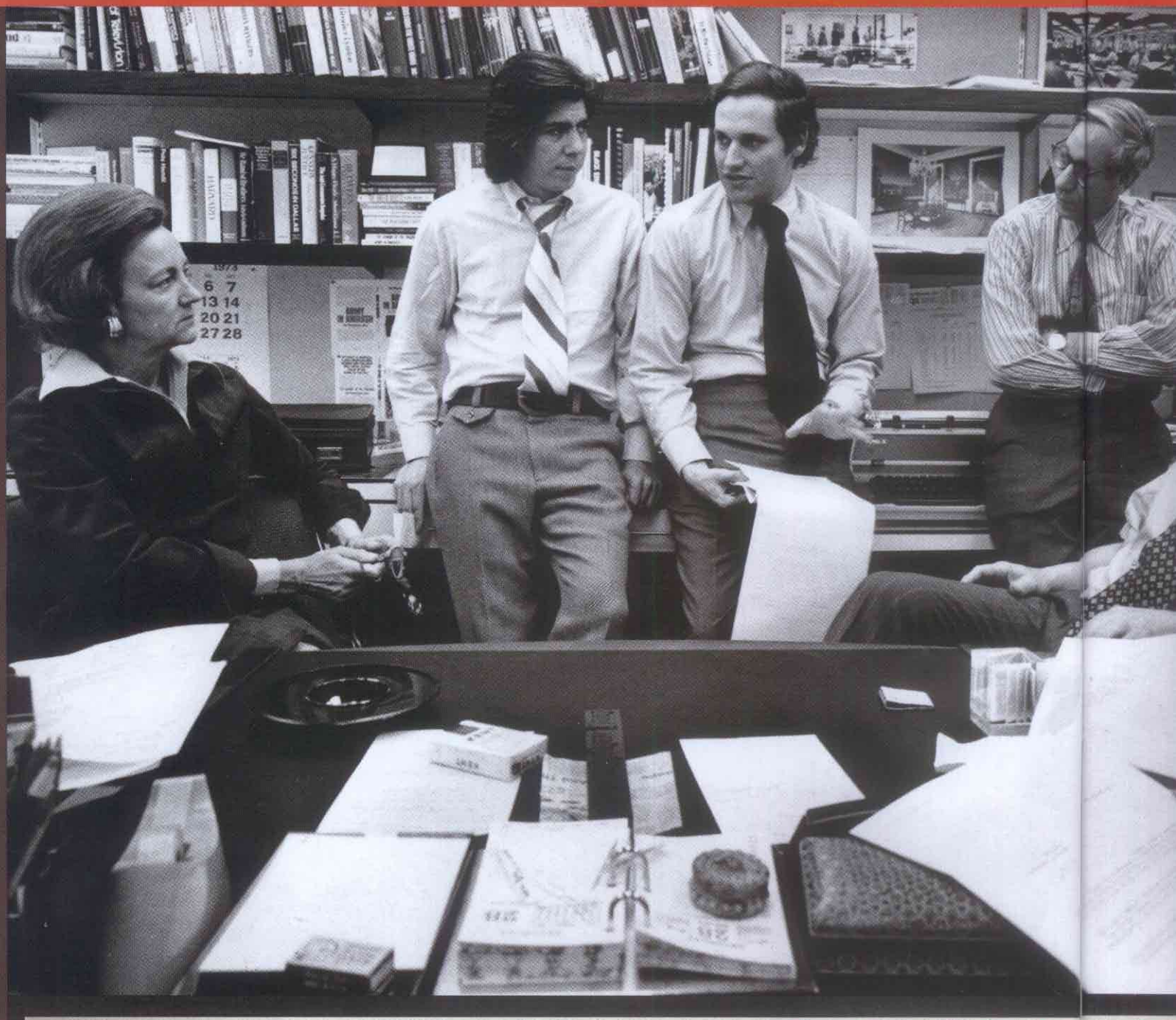

Watergate was at heart a power struggle. Truth and justice pla

about The Washington Post reporters and editors it portrayed. But it was only a movie. It does not tell the whole story, or even the real story, of the Watergate scandal, and it gives a misleading picture of the real stakes involved.

The larger truth about Watergate—the essential "backstory," if you will—became clearer last week, when the actual Deep Throat stepped out of the shadows and, with a nudge or two from his family, revealed himself: W. Mark Felt, 91, a frail old man, smiling and blinking for the flashbulbs. His identity and rank at the time of Watergate—No. 2 man at the FBI—shed new light on the true nature of the scandal and its lasting effects. Felt's motives were the subject of instant and intense debate (Felt himself suffers from dementia), but they were almost certainly mixed, in ways that are important to understanding the story.

The real story, like real life, is murkier, more mundane, more ambiguous than the movie version. But it is also more telling and relevant to today's headlines. It is not primarily a story about the press or the search for truth. Rather, Watergate was at heart a power struggle. Truth and justice played a part, but only a part. It was largely a behind-the-scenes contest for control. At times high-minded, at other times brutal and raw, the forces vying for control shifted the center of gravity in the nation's capital in profound and lasting ways. Only now, 35 years later, is the pendulum beginning to swing back.

