JIM HOAGLAND
THE NEWSPAPERMAN: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BEN BRADLEE
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

JIM HOAGLAND
Contributing Editor, *The Washington Post*
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ON SCREEN TEXT:

The Newspaperman

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Jim Hoagland

Contributing Editor, *The Washington Post*

Getting into journalism

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Self-expression. I grew up in the segregated South-- at a time when it was hard to believe that human behavior could change positively. But it did. I wit-- witnessed that in the South. And I figured that's a good story. That's a story I want to tell. But I was also interested in the rest of the world. And I saw—the—the chance to work for—a major newspaper-- to go overseas, to

explain the rest of the world to my audience, to my readers as a dream. And—it turned out to be just that.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Another thing that—propelled me in that direction I think was—an innate skepticism that was encouraged by having grown up in a—church that w—could be—classified as holy rollers—people who handle snakes, talked in tongues. And somehow I didn't quite fit in with that. And—particularly when the—when I was eight or nine years old, the—minister explained to the congregation that the world would end on December 31st of that year. So you can imagine on New Year's Eve going to bed rather upset. Waking up on New Year's Day and saying, "I'm always gonna need at least two sources."

Ben Bradlee's sense of story

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I think one of the things that-- really bound me to Ben Bradlee was his sense of the story. It's what he talked about all the time. And I shared, being from the South—a certain reverence for storytellers. And for—the book. So it was—a way for me to—express myself, to tell—a good story that obviously had to be based on the truth.

Meeting Ben Bradlee

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Well, I came to Washington in December of 1965. I was working at *The New York Times* in Paris, which was a rather comfortable place to be in my career. And I'd come to Washington to—visit a friend. And I went to *The Post*, actually, to visit the brother of a colleague from *The Times*. The brother was Murray Martyr. He was a famous—and—and respected state department correspondent for *The Washington Post*. And he said to me, "You ought to meet this guy Bradlee," who'd just taken over as managing editor at that point. And—I said, "Well, I'm comfortable at *The Times*. No need to try to find a job or something." He said, "Just go talk to him." I walked into Ben's office. We talked for ten minutes. He offered me a job. And I took it on the spot. Because I realized that I had solved one of life's problems, which is to find somebody that you really want to work for. Ben was easily the most charismatic person I'd ever met at that point. And you just had this sense that you could work with Ben and get things done. And so I took the job—without a second thought. And I've been there 50 years.

Wanting to work at *The Washington Post*

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I'd started my career—on small newspapers in South Carolina, which is where I grew up and went to school. And—then I went to Europe-- on a fellowship. And—was in the Air Force. And—wanted to stay in Europe. So I got a job at *The New York Times International Edition* in Paris. Essentially—I was doing mostly copy editing, although writing some for *The Times*. And it became really clear to me that *The Times* was a great editor's newspaper, that editors had all of the authority and writers not so much. That was the other

thing that drew me to Bradlee. You just had a sense that this was somebody who was willing to take chances, which he was doing in hiring somebody who's relatively unknown at that point. And to be really interested in how you told a story, how you wrote that story. So—I just decided on the spot that—I wanted to work with this guy.

Ben Bradlee's charisma

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JIM HOAGLAND:

There are only two men I've ever used the word "seductive" about. Ben Bradlee's one. Bill Clinton is the other. And they share a lot of—characteristics, a lot of traits. So—I think that's definitely true for Ben. It—it's also the way in which he could—make you feel that he was really interested in you. I mean—I mentioned already that he was—a person who cared about the story. He cared about people, too. And he had a sense of people that was quite extraordinary. And so it was frequently said around *The Post* that Bradlee was the only editor who could ever call you into his office, make you understand that you'd committed a terrible, terrible crime against journalism. And as you walked out, you were saying to yourself, "Ah, that Bradlee, what a guy." And—and—I never had to test that hypothesis. But that's what people at *The Post* said. And some people who had that experience actually agreed with it.

