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Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, and Aaron Brown Offer the Passionate Liberal Rebuttal to Mark Felt's Critics

Anchors Gush Over Heroism of "Deep Throat"

In nearly every journalism school in America, students are taught the legend of Watergate, of how heroic reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein used the heroic anonymous source "Deep Throat" to defend the constitutional order. This legend, peddled commercially as the book and movie deals that produced *All The President's Men*, is almost never taught as how to take down a Republican President for political gain and personal profit.

A few years ago, the impeachment of Bill Clinton was routinely savaged by liberal reporters as a saga with "no heroes." (See box.) But Tuesday's *Vanity Fair* scoop naming Deep Throat as former FBI second banana Mark Felt made some TV news veterans giddy with the notion of heroism:

Dan Rather. On the *CBS Evening News*, reporter Jim Axelrod allowed former Richard Nixon aide Chuck Colson to say Felt was wrong to leak to the press, the rebuttal came from the Old Media. "I think he performed a public service," said disgraced anchorman Dan Rather. "Widespread criminal conspiracy led by the President of the United States. I, for one, think it would have succeeded had it not been for Woodward, Bernstein, Bradlee, and the source to whom they promised anonymity."

Aaron Brown. As Colson told him Felt's actions were "demeaning," *CNN NewsNight* anchor Aaron Brown retorted: "Why is it not honorable?...Believing that an institution you've devoted your life to, care a lot about and is important to the country, is being used in an improper way, and the only way you have to solve it or to deal with that is to go outside that agency, why isn't that honorable?"

Although Brown aired more critical views of Felt from Colson and David Gergen and liberal journalist Timothy

Noah, he remained adamant in his personal viewpoint. When Noah found no hero in Watergate, Brown replied: "I want to spin that in an absolutely heroic way. That what actually he saw happening was the political side of Washington trying to take control of an institution with enormous power, that needs to operate outside of whoever is in government at any given time, not unaccountably, but independently."

Watergate Heroes, Monicagate Losers

"I just think — I don't know, 'hero,' that's not a word I throw around. But in just looking at the landscape at the time, what Washington was like, it does make a kind of moral sense to me." — *CNN NewsNight anchor Aaron Brown, May 31, 2005.*

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"Accept for a moment this premise. There will be no winners in the impeachment battle going on, no heroes are going to emerge from this mess, that when all is said and done, the landscape will be littered with losers of varying sorts. Ms. Lewinsky, whose life is forever changed, Ms. Tripp, who will never seem heroic, Judge Starr will be no winner, and Mr. Clinton will be the biggest loser of all. According to this premise, the only person even vaguely close to a winner is the First Lady. And what a heavy price she has paid for that." — *ABC Good Morning America/Sunday anchor Aaron Brown, November 22, 1998.*

Tom Brokaw. Former NBC anchor Tom Brokaw strongly objected to Pat Buchanan on the June 1 *Today*: "I think Pat said yesterday said that Mark Felt was a traitor. A traitor to what, the truth?...This was true, it was illegal activity. This was not somebody acting as a private citizen in their own company. This was the highest elected official we have in this country."

Katie Couric added: "These were not personal dalliances." Brokaw vaguely admitted JFK's behavior in the White House was "shocking," and that former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover "used to use information to increase his own base," but "it was not nearly of the magnitude of this. This is a president who

was an undicted co-conspirator. We had a lot of people who went to jail, who had a full and fair hearing in the federal court system, and Richard Nixon, a lot of people believe, should have gone to jail as well." Anchormen can't be objective in reliving the liberal glory days. — *Tim Graham and Brent Baker*

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