The loss in Vietnam and the crime of Watergate gave a bad name to "national security" and "executive privilege," noble phrases Nixon frequently invoked to justify his illegal acts. The scandals had the effect of undermining executive authority—of dismantling what the historian and JFK

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MARK GODFREY—IMAGE WORKS, WARNER BROS.-PHOTOFEST, GERALD HERBERT—AP

BRIGHT LIGHTS: Kay Graham, Bernstein, Woodward, Simons and Bradlee discuss The Washington Post's Watergate coverage (left); Redford and Hoffman portray reporters in a newsroom cast as a beacon of truth (above); Woodward and Bernstein (below) reunite in Washington after Deep Throat's identity was revealed

stice played a part. But it was really a contest for control.

adviser Arthur Schlesinger Jr. called "the Imperial Presidency." Power was, in effect, turned over from its traditional and most forceful executors—the White House, the Pentagon, the intelligence agencies—to the people and organizations that are supposed to function as a check on power: the courts, the press, congressional watchdog committees. The 1970s saw a rise of a new counterestablishment—populated largely by reporters and lawyers—all conjoined and interlocked in one giant scandal machine that, at times, seemed bent on bringing down anyone in an official position of authority for any peccadillo, no matter how minor or distant.

The impact on government was, for better and for worse, predictable. True, there were no more J. Edgar Hoovers running secret sinister empires. On the other hand, bureaucrats became timorous, or, in the lingo of government, "risk averse." They were afraid that if they took any chances, they'd have to hire a lawyer or read about themselves in an article by Bob Woodward.

But pendulums do swing, especially when they get a hard shove. Ever since 9/11, President George W. Bush has been trying to push back, and with some success. To much of the electorate, the lines have been drawn. Increasingly the press and Congress—or anyone who questions authority—are cast as the bad guys, as unpatriotic or irresponsible. Bush wants to restore the executive power that Nixon squandered. His critics think he has already overreached. His supporters cheer him for trying to save the country and for rolling back the antiauthoritarian excesses that were the legacies of the 1960s, of Vietnam and Watergate.

How did we get from there to here—and maybe back again? The story begins with

Richard Nixon, cunning, bright, able and, as time went on, ever more paranoid. The young Nixon was a southern California striver. Insecure about his degrees from Whittier College and Duke Law, he had tried to make it in New York, but the fancy firms rejected him, sending him back west. It was in politics, however, not in law, that Nixon found his métier. Elected to Congress in 1946, he arrived in Washington in 1947, the same year as Jack Kennedy. Ambitious, shrewd and gifted at exploiting voters' fears (from communism to race), Nixon was a Republican in a Democratic town; the last GOP president, Herbert Hoover, had been defeated four elections before, and Truman was about to win a fifth. Even as Nixon rapidly moved up to the Senate and then to the vice presidency under Eisenhower, Nixon never shook the feeling that Washington was hostile territory. His heartbreakingly close loss to Kennedy in 1960 (outpolled by just 118,574 votes out of more than 68 million cast) only fed Nixon's resentments and conspiratorial world view.

And so, as he moved into the White House in 1969, Nixon returned to a capital, and a government, he believed hated him. To the new president, the federal bureaucracy was the enemy, the bastard progeny of FDR's New Deal and LBJ's Great Society, stuffed full of pointy-headed Democrats. He wanted to get control of the government, to consolidate power in the White House. He was extremely aggressive about tracking down his enemies (by wiretap if necessary) and purging the disloyal.

THERE WAS ONE AGENCY that presidents had learned to handle very, very carefully, however, and that was the Federal Bureau of Investigation. For decades, its director, J. Edgar Hoover, had maintained his independence through a crude device: blackmail. He kept secret files on the private lives of powerful senators and cabinet officers and presidents, and he made sure they knew it. When Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy started grumbling about getting rid of Hoover during his brother's administration, Hoover let the Kennedys know that he had files on the president consorting with a Mafia moll and a call girl rumored to be an East German spy. That was the end of the get-rid-of-Hoover talk among the Kennedy brothers.

Nixon also wanted to get rid of Hoover, who had been FBI director for more than four decades when Nixon finally became president. Nixon never could bring himself to fire Hoover ("He's got files on everybody, goddamn it," Nixon reportedly said). The aging director died in office in May 1972.

Watergate Revisited: Follow

Passed over for the FBI directorship and wary of Nixon's imperial ambitions, W. Mark Felt became Deep clues drove "Woodstein" to dig where others didn't dare. A look back at the twists and turns of Watergate—a

■ WATERGATE EVENTS AND REVELATIONS ■ FELT'S ROLE

1970

SPRING: Navy courier Bob Woodward delivers a package to the West Wing, where he meets FBI Assistant Director W. Mark Felt. Woodward asks for Felt's number; Felt offers up his direct office line.

cameras are arrested while breaking into DNC HQ at the Watergate Hotel. One, James McCord, says he has worked for the CIA; two carry notes that link an "E. Howard Hunt" to the White House.

