



**Email this article**  
**Print this article**  
**Most popular pages**

**Click to send**  
**Click to print**  
**Today | This Week**

## 'Deep Throat' wasn't only a source for Watergate

**Mark Memmott**

USA Today

Jun. 12, 2005 12:00 AM

Deep Throat may have been the most famous anonymous source in American history.

But reporters who worked in Washington during the Watergate years say W. Mark Felt was just one of dozens of officials who would talk to them confidentially about the investigations. They also say he was a source to others besides the *Washington Post's* Bob Woodward.

Felt, now 91 and with a memory that is reportedly fading, has been portrayed by his family as a hero who helped Woodward because he feared the Nixon administration was running roughshod over the Constitution. Veterans of the Nixon administration such as one-time presidential candidate Pat Buchanan, however, have labeled Felt's actions dishonorable.

Interviews with a dozen reporters who covered the Watergate scandal, including a few who crossed paths with Felt, produce a nuanced view of his actions and how common it was for high-ranking officials to tell reporters what they knew.

Stephan Leshner and Nicholas Horrocks, reporters for *Newsweek* magazine in the early 1970s, say Felt was helpful to them several times, including once when Leshner was digging for information related to Watergate. Felt in those years moved up from the No. 3 to the No. 2 post at the FBI.

In late 1972 and early 1973, Leshner was chasing a report about evidence of phone calls between political dirty trickster Donald Segretti and White House officials.

Leshner needed to confirm details of the connection, which then-*New York Times* reporter Steven Roberts had first revealed. At Felt's office, Leshner told Felt what he had learned concerning Segretti's connection to the White House.

"Felt said, 'I wouldn't be surprised' if that were true," Leshner says. "That let me know I was headed in the right direction.

"He seemed to be willing to get involved when it was about something that either made the FBI look good or would help make sure it wasn't besmirched," said Leshner, 69, now an author of non-fiction books living in Katonah, N.Y.

Such accounts add context to the debate sparked by the revelation that Felt is Deep Throat.

"You could go to him and say 'I'm getting this, what do you think?' And he might help," said Horrocks, 67, managing editor of the *Examiner*, a newspaper that covers Washington, D.C., and its suburbs. For Horrocks, Felt was a source on stories about FBI investigations of radical organizations.

## 'Their own Deep Throat'

"Everybody had their own Deep Throats," said Dan Thomasson, who at the time was a Washington correspondent for the Scripps-Howard News Service. Felt was not among his sources, but the FBI "was a sieve," said Thomasson, 71, who now writes a column for the news service twice a week.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many reporters knew that Felt would talk "off the record."

"I knew W. Mark Felt . . . as a senior FBI official who, like others in the demoralized bureau, was talking to the press," investigative reporter Seymour Hersh writes in the latest issue of the *New Yorker*. In those years, Hersh worked for the *New York Times*. Hersh, who also spoke with *USA Today*, says Felt was not among his sources on Watergate stories.

Felt had long been among those who Watergate aficionados thought might be Deep Throat, the man portrayed so dramatically in Woodward and partner Carl Bernstein's book *All the President's Men* and the movie of the same name.

Woodward and Bernstein, as well as *Post* editor (now retired) Ben Bradlee, had sworn not to reveal Deep Throat's identity until after his death. But on May 31 they were released from that pledge when *Vanity Fair* magazine broke the news.

Attorney John O'Connor, who wrote the *Vanity Fair* story and represents Felt, would not comment when asked if his client or Felt's family know how many other journalists he may have been a source for over the years.

## Reporters reminisce

The news of Deep Throat's unmasking has sparked reminiscing among the Watergate-era reporters about the stories they wrote and the sources they cultivated.

Robert Jackson, 70, is retired from the *Los Angeles Times*. One of his best sources throughout the Watergate coverage was James McCord, one of the five burglars arrested in the break-in. McCord gave Jackson several scoops, including details of his testimony to a grand jury.

But McCord "could be a difficult guy to deal with," Jackson says. He wanted to do things his way. Jackson was scooped by the *New York Daily News* on a report that McCord had been offered "hush money" if he would agree not to testify about what he knew.

"I called McCord at home," Jackson said. "He said, 'Yeah, that's right.' I said 'Jim, why didn't you tell me?' He said, 'We hadn't gotten to that part yet.' "

Since Felt has stepped forward, Leshner and Horrock see no reason not to talk a little about their dealings with him.

Leshner was struck by what he thinks was Felt's "sympathy for the new kid on the block - me. I think that was part of the reason he helped me."

Horrock saw a man who was eager to rise.

"He was very 'dudeish' for an FBI guy," Horrock said. "He had this quite flamboyant hair. And the other thing I remember, is that he had a better class of suits. ... Mark dressed well, and it was noticeable."

**Email this article**  
**Print this article**  
**Most popular pages**

**Click to send**  
**Click to print**  
**Today | This Week**