

MR.PAKULA GOES TO WASHINGTON

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rectors in the American cinema might be described as specializing in outcasts and oddballs. Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that all five of Alan Pakula's features (including his two pathological comedies, *THE STERILE CUCKOO* and *LOVE AND PAIN AND THE WHOLE DAMN THING*) have focused on characters whose personalities, professions, or both have taken them far from what we laughingly call normalcy—as his style, for all the director's ability to achieve a stunning behavioral conviction in the depiction of the future-shock world we live in, remains inveterately a *moviemaker's* style, not a social documentarian's.

If I have dwelt particularly on *THE PARALLAX VIEW* in this too-brief commentary on a major director's work, it is not only because I personally find that film to be Pakula's most exciting and regret its comparative neglect in favor of *KLUTE* (with its powerhouse performance by Jane Fonda) and *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN* (a pre-sold hit if ever there was one—not that anything about the finished film suggests that its makers were willing to coast on that assurance). It's also because *PARALLAX* is his most adventurous in its exploration of the medium itself as event: in its fascination with an environment in which places often possess a more forceful identity than people; in its disdain of conventional polarizations in an analysis of the tension between the individual and civilization—above and beyond "society"—as the ultimate Organization; in its complex appreciation of history as pseudo-event; and above all in its forceful stylistic intuitions of the power and patterns of the imagination, how central intelligent agencies (be they mysterious corporations or film directors) can use it to reshape, even displace "reality."

Joseph Frady—with his infantile-punny name so appropriate to the Parallax world, a respectable portion of intelligence, a "talent for creative irresponsibility," and just maybe an eye on the Pulitzer Prize—sets out to get the biggest story of modern time and ends up locked in it, the apparent assassin of a man whose life he'd have saved. Like *KLUTE*'s Peter Cable, who exits dreamlike through a windowpane and leaves behind only a transparent vestige of his former power and identity, Frady becomes the little boy in the Parallax slideshow, caught with his pants down, running toward a lighted doorway that spells escape until filled by a silhouette holding a shotgun. The man does not step into view: he is simply, suddenly *there*. Or perhaps, after all, he is not: the lines of that immovable figure are so clean and absolute that he might as well be a cut-out, a panel of black against a panel of white. The image explodes in Frady's face. History is neatly written; the form is satisfied. The system works.

# MR. PAKULA GOES TO WASHINGTON

Alan J. Pakula on  
**ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN**  
interviewed by Richard Thompson



Alan J. Pakula on the set of *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*.

**A**lan J. Pakula, 48, grew up in New York and majored in drama at Yale with "semi-usual fantasies about becoming an actor." Later, he directed plays at Hollywood's Circle Theatre, including Anouilh's *Antigone*. As a production apprentice at MGM, Pakula spent eight months reading scripts and writing synopses for writer-producer Don Hartman, a veteran of Danny Kaye comedies and the Road series, who then became head of production at Paramount. At 22, Pakula went along as assistant head of production.

At 28, he began to produce a series of films directed by Robert Mulligan (the only director Pakula produced for): *FEAR STRIKES OUT*, *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, *LOVE WITH THE PROPER STRANGER*, *BABY THE RAIN MUST FALL*, *INSIDE DAISY CLOVER*, *UP THE DOWN STAIRCASE*, and *THE STALKING MOON*. In 1969, he began directing with *THE STERILE CUCKOO*, then *KLUTE*, 1971; *LOVE AND PAIN AND THE WHOLE DAMN THING*, 1973; *THE PARALLAX VIEW*, 1974; and *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*, 1976. He considered a career as a psychoanalyst, but did not pursue it. He describes himself as "an analytic buff."

The interview took place in June and August, 1976, in Pakula's offices at MGM where he is preparing his next film, *COMES A HORSEMAN WILD AND FREE*, original screenplay by Dennis Lynton Clark. Set in Montana in 1946, the film will star Jane Fonda and James Caan.

See also these key interviews: *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1972; *Positif* #136, March, 1972; *Movietone News*, nos. 26 and 27, October and November, 1973. I am grateful to Richard Jameson and Howard Suber for suggesting key questions—R.T.

When I came onto ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, there was a first draft of the screenplay by William Goldman, and Bob Redford and Dustin Hoffman had been cast. Bob Redford was the producer.

*Had Redford cast himself?*

Bob had no choice. He wanted to see this film made.

*Why?*

Bob's interest was on a lot of levels, I think. He's an activist in terms of things outside the industry—ecology, for example. I'm sure the triumph of the individual over the vastness of the government appealed to him; that's the extraordinary appeal of Woodward and Bernstein's story. I had just made a film, THE PARALLAX VIEW, which someone at *The Atlantic Monthly* said had destroyed the American hero myth. If that's true, ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN resurrects it. One film says the individual will be destroyed, it's Kafkaesque that way, Central European. The irony of the film lies in the contrast of all the pop-art American motifs, indicating the innocent, open society; you get the feeling we used to associate with Central Europe of the individual destroyed in a secret maze by forces of which he has no knowledge. The Woodward and Bernstein story is the antithesis of that. Film students have asked me how I could do one and then the other, and I say, it's very simple: PARALLAX VIEW represents my fear about what's happening in the world, and ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN represents my hope. Like most of us I'm balanced between the two.

Bob is fascinated by how the system operates. I have a theory—Bob knows it—that he has a tendency to make how-to pictures. The first picture is DOWNHILL RACER—how to be a champion skier; THE CANDIDATE—how to be a political candidate; JEREMIAH JOHNSON—how to survive in the wilderness; ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN—how to be a successful investigative reporter.

Bob was far more interested in making this film, seeing it made, than he was in acting in it. He was not crazy about the part of Bob Woodward; he's very fond of Woodward, but he wasn't crazy about playing him. He thought it was a very difficult and possibly thankless role.

