An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Ben Bradlee

- Post Reprint: “The Truth-Seeker”
- Editorial Cartoon Activity: Tom Toles, Ben There, Doing That
- Post Reprint: “An editor of legendary impact”
- Post Reprint: “In His Own Words”
Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein’s view of Ben Bradlee from the Watergate trenches: ‘A great general … with the love and affection of his troops’

BY BOB WOODWARD AND CARL BERNSTEIN

Four decades ago, Ben Bradlee told us his general theory of newspapering and life: “Nose down, ass up and moving steadily forward into the future.”

He understood the past and its importance, but he was utterly liberated from it. The past was history to learn from. And he refused to let himself be emotionally encumbered by it or deterred by either the lows or the highs.

The military analogy, so often a cliche, holds in his case: a great general, calm in battle, with the love and affection of his troops, of whom he was as protective as he was aggressive in sending them on their mission.

He was an original of his own creation, different from everybody else in his newsroom — different in
temperament, different in outlook, and different even in his physicality and his language (a mix of high-church English and the locution of a savvy sailor). He transformed not only The Washington Post but also the nature and priorities of journalism itself.

He was not a man of regret — ever, it seemed. He was never cynical, but persistently skeptical. And the thread that ran through his life — remarkably, without self-righteousness — was reverence for the truth.

One of the measures of Bradlee’s command was how he dealt with errors and mistakes, perhaps the most uncomfortable responsibility of a journalist. This is a real test of strength, competence and commitment to the truth.

We lived in the trenches with Bradlee during the reporting of the Watergate story, and almost exactly 42 years ago, we made an epic mistake: claiming in a front-page story that secret grand jury testimony had established that Richard Nixon’s White House chief of staff, Bob Haldeman, had controlled a secret fund used to finance the break-in at the Watergate and other illegal undercover activities.

The story, four months after the White House had labeled the break-in a “third-rate burglary,” represented a huge advance in bringing the crimes of Watergate closer to the Oval Office. Our problem was that there had been no such grand jury testimony — though it turned out we were right that Haldeman had controlled the fund, and controlled much more.

“What happened?” Bradlee asked us. The White House and the president’s supporters were unleashing a barrage of denunciations and denials that seemed credible. We were not sure what our mistake was and were on uncertain ground this day in October 1972, and we were scrambling ungracefully.

“You don’t know where you are,” Bradlee said. “You haven’t got the facts. Hold your water for a while…. We’re going to see how this shakes out.”

Finally, Bradlee spun in his chair, put paper in his old manual typewriter and began to type. After a few false starts, he issued his statement: “We stand by our story.”

There was no rancor or anger toward us, even though he would later say that this was one of the lowest points in his 23 years as executive editor of The Post.

We had made a stupid, rookie mistake, and the stakes were enormous. Our principal source, the Nixon campaign treasurer, knew that Haldeman had controlled the fund — and he had testified before the grand jury. But he had not been asked about Haldeman. We assumed that he had, thus violating a cardinal Bradlee rule: “Never assume anything.”

Bradlee’s support at this lowest moment was more than a comfort and a vote of confidence. We knew he believed that we were on the right track, but we had stumbled — nearly fatally. He was a lifeline of calm reassurance. (His wife,
Sally Quinn, has said that she never observed Ben experiencing even a moment of depression.)

For Ben, it was again a question of the facts. What were they? Had they been verified? Who said something different?

You had not lived as a reporter until you underwent a Bradlee interrogation. At one point during that excruciating episode, we were summarizing for him what one of our sources had said.

“No,” Ben insisted, “I want to hear exactly what you asked him and what his exact reply was.”

When we finally untangled our mistake about Haldeman a few days later — and had developed additional evidence of his control of the secret fund — Ben had already moved on.

His question was, “What have you got for tomorrow?” In other words, steadily forward. Nose down, ass up. How were we next going to explain to readers — and to him — what was going on and why? …

Bradlee had a unique restlessness. This characteristic was identified early in his life. He was part of the famous Grant Study of Harvard freshmen in the late 1930s. Social workers and psychologists interviewed and followed the 268 subjects (Bradlee called them “guinea pigs” in his memoir) through life. An early interviewer reported on this “restlessness,” adding, “There have been times when he has drunk too much alcohol, but this does not satisfy him.”

In a sense, nothing satisfied him fully. He kept raising the bar on everyone — himself included. From the day he took over as editor of the paper in the 1960s, he would prowl the fifth-floor newsroom looking for the action, or who had the good story or the latest gossip. Bradlee’s physical command and elan — a kind of leadership in itself — was famous and much imitated (horrendously by too many acolytes who started wearing Turnbull & Asser shirts, to the point where the newsroom sometimes suggested a Savile Row showroom). As he stopped to visit with reporters, chest outstretched, a look of curiosity or delight crossing his face, work often ceased, and from perhaps a hundred or more desks, the eyes of his staff would be trained on him, trying to read the signals. If two or three of his reporters were in a knot talking, he approached them. Maybe they had something, and he wanted to hear.

Be aggressive, he insisted. “I am very sympathetic with reporters who push,” he told us in a 1973 tape-recorded interview for the book we were writing about Watergate — which would eventually become All the President’s Men. “And it makes me feel terribly comfortable and particularly comfortable about being an editor who pushes back.”

He did not edit the paper for his friends or for those in high places.

When we were pursuing a story about the role of Henry Kissinger, Nixon’s national security adviser, in selecting 17 White House aides and newspaper reporters to be wiretapped to find sources of news leaks, Kissinger exploded when we informed him that we were going to quote his remarks to us in the paper. “What?!” Kissinger exclaimed. Those were not the rules he observed with other reporters. His voice was rising. “I don’t have to submit to police interrogation about this.”

Soon, we were summoned to meet with a group of the paper’s senior editors in the office of Bradlee’s deputy, Howard Simons. Bradlee, who was out of the building, phoned in and, imitating Kissinger in an exaggerated German accent, delivered his news. “I just got a call from Henry. He’s mad. You decide what to do. I’ll play reporter and read you what Henry said and you can use it if it will help.”

In the ensuing debate, the story was delayed and we got beat — not for the first or last time, by Seymour Hersh of the New York Times — though Kissinger’s quotes to us made their way into The Post soon after and, eventually, into a number of books.

The appearance of Hersh’s byline on crucial Watergate stories in the Times thrilled Bradlee. “We no longer controlled [the story] by ourselves,” Bradlee told us a few months later in the same taped interview. “That was a joyous time.”

