



The Secret Man: The Story of Watergate's Deep Throat

By Bob Woodward

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In Washington, D.C., where little stays secret for long, the identity of Deep Throat -- the mysterious source who helped Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein break open the Watergate scandal in 1972 -- remained hidden for 33 years. Now, Woodward tells the story of his long, complex relationship with W. Mark Felt, the enigmatic former No. 2 man in the Federal Bureau of Investigation who helped end the presidency of Richard Nixon.

The Secret Man chronicles the story in intimate detail, from Woodward's first, chance encounter with Felt in the Nixon White House, to their covert, middle-of-the-night meetings in an underground parking garage, to the aftermath of Watergate and decades beyond, until Felt finally stepped forward at age 91 to unmask himself as Deep Throat.

The Secret Man reveals the struggles of a patriotic career FBI man, an admirer of J. Edgar Hoover, the Bureau's legendary director. After Hoover's death, Mark Felt found himself in the cross fire of one of Washington's historic contests, as Nixon and his men tried to dominate the Bureau and cover up the crimes of the administration. This book illuminates the ongoing clash between temporary political power and the permanent bureaucracy of government. Woodward explores Felt's conflicts and motives as he became Deep Throat, not only secretly confirming Woodward and Bernstein's findings from dozens of other sources, but giving a sense of the staggering sweep of Nixon's criminal abuses.

In this volume, part memoir, part morality tale, part political and journalistic history, Woodward provides context and detail about The Washington Post's exposé of Watergate. He examines his later, tense relationship with Felt, when the FBI man stood charged with authorizing FBI burglaries. (Not knowing Felt's secret role in the demise of his own presidency, Nixon testified at Felt's trial, and Ronald Reagan later pardoned him.) Woodward lays bare his own personal struggles as he tries to define his relationship, his obligations, and his gratitude to this extraordinary confidential source.

The Secret Man is an intense, 33-year journey, providing a one-of-a-kind study of trust, deception, pressures, alliances, doubts and a lifetime of secrets. Woodward has spent more than three decades asking himself why Mark Felt

became Deep Throat. Now the world can see what happened and why, bringing to a close one of the last chapters of Watergate.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Bob Woodward's secret man is no longer a secret, now that former FBI assistant director W. Mark Felt and his family have revealed that he was Deep Throat, Woodward's legendary anonymous source for his Watergate reporting. Soon after Felt made his identity known, Woodward, who "is prone to complete his homework before it is due or even assigned," according to the afterword by his reporting partner Carl Bernstein, himself revealed that he had been working on a manuscript in preparation for that moment, one that would after 30 years tell the inside story of their mysterious, and history-changing, relationship.

Certainly you get in *The Secret Man* the cloak-and-dagger details you'd expect--and are likely already familiar with from both the book and the superb movie of *All the President's Men*: the late-night garage meetings, the red flag in the flower pot, the whispered warning that lives were in danger. Woodward retells the still-riveting story of his and Bernstein's unearthing of the scandal with efficiency and with the last puzzle piece in place. And he is able both to explain some of Felt's motivations, as an FBI loyalist disgusted by Nixon staffers trying to run roughshod over his agency, and to trace some of his remarkable bureaucratic tactics, including commissioning an FBI leak inquiry and deflecting it away from himself. Most fascinatingly, he gives a warts-and-all account of his shameless youthful cultivation of Felt, beginning with their first encounter when Woodward was a bored Navy lieutenant on the make, just three years before being assigned to cover the arraignment of five men in business suits arrested in the offices of the Democratic National Committee. But in a crucial way this doesn't seem to be the book that Woodward had wanted to write, for Felt remains a mystery. A shadowy father figure during the Watergate period, Felt soon distanced himself from Woodward after running into legal trouble of his own, and they fell out of touch in the intervening years. When Woodward finally reestablished contact in 2000, Felt had lost most of his memory, and any understanding with his former source, with whom he was so closely tied in both his private and public lives, remained poignantly but frustratingly unreachable. --Tom Nissley

From Publishers Weekly

Rushed into print after former FBI second-in-command W. Mark Felt was unmasked as Watergate's enigmatic arch-informant, this memoir reminds us that the scandal's lasting impact was less on politics than on journalism. Woodward recounts his cultivation of the avuncular Felt as mentor and source during his days as a cub reporter, the cloak-and-dagger parking garage meetings where Felt leaked conclusions from the FBI's Watergate investigation, Felt's ambivalence about his actions and the chilling of their post-Watergate relationship. The narrative drags in later years as the author showily wrestles with the ethics of revealing his source, even after a senile Felt begins blurting out the secret and his family pesters Woodward to confirm his identity. Woodward portrays Felt as a conflicted man with situational principles (he was convicted of authorizing the FBI's own Watergate-style illegal break-ins), motivated possibly by his resentment of White House pressure on the FBI for a cover-up, possibly by pique at being passed over for FBI chief. Unfortunately, Felt doesn't remember Watergate, so his reasons remain a mystery; Woodward's disappointment at the drying up of his oracle is palpable. What's clear is that Deep Throat laid the template for Woodward's career; his later reporting on cloistered institutions--the Supreme Court, the CIA, the Fed, various administrations--relied on highly-place, often unnamed insiders to unveil their secrets. It gave his reporting its omniscient tone, but, critics complain, drained it of perspective and made it a captive of his sources and their agendas. Woodward doesn't probe these issues very deeply, but he does open a window on the fraught relationships at the heart of journalism.

From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Poor Bob Woodward. He is the nation's most famous investigative reporter, and he gets scooped on the story he's been prepared to tell for 30 years—the identity of Deep Throat. Woodward rushed *The Secret Man* into print shortly after Felt exposed himself as Deep Throat to *Vanity Fair* magazine. It's no surprise, then, that critics complained the book offered little additional insight and shed almost no light onto the motives of Felt, who suffers from dementia. At its best, the book can be inspiring, reaffirming some critics' belief that the truth will prevail, the bad guys will be brought to justice, and journalists will continue to serve as the watchdogs of democracy. At its worst, *The Secret Man* is a *Cliff's Notes* version of *All the President's Men*, a memoir from a man who, after three decades as confessor to the nation's powerbrokers, prefers to keep his own counsel.

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