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'Final Days' Sets a Paperback Record

The paperback rights for "The Final Days," the book about the last days of the Nixon Presidency by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, were sold yesterday for \$1,550,000, a record for a nonfiction book, according to Simon & Schuster, the book's hard-cover publisher.

The rights to the book, written by two reporters of The Washington Post, were purchased by Avon Books, one of seven publishers that participated in a three-round auction conducted by Simon & Schuster that began last Thursday.

The previous record for a nonfiction book was held by "The Joy of Cooking," by Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker, whose paperback rights were sold to the New American Library in 1973 for \$1.5 million. Last year, "Ragtime," a novel by E. L. Doctorow, was sold to Bantam Books for \$1.85 million.

"I feel elated that the merits of 'The Final Days' have been so recognized," said Joni Evans, vice president and director of subsidiary rights for Simon & Schuster.

Mrs. Evans said that the initial hard-cover sales of the book exceeded by 50 percent Simon & Schuster's previous fastest selling book, "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," by William L. Shirer. By the end of this week there will be 427,000 hard-cover copies of "The Final Days" in print.

Under the terms of the sale concluded yesterday, the book can be published in paperback on May 3, 1977, or one week after it is taken off The New York Times best-seller list, whichever comes first.

Hall tomorrow has been canceled. The Metropolitan Opera tenor has had to return to Italy because of an illness in his family. Refunds can be obtained at the Fisher Hall box office.

"Rebel Women" To Open May 4

"Rebel Women," a new play by Thomas Babe, dealing with three Southern women who stand in the path of General Sherman's march to the sea, has been scheduled to begin public performances May 4 at the Public/Anspacher Theater.

Joseph Papp is presenting the New York Shakespeare Festival production. Jack Hofsiss has been commissioned to direct. Kathryn Walker, David Duke, Leora Dana and John Glover will play the leads in the play. Emma Angeline Butler, Mandy Patinkin, Debbie Offner, Peter Weller, David Dean, Mark Kologi and Eric Roberts are featured.

Play in French Starts Run May 5

Madeleine Renaud and Jean-Pierre Aumont will co-star in "Des Journées Entières Dans les Arbres" (Days in the Trees), a French-language play by Marguerite Duras, which will be presented for 12 performances starting May 5 at the Ambassador Theater, 215 West 49th Street. Jean-Louis Barrault, who with his wife, Renaud, was a member of the Comédie Française for more than 25 years, will direct.

The four-character play features the two co-stars as a mother and son confronted by a young woman in search of her identity. It is being presented by Le Treteau de Paris and Jean de Rigault, in association with the French Institute and the Alliance Française. The play will be presented in French with simultaneous translation available with the use of rented head sets.