Bradlee was not above using theater to protect his reporters. When the Nixon reelection committee issued subpoenas for our
Watergate notes and those of others at The Post as part of a civil lawsuit, Bradlee and publisher Katharine Graham agreed to declare that she — not her reporters — was the legal owner of all the materials, and that any court action would have to be directed at her personally.

“If the judge wants to send anyone to jail, he’s going to have to send Mrs. Graham,” Bradlee told us with palpable glee. “And, my God, the lady says she’ll go! Then the judge can have that on his conscience. Can’t you see the pictures of her limousine pulling up to the Women’s Detention Center and out gets our gal, going to jail to uphold the First Amendment? That’s a picture that would run in every newspaper in the world.”

It was not until we interviewed Bradlee that summer of 1973, in the midst of the nationally televised Senate Watergate hearings, that we fully realized the extent and nature of the pressures that he — and Mrs. Graham — had been under, and how he had insulated us. He’d not even told Howard Simons about serious attempts to get The Post to dial back on its Watergate coverage.

“I was beginning to understand how my own c--k was on the line,” he said.

He was getting phone calls from fellow newspaper editors — colleagues he regarded highly — who warned him that The Post had “gone nuts.” Katharine Graham was being bombarded — from within the administration, especially by Kissinger; by her closest friends, among them the influential columnists Joseph Alsop and James Reston; and by members of her board of directors.

“There came a time when Katharine said we better talk about this because it is very, very serious,” Bradlee told us. “She was getting a lot of s--t from close friends like Alsop and Reston saying The Post is really out on a limb with this and really harassing, almost, the administration, and why isn’t any...
other newspaper playing it? And she would come back to me and sort of play this stuff back to me. And I would go through this number and really assure her” that the stories were solid.

“She got worried a couple of times,” he continued. “Let’s face it. She’d go up to Wall Street and some of her pals up there would tell her that [the Nixon people] were really out to get The Post and that they were following her and tapping her phones, and they were following me and tapping my phone and that they weren’t screwing around. And she’d report this back.”

Among other things, she expressed concern that Nixon operatives would leak information — whether true or not — about his or her personal life, Bradlee said. (No evidence surfaced in all the Watergate investigations that Graham, Bradlee or anyone else at The Post had been wiretapped or followed.)

A turning point, he said, was a story published in September 1972, three months after the break-in, when John N. Mitchell, Nixon’s former campaign manager and his attorney general, responded to us in a phone conversation that “Katie Graham’s gonna get her tit caught in a big fat wringer” if a story implicating him was published. Mitchell had added that, in the near future, “we’re going to do a story on all of you,” and had hung up the phone.

“People said to me, ‘You know that you would have had to quit if you’d been wrong,’ and I sure as hell would have,” Bradlee told us. “Not to put too fine a point on it,” he said, there were “pressures, pressures. . . . It gradually increased every day. . . . Sure I was scared.”

At one juncture, there was an opportunity for The Washington Post Co. to buy a television station in Hartford, Conn. Bradlee had spoken with members of The Post’s board of directors, who were concerned about the impact the Watergate stories would have on a possible purchase.

“Would the [station owners] be more likely to sell if we wrote this kind of story or less likely to sell? And I knew about [the debate], and there was no way I was going to tell you about it, or Simons [the managing editor] about that.”

“You don’t want to be wrong ever,” he told us. “When you’re playing this kind of hardball it triples, quadruples [the stakes] in a multidimensional way.”

“Obviously we had lightning in a bottle, right? But whether it was lightning that had the capacity to destroy us or the president or either one, I [hadn’t] felt that yet.” He added, “I mean you were f---ing around with another police story and then one more thing would come up and the look of incredulity on both your faces I will remember until I die.”

A s editor, he made the final decisions on whether to publish dozens of stories that might reveal sensitive national security secrets. During the first month of Jimmy Carter’s presidency in 1977, Bradlee was summoned to the Oval Office as The Post was preparing to publish a story that King Hussein of Jordan was on the CIA payroll. Carter confirmed the CIA payments but made a personal plea for Bradlee not to publish the story. After Carter acknowledged that publication would not harm national security, Bradlee made the decision to print it, incurring Carter’s wrath. A personal note arrived from the president, rebuking Ben for the “irresponsible” story.

Bradlee was naturally suspicious of assertions — by presidents, especially — that stories should be withheld on national security grounds, as demonstrated time and again by spurious claims, including in the Pentagon Papers case. But not always.

In 1988, a low-level U.S. intelligence analyst came to The Post with information about important top-secret programs. The West had not yet won the Cold War. As Bradlee wrote in his 1995 memoir, A Good Life, the analyst provided “details for three different operations, each involving systems by which the Soviets controlled different units in their nuclear forces, each describing how the United States had been able to penetrate these systems in real time.”

Bradlee personally met with the analyst and concluded that the information, if disclosed, “plainly threatened the security of this nation.”

He refused to publish but worried — not on competitive grounds, but in the interests of America’s safety — that the analyst would go to other news organizations until he found an editor who would. Ben
was a patriot of the old school, having seen plenty of action in his three years aboard the destroyer USS Philip in the Pacific during World War II. “We wanted him on ice,” Bradlee wrote in his memoir, and he discussed with CIA Director William Webster how the man could be sidelined: given a promotion by the CIA, and warned that he would be prosecuted and jailed if he ever disclosed or discussed the top-secret programs. The analyst apparently never disclosed the information to any other journalists, and the details of the operations, which were highly successful, remain so sensitive that intelligence officials contend that they should not be revealed even today.

Ben Bradlee was the essence of newspapering. In 2008, he again sat down with us for a tape-recorded conversation about Watergate, his life and The Post. Ben reflected on the convulsions in the news media brought on by, among other factors, the economic decline of the newspaper industry, the ascent of the Internet and — of special concern to him — the impatience and speed of the news flow.

There was too much hand-wringing that newspapers would disappear, he said. “I am really appalled about that. I cannot envision a world without newspapers. I cannot envision it. I can envision a world with fewer newspapers. I can envision a world where newspapers are printed differently, distributed differently, but there is going to be a profession of journalism and their job is going to be to report what they believe the truth to be. And that won’t change.”

