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The Up and Comers

On the average there are roughly fifty burglaries daily in the District of Columbia. Some are reported at length in our newspaper. Most are reported in smallish type in a crime column. Obviously, this burglary was different.

—*Washington Post* managing editor Howard Simons in 1973

In June 1972, Leonard Downie Jr. was living in London on a fellowship with the London School of Economics. He was a long way from his job at the *Washington Post*, a paper he'd joined as a summer intern in 1964. Downie had worked his way up as a hotshot metro reporter covering local police and courts, and in the process had become one of the top investigative reporters in Washington. As was his habit, he routinely read the *International Herald Tribune* to keep up with what was happening back in the United States.

One day, he picked up the paper and read a story about an odd burglary inside the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate hotel complex. Five men in business suits wearing surgical gloves had been arrested on June 17, 1972, with nearly \$2,300 in cash—most of it in sequentially numbered \$100 bills—and carrying sophisticated bugging equipment. Downie found the story totally intriguing. One of the five men was James W. McCord Jr., who not only worked for the CIA but handled security for President Richard Nixon's re-election effort. Downie was dying to know more. The story he read on June 19, 1972, was written by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. Downie was familiar with Bernstein's name but had no idea who the other reporter was.

“I’d never heard of Woodward,” said Downie, who would become executive editor of the *Washington Post* almost two decades later in 1991. He wondered who Woodward was and what he was covering and whether they would work together when Downie returned to the *Post* in July.

Downie didn’t know him because Woodward, twenty-nine, had joined the paper only nine months earlier, in September 1971. Woodward had not been a reporter for very long, but with a desire to write, unparalleled curiosity, and an insatiable need to uncover secrets, what other career would suit him?

Woodward had found his way to the *Post* from his hometown of Wheaton, Illinois. Wheaton is home to Wheaton College, a private, conservative Christian college, often called “the Harvard of Christian schools.” With two thousand students, the college provided a steady stream of babysitters for the Woodward family.

Today it is home to the Billy Graham Center Archives, and it exerts a strong religious influence on the community. The college had set the morality bar high for the townspeople. Woodward’s parents and their friends drank and smoked—a Wheaton College taboo—and often family members had to clean up evidence of sin before the babysitter arrived, as Woodward told author David Halberstam in the mid-1970s. Over the years, many a young religious zealot tried to convert the adolescent Bob Woodward. “Have you taken Christ?” they asked.

“Yes, I have,” he told them, when he was about seven or eight. Over the years, he tried several times to become a born-again Christian, but it never took.

“It was a significant introduction into fraudulent behavior,” he told Halberstam.

When Woodward was twelve, his parents’ marriage crumbled, and along with it his childhood sense of security. Not only were his mother and father no longer married and living in the same house with him, his brother, David, and his sister, Anne, but his mother moved out. The children, in a decision uncommon in the 1950s, stayed with their father. The breakup of his family was terribly traumatic for Woodward, especially because, as he told Halberstam, the way he discovered his parents’ impending divorce was by snooping through the mail. (He later learned while rifling

through his father's pockets that his father intended to remarry. Alice Woodward was part of Bob's life for the next forty-one years.)

"He undoubtedly felt like he had been pushed aside," his father said in a 1996 *GQ* profile. "At the time of the divorce, I was really getting involved in the practice of law. Bob had no close relationship with somebody in the home as a parent."

His parents' painful divorce and later working as a janitor cleaning his father's law office at \$11.75 a week are keys to Woodward's development as a reporter. The inquisitive Woodward could not help snooping through the treasure trove of documents that just might reveal Wheaton's secrets. "I was raised in a small town in the Midwest, and one of the things I learned very early was that everybody in the town had a secret," Woodward told movie director Alan J. Pakula in 1975. "My mother had a secret. Or a series of secrets. I had secrets. My friends had secrets. And most of the time nobody ever found out about those secret things." Woodward didn't know it at the time, but he possessed the kind of insatiable curiosity that defines reporters. They don't go into journalism for the money, though they feel blessed to be paid for doing what they love. But the bottom line is that they just *have* to know.

Woodward would be at his father's office at 10 p.m. when no one else was there. "You'd go around cleaning up ashtrays and trash cans and sweeping," he told me. "What's that on the desk? Oh that's interesting. You start looking at what's on the desk, then in the drawers, then in the files, then eventually to what they call the disposed files—in other words, old cases in the attic. Look, I'm a teenager. It just seemed obvious. There was no doubt or hesitation because again it's a private transaction. No one knows you are doing this. Maybe it's a waste of time. Maybe it's not. But you are going to learn something."

Alone at night, the young Woodward scoured divorce cases, IRS files, trial transcripts, and fraud cases. These all fascinated him, though he often discovered that hypocrisy pervaded people's actions. In one case, a high official in the school system was making advances on a student. The district attorney wired the girl to meet with the official, and Woodward found the transcript in the files.

“It was the first time you see the evidentiary purity of a tape recording,” Woodward said.

As a junior at Wheaton Community High School, Woodward ran for student body president, but didn’t win because many of his peers found him to be aloof and distant. Scott Armstrong, a Wheaton friend of Woodward’s younger stepsister, Sue Keller, comanaged the freshman class campaign for Woodward with Keller. “I was the only person who delivered their class for him,” said Armstrong, who was thirteen when he and Woodward first met. “I actually delivered a lot of people, but maybe it’s more attributable to his stepsister.”

After his father remarried, the family grew to six children—three of Alice’s, three of Al’s—and then became seven when Alice and Al had a daughter, Wendy. “They, the Woodwards, steps and others, all lived happily on Prairie Avenue,” said Armstrong. “It was a mingled family. It was a large family, and his father was a terrific, intelligent lawyer, a city-father type, and his stepmother was a very energetic, make-everything-happen, Martha-Stewart-before-Martha-Stewart kind of woman, very capable and competent. His mother lived in a nearby community.”

It may have seemed like a happy family to Armstrong, but that was the surface snapshot. Woodward’s parents’ divorce had had a profound effect on him, especially, as he told Pakula, since his mother had also had several nervous breakdowns while he was growing up. He has often told the story of counting Christmas presents after he realized that his father was being far more generous to his step siblings than to his own children. “Woodward counted the number of presents his stepmother bought for him and his younger brother and sister and compared them against the number of presents she bought her own kids,” noted Pakula, after Woodward told him the story in 1975. “He had made a list of both sets of presents—priced them in stores. She had spent much more money on her own kids. He told his father it was unfair. When he called his father, he [Woodward] was hysterical. His father gave him the difference and told him to buy gifts for the kids. His father would not have discussed it with his stepmother, didn’t want conflict. That kind of list, making investigations, thoroughness, obsession with unfairness has a lot to do with how he functions as an investigative reporter.” Woodward told Pakula

that he “kind of liked making investigations and was obsessive about unfairness.”