*The Redford we saw on that television documentary about the making of the film doesn't seem at all like Woodward, whereas Hoffman really fits Bernstein. Woodward is such a poker player compared to Redford.*

Forget about the TV show, that was Bob Redford, not Bob Redford playing Woodward. In the film, Bob plays it very close to the vest. He's very cautious, very concentrated, very contained.

*When they interview someone, one reporter is the tough cop and the other is the con cop.*

Bernstein's the con cop and Wood-

ward's the tough cop, the one who goes right to the questions, bluntly; it embarrassed Bernstein sometimes. And unlike the man who was in THE STING, he plays no surface charm; Bernstein does all the charming things.

*How did you think out the way you would characterize people in this film? Characterization seems to operate through behavior—acting—and also through environment, through the décor you place your characters in.*

That's terribly important. In the beginning, you start with reality; doing a real thing. Besides reading the book, I had spent a lot of time with Bob and Carl, as had Bob and Dustin. I went over the characters with Bob and Carl, reminisced about them; they described the characters, sometimes in more detail than in the book. We tried to go with reality wherever possible.

I felt the film demanded the same kind of discipline that is necessary for investigative reporting. At all times, the prayer was that audiences would sense a great deal more about the characters than was verbally revealed on the screen. One of the greatest problems with doing this kind of story, where the narrative demands are enormous—and the narrative demands were enormous—is that every scene must add to the solving of this mystery or show you the conditions under which it was solved.

*An incredible amount of exposition.*

Incredible. I don't think there's a more verbal film that's ever been made, not even CLAIRE'S KNEE.

*Do you find that sort of characterization, in which more is implied than said, common to KLUTE and THE PARALLAX VIEW as well?*

Yes. In any detective story when your main character is going to a series of characters who last for only one or two scenes in the film, you are in danger of winding up with characters who are just lifeless puppets serving the narrative. Usually, this is disguised by some obvious surface color—which may account for the number of broken-down, alcoholic nymphomaniacs one finds in detective stories. The average detective story lends itself to that kind of obvious color, because in most detective stories, the solution of the mystery—which is who killed so-and-so or who stole what money—invariably leads you to the bottom of society, to the people who do not live like everybody else, the people who have not made it, the people whose lives have been destroyed, the people whose lives have a good grotesque quality about them. It's a director's dream: the audience is not going to get bored.

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN is the opposite of that. If it's a detective story, it's a middle-class, establishment one. It was essential not only to preserve the sense of that in the film, but to emphasize it. Instead of the world of nightclubs with

broken-down torch singers, crap games, gunmen, the night world, the world of people who don't come out in the daytime, people who never seem to raise their heads up into the middle class, Woodstein's search takes them to just the opposite: they're in the world of people upon whom the sun shines, the people who cut their grass, the people who pay their taxes on time, whose lives are ordered, whose houses are neat, whose world is precise. The people whom most of your audience envision as themselves.

We had to emphasize that, it's what the story is all about: establishment corruption, the most threatening and dangerous kind. I said to Gordie [cinematographer Gordon Willis] that a lot of this must take place in the sunlight, we have to go for ordered, formal compositions; the compositions and sets have to visually give you a sense of their lives.

For example, Hugh Sloan has only two scenes in the film—well, three, but one's videotape—he's a major character and you have very little time with him. Again, we started with reality. We saw the exact apartment he lived in at that time. The exterior used in the film is the building Sloan lived in at that time. Sloan lived in a new suburban development of row houses designed in a Disneyland version of eighteenth-century Federalism. The contrast between this sunny little community with its sentimentalized architecture—Federalism with the guts out, this protected little enclave for middle-class people on the way up—and the gray world Woodward walks into after the second Deep Throat scene, that no-man's-land of huge stone power dwarfing the individual in a most threatening way—that contrast dramatizes one of the most important themes in the film: the complacency and abuse of removal of most of the society from the dangers that are being revealed to Woodstein and the audience.

We built the interior from the real floor plan. Carl and Bob described the way it had been furnished: it was like visiting your grandparents, they said; it looked like old people, with wingchairs—that to them is old.

Sloan's first scene takes place in the daytime, and there's sun on the wingchair, soft light through gauzy curtains; the sun's on him, but not on them on the couch. There he sits—a very formal portrait. We shot a medium shot and a closeup, only used the closeup for one line as the tag at the end of the scene, never used it for the rest of the scene because in the closeup you lost the formality, that whole sense of a modern version of the young Virginia squire, decent, aristocratic, sitting in his wingchair with a nineteenth-century convex mirror behind him, almost ready for Gilbert Stuart



to come along and paint him. In the midst of this precise tableau with the shaft of sunlight, all these cheap, corrupt little facts come out—in counterpoint to what we see, and indeed in counterpoint to a simple, traditional kind of decency that we sense in the character of Sloan.

An essence of investigative reporting is getting people to talk about things they don't really want to talk about, or at least are deeply ambivalent about. How Woodward and Bernstein will get them to talk, and if they will get them to talk, is the key to much of the suspense in the film. If you don't have a sense of the character—why it's difficult for him to talk, what his attitude about all this is, what kind of person he is—then none of the suspense works. Unless you know what his feelings are and what might work on him, then there's no fascination in seeing how the reporter handles it, how he gets the information.

*You must have chosen to include scenes in the reporters' apartments as well.*

You get a sense of the character. There was a major decision made in this film and we kept fighting against it and testing it: dramatize them through their work and don't linger on their personal lives. We even shot a scene between Dustin and a girl; and we spent endless time working out scenes of Bob with a girl, but we didn't shoot them. The film is about their work. The reason we were filming the story of Woodward and Bernstein was because of what they accomplished and how they accomplished it. The challenge became to reveal them as people through the way they worked.

*Generically, it's a job film.*

That's a decision Dustin is unhappy about to this day. He feels it left out the whole personalized sense of the characters.