JUNE 19: Now a Washington Post re-

GANG OF FIVE: The Watergate break-in crew, with McCord

a GOP security aide; former attorney general and current Nixon campaign manager John Mitchell denies any ties to the break-in. Nixon is ahead in the polls by 19 points.

JULY 5: Convinced that the White House is bent on obstructing the ongoing FBI investigation, Felt and two colleagues meet with Gray to protest. Felt soon tells Woodward that "the White House regard[s] the stakes ... as much higher than anyone outside perceive[s]."

AUG. 1: Linking Nixon cash to Watergate for the first time, the Post reports that a $25,000 check donated to the re-election campaign wound up in the bank account of a Watergate burglar.

AUGUST: Unable to reach his source on the phone, Woodward visits Felt's home in Fairfax, Va. There, Felt tells the reporter that from now on they must speak in person, late at night, on the bottom level of a parking garage in Rosslyn, Va. They agree on a set of signals that will allow both to call meetings when necessary.

SEPT. 15: The grand jury hands down indictments of Hunt, G. Gordon Liddy and the five Watergate burglars.

SEPT. 16: Breaking the rules, Woodward calls Felt and reads him a draft of a story hinting that officials from the Committee for the Re-election of the President (CRP) financed Watergate; Felt says "you can go much stronger" about which officials controlled the secret fund.

SEPT. 17: Over the phone, a frightened Felt confirms that Nixon

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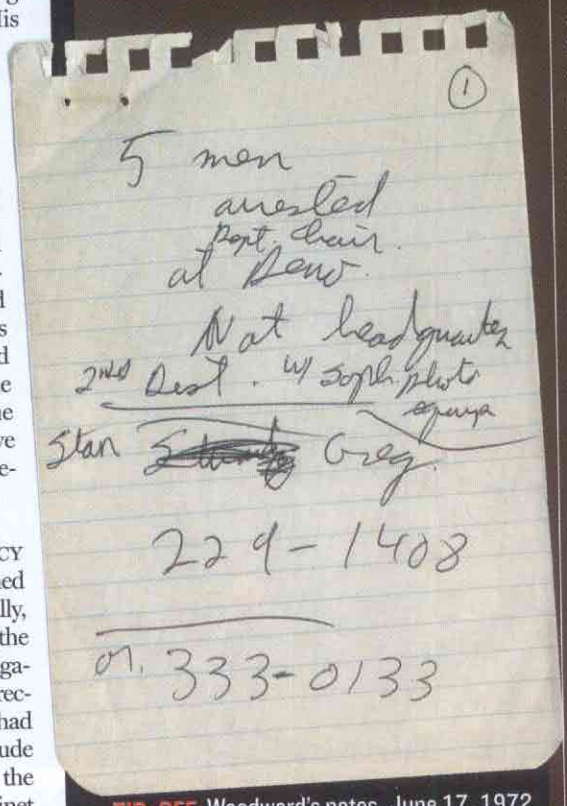


TIP-OFF: Woodward's notes, June 17, 1972

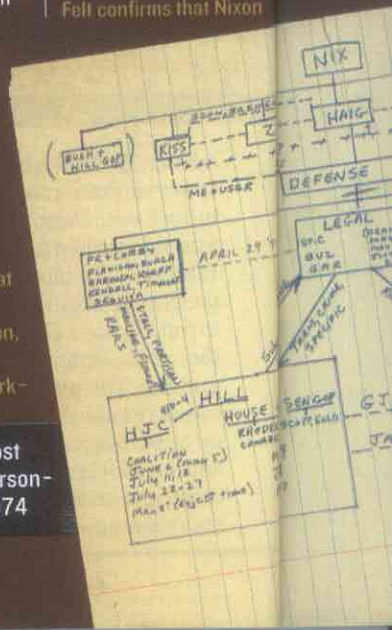
1972

MAY 2: At 9:45 a.m., Felt learns that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover has died. Promoted a year earlier to a top bureau spot, he's next in line—but Nixon appoints outsider L. Patrick Gray instead.

JUNE 17: 2:30 a.m. Five men equipped with bugging devices and

porter, Woodward calls Felt at his FBI office, seeking info about Hunt; Felt says the case will "heat up"—then hangs up. Woodward soon learns that Hunt once worked for the CIA and calls Felt back. Felt now admits that Hunt "is a prime suspect" in the Watergate investigation.

JUNE 19: The Post reports that McCord is



THE CAST: A Post researcher's personnel diagram, 1974

TOP TO BOTTOM: UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL; WOODWARD AND BERNSTEIN WATERGATE PAPERS, HARRY RANSOM CENTER AT UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN (2)

Following Felt's Trail

ark Felt became Deep Throat: the shadowy source whose confirmations and urns of Watergate—and the part that one man played in toppling a president.

n crew, with McCord at far left

deputy campaign director Jeb Magruder and CRP staffer Herbert Porter received at least $50,000 in secret-fund dough.

SEPT. 29: The Post reports: "John Mitchell, while serving as [A.G.], personally controlled a secret Republican fund that was used to gather information about the Democrats."