Woodward had been groomed to follow in his father’s footsteps. Known as Woody to close friends and Al to others, his father was a prominent lifelong Republican lawyer in town and later an Illinois Appellate Court judge. According to Pakula’s notes, Al Woodward was a stoic workaholic who left his son alone. “Father Faulknerian character in the Midwest. Meticulous,” wrote Pakula in his notes. “Do anything for anyone—simplistic—not intellectual. Family person. Father’s reason for taking custody of family: ‘mother was incapable of taking care of us. It was not that he had any need to raise family.’”

Around town, Bob was known as “Al’s boy.” For most of his life, he had followed a prescribed track that would lead him toward a law career. He’d played football in high school to please his father, although mostly he’d warmed the bench. His father had been captain of the Oberlin College football team, however, and playing high school ball was considered the manly thing to do. Woodward’s approach to football was a harbinger of his future. His coaches were impressed not by his natural talent but by his indefatigable work ethic. Years later, Woodward’s same intense dedication to reporting, despite his being a clumsy writer, would wow his editors.

“I think I played in two games in three years,” Woodward told the *Chicago Tribune* in 1991. “Back then, Wheaton was dominated by two auras. One was that of Red Grange, who played football there. And the football stadium was called Grange Field. You played football if you possibly could. It was the thing to do. It was better to go out and sit on the bench than not go out. The second aura was that of Billy Graham.”

In 1961, the year Woodward graduated from high school, he won a Naval Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (NROTC) scholarship to Yale University. It helped to offset the cost of the pricey Ivy League college. But the scholarship meant that he would owe the navy four years of his life after graduation.

“I had a girlfriend that moved to New Jersey and that’s why I went to Yale,” Woodward told the *Houston Chronicle* in 1974. The girlfriend was Kathleen Middlekauff. She had grown up in Wheaton and had been Woodward’s high school girlfriend, and

she eventually married him in 1966, becoming Kathleen Woodward. She still uses that name today, although they divorced in 1970.

Moving halfway across the country into Yale's liberal elitism had a big effect on the conservative Midwesterner, who at his 1961 high school graduation had spoken words borrowed straight from Arizona Republican senator Barry Goldwater's Conscience of a Conservative speech.

Yale opened up new worlds to Woodward. During his freshman year, his roommate was dating a black woman, and Woodward opposed the relationship. By his sophomore year, he told Halberstam, he thought that his roommate should marry the woman. His world opened up politically as well, as he progressed from being a conservative Republican to having a greater comfort with socially liberal ideas and thoughts.

At Yale, Woodward majored in English and history, joined the secret society Book and Snake, and was editor of the *Yale Banner* yearbook. His college professors were literary lions Robert Penn Warren, the author of *All the King's Men*, and Cleanth Brooks. "Back then, I saw him as a very complex and creative person," said Kathleen. "The kind of writing he was doing then was very searching and exceedingly introspective and self-reflective and very on the edge. Not necessarily easy to understand. Existential. Very probing and intense. Highly intense. These were qualities I found exceedingly attractive."

It was at Yale that Woodward wrote his first book. "I read his novel," said longtime friend and Yale classmate Scott Armstrong. "I thought it was terrific. I'm sure there must have been something about it that was less than polished. But it was as well written, literary, and complicated as a Russian psychological novel. It had little bitty smidgens that I recognized from his life. I remember that it read well. I didn't have trouble turning pages, but I don't remember action. It was a very cerebral novel."

The novel was submitted to a publisher and rejected. "He was really devastated by that rejection, which was a simple rejection to the effect of, 'I'm sorry, your book is not right for our list.' I actually remember the line," said Kathleen Woodward. "It was very devastating for him because he had envisioned himself as a writer of fiction. I certainly thought he had talent."

After Woodward graduated from Yale in 1965 and then served in the navy for a year, he and Kathleen were married. He was twenty-three. That same year, Carl Bernstein, twenty-two, was joining the *Post* as a reporter. “My fantasy for Bob was that he would become the great American novelist, and I would be a researcher on Wall Street for, say, the photography industry or something and would support him. Isn’t that funny?” said Kathleen. “But I didn’t go on to grad school in economics. We were stationed in Norfolk first, then San Diego. But I did take courses in English, and here I am a professor of English and that was his major. It still wasn’t clear to me that he was not going to be a novelist back then.”

By the time of Woodward’s Yale graduation, he, like many other young Americans, disagreed with the rationale behind the Vietnam War. He wanted no part of it, but he had made a commitment to the navy. First he served on the USS *Wright*, a communications ship that has since been decommissioned. He hated the navy, finding it boring. He took a correspondence course in romantic poetry just for intellectual stimulation.

In 1967, Woodward received orders to go to Vietnam and felt terrified, but he was smart enough to outsmart the navy. He had no intention of making a career out of the navy, so he feigned an interest in doing so with superior officers. He reasoned correctly that if he presented himself as a navy careerist, the navy would put him on a destroyer, far from the inland fighting. Otherwise his orders would put him in a situation where he was certain that he’d be killed. “I wrote a letter to every senior officer who might be able to help me,” Woodward told Halberstam. “I got hold of the Pentagon phone directory and went through it methodically, looking for anyone I might know who might be involved in the decision.” The navy put him on a destroyer, the USS *Fox*.

It was on the *Fox* that Woodward played one of the many pranks he would become famous for. This one involved the commanding officer of the *Fox*, when the ship was docked at Long Beach Naval Yard in California. The commander, Captain Robert Welander (who retired as a rear admiral) had his eye on an aircraft carrier tailhook, used to stop landing planes, that was encased in glass. Woodward decided to steal it for Welander. He told Halberstam that one night he got really drunk and hid in a closet, and

when it was safe, he came out, smashed the case, stole the tailhook, and brought it back to the *Fox* to present to Welander.

Back at the Pentagon, Woodward continued to be frustrated with the war. "I didn't like the Vietnam War and I didn't know what to do with that conclusion or emotion," explained Woodward. "I didn't have, quite frankly, the courage or the wherewithal to figure out how to do something about it. So I went along. My most rebellious act was to march in a peace march in my uniform, which was dangerous. I didn't quite realize that. That would have been the year 1969, which was at the height of those demonstrations. I did it in my uniform. At least with my navy jacket on. You know, not for hours, but I made an appearance." No one saw the full lieutenant in the U.S. Navy with Top Secret security clearance marching in a peace parade.

His second rebellious act also occurred at the Pentagon, when he was assigned as a watch officer overseeing TeleType communications for Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, the chief of naval operations. Woodward sent out a memo from the secretary of defense saying that "he'd become aware that there were lots of people who had unnecessary jobs in the Pentagon," Woodward told me. "And that the people who most realized they had unnecessary jobs were the people who held them. And if those people would come forward and identify themselves [Woodward started really laughing as he remembered], they would get their boss's job. They would be promoted [more laughing]. Yes, it was a prank. I gave it some distribution in the Pentagon and there was kind of a minor flurry of who had done this. I thought it was quite funny, and so did others."

