

**I**t was only coincidence, but there I was in Washington, D.C., in June as the story broke not only recounting the work of mystery whistleblower Deep Throat, but also naming him. W. Mark Felt, then the No. 2 man at the FBI, was a major source that enabled Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein to turn out a series of stories for the Washington Post revealing the machinations of the White House in what become known as the Watergate scandal and led to President Nixon's resignation.

Back in 1972, as the details of the scandal began to come out, I was the city editor of the Centre Daily Times, a commercial daily in State College, Pennsylvania, the home of Penn State, and a part-time graduate student in Penn State's School of Journalism. I was studying for that degree because it was there, and, at the time, applicants were not required to take GREs.

At least I knew what I didn't know.

With no real plan to "use" my degree, I continued 10 weeks at a time (Penn State was on the term system then) toward my master's in journalism. Along the way I wrote my master's thesis about the first newspaper I had worked for full time at the age of 17, the Evening Courier of Tamaqua in Schuylkill County. Unfortunately, I had to title my thesis "Death of a Small-Town Daily," for the Courier, like many other newspapers of its size, had been bought by another newspaper and merged into a larger regional newspaper. The future novelist John O'Hara had worked there in the 1920s after getting fired from a newspaper in Pottsville, the county seat.



But as I finished my thesis, still not having a plan other than advancing someday to become the editor of the Centre Daily Times, Penn State's journalism program, like others around the country, started seeing increasing enrollments. Some of us local journalists were hired to teach the first-level newswriting course to help deal with the horde of journalism students.

The influx was attributed to Watergate. The theory was that if two journalists could topple a president, that was the career to go for—and a journalism degree was the way to get a leg up on that career. (You didn't need a journalism degree to get into the newspaper business but it did help editors separate the committed from the dabblers. A good journalism school was like boot camp.)

Unfortunately, a lot of students didn't do their research. For one thing, a combination of factors brought down President Nixon, from his own hubris to a tough judge named Sirica to the Supreme Court that ordered Nixon to yield his secret tapes.

Students also did not do a very good job of finding out what starting salaries were. Yes, salaries were very good at metropolitan newspapers, but you had to work your way up, starting in places such as Pottsville or Chambersburg or Stroudsburg. In 1961, I started at \$35 a week and, I believe, was making \$40 when I enlisted in the Navy two years later. In fact, when I went from the Centre Daily Times to become a lowly journalism professor, my annual salary increased by \$4,000.

But in those days salaries didn't matter to students. Journalism was a calling, not a career. Students were acolytes on the road to becoming reporter-priests and thorns in powerful politicians' sides .

As an academic, I had other goals. After getting tenure, I finally knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, and in my 28 years on the faculty, I didn't give much thought to Deep Throat. In fact, I discouraged students from seeing themselves as future Woodwards and Bernsteins, but rather tried to make them understand the daily grind of good journalism. I told them that the path to Washington started in a small town and you worked your way up. Begin in Lewistown, move on to Harrisburg, Lancaster, Philadelphia—then you've earned Washington.

I traveled a different path but, nevertheless, there I was in Washington and the buzz was all about Woodward and Bernstein and Deep Throat. I was there attending an orientation for my second Fulbright lectureship teaching journalism in China, which I'll do this fall.

Only then did it suddenly hit me, as it must have hit journalists and journalism faculty across the country if they thought about life and coincidences: One man changed our lives. Thank you, Mark Felt.

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