*Because both actors were so involved with their real counterparts? Because Dustin wanted to play Carl in a larger, mythic way?*

No, more than that, I think Dustin loves detail, and it meant leaving out an enormous amount of detail. There were fascinating things we found out about them that there was no time for. But Bob and I felt we could not stop the relentless narrative drive of the film to stop parenthetically, kick off our shoes, and relax with the characters. Dustin felt we didn't take enough time to play the reactions of Woodward and Bernstein, particularly Bernstein. We felt it would have made for a more leisurely film, endangering the line of tension that holds the whole experience together.

*You sneaked a lot in—the bicycle wheel is there.*

You had to sneak everything in in terms of their getting the story, always their work. In directing any film, you spend a great deal of time first accumulating information, and then discarding information. Both these areas of

work were more difficult than on any film I've done before. I spent my first months of preparation finding out everything I could about the subjects and characters, and amassing details and ideas—a constant accumulation. The next step was ruthlessly boiling it down: discarding, discarding, discarding. And hoping that somewhere in that boiling process, something of the original richness was still there, even if no longer verbalized. One hopes the initial accumulation will give the film a texture, a resonance the audience will feel.

I told Bob I didn't know how I could do this film if I couldn't go to the *Washington Post*; there's no way I could get that sense of reality. It's a how-to picture, and if you don't believe how they did it, the film is nothing. That was the bottom line for everybody playing reporters or editors: whatever they knew or didn't know, they must know their work, must know how to be a good reporter and a good editor.

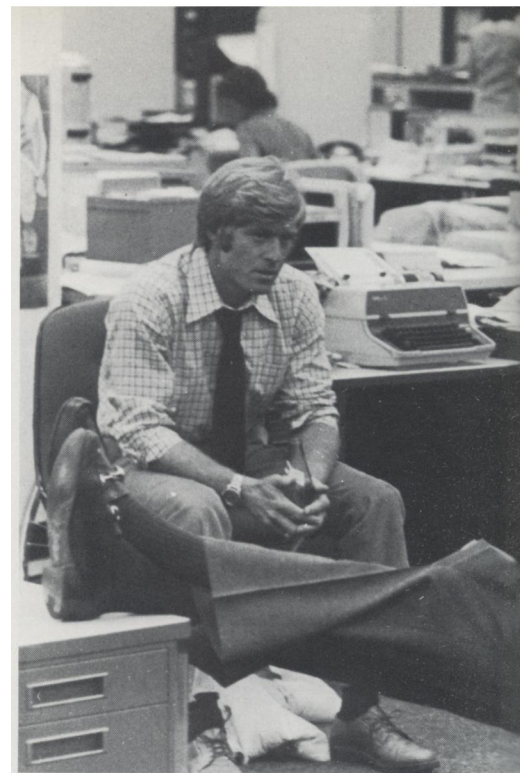
**I** think we feel the reporters' ruthlessness in the film. In dealing with an administration, part of whose tragedy was that the end seemed to justify any means—and some of those ends were pretty crummy too—Woodstein certainly did not hesitate to have *their* end justify some very questionable means. Their end was to get the story, not to save the country. When I was first doing research, Nora Ephron told me that investigative reporters are not interested in making great moral statements; they're not working from moral outrage. And it's true, they're obsessed only with getting that story. To *reveal*: that's their job, that's their hunger, and it has to be a desperate hunger for them to succeed. An investigative reporter exposes the secret wrongdoings of people with great power. People with power are never taken at face value. They must always be seen whole and clear for what they are not: they must not be looked up to unquestioningly as the child looks up to the parent. The investigative reporter performs a great service to society. But it's a highly unsentimental line of work. They're a far cry from the simple, kindly heroism of Capra's films: there was no way we could make MR. WOODSTEIN GOES TO WASHINGTON.

*The film is about two obsessive individuals—you don't see them do anything else; you see them doing this at 3 A.M.*

No question: it is obsessive. Without that obsession, there would have been no way that anybody would have made those breakthroughs. Somebody said that if Woodward and Bernstein had been happily married, Nixon might still be President.

*Within the newsroom, the only two of their colleagues they use badly are women.*

I know. It's based on two incidents in



Woodward (Robert Redford), Ben Bradlee

the book.

*And they do use those two women in sexual ways.*

One of the people at the *Post* was disturbed by the fact that the two *Post* women were shown using their sexuality. I think what you say is more to the point: it's not the women who come off questionably, it's the reporters who come off questionably. Because they're exploiting them. But when you're obsessed, it's for the story. From their point of view, the women are reporters and if anybody should understand, they should. And if they don't, well, the story's more important.

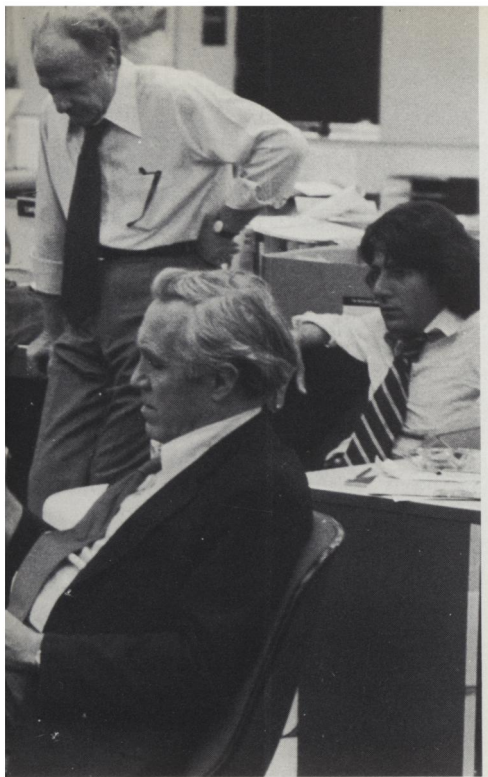
*How subjectively did you intend viewers to relate to Woodward and Bernstein? Were you careful not to be judgmental? Were you inviting the viewers to be judgmental?*

My initial fascination with the subject was: What would it have been like to have been Woodward and Bernstein when they first revealed the story. So obviously I intended the viewers to relate to Woodward and Bernstein. We tried to make the film the way investigative reporters write: to present the realities and let the audience draw the conclusions to be drawn.

