

## Capitol Punishment

# Joe's Papers

Washington Post?

By Art Buchwald

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No one seems to be more distraught over the release of the Pentagon Papers, than the famed hawk columnist Joseph Wallstop.

When I visited Joe in his bunker underneath his house in Georgetown, Joe was frothing at the mouth.

"They were my papers," Joe cried. "The New York Times and The Washington Post had no right to use them."

I look confused. "How could they be your papers, Joe? I thought they belonged to the Pentagon."

"I have had a deal with three administrations to get first crack at all top secret classified documents."

"Why you, Joe?"

"Because I am a friend of the Pentagon, because I believe in the war, because when they leak a document to me they know it will be printed the way they wrote it. Now everyone has access to top secret material. It's not fair."

"Are you trying to tell me, Joe, that the Pentagon Papers aren't the first classified documents that got into the papers?"

"You must be a fool," Joe replied contemptuously. "Everyone of my columns is based on top secret information."

"The administration's quarrel with the leaking of the Pentagon Papers is not with what was revealed in them, but who printed them."

"Joe, if I hear you right, the government has been leaking classified documents to friendly newspapermen for years."

"I don't know how I can make it any clearer," Joe said in his usual irritated voice.

"Then what did The New York Times and The Washington Post do that was so wrong?"

"They printed *unauthorized* leaks of classified documents. The leaks that I have printed have been authorized by the highest men in government. When they give me a top secret paper I know they want to see it in the papers. For one thing it shows them in a good light which is very important if you're a high government official. The Pentagon Papers show high officials in a bad light and that, my friend, no matter how you look at it, is treason."

"Maybe Daniel Ellsberg didn't know The New York Times and The Washington Post were unauthorized to receive government secrets."

"He knew it all right," Joe said. "And if there was any question he should have checked with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They have a top secret list of newspapermen who can have access to classified documents. I can assure you that no one from The New York Times or The Washington Post is on that list."

"I can understand why you're mad, Joe. But is there anything you can do about it?"

"I certainly can. Since the Pentagon Papers were printed I have received hundreds of top secret classified documents from sources I cannot reveal, proving the Pentagon Papers are wrong."

"But how does the reader know your top secret papers are more accurate than Ellsberg's top secret papers?"

"Because mine were leaked to me by responsible men who have no ax to grind except to prove the decisions they made were right," Joe said.

"That makes sense. Wouldn't the government be wise to list the newspapermen they were leaking papers to so the public knows whom to trust?"

"I don't think you have to go that far," Joe said.

"The best test for the public when reading a secret document is: if it supports the government it's an authorized leak, and if it doesn't, it's a matter for the Justice Department and a grand jury."

The doorbell rang and a four-star general handed Joe a large brown envelope. "These are your columns for next week, Mr. Wallstop. Please sign here."

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