We were just 30 years old when we wrote All the President’s Men, and to say that we were impressionable at that time — to Bradlee and his methodology — would understimate the case. But as the years of our association turned to decades, and the friendship and the bond forged by a shared, unique experience became unbreakable, we remained just as wide-eyed and impressionable to his wisdom, to the inimitable truth of his example, and still incredulous at the sheer joy and determination he seemed to bring to his life each day, which, when we first encountered him, had invited disbelief. Over the next 40 years we learned again and again that what we had observed was all true.

“How would you like to be remembered?” Sally, his wife of 36 years, asked him in an interview for The Post in 2012. His answer is his essence: “To leave a legacy of honesty and to live a life as close to the truth as I can.”

— October 29, 2014

Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein are co-authors of the Watergate books All the President’s Men and The Final Days.
How Ben Bradlee transformed The Washington Post

BENJAMIN C. Bradlee, who died Tuesday at the age of 93, was the architect and builder of the modern Washington Post. His conviction that even the most powerful should be held to a standard of truth-telling inspired journalists well beyond The Post. His exuberance at work and in life served as a model well beyond journalism.

As managing editor and then executive editor from 1965 to 1991, Mr. Bradlee liked to roam the sprawling newsroom. Once he came up to a young journalist on the National staff, hired just months before, whose story was on Page One that day. Mr. Bradlee jabbed a finger at the front-page story. “Nothing like this!” he said, with a broad, knowing smile.

There was nothing like working for him, either. His enthusiasm was infectious. When Mr. Bradlee stopped to ask what was going on, reporters eagerly shared a tantalizing idea or tip. “Worth a phone call,” Mr. Bradlee often replied, and he needed say no more. His newsroom crackled with the energy of a modern startup. A certain “creative tension” was the reality, a competition among reporters and editors to win his approval. Mr. Bradlee loved the chase and the thrill of discovery.

Mr. Bradlee called reporters “the best lie detectors,” and nothing mattered more to him than exposing the truth, even if it took a long time. In his own account, the Vietnam War and then Watergate marked a crisis of confidence in American society, brought on by leaders who did not level with the people. In the Pentagon Papers, excerpts of which he published despite government threats, Mr. Bradlee saw proof that the American people had not been told the truth about decisions made to escalate the war. Then came Watergate and his determination to find out what really happened. He was outraged at President Nixon’s behavior. Nixon “lied over and over again with intent to deceive the American public and thereby save his ass from the consequences of his crimes,” Mr. Bradlee wrote in his memoir. The newspaper won global recognition for coverage that led to the president’s resignation, but the lesson for journalists was in Mr. Bradlee’s fusion of doggedness, fearlessness and professionalism.
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His management could be erratic, and he made mistakes, but Mr. Bradlee never tired of looking for the finest talent, both established and upcoming. Early on he lured David S. Broder from the New York Times and Haynes Johnson from the Washington Evening Star. They helped define the era. “The more we found, the hungrier we got,” he recalled. He invented the Style section, capturing in the newspaper the magic of the “New Journalism” then popular in magazines — provocative, literary, probing, sassy and swashbuckling. He was impatient with mediocrity and flackery. He relished stylish writing and reporters who were fast off the mark.

What Mr. Bradlee built at The Post could not have been achieved without the support of the Graham family, which invested generously in his ambitions and courageously stood behind his editorial decisions. Katharine Graham named Mr. Bradlee managing editor in 1965, and their partnership and shared vision spanned a generation of growth in the newspaper’s stature and profitability. Donald E. Graham, who did so much to lead the newspaper in the next generation, never forgot Mr. Bradlee’s contribution. As he said at his retirement in 1991, “It’s Bradlee’s paper.”

— October 21, 2014
Tom Toles  |  October 23, 2014

**Ben There, Doing That**

1. Who is the main figure in the editorial cartoon? What is the news peg?

2. Toles includes a desk and high-back chair in the cartoon’s details. What do these symbolize?

3. To what do the headlines of *Paradise Post* refer?

4. Editorial cartoons do not always have titles. In what way is the title to Toles’ October 23 cartoon both word play and speculation?

5. Tom Toles places his alter ego in the lower right corner. Often he adds a short statement. What does his use of “30-” communicate?
Benjamin C. Bradlee, who presided over The Washington Post newsroom for 26 years and guided The Post’s transformation into one of the world’s leading newspapers, died Oct. 21 at his home in Washington of natural causes. He was 93.

From the moment he took over The Post newsroom in 1965, Mr. Bradlee sought to create an important newspaper that would go far beyond the traditional model of a metropolitan daily. He achieved that goal by combining compelling news stories based on aggressive reporting with engaging feature pieces of a kind previously associated with the best magazines. His charm and gift for leadership helped him hire and inspire a talented staff and eventually made him the most celebrated newspaper editor of his era.

The most compelling story of Mr. Bradlee’s tenure, almost certainly the one of greatest consequence, was Watergate, a political scandal touched off by The Post’s reporting that ended in the only resignation of a president in U.S. history.
But Mr. Bradlee’s most important decision, made with Katharine Graham, The Post’s publisher, may have been to print stories based on the Pentagon Papers, a secret Pentagon history of the Vietnam War. The Nixon administration went to court to try to quash those stories, but the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the decision of the New York Times and The Post to publish them.

President Obama recalled Mr. Bradlee’s legacy on Tuesday night in a statement that said: “For Benjamin Bradlee, journalism was more than a profession — it was a public good vital to our democracy. A true newspaperman, he transformed the Washington Post into one of the country’s finest newspapers, and with him at the helm, a growing army of reporters published the Pentagon Papers, exposed Watergate, and told stories that needed to be told — stories that helped us understand our world and one another a little bit better. The standard he set — a standard for honest, objective, meticulous reporting — encouraged so many others to enter the profession. And that standard is why, last year, I was proud to honor Ben with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Today, we offer our thoughts and prayers to Ben’s family, and all who were fortunate to share in what truly was a good life.”

The Post’s circulation nearly doubled while Mr. Bradlee was in charge of the newsroom — first as managing editor and then as executive editor — as did the size of its newsroom staff. And he gave the paper ambition.

Mr. Bradlee stationed correspondents around the globe, opened bureaus across the Washington region and from coast to coast in the United States, and he created features and sections — most notably Style, one of his proudest inventions — that were widely copied by others.

During his tenure, a paper that had previously won just four Pulitzer

Publisher Katherine Graham and Executive Editor Ben Bradlee were upbeat in June 1971 after a judge let The Post continue to publish the Pentagon Papers, a decision endorsed by the Supreme Court.
Prizes, only one of which was for reporting, won 17 more, including the Public Service award for the Watergate coverage.