Building a team around Ben Bradlee

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I think he hired about 50 or 60 reporters and editors in his first year at *The Post*. He had come—of course, with a mandate from Katharine Graham to make *The Washington Post*, which was at that point a decent but not particularly outstanding local newspaper. And his mandate was to make it a great national and international—newspaper. And it was clear that he was gonna do that, that he was gonna give every bit of energy he had to doing that. And he set out to hire—a staff. And he hired some stars. He hired some people who would fit into his eventual plans.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I mean the fact that I'd lived in Paris and gone to school in France as well I think was a kind of a bond for us. And he thought perhaps I could help on the international side at some point. And then the third category were real characters. People he'd just took a fancy to while he was talking to them and said, "I want to have lunch with that guy or girl in five years." And that's the way he always advised me. And I think-- all of his other editors on how to go about hiring people, was to think about whether you wanted to have lunch with him in five years or not. So in the first year he brought in David Broder. He brought in Ward Just. He brought in a lot of people who had—national recognition. But he also took—a lot of chances and a lot of 'em paid off.

Ben Bradlee loved good reporting

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Well, Ben had—a real—he was an artist of profanity in—in some ways. So I'll tell the story about what really turned Ben on was the "holy shit" story. He

wanted people to sit down at the breakfast table, open up the newspaper, and say, "holy shit" as they read what was on the front page. And that was—that drove him—probably more than anything else I can think of. Again, a lot of it was about the people. He wanted to see stories on the front page that explained what people had done and why. And if it was outrageous, all the better. He had a keen sense—and I think his time in France—helped him develop a sense of foibles, of human foibles, because—the French have those. And—probably an overabundance in—in some ways. But they're also people who really interested Ben. But he—he wanted to—explain to you how it was that the president of the United States could have stooped to bugging political opponents and then worst of all trying to cover it up.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

He really was trying to get down to the level of a truth that would shock and surprise people. But he always wanted to put in the proper context, and explained and written in a graceful style. I said earlier that *The New York Times* was a great editor's newspaper. The point I meant to make was that *The Post* was a reporter's newspaper, a writer's newspaper. You knew that Ben would go with you, would support you if you got it right. You also knew he would kill you if you didn't get it right. And that was—that was kind of the discipline of the newsroom.

Ben Bradlee was a formidable editor

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JIM HOAGLAND:

One of the first stories I worked on, on the local staff—because when I was hired I was hired onto the local staff of *The Washington Post*—was a ten-part series that I co authored with Leonard Downie, who was later to become the executive editor succeeded Ben. And we had picked up the savings and loans scandals of the time pretty much before anybody else had. And we wrote a ten-part series that-- was rather blunt about the failings of local savings and loans association. The day the first story ran, a delegation of the presidents of local savings and loan came to Ben's office and told him that they would withdraw one million dollars worth of advertising, this was in the days when one million dollars was money, if he didn't stop the series then. He threw them out of his office. I did not know that for another six months, because Ben did not want to tell us the story of the kind of pressure that we would have faced, at that time. And that's the kind of editor Ben was. And he demanded that same kind of effort from his editors toward his report—toward their reporters. That you had to—get the goods, but you had to be right.

The qualities of a great newspaper

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I said that Ben—had a mandate from Katharine Graham. One of the things that Ben would ask you occasionally would be, "what makes a great newspaper, Hoagland?" And I'd said, "well, I guess a great editor like you, Bradlee." He'd scoff. And he'd say, "actually, it's a great publisher who gives editors the authority to pursue the truth." And that was what Ben did. And that's what Kay let him do. And in some ways made him do. Not that Ben

Bradlee needed much encouragement along that line. But they were a great team. And I think Ben captured a basic truth there about the newspaper business. These are harder times. I don't think Ben, even Ben understood that he was on the cusp of the golden age of journalism, of newspaper journalism, and certainly of the branch that I was most involved in, foreign reporting.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

But if your newspaper survived the television—the advent of television, you often found yourself in a kind of a quasi-monopolistic situation in your community. You were the best show in town for advertisers. And so the profits started coming in in a very healthy way. And that money, thanks to the Grahams and thanks to Ben Bradlee, was put back into the reporting for foreign news. And as we saw—in Watergate, into investigative reporting.

Ben Bradlee's relationship with Kay Graham

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Ben was able to make Katharine laugh, which wasn't always easy. He had a great sense of humor. She had—a sense of humor that she didn't display all that often in public, but actually was quite acute. And I think the fact that they got along so well. And I think there was a kind of a—love element in their relationship—unrequited of course. But—that—that made them-- get along. But the—at the base of it really was trust. She trusted him entirely. She trusted his judgment. Not that she didn't at times—come down to the newsroom and say, "What the hell is goin' on here?" I was on the receiving end of a couple of those—when—I was the foreign editor. And

would—occasionally—publish cartoons of Henry Kissinger on the front page that Kay heard about from him. And then I heard about from her. And the end of the conversation was quite clear that the next time I wanted to do it, I would still do it. Otherwise, she could fire me. She took the—the—the same attitude with Ben. They understood that. That he was going to do it unless and until she had to fire him. And she would have never fired him.

