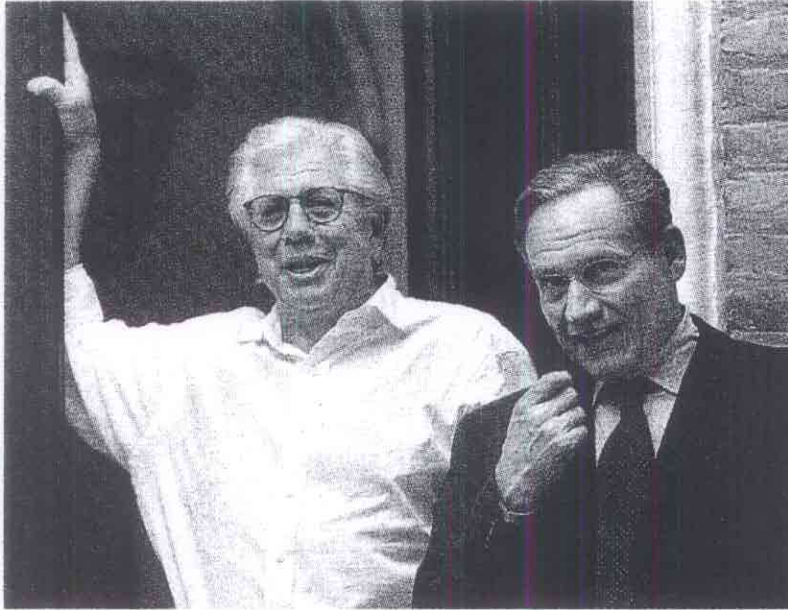


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In the Prelude to Publication, Intrigue Worthy of Deep Throat



Win McNamee/Getty Images

Carl Bernstein, left, and Bob Woodward speaking to reporters yesterday on the steps of Mr. Woodward's home in Washington.

By **TODD S. PURDUM** and **JIM RUTENBERG**

WASHINGTON, June 1 — This was not the way that Bob Woodward expected to tell the last chapter of the Watergate story that he and The Washington Post had owned for more than 30 years.

Mr. Woodward, a Washington media machine, has long been largely insulated from normal journalistic rivalries. But this week, in the wake of Vanity Fair magazine's disclosure that W. Mark Felt was his secret source — Deep Throat — it became clear that Mr. Woodward had been facing months, and even years, of competitive pressure from an unlikely source, the Felt family itself.

On Wednesday, word came that the family of Mr. Felt — the ailing, 91-year-old former No. 2 official of the F.B.I. — had sought payment in vain for his story after failing to reach a collaborative agreement with Mr. Woodward, not only from Vanity Fair, but also from People magazine and HarperCollins Books. They are apparently still determined to claim their share of the story that has helped make Mr. Woodward a millionaire.

"It's doing me good," Mr. Felt told

reporters outside his home in Santa Rosa, Calif., when asked how he was reacting to the publicity. "I'll arrange to write a book or something, and collect all the money I can."

