



By Maxwell Silverstein

Putting It All Together

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN. By Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. Simon & Schuster. 349 pp. \$8.95.

By RICHARD J. WHALEN

"DON'T GLOAT," Howard Simons, The Washington Post's managing editor, told the troops in their hour of Watergate triumph and vindication on April 30, 1973. "We can't afford to gloat." Of course, the command went unheeded. The next morning's Post carried an eight-column, three-deck headline across page one: 3 Top Nixon Aides, Kleindienst Out; President Accepts Full Responsibility; Richardson Will Conduct New Probe.

By that time, the Watergate story had long since ceased to be the almost exclusive property of the young reporting team of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein ("Woodstein," as they were known in the newsroom) and their somewhat nervous

RICHARD J. WHALEN, a former adviser to President Nixon, is the author of *Catch the Falling Flag: A Republican's Challenge to His Party*. His newest book, *Taking Sides: From Kennedy to Nixon to Kennedy*, will be published in the fall.

but steadfast editors. Watergate, chiefly by dint of the Post's sustained, high-risk investigation, had become the biggest scandal in the history of the presidency.

We do not yet know how the national tragedy will end, but thanks to this unassuming, straightforward narrative, we know how Woodward and Bernstein (as they refer to themselves) went about their indefatigable, often brilliant journalistic detective work, which produced the stunning beginning of the unfinished story of Watergate. Because they didn't know any better, and had not been spoiled by daily exposure to the celebrated on terms of false intimacy, these two eager-beaver city-side reporters tackled the Watergate break-in and its unfolding implications on the moral plane of petty criminality, which proved to be the low road directly into the dark heart of the Nixon White House.

In this intensely media-conscious city, the exploits (and rewards) of Woodward and Bernstein are sufficiently well-known so that a summary does them no injustice. Basically, the two simply worked very hard, which is the essential (and perhaps sole) ingredient of so-called investigative journalism.

Because there were many honest and conscience-stricken individuals in the Nixon government and campaign appara-

tus — the book is appropriately dedicated to "the President's other men and women" — the reporters were able to turn up valuable sources among middle-ranking insiders. And then there was Woodward's super-source — Deep Throat, so nicknamed because he spoke only on a deep-background, no-quote basis.

If I did not have such respect for the integrity of Woodward and Bernstein, I would be tempted to suspect that Deep Throat is a composite character made up of several sources — he is too knowing about too many very closely held subjects in widely separated political quarters to ring quite true. But Woodward and Bernstein are admirably free of the vices of New Journalism, and so we are bound to accept Deep Throat as a real, live source, and therefore to attempt to guess his identity. An informal poll of leading Nixonologists turns up two nominees: Robert Finch and Harry Dent. Neither man "fits" precisely, but both had the necessary position and motivation.

The main, often fascinating revelations in this book concern the inner workings, not of the White House or the Committee to Re-Elect the President, but of that great adversary institution, The Washington Post. During

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those fantastic weeks in the late winter and early spring of 1973 when the "Woodstein" disclosures were exploding almost daily, the front page of the Post became the most brutally effective instrument of government in the capital. Its rule was absolute and terrible. Enemies were summarily executed in cold print while friends—especially one highly placed friend—were spared by silence.

That friend of the Post's management, of course, was Dr. Henry Kissinger—dear, indispensable "Henry." Kissinger enjoys a unique immunity among Nixon men because he has made himself endlessly accessible to the media on his terms.

Woodward ran head-on into the gross pro-Kissinger double-standard while attempting to report the story that Kissinger had personally fingered aides for FBI wiretaps. A "top FBI official" told him wiretap authorizations came orally or by letter from Kissinger. A former FBI man confirmed it. Kissinger himself, in a telephone interview, refused to deny it, virtually admitted it and then demanded that the entire conversation be put on retroactive background. Woodward refused.

Kissinger swiftly went over Woodward's head, first to diplomatic writer Murrey Marder and then to executive editor Ben Bradlee, whom he telephoned at

home to declare that it was "almost inconceivable" that he could have authorized the wiretapping. While the editors of the Post gave "Henry" the benefit of every doubt, conceivable and inconceivable, the clock ticked away. Finally it was too late to write a story for the first edition. Next morning, Seymour Hersh, who applied the same standard to everybody in the Nixon Administration, broke the Kissinger wiretap story in The New York Times, and Marder rewrote it a day later.

This episode not only sheds light on the character of Henry Kissinger, but also on the role of subjective emotion in the Post's handling of the Nixon scandals. Would the paper have done such a splendid job if its publisher and top editors had not hated Nixon so much? Whether or not Nixon deserves to be hated is irrelevant. The anonymous "source" stories that broke open the Watergate cover-up conspiracy have created precedents and established ground rules for future conflicts between press and politicians in which the balance of power may swing the other way.

Woodward and Bernstein and the Post have recently been overshadowed by the publication of President Nixon's own oral history of the botched Watergate cover-up. But nothing has yet come to light in the White House transcripts or elsewhere to alter the story these remarkable reporters told under extraordinary pressures. They and their editors have every reason to be proud, but Howard Simons's advice becomes more valid as we move toward the climactic agony of Watergate. □