Politics and the press

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Well, you have to let the chips fall where they may. We were talking about Henry Kissinger—who actually I've gotten to know quite well in his more mellow years. But-- I remember writing a—review of a book about Kissinger. It wasn't even Kissinger's book. But it was about him. And he seemed to feel that I had impugned his integrity in the review. There's nothing to make enemies for you in this business like writing book reviews. You can say, "Your foreign policy stinks," and he won't mind. But Henry then proceeded not to speak to me at social gatherings for a year, made it very ostentatious. And then after about a year-- he came over to me at some reception. He had been reading some columns that I'd written recently that he seemed to—actually agree with. And he said, "Hoagland, you're an acquired taste." And after that, we were able to—still disagree on a lot of things, but to have conversations that—were amicable. I think that's what you have to do in Washington. You—you have to write—if you're a columnist certainly, what you think, what you think the truth is, and let other people react to it.

Ben Bradlee's friendship with JFK

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I never talked to Ben about that. And—except in passing. And I never knew much about it. But he did—I think he did feel-- particularly attached to—JFK and to—and to Jackie—as well. But—I do remember—I think his feelings about—President Kennedy came to the fore for me the morning after Bobby Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. And I woke up to that news that morning. And I'm not quite sure of why I did. But I went immediately down to *The Post*. And there was almost nobody there. The only person who was in the newsroom at that point was Ben Bradlee. And Ben came over to me. And he said—now this is after his friend the president was killed and a couple of months after Martin Luther King was assassinated.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

And now he had lost Bobby. He came over to me and said, "Can this country survive? Can we get through this?" Ben cared a lot about this country. I think in the way—and again, this was something that—was a bond for us. If—Americans who have lived—a good part of their lives overseas take a certain perspective on America, I think, that helps them understand both the strengths and weaknesses of our country. And Ben cared a great deal. And that morning—it came out in that way. And then he turned around and said, "I've got a paper to put out."

The *Post* during the Vietnam War

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JIM HOAGLAND:

For me, the turning point was—October 1967, the march on the Pentagon. Bradlee called us– a group of us. I was a reporter on the national staff at that point. And called us into his office and said that he wanted to make sure as we were covering this extended weekend of a massive protest that wound up at the Pentagon, that this effort was not being funded by Moscow. He wanted us to really push on that so that we would not be embarrassed in any way—by independent reporting. And we had to show that—again, we had the goods. And that—that was a period at which—there were street protests. And there's one point at which, and it may have been, I think it probably was the march on the Pentagon in 1967—when Ben turned to Dick Harwood who was the—the number three in the newsroom at that point, and said, "How can we cover this protest movement—independently when my wife is out helping lead—some of the march and your wife is beside her?"

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JIM HOAGLAND:

He was very aware of the—cross currents in that period. But—and—and—actually, the only time Ben Bradlee ever disappointed me was that—in '68, I asked him to send me to Vietnam—as correspondent. And he said, "Hoagland, you're too political," and found a job in Africa for me instead. Which was great for me, because Africa was ex—exactly the right place—for me to work at that point. But—he—his antennae were quite keen about—the fact that—people around him, his reporters by and large were again—had become against the war. One of the things I did at *The New York Times*—when I was copyediting was to copy edit the—stories that came from David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan—in '65-'66, early '66.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

And the—the tone of the coverage at that point was what I think the public at large probably believed, which was we could still come out of this war okay. It was worth doing. And here's how we should proceed. It was disagreement with the tactics not with the cause. That shifted dramatically in late '66 and into '67—when people thought it was a lost cause, lives were being sacrificed, and our society was being torn apart. And my story about Ben Bradlee and Dick Harwood is—is meant to emphasize just that.