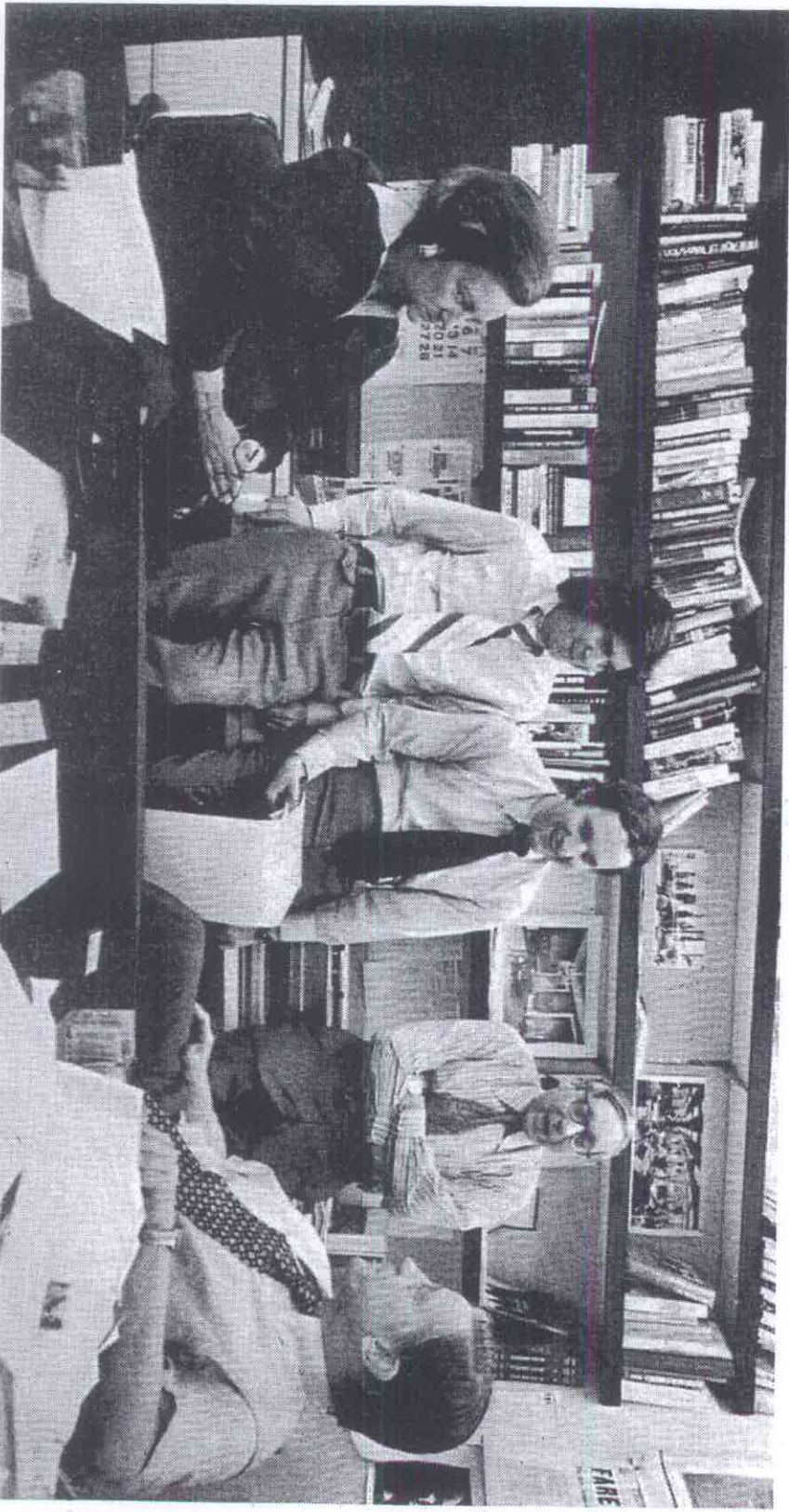
J. Todd Foster, managing editor of The News-Virginian of Waynesboro, said that in 2003, after being frustrated in their efforts to persuade Mr. Woodward to cooperate, the Felt family had come to him — about six months after he had approached them on his own hunch that Mr. Felt was Deep Throat — to propose a collaboration. At the time, Mr. Foster was a contributor to People, which he said considered but rejected an article because the Felts wanted payment.

"This was always about the money, and they were very up front with me," he said in a telephone interview.

Mr. Foster and the Felt family then took the project to ReganBooks, an imprint of HarperCollins. But Judith Regan, president and publisher of ReganBooks, said Wednesday that a possible book had collapsed be-

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A MYSTERY SOLVED: Roles and Obligations



On April 30, 1973, with the Watergate scandal growing, Carl Bernstein, second from left, and Bob Woodward discussed the next day's coverage with Katharine Graham, publisher of The Washington Post; Benjamin C. Bradlee, executive editor, right; and Howard Simons, managing editor.

The Washington Post

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cause of serious concerns that Mr. Felt was no longer of sound mind.

It also became clear on Wednesday that the Vanity Fair article had forced Mr. Woodward to bow to the institutional imperatives of the newspaper that has given him almost unrivaled leeway to tell his stories in the time and way of his own choosing, often in best-selling books.

Senior Post executives said that the newspaper had convinced Mr. Woodward that the time had come to tell the tale, and as quickly as possible.

On Tuesday, Leonard Downie, The Post's executive editor, was speaking at a management retreat on the Eastern Shore of Maryland when his cellphone began ringing so incessantly that he turned it off. He ignored hand-passed notes from the hotel staff. Only when The Post's chairman, Donald Graham, stepped out to take a phone call did they learn of the Vanity Fair scoop. "He signals me through the door with one of those finger things," Mr. Downie said Wednesday. "He said, 'You better call Woodward.'"

For years, The Washington Post has called Mr. Woodward on the very biggest stories, but in a way almost unheard of at other major news organizations. He holds the rank of assistant managing editor, but is allowed to labor in freedom for months at a time on books — now 12 in all — that almost invariably become best-sellers, after their most newsworthy disclosures are doled out in The Post over several days of prepublication publicity, timed for maximum effect.

The Post reported Wednesday that Mr. Woodward had been preparing for Mr. Felt's eventual death by writing a short book about their relationship that his longtime publisher, Simon & Schuster, is now rushing into print. Mr. Woodward said in a brief telephone interview that he had been reluctant to dissolve his pledge of confidentiality, doubting whether Mr. Felt was competent to come forward.

Todd S. Purdum reported from Washington for this article, and Jim Rutenberg from New York. Edward Wyatt contributed reporting from New York, and Dean E. Murphy from Santa Rosa, Calif.

Ultimately, after a hastily arranged meeting on Tuesday with Mr. Downie, who had raced back to The Post, Mr. Woodward's own careful advance planning bowed to the inevitable: Vanity Fair had the goods.

"That story laid it all out, and it's silly to say you have no comment and won't even say whether the goddamn thing is right, when you know it's right," said Benjamin C. Bradlee, The Post's executive editor in the Watergate era, who had begun the day, like Mr. Woodward and his Watergate co-author, Carl Bernstein, buying time by declaring, "The wisdom of the ages cries out for silence."

