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History of Journalism

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Journalism Through Carl Bernstein

69 people with criminal charges. Months of digging through library files and banknotes. Countless phone calls and office arguments. Late night and early morning phone calls. Hours of digging and being told no. Days of living a life at risk and time after time getting the story wrong. For two years, this was the life of journalist and author Carl Bernstein, the mastermind behind cracking the mysterious code of the Watergate scandals. He dove head-first into his work, relying at first on his intuition only to eventually uncover a scandal that now marks American history. Bernstein, an icon in the field of investigative journalism, stands as a model of reality and accountability in the book pages of American media history. Best known for his pivotal role in uncovering the Watergate scandal alongside Bob Woodward, Bernstein's career is defined by a relentless pursuit of the truth and an unwavering dedication to exposing the hidden secrets that come with political power. As one-half of the infamous duo that brought down U.S. President Richard Nixon, Bernstein's work goes beyond mere reporting; it symbolizes the crucial role that journalism and the media play in upholding a functioning democracy.

Carl Bernstein is most well known for being the author of the Watergate stories that ultimately forced President Richard Nixon to resign from office, in turn being the first

president to do so. But what exactly was Watergate? Watergate is the term used in reference to the burglary at the offices of the Democratic National Committee, operated at the highest level by Richard Nixon. This was an attempt to skew the outcome of the 1972 presidential election and secure a victory for him and his party in his re-election campaign. The scandal, however, according to an article in the Washington Post, written by Alfred E. Lewis, started as just a burglary. On the night of June 17, 1972, the security guard on duty at the Democratic National Committee noticed that several of the entrance doors to the building had been taped over. When local police arrived at the headquarters they arrested five men on the scene. Immediately, there were many inclinations to suggest that this was different from the average break-in. Lewis and Garrett M. Graff of Vanity Fair both describe how the burglars were older men, wearing rubber surgical gloves, carrying large sums of cash, and dressed in a suit and tie—not your average burglar attire. They were caught in the act of trying to bug and tap phones to collect information, but what made them suspicious to authorities was the fact that they were carrying the Committee to Re-Elect the President’s White House phone number, according to a History.com article. President Nixon quickly shut down and denied all rumors of his and his committee’s involvement in the break-in. Initially, most people believed his phony coverup. But not Washington Post reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. The two saw right through the President’s claims and began digging to uncover the truth behind the lying eyes of Nixon.

Together, Woodward and Berstein stripped back the different layers of this so-called “burglary,” uncovering people of higher and higher power as they went. In a findings document

published by the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas at Austin, Bernstein and Woodward began by discovering that one of the robbers was a previous CIA employee, who eventually became the coordinator of security for the Committee to Re-Elect the President. From him, they discovered the phone number of White House consultant Howard Hunt. Bernstein sifted through countless hours of phone records and bank statements to verify Hunt's connection to the committee. Once he was reassured of his affiliation, they finally had a lead. The two journalists took off, interviewing countless officials from Nixon's campaign, members of the White House staff, the White House administration, and other linked bystanders. Finally, after four months of tracing the different links to this story, Bernstein and his partner, Woodward, were able to connect the dots all the way up to Nixon and reveal that this break-in was all part of a larger scheme to sideswipe his opponents and get him re-elected as the United States president.

Bernstein's investigative journaling for this case uncovered many of the corrupt aspects of our nation's politics and government. His writing lit a fire in the hearts of the American public. People were enraged and disappointed in their President, someone who was supposed to uphold democracy and remain truthful to the American people. They felt foolish for believing Nixon's words during his second inauguration, as he solemnly swore to, "defend the Constitution of the United States," and to "faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter," as seen in a video of the ceremony on the Richard Nixon Presidential Library youtube channel. However, Nixon went back on his words, practically doing the opposite of what he said he would and, in turn, betraying his country and the Constitution. In a

Federal Times article written by Michael Hardy, he writes in regards to Bernstein's publication of the Watergate scandal that, "a newfound appreciation of investigative journalism emerged, and government realized that press might not be so easily contained." Bernstein's drive for the truth was awe-inspiring not only for other journalists but for all viewers. In an article published by the Investigative Impact, after the publication of the Watergate scandal stories and the resignation of President Nixon, there was a dramatic "influence on journalism, sparking interest in investigative reporting by thousands of journalists and students, and setting an example for generations of reporters to come." Bernstein had shown people of all ages what it truly meant to be a journalist and why news is so crucial to have a functioning society. He made youth want to join the field, as people could now see how important the job is and how far curiosity and honesty can take you. It made people inspired to do as he did. To uncover the undiscovered and to take power away from people who did not rightfully have it.