OCT. 8: Meeting in Rosslyn from 1:30 to 6 a.m., a harried Felt tells Woodward that 50 staffers at CRP and the White House engaged in ops designed to harm Nixon's opponents.

OCT. 10: The Post reports: "FBI agents have established that [Watergate] stems from a massive campaign of political spying and sabotage."

OCT. 19: In the White House, H. R. Haldeman names Felt as the top tattler. "If we move on him," says the chief of staff, "he'll go out and unload everything."

STACKED: Books of Watergate evidence

OCT. 27: After Woodward and Carl Bernstein wrongly report that the CRP treasurer fingered Haldeman in his federal testimony, Felt confirms that Haldeman does, in fact, control the fund. The Post prints Felt's blind quote: "This is a Haldeman operation."

NOV. 7: Nixon is re-elected with more than 60 percent of the vote—one of the largest landslides in American history.

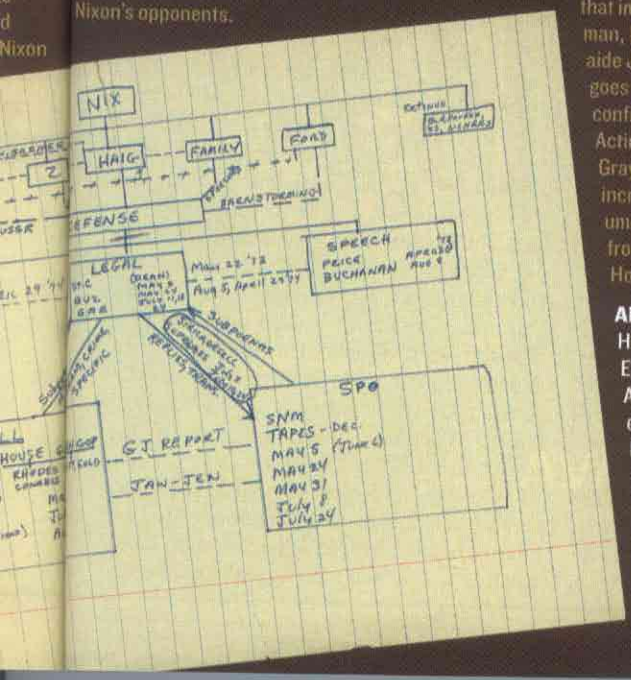
1973

JAN. 24: Felt meets Woodward in the Rosslyn garage and confirms that Mitchell and White House special counsel Charles Colson were "behind the Watergate operation."

JAN. 30: After pleading not guilty on all counts, McCord and Liddy are convicted of conspiracy, burglary and wiretapping.

APRIL 26: As evidence that implicates Haldeman, Mitchell and top aide John Ehrlichman goes public, Felt confirms that FBI Acting Director Gray destroyed incriminating documents recovered from Hunt's White House safe.

APRIL 30: Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Attorney General Richard Kleindienst resign; Nixon fires White House counsel John Dean.



REELED IN: The original Nixon White House tape recorder

MAY 16: Fresh from a frantic encounter with Felt, Woodward tells Bernstein that "everyone's life is in danger" and "electronic surveillance is going on"; they never find evidence of either.

MAY 17: The Senate Watergate Committee begins its nationally televised hearings.

JUNE 3: The Post reports that Dean has testified to discussing the Watergate cover-up with the president "on at least 35 occasions."

JUNE 22: Felt retires.

JULY 13: In his congressional testimony, a former Nixon aide reveals that since 1971 the president has recorded all West Wing phone calls and conversations.

JULY 18: Nixon shuts off the taping system.

JULY 23: Asked to turn over the White House tape recordings to the Senate or the special prosecutor, Nixon refuses.

OCT. 20: The Saturday Night Massacre. With impeachment looming, Nixon asks A.G. Elliot Richardson to fire special prosecutor Archibald Cox, but the A.G. resigns in protest. Richardson's deputy also resigns; instead Acting A.G. Robert Bork must fire Cox.

NOVEMBER: Felt tells Woodward that there are deliberate erasures on the tapes that Nixon has just turned in.

NOV. 21: The Senate reveals that there's an 18½-minute gap in the tape of Nixon's June 20, 1972, chat with Haldeman.

1974

APRIL 30: The White House releases more than 1,200 pages of edited tape transcripts; the House demands the actual tapes.

JULY 24: The Supreme Court rejects Nixon's claim of executive privilege, ruling unanimously that Nixon must turn over the tape recordings of 64 White House conversations.

JULY 27-30: The House judiciary committee adopts three articles of impeachment, including obstruction of justice.

AUGUST: When asked by The Washingtonian if he's Deep Throat, Felt says: "I can tell that it was not I and it is not I."

AUG. 9: Richard Nixon resigns from the presidency.

