

# GOVERNMENT FLAKS?

## Bob Woodward



Robert Upshur Woodward rose from obscure reporter working for *the Washington Post* to become one of the most famous journalists of recent times for his role, with that of Carl Bernstein, in "breaking" the Watergate story. Together, "Woodstein" broke one of the biggest news stories of all time: a chain of abuse by the Executive office of the Presidency that led to calls for impeachment, and the eventual resignation, of President Richard Nixon.

Immortalized by Robert Redford in the movie based on the book *All the President's Men*, the real Woodward is quite an enigma. Adrian Havill, in his recent book *Deep Truth*, presents the most comprehensive biography to date of both Woodward

and Bernstein. He also details some of the fabrications that passed for nonfiction in the book from which the film was based. Most importantly, he gives us a great wealth of background on who Woodward really is, where he comes from, and what his connections are.

### A Yale and a Secret Society Member

The staunchly conservative Bob Woodward grew up in Wheaton, Illinois. A good student at Yale, he was ultimately one of fifteen seniors "tapped" for one of that university's secret societies, Book and Snake, a cut below the more infamous Skull and Bones, but the top of the second-tier fraternities. Woodward had his first journalistic experience working for the *Banner*, a Yale publication. In his 1965 year-book he was referred to as a "Banner mogul." Havill writes,

Certainly, with the CIA encouraged to recruit on the Yale campus, particularly among history majors and secret societies, it is more than reasonable to assume Bob may have been one of those approached by the agency, or by a military intel-

ligence unit, especially after four years of naval ROTC training. Although it would answer a lot of questions that have been raised about Bob Woodward, at this point one can only speculate as to whether he was offered the chance to become a "double-wallet guy," as CIA agents who have two identities are dubbed. It would certainly be understandable if he decided not to adhere to the straight and accepted the submerged patriotic glamour and extra funds that such a relationship would provide. It would also explain the comments of Pulitzer Prize-winning author J. Anthony Lukas, when he wrote in 1989 that Bob Woodward was "temperamentally secretive, loathe to volunteer information about himself," or the *Washingtonian's* remarks in 1987: "He is secretive about everything." As *Esquire* magazine put it, summing up in its 1992 article on Bob, "What is he hiding?"

### The "Floating Pentagon" Assignment

Three days after graduating from Yale, Woodward was sent by the U.S. Navy to Norfolk, Virginia, where he was commissioned as an ensign by none other than U.S. Senator George Smathers from Florida. Bob's assignment was to a very special ship, called a "floating Pentagon," the U.S.S. *Wright*. The ship was a National Emergency Command Ship—a place where a President and cabinet could preside from in the event of a nuclear war. It had elaborate and sophisticated communications and data processing capabilities. It had a smaller replica of the war room at the Pentagon. It ran under what was called SIOP—Single Integrated Operation Plan. For example, in the event of nuclear war, the *Wright* was third in line to take full command if the two ahead of it, the Strategic Air Command in Omaha (SAC) and NORAD, were rendered incommunicado. Woodward—straightfacedly—told authors Colodny and Gettlin (*Silent Coup*) that he guessed he was picked for the ship because he had been a radio ham as a kid.

Aboard the *Wright*, Woodward had top secret "crypto" clearance—the same clearance researcher Harold Weisberg found had been assigned to Lee Harvey Oswald when he was himself in the Marines. Such clearance in Woodward's case gave him full access to nearly all classified materials and codes on the ship. Woodward also ran the ship's newspaper. Woodward has insisted that possessing a high security clearance is not necessarily indicative of intelligence work.

The *Wright* carried men from each of the military services, as well as CIA personnel. One of Havill's government sources reported that the CIA would likely have had additional informants on a ship of such sensitivity, adding that "the rivalry between the services was intense."

After a two and a half year stint on the

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## THEY CONNECT

"To sort of take the term Watergate and link it to Howard Hughes, I think, is really unfair."

