All the President’s Men • SUMMARY OF THE FILM

Alan J. Pakula's adaptation of Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward's Watergate best seller isn't just a sentimental journey for Nixon-haters—it's also the best newspaper picture ever made, a great detective story, and a taut thriller that's no less suspenseful for the fact that we know how it ends. Director Pakula and screenwriter William Goldman recast the Washington Post reporters' straightforward recounting as a grand conspiracy thriller (a la Pakula's other great '70s film, The Parallax View), parceling out the information and ratcheting up the tension as Woodward (Robert Redford) and Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman) unravel what really lay behind the infamous "third-rate burglary" of June 17, 1972.

Jason Robards, Hal Holbrook, and Jane Alexander offer brilliant supporting turns, and the superstar leads convincingly inhabit a couple of skilled but career-stalled scribes who grab on to the Watergate story and work it relentlessly—at first because it represents professional salvation, but ultimately because they recognize the gravity of what they're uncovering. The film's lasting triumph is that it never lets you lose sight of what was riding on their success or failure.

WOODWARD, BERNSTEIN STILL LEGENDS 30 YEARS LATER
MU Researcher Finds 'President’s Men’ Preferred Text On Watergate
By Kathy Deters

COLUMBIA, Mo. — After hundreds of hours of research, careful fact-checking and hushed secret meetings in parking garages, two journalists untangled the nation’s most prominent political scandal and unwittingly became both role models and legends in the process.

Bonnie Brennen, associate professor in the Missouri School of Journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia, recently found that All the President’s Men, written by investigative reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, continues to serve as a handbook for many American journalists 30 years later. The book, which recounts the process Woodward and Bernstein followed while uncovering Watergate, helped establish the processes that many of today’s journalists now follow, such as using anonymous sources, checking and re-checking facts, and corroborating all charges and accusations with at least two other sources of information.

“Quite apart from the actual experience of Watergate, the most famous chronicle of this political scandal, All the President’s Men, codifies an ideology of journalism that has framed an understanding of the role of the press in the United States and western Europe since the 1970s,” Brennen said.

In her paper Sweat Not Melodrama: Reading the Structure of Feeling in ‘All the President’s Men,’ Brennen also examined recent coverage of Watergate and found that All the President’s Men is still treated as the single most authoritative recollection of Watergate. Although several key figures—including H.R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, G. Gordon Liddy, John Dean, E. Howard Hunt and even Richard Nixon—published texts on Watergate, All the President’s Men continues to be the most famous chronicle of this investigation.

“John Dean’s recent reliance on All the President’s Men in his investigation of Deep Throat once again showcases the role of this book in creating the history of Watergate,” Brennen said. “Much of what has become common knowledge about the break-in and the subsequent cover-up does not come from the actual Watergate coverage, but instead comes directly from Woodward and Bernstein’s recounting of the scandal.”