—ANDREW ROMANO

ARTICLE I
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NINETY-FOURTH CONGRESS
ROLL CALL
No. ____ H. ____ S. ____
DATE 7/27/74
1
COMMITTEE | Ayes | Nays | Present | Ayes | Nays
MR. DONOHUE
MR. BROOKS
MR. KASTENMEIER
MR. EDWARDS
MR. HUNGATE
MR. CONYERS
MR. EILBERG
MR. WALDIE
MR. FLOWERS
MR. MANN
MR. SARBANES
MR. SEIBERLING
MR. DANIELSON
MR. DRINAN
MR. RANGEL
MR. JORDAN
MR. THORNTON
MS. HOLTZMAN
MR. OWENS
MR. MEZVINSKY
MR. HUTCHINSON
MR. McCLORY
MR. SMITH
MR. SANDMAN
MR. RAILSBACK
MR. WIGGINS
MR. DENNIS
MR. FISH
MR. MAYNE
MR. HOGAN
MR. BUTLER
MR. COHEN
MR. LOTT
MR. FROEHLICH
MR. MOORHEAD
MR. MAZZOLI
MR. LATTA
MR. RODINO, Chairman
Total
37-11

ROLL CALL: For the judiciary committee impeachment vote

TOP TO BOTTOM: NATIONAL ARCHIVES—AP; PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT R. MCELROY FOR NEWSWEEK; PHOTOGRAPH BY WALLY MCNAMEE FOR NEWSWEEK

THE MAKING OF A G-MAN: Felt poses with his pistol as a young FBI agent (left); on the high-school basketball team (above, circled); J. Edgar Hoover honors Felt, with wife Audrey, for his service (below)

But the instant Hoover was gone, Nixon moved to install his own man, L. Patrick Gray, as head of the bureau.

This did not sit well with the FBI's No. 2 man, Mark Felt. In his memoirs, Felt says he deserved the FBI's top job. Interviewed by NEWSWEEK, Felt's fellow G-men of that era recall Felt as an old-school Hoover loyalist, a white-shirt, snap-brim-hat stickler for discipline. "He was disdainful of journalists," recalled Cartha (Deke) DeLoach, 84, a former high-ranking FBI official. But FBI historian Curt Gentry, who interviewed Felt, quoted FBI hands as saying that Felt had "a touch of the chameleon. Talking with Roy Cohn, he seemed like an archconservative; with Robert Kennedy, an enlightened liberal."

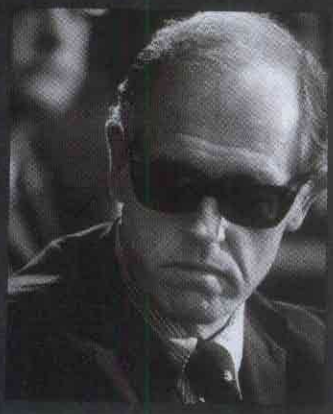
What drove Felt to break ranks and become the most famous anonymous source in history? Was it his disappointment at being passed over? That may have been part of it, but not all. There was a larger power struggle unfolding as Watergate moved up from Nixon's "plumbers" to hush money to the mechanics of cover-up: the White House at one point wanted the CIA to block the FBI's investigation of illegal payments.

By all accounts, including his own memoir, Felt was furious at such meddling with the bureau. Two days after the initial crime—a mysterious June 1972 break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Hotel—Felt received a call from a Washington Post reporter named Bob Woodward. Felt had been a friend of Woodward's, the Post reporter revealed last week after the Deep Throat story broke. Two years earlier, as a young Naval Intelligence officer running an errand to the White House, Woodward had bumped into Felt, also cooling his heels outside an executive office, and struck up a conversation. (The fact that Woodward had been in uniform, calling Felt "sir" and asking career advice, rather than asking questions as a scruffy reporter, no doubt helped warm the relationship.) After Woodward became a Post reporter, the two men stayed in touch, and Felt even fed Woodward a few tips.

BUT FELT WAS NERVOUS when Woodward called looking for information about the Watergate break-in, and he soon stopped returning the reporter's calls. The persistent Woodward went to his house. Felt was even more anxious. But he didn't cut Woodward off. As an old German-spy hunter from World War II, Felt knew a few counterespionage tricks. Felt and Woodward worked out an elaborate system of signals to arrange meetings, usually after 2 a.m., in a parking garage across the river in Rosslyn, Va. In his notebooks, Woodward began referring to his source as "M.F." (My Friend).

After Deep Throat was revealed by Vanity Fair magazine, a debate broke out on talking-head shows and the Internet about whether to call Felt a hero. Many conserva-

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: HOWARD MOORE—DESERET MORNING NEWS - GETTY IMAGES, COURTESY OF TWIN FALLS TIMES - NEWS, POLARIS



CAPITAL CRISIS: Sen. Sam Ervin at the hearings (above, center), Attorney General Mitchell and his wife arrive at the Justice Department (left), E. Howard Hunt testifying before the Watergate committee (right)

tives, including a few old Nixon hands, branded him a "snake" and a "traitor." Others, particularly on the left, observed that Felt had shown considerable courage—and then never tried to cash in, at least until now. Defenders of the FBI pointed out that Felt (and, before he died, J. Edgar Hoover himself) had resisted a Nixon White House plot—the Huston Plan—to illegally snoop on student radicals and other "subversives." But the G-men may not have had the purest of motives. The fact is that the bureau had run plenty of "black-bag jobs" (warrantless entries); indeed Felt was later convicted (and pardoned by Ronald Reagan) for authorizing illegal break-ins of suspected radicals (Nixon provided testimony supporting Felt). Most scholars of the period agree that Hoover's real reason for opposing the Huston Plan was that he didn't want the White House intruding on his monopoly on illegal spying.