When we previewed the film, we found that in the cities the audience would relate very strongly to Woodward and Bernstein, but in places like Kentucky there would be strong relation to the people they were interviewing, the people they trapped.

*They seem to know how to use people: they're not inventing the technique on the spot, they've done it before.*

It's not the good, old MR. SMITH hero, who was so simple he didn't know how



(Jason Robards), and Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman).

to disguise how he felt. This is a very different kind of man, not in the classic mold. Obsessed with the work at hand, they'll do anything to achieve success in the work. They're more related to the detective character than other American types. Look at the Bogart characters: they weren't doing it for good or to save the world, it was out of their own fascination with it, their own amoral feeling about the case.

*That's apt, as the Bogart character in those films is quite willing to bluff or misrepresent himself to find out what he wants to know.*

Absolutely. He wants to get his story, he wants to solve that mystery. They're both amoral in a way, not much to do with the old-fashioned American hero compared to the manipulating European.

*Are you interested in film noir, those post-war crime melodramas with the world coming apart at the seams behind the plot? That picture of the world in chaos and disarray, as well as the use of visual style and signs to carry most of the film's "meaning," could relate to KLUTE, THE PARALLAX VIEW. . .*

Oh sure. In KLUTE, the fact that you are in this nightmarish world, this underbelly of society, right away makes it much more theatrical. The most interesting things to photograph, I suppose, are extreme things: the very rich with huge houses; the very down-and-out people, alcoholics and derelicts, the people who can't make it but who are desperate.

*Because they're not real to us?*

That's right. You see very few middle-class detective stories. Carvel was the setting for Andy Hardy; you never see THE CARVEL MURDER.

*Hitchcock came close with SHADOW OF A DOUBT.*

There's the great exception, it's a wonderful film. And that's why it's unlike any other film of its time, when you think about it. It's stunning. I never get tired of seeing it. In KLUTE, you see, I deliberately open on a middle-class setting, Thanksgiving Day, sunlight, the only family we ever see in the film, to point up the alienating nature of the rest of the film. There's titillating escape in going to see films about murders, and the fact that you've gone into a world of people who dare to live like that has always had a great theatrical pull. KLUTE has that in it. Those films of the Forties had it. Sure, it was a film of the alienated people, but the fascination for an audience was spending two hours with characters that let their ids go awry. In ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, we couldn't offer them that. There's no shock in seeing how Sloan lives, or how the bookkeeper lives.

*Faced with the scene from detective films where the client tells the detective he's off the payroll and off the case, Woodward and Bernstein would do what the dick does: keep on going.*

Exactly true, they would. It has about the same moral base as the detectives had.

When Bob first talked to me about directing the film, I said to him that one of my concerns was that he and Dustin were in the film, particularly him—I'd wanted to work with them both for a long time, so it had nothing to do with their talents. The essence of this story is that two unknown reporters are catalysts in bringing down some of the most powerful people on earth. If you have two huge stars, right away that makes its own statement. Particularly Redford. While Dustin's a star, he's a character actor as well, he's not an obvious hero star. Bob is in the classic mold—one of the few first-rate actors who is. He looks so competent on screen in everything he does. It doesn't matter that Bob can have trouble opening a bottle of club soda in real life, like all of us; on screen, it looks like it would pop open if he just waved his thumb at it. That's trouble for this film. But now I am convinced that one of the shrewdest things done in the making of the film was the casting of Bob Redford and Dustin Hoffman—and I had no part in the casting.

I told Bob, if you come on as stars in the newsroom, we're in trouble. The key to that is Ben Bradlee, because the star of the newsroom at the Washington Post, without question, is Bradlee. Look at Ben in that half-hour television documentary the other night on the making of the film: Ben comes out of it as the star, he has that thing, he holds the screen down. If Bob and Dustin went in there as stars and the Bradlee part went to a secondary actor,

no matter how good, who didn't have the sort of personality that could overpower them, if they seemed more above the title than he—it wouldn't work.

*In all newspaper films, the editor is top dog.*

Yeah, but it's true in real life. More often than not, especially in magazines, the Clay Felkers have a quality that turns writers on. So casting that part became very important.

*So your strategy was to set Bradlee as the center. . .*

A center who can push them down. For example, the major "star entrance" in the film is Robards'. Up until he comes on, there's almost no camera movement; very little. When he comes out of his office, arbitrarily out of nowhere, we move with him down half the set: we give him a star entrance out of Belasco, all stops out. And you say, here comes the king.

Jason's greatest successes have come playing failures, men who could not deal with reality, whether as Hickey in The Iceman Cometh, or in Moon For The Misbegotten. The poetic failure. Poetic failure is the antithesis of Ben Bradlee, who thrives on success, on being of and in the world and trying to be a controlling factor in the world. He loves dealing with reality. Whatever poetic qualities there may be in Ben privately have nothing whatsoever to do with the Ben Bradlee who's in that office and portrayed in this film. Jason and Ben are very different people. Jason's full of soul, which is one of the least-needed qualities to play Ben Bradlee. We finally went with Jason's belief that he could do it—and he knew Ben, he understood the part and its problems.

*You must have thought about characterizing Bradlee as positively as you did. He's the only character in the film who is totally admirable; he doesn't screw anybody, etc. You could have placed him more ambiguously had you wanted to.*

First of all, he's not sentimental. His concern is not about hurting people unnecessarily, it's "Is the paper going to be in danger?" He never says, "Poor John Mitchell, poor so-and-so." He is concerned about the truth and corroboration of the story. If the story turns out to be untrue, it's going to be bad for the Washington Post.

*How did you deal with the problem of fairness in depicting real people?*

In terms of accusations or charges, nothing was ever said that wasn't corroborated in the book, or in their notes for their stories; that just could not have been done. That became our guideline: Woodward and Bernstein had their two-source rule, and this was our rule.