Bob Woodward,  
April, 1976.

## The Deceptions of All the President's Men

Had the book been presented as fiction, readers could not complain. However, the book sits on non-fiction shelves around the world. Maybe it shouldn't.

In his book *Deep Truth*, author Adrian Havill presents several events in *All the President's Men* that are, to put it generously, highly suspect. One example is the scene in which Woodward and Bernstein have made their first egregious mistake. They sourced Hugh Sloan's grand jury testimony for a story that Sloan had never told the Grand Jury, showing that Haldeman was one of the inner group at CREEP controlling the mysterious slush fund. In the book, the dejected Woodward and Bernstein walk home in the rain, beaten both physically and symbolically by the elements, with only newspapers over their head to keep them dry. Havill did some checking. *It never rained that day.* That might seem an inconsequential detail to some, but others will understand that it was a device created to bring drama. How many other "events" were merely fictional devices? Havill found several. For instance, at one point, Carl Bernstein is about to be subpoenaed by CREEP, and Ben Bradlee advised Carl to go hang out at a movie until after 5:00 p.m., then to call into the office. According to the book, Carl went to see *Deep Throat*, hence the reason for the name "Deep Throat" having been given to Woodward's secret source. But there was no *Deep Throat* playing anywhere in D.C. at that time. In fact, the theaters were being very cautious, having recently been raided by law enforcement authorities. Not one theater in town was showing *Deep Throat*.

And speaking of "Deep Throat" . . . One of the most astonishingly bald-faced inventions was the process by which Woodward and "Deep Throat" allegedly made contact when they needed to speak to one another. In the book, much is made of the spooky, clandestine meetings between "Deep Throat" and Woodward. When Woodward needed to ask "Deep Throat" something, he was to put a flower pot with a red flag in it on his sixth floor balcony, which, we are supposed to believe, this high level source checked daily. When "Deep Throat" wanted to speak to Woodward, a clock

would supposedly be drawn in his copy of the *New York Times* designating the meeting time. But neither of these scenarios fits the reality of where Woodward lived. Woodward, who could remember the exact room number (710) where he met Martha Mitchell just once, evidently had trouble remembering the address at which he had lived. In an interview he once said it was "606 or 608 or 612, something like that." However, Havill found that Woodward's actual address was 617. This is important, because the balcony attached to 617 faced an interior courtyard. Havill poked around and found that the only way to view a flower pot on the balcony was to walk into the center of the complex, with eighty units viewing you, crane your neck and look up to the sixth floor. Even then, a pot would have been barely visible. There was an alley that ran behind the building that allowed a glimpse of the apartment and balcony, but at an equally difficult angle. And in both cases, we are to believe that this source, who strove hard to protect his identity, would walk up in plain view of the eighty apartments facing the inner courtyard or the alley on a daily basis, on the chance that there might be a sign from Woodward. When Havill tried to poke around, just to look at the place, residents of the building stopped him and inquired who he was and what he was looking for. Unless "Deep Throat" was well known to the residents of the building, his daily visits seem to preclude being able to keep his identity a secret.

As for the clock-in-the-paper, the *New York Times* papers were delivered not to each door, but left stacked and unmarked in a common reception area. There was no way "Deep Throat" could have known which paper Woodward would end up with each morning.

Havill, in fact, believes that "Deep Throat" is no more real than the movie episode or the rain, but rather, a dramatic device. It certainly worked well. And Woodward's and Bernstein's editor at Simon and Schuster, Alice Mayhew, urged them to "build up the Deep Throat character and make him interesting." While it is now clearly known that at least one of Woodward's informants was, in fact, Robert Bennett, the suggestions from Colodny and Gettlin in *Silent Coup* about Al Haig and Deborah Davis's suggestions in *Katherine the Great* about Richard Ober may not be contradictory. Other names that have been suggested have included Walter Sheridan

(Jim Hougan in *Spooks*) and Bobby Ray Inman (also in *Spooks*). If Havill is correct and there is no "person" who was known as "Deep Throat", it is possible that any or all of the above were passing along information, explicitly not to be sourced or credited to them in any way, on deep background.

