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THE TIPSTER

Reporters Credit Felt With Keeping Story Alive

By DAVID JOHNSTON and DAVID E. ROSENBAUM

WASHINGTON, June 1 — Through the summer and fall of 1972, the F.B.I.'s investigation into the Watergate break-in seemed to sputter, and according to the reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, it might have died as a news story had it not been for W. Mark Felt.

The two reporters repeatedly relied on the man they called Deep Throat, a crucial source of information and encouragement, they later wrote in their book, "All the President's Men." He helped connect the Watergate burglars to the White House and exhorted the young reporters to follow the money used to finance the Watergate break-in.

Mr. Felt, the now-unmasked Deep Throat, did not disclose the main elements of the Watergate scandal — the intimate involvement of President Richard M. Nixon in a criminal conspiracy, his abuse of power and the secret tape recordings that documented his conduct. All this was revealed during the Senate Watergate hearings, which began in May 1973.

But Mr. Felt's help early in the burglary investigation was critical. Much of the information Mr. Woodward's source provided, according to the book, involved the secret stash of money used to finance the Watergate burglary and other efforts to sabotage and spy on Nixon's political opponents.

It dovetailed with the information the Federal Bureau of Investigation was compiling in its investigation of the burglary and was the type of detail with which Mr. Felt would have

Crucial details about a secret money trail led to a wider plot.

been familiar, like the discovery of 13 new \$100 bills that had been found in the burglars' possession, cash that ultimately led agents to the Committee to Re-elect the President.

Mr. Felt occupied a particularly powerful position because of the

death of J. Edgar Hoover in May 1972, a month before the break-in. The White House picked L. Patrick Gray to succeed Mr. Hoover, passing over Mr. Felt, who believed he deserved the job. Mr. Felt stayed on, operating as the bureau's day-to-day manager.

In his 1979 book, "The FBI Pyramid From the Inside," Mr. Felt wrote that he received reports about the investigation at least once a day from agents like Robert G. Kunkel, head of the F.B.I.'s Washington office, which was in charge of the inquiry. Almost immediately after the break-in, there was friction with the White House, Mr. Felt wrote, because the White House aides including John W. Dean III, the White House counsel who later served four months in prison for his role in the Watergate cover-up, demanded that they be informed of everything the F.B.I. had learned.

In November 1972, Mr. Gray told Mr. Felt that he risked dismissal because the White House aides believed he was the source of articles in The Washington Post. As Mr. Felt recounted in his book, he replied: "Pat, I haven't leaked anything to anybody. They are wrong!"

Deep Throat offered some details and confirmed others the Post reporters had developed elsewhere that allowed them to publish a drumbeat of articles in 1972 and early 1973, without which the Senate in-

vestigation probably would not have gotten off the ground. Among the more significant details outlined in the Woodward-Bernstein book:

Two days after the June 17, 1972, burglary, Deep Throat told Mr. Woodward that E. Howard Hunt, a former intelligence agent who had worked in the Nixon White House, was involved in the break-in. This was the first indication that the White House was connected to the crime.

In September, after the Watergate burglars had been indicted, Deep Throat suggested to Mr. Woodward that high officials in the Nixon campaign provided the money that financed the burglary. He said that Jeb S. Magruder, the deputy cam-

paign director, and Bart Porter, another campaign official, had each received \$50,000 from a stash kept in the safe of Maurice H. Stans, Nixon's chief campaign fund-raiser.

In early October, Mr. Woodward learned from Deep Throat that the Watergate burglary was part of a larger pattern of espionage and sabotage around the country. He said more than 50 people directed by the White House and the re-election campaign, and financed with money from the president's campaign, conducted operations, called dirty tricks, to disrupt the political opposition.

Later in October, Mr. Woodward was told by his source that H.R. Haldeman, Nixon's chief of staff, was primarily in control of the secret stash of money.

In January 1973, Mr. Woodward was told that John N. Mitchell, who had been Nixon's campaign chairman, and Charles W. Colson, a White House special counsel, were sponsors of Mr. Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy, who planned the Watergate burglary.

In April 1973, the month before the Senate hearings began, Deep Throat confirmed that L. Patrick Gray, the acting director of the F.B.I., had destroyed files from Mr. Hunt's safe at the instructions of the White House.

Mr. Felt's anger at what he viewed as efforts by the White House to block the F.B.I.'s investigation of the burglary pervades his book about the case. He wrote that F.B.I. agents complained constantly about White House interference.

At one point, Mr. Felt recounted a tense meeting with Mr. Gray. "We must do something about the complete lack of cooperation from John Dean and the Committee to Reelect the President," Mr. Felt said. "It's obvious they're holding back — delaying and leading us astray in every way they can. We expect this sort of thing when we are investigating organized crime, but we can't sit still and accept it from the White House and CREP."

Mr. Felt wrote that Mr. Dean obtained agents' interview reports and met secretly with Mr. Gray at the director's apartment to obtain "raw files" along with reports of tips and leads — investigative material that is never turned over to outsiders, much less to possible subjects in a criminal inquiry.

Mr. Felt was incensed when Mr. Dean and other aides persuaded C.I.A. officials like its director, Richard Helms, and its deputy, Vernon Walters, to urge Mr. Gray to curtail the F.B.I. investigation, falsely citing national security concerns.

Mr. Felt, who denied for decades

that he was Deep Throat, wrote that he had met with Mr. Woodward on only one occasion during the Watergate investigation: "He wanted to check out the information that he and Bernstein had collected and he asked to tell him which was accurate and which was not. I declined to cooperate with him in this manner and that was that."