*What did you see as the purpose of the film—illustration of the book, a "lest-we-forget" parable, what?*

In the beginning, to be really absurdist about it, it was climbing a mountain be-



cause it was there. I wanted to tell that story because it was there. On a childlike level—one of the most important levels on which this picture operates, that primitive storytelling level—I was fascinated by what it would have been like to be Woodward and Bernstein. These two untried young men discovering the story which became the most important investigative story of our Republic, that had an enormous effect on our society, and eventually resulted in the resignation of the President of the United States. This goes right back to why you make pictures, why you want to be a director. It goes back to that childhood fantasizing, putting yourself into a world you would love to be in.

Second, the methodology of investigative reporting fascinates me. And of course, as I think *KLUTE* and *THE PARALLAX VIEW* represented in different ways, the relationship between the individual and power. And as I said to Woodward and Bernstein, if *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN* had been a work of fiction, I never would have made it; I wouldn't have believed it.

*The modifying point is that the power of these two individuals is hooked up to the power of a great institution, the Washington Post. In the case of PARALLAX, it's impossible for Warren Beatty, without a major paper behind him, to accomplish what Woodward and Bernstein do later.*

I don't think the *Washington Post* would have had the story without Woodward and Bernstein. In that way, it was very much their story. The *Post* backed them, that's true; but it wasn't like the power of the *Post* or the power of Ben Bradlee could really get them that much help. If anything, it sometimes made it more difficult in terms of people being frightened of speaking to them. But the fact that it was published certainly had a lot to do with the courage of the *Post* at that point.

*Any qualms about political criticism for releasing the film during a Presidential election year?*

Bill Safire came out and said the book, *The Final Days*, and the release of the film was a vendetta. The realities are that Bob Redford wanted to make this film before that and there was no way to get it ready in time—he wanted to make it earlier, not later. From the point of view of Warner Brothers, who controlled the release date, they were also financing President Nixon's memoirs—they paid him a large sum of money for paperback publication rights. The fine, even hand of American business.

My own feeling is that this kind of corruption, this danger to the electoral system, can't be restricted to one party. I think that people who are attracted to enormous power share similar strengths and vulnerabilities. It's certainly not limited by party. I don't think Woodward and Bernstein would have decided not to

pursue the story had it been LBJ in power, and I don't think we would have refused to do a movie if it had been about a Democrat. I don't think you worry about the political effect of a film's release in that way if you believe that the film does deal with reality and has its own integrity. I don't think any of us were trying to be kingmakers by the release of this film.

**W***hat about the data-technology closeups that run through the film? Television screens, typewriters, Xerox machines, library slips, special copypaper sets, and at the beginning of the film, those .44 Magnum typewriter key letters filling the screen?*

The use of the television set is something apart. The typewriter keys, library slips, list of people who work at CREEP, notepads on which Woodward scribbles his notes while he's phoning, pencils, pens, were all part of a conception of the absurdity of the weapons in this war story—that what brought down perhaps the most powerful people on earth were these little slips of paper, and pens, and typewriter keys. Actually, the opening shot of those typewriter keys set the whole use of objects in the film. I thought of that in Washington a couple of weeks before we started to shoot. If there was ever a picture which says on the most primitive level that the pen is mightier than the sword, this is it. Letters as bullets; typewriter keys as guns; little things becoming huge in their power: it becomes those little things against those enormous buildings and against those people behind the television screen that you can't reach.

So when the typewriter keys come down, we had whiplashes and gunshots mixed in with that sound; not enough so you can tell, just enough to get that CRACK! Originally, I didn't want to see the Warner Brothers trademark before that because I didn't want to see any letters before the typewriter keys: the first letters you see are weapons. We tried to magnify those sounds—the little scratchings of pencils, it's like little rats who scratch their way under those huge buildings and that huge power, burrowing in.

*Some of your shots are intricate presentations of the idea of scale. The Library of Congress reading room shot, for instance, where you have several abstract ideas of scale at once: how small the library slip is, yet how much it contains both in terms of importance and in terms of sheer data—that shoeboxful of them containing millions of discrete data bits, all very tiny; you pull back, there are the men, and what they contain, their complexity, how big they are in one sense but as the shot continues, how small they are in another; and then the Library is so large. It's something like Charles Eames' film, POWERS OF TEN.*

That was the essence of the Library of Congress shot. Some people say it was a tour-de-force for its own sake; I don't

think it was. I tried to do several things with it. Starting with those little library slips as clues, filling the screen at first, enormous in their size, and then pulling back to the top of the Library of Congress, where the reporters are so small, gave me a chance to dramatize the endless time it takes to do these things, without being boring about it. It also gave me a sense of how lost they are in this thing, how tiny these figures are in terms of the enormity of the task, and the heroic job they're trying to achieve.

There's also something about the Library of Congress that moved me, particularly in that shot in the hallway, something I didn't expect audiences to share, a personal thing. That pseudo-Renaissance hallway they walk through to the reading room, and indeed, the reading room itself, have a romantic conception of power behind them, also a romantic ideal of the human being: the antithesis of what's going on in this film.

*It's an architectural difference, among other differences.*

I love to use architecture to dramatize a society, very much so in *KLUTE*, even more so in *PARALLAX VIEW*; that was really creating a whole sense of a world through buildings. In *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*, the power of the administration is dramatized through the buildings. It's strange because you don't see the power, you don't see the President except on television.

*An idea that comes from that is that the buildings don't belong to the men in them; the buildings will be there forever, the men will come and go. That doesn't come from the data of the building's appearance, of course, it comes from our prior knowledge.*

There's never been a film I know of that has depended so much on the basic knowledge the audience has and that uses that, takes it for granted. That's deliberate. That's what surprised me when the picture was such a success in England and at the Berlin Festival.



*You made KLUTE and THE PARALLAX VIEW for wide Panavision proportions while ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN is in 1.85. Why?*

We shot with Panavision equipment on ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN—Panavision made some special diopter lenses for us—but we didn't use squeezed [anamorphic], we used 1.85. That was Gordon's decision. I said, fine, as long as I get a very sharp, hard look. I would have fought it on PARALLAX VIEW, with its wide scale and space.