“Ben Bradlee was the best American newspaper editor of his time and had the greatest impact on his newspaper of any modern editor,” said Donald E. Graham, who succeeded his mother as publisher of The Post and Mr. Bradlee’s boss. “So much of The Post is Ben,” Mrs. Graham said in 1994, three years after Mr. Bradlee retired as editor. “He created it as we know it today.”

Leonard Downie Jr., who succeeded Mr. Bradlee as The Post’s executive editor in 1991, said, “Ben’s influence remained very much alive at The Washington Post long after he retired, distinguishing the newspaper and our newsroom as unique in journalism.” President Obama saluted Mr. Bradlee’s role at The Post when giving him the country’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, in 2013: “He transformed that newspaper into one of the finest in the world.”

Mr. Bradlee’s patrician good looks, gravelly voice, profane vocabulary and zest for journalism and for life all contributed to the charismatic personality that dominated and shaped The Post. Modern American newspaper editors rarely achieve much fame, but Mr. Bradlee became a celebrity and loved the status. Jason Robards played him in the movie “All the President’s Men,” based on Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein’s book about Watergate. Two books Mr. Bradlee wrote — Conversations With Kennedy and his memoir, A Good Life — were bestsellers. His craggy face became a familiar sight on television. In public and in private, he always played his part with theatrical enthusiasm.

“He was a presence, a force,” Woodward recalled of Mr. Bradlee’s role during the Watergate period, 1972 to 1974. “And he was a doubter, a skeptic — ‘Do we have it yet?’ ‘Have we proved it?’ ” Decades later, Woodward remembered the words that he most hated to hear from Mr. Bradlee then: “You don’t have it yet, kid.”

Mr. Bradlee loved the Watergate story, not least because it gave the newspaper “impact,” his favorite word in his first years as editor. He wanted the paper to be noticed. In his personal vernacular — a vivid, blasphemous argot that combined the swearwords he mastered in the Navy during World War II with the impeccable enunciation of a blue-blooded Bostonian — a great story was “a real tube-ripper.”

This meant a story was so hot that Post readers would rip the paper out of the tubes into which the paperboy delivered it. A bad story was “mego” — the acronym for “my eyes glaze over” — applied to anything that bored him. Maximizing the number of tube-rippers and minimizing mego was the Bradlee strategy.

Mr. Bradlee’s tactics were also simple: “Hire people smarter than you are” and encourage them to bloom. His energy and his mystique were infectious.

“It was hard to explain the full force of his personality to people who never met him,” said Ward Just, the reporter-turned-novelist whom Mr. Bradlee sent to cover the Vietnam War for The Post in 1966.
1967. “He really was one of those guys you’d take a machine-gun bullet for. You only meet three or four of them in an entire lifetime.”

But his strengths sometimes became weaknesses. The editor who could inspire his troops to do some of the best journalism ever published in America also fell for an artful hoax by a young reporter, Janet Cooke. Cooke invented an 8-year-old heroin addict named Jimmy and wrote a moving story about him. After the story won the Pulitzer Prize in 1981, Cooke was exposed as an impostor who invented not only Jimmy but also her own life story.

When they realized that Cooke had concocted an imaginary résumé, Mr. Bradlee and his editors interrogated her and extracted a confession. Mr. Bradlee quickly returned the Pulitzer, then encouraged The Post’s ombudsman, Bill Green, to investigate and report how the incident could have happened. This was the biggest assignment ever given to the in-house reader’s representative. Mr. Bradlee had created the position in 1970, making The Post the first major paper to employ an independent, in-house critic.

Green produced a detailed, embarrassing report about a newsroom where the urge for journalistic impact overrode several experienced reporters’ doubts about Jimmy’s existence. “Bradlee was really hurt” by the Cooke affair, recalled Peter Silberman, who served under Mr. Bradlee as a senior editor.

Mr. Bradlee had a notoriously short attention span. He rarely dug into the details of an issue himself, leaving that to the people he had hired. He managed The Post newsroom with a combination of viscera and intellect, often judging people by his personal reaction to them. He or she “makes me laugh” was perhaps Mr. Bradlee’s greatest compliment. He never enjoyed the minutiae of management and spent as little time on administrative work as he could get away with.

But Mr. Bradlee coped successfully with many crises. “Ben’s famous drive for a good story makes it easy to overlook his good judgment on matters ranging from national security to personal privacy,” observed Boisfeuillet Jones Jr., who was The Post’s lawyer when Mr. Bradlee was editor and who later became publisher. …

Mr. Bradlee’s wartime experience left him an unabashed patriot who bristled whenever critics of the newspaper accused it of helping America’s enemies. He sometimes agreed to keep stories out of the paper when government officials convinced him that they might cause serious harm. But he also reacted angrily to what he considered phony attempts to invoke “national security” by officials who were really just trying to avoid embarrassment.

Lying, especially lying by public officials, particularly offended Mr. Bradlee. He wrote and lectured on the subject for decades.

“The values that Ben instilled in our newsroom — independence and fairness, aggressive reporting, compelling writing and individual initiative — will long outlive him,” Downie said. “And it will always be a newsroom where everyone has fun, as Ben did.”

Mr. Bradlee’s relationship with Mrs. Graham was critical. She allowed him to spend money, ultimately many millions of dollars, to build a great newspaper. At key moments — particularly the 1971 decision to publish excerpts from the Pentagon Papers and later during Watergate — she stood squarely behind him, defying the advice of her attorneys and business advisers and her powerful Washington friends. …

**First whiff of the industry**

Benjamin Crowninshield Bradlee was born into the old aristocracy of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Boston on Aug. 26, 1921. His father, Frederick Josiah Bradlee Jr., known as “B,” could trace his American ancestry back through 10 generations of Bradlees. B was an all-American football star at Harvard who became an investment banker in the booming 1920s. He married Josephine deGersdorff, daughter of a prominent New York lawyer and a New England aristocrat named Helen Crowninshield. …

Mr. Bradlee got his first whiff of the newspaper business at age 15, when his father arranged a job for him as a copy boy on the Beverly (Mass.) Evening Times. He could augment his $5-a-week salary by reporting events in the lives of local citizens, which he loved to do. “I
learned a vital lesson: People will talk if they feel comfortable,” Mr. Bradlee wrote in *A Good Life*.

