***All the President’s Men Can Put Journalism Back Together Again***

*All the President’s Men*, released in 1976, provides a detailed account of the Watergate break-in and Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein’s reporting of the initial cover-up. Woodward, Bernstein and their Washington Post boss Ben Bradlee exemplify journalistic excellence-the commitment to fact supported truth in the face of any type of pressure. Political cover-ups, deadlines, lack of source cooperation, and even hints of personal danger did not deter these men from pursuing the truth. It’s interesting to think how Woodward and Bernstein’s investigative journalism would have differed with today’s technology. Cell phones, the Internet, and 24 hour news cycles would have impacted the Watergate investigation, but how?

Watergate’s biggest lesson is the story is not the break-in, but rather the cover-up. This has been proven true in many instances in the past 40 years. An obvious example would be the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal of the late 1990’s. While watching *All the President’s Men*, I substituted the Watergate break-in for Clinton’s affair and the truth pursuit became silly and depressing. A presidential affair doesn’t hold a candle to a presidential commissioned break-in. Upon second thought, I focused on the idea that nobody likes to be lied to and the inquisitive part of human nature tends to lean towards truth discovery. This thought helped me understand why an unbiased reporter would consider the cover-up of the Clinton/Lewinsky affair news worthy. The slow process of unraveling a cover-up can lead to a story keeping its legs. David Letterman’s affair is a prime example of a public figure getting in front of a story before it finds legs. He was able to publicly and professionally come out and admit his wrongdoings to a national audience. Letterman shifted public focus from his mistakes towards the illegal actions of the blackmailer.

Most companies and businesses have a policy of directing any reporter’s questions to Human Resources. Human Resources are then directed by the company lawyers to provide verification information only. By providing an employee’s name, job title, and dates of employment this fact verification information only policy does not answer all questions of investigative journalists. Lessons learned from lawsuits and court precedents set in the past 40 years have made it difficult to do the type of reporting Woodward and Bernstein did in the early 1970’s.

Advances in information technology since the 1970’s have created an easier path for reporters. The simplicity of multitasking with a cell phone is something we take for granted today. I wonder if the sources unwilling to speak in person or over the phone to Woodward and Bernstein would have felt safer and been more cooperative if they communicated through email or text messages. I’m sure today’s reporter loves being able be to gain a source’s trust by communicating anywhere they and their Blackberry go. Video camera communication over the Internet negates the necessity of flying cross country. I’m sure Woodward and Bernstein’s boss, Ben Bradlee, would have loved to been able to keep expenses down. The impersonal aspect of texting or emailing could have been beneficial to Woodward and Bernstein’s reporting. Of course, Deep Throat’s warning to Woodward that he’s being bugged might have negated the used of cell phones and computer communication.

Being able to communicate across the globe in real time through text or video can be an invaluable asset to a reporter. Today’s reporter needs to be capable of realizing a story’s potential doesn’t necessarily end with a source’s lack of replying to an email. Face to face interviews can separate fact from fiction.

More than a reflection of the style of early 1970’s American reporters, *All the President’s Men* is a timeless study in journalistic credibility and integrity that continues to ring true.