The argument that Felt resisted Nixon because he did not want the bureau to become "politicized" is shaky, or at least hypocritical. After all, Hoover routinely blackmailed politicians. And Judge Laurence Silberman, who, as acting attorney general in the Ford administration, was one of the few non-Hooverites ever to see Hoover's secret files, told NEWSWEEK that every president except Truman and Eisenhower used, or tried to use, the bureau against his political enemies.

If Felt was offended by Nixon's heavy hand on the FBI, what could he have done about it? Not go to his boss or Attorney General John Mitchell, both Nixon stooges. He might have gone to a congressional oversight committee—but that would have invited scrutiny into whatever Hoover had been up to all those years.

So he became Deep Throat instead. Years later, the straitlaced Felt apparently told his family that he never liked that name, borrowed from the pornographic movie (the code name for Woodward's source was coined by the Post's late managing editor Howard Simons as a kind of in-house joke).

According to the Vanity Fair article by Felt's family lawyer John O'Connor, "I'm the Guy They Call Deep Throat," Felt agonized over his secret role in Watergate for decades. In his 1979 memoir of his days in the FBI, "The FBI Pyramid," Felt had written that leaking was wrong. Only in his old age did his family convince him that he had been a hero, and even then he seemed to have had doubts. The family brought in a freelance writer, Jess Walter, to try to help him tell his story. According to New York publisher Judith Regan, who saw Walter's manuscript, Felt, addled by dementia, was unable to recall any details. Felt did acknowledge he was Deep Throat on most days—but on other days he would deny it.

Yet there is no doubt that Felt was Deep Throat and played a key role in unseating Richard Nixon. In the first couple of months after the Watergate break-in, The Washington Post, virtually alone among news organizations, pursued the story while administration spokesmen scorned the Post with denials, abuse and not-so-veiled threats. During this trying period, Deep Throat's guidance and confirmation of essential details was "vital," former Post executive editor Ben Bradlee told NEWSWEEK.

Nixon himself suspected that Felt was leaking to the press. On the White House tapes, he can be heard inquiring about Felt and deriding him with an anti-Semitic remark (assuming, without any evidence, that Felt was Jewish). Why didn't the White House insist on firing Felt? Possibly, Nixon was still afraid of those secret files collected by Hoover—but now kept in Felt's office.

Watergate did not just spell the end of the Nixon presidency. It started a chain reaction of investigations and prosecutions that eventually exposed all manner of secret wrongdoing by the FBI and the CIA: black-bag jobs, illegal mail opening and CIA plots to assassinate foreign leaders. The effect of these investigations by the press, the courts and congressional committees was profound. Battered by failure in Vietnam and the exposure of the CIA's "crown jewels" (its most hidden and "deniable" covert operations), the military and the intelligence community became deeply demoralized in the late 1970s. From

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: WALLY MCNAMEE—WOODFIN CAMP, DAVID HUME KENNERLY—GETTY IMAGES, DAVID HUME KENNERLY—CORBIS

the highest levels to the lowliest commands, the watchword was caution.

WHEN UNARMED Islamic militants poured into the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in November 1979, the Marine guards fired a few cans of tear gas—but otherwise held back and let the "students" seize the embassy. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and national-security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski wanted to avoid military action. A 444-day hostage crisis ensued. (According to what may be an urban legend, the Soviet intelligence services took a more draconian approach to ending hostage crises. Standard procedure, or so the story goes, was to kidnap one of the kidnappers and send a severed body part to the others.)

The Reagan presidency saw a renewed buildup of the military and an "unleashing" of the CIA, as well as stirring rhetoric about renewed American pride. But Reagan, or his minions, overreached. Working out of the national-security staff of the White House, Lt. Col. Oliver North ran a scheme to sell arms to Iranians in order to free some American hostages, and to use the proceeds to illegally fund freedom fighters in Nicaragua (violating a congressional ban). The plot imploded and Reagan narrowly missed facing impeachment charges. For top CIA officials, who were prosecuted, the message was clear: Do not take risks. Safer to keep your head down.

At the same time at the Pentagon, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Colin Powell was preaching the Powell Doctrine, which roughly held that the military should never intervene without overwhelming force, public approval, the certainty of victory and an exit strategy, i.e., almost never. Powell actually resisted invading Iraq in the first gulf war and had to be pressured by the then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney.

President Bill Clinton and his cabinet officers often felt thwarted by the balky military and intelligence services. "What good is it to have the greatest military in the world if you can't use it?" a frustrated Secretary of State Madeleine Albright once demanded when the Pentagon was resisting action in the Balkans. The record shows that Clinton would from time to time ask the military or the CIA why it couldn't do more to get rid of Osama bin Laden. But each time, excuses were made (armed intervention would require too many troops, too much airlift, assassinations were illegal, etc.).