By 1970, his years in the navy and varying career paths had taken a toll on his marriage. He and Kathleen decided to split up after four years of marriage. For her, the divorce was a horrible experience. She was teaching in France, and one day went to American Express to pick up her mail. Included was a newspaper clipping with the headline WOODWARD V. WOODWARD, which is how she found out her husband had filed for divorce. "It was news to me," Kathleen said. "Perhaps this is an example of his being demanding, or severe. We didn't really ever talk about it because it was not up for discussion."

When it was time to get out of the navy on July 31, 1970, Woodward wasn't so sure he wanted to go into law. He thought law school was a gutless thing to do for someone who had given five years of his life to the navy. Yet he applied and was accepted to Harvard Law School, though he knew he didn't want to go. But what did he want to do? He wasn't married. He wasn't tied down by loans or family or other obligations.

"I could have gone to law school," said Woodward. "When I was getting out of the navy I was thinking about all kinds of options. I thought about going to grad school, law school. I think Procter and Gamble still has this program where they hire people as a project manager. I interviewed with them. I had a girlfriend at the time who said, 'Oh, so you're going to be Mr. Jiffy Peanut Butter?' They didn't offer me a job. But if they did and that was the first thing that came along, I thought, that will be different. It won't be the navy. It won't be law school. You know, turns in the road."

One thing was certain: he didn't want a navy career. In Woodward's fifth year in the navy, he lived in Washington, D.C., and worked in communications for the Pentagon, though some Woodward critics claim that despite his repeated denials, he was involved in military intelligence.

"I spent my last year in the navy in Washington, D.C., from sixty-nine to seventy and I was working in the Pentagon and saw some of the things going on in Vietnam," said Woodward to a University of Maryland audience in 2002. "And I was reading the *Washington Post* and I realized the *Post* had a better take on what was going on in Vietnam than the generals and admirals in the Pentagon. I realized there was a disparity again between what was really going on and what was being said publicly about Vietnam. The sense the *Post* was a lifeline to what was really happening was very evident to me. That propelled me into the newsroom."

Woodward subscribed to the *Washington Post* and liked the direction its editor, Benjamin Bradlee, was taking the paper. In April 1970, he brashly wrote to the *Post* asking for a job on the major metropolitan newspaper, even though he had zero experience.

"Thank you for your letter of April 23 informing us of your July 31 release from the Navy," the *Post*'s director of personnel

wrote, and offered to pass his file on. It wound up on metro editor Harry Rosenfeld's desk. Rosenfeld had become the metro editor in 1970. He agreed to see Woodward.

"I didn't want to just kiss him off," said Rosenfeld. "But normally, I wouldn't see anyone without any newspaper experience."

What made a difference was that Woodward had gone to Yale. This impressed Rosenfeld. So did Woodward's five years in the navy. Rosenfeld knew that sometimes you had to take a chance on people, although he'd once made a mistake by hiring a man with a Ph.D. and a WASPy name with "the third" attached. "He worked as hard as he could," said Rosenfeld. "But he was not a newspaperman."

Yet Rosenfeld knew that this previous unfortunate experience shouldn't warn him off other raw talent. He found Woodward refreshing. "Woodward made a good impression on somebody like me who was used to a lot of hippie reporters, running around with beards and smelling of marijuana. It was a relief to see somebody who looked like an earnest type, a sober citizen."

Rosenfeld decided to give him a two-week tryout and assigned him to his deputy, Andrew Barnes, who had started at the *Post* in 1965. Barnes would leave in 1973, making his way up to become editor of the *St. Petersburg Times* in Florida.

"I'd always been open to atypical candidates," said Barnes. "That's how you get good journalists. God knows, Bob was smart and wanted to do the job. The *Post* newsroom was not the neatest and tidiest, and Bob was so neat and trim. Perfectly shaved. Erect in his bearing. He didn't say, 'Yes, sir,' but he was right on the edge."

No matter what the assignment, Woodward busted his butt. He was always at the paper. Barnes cooked up assignments to cover small-time, unmemorable events, and he was impressed. If another three calls or more trips out of the office were necessary, Woodward made them. The problem was, Woodward didn't know how to write a story or understand the lingua franca of a newsroom. He didn't know what Barnes meant when he used words like *nut graph*, *attribution*, or *lead*.

Barnes was a desk editor. He moved thousands of words of copy a night. He knew who was good and whom he had to worry

about on the metro staff. He didn't have time to tutor Woodward, nor was there any system in place for veterans to help green reporters. No matter how hard Woodward tried, Barnes knew it wouldn't work. Woodward never wrote one story that was good enough to go into the paper.

"Bob didn't know how to tell a story," said Barnes. "He had all the facts, but you had trouble tracking the story and it was boring. Bob wanted to succeed, and God knows I wanted him to. But his stories would have taken constant editing, and then I'd worry about a mistake being edited into the story."

At the end of the tryout, Barnes told Rosenfeld that Woodward had some raw talent but needed aging. "I remember saying to Bob, 'I'm with you, but this isn't going to work out,'" said Barnes. "He may have been crushed. But he wouldn't have shown it."

Woodward left the paper in love with reporting and only a little bit discouraged. He knew he had more to learn, but he had found work that he loved. "I left more enthralled than ever," Woodward wrote in *The Secret Man: The Story of Watergate's Deep Throat*. "The sense of immediacy in a newsroom and the newspaper was overwhelming to me."

With recommendations from the *Post*, Woodward got a job at the *Montgomery Sentinel*, a small, respectable Maryland weekly paper where Woodward could learn on the job as countless other gung-ho, inexperienced reporters had done. He did just that. He covered the hell out of whatever he was assigned, and he roamed freely, occasionally doing minor investigative stories.

"One of the stories I wrote was an evaluation of all the high school principals in Montgomery County," Woodward told *Writer's Digest* in 1996. "I'd never written a story that created such a firestorm. Hundreds of people picketed the newspaper. One of the principals sued for libel, unsuccessfully ultimately. Obviously, the quality of education was very important to the people of that community. It was a real eye opener to see the emotions parents felt about saying this principal's good, this principal's not good, this principal's not suited."

Meanwhile, the *Post's* Rosenfeld, who would soon be Woodward's savior, had heard from his Maryland reporters just how good Woodward was. "I also saw his stories," Rosenfeld said,

“and I found that they were most always on enterprising topics, not the normal announcement handouts. But actually they made hard reading. They were good stories, cutting edge for Montgomery County but not terribly easy to decipher. You knew he had a story, but he didn’t tell it in the most lucid way.”

Nonetheless, once or twice his *Post* competitor Jim Mann had to follow a Woodward story. “He was incredibly inquisitive,” said Mann. “It wasn’t just what he got in the paper. But I remember interviewing alongside him. He was an incredibly good interviewer. He knew how to establish trust with the people he was interviewing.”