Journalistic objectivity

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JIM HOAGLAND:

You have to be very aware of it. And Ben was very aware of it. One of the things he did was he hired Ward Just to be his correspondent in Vietnam. Ward was working for *Newsweek* at that point. And Ben knew him through the *Newsweek* connection. And he knew h—that Ward Just was straight as an arrow. That you would get the truth on the ground from—your correspondents. When I became foreign editor, it was at a time when there was a lot of controversy over Central America. And—*The Washington Post* was particularly accused of leaning too far to the left on that. And so Bradlee and I talked about that, to be very aware of it. And I made a decision to—send—we had had a correspondent who's—I—whose whatever bias there was, and I didn't believe there was much, tended toward the more romantic revolutionary. So, I look for a correspondent who was exactly the opposite in his personal views and sent that correspondent.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

And the copy was pretty much the same. So you have to be very aware of it. Perhaps the most revealing story I can think of—about Ben Bradlee on this score, on—on the question of being aware of what your biases are and counteracting them, working—to make sure you're—totally objective. 1982, Israel invades Lebanon. A lot of controversy. *Washington Post* coverage and me in particular by name, denounced in *The Re-- New Republic* and elsewhere as being—very anti-Israeli. I'd been the Middle East correspondent, so that was—naturally attached to me to some extent. Although what people who said that didn't understand was that I'd insisted as part of the Middle East beat that I would cover Israel as well as the Arab world. Because I figured that when I got tired of hearing about Arab propaganda, I could take a trip to Israel and within two weeks I'd be tired of hearing the Israeli side of the story. And I would get some kind of balance on it.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

So Israel—invades Lebanon in—1982. And there's an outcry about *Washington Post* coverage. And Ben comes to me and says, "I've had a contact from—a rabbi—who would like to come and sit on the foreign desk for a week to observe what you do." And I said, "Ben, we can't do that. That's against all journalistic principles. You can't do that." He said, "What's he gonna see? He's just gonna see what you do. What's wrong with that?" And I fought and I fought. And then I said, "Okay, Ben, we'll do it." And so—a—very smart—we were—fortunate, very smart—professor actually, rabbi as well—came and sat—on the foreign desk for a week observing what editors

do and our contact with the correspondents. We didn't change anything that we did. We didn't try to make an effort to—put on a show or anything. We just let him sit in. And at the end of it, he went to Bradlee. And he said, "I'm convinced that you're doing the right thing, that you're trying as hard as you can to keep any bias out of the newspaper." And he then had the grace to write a report in which he said just that.

The Pentagon Papers

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I was overseas at that point in the Middle East dealing with a war that was going on. So, I'm not your best source on that. I mean, it—it represented a lot to all of us that—they would take those risks. And—and the risks were substantial. But they felt it was the right thing to do. Kay backed him up entirely, despite disparagement from the attorney general of the time. And—they went ahead. And—and I think really served American democracy very well—with that. Again, I was overseas, it was all at a great distance from me. But I—I think it did, certainly in the public mind—establish *The Washington Post* as—close to being a coequal with *The New York Times*. Put us certainly on the path to surpassing *The New York Times*.

The *Post* vs. The *Times*

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JIM HOAGLAND:

When we talked in a situation like that he would talk about the cables that editors send out to foreign correspondents. "Why you wan have this story?"

The cablese was a form to use as few words, even as few letters as possible to save money on sending telegrams, 'cause that's how you corresponded in those days. "So Hoagland, why you wan have?" Although he never actually sent—a cable like that. But he was very, very much aware that our primary competitor was *The New York Times*. And he was bound and determined to make it—make *The Washington Post* number one. And in the minds of many of us he succeeded.

Winning the Pulitzer Prize

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I was working—I mean—as I just mentioned, the—the editors used to correspond with correspondents—or be in touch with correspondents—by cables, by telegrams. And in 1971—I was based in Nairobi, in Kenya, and had written a ten-part series about South Africa. And on a spring morning—the telephone rang. And I knew it was the telegraph office calling me to read me the telegram that normally said, "Used your story about Kenya page one" or something like that. And so I was kind of half groggy. And I picked up the phone. And the telegraph operator started reading off a telegram, "X Bradlee," that was the way it began is "From Ben Bradlee." "We are bursting with pride." And I'm thinking, "What the hell?" "To tell you that you have won" and then she stopped and said, "I'll have to spell this for you. The P-U-L" and when she hit L, I knew what it was and erupted in joy. So that was a message from Bradlee.