In the spring of 2001, George W. Bush at least once expressed frustration at the lack of effective options against Al Qaeda. "I'm tired of swatting at flies," he said. "I'm tired of playing defense. I want to play offense. I want to take the fight to the terrorists." But the White House national-

Shopping a Big Secret

ERIC LUSE-SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

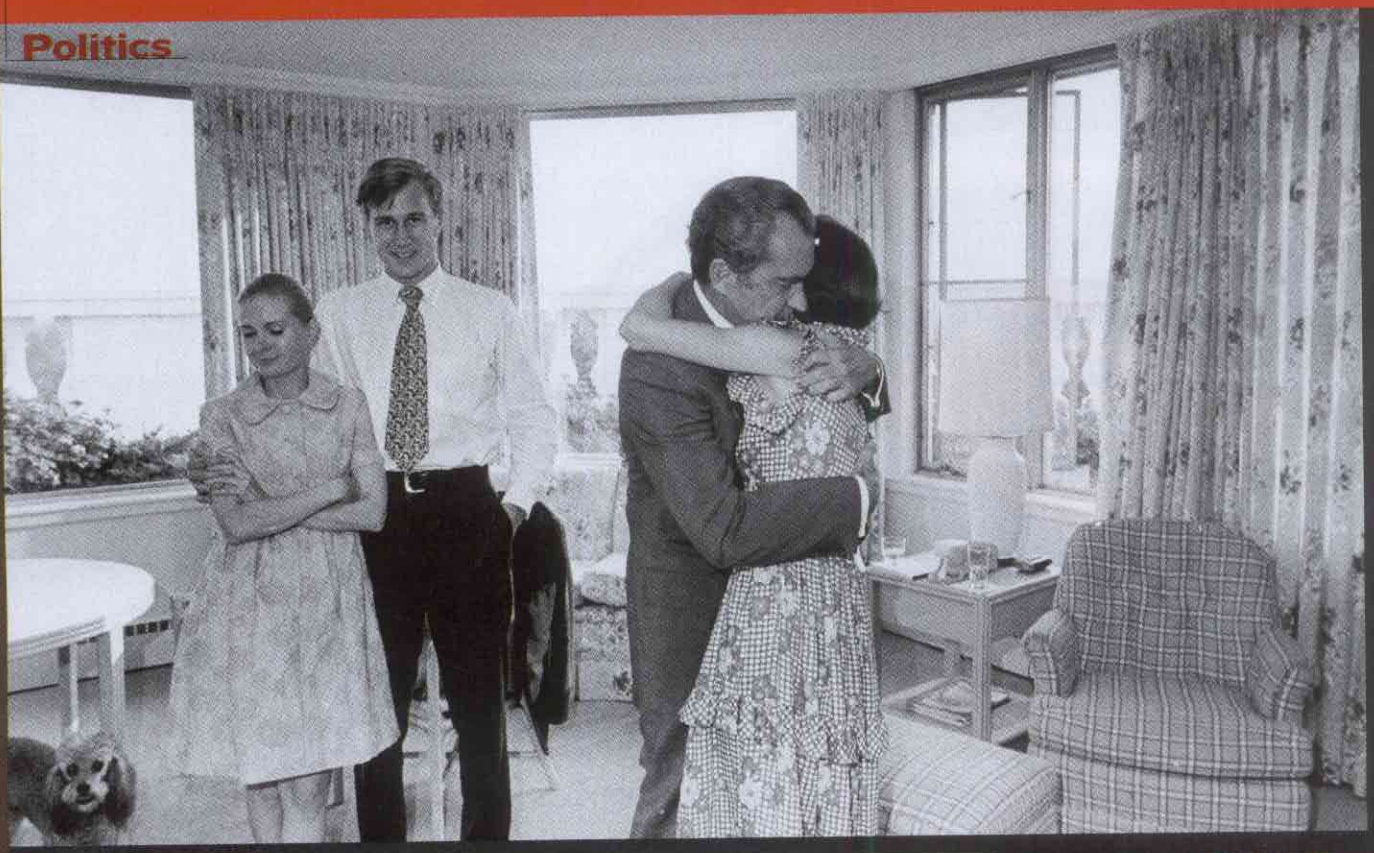
OPENING UP: Felt greets the press with daughter Joan and his grandson Nick Jones

In the City of Leaks, it is astonishing that the secret of Deep Throat lasted as long as it did. But now that the word is out, the scramble is on to cash in. Indeed, money is at least one reason that Deep Throat's family revealed his identity, through an article written by the family lawyer, John O'Connor, in Vanity Fair. Mark Felt's daughter Joan, once estranged from Felt (she was living on a commune when he was spying on subversives), is now his caretaker. As the Vanity Fair article made clear, she felt that her father deserved recognition before he died, and, as she put it, she saw a way to pay off some debts for her children's tuition bills. Her original hope was to work with Bob Woodward, The Washington Post reporter who made Deep Throat famous. But Woodward, who was unsure of Felt's mental capacity (Felt had suffered a debilitating stroke) to waive Woodward's promise of confidentiality, would never acknowledge that Felt was, in fact, Deep Throat.