That year, when Maryland Governor Marvin Mandel was in a mysterious car accident in the southern part of the state, Woodward impressed Mann with his ingenuity. Mandel had told reporters that he was meeting with Democratic leaders, but no Democratic leaders could confirm that they’d met with him. It turned out that the married Mandel was off with his girlfriend.

“Woodward said, Let’s get the gas records and see how much gas was in the car and how far it would have been driven,” said Mann. “It didn’t turn into a story, but I thought it was pretty clever.”

Rosenfeld, too, had been paying attention to Woodward’s stories. He had his hands full, however, with a staff of reporters who needed attention. To his mind, many of the reporters were bright, lovely people, but they needed discipline.

Rosenfeld had joined the *Post* in 1966 as the night foreign editor. Three years later, he had been named foreign editor, a job he loved because it involved traveling around the world. He had studied international relations in graduate school at Columbia University and thought that he was well suited to be foreign editor. But executive editor Benjamin Bradlee thought differently. He asked Rosenfeld to take over as metro editor and rebuild the staff of roughly a hundred reporters and editors, by far the largest on the paper.

Woodward was leaving nothing to chance. He sent Rosenfeld his stories and peppered him with phone calls. “He was very much on my mind because he kept himself very much on my mind,” said Rosenfeld.

So did Mann, who became Woodward's champion with *Post* editors. In mid-1971, Mann left the Montgomery County beat. When he did, he wrote a memo to Rosenfeld and then city editor Barry Sussman saying that the *Post* ought to hire Woodward. Around the office, some editors teased Mann. "[Woodward] became known as 'my boy,'" said Mann, "as in 'Are we going to hire your boy or not?'"

Woodward wasn't just going after the *Post*. He also applied for a reporting job at the *New York Times*. On May 4, 1971, the *Times* rebuffed him. "I'm afraid we have no staff openings at the present, nor do we anticipate any in the near future," reads Woodward's rejection letter.

During the summer of 1971, Rosenfeld had taken vacation time to paint the basement of his house in preparation for the bat mitzvah of one of his daughters. It was hot, and Rosenfeld hated what he was doing. In the middle of painting, he was interrupted by a frantic phone call from the *Post*. An editorial aide had disappeared, leaving a wife and a young child. The wife was hysterical and Rosenfeld called the police to try to get the young man declared a missing person. Rosenfeld kept going up and down the ladder in his basement, trying to paint and handle an office crisis. For a man with a short fuse, it was not an ideal situation.

In the middle of this, Woodward phoned. Rosenfeld, a hard-charging, nervous man who smoked and was prone to blow-ups, blew up. "I'm busy," he yelled at Woodward. "Call me at the office. Later."

"This guy is calling me every other week," said Rosenfeld, "and I tell him we are going to get to him, but he doesn't leave me alone."

The rest of the story has become legendary. Rosenfeld's wife, Anne, was mystified by her husband's annoyance at Woodward's persistence. "So what are you complaining about?" asked his wife. "This is just the kind of guy you are always saying you want as a reporter."

By August 1971, Woodward was sitting outside Bradlee's office for a final interview. Karlyn Barker was there, too, hoping for a job. "He seemed nervous like me," recalled Barker. "We were both waiting for the thumbs up or thumbs down from Bradlee. Bob was telling me that he'd had a tryout and it didn't work

out. I remember thinking, ‘Gee, I hope they hire this nice young man.’”

They both got jobs working for Rosenfeld. Before Woodward started on September 15, 1971, he got a letter of acceptance confirming his starting salary of \$156 a week, or \$8,112 a year, making him one of the lowest—if not *the* lowest—paid reporters at the *Washington Post*.

“Woodward comes on board to do night police,” said Rosenfeld. “But Woodward goes to night police not with a chip on his shoulder, like every other reporter I ever sent who hated to cover the pigs. Woodward goes down there, and he brings an extra cup of coffee and a copy of the paper. He establishes himself with the police officers and gets credibility. And he starts to do stories.”

Woodward was slogging along doing jobs that most beginners bristle at, only he loved it.

“I was the night police reporter. Working from six thirty p.m. to two thirty a.m. at the *Post*,” said Woodward. “And that was my basic job, but I would come in and work during the day because I liked it so much. The world is open to you. The city editor, Barry Sussman, said to me, ‘Look, you have an unlimited expense account for all practical purposes.’ As I recall, he said, ‘You can’t take somebody to the Jockey Club every day. But if taking people out to lunch or something helps, do it.’ He literally said if you are going to call somebody at the White House or Agriculture Department, check with the beat reporter. The navy was so closed and organized and limited, and all of a sudden the world that had been as narrow as it could be, was open. It was liberating. I was twenty-eight at this point.”

The first time Woodward dealt with Ben Bradlee on a story, he was terrified. Shortly after he was hired, a congressional committee was planning to investigate police corruption, a topic Woodward had been writing on. This was just the kind of story Bradlee liked. “It scared the hell out of me,” Woodward told David Halberstam. “There was the editor almost leaning over my shoulder. And he was asking these questions: ‘Where does it come from? How sure are you?’”

A few weeks later, Bradlee told Halberstam, he took some new reporters out to lunch. “Which one of you is Woodward?” Bradlee bellowed.

Woodward identified himself.

“You are all over the paper,” Bradlee said. “Keep it up. Keep it up.”

Woodward was assigned to Douglas Feaver, the night city editor. One night Feaver sent him out to cover a triple fatal fire. “He called in his notes and did a spectacular job,” said Feaver. “The fire story was on the front page the next two mornings.”

Since Woodward worked the overnight slot, Feaver expected that Woodward would go home and get a good night’s sleep. “The next morning, on his own time, Woodward went to the building inspectors and found out this building had a record of compliance failures during electrical inspections, and he had another big story. It really impressed me.”

Woodward didn’t stay on night police for long. He pushed on, turning restaurant health inspection violations into front-page stories. In the early spring, Woodward pursued stories on corruption within the D.C. police department. But he was still green.

Early on at the *Post*, when he was aggressively breaking stories on restaurants being closed down for code violations, a health inspector called. The Mayflower coffee shop got the lowest score ever, he was told. The inspector had never seen anything like it. Woodward dashed over to get the report, returned to the *Post*, and banged out a story.

“One of the things the *Washington Post* still liked was early copy,” he told a group of journalists in 2005. “So I turned this story in about lunch time.”

He was pretty pleased with himself. This would be a big story because the coffee shop was inside the fancy Mayflower Hotel, where the swells dined and the elite stayed overnight. His editor read the story, thought it good, and then asked, “Did you go over there?”

“No,” replied Woodward. “It’s all in the record. It’s an absolute slam dunk.”

“The Mayflower Hotel is four blocks over there,” said the editor. “Get your ass out of here and over there.”

He did. When he got to the hotel, he asked for the coffee shop and was told that the hotel didn’t have one. He looked more closely at the report. Wrong address.