*And where several key scenes are so horizontal.*

Absolutely. KLUTE was a very vertical picture, and PARALLAX VIEW was very horizontal. One has people trapped in tunnels, pressed, claustrophobic, the world pushing in on them; the other has people lost in space. In ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, an essence of the work, investigative reporting, is concentration and patience: sitting on the phone, talking to people you don't see, locked in for long periods of time. It's the opposite of physical movement. And to have done a lot of camera moves would have broken

the concentration rather than intensified it. So there is comparatively little camera movement in the film. When the camera does move, as they become more manic toward the end, it seems very theatrical by contrast. The new film I'm working on will have a great deal of movement because intense physical movement and work is a major part of the characters' lives and story.

*Do you think about composing your frames in terms of negative space? Charged space? You seem to compose more spatially dramatic shots than other directors working now—the way you place characters, often off-center or off-balance, using passive and active space.*

There's a great deal of that in KLUTE, where I was going for tension and compression. That sense of negative or potential space—in film you have the other element, too: it moves. Part of the tension is the constant change in spatial relationships, which I love to do: the spatial relationships between the characters and their world changing during a scene as well as the spatial relationship between characters changing during the scene. All of which comes out of trying to convey some subjective feeling to the audience. I hate camerawork for its own sake. If you don't know what to do with a camera, then don't do anything—just as I tell an actor. "If you don't know what to do, don't do anything until you find what's needed; start with nothing." When you start imposing something to make it interesting, the whole concentration of the film falls apart. It becomes dishonest and the audience senses it.

The decision about how to frame a picture comes from how to intensify that experience for the audience, to give it to them without telling them that you're giving it to them. I once said of ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN that I didn't want the film to editorialize: they wouldn't say so-and-so is bad, so-and-so is good; rather, they would say, so-and-so did this, this is what happened. But actually, the camera keeps pushing the audience to a point of view all the time. In the middle, that crowd at the Convention screaming "Four more years! Four more years!" while Woodward is at the typewriter—that's giving the audience a whole sense of what's happening. And at the end, Nixon on the television set, taking the oath of office while they're both typing away: visually, the audience is pushed into very specific feelings, but they are not stated verbally. It deals on a more primitive level on the one hand and on a more sophisticated level on the other; it's more unconscious for them, they don't even know what's happening to them in some way.

*It bypasses verbal formulation.*

Yes. I'm bored with people who say films have to be all visual. I've often wondered what would have happened if radio had started before silent films, and

if films had come out of radio. I think we would have had a whole different sense of what's pure and what's impure. It's absurd to say that film is only visual, and to use a lot of aural effects makes it an impure art. That's nonsense. It's trying to compare being painterly and being literary: two different things. Sound is as much a part of films today as visuals. You try to orchestrate the sound track very carefully for an effect, because people do not hear at the same level all the time. The ear edits. That's one of the great tools you have as a director—what you do with the soundtrack.

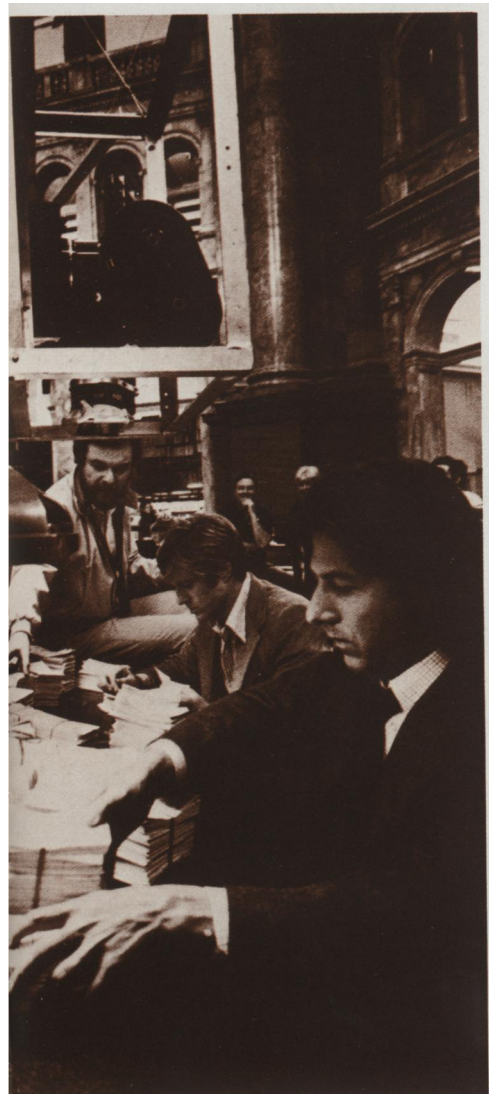
*You have a set of shots which counterpose the television screen and Woodward's typewriter carriage.*

That scene is during the Republican Convention, when Woodward is sitting at his typewriter writing about the delay of the GAO report—the Republicans are trying to hold it back until after the Convention. He's trying to write that story, and on the television is the renomination of Richard Nixon. There's one shot of the keyboard of the typewriter in the foreground, with his fingers typing. In front of him is the television set. His hands and the typewriter are bigger than the television screen.

Anyway, that was the original shot I thought of having. We were setting up television sets around the room so there wouldn't be just one, stagily set in front of Bob Woodward. I was bothered that the original shot made Woodward's hands and the article he was writing much more powerful than the nominating convention on the television screen. So we put a TV set way in front of Woodward so that the cheering people at the Convention would fill three-quarters of the screen while Woodward typing would be a tiny figure in the background, thus dramatizing the David and Goliath struggle I wanted. That shot became the climactic shot of the scene. The reversal of scale from the previous shot, where Woodward's hands were bigger, dramatized the true nature of the conflict.