Ben Bradlee's management style

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JIM HOAGLAND:

He knew how to mix the praise-- the carrots and the sticks. And at least in my experience, there were more carrots than sticks. I-- I wouldn't have called him a dict-- you could argue with Ben over decisions. There were only two or three things—about whether we should hire somebody or not, where he really put his foot down. Other than that, you could, you know, if you had a case to make, you could win him over on your side. So he never struck me as very dictatorial or—or—in any way tyrannical. And he really made you feel good once you'd done something, once you'd really achieved something. And he made it feel like it had been kind of a joint project with you. That you and he had done this. "And isn't that great, Hoagland?" So yeah, he did provide a lot of encouragement.

Ben Bradlee's modesty

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I think Ben Bradlee's finest moment was on the day that Richard Nixon resigned. Well, actually, no, it was the Saturday Night Massacre. It was the Saturday Night Massacre. And the heads were tumbling. And Ben Bradlee went through the newsroom. I wasn't there. But-- but I immediately got an account of it—telling people, "Don't gloat. Don't gloat." And I've always thought of that as Bradlee's finest moment. It was just the right thing to say at the right moment. And it—I think it really influenced—the way in which—Carl Bernstein, Bob Woodward, and the rest of the staff—conducted

themselves with dignity—in a moment when we could have—shown a little too much hubris. And we didn't, thanks to Ben Bradlee.

The distrust surrounding Nixon

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JIM HOAGLAND:

You know, I've taken that as such a normal attitude—particularly, I think, for a journalist in Washington—that I—I'd never really thought deeply about it or really discussed it with him. I mean, Nixon was—I mean, the Watergate cover-up, I mean, the fact that he thought he could twist the story, use pressure on a newspaper to not publish the story—and prevail—I mean, it—it bears a lot of echoes to kind of some of the thoughts about today's politics, as well, in that Nixon did not respect the truth. And I think Ben really didn't like that. And I joined him in that feeling.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Nixon made his reputation in California by smearing—a woman candidate—for the Senate. And never turned back. Was always willing to use dirty tricks. Was always willing to tamper with the foundation of democracy. And certainly Bob and Carl and supported tremendously by Ben had the same feelings as they pursued the Watergate story, that this was about American democracy.

How Watergate changed the *Post*

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JIM HOAGLAND:

It also brought a lot of young people into the profession who might not have gone into it otherwise. It set a new model—for what success in journalism meant is to be a Woodward and Bernstein, to be an investigative reporter. And—not all of them turned out to be as successful, of course. But—it did inspire a generation, I think—of journalists to—try to change things, try not to accept—falsehood and—trickery, criminal behavior as standards in governance. It certainly made *The Post* better known abroad. I mean, *The Post* by the fact that it was in the nation's capital and became the dominant newspaper in the nation's capital was already taken quite seriously abroad. But I think Watergate certainly brought us—in some places new fame, in other places new notoriety if the—those countries or the—at least the rulers of those countries had close links to Nixon.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I was in—the Middle East-- when Nixon made his final foreign trip, 1974 in Cairo—which was in part he was making a big peace effort to draw attention away from Watergate. That was—at least our conclusion after—you know, he clearly it was not the best time for him in terms of being out of Washington. He thought he could use a successful foreign trip—to counterbalance or to—undermine his critics. That's when he got phlebitis on that flight actually. And—endangered his own health by taking a trip that he shouldn't have taken. And at the end, didn't really produce—peace in our time – in the Middle East.

The current state of journalism

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Newspapers themselves have gone through a very traumatic experience—with—the shift away from the advertising model. Our economic model has been—really damaged over the past few years primarily by the Internet. And—availability of newspapers on the internet for free mostly. So that's—lessened the budgetary resources that I referred to before, the profit pool that was able to fund the kind of investigative reporting. And more and more you see investigative reporting, a lot of it, done by nonprofit organizations. And that may be—a model for the future that we need to look at. Although, it'll never be quite the same. So it—there are fewer resources available today. Probably than—net less reporting. I don't think the—determination to try to tell the truth as a news organization—has lessened. Certainly not at *The Washington Post*, nor I believe at *The New York Times*. But you get below the top four or five newspapers—and the economic times are so hard that they don't have a lot of space in which to do the kind of reporting that they might have done—in an alternative world.

