

**Remarks by Donald E. Graham  
Presenting The Media Institute's  
2023 Freedom of Speech Award  
To Bob Woodward  
October 19, 2023**

I came to work at *The Washington Post* in January 1971 as a reporter. I knew I might not be the best reporter at the *Post*, but perhaps I aspired to be the best reporter hired in 1971.

But in December of that year, my hopes were dashed. We hired a fellow named Bob Woodward. He was hired – this is true – because he so pestered Harry Rosenfeld, the metro editor of the *Post*, with phone calls that Harry's wife, Annie, finally said to him, "Aren't you always saying you want reporters who are more persistent?"

Woodward took no time at all to make himself noticed. I remember a dinner at my mother's house with Ben Bradlee where all three of us were talking about what a great reporter Woodward was, months before Watergate. Note that this was Bradlee, perhaps the greatest editor of any American newspaper, and Kay Graham, in my biased eyes probably the greatest publisher of any newspaper, talking about a rookie reporter. He was the best reporter in Washington then, and he's the best now.

I had a closeup view of Watergate; I was no longer in the newsroom but was working in production or circulation, talking to Bob and Carl in the evenings and to my mother almost every day. Woodward would say, correctly, that the *Post* alone did not cause the uncovering of the Watergate scandal and all it led to. Judge John Sirica, the Senate Watergate Committee, and others played key roles. But I would say all these years later: If the *Post* hadn't hired Bob Woodward, I'm not sure that story would ever have been disclosed.

Now suppose you were Woodward after Watergate: You were 31; you had won the Pulitzer Prize for your newspaper; you had written the No. 1 best-selling book, and you were being played in a movie by Robert Redford. Might you work a little less, become a well-paid speaker, and a talking head on TV?

Bob's answer was: He worked even harder. He went on to write 21 books, of which 13 have been No. 1 best sellers – more, I believe, than any other nonfiction writer. He wrote the first book to get inside the Supreme Court; he wrote four books on our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the only such books to report the thinking of our nation's leaders contemporaneously during wartime. If I wanted to understand Donald Trump, I would start with Bob's three books on him, though I understand there are other books on President Trump.

Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest reporter in the history of American journalism, Bob Woodward.