“So I went over to the Statler Hilton Hotel, which was a half block from the *Post*,” recalled Woodward. “God knows why they

would have a Mayflower coffee shop in the Hilton Hotel, but they did. There it was. I saw it. It said, 'Closed for repairs.'"

He returned and sheepishly asked his editor for the copy without admitting the truth. "I have a few minor changes," Woodward said.

"Fires, shootings, investigations, the gritty and shocking street crimes, and the politics of the police department were all subjects where I could find stories," Woodward wrote in *The Secret Man*. "I loved newspapering so much that I often worked the day shift also." For free. He also told his editors that he didn't think other reporters worked hard enough.

The stories about Woodward the productive workhorse are legend now. When he first started—and nothing changed over time—he worked harder than most other reporters did. In his first months, he had page-one stories on different subjects five days in a row. Stories that other reporters might spend a week on, he'd turn in the next day.

Around this time, Donald Graham, the son of Katharine Graham, who owned and published the *Post*, came by Woodward's desk. The union people were complaining that Woodward was working far more than his prescribed 37.5-hour workweek and wasn't putting in for overtime as the union contract required. That didn't slow Woodward, though. He had discovered his passion and he had all the time in the world to pursue it. No wife. No kids. Nothing but newspapering.

While editors loved Woodward, not every reporter thought so highly of the prolific new guy. "I thought Woodward was a prima donna and an ass-kisser, a navy guy, green lawns of Yale, tennis courts," *Post* colleague Carl Bernstein told Halberstam. "I didn't really think a lot of most of Woodward's stories. I thought they were from the wham-bam school of journalism, making a lot out of very little."

Bernstein, a twenty-eight-year-old *Post* reporter, was the other name that surprised Len Downie as he read about the Watergate break-in from London, where he was temporarily living. Soon he would be returning to the *Post* as an editor. "The story was intriguing on many levels, including the fact that Carl was one of the

reporters on it,” said Downie. “Because I wasn’t sure that Carl would still be working at the *Post* when I got back considering all the trouble he’d gotten into.”

If Bob Woodward was strait-laced, clean-shaven, and determined to please his editors, Carl Bernstein was the opposite. Bernstein was an antiestablishment type. He wore his hair long, smoked incessantly, wore military fatigues, and was generally thought of as the office deadbeat. “Carl was a hippie, or a hippie wannabe,” said Tim Robinson, a metro reporter who worked with him. “Long hair, very interested in music. I remember some reporter came up to the Virginia desk and said he was going to get an oil change. Bill Curry, Carl’s editor, said, ‘You ought to take Carl in, too. His hair is getting pretty greasy.’”

Charles Puffenbarger, a former *Washington Star* and *Washington Post* editor, was one of Bernstein’s mentors. When Bernstein lived in a house with a couple of guys in Arlington, Virginia, “Carl did none of the work,” Puffenbarger told Alan Pakula in 1975. “They were having a party. The guys said, ‘You’re going to help, Carl. You’re going to clean the bathroom.’ He said, ‘How?’ They showed him the brush to clean the toilet. He said, ‘Clean the toilet with that? I’ve been scrubbing my back with it.’”

Unlike many other *Post* reporters, Bernstein was born and raised in Washington and knew well the city’s rhythms and history. When he was eleven, his parents, considered leftists, moved the family out to the Maryland suburbs into a predominantly Jewish area. “He lived in a neighborhood that was not only nice but was particularly popular because it had tons of kids,” said Gloria Feinberg, who met Bernstein when he was in ninth grade. “He was highly energetic and much more socially aware than other kids in the crowd we traveled in. Carl had a gift which he has now. He sees the big picture. The issues then were civil rights, and there was a big push for white teenagers to understand what the world was beyond their solidly middle-class neighborhood. The schools weren’t integrated to any extent. He was far more aware about what was going on than just being concerned about the next school dance. He was thin and wiry. I think he won a Howdy Doody look-alike contest because he had dark brown hair and lots of freckles.”

In high school, Bernstein, a phenomenal dancer, was more apt to be playing pool or hanging out with friends or working on B'nai Brith youth activities than studying. He barely graduated from Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 1961. "My own graduation from Blair is a memory so vivid that I continue to have nightmares about it," said Bernstein, the school's 1976 commencement speaker. "I was never able to send out invitations and those little white cards with your name engraved in script because Mr. Adelman, with good reason, had refused to pass me in chemistry. And I was also flunking gym. The explanation had less to do with my scores on tests or physical dexterity than with the fact that I wasn't in class very often."

He didn't have much success either at the University of Maryland, the only college, he has joked, that would accept him. Parking tickets and poor grades did him in. "Carl was kind of a rough street kid," said former *Post* reporter Stuart Auerbach, who worked with Bernstein. "It's not that he came out of the ghetto. He never finished college, but he worked his way up at the *Washington Star*. But he was more street. He had street smarts."

Street smarts worked for Bernstein. They allowed him to be successful after his father, who knew someone at the *Star*, helped him get a copyboy job at the afternoon newspaper when Carl was only sixteen. By the time he was nineteen, Bernstein said he was earning \$86.25 a week. "The best thing I ever did is I got so tired of making those funny little trays in woodworking shop so I finally decided to take typing with the girls," said Bernstein. "The fact that I could type is what got me hired at the *Washington Star* because I could type fast, and I'd taken a journalism course in high school and I could write. It was the one thing I had some skill at, and it was the only reason I was able to graduate from high school."

The first time Bernstein walked into the *Star* newsroom, he was hooked. "I saw that newsroom and it was maybe the most incredible moment of my life," he said. "This clattering of typewriters and people yelling 'Copy.' I never saw anything like it."

Bernstein has often told of his rite of initiation to the *Star* family by an older copyboy, who saw an easy mark. "So it's my first day at work at a newspaper," Bernstein told a *Chicago Sun-Times*

reporter in 1974, “and I’m wearing this brand-new cream-colored suit, because I figure that this is the way that you impress people and get a job as a reporter. At 2:30 in the afternoon, one of the older copyboys comes around and he says, ‘It’s 2:30, and the newest copyboy always has to wash the carbon paper. Unless you wash the carbon paper at 2:30, it’s not good for the rest of the day, and we won’t be able to get the late editions out.’”

So Bernstein collected all the purple carbon paper he could find in the newsroom, filled a sink in the men’s room, and started scrubbing. Purple water flew everywhere, turning his cream-colored suit into a child’s art project. He continued scrubbing.

In walked managing editor Newbold Noyes, who said, “What in the name of Christ are you doing?” This would become a classic Bernstein story.

Bernstein later wrote about that formative period of his life in 1981 when the *Washington Star* folded:

My rites of passage were spent on the dictation bank—an institution in which copyboys and copygirls were lined up along a row of typewriters and made to compete through the grungiest of reportorial hoops. I still have the copy of the dictation I took from Dave Broder in Dallas [in 1963 when President Kennedy was shot]: My hands were shaking so badly that I misspelled Parkland Hospitol in the lead.