He was the 52nd male Bradlee to enter Harvard since 1795 — “no alternatives were suggested, or contemplated,” he wrote. He arrived at Harvard Yard just as war in Europe was beginning and decided to join the Naval ROTC to improve his initial posting in the war he and his contemporaries knew they would soon be fighting. With that threat hovering over him, Mr. Bradlee found it hard to be serious about college. Only in his third year, with the war ever more ominous, did he buckle down.

He took a double academic load, which, after summer school, allowed him to graduate in August 1942 with majors in Greek and English. On the same day he received his diploma and his naval commission, Mr. Bradlee married his college sweetheart, Jean Saltonstall, a member of one of Massachusetts’s best-known families. After a short honeymoon, just as he was turning 21, he was off to war.

Mr. Bradlee’s three years in the wartime Navy had a lasting influence on him. As a young officer, he learned empathy for the enlisted men and developed a style of leadership that he relied on throughout his professional life. As recounted in his memoirs, it combined an easy authority with tolerance for the irrepressible enthusiasm of those under his command. Even as a young officer, he never enjoyed a confrontation and preferred accommodation to the aggressive use of authority.

After the war, Mr. Bradlee got his first real job in journalism, working with a St. Mark’s friend, Blair Clark, to create the *New Hampshire Sunday News*. Mr. Bradlee was one of seven staff members who filled the 64-page paper every week. The editor, Ralph M. Blagden, “had an almost contagious sense of how to find a story and where it might go,” Mr. Bradlee wrote in his memoirs. “For every answer we gave him, he had 50 more questions, and I learned everything from him in two years.”
But the *Sunday News* couldn’t make money, and it failed. Family friends offered to help Mr. Bradlee find a new job. Edward A. Weeks, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, wrote a friend at the *Baltimore Sun* about Mr. Bradlee; Christian A. Herter, the congressman and former governor of Massachusetts, wrote to *The Post*. In November 1948, Mr. Bradlee set out on a train trip, bound from Boston to Baltimore to Washington to Salt Lake City to Santa Barbara. When his overnight train reached Baltimore, a heavy rainstorm discouraged him from getting off, so he decided to go first to Washington. The day before he arrived for an interview, a *Post* reporter had quit unexpectedly, creating a vacancy. Mr. Bradlee charmed *The Post*’s editors, who offered him a job for $80 a week, starting on Christmas Eve.

In his first days at the paper, he impressed *The Post*’s managing editor, J. Russell Wiggins, by producing a list of the city’s 10 leading bookies. He didn’t tell Wiggins that he got the names from Morris Siegel, his new pal, who was a *Post* sportswriter. Mr. Bradlee covered the municipal court, the attempted assassination of President Harry S. Truman by Puerto Rican nationalists, the gambling industry in Washington and life in the city’s alleyes, still home to tens of thousands of poor African Americans.

He liked *The Post*, but he wanted to cover big national stories, and it was clear to him that he wouldn’t get a chance to do that for years. *The Post*, which Mrs. Graham’s father, Eugene Meyer, had bought at a bankruptcy auction in 1933, was still losing money. $1 million a year in 1951. Mr. Bradlee concluded that the paper would not be growing anytime soon. So when an old friend said he could help him become the press attaché at the American Embassy in Paris, he jumped.

Mr. Bradlee loved life in Paris, but he was not a natural diplomat or bureaucrat. After 21 / 2 years, he found a way to return to journalism. *Newsweek*, then a struggling imitation of *Time* and owned by Vincent Astor, needed a European correspondent. The magazine’s foreign editor was delighted to discover that Mr. Bradlee’s mother had been a friend of Brooke Astor, the boss’s wife. He got the job.

“The sheer joy and romance of being a foreign correspondent is hard to explain, even harder to exaggerate,” Mr. Bradlee wrote in his memoirs. In four years, he covered wars in Algeria and the Middle East, peace conferences in Geneva, the wedding of Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier in Monte Carlo. …

Two deaths in 1963 altered Mr. Bradlee’s life. The first was Philip Graham’s suicide that August, after a struggle with bipolar disorder. Then in November, Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. A fortnight before his death, the Bradlees had spent a glamorous weekend with the Kennedys at their new retreat in Middleburg, Va. On Nov. 22, 1963, “life changed, forever, in the middle of a nice day, at the end of a good week, in a wonderful year of what looked like an extraordinary decade of promise,” Mr. Bradlee wrote. …

On Nov. 15, *The Post* announced that Mr. Bradlee would be the paper’s new managing editor, a title he would hold until 1968, when he was named to the newly created position of executive editor.

**Fast, loose and fun**

In 1965, *The Post* had a relatively small staff that included no more than a dozen distinguished reporters. Its most famous writer was Shirley Povich, a sports columnist. Its Pentagon correspondent was on the Navy payroll as a reserve captain. The newspaper had a half-dozen foreign correspondents and no reporter based outside the Washington area in the United States. The paper had no real feature section and provided little serious cultural coverage, but it did carry a daily page called “For and About Women.”

Apart from its famous editorial page (including the renowned cartoonist, Herblock), which had challenged Sen. Joseph McCarthy and vigorously promoted civil rights for African Americans, and which remained Wiggins’s domain after Mr. Bradlee’s arrival, the paper generally had modest expectations for itself, and it calmly fulfilled them.

At the outset, Mr. Bradlee decided “to concentrate on the one thing I did know about: good reporters.” He relied heavily on one good reporter at *The Post*: Laurence Stern, who proved to be his most important
sidekick in the early years. Stern was a wry, irreverent intellectual with ambitious ideas for journalism. Mr. Bradlee named him The Post’s national editor.

Mr. Bradlee brought Ward Just to The Post from Newsweek and soon sent him to Vietnam, where he wrote eloquent, gritty dispatches that undermined the Johnson administration’s public optimism about the course of the war in 1966 and ’67. He hired Richard Harwood from the Louisville Courier-Journal, a brilliant and dogged reporter who became one of the most important editors of the Bradlee era. He found George Wilson, a writer for Aviation Week, who became a distinguished Pentagon correspondent. He hired an old friend from Paris, Stanley Karnow, a Time magazine correspondent in Asia, to be The Post’s China watcher, based in Hong Kong.