So Joan, with O'Connor's help, looked elsewhere for an amanuensis. An attempt to sell the story to People magazine fizzled. A freelance writer, Jess Walter, was brought in to interview Felt. Walter spent about four hours recording conversations with Felt but found it "riddling" to talk to him, he told NEWSWEEK. Crisp G-man to the end, Felt was very fastidious about his appearance. Judith Regan, a well-known New York publisher who saw the project, was interested in the Felt book but balked. "Felt was in and out mentally. Some days he said he was Deep Throat, some days he said he wasn't," she told NEWSWEEK. David Kuhn, a well-connected agent representing the Felt family, says Regan's firm faxed an offer to O'Connor last Wednesday, and that it is under consideration, pending negotiations with other publishers (Kuhn says he and O'Connor met with seven publishers last week, have meetings with more scheduled—and have been in talks with movie and TV producers as well). Regan confirms that there's an offer on the table, but says she's still concerned about "his ability to be interviewed for the book."

As Felt toddled past reporters last week on his daily outing, he declared that he was enjoying the hubbub. "It's doing me good. I'll arrange to write a book or something and collect all the money I can," he exclaimed. (The family got no direct payment for the Vanity Fair article; O'Connor was paid a writer's fee, possibly about $10,000.) But if Deep Throat is in a fog, who will want to read his reminiscences? The one sure best seller is Woodward's own book about Deep Throat. In the works for months, it will be published in July. Woodward will presumably resolve the last mysteries, like why Deep Throat was described in "All the President's Men" as a heavy smoker, even though his family claims that he quit in 1943. (Hint from an anonymous source who sounds a lot like Woodward: ever met a secret smoker who lights up under stress?)

–EVAN THOMAS with KAREN BRESLAU



Bush's supporters cheer him for rolling back the legacy of Watergate.

FINAL HOURS: Nixon hugs his daughter Julie on the day of his resignation

security bureaucracy was just getting around to meeting on how the president's wishes might be accomplished when terrorists started flying into buildings.

After 9/11, the Bush administration was all-out. Bush said he did not want to blow up a few tents with cruise missiles; he wanted "boots on the ground." Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was infuriated by the Pentagon's slowness to get troops into Afghanistan (the military, following the CIA by a couple of weeks, arrived in mid-October). But the sleeping giant was awake, and starting to stir. Since then, the posture of the military and the intelligence community has been "forward leaning," as Rumsfeld likes to phrase it.

But will the Bush administration lean too far? And is risk aversion really a thing of the past? The answers to both questions are uncertain. The intelligence failure over WMD in Iraq, and the administration hype to compensate for it, was not encouraging. Nor is the ongoing scandal of the treatment of prisoners in Afghanistan, Iraq, Guantánamo and perhaps in secret prisons in undisclosed locations elsewhere. At the same time, investigators who have examined the national-security establishment's performance since 9/11 have seen signs of the old inertia, the fear that a wrong move could land an unlucky bureaucrat in the hot seat of a congressional investigating committee.

Join Evan Thomas for a Live Talk on Thursday, June 9, at noon, ET, at Newsweek.com on MSNBC

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT Bush wishes to expand executive power, to restore it to pre-Watergate days. Vice President Cheney has been particularly outspoken about guarding the prerogatives of the executive. At press conferences (most recently last week), Bush has shown a kind of casual disdain for Congress and the press, his two main foes in the Washington power game.

Bush, as even his wife, Laura, will admit, can get too cocky at times. Will cockiness become arrogance and lead to the sort of sins of pride that doomed Nixon and nearly tripped up Reagan? It seems unlikely: Bush is not at all paranoid (like Nixon) and he is more hands-on (and less vulnerable to an Ollie North) than Reagan.

And, perhaps most important, Bush lives in a different world than his predecessors—a world Deep Throat helped create. Official Washington is a glass-walled hothouse changed forever by the speed and openness of technology and the residual impact of Watergate. Though the Great Scandal Machine that almost took Clinton down is idling, and the ardor of its operatives has cooled, it can always be restarted and re-energized with some old-fashioned digging and a few clicks of the computer. The Bush administration may demand deference and long for a return to a vanished Washington in which reporters looked the other way when FDR was in his wheelchair or evaded Congress to send arms to Britain, but after Watergate, even a restored Imperial Presidency would be in constant danger of crumbling.

Last week NEWSWEEK asked Bob Woodward whether, if Bush did overreach like Nixon, a new Deep Throat would materialize in the shadows. "I believe so," said Woodward. "And I think they know in the Bush administration that it's always a real possibility." But what if Bush's New Centurions do succumb to the age-old temptation to abuse power? "Who knows?" mused Woodward. "I hope we've all learned the lessons of Watergate."

With ANDREW MURR and ELEANOR CLIFT

NIXON PRESIDENTIAL MATERIALS STAFF, NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT COLLEGE PARK, MD.