At the *Star*, Bernstein became something of a terror to the other copyboys. One of them, Warren Hoge, a contemporary, would go on to become Bernstein’s friend and a *New York Times* reporter. Yet in 1964 Bernstein intimidated him. “He seemed an insider,” Hoge told Halberstam. “He knew the neighborhood, the underside of Washington life, and he was very ‘in’ at the *Washington Star*. And he was loud and cocky, the personification of cockiness.”

Bernstein was twenty.

He made it clear he was one of the “big boys” and not to be confused with the humble copyboys who ran errands. “He laughed at their jokes,” said Hoge, “not at ours.”

He paid no attention to copyboys like Hoge. “I almost felt a fear of him,” said Hoge. “Then at some point, he realized that I might be a peer and might have something. Very quickly and

suddenly, overnight almost, he treated me differently. He offered his friendship. I might have been afraid of asking for it.”

Bernstein did become a reporter at the *Star*, but not for long. The *Star* had an unofficial rule that you needed a college degree to write for the paper. Bernstein, who had dropped out of college, had no interest in finishing it. At the *Star*, he was basically a dictationist, a step below reporter, more like a rewrite man. He left the paper in 1965, when he was twenty-one, to follow *Star* assistant city editor Coit Henley to the *Elizabeth Daily Journal* in New Jersey, where Bernstein got his first full-time reporting job.

Henley hired him because he saw a certain attractive quality in Bernstein that would make him a good reporter. “There was something about him, an energy, a passion, something of the street urchin in him,” Henley told Halberstam.

In typical Bernstein fashion, though, the budding reporter didn’t have enough money to travel from D.C. to his new job. Henley drove down in a rented car to pick up his new charge. “I got there and he was staying at some rooming house, and I had to double-park,” said Henley. “While I was waiting, he was having some argument with a woman because he was leaving, and a city bus came by and creamed my leased station wagon.”

Bernstein performed well for Henley, however, and made him look good, although some people on the staff referred to Bernstein as “the rotten kid.” He quickly won first prizes in the New Jersey press association for a story on teenage drinking and for his first-person coverage of the massive 1965 blackout that cut off electrical power in much of the northeastern United States.

Here is Bernstein, at age twenty-one, writing about hitchhiking in a city that is shut down in darkness:

He loaded 15 of us into the oversized automobile and started heading uptown. . . . Even at our final stop at 47th Street, the car was still loaded. And what a ride! By now the police had put up huge searchlights at some important intersections and people were walking in the middle of the street and hitchhiking. Grown men in Brooks Brothers suits walking backward on Eighth Avenue with their thumbs out like they were sailors on the Turnpike.

The hotels. Who could ever forget the hotels on the night of the Great Blackout? I walked into the lobby of the Americana,

that grand monument to the nation's conventioners, and it was a human parking lot. One thousand people, the hotel's PR man said, were sprawled out in the lobby. It looked like two thousand and it was the damndest thing I have ever seen in my life.

As Leonard Downie wrote in his 1976 book *The New Muckrakers*, Bernstein's long, rambling account of the New York City blackout, written with colorful language, foreshadowed Bernstein's future. "Both reporter and participant, Bernstein wrote about the blackout in Manhattan as a Bernstein Odyssey," wrote Downie. "Bernstein would invariably get mixed up with participants in protest demonstrations, be himself manhandled by the police and spend nights in demonstrators' encampments, sharing their experiences and later offering what amounted to a diary of his adventures as story information for the *Post*."

Yet Bernstein's early prose also shows another side of him, one that any good reporter should have: an unstoppable desire to be at the center of things, a ferocious curiosity that makes it impossible to drive past a group of people where something is happening, whether it's a shooting, a traffic accident, or police officers shoving a teenager. Bernstein always had to be at the center.

"Bernstein thought a lot of himself and his skills, and he lorded it over colleagues," Henley told Halberstam. "He was somebody who knew the editor. He knew he was better than they were, and he let them know it. He was a little bit of a show-off."

Rather than live in working-class Elizabeth, home of noxious chemical factories, Bernstein moved to New York City, into hip Greenwich Village, and quickly accumulated looming debts, a practice that would dog him for much of his life. After he worked for a year at the *Daily Journal*, the *Post* hired him as a reporter for its metro staff. According to Halberstam, before Bernstein moved back to Washington, his father, Alfred, had to drive to Atlantic City and bring several thousand dollars with him to pay off his son's debts.

It was in October 1966 that then city editor Stephen Isaacs hired Bernstein. Isaacs told Halberstam that he had a practice of never reading a job applicant's clips that accompanied the applications. A good rewrite editor could be responsible for polishing the story with stellar prose. Instead, Isaacs listened to how reporters

talked, looking for how their minds worked and whether they had an edge. Bernstein certainly did. “The first thing he said when we had the interview was that he wanted my job,” Isaacs told Halberstam.

Later, during one of the countless frustrating encounters between Isaacs and Bernstein, Isaacs told his reporter that he would never become city editor.

“Why?” shot back Bernstein, who often seemed oblivious. “I don’t trust you enough,” Isaacs told him.

Bernstein replied that Isaacs was “full of shit.”

“I mean, he was a very combative guy,” said Isaacs. Nonetheless, Isaacs liked Bernstein because he was bright, intense, and aggressive and “you could tell he had ink in his blood. Someone said his heart beats at the rate of the press. He is really a newspaper urchin.”

On July 4, 1967, Bernstein showed a bit of his early flash in a story about an aviation pioneer:

Dr. Henri Coanda, who invented a forerunner of today’s jet plane in 1910, is still inventing.

He is also still writing, still sculpting, still conducting biological experiments and still collecting art.

However, he doesn’t play the cello anymore.

The eighty-one-year-old scientist explained the other day that “when the jet machine crashed, so did my wrist,” so he had to give up the cello.

That was in 1910, in Paris.

Now, looking positively spiffy in a blue blazer, black loafers and striped slacks, Coanda recalled that “I never intended to get off the ground; it was an accident.”

In the mid- to late 1960s, the *Post* had become one of the most exciting places to work in journalism. Things were changing. In 1965, owner Katharine Graham hired forty-four-year-old, hard-charging, glamorous Benjamin Crowninshield Bradlee, the Washington bureau chief for *Newsweek*, to kick some life into the paper. He would begin as a deputy managing editor, soon to be managing editor. Bradlee, a Boston Brahmin with a rooster tattoo, was ready for the task. By 1968, he was the top editor setting the tone and was determined to undermine the public conception that the *New York Times* was the *only* paper worth reading. He wanted

the *Post* to be a national newspaper that pushed the boundaries of lively daily journalism. The premium at the time was on solid, good, creative journalism and not on cost cutting.

Around the same time in the latter part of the sixties, a group of talented and highly competitive male reporters all arrived with Bernstein to populate the metro staff: Peter Osnos, Bob Kaiser, Len Downie, Jim Mann, Sandy Ungar, and Richard Cohen.

