

Three Decades Later, 'Woodstein' Takes a Victory Lap

By TODD S. PURDUM

WASHINGTON, June 2 — The writer Murray Kempton once called them the Tom and Huck of American journalism, and their surnames became a single, swashbuckling compound noun: Woodstein. Now Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein are together again, joined in a visibly affectionate, sometimes awkward embrace by the disclosure of Deep Throat's identity.

No longer "the boys" to whom their gruffly elegant editor, Benjamin C. Bradlee, turned as The Washington Post's best hope of cracking the riddle of Watergate, Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Woodward are late-middle-aged men, a decade older than Mr. Bradlee was when they made their names in 1972. They long ago went their separate professional ways, Mr. Woodward to stability and rich-etic stroll along the rich buffet of life.

"One was colorful and flamboyant, and the other one thought that was absolutely fine," said Robert Redford, who helped produce the film of "All the President's Men," in which he played Mr. Woodward. "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.'"

But from thinner to thicker, through richer and poorer, the two have preserved a special relationship, one that friends say has now led Mr. Woodward, 62, who had all but finished a manuscript on his secret-source relationship with W. Mark Felt, to take Mr. Bernstein, 61, aboard for one more project that



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Katherine Frey/The Washington Post, via Associated Press

On May 7, 1973, Carl Bernstein, left, and Bob Woodward learned that they had won a Pulitzer Prize for their Watergate coverage. On Tuesday, they learned that their prized source's identity had been disclosed.

seems likely to become this summer's hot book.

One tentative plan is to have Mr. Bernstein write new material, and share some kind of cover credit, though not co-authorship, according to a prominent publishing industry figure who insisted on anonymity because of the delicacy of the negotiations between the onetime colleagues. Any final deal will depend on agreement between them, and the situation, including the precise shape of the book and the collaboration, remains fluid, just as their relationship has always been hard to define.

"I just think these were two guys who were together in a war where their lives and professional reputations were at stake, and they went through lots of ups and downs, and they credit each other that they couldn't have done it without each other," said the media writer Ken Auletta. "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."

And so they were again on the morning talk shows on Thursday, like a less crochety version of "The Sunshine Boys," as anchors excitedly asked Mr. Woodward about his relationship with Mr. Felt, and Mr. Bernstein waited patiently, then chimed in, the dialogue overlapping, with observations that were often general.

When Matt Lauer of the "Today" program asked if it was bittersweet or a relief to have the burden of their

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33-year-old joint secret lifted at last, Mr. Woodward opened his mouth to answer, but Mr. Bernstein beat him to the punch.

"Wrong word, 'bittersweet,'" he said. "I think it's like having tried to protect something precious for all these years that you carry around, and for the first time it's not there to protect in your pocket anymore. It's a very strange feeling."

A long relationship sometimes strained, but almost always special.

For many Washington journalists of a certain age, it was a strange but not unpleasant feeling to see Woodward on the case again. Mr. Woodward made his career at The Post, climbing the management ladder and building a career writing best-selling books, first with Mr. Bernstein but long since alone. Mr. Bernstein left The Post for jobs at ABC News, Time magazine and Vanity Fair, and for his own book-writing career. He wrote a memoir of his union activist parents' struggle with anti-Communist blacklists, was co-author of a book about Pope John

Paul II's role in opposing Communism and in recent years has been at work on a biography of Hillary Rodham Clinton, nearing completion.

"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 Mr. 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."

While Mr. Woodward wrote a book, "Wired," about the actor John Belushi's death from a drug overdose, Mr. Bernstein dipped more deeply into the world of Hollywood and entertainment. He married the writer Nora Ephron, who chronicled their messy breakup in her thinly veiled novel "Heartburn," which became a film in which Jack Nicholson played the character based on Mr. Bernstein, as Dustin Hoffman had a decade earlier in "All the President's Men."

Mr. Bernstein relished public friendships or courtships with the likes of Shirley MacLaine, Bianca Jagger and Elizabeth Taylor, and "liked to sip from the cup of life," as Graydon Carter, the editor of Vanity Fair, put it. But Mr. Bernstein gave up drinking about 20 years ago and, Mr. Carter said, "is much more settled down than he was before."

The Woodward-Bernstein professional partnership had been strained, and ultimately did not survive after collaboration on their second best

seller, "The Final Days," about Richard M. Nixon's last, haunted days in the White House. During the writing, friends say, Mr. Bernstein was often nowhere to be found, and the relationship suffered a chill for a time, though there was never a split like that of Martin and Lewis.

Mr. Bernstein has said they began talking more after Mr. Woodward's second marriage broke up in the late 1970's. Mr. Woodward has long been happily married to his third wife, the New Yorker writer Elsa Walsh, and Mr. Bernstein was married for the third time in 2003, to Christine Kuebeck.

"We see each other a lot," Mr. Bernstein said in a telephone interview late Thursday. "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."

He said the disclosure this week that Deep Throat was the No. 2 official of the F.B.I. had "reignited the wars of Watergate" among old Nixon hands; had once again reminded him, Mr. Woodward and Mr. Bradlee of the special bond they forged in fire; and had turned out to be "a much more emotional moment" than he had expected.

"We're going to always be bound by this," Mr. Bernstein said, "and we, together with Ben, have taken great care to keep this identity secret, as well as those of our other sources, and to really practice the most basic of journalistic principles under the most difficult of circumstances."

Two years ago, Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Woodward drew some criticism for selling their Watergate papers (except those involving Deep Throat) to the University of Texas for \$5 million, an unusual arrangement in which The Post, given the special historical circumstances involved, surrendered any claim of ownership on work first done for it. Mr. Bradlee has suggested that Mr. Bernstein needed the money; Mr. Bernstein has in the past described the agreement as a business decision based on the principle that people should be compensated for their work.

In a telephone interview from Utah, where he has a home, Mr. Redford recalled that for months, well before publication of "All the President's Men," Mr. Woodward and Mr. Bernstein refused to return his calls expressing interest in developing a film from their story, at a time when it was not at all clear that their work would help lead to Nixon's downfall. Mr. Redford finally got through to Mr. Woodward, who said, "Is this really you?" and insisted on calling back himself.

"They thought they were under surveillance, and worried about being set up," Mr. Redford recalled. "The fact of the matter is, I think the public at large owes a great debt to those guys — and to Mark Felt. Look, it wasn't so much who did what as that it was done. If something like that happened today, would it go the same way? I don't know."

"I'm personally sad, because I feel I stumbled into a high point of journalism and had to watch it slide away when suddenly glamour became the main attraction of getting into journalism. It became a very sad thing for me to watch. I'm glad the real meaning has come back, at least for a day."