The President is never shown except at the height of his power. There were people who said, "Why didn't you give him the defeat, why didn't you show him down and out and give the audience that satisfaction?" That's not what the film is about. The godlike quality the audience has at the end of that last scene, seeing the man take the Oath of Office for the second term as President of the United States, at the height of his power; and those men with their little typewriter keys against the gunshots of the cannon salute. Thank God they had the twenty-one gun salute, because it set up the typewriter keys as weapons. And the reporters don't look up: just that same, driven. . . .

*Nixonian concentration.*



Camera hovers over Woodstein and Pakula in Library of Congress.



Yes. But the power of that shot depends upon the audience knowing what the President at the height of his power doesn't know, what even the reporters typing away don't know: that in two years, what they're writing is going to force him to resign.

I never planned the twenty-one gun salute against the typewriters until [associate producer] Jon Boorstin brought in the tapes and we were playing them to decide on which one—of the inauguration—we would use. We got to the twenty-one gun salute and without that, we wouldn't have thought of the effect: it all came together that day.

*You put Woodward and Bernstein through their paces in space: a lot of strange positioning in the frame, unusual compositions, making them move in odd ways. Woodward particularly seems more ill at ease in space than Bernstein, from the scene where Bernstein rewrites his copy on.*

Woodward was the new man in the room. Bernstein had been there awhile, for years; in reality, I think, he was going through a bad time just then on the paper. Carl is a man who works hard when he's turned on, and if he's not turned on by something, forget it—a syndrome I know very well. Woodward had come in six or eight months before and was turning out page-one copy regularly: totally driven, he calls himself a "workaholic." That tension inside Woodward helps hold this picture together; it comes out of that tense, obsessive drive for the story. Almost always, he doesn't relate to the world he's in unless it relates to the story. The way he walks: it's not where he is, unless that space has something to do with what he's thinking about. It's like he almost doesn't belong there, in that space.

*What about the emotional or dramatic use of color? There are times when it seems that, out of the normal, low-key fabric of the film, you go KAPOW! The scene in Bernstein's apartment when Woodward comes over to say, "We're bugged!"—you frame Woodward in the entryway, silhouetted against hot chrome yellow, everything else dark, shadowed: and that's the moment when fear comes to the front of the film.*

When I came on the film, I went back to do the research trying to keep my mind free of as many preconceptions as possible. Hoping reality would make the work more organic.

The first thing I did was hit the *Washington Post* newsroom. I shudder to think what it would have been like if the *Post* hadn't moved into its new quarters, which it had done about a year before the Watergate story broke. Their old offices, I gather, were like most old newspaper offices. It would have been a great loss to the film. I can't tell you that I would ever have thought of conceiving of a newsroom like that if the *Washington Post* hadn't had it; but given that ne

room—it was the whole key to the style of the film. The colors of the *Washington Post* are hard. First of all, it's hard fluorescent light through the whole room. I said to Gordie, I want it hard, don't soften it; I want to make the audience uncomfortable. The truth is uncomfortable, we're obsessed with the truth, so there should be harsh light. There is one major cut when you cut back to the newsroom from Bradlee's lawn at night when your eye is literally shocked. I wanted that.

My concern was that Technicolor [the lab] would balance the prints for a nice sense of flow; soften it down to a smooth, ivory thing. I told them I wanted the audience to recoil; it's back to exposing the truth.

Plus there are those incredibly harsh, tough poster colors—hard electric blues—in the *Post* newsroom. And that idea of being put in the middle of a modern poster, the total lack of subtlety, a kind of cruelty about it, the lack of rest for the eye, became the center of the visual conception of the film. The *Post* newsroom is in the business of communicating the truth. They do it in a place without shadows where everything is exposed; you can hide nothing in that room. That reality gave us a very apt visual concept. In contrast to it, the world that's trying to hide itself becomes that much more dramatic. I wanted to show the total accessibility of everyone at the *Washington Post*—you see everything Bradlee does behind his glass wall;

if he scratches, the whole office watches him—compared to the inaccessibility of the President.

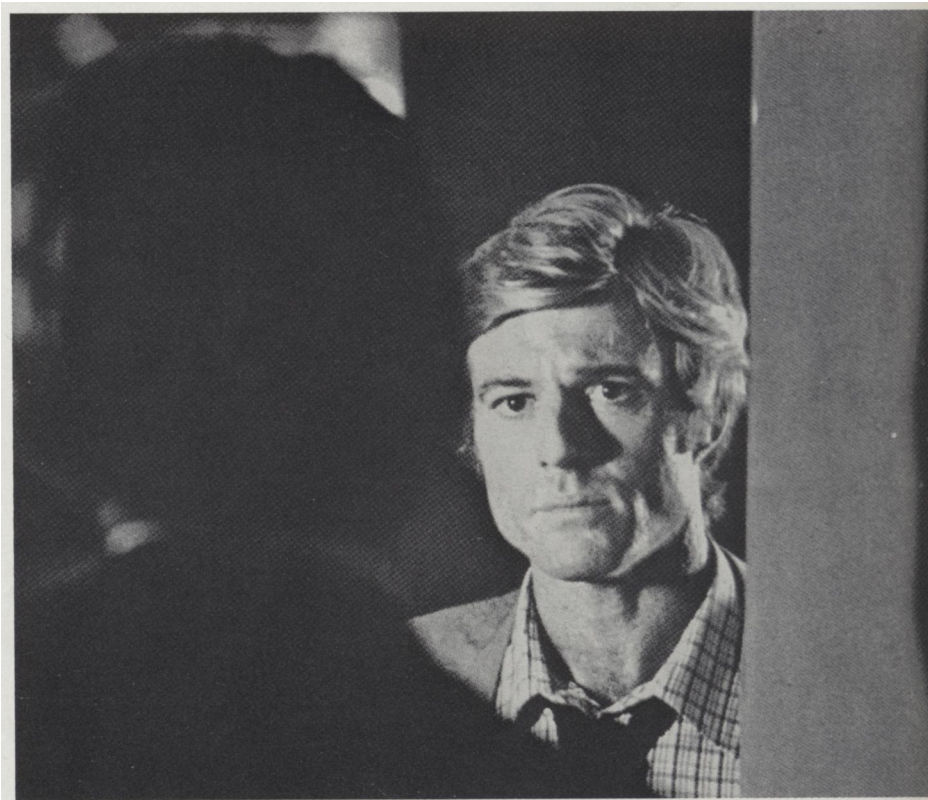
A light that exposes everything with hard, tough, exposed colors became terribly important to the center of the film: exposing the truth. Then obviously you have the dark and the hiding as a contrast.

