

Woodstein's Retreat

Until the *Washington Post* ran a routine story recently on the marriage of *Post* Watergate Sleuth Bob Woodward to Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* Reporter Francine Barnard, the magic names of Woodward and Partner Carl Bernstein had been suspiciously absent from the paper. Their familiar double byline has not appeared in the *Post* since September, and they have been missing from the talk-show circuit.

The duo has indeed gone underground. Requests for interviews are being declined, and Woodward said recently: "We've dropping out." Wood-

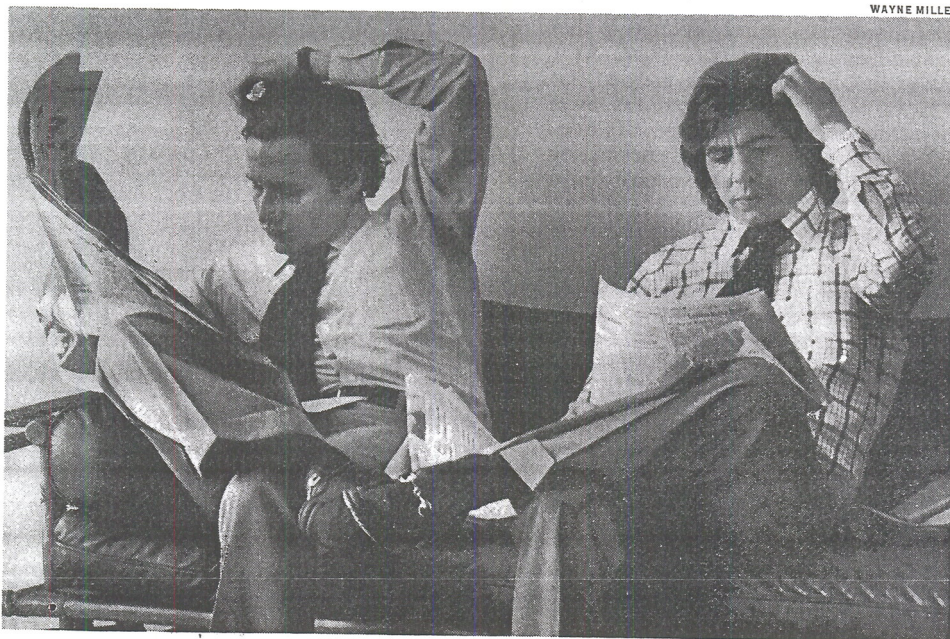
Redford's offer to buy movie rights to the book for fear the Hollywood version would be, well, too Hollywood. They were right. The first draft of Writer William Goldman's script was excellent in parts, but generally superficial. "It read like a Henny Youngman jokebook of one-liners," Bernstein complained to a friend. "Harry Rosenfeld [*Post* metropolitan editor] came out looking like Phil Silvers, and Ben Bradlee became Walter Pidgeon. It was just too shallow." So Bernstein and *Esquire* Contributing Editor Nora Ephron, his sometime roommate, have rewritten large chunks of the script.

Money has changed their life-styles

municipal bonds, and are worried about their tax bill. They have each earned about \$1 million in the past year.

Woodward recently passed through a period of intense disillusionment and self-doubt, deepened by a shocking medical report—mistaken, as it turned out—that he was dying of leukemia. He has also been disappointed by the ultimate result of the Watergate exposé. A friend describes Woodward as disillusioned because "the nation traded a dishonest S.O.B. for an incompetent."

That personal angst seems to have contributed to Woodward's hasty decision, after a few days of consideration, to get a marriage license. Woodward and Bernstein have had frequent disagreements in recent months, including a tiff over Woodward's pursuit of Francine Barnard. She had first gone out with Bernstein. When Woodward asked his partner for her phone number, Bernstein at first refused to supply it. The reporters also clashed from time to time on minor matters of literary style during the preparation of the first book. For now, amity has been restored. Bernstein was one of the seven guests at the wedding and then took the newlyweds to dinner at D.C.'s pricey Sans Souci restaurant. That was only fitting: in humbler days, Woodward usually found himself stuck with Bernstein's supper bill.



WAYNE MILLER

WOODWARD & BERNSTEIN AT SAN FRANCISCO TV STATION BEFORE "DROPPING OUT" Phil Silvers, Walter Pidgeon and the Henny Youngman jokebook.

ward, 31, and Bernstein, 30, have had their troubles coping with sudden fame. As a friend explained their new reticence: "People were always asking them for big public-policy statements. They don't want to be pundits." Adds *Post* Executive Editor Ben Bradlee: "They're journalists, and they're not journalizing when they get distracted by other reporters."

At the moment, "Woodstein," as they are known collectively, are practicing journalism in a small sixth-floor office at the *Post*, where they are writing a book about the last 100 days of the Nixon Administration. Some of the more important Nixon loyalists examined in their first volume, *All the President's Men*, have refused to be interviewed. The pair are behind schedule on the book, and had to hire an outside researcher to help them.

The movie version of *President's Men* has also been a headache. They came close to rejecting Actor Robert

only mildly. Bernstein bought a cooperative apartment in a decayed Northwest Washington neighborhood, lent a friend money for a down payment on a house, and bought a closetful of expensive clothes ("which he wears badly," sighs one acquaintance). Bernstein still does not own a car, and he crashed in a rented auto two months ago. He broke two ribs, contracted a mild case of pleurisy and put on a quick 15 lbs. because of enforced inaction while recuperating. Friends describe him as inhibited by his Watergate-related publicity and irritated at no longer being able to play the colorful slob with conviction.

Woodward appears equally insouciant about wealth. He bought a house near Georgetown for a price in six figures and picked up a new BMW Bavaria to replace the aging VW Karmann-Ghia in which the two did their nocturnal Watergate investigating. The two reporters share a financial adviser, have sunk large sums into tax-exempt