

BOOKS

Big enchiladas

By Geoffrey Wolff

All the President's Men by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. Simon and Schuster (349 pp., \$8.95).

"Good God!" said Howard Hunt, learning from Bob Woodward that his name and phone number were among the effects of two burglars braced in the Watergate.

"JEEEEEEEEESUS," said John Mitchell, learning from Carl Bernstein that he'd been fingered as Mister Big of the secret funds.

"We've never had a story like this. Just never," said Barry Sussman, District of Columbia editor of the *Washington Post*, before the story got one-third as good as it was going to get.

Breathes there man or woman who has not heard this legend sung? How Riverboat Carl parlayed his hunches into the undoing of the wicked? How Meticulous Bob, a year older at 29 than his comrade, hammered home the coffin nails, with the phantom Deep Throat's guidance? How these two, Luck & Pluck, conspired, with the *Washington Post's* prodding and governance, to make all inoperative Jeb Magruder's exasperated declaration, "It's none of your business," thereby turning over many mossy stones to reveal many damp slugs?

Around the newsroom at the *Post* they called them Woodstein. Not because the two are similar, but because the single compaction was handier to say than two names, and it was being uttered so often. Woodward would dog after the facts, browbeat Deep Throat into good citizenship, bang out the first fast drafts of their serial revelations. Bernstein would dream up theories of the crime, follow the dots into unlikely labyrinths, polish the final drafts. Each had his own sources, and they didn't mix or share them.

They cooked up a scheme for this book in October 1972. Back then they planned to include themselves out of their story and to use the book to inventory the speculations—what Ziggy the Inoperative calls "hearsay, innuendo and guilt by association"—that the *Post*

wouldn't print. But soon enough it became clear that there was no speculation so farfetched that it couldn't be printed, because there was no offense so kinky that the Maximum Enchilada and his consiglieres wouldn't commit it, and get caught committing it. So instead of becoming a horror yarn of possible crimes, *All the President's Men* became a champion account of the detection of crimes. It's told in a joint third person, just the right voice for such a document, modest, distanced enough from inevitably swelling self-regard, giving the illusion of one reporter telling the story of his friend, turn and turn about. Together they brought home quite a sweet deal for themselves: Robert Redford's due to play Woodward, Dustin Hoffman or Al Pacino to play Bernstein, the book was auctioned to a paperback house for a cool million, it's a full selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club for July.

Meantime, the *Washington Post* won a Pulitzer Prize for its ruling hand in the proceedings, and for this ex-employee it couldn't have happened to a nicer enterprise. Journalists by their nature are appealing characters: skeptical, finely tuned to the mutability of persons and circumstances, partially schooled in a world of discrete matters, and indiscreet, affecting an iron-plate proof against any astonishment. In fact, the mark of this fine book, and its humanizing energy, is its repeated demonstration of the continuing capacity of these reporters and their editors to be stunned, grieved and outraged by what their President and his henchman did to their country.

Ben Bradlee, the paper's executive editor, is a man for whom the adjective *urbane* was bespoke. At once cultivated and vulgar, slick-looking and tough-looking, cunning and generous, he's not the man you'd pick to surprise. He knew, early in the game, that he and his editors and reporters were playing with the Nixon Family, that "this is the hardest hardball that's ever been played in this town." Yet he was stung and amazed by the acid dumped on his personality by our new Baby in Christ, Charles Colson. And when Bernstein and Woodward turned him out of bed in the dark of an early morning to warn

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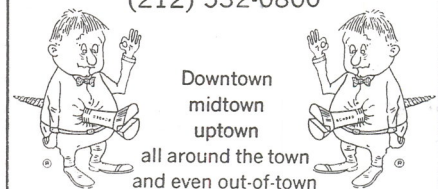
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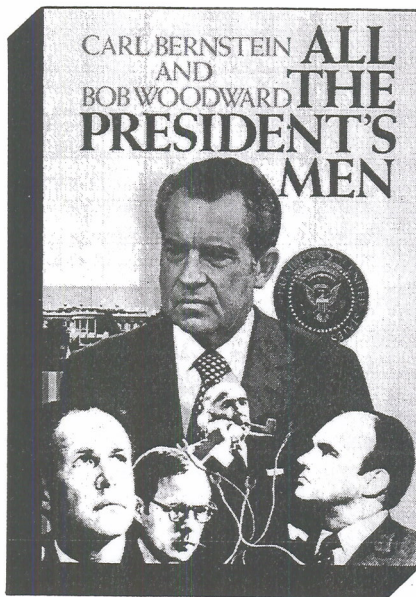


him of fresh crimes rising from the fens and bogs on Pennsylvania Avenue, "he said that the problem was no longer just journalistic. He mentioned something about the state and the future of the country."