Janet Cooke and the story that never happened

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JIM HOAGLAND:

Janet Cooke was a—reporter on our metropolitan staff. I came to know her. I was foreign editor at that point when she came into my office—and said she wanted to be a foreign reporter. And that she particularly—was interested in France. And so I spoke some French to her. And she said, "Oh no, I never speak French with foreigners, with non-French people." And so it caused me to question how much French she knew. And I never selected her for – for a

foreign job. But Janet Cooke was a metropolitan reporter at *The Washington Post* who wrote an article—about a seven or eight year old heroin addict—in Washington. There were reporters on *The Washington Post* who challenged that account, at the time, and said, "We shouldn't publish this." They w—were not listened to. And the story was published and won a Pulitzer Prize that year.

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JIM HOAGLAND:
And I think it was Associated Press, but another news organization, in checking Janet Cooke's resume, discovered that she had not graduated from the college she said she had. And that caused people to start looking at her background a little more intently. She resigned. And then Ben Bradlee did another great thing. He turned to Bill Greene who was our ombudsman. And Bradlee had basically created these—this idea of having an ombudsman on the staff of the newspaper to be the reader's representative. And Bill Green who had come from Duke University—where he'd—had taught journalism—as this non-nonsense—ombudsman. And Bradlee said, "Tell this story. Report this story of exactly what happened. And I'll give you all the space you need."

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JIM HOAGLAND:
And Bill Green authored a very revealing account of how this embarrassment to the newsroom had happened. And Bradlee kept his word, published it in full. And a little bit like the Johnson & Johnson case with Tylenol, where they immediately took action to—try to deal with the problem rather than say, "no, no, nothing has happened here." But anyway, Bradlee immediately said,

"here's what happened. Here's the truth about it." And I think that was a great moment for Ben Bradlee, when he made that decision to do it.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I don't know the extent to which Ben was deeply involved. I mean, clearly he was involved in-- in terms of the—the final decisions to publish and—to nominate it for the Pulitzer. But the extent to which he had tried himself to determine whether or not—this was possible. That it's—you could have this kind of situation. And that reporter could penetrate deeply enough. I'm not sure. I just don't know. How do you—how do you know that the sources—I mean—this is—this was part of what—what Bradlee always preached to us as well was that—you better get it right from your sources. And they'd better be right. And if they misled you, then they sacrificed confidentiality. They sacrificed whatever advantage they thought they were gonna achieve from the story. We would expose them.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

A lot different—doing that with people involved at the White House and doing that with people involved in the drug trade in the ghetto. We—we simply didn't know enough.

The aftermath of the Janet Cooke scandal

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JIM HOAGLAND:

It hurt his paper. It hurt his publisher. So it sure as hell hurt him. He would absorb it that way—even if it wasn't—a personal failing or if he felt—I don't

think he thought so much that it was a personal failing. Although—well, I'll take that back actually. I—I think he did feel some responsibility for it, for not checking it. So—I mean, the—the couple of days after the—it happened, after her story began to fall apart—Ben felt very badly. That's true. But Bill Green helped bring him out of it. And—and I think at the end of the day, he was able to look back, because he did the right thing at the end of the day, at the end of the story-- and set—actually—he'd brought into prominence—that whole sequence brought into prominence the whole idea of the ombudsman for an American newspaper. I can't say it was a net positive experience. But there was some positive elements. And Ben was able to focus on that.

Ben Bradlee leaving the *Post*

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JIM HOAGLAND:

About the only thing I remember is my saying to him, "Bradlee, you've finally done something I disagree with." Ben—there was a moment at which, you know—Ben's great rivalry was with *The New York Times*. And he personalized that in—being a rival of Abe Rosenthal. And the *New York Times* had a policy, I believe they still have the policy, of requiring their—editor to retire at age 65. And so the day that that story an in *The New York Times* that Abe Rosenthal was retiring, Abe sent him a mess—Ben sent Abe a message saying, "Yeah, in five years time, *The Washington Post* will say, 'Bradlee retires at age 70.'" Actually, he went beyond. So he—he was very aware of that.

Ben Bradlee's impact on journalism

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JIM HOAGLAND:

He gave a sense of what being a great editor was like. There have been great editors in—American history. And we've read about them. But at that time, I don't think you could say that there was—a single great editor. There were some good editors around, Gene Roberts—and some others. But Bradlee showed you what a great editor was in a very personal way, in a very—compact sense of leadership. And what a dedication to getting the story and getting that story out no matter what pressure was exerted against you, because you were convinced it was right. He set a model. I think he really—gave—the profession of editing, of being an editor a new dimension.