With the revelation of Watergate came great fame for Bernstein. He was seen as a mastermind and a genius in the eyes of the public. Before the publication of this story, he was not living in the light of such fame. Carl Bernstein was born on February 14th, 1944 in Washington, DC, but grew up in Maryland, according to the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas at Austin. He began his career in journalism when he was sixteen as a copy boy at the Washington Evening Star. Bernstein remembers observing the newsroom of the Star on his first day and thinking that there was "incredible chaos and commotion," as he said in a 2022 PBS interview, but that it was an "ordered commotion." He continued to say that it was, "the most exciting thing I've ever seen in my life." All of the bustle and noise was so appealing

to him, that he instantly felt drawn in. He stayed at the Washington Evening Star, moving up in the ranks, until they declared that he needed a college degree to officially write for their paper. According to an Investigating Power article titled Carl Bernstein, Bernstein then enrolled in classes at the University of Maryland, College Park. On top of his normal class load, he started reporting for his school's independent paper titled, The Diamondback. But when he did not keep his grades up and dropped out of college, he was prevented from being able to write for the Washington Evening Star. He then moved to New York City to report for the Elizabeth Daily Journal. It was then that he won his first-ever prize for journalism, taking home awards from the New Jersey Press Association for his publications on drinking as a teenager. Continued in the Investigating Power article, describes that in 1966, after only a year of holding that position, Bernstein moved to Washington, DC, where he began his career working for the Washington Post. He worked as part of the metro staff in a newsroom filled with reporters where he was just one of many, until alongside Bob Woodward, they began putting the puzzle of Watergate together. They worked many hours in the Washington Post newsroom, scribbling notes from interviews collected on any piece of paper they could find, before typing the notes up on their typewriters to compare and contrast evidence. Bernstein's ability to work with such speed and accuracy in such a chaotic setting is impressive, to say the least, as he was, "perfectly suited for it," Don Nelson writes in a Nieman Storyboard article.

His personality was perfectly suited for journalism, but also for the Film and English industry. After the blowup of his Watergate story, Bernstein, along with Woodward, turned their findings into a book titled, *All the President's Men*, which then turned into a movie. These

two works saw record-breaking sales and popularity. Through these publications, Bernstein and Woodward looked even more impressive as they documented the entire process, step by step, of how Nixon and his staff were found out. This movie captured every perfection of Bernstein's work, displaying persistence, particularly through his ability to interview subjects and get those who had been silenced to speak up. In this movie, he is documented jotting down interview notes on cigarette packages and paper napkins, which alludes to how impressive his work ethic truly is.

Though Carl Bernstein is most famously known for Watergate, he has worked on many other successful projects as well. According to statistics on his website, CarlBernstein.com, he has 5 best-selling books. One of his popular works is a memoir about his time writing for The Evening Star during the era of the Kennedys, while another is a United States Congress television show. In one of his more recent works, he wrote about the life of Hillary Clinton. Bernstein is also famously recognized for being an "on-air political analyst for CNN," as stated on his website. Bernstein and Woodward also published a second book after they publicized, *All the President's Men*, titled, *The Final Days*, about the conclusion of Nixon's presidential run. In an Investigating Power article titled Carl Bernstein, they explain that in 1973, Bernstein and Woodward won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service Journalism for their coverage of Watergate, solidifying their place in the record books of history and journalism.

Bernstein currently lives in Sag Harbor, New York, with his wife, Christine Kuehbeck, according to an article written by David M. Alpern for the East Hampton Star. He continues his

career in journalism, almost always writing consistently on the theme of the abuse of power by political figures. Bernstein continues to cover politics, always analyzing the political atmosphere of the world. He uses his many years of experience to predict voting outcomes for current political elections and has done work for ABC, CNN, and CBS, either writing stories for them or sitting down for an interview to discuss his career. Bernstein often gives younger journalists advice for advancing their careers or getting started with a career in journalism. In an interview for PBS in 2022, he explains how there is no such thing as the “absolute truth,” but that as a journalist you should always try to get the, “best obtainable version of the truth.” He continues to explain how no matter the circumstance you should keep pursuing, even though the truth is often very complicated. “You do not take no. You use common sense,” Bernstein urged.

Regarded as a legend in the industry, Bernstein's contributions to journalism have left a sincere impression on people throughout the United States. He has had an incredible influence on investigative journalism in particular. With his unwavering search for the truth and dedication to exposing countless hidden facets of complicated stories, Bernstein, along with colleague Bob Woodward, was instrumental in unraveling the Watergate affair, which ended in President Richard Nixon's resignation. Bernstein's career serves as a prime illustration of the ability of investigative journalists to hold public figures responsible for their deceptions. His career leaves a great legacy for all journalists to follow, serving as a constant reminder of their responsibility to defend accountability and a transparent viewpoint in democracy. His work

changed the field of investigative journalism forever, serving as a model for upcoming generations of journalists.