

Washington Post Cagey About How It Got Book

New York

The Washington Post's editor says his newspaper obtained portions of "The Ends of Power" by H. R. Haldeman at no cost beyond normal reporting expenses, while two other newspapers say a mysterious woman caller offered to sell them the book.

"The story is infinitely, less complicated than you suspect," editor Benjamin C. Bradlee said in a telephone interview in which he denied receiving a call from the woman. "We got it from someone whose name you don't know, whose affiliation you don't know. Nor have you ever heard of them."

The Post published in Thursday's editions what it said was material from the last two-thirds of the book, prompting early publication of the 352-page volume itself — which sells for \$12.95 — in addition to high-priced excerpts.

Suspicious of the publisher, New York Times Books, and the Times syndication service centered on a possible security breach at the Scranton, Pa., press where the book was produced.

In part, the suspicions were based on the Post's statement that it had not obtained all of the book, which was bound from printed pages collected into 11 sections called "signatures."

Although three guards oversaw the binding, executives believe "The Ends of Power" was most vulnerable to the theft of substantial portions in sequence at this stage.

Further, the New York Times said yesterday that a "Nancy Collins" checked out of a Scranton motel Thursday. Nancy Collins is the Washington Post reporter credited with getting the book. The



UPI Telephoto

NANCY COLLINS
Washington Post reporter

reporter declined to comment.

Speculation about a Scranton source was also fueled by a telephone call the Times received one night last week. A Times editor who requested that his name not be used said the woman caller told him she would give the book to "the highest bidder."

The editor quoted her as saying she was a reporter for a Scranton newspaper, that the newspaper had rejected the book, that she was angry and that she intended to quit.

"It sounded as though it might be real," the editor observed, saying the woman never called back as instructed. He said the woman, who sounded like someone in her mid-20s and spoke without an accent, gave him a cover name of "Nancy" so that he would know her when she called again.

Peter Michelmore, metropolitan editor of the New York Post,

also said that a woman of similar description called him last week.

She said that she or someone she knew worked at the printer's and that she was auctioning the book in calls to the New York Post, the Washington Post, the Times and the New York Daily News. She did not call back, Michelmore said. The News said it did not receive a call.

Executives of the two Scranton newspapers, the Times and Tribune, said they would have printed stories if given the book and that they did not think anyone on their staffs could have been involved.

ABC, which was allowed to read "The Ends of Power" at the publisher's office to help in preparation of a special show on the books, after signing a confidentiality stipulation, branded as "preposterous" any possibility that the network was the source.

Bradlee declined to discuss the source in any detail but did say that ABC was not it. Nor, he added, was Newsweek magazine, which is published by The Washington Post Co.

Associated Press