Ben Bradlee was self-aware of his persona

00:41:02:00

JIM HOAGLAND:

One of the things that's pointed out by—a fellow columnist and terrific newsman named Richard Cohen, was that when you went to see—when—when they made the movie of *All the President's Men*—and you saw Jason Robards walking around the newsroom, swinging his arm like that. And you realize that it was after the movie came out that you saw Ben Bradlee in the newsroom going around swinging his arm like that, having seen Jason Robards do it and liked it. So Ben was very aware of the impact he had on people and—this magnetic personality, I think. He was aware of his Benness. He was terrific at walking through the newsroom—and if he had something nice to say to you and particularly said it—and all the people around you could hear it, you would wind up beaming about it. But if he came

over and said, "What the F are you doing with this?"—you felt that, too. You felt it like—whiplash.

The style section

00:42:17:00

JIM HOAGLAND:

Oh, it was a great—innovation. And—just enlivened the whole newspaper. He had—a terrific style editor. The arrival of the style section, which was Ben's idea, from beginning to end—to get out of this idea of ghettoizing news for women and really covering culture. This was—a good example of where—Ben brought together—the best aspects of editing and reporting. He was willing to let imaginative writers like Nicholas von Hoffman and some others really push the form of—daily journalism. And he was al-- he allowed Dave Laventhol, who was the first editor at the—of the style section to push the form in terms of a news section that really covered culture. I remember—must have been about 1967 or so—Carl Bernstein and I, both metro reporters at that point, did kind of competing reviews that were run in the style section of the Beatles album *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Band* – and all of its various—statements about drug use and all of that. So that was the kind of place it was. It would do things that no other newspaper was really doing. And that came together particularly well, I think, in the style section. Ben had a developed sense of glamor. He knew what glamor was from his Paris days and everything else. And certainly anybody who marries Sally Quinn knows all about glamor. And in—in a good way. So he—he had that sense.

Ben Bradlee's time in Paris

00:44:11:00

JIM HOAGLAND:

I've lived in Paris three times on and off. So I have some sense of what—that era was like. It was a time when the dollar was very strong. The franc was very weak. You could live very well, very cheaply. And it was a time of great news stories coming out of Europe as well. So it's the—the perfect existence I would think. And Ben always talked very fondly about—his Paris days. That was a period of—the American presence abroad as a very positive thing, a very—important thing, a very part—and a very important part of the national existence, persona. And I think Ben was aware of that—that he was seeing a period of history there that was significant in world terms, involved America much more in the world. And he brought that sense back with him.

Ben Bradlee's lasting legacy

00:45:14:00

JIM HOAGLAND:

Well, there's the—the editor part, where he really became to personify the crusading editor—in—in American life. And of course—there's the personal side, those of us who knew and loved him—will miss him forever—greatly. And—it's, you know, sometimes tough to think about being here without Ben.

Writing for Ben Bradlee

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JIM HOAGLAND:

I always thought of Ben as kind of the first reader that I had to get past. Ben cultivated an image of—not having a very long attention span. And who knows? In some ways, it might have even been true. But you—you knew—particularly as a foreign reporter—foreign correspondent, you knew that you had to get Ben's attention quickly. You had to hook him on the story. And then you had to figure out ways to keep him with the story. So he was kind of always—you know, "What would—would Bradlee like this story? What—what if I use this lead? Is it--" he was a constant presence in the mind. Again, certainly—very much so of foreign correspondents, even though you had a foreign editor—he didn't read the copy when it first came in. But you knew you wanted to write something that would—catch his attention and keep his attention.

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JIM HOAGLAND:

So he—he was an important first reader for that. I actually had this conversation with the foreign editor at the time talking about, "Well, who do we write for? What—what-- what kind of—person do we want to write for?" And—I said, "Well" he said, "Well—you want to write for—a member of Congress." And I said, "Gee, that's totally different than what I thought. I thought you would want us to write for somebody who'd maybe finished the tenth grade, but not necessarily gone to college." He said, "Yeah, a member of Congress--" this was a different day, of course. But—I said, "No, I think I'll use Bradlee as my model reader." And it seemed to work out.

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