“These were bright, lovely people, but they all had the worst habits,” recalled Harry M. Rosenfeld, who tried to bring order to the metro staff. “There was anarchy on that side. A lot of factionalism. A lot of reporters playing against each other. All of a sudden there was a strict work ethic. All of a sudden there were standards about what was a story. All of a sudden, it wasn’t good enough to pick up a phone instead of getting off your ass and walking six blocks to the bike store that had just been held up.”

It was a time when any career path seemed possible. Osnos joined the *Post* in 1966 at age twenty-two, and soon was covering Prince George’s County. By 1970, he was heading to Vietnam as a *Post* foreign correspondent. “Carl and Richard Cohen were very close and I was part of that group,” said Osnos. “We were all young and hungry.” Cohen, who had joined the paper in June 1968 from New York, was assigned to the desk in front of Bernstein. They instantly liked each other, although Cohen thought that Bernstein talked funny. Cohen, Kaiser, Bernstein, and another reporter were sent to cover Resurrection City, also known as the Poor People’s Campaign of 1968. Bernstein and the other reporter jumped out of the car for some now-forgotten incident.

Cohen turned to Kaiser and asked, “What kind of accent is that? It’s the strangest accent.”

“That’s a Washington accent,” Kaiser replied.

At that time, said Cohen, who still writes a column for the *Post*, there was such a thing as a Washington accent.

“Carl’s a very good reporter,” said Cohen. “One time there was some kind of event at the Philippine Embassy. Some terrorist thing, a shooting. Everyone went flying over there to the scene. But Carl knew exactly what to do. He got a phone book and started calling people in the building and getting interviews. If you went over to the building, you stood there watching.”

Shortly before Cohen joined the paper, Bernstein had married *Post* reporter Carol Honsa on April 20, 1968, just after turning twenty-four. Honsa brought stability to Bernstein's life. The couple lived in a vintage apartment in the Biltmore, and their good friends, Barbara Cohen, a *Washington Star* editor, and her then husband, *Post* reporter Richard Cohen, lived nearby. Honsa was "strikingly beautiful," Barbara told Halberstam. "We used to sit around there, usually on the floor. I remember the first time we were there. Carl was very nice with new people. Everybody was so busy and he was very quiet and made a point of drawing me out. We began to see a lot of them. We were all young and did nothing but talk shop."

The two couples vacationed once on Block Island off Rhode Island's coast, where there were no cars. "There was a restaurant on the other side of the island," recalled Barbara, "and Carol Bernstein refused to hitchhike. So the rest of us went on together and she got very angry. She did stabilize his life and managed it and gave it some structure. But it was not really a very happy marriage."

The union didn't last long. "They were a really odd couple," said a metro reporter who worked alongside Bernstein in the late 1960s. "She seemed very white bread. He was very rye bread. She used to leave him notes with a list of ten things to do, and he'd pass them around, which seemed smarmy to me." Honsa has said that she never discusses the marriage.

Bernstein wasn't ready for marriage. It might not have been a good idea, and at some level, Bernstein knew it. His friend and colleague Robert Kaiser had encouraged the marriage. He thought it was time for Bernstein to settle down. "They started to go out, they got engaged, and Carl asked me to be the best man," said Kaiser. "I was thrilled. I was a completely square and conventional guy, already married at twenty-two. Carl lived a very full and complicated life. A lot of girls. Even with the booze. We all drank too much."

A week before the wedding, Bernstein got cold feet. He and Kaiser went out to lunch, and Bernstein voiced his concerns. "I don't want to do this," he told Kaiser, but Kaiser couldn't hear him. Kaiser had rented a bus for the couple to leave the wedding,

which would be held at Bernstein's parents' house in Silver Spring, Maryland.

"Carl, it's time to grow up and settle down," said Kaiser. "Carol is wonderful. She loves you. She'll take care of you. She'll pay your bills."

Bernstein was well known around the office for his chaotic financial life. He had a long list of people to whom he owed money—a list that dated back to when he first joined the *Post* as a reporter at twenty-two. When he wasn't borrowing money, he was bumming cigarettes. And then there were the stories of his womanizing—even after he was married. "There were always calls from creditors," Stephen Isaacs told Halberstam. "There were girlfriends calling, you know, asking for hundreds of dollars that he owed them."

Chuck Conconi, who worked at the *Star* when Bernstein was a copyboy, said that Bernstein enjoyed a reputation as a ladies' man. One day when Conconi was at the *Star*, he was sent to cover a dinner at the Shoreham Hotel, where President Lyndon Johnson was speaking. He ran into Bernstein, and they chatted for five minutes. Three or four days later, Conconi bumped into Bernstein's wife. Honsa said to him, half-joking, "I didn't like it how you kept Carl out that late the other night." Conconi's blank, confused look indicated he had no idea what she was talking about.

"Then I got it, but it was too late," said Conconi. Honsa, realizing that her husband had not been with Conconi, just walked away. After three years of marriage, Bernstein and Honsa separated in 1971 and divorced in 1972, in the early days of his Watergate reporting. (In the Watergate archives is a bill for \$175 that Bernstein paid to cover legal expenses for Honsa's attorney in their divorce.)

Marriage may not have been a good fit for Bernstein, but reporting was. He was talented and ambitious, and he loved reporting. He was part of the hard-charging, young metro cohort that was nipping at the heels of the big-name *Post* national reporters such as David Broder, Haynes Johnson, and William Grieder, men who had already earned their stripes. "From 1966 to 1982 was a period of great enterprise and great excitement at the *Washington Post*," said Osnos, who worked there for eighteen years. "The

New York Times was considered stodgy, and the *Post* was innovative and provocative. It helped that the *Washington Star* was taking on the *Post* in an intense competition.”

One Saturday afternoon in spring 1969, Osnos and Bernstein, then twenty-five, heard that the *New York Times* was going to have a story in its Sunday paper about some Baltimore indictments that included a congressman. They saw it as a Big Story, and they were going to be scooped. At the time, Osnos was a Maryland state reporter and Bernstein was general assignment working a Saturday afternoon shift.

“We did our best to get the story but didn’t succeed,” said Osnos. “We had no idea who the congressman was, but we were determined to find out. So we were reduced to finding out what was in the *New York Times*’s first edition.”

Osnos asked his mother in New York City to go to Times Square at 6 p.m., buy the first edition, and look for any stories datelined Baltimore. The only Baltimore story was in the travel section. He couldn’t expect his mother to hang around Times Square for the second edition.