Mr. Bradlee’s biggest coup, in his estimation, was hiring David S. Broder from the New York Times. …

Soon after he joined The Post, Broder said, “I knew it was heaven for me.” Mr. Bradlee’s Post was fast, loose and fun, and it gave Broder and other self-starting reporters plenty of room to flourish. Laughter and irreverence were crucial ingredients. Mr. Bradlee played favorites, so the people who made him laugh, or who wrote those tube-rippers, agreed that working for him at The Post was a heavenly experience. Those left out of Mr. Bradlee’s magic circle could feel their exclusion with some pain. Confronted with a staff that included reporters he considered mediocre but who all enjoyed job security, Mr. Bradlee felt he had to encourage some people to leave — by “abusing people,” as he put it in 2000. “That’s what it was — mistreating people, not treating them the way you treated the people you really cared about.” He did it with no pleasure, his words and his body language made clear, but “I did it, to try to get rid of people, to try to persuade people to leave.”

Mr. Bradlee had the reputation of a tough guy. But after that initial period, he avoided confrontations and almost never fired an employee. The changes he made were not guided by any grand design or elaborate philosophy of journalism. “I was simplistic,” he said in 1991, discussing those early days. “If you made the paper better every day, and you got better people working for you, and you reached higher, the paper would get better.” It was a lesson he said he learned from Miss Fisk at the Dexter School, his private grade school in Boston: “Our best today, our better tomorrow.”

When he came to The Post, Mr. Bradlee did have in mind one departure from the traditional view of daily journalism: “There [was] no reason why you couldn’t do daily what the news magazines were doing weekly,” he said. “On main news events, tell [readers] what it meant as well as what happened, and put it in some kind of historical and social perspective. And as far as the back of the book was concerned [the phrase used at Time and Newsweek to describe the magazines’ feature
sections] to tell [readers] what was going on in the cultural divisions of society. And to entertain them. Those magazines were more entertaining than newspapers.”

Post reporters such as Just, Harwood and Nicholas von Hoffman, a daring writer who learned his craft at the old Chicago Daily News, began to write with a confidence and an edge that was seen in the “new journalism” being published in Esquire magazine but was rarely on display in daily newspapers. Broder, Harwood, Haynes Johnson, a Pulitzer Prize-winner from the Evening Star, and their colleagues made The Post the country’s leading chronicler of national politics, Mr. Bradlee’s favorite subject.

Taking a new approach

In the late 1960s, Mr. Bradlee began work on a new section for The Post that would give the paper a “back of the book” like Time’s or Newsweek’s — a place for cultural news, entertaining stories and journalism about the way people conducted their lives. Mr. Bradlee wanted a section devoted to “how men and women lived — together and apart — what they liked and what they were like, what they did when they were not at the office. We wanted profiles ... that went way beyond the bare bones of biography. We wanted to look at the culture of America as it was changing in front of our eyes. The sexual revolution, the drug culture, the women's movement. And we wanted it to be interesting, exciting, different.”

The Style section first appeared Jan. 6, 1969. ...

Local news was never a favorite Bradlee topic, but he understood its importance and encouraged the editors and reporters who cared about aggressive coverage of the Washington region. The Post expanded into the suburbs just as they were becoming the dominant force in the regional economy, a critical element in the paper’s successful competition with the Evening Star.

Mr. Bradlee was especially proud of one of the changes he made during his first years at The Post that wasn’t as tangible as a new section of the paper but ultimately might have been more significant. The Post he inherited was intertwined with power in a way that made him uncomfortable. As publisher, Philip Graham had often used his stature and personal charm to meddle in politics and influence events behind the scenes. For example, he encouraged Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson to agree to be running mates in 1960. Post editors also sometimes used their power to achieve objectives that were not entirely journalistic.

Mr. Bradlee wanted none of this. ...

A turning point

Watergate made Mr. Bradlee’s Post famous, but the story that probably made the Watergate coverage possible was the Pentagon Papers, initially a New York Times scoop. Daniel Ellsberg, a disaffected former government official, gave the Times a set of the papers, a compilation of historical documents about U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Times journalists worked for months on stories about them, which began to appear June 13, 1971. The stories created a sensation, even though they contained very little dramatic revelation. After three days of stories, the Nixon administration successfully sought a federal court injunction blocking further publication, the first such “prior restraint” in the nation's history.

Ellsberg then offered the documents to The Post. Two days after the court order, Post editors and reporters were plowing through the Pentagon Papers and planning to write about them. ...
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for weeks afterward.

The sense of independence earned in 1971 was critical to The Post’s pursuit of Watergate, which began the next June. At every stage, it was a compelling yarn, from the days when Woodward and Bernstein established connections between the burglars and President Richard M. Nixon’s reelection campaign to the amazing weeks, more than two years later, when it became clear that the president would not survive in office. …

‘A grand, brave man’

Mr. Bradlee had edited The Post for nearly nine years when Nixon resigned in August 1974. In those years, he had created a great newspaper and made it famous. Nothing that happened in the newsroom in the 17 years he remained as executive editor was as dramatic as the events of those first nine, with one unhappy exception: the Janet Cooke affair in 1981.

Cooke’s deception was a jolt for Mr. Bradlee and his colleagues. Personnel management was not one of his strong suits. Female and black reporters had brought formal complaints of discrimination against Mr. Bradlee’s Post, to his great frustration. He thought he was open and fair but didn’t realize that the lack of any reliable system for evaluating journalists and developing their careers made some people feel they weren’t appreciated.

In 1984, at Don Graham’s urging, Mr. Bradlee named Downie managing editor. Downie, 21 years younger than Mr. Bradlee, had won his stripes as an investigative reporter and as an editor on the Watergate story. He was not one of Mr. Bradlee’s favorites and wasn’t his first choice to be managing editor. But he won Mr. Bradlee’s respect, and they were soon working easily together. In 1991, on the eve of his 70th birthday, Mr. Bradlee retired. He still looked and acted like a man much younger.

