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RODERICK THORP AND THE HOUSEWIVES

N. Evans will shortly publish (or rather republish) "Wives: An Investigation" by Roderick Thorp and Robert Blake. Thorp was of course the author of a big 1966 best seller, "The Detective," another novel, "Dionysus," which flopped, and a nonfiction work about teen-agers and drugs, "The Music of Their Laughter." His new book has had a peculiar history, managing to get him and the publisher in some hot water. The idea--a series of transcribed interviews with middle class American housewives about their sex lives--was originally sold to Harper & Row along with a novel and the drug book. Harper published the latter, which did not do well, and decided it did not want the other two books. Evans then picked them up and announced "Wives" for September 7, with a first printing of 10,000 copies. Then the trouble began. Some of the female subjects got a look at the finished book and panicked when they saw that even though their names had been changed, the description of the community in which they lived was a dead give-away. Several of them approached Nancy Wechsler, an attorney with the New York firm of Greenbaum, Wolff & Ernst, who in turn approached the publisher in an attempt to stop publication. It seems that though they had all signed releases that did not give them a great deal of protection, they had also been given firm and repeated verbal assurances by the author that complete anonymity would be maintained. Mrs. Wechsler emphasized to PW that she received complete cooperation from the publisher when the matter was brought to his attention, and that all requested changes were made. Herb Katz of Evans confirmed that the entire first printing was destroyed, and that a substantial part of the cost of re-publishing was borne by Mr. Thorp personally. "Our involvement with Mr. Thorp from the outset went beyond this one book," he said, adding that the novel, thoroughly rewritten and re-titled "Slaves" (originally it was "Dirty Kisses"), would be out next year. The advance sale on "Wives"--despite unfavorable notices from PW, Kirkus and the Times--is around 14,000.

GRAVEL CHARGES BEACON HARASSED

Sen. Mike Gravel of Alaska, who turned his copies of the full Pentagon Papers over to Beacon Press of Boston for publication, was in New York recently, charging that federal agents tried to get Beacon's editors to show them the manuscript, which they refused to do. He claims that the Administration is trying to repress an independent edition of the documents. "Everyone else turned us down," he told reporters. "Macmillan, Simon & Schuster, MIT, Harper. Part of the reason was timing, but the rest was pressure."

SHORT STUFF

"The Last Whole Earth Catalog," which seems to have turned into the chic coffee table book of the year, just hit an in-print figure of a million. Why isn't it on anybody's best seller list? Just because it's paperbound, booksellers, doesn't mean you can't report it. . . . Move "Wheels" a little to the left, "Any Woman Can!" a little to the right, and stick in Gay Talese's "Honor Thy Father." Pre-pub, there are 125,000 copies in print, and no matter what talk show you tune into in the next few weeks, Gay will probably be on it, giving you the low-down on the Dons and Capos. . . . The new Book World, with enlarged format and pictorial cover, is out and looks snappy. . . . The B. F. Skinner book, "Beyond Freedom and Dignity," seems to have upset just about everyone (they either love it or hate it), and there are now 75,000 in print. . . . Time Inc. has generously endowed a scholarship at MIT in the name of the late Eric Hodgins, long-time publisher of Fortune and author of "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House."