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Woodward and Bernstein, Dynamic Duo, Together Again

By ALESSANDRA STANLEY

It was like Simon sitting down with Garfunkel or Sonny returning to Cher. Woodward and Bernstein were sitting side by side, openly discussing the identity of Deep Throat. Starting on the "Today" show, and wending their way from "Good Morning America" to "Larry King Live," the two Watergate reporters basked in the relief and reflected glory of giving name to their anonymous source at long last.

The TV Watch

There was nostalgia and also a certain old-fashioned charm to their courteous duet; W. Mark Felt was Bob Woodward's friend and source, but Mr. Woodward made sure Carl Bernstein also got a chance to speak. Mr. Woodward did begin to look a bit strained, however, as the day wore on.

And for once, theirs was a tale that did not carry an ominous message about the dominance of television. Mr. Felt and his relatives did not call Barbara Walters or Jay Leno to make their announcement, nor was he outed by "Dateline" or "Extra!" One of the more interesting, if minor, strains of the Deep Throat story was counterintuitive: Mr. Felt's identity was revealed in print (and in Vanity Fair, a monthly magazine at that). Television merely picked up the scoop and amplified it. Some 30

years later the news media haven't changed that much. It's the political climate that has dramatically altered.

And that was the most striking image of the whole Watergate reunion. Two journalists famous for protecting a confidential government source were being celebrated at the same moment that two other journalists, Matt Cooper of Time magazine and Judith Miller of The New York Times are facing possible jail time for refusing to identify confidential government sources. Technically, at least, the Nixon administration could have tried to force the Washington Post reporters to name Deep Throat but then, unlike now, such a move against the fourth estate would have been political suicide.

The Washington Post's former executive editor, Benjamin C. Bradlee, told Jim Lehrer of PBS that the experience "offers proof of the fact that anonymous stories — anonymous sources can be handled properly and be useful to society, and that when you — before you throw reporters in jail for keeping their sources anonymous, you'd better be careful."

The Washington Post was brave to confront the Nixon White House with reports that were more aggressive than those of other newspapers, but the newspaper was also lucky to be first on an important story during a time when the public's faith in the

highest level branches of government was eroding and journalists' credibility was on the rise.

President Bush couldn't be luckier. Now, respect for the news media has rarely been lower, and the one major investigative piece conducted during his re-election campaign by CBS News was botched, because Dan Rather's report that Mr. Bush used family connections to get in — and around — the Texas National Guard relied on fake documents.

Not everyone was thrilled to dis-

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cover that Deep Throat was the No. 2 official of the F.B.I., of course. Many of the same people who were Nixon supporters during Watergate are now important figures in or on television, from Pat Buchanan, the former White House speechwriter who is a regular talk show commentator, to Roger Ailes, the chairman of Fox News who was a media adviser to Richard M. Nixon in 1968. (And, of course, the president's father, George H. W. Bush, was chairman of

the Republican National Committee in 1973 when the Watergate scandal was reaching its peak.)

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Fox News paid less attention to the revelation than other 24-hour news networks. Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Woodward were on CNN but not on Fox. "When The Washington Post put them on low-rated cable news networks first, we decided to pass," the network's spokesman, Paul Schur, explained. Fox used a clip of the legendary duo from the "Today" interview on NBC and also gave ample voice to those who viewed Watergate as a "media putsch," including a clip of one of the Watergate burglars, Bernard Barker, then working for the C.I.A., now almost as elderly as Mr. Felt, and who indignantly complained that when he saw Mr. Felt's "weak chin" he knew at once that he was not a man of honor.

The list of famous mysteries keeps growing shorter. In 2000, the Vatican revealed the Third Secret of Fatima, and now The Washington Post has confirmed the identity of Deep Throat.

"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," Mr. Bernstein told Matt Lauer of NBC. "It's a very strange feeling."