The staff drenched him in an outpouring of emotion on his last day in the newsroom, July 31, 1991. Most of the men and women on the staff had bought, borrowed or faked a striped shirt with a white collar and cuffs, mimicking those made by Turnbull & Asser in London that Mr. Bradlee had been wearing for years. For tribute after tribute, Mr. Bradlee kept his eyes dry. But then he heard the telegram from Nora Boustany, who had covered the war in Lebanon for The Post and was back in Beirut for a visit at the time of the retirement party. Her comments were read aloud:

“Whenever I found myself alone on the streets of Beirut, I would just shrug off the shelling, the gunmen, and the dark corners, telling myself there is this distinguished eminence up there who really appreciates and understands the true meaning of courage in journalism. … For me you will always be the grand, brave man of the news who watched over me and made me want to give just a little bit more. Thank you for giving us all something so special to believe in.” …

The late David Halberstam, who won a Pulitzer Prize for the New York Times and devoted much of his book “The Powers That Be” to Mr. Bradlee’s Washington Post, offered this valedictory in an interview:

“He took The Post, then affluent and filled with underutilized potential, and made it a formidable national newspaper worthy of a head-to-head competition with the [New York] Times. He did it in a way that made the paper itself a joyous place to work. The paper reflected his personality. He was exuberant, competitive and combative if challenged. He made The Post a magnet for young reporters looking for a chance to play in a very high-stakes game.”

— October 22, 2014

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This piece is an excerpt from the longer article. To read the entire article, go to http://thewashingtonpostnie.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/showlink.aspx?bookmarkid=AFXXQ4MVE93
Newspapers don’t tell the truth under many different, and occasionally innocent, scenarios. Mostly when they don’t know the truth. Or when they quote someone who does not know the truth.

And more and more, when they quote someone who is spinning the truth, shaping it to some preconceived version of a story that is supposed to be somehow better than the truth, omitting details that could be embarrassing.

And finally, when they quote someone who is flat-out lying. There is a lot of spinning and a lot of lying in our times — in politics, in government, in sports and everywhere. It’s gotten to a point where, if you are like me, you no longer believe the first version of anything. It wasn’t always that way.

I guess it started for me with Vietnam, when the establishment felt it had to lie to justify a policy that, as it turned out, was never going to work. It mushroomed during the counterculture days, when sacred protective shrouds were ripped away from every institution in our society. Government itself, of course, the church, schools, colleges, family and sexual relations, business, especially big business, the Boeskys, the Milkens, the Barbarians at the gates.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

The late Washington Post editor Benjamin Bradlee on why politicians — and journalists — lie
And, of course, the press, which was on hand to record the ripping of the shrouds with glee. Some thought: too much glee.

One by one these institutions got a hard second look from the new generation, the first hard look since World War II and the first new look from citizens of the Information Age. But Vietnam, the counterculture — Haight-Ashbury and drugs and all that — the Pentagon Papers, Watergate, Nixon’s exile to disgrace, the S&L scandals, Iranagate, the Gulf War, they were all terribly important stories, historical turning points that had to be covered with energy and intelligence.

Let’s look at Vietnam first and the damage it did to the habit and the virtue of truth, to the politicians caught in its jaws, to the press caught up in the web of official lies. Just one incident hidden away in the Pentagon Papers, which, of course, no one ever read.

When [President Lyndon] Johnson sent his secretary of defense, Bob McNamara, to Vietnam right after he succeeded Kennedy, he wanted McNamara to give him a new, fresh look at how the war was going. It was the end of December or early January 1964. McNamara, the whiz kid, toured the battlefields, listened to the generals’ briefings for days. When he left Vietnam to come back to America, he held a press conference at Tan Son Nhat Airport proclaiming that he was much encouraged, that the South Vietnamese army had shaped up, that all the signs pointed toward progress. It was not the “light at the end of the tunnel” speech, but it was damn near the same. When he landed at Andrews Air Force Base, he told reporters there pretty much the same thing. He was, he said, going to tell the president how much things had improved. And then he took a helicopter to the White House lawn and disappeared into the White House. And nobody knew what he told the president.

But, wonder of wonders, it’s there in the Pentagon Papers. Seven years later, it turned out that when he landed on the White House lawn, he swept into the president’s office and told him that everything was going to hell in a handbasket in Vietnam. [Gen. William] Westmoreland was going to ask for a couple of hundred thousand more GIs, and he, McNamara, would probably support that request.

Just think for a minute how history might have changed if Americans had known then that their leaders felt the war was going to hell in a handbasket!

In the next seven years, thousands of American lives and more thousands of Asian lives would have been saved. The country might never have lost faith in its leaders. Because the country, deep down in their hearts, came to know that their leaders were lying. And that’s the beginning, I think, of a great sea change in this country. They knew it, despite whatever their commander in chief said — they knew it. There wasn’t much anybody could do about it, but they knew it.

America did start to lose faith in its leaders. All that information is contained in the Pentagon Papers, incidentally, if anybody ever wonders why newspapers raised such hell about being denied the right to print...
information from those documents. The idea, incidentally, that any of that was secret boggles your mind. And yet the government of Richard Nixon took two papers to the Supreme Court to try to stop them from publishing a story for the first time in the history of the republic.

Now, 18 years later — get that, 18 years later — the prosecutor, the solicitor general of the United States, a man called Erwin Griswold who was dean of the Harvard Law School, wrote a story for The Washington Post — he volunteered to write a story for The Washington Post — saying that at no time had national security been threatened as a result of publishing the Pentagon Papers.

Just think of that for a minute. Never mind the couple of million dollars that it cost to defend these newspapers against that prosecution. You have no idea what it was like, what it is like, to be accused, in effect, of treason by your country. At first, we were not even allowed in the courtroom because we didn’t have security clearance to hear the government’s case against us. The courtroom had two swinging doors which had glass panels in them. The glass panels were covered with blackout curtains. Blackout curtains! And when you asked why, you couldn’t believe the answer, which was so that no one — godless communists or whoever — could read the lips of the witnesses.

Let me just take a little riff on this one because it is so outrageous. It’s a civil case where you’re not indicted, but if you lose a civil case, you know damn well you’re going to be indicted. And if you’re indicted and you happen to lose in front of a jury, you know damn well that your newspaper is going to lose all its television stations because a felon can’t own a television station.

But anyway, the high moment for me was when the judge turned to an assistant secretary of defense who was testifying, and he said: “Let’s cut to the chase; let’s get right to the point. What information contained in the Pentagon Papers would most seriously damage the national security of the United States if The Washington Post publishes it?”

The guy went absolutely white — ashen — because he had not read the Pentagon Papers. He immediately asked for a continuation for a few minutes. And we could see them huddling over there, the prosecution team.

And at the defense table, which had nine of us on it, all mostly reporters — I forget whether Katharine Graham was a defendant; I think she was — we had brought a couple of documents with us. And we waited and waited and waited. And, finally, he said he was ready to return to the stand.