“It was now about 9 or 10 p.m.,” said Osnos, “and Carl got on the phone and called the *New York Times* loading dock on Forty-Third Street and persuaded the foreman to look for a Baltimore dateline and read him the first paragraph. Having been beaten, we found out what they had and then matched it and made the last edition of the *Post*’s Sunday paper. It was a whole hell of a lot of fun. Carl was unbelievably imaginative and zany in his own way. He was a brilliant shoe-leather reporter.” Brilliant but never trustworthy. Sanford “Sandy” Ungar, now the president of Goucher College in Maryland, had joined the *Post* in September 1969 as an editorial writer and moved on to the metro staff in 1970 to be a general assignment reporter. In those days, the typewriters were bolted down to heavy gray metal desks on linoleum floors littered with cigarette burns. “Carl’s colleagues always regarded him with mixed feelings,” said Ungar. “We thought he was gutsy and bold, but not entirely trustworthy. We used to joke that it was a good thing the typewriters were bolted down so he couldn’t take them.”

By January 1970, Bernstein was working for the new metro editor, Harry Rosenfeld. Bernstein had loved Isaacs, who was more

like a commune leader than the gruff, old-fashioned Rosenfeld—a real screamer who kept a bottle of Maalox in his desk. Naturally, Bernstein was wary of Rosenfeld.

“One of the first big stories that broke on my watch was the murder committed by Muffin Mattingly and her biker boyfriend,” said Rosenfeld. “They killed her daddy by crushing his neck with a crowbar. I wanted Carl to find out everything that happened to Muffin from the time she left her mother’s breast to incarceration. The assignment played to his strength. He knew his town. But to use the word *disciplined* with Carl at that stage would be a contradiction. He was ambitious. He was smart. He was a hustler, but he wasn’t always totally responsible.”

But Rosenfeld acknowledges, however, that Bernstein was the perfect reporter to ask to do that story in a newsroom filled with young people who’d grown up elsewhere. “Almost unlike every reporter there,” said Rosenfeld, “he was born and raised in Washington and so had the feel of the place, and remembered things from ten years ago. Most reporters came to Washington to get the job at the *Post*, including myself, including Barry Sussman. Carl knew everybody, and that was his kind of story.” The Muffin Mattingly story ran on January 13, 1970, under the headline MUFFIN “TOUGH AS NAILS, BIKER TOUGH”:

Two weeks ago, fourteen-year-old Debra Mattingly (nicknamed Muffin) phoned her former counselor at Washington’s Runaway House and announced that she had married a Hell’s Angel.

“I didn’t know whether to believe her or not,” the counselor, Judy Swannell, 26, said yesterday. “With Muffin you could never tell where fantasy left off and reality began. She told me they (Muffin and her husband) were sitting around fondling their knives.”

The man Muffin identified as her bridegroom, Eugene Louis Comeau, 19, was the latest of a string of boyfriends who shared what Miss Swannell called “Muffin’s motorcycle fetish.”

Rosenfeld was pleasantly surprised by Bernstein’s work on the story, especially after the *Washington Star* beat the *Post* for the first two days. But Bernstein made up for it with the kind of compelling human-interest story that, somewhat unusual at the time, is common in today’s journalism.

Rosenfeld's first exposure to Bernstein soured him. Before taking over the metro staff, Rosenfeld was on the foreign desk. He didn't know Bernstein, but he knew of him by reputation. He also knew Bernstein's parents. "They were always asking in a very concerned way how their son was doing," noted Rosenfeld. Rosenfeld had heard the office talk about how this kid Bernstein was always striving to get off the local section. "He would volunteer himself to every national editor to do every bit of scut work," said Rosenfeld. "Just so he could get away from metro."

Rosenfeld first worked with Bernstein on a story that was popular in the late 1960s about young men who had escaped to Canada to avoid the draft during the Vietnam War.

"Somebody gave Carl the assignment to go to Canada to interview draft dodgers, so the story fell to me," said Rosenfeld. "He went away and came back from Canada and no stories were produced. 'Carl, where's the story?' I asked. Finally, I said to him, 'I've got to have the story.' He eventually produces this mountain of copy. It was terrible and I didn't use it at all. I came to find out that when I had given Bernstein the ultimatum, his editor sat down with him and batted it out. It was a piece of crap. The draft dodger story never got in the paper. He had a hard time doing it because he didn't do it right away. If he's not focused, nothing happens." This experience would be a harbinger of things to come.

But Bernstein also made a lot happen. He wrote about communes, protests, sleazy housing projects, and quaint neighborhoods. He usually did it in a style that pleased his editors when he finally got the story in. That was the problem: he couldn't make deadlines. He drove his editors crazy pushing a story until the last minute.

In fact, that is why Bernstein happened to be in the office on Saturday, June 17, 1972. He did not like to work weekends. But his editor, Tom Wilkinson, on the Virginia desk where Bernstein was assigned, was unhappy with Bernstein. Bernstein had been working on a story about shoddy construction practices at a Virginia high-rise project and should have turned in his story on Friday for Sunday's paper. "I knew pretty early in the week he wasn't going to make it," said Wilkinson. "I pressed and started hearing that litany of reasons why he couldn't get it done in time."

Wilkinson ran out of patience and ordered Bernstein to work on the story that Saturday. Bernstein resisted. People weren't return-

ing his phone calls. No one would be around on Saturday. He didn't have all the records. He was having internal structural story problems. "I told him he had to come in," said Wilkinson. "He wasn't happy. But he came in."

There were other reasons Bernstein's editors were wary of him. He was sporadic as a reporter. When he liked a story, he would be all over it and do a bang-up job. When he was less than enthused, it showed. Sometimes he would disappear from the office. He was tossed off the city hall beat when an editor paid a surprise visit to the city hall press room and found him asleep on a couch at noon, even though Bernstein said he was sleeping off a migraine.

"Stories he didn't particularly like, he waltzed around a lot, procrastinated, dawdled, found small crevices that somehow became big problems," said Wilkinson. "All the kinds of roadblocks, real and otherwise, that creative reporters can dream up." In 1972, though not officially, Bernstein was on probation, in danger of losing a job he wasn't sure he wanted. He thought after six years he should be on the national staff, but editors thought otherwise. He'd already asked unsuccessfully five times to be sent to Vietnam as a correspondent.

Just a few weeks before Watergate, Bernstein heard that Hunter S. Thompson was leaving *Rolling Stone* magazine, and he applied for a job. Bernstein was restless. He felt underutilized and underappreciated at the *Post*. Writing about Virginia, where he didn't even live, was not his idea of where he should be after six years. He should be on the national desk. Or, as someone equally passionate about rock and roll and classical music, he should be writing about music. Or covering the Vietnam War. But those things weren't going to happen. Bradlee was closer to firing Bernstein than to offering him the prestigious job of war correspondent.

So it was not surprising that in London on that morning when Len Downie read the first Watergate story, he was amazed to see his old friend Bernstein still working at the *Post*. What he did not know as he read the June 18, 1972, story was that soon the three of them—Woodward, Bernstein, and Downie—would be working together on the most spectacular story in American journalism and that his relationship with Woodward would grow more difficult and strained over the years as each man grew more powerful at the *Post*.