Mr. Downie said that he and Mr. Bradlee had agreed that since the Felt family had come out with its secret, the newspaper had no choice but to run with it — a choice, he said,

Vanity Fair wasn't the only one chasing the story of W. Mark Felt.

that Mr. Woodward ultimately agreed with, after going "through the sort of devil's advocate arguments" to the contrary.

"Bob works for The Washington Post so how we handle Deep Throat's death and identity in the newspaper is a joint decision, and he knows that," Mr. Downie said. He said that Mr. Woodward had probably been noncommittal in his discussions with the Felt family "because he knew The Post would have to do what The Post had to do as a newspaper."

He said that Mr. Woodward does not have an entirely free hand in striking such deals, "at least not involving what goes into the newspaper itself," and as for book deals, Mr. Downie said, Mr. Woodward is free to pursue topics of his choice but "we get to pass approval about whether or not it's consistent with our principles or ethics."

Mr. Foster of The News-Virginian said the family was seeking a big payout though he did not know an exact figure. But Vanity Fair did not provide any sort of bonanza. The magazine's editor, Graydon Carter, said Mr. O'Connor was not paid

much more than \$10,000 for the article. "The money is not that much," Mr. Carter said, though the family was free to sell movie and book rights on its own.

Repeated efforts to reach the Felt family's lawyer, John D. O'Connor, who wrote the Vanity Fair article, were unsuccessful on Wednesday and Mr. Felt's daughter said that he and Vanity Fair had told her not to talk. Mr. Felt's grandson, Nick Jones, speaking to reporters outside his home in Santa Rosa, Calif., said of his grandfather's role in Watergate, "We stand behind him and what he did."

Mr. Woodward, speaking from his home in Georgetown, where television and still cameras were staked out as he prepared an article about his relationship with Mr. Felt for publication in Thursday's Post, dismissed any notion that he was trying to protect a commercial interest.

"What I'm trying to protect is the story, and that it be accurate and full and complete," he said.

While Mr. Felt's disclosure left some skeptics insisting that no one person could have known so much of what Deep Throat is supposed to have told Mr. Woodward, in hindsight, there have long been blindingly obvious clues pointing to Mr. Felt. He was always the first choice of Nora Ephron, the novelist, screenwriter and director who was formerly married to Mr. Bernstein.

"Woodward's code name for their source — before he was christened Deep Throat by Washington Post managing editor Howard Simons — was My Friend," or M.F., Ms. Ephron wrote on The Huffington Post Web log. "Hello."

In fact, Mr. Bradlee said it was his understanding that Mr. Woodward had first met Mr. Felt, a Navy veteran and career officer in the F.B.I., in a chance encounter as a young Navy communications officer in Washington. During The Post's inquiry into Watergate, Mr. Bradlee knew that Deep Throat was a senior official in the Justice Department, but learned his name only after President Richard M. Nixon resigned.

"I was sitting on a park bench in McPherson Square," near The Post's headquarters on 15th Street, Mr. Bradlee recalled, "and I said: 'I've got to know.' It appeared to me that there was some kind of potential, the scene was set for an attack on the existence of Deep Throat, that it was a composite, blah-blah-blah. To satisfy

whatever role I would have in defending it, I felt I would have to know."

Mr. Downie said that Mr. Woodward had told him Mr. Felt's name a couple of months ago, so the paper could begin preparing material to run in the event of his death.

In the past, Mr. Woodward has sometimes been faulted for withholding material for publication in his books that would have made important news if published in the newspaper in a more timely way. On at least one occasion, in 1987, the Post declined to publish what would have been big news: Mr. Woodward's account of his deathbed conversation with William J. Casey, the former director of Central Intelligence, about the Iran-contra affair, shortly after it occurred.

The paper did so on the grounds that Mr. Casey's silent nod that he had known about the diversion of funds from arms sales to Iran to the Nicaraguan contras was ambiguous. The post later published the account as part of its excerpts from Mr. Woodward's book on the topic, "Veil: The Secret Wars of the C.I.A. 1981-87."

Even now, Mr. Woodward seems likely to have the last word on Mr. Felt's story. Mr. O'Connor, the Felt family lawyer, said on the ABC program "Nightline" on Tuesday that his client had no memory of the elaborate signals — a red flag in a flowerpot, a clock's hands scrawled on p. 20 of Mr. Woodward's home delivered copy of The New York Times — that Mr. Woodward said were used to arrange meetings with Deep Throat.

Steve Luxenberg, now the editor of the Outlook section of The Post, and a former investigations editor who worked closely with Mr. Woodward, said he had done the honorable thing in the case of Mr. Felt, working to protect his source's interests and the paper's.

Mr. Bradlee, whose passion for hot stories was famous, said The Post had lost little in waiting to tell Mr. Felt's story. "It seems to me you gain as much in prestige in keeping your word as you lose in losing the scoop," he said. "You know, a pledge is a pledge."

Asked if the Felt family's disclosure had helped Mr. Woodward, by corroborating the existence and identity of Deep Throat, Mr. Bradlee responded with a proud laugh about his onetime protégé: "It helps him on the way to the bank, I'm sure!"