The stenotypist read the question back, and he said, “Operation Marigold.” You know, we were all terrified that if it starts with “Operation,” you know that has to be national security. So George Wilson, our Pentagon correspondent, started stirring through a transcript of hearings — not classified hearings — and in the agate print he found a reference to “Operation Marigold.” (In case you’ve forgotten what it was, it was an effort by Lyndon Johnson to enlist the Poles to see if Ho Chi Minh would offer them a deal that he wouldn’t offer to him.) And the following week’s Life magazine had a lead article by Harold Wilson, the prime minister of Great Britain, on
Operation Marigold. I mean, it’s just ridiculous.

Even the very best newspapers have never learned how to handle public figures who lie with a straight face. No editor would dare print this version of Nixon’s first comments on Watergate, for instance: “The Watergate break-in involved matters of national security, President Nixon told a national TV audience last night, and for that reason he would be unable to comment on the bizarre burglary. That is a lie.”

We won’t dare do that. But that is what it was, and, for better or for worse, we aided and abetted in publishing something that wasn’t the truth, something that was a lie. I hate to hedge this by calling them non-truths; I like to call them lies. And even the boldest editorial pages, where such a comment might be appropriate, are reluctant to strike that hard, that fast.

So we have to wait, searching aggressively for ways to prove the lie, and in the process, we alienate those who don’t believe or don’t want to believe the lie. Two cases involving lies — not as they are being called today, “being inaccurate, incomplete or unreliable,” but lies — that have dominated Page One, of course, in the last several weeks illustrate our dilemma.

For two years, Speaker of the House [Newt] Gingrich has defiantly and even contemptuously denied that GOPAC, his own political action committee, had anything to do with the college course he was teaching. And for two years the press reported his denials, even though most of the press knew he was lying. And the Ethics Committee found that GOPAC was deeply involved in developing, fundraising and promotion for Newt’s course.

During the 1996 presidential campaign, the Republicans accused the press and the Democrats of keeping the Gingrich affair alive to make life easier for Clinton. The Gingrich affair did make life easier for Clinton then, and as a matter of fact, it’s going to make life easier for Clinton today.

Suddenly, on the eve of Christmas, Gingrich decides to cut his losses in order to save his speakership. And he issues one of the most extraordinary mea culpas in the history of confession — so obfuscated that the public is still trying to determine what he is confessing. He did not confess, you notice, to violating any law, just to “failure to ensure” that he did not violate any law.

Excuse me? Where is Lewis Carroll when we need him?

The great cartoonist Herblock had a cartoon recently which showed a dead person, a man holding a gun right over him and talking to a policeman. The caption was, “I failed to call my lawyer.”

Am I the only one who thinks that Mr. Gingrich is lying again, even as he “confesses”? “I did not intend to mislead the committee,” Gingrich explains — come on! — even as he admitted that “in my name and over my signature, inaccurate, incomplete and unreliable” — that’s where we got that — “statements were given to the committee.”

The conservative pundit William Schneider, whom most of you know or have seen on television, had it just about right, it seems to me, when he said: “Gingrich’s violation of House rules was not an inadvertent error. It was a systematic pattern of deception, carried out with hubris and defiance over several years.” You know it’s one or the other; it can’t be both.
The spinning done on the Gingrich affair by the likes of master spinners Tony Blankley and GOP chairman Haley Barbour has been so successful, it seemed to me, that Gingrich would prevail — at least for a while. And of course, you know that a few hours ago he did prevail — for a while.

The other story, equally brimming with lies and equally dominating our front pages, of course, is the Democratic National Committee’s lurid fundraising problems.

This is currently my own favorite to illustrate the problems facing the public and the press as they search for the truth. You know the grand outlines:

Although the law forbids non-U.S. citizens and companies from contributing money to U.S. political campaigns, a motley crew of foreigners contributed hundreds of thousands of bucks to the Clinton campaign and the Clinton defense fund. (“Motley crew” hardly describes them: Suma Ching Hai, a slinky cult leader from Taiwan; Wang Jun, a weapons dealer from mainland China; and a couple of Indonesian millionaires named Riady — one of whom visited the White House 20 times. That’s just to name a few.)

These donors have had extraordinary access to President Clinton, including the odd sleepover in the Lincoln Bedroom.

The earliest comments described the visits as “purely social” by a White House spokesman. That was a lie. Financial donations were first defended as legitimate. That, too, was a lie, and $1.5 million was then returned.

One day, December 22, 1996, three days before Christmas, the White House gave three distinctly different versions of a May 9th meeting between senior Clinton aides and officials of Clinton’s defense fund to discuss several hundred thousand dollars of questionable donations. All this behind closed doors, and we don’t know anything about it. An authorized White House spokesman said there was a debate at the meeting about whether to keep $378,999, with some White House officials suggesting that some of the money appeared to be legitimate and should be kept.

Reporters who went with that version were lying, apparently, because the next version said no one suggested keeping anything; aides were simply raising questions.

And later that was rendered “inoperative,” in [Nixon press secretary] Ron Ziegler’s immortal phrase. The questions raised concerned only how to explain to donors and the public that their money was being returned.

When the money was returned in late June, the refund was accompanied by a letter to the donors that said: “This does not mean you cannot make a contribution if you meet the requirements described in the enclosed fact sheet.”

That letter produced another $120,000, but a subsequent investigation — all of these “subsequent investigations” are triggered by reporters who think that the truth has not yet emerged — found that some of that money came from people who “lacked the resources” to give and was, in fact, from other sources.

And so that $120,000 was returned. There seems to be more money going back out then there is coming in!

Where lies the truth? That’s the question that pulled us into this business, as it propelled Diogenes through the streets of Athens looking for an honest man.

The more aggressive our search for truth, the more some people are offended by the press. The more complicated are the issues and the more sophisticated are the ways to disguise the truth, the more aggressive our search for truth must be, and the more offensive we are sure to become to some.

So be it.

Remember, Walter Lippmann was right so many years ago when he wrote that, in a democracy, the truth and nothing but the truth are rarely available immediately. In a democracy, the truth emerges — sometimes it takes years — and that is how the system is supposed to work and eventually strengthen itself.

I take great strength from that now, knowing that in my experience, the truth does emerge. It takes forever sometimes, but it does emerge. And that any relaxation by the press will be extremely costly to democracy.

Ben Bradlee, who passed away October 21 at age 93, was executive editor of The Washington Post from 1968 to 1991. This essay is excerpted from the Press-Enterprise Lecture he delivered at the University of California, Riverside, on Jan. 7, 1997.