

Watergate Writers Defend New Book

Washington

Carl Bernstein and Robert Woodward, who helped uncover the Watergate scandal, said yesterday their latest book about Richard Nixon's last days in office is "basic reporting" that might contain minor errors but is "the best obtainable version of the truth."

The two Washington Post reporters, whose first book "All the President's Men" is now a movie, were questioned closely about both the style and content of their latest volume, "The Final Days," on a NBC's "Meet The Press."

"The Final Days" contains purported revelations about Mr. Nixon's intimate family life and reports many of Mr. Nixon's closest advisers, including Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, did not like or trust Mr. Nixon during the height of the Watergate pressures prior to Mr. Nixon's resignation as President.

When asked about claims of inaccuracy by some principals in the book, Woodward said some of the over 300 persons interviewed told the reporters they would have to deny speaking to them or dispute what they reported when the book was published to save their own positions.

Woodward said, "We make no pretense of infallibility. This is reporting, the best obtainable version of the truth a year and a half after the event . . . We are reporters, we make mistakes. Maybe we did in this one."

But both authors emphasized that everything they wrote had been told to them by several sources and "the thrust of what's there" was true.

"We'll stand by it and be happy to research it," Woodward replied when advised of a denial by the White House physician that he said Mr. Nixon had a "death wish."

He noted that initial Watergate revelations in the Washington Post were also attacked as inaccurate.

Bernstein said that in writing the book he viewed Mr. Nixon "certainly with more compassion than I ever had for him. The more you reported this story, the more you saw the agony of this man and his inability to come to grips with what was happening to him at this time . . . a lot of it is very moving."

United Press