The journalistic problems were problems enough, thank you. Colson promised to attack the *Post* from the protection of many salients. Its competitors would be spoon-fed news, and the *Post* would be starved. (Fair enough, if childish enough.) Challenges against the *Post's* ownership of two Florida television stations were filed with the Federal Communications Commission. The Prez, from the sanctity of the office he so reveres, pledged to "fix that sonofabitch" Edward Bennet Williams, the *Post's* lawyer. And John Mitchell, having finished crying the addition of vowels to his JEEEEEEEEESUS's name, promised that "Katie Graham's gonna get her tit caught in a big fat wringer if that's published." Published it was.

And not the least extraordinary aspect of the Woodstein account is the miniscule part that the doubts and deliberations of Katherine Graham, owner of the *Post*, play in it. As Woodward and

Bernstein winningly fess up, they made many blunders while they were on the story, some of them foolish, some unethical, some illegal. Twice they printed



false stories. They could have gone to the slam for interfering with grand jurors. They sometimes harassed witnesses (one promised to shoot Woodward if he showed up in California) and they were

not exempt from following false trails.

Yet not till the game was half won, not till a couple of months before James McCord's letter to Sirica and Patrick Gray's testimony to the Senate in March utterly vindicated her newspaper, did Katherine Graham ask Woodward, in effect, "What have you boys been doing with my newspaper?" And even then the purpose of her conference, following a veiled warning from Henry Kissinger to lay off ("What's the matter, don't you think we're going to be re-elected?"), was to prod her reporters to turn over more stones. Woodward told her that he and Bernstein weren't certain the whole miserable story would ever be aired.

"Never? Don't tell me never."

(Ah yes, by the way: my own vote in the Deep Throat Sweepstakes goes to Richard Moore, special counsel to the President, by reputation an honorable citizen of the Republic, a canny dissembler whose bogus Stengelese testimony buffaloes Sam Ervin's committee, a man in whom John Dean confided much, if not all, and like Deep Throat's chum Bob Woodward, a Yale Man. Will it play?)

MUSIC

Cocker: is this a comeback?

By Janet Maslin

Nobody really knows why Joe Cocker's latest live comeback appearance worked out the way it did, but in the days following the debacle there were a few attempted explanations. "He's a full-grown boy," said one angry source connected with Cocker, "and the fault lies with him, not with A & M or anybody else." "When you get right down to it, it wasn't tragic or fatal—just a case of public drunkenness, albeit under the worst possible circumstances," mollified another. "He's crazy," said a third Cocker associate, very quietly. "But you can't say I said so."

At the start of his career, Joe Cocker had been working as a gas fitter in Sheffield, England; two years ago he returned there, a prematurely exhausted rock star gone home to his parents while he recuperated from occupational wear

and tear. In the interim, he had developed the reputation of an eccentric, a junkie, an alcoholic, perhaps all three. But the press had invariably depicted him as an innocent, a bewildered goose caught up in the entrepreneurs' fierce scramble for his golden eggs. In any case, he was universally acknowledged to be unpredictable, so it must have come as a nice surprise to A & M last July or so when he announced his willingness to start work on a new album. By May he had completed more than two records' worth of material—convenient, in case another disappearing act was in the cards—with the first album scheduled for release in mid-June. Production had been handled by Jim Price, a seasoned pro whose credits include playing trumpet with Joe's Mad Dogs and Englishmen and on the last Rolling Stones tour. However Joe may have really felt about the idea, his associates all recall his ostensible willingness to help promote the new material by doing one very special live show.

And Joe isn't one to start small; his last live tour, in 1972, began with a make-it-or-break-it date at Madison Square Garden. He made it, even though the personnel in question were wildly, disastrously unprepared for such a nerve-wracking engagement. This time Joe decided to go for broke at the Roxy, in front of an L.A. invitations-only crowd that included all manner of celebrities, powers and tastemakers (Bill Graham, David and Cher, Diana Ross, Al Kooper, even Lesley Gore). There was a certain amount of suspense, among people who knew Joe, as to whether or not he'd go through with it. But right up until the day of the show, the prospects looked relatively rosy.

There was a rehearsal at six, and it went well. Then the band went next door to the Rainbow, where they spent the next four hours watching Joe consume a record-breaking quantity of Courvoisier. Nobody tried to stop him, probably because it wouldn't have made any difference.