

Win, Place and Show

By JOYCE ILLIG

IS THE PUBLIC TIRED of reading about Watergate? Judging from the first week of sales figures and print orders for the two mass-market paperback editions of Nixon's transcripts, people are racing to buy the books as fast as Dell and Bantam can get them out.

Although the number of books in print at both houses changed daily to keep pace with the rapid reorders, by the end of the first week of publication Dell was reporting 1.7 million copies in print and anticipating a total sale of three million copies. Bantam had 1.4 million copies in print and estimated the sale of two million copies by the end of the second week. District News, wholesale distributors to 14,000 retail outlets in the District of Columbia area, distributed 112,000 copies of the two editions in the first week: 65,000

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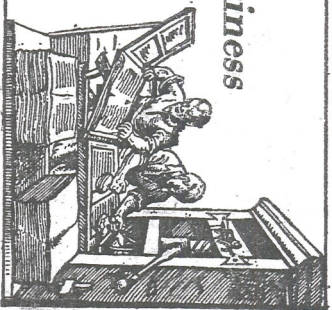
of the Bantam edition and 47,000 of the Dell edition. According to the sales figures from both Dell and Bantam, there's a cross-country interest in the transcripts. Dell reports that the Pentagon newsstand sold 352 copies in the first week; that 900 copies were sold at National Airport; that between 300 and 500 copies were sold in each of the 12 Washington-area Walden bookstores. In Detroit, they've sold 52,500 copies; 5000 copies in Oakland with a reorder of 10,000; 62,000 copies in Chicago bookstores; 859 copies in Grand Central bookstores. Five thousand copies have gone to England and another 6000 to other foreign markets.

Bantam showed sales of 3000 copies in three days in three B. Dalton stores in Minneapolis; 200 copies sold during a lunchtime at the National Record Mart store in Pittsburgh; 2000 copies sold in a chain of Montreal bookstores in three days; a seven-store chain in Chicago sold 2200 copies in two days; and at National Airport there were 1000 copies sold the first day.

During the first week that the 1308 page transcripts were on sale at the Government Printing Office bookstores (six in D.C. and 18 in other areas), the first printing of 15,000 copies sold out. There were orders for an additional 30,000 copies. This put the GPO original version into its third printing, even though it carried the burden of a \$12.25 price tag.

Two days after the GPO version went on sale, Bantam (which has been virtually

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unchallenged in the instant book field which it created 10 years ago with the Warren Commission report) announced the publication of *The White House Transcripts* with The New York Times, at \$2.50. The surprise was the unexpected entry of Dell into the instant sweepstakes that same day. Dell teamed with The Washington Post and announced publication of *The Presidential Transcripts*, at \$2.45.

There's a squabble about who won the race: both Bantam and Dell claim to have been out first on May 7. Meanwhile, Brentano's made a three-volume facsimile of the GPO edition, printed 1500 copies at \$10.95 and had it on the shelves of their New York and Washington bookstores on May 6.

But who published first is of little interest except to insiders. The public may better ask why it cost the Government Printing Office \$12.25 to publish a book that commercial paperback houses can produce for \$2.50.