Havill asks, and then answers, his own questions as to the dishonesty in *All the President's Men*:

"Why would Bob and Carl invent or embellish such seemingly incidental details of their book? Why would they make up meetings with a character named Deep Throat? The answer is Bob was consumed by naked ambition, anxious to prove that he could succeed at his newly chosen profession. There was money and fame at stake. . ."

And maybe a cover story to protect as well. ♣

## Bob Woodward

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Wright, Woodward was assigned to go to Vietnam. Woodward wrote the Pentagon asking to serve on a destroyer. The wish was granted. One naval captain told Havill that it seemed reasonable Woodward would have a little pull from his previous duty to avoid getting assigned to Vietnam. Another former naval officer disputed that, saying "Nobody got out of going to Vietnam in 1968."

But Woodward did. He was stationed aboard the U.S.S. *Fox*, based in Southern California. The personnel on board the *Fox* included an intelligence team, many of whom had studied Russian and Asian languages at the famous armed services language school in Monterey, California.

By 1968, Woodward ran the ship's radio team. In 1969, Woodward was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for his communications work. From there, Woodward moved on to a Pentagon assignment, a job that included briefing top officers in the government. Admiral Thomas Moorer and former secretary of defense Melvin Laird are both on record noting that Woodward briefed Al Haig at the White House during this period. What is suspicious is Woodward's semi-admittance to Hougan that he had done some briefing, and his complete denial to Colodny and Gettlin that he had ever briefed anyone at the White

House. Havill notes:

Considering the evidence, Bob Woodward's denial more strongly suggests intelligence than it does his uninvolved in White House briefings.

Woodward's secrecy about his past, his choice of associates, and what is known of his activities caused Havill to write:

*The question, then, begs itself once more. Was Bob Woodward ever a free-lance or retained Central Intelligence Agency liaison officer, informant or operative . . . ? This author got various forms of affirmative opinions from intelligence experts. It would explain his assignment to the Wright and his misleading statements to interviewers. It would make understandable his being able to get out of going to Vietnam in 1968, his extension for an additional year at the Pentagon, his being chosen to brief at the White House and his denials as well. It would also help explain his subsequent high-level friendships with leaders of the U.S. military and the CIA.*

It would also explain the role Woodward and Bernstein wittingly or unwittingly played in keeping the CIA's nose clean while making sure the world saw the President's nose was dirty.

### The Legacy of Deep Throat

Whatever his background, whatever his connections, one cannot trust what Woodward says as fact. Take, for instance, his account in *Veil* of his last interview with dying CIA Director William Casey. Havill tracked down Casey's family, friends, hospital security staff and CIA guardians and found that the visit Woodward described was impossible. First of all, Casey was under 24 hour guard by several layers of security: CIA members, hospital security, and Casey's family. And Woodward had already been stopped once while trying to see Casey. According to one of Havill's sources, Woodward was not merely asked to leave, as Woodward reported in his book, but was forcibly shoved into the elevator. And Woodward's story kept shifting. Woodward told a Knight-Ridder reporter that he had gotten in by flashing his press pass. To Larry King, Woodward claimed he just "walked in." But even assuming he somehow managed to get by all of that security, Woodward would still have been the only person to claim that Casey had uttered intelligible words in those last hours. The only other person to make such a claim was Robert Gates, who himself became CIA Director. The family, doctor and medical staff said Casey could not make words at this point, only noises. At least Gates questioned whether he might have been imagining he heard words.

Woodward has never retracted his "conversation." In addition, Woodward once said that Casey sat bolt upright, which would seem highly implausible given his rapidly deteriorating state. Onetime CIA Director Stansfield Turner, a friend of Woodward's since 1966, said Woodward told him he'd walked by Casey's room and Casey had waved to him. Casey's bed was positioned in such a way in the room as to make that impossible too.