*Do you think of yourself as an actor's director?*

I always love working with actors: it was my first love. It's not so much any more. I enjoy it, in many ways it fascinates me because it is an exploration of character—the kind of thing that interested me in being an analyst, except you're not doing it for therapeutic reasons, you're doing it to find out what there is in that person that'll be right for that character. An actor cannot give anything to a part that is not somewhere inside him. All an actor has to work with is himself—his own observations, his own feelings.

*Are actors grasping? Do they want something from you?*

They want any help they can get from anybody to be better actors and give better performances. That's why every actor says, "I want a wonderful director, I want a very strong director." And invariably, they want it on the one hand while they doubt and question it on the other. Usually, the ambivalence they bring to a relationship with the director is the very ambivalence they have about themselves: moments of enormous belief in



JUSTIFIABLE PARANOIA: Woodward meets the mysterious Deep Throat (Hal Holbrook).



themselves and moments of grave self-doubt. That's very often projected onto the director. Sometimes you're swept along in the moments of great belief, and you can do no wrong; other times you're swept along in the moments of self-doubt, and can do no good. It's a hell of a rollercoaster ride. Somewhere in between, you try to keep your equilibrium about what work you're doing is good and what is bad.

**T**his film, with *KLUTE* and *THE PARALLAX VIEW*, have been called a paranoid trilogy. What is paranoia for you?

I think that paranoia is a terribly misused word, the sort of word that's used constantly today, unclinically and incorrectly. I use it to represent an excessive fear of the unknown, the unseen.

*The unknown is always threatening?*

Not always, but there is that kind: a child's fear of darkness, night fears, fears in some way of being punished, that the unknown is indeed threatening, that there is something out there that you can't see, that could destroy you. Not a realistic fear of the unknown, but one that comes out of internal fears for oneself—one's internal anxieties being directed onto something outside of oneself.

*It's a personalized fear—something trying to get you.*

Very personalized. In *KLUTE*, it was much more personal, so that the whole suspense thing of being followed by this man and her own anxieties about herself all come together. One of the fascina-

tions of melodrama is that it takes so many of our fears of the unknown and gives us a chance to act them out in a group situation where we are safe. The word paranoia might be more sensibly applied to *KLUTE* than to *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*, where the characters are more rational. What most melodramas do is take that irrational fear of the unknown we all have, then externalize it, make it something to be afraid of; then the hero and heroine are saved and we've triumphed over the fear, facilitating that kind of catharsis.

In both *PARALLAX VIEW* and *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*, the fear has to do with a growing sense of living in a potentially threatening society. The fear in *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN* comes out of the dealings with Deep Throat. After those dealings, we have the sense that the safe, open society we supposedly live in is full of dark unknowns that could be threatening us—the kind of thing we associate with foreign societies. That's very much what *PARALLAX VIEW* is all about, and that's why at the end of it we used all those cheerful, open, American images—red-white-and-blue tablecloths and banners, all those little cheerleaders putting up their little Presidential faces—a vision we've all grown up with about America, underneath which is the mysterious unknown.

*You reserve that fear until the end of ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, you don't let it break through to the surface earlier in the film.*

The only places you feel the fear before that, I guess, is when they're talking to

secretaries, and when they're interviewing people in doorways.

*You're seeing the effects of anxiety.*

Yes, but you reserve that till the end because if we didn't, then the whole picture would have been hyped and unreal. Deep Throat is the key to the whole thing: a man who was that disturbed and that frightened, who was obviously close to the center of the government—that's what releases that fear.

*How did you decide to present Deep Throat in such a strong way—closeups, dramatic dark lighting, dominant composition?*

I had great concern about that. When I talked to Bob Woodward originally, I kept asking for assurance that there really was a Deep Throat, that he wasn't apocryphal, because the whole idea of meeting this unknown source in garages in the middle of the night, flags in flowerpots, changing cabs, all that was out of style with the rest of the story. I kept saying, it's almost like a gift to some film director, did it really happen that way? Because if it didn't happen that way, I wouldn't do it that way. My first reaction if it were a work of fiction would be to say, is it going too far? Bob reassured me that it did happen that way. Given that, I said all right, its gift to us is that it does dramatize another sense of danger in these things at a different level than anything else in the film. The idea is that Deep Throat is so afraid of being followed that Woodward begins to be frightened, wondering what was going on.

*The pace of the film seems very effective in that there's a certain rhythm for the beginning and the middle and then, BAM, the film's over. It's one of the most hardminded choices in the film, making the end pointed, hard, abrupt, rather than letting it diffuse.*

Absolutely, to leave the story while they were still the only ones battling it out, at least in the vanguard, when the story had been revealed to them in its outlines. I liked the irony of ending right after their greatest defeat, the Haldeman story: they were right but their story was wrong. That was Bill Goldman's concept before I came on the film and the more I worked on the film the more I came to trust it. The two of them and Bradlee against the world; everyone saying, they've obviously gone too far, while we know it goes further than that—much more dramatic than seeing them proved right all over the place. The one thing we did do was put in the teletype at the end, and that came later—after the first preview.

*It fits well with the beginning, the typewriter keys.*

And again, it's relentless: the weapons of words keep hammering out the fate of these people.

*And it's impersonal.*

Absolutely: a good investigative reporter is not on a personal vendetta. ✧



Warren Beatty in *THE PARALLAX VIEW*.

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