Likewise, Woodward does not seem to demand authenticity from subordinates. Under his watch as Assistant Managing Editor of the Metro desk, the *Post* suffered a humiliation of the highest proportions at the hands of one of his hires, Janet Cooke. It was this incident that knocked the *Post* from its perch as "America's leading newspaper," as it had been called in the wake of its Watergate reporting.

Janet Cooke was a gifted writer with a knack for capturing the essence of the streets of D.C. She went to the *Post* for a job, and Woodward hired her. More illustrator than reporter, she painted vivid images, if not entirely accurate ones. The latter trait soon brought her trouble.

Cooke's crowning glory—and worst disaster—was a story called "Jimmy's World," about an eight year old heroin addict. The story brought both praise and outrage: praise for the vivid writing, outrage that a reporter could just stand by and watch a kid taking drugs. The controversial story managed to earn a Pulitzer, but only after some arm twisting by the committee head, who overruled the committee's first choice for the prizewinner to pick "Jimmy's World." Some of the committee members hadn't even read the story, but not wanting to appear divisive, they stood together, for better or for worse. Made bold by the award, Janet Cooke's fabrications grew even larger and more personal. She started making up a history for herself that she didn't possess, including training in languages she couldn't speak. Several at the *Post*, including Woodward, were worried that her story of Jimmy may not be true. They pressured Cooke to produce "Jimmy." Losing the battle to protect her source, it rapidly became clear that she had no source. *There was no Jimmy.* And for the first time ever, a Pulitzer was returned. The *Post* was thoroughly embarrassed by a woman under Woodward's direct supervision at the paper.

But Woodward's most stunning deceptions come from the work that launched his career, his tracking of the Watergate story as retold in the supposedly nonfiction work *All the President's Men*. Adrian Havill found curious discrepancies between ac-

countings of incidents as reported in the book, and the rest of the available facts (see sidebar at left).

Given his role in the Watergate cover-up, and the misrepresentations in his own work, it remains to us a huge mystery why this man is treated with the reverence he is. Considering his behavior, his background, his credibility, and his connections, we now feel compelled to join Adrian Havill in asking who is Bob Woodward? Whom does he serve? Is his career sustained for the purposes of those with a "secret agenda"? †

## James Phelan

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gan. Robert Maheu, a friend and source for Phelan, had gone from the Company to Hughes. But, incredibly, in the entire book, after the Foreword, the CIA is mentioned in only two passages. The first is when Maheu's role as Hughes CEO is introduced and then again when the Glomar Explorer episode is sketched in. In an interview he did in *Penthouse* in 1977 Phelan was asked about Woodward and Bernstein and the possibility that Robert Bennett—Mullen Company executive, Hughes employee, CIA asset throughout the Watergate affair—was "Deep Throat." Phelan discounted this. He said that Bennett "inherited E. Howard Hunt" and Mullen served as a "cover for two CIA agents working abroad." He said he had interviewed Bennett "and found him to be very forthcoming."

As the CIA documents presented in this issue reveal, Phelan didn't do his homework in regard to any of these subjects. In that same interview, Phelan praises the work of Woodward and Bernstein, who were being deliberately led off the trail of the CIA by Agency asset Bennett. In *Scandals, Scamps, and Scoundrels*, Phelan chalks up Watergate solely to Nixon's obsessive and quirky personality. This was well after the publication of Fred Thompson's book (see page 29) which details the role played by the Mullen Company and Bennett in the Watergate affair.

As with his 1967 caricaturing of Garrison, those interested in what really happened at Watergate and what really transpired between the CIA and Hughes had to settle for personality sketches, vague generalities, and Phelan's own cleverly disguised biases. On the two great traumatic shocks to the system—Watergate and the JFK conspiracy—Phelan has been anything but what Random House billed him as: an investigative reporter. †