

Capital Comment

Postwatch

She's Regal! She's Ruthless! She's Kay Graham!

Washington Post Company chairman **Katharine Graham** won't like *Power, Privilege, and the Post*, the new unauthorized biography of her by **Carol Felsenthal**.

She especially won't like a 12,000-word excerpt from the book in the February *Vanity Fair*, which brings back all the sad stories of **Phil Graham's** manic-depressive illness, serving up almost every sordid scene anyone can remember.

The last half of the 512-page book is



A new book about Katharine Graham tells many stories, but she remains elusive.

more interesting to *Post* watchers. It has lots of stories about Kay Graham's two sides: the ruthless and imperious queen, the smart and successful publisher.

It also has lots on her relationship with **Ben Bradlee**. Among the stories:

Bradlee killed plans for a stunning new *Post* headquarters designed by **I.M. Pei** not because of the architecture but because he was trying to humiliate *Post* business head **John Sweeterman**.

Bob Woodward was Bradlee's heir apparent until the **Janet Cooke** blowup in 1980. Having to give back Cooke's Pulitzer derailed Woodward and also cost Bradlee the power to name his successor. He wanted **Bill Greider**, now with *Rolling Stone*, or **Shelby Coffey**, now editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. Kay probably wanted **Jim Hoagland**, who as a foreign editor had helped set up many of her trips abroad. After Janet Cooke, Kay's son **Don** settled on the seemingly safe **Len Downie**.

Felsenthal says that Kay Graham, whom she interviewed extensively for her earlier biography of **Alice Roosevelt Longworth**, declined to cooperate on this book. "She sent me a very kind note saying she was writing her own memoirs. Then the notes became shorter and curt." Neither son **Don** nor daughter **Lally Weymouth** cooperated, either—**Don** declined graciously, Felsenthal says, but **Weymouth** sent her a nasty note saying she doesn't discuss her mother.

While Felsenthal did plenty of research, her book is mostly clues and guesses about the elusive personalities of Kay and **Don Graham**. More answers may be coming in Kay's memoirs, but a publicist for **Knopf**, her publisher, says her book won't be out this year.

Bleeding Talent

When word got out that *Style* writer **Martha Sherrill** was being wooed by the New York fashion magazine *Mirabella*, executive editor **Len Downie** and managing editor **Robert Kaiser** took her to lunch. Their question: "How can we keep you?"

The *Post* is bleeding good feature writers. **Jane Leavy** split to write novels; **Dave Remnick** went to the *New Yorker*; **Stephanie Mansfield** writes for *GQ*; **Marjorie Williams** went to *Vanity Fair*. TV critic **Tom Shales** has all but abandoned the newsroom, often writing from Los Angeles, and has said he's interested in life beyond the *Post*.

Part of the problem is that talented writers tend to be restless, and the *Post* has confined them. Editors discourage freelance work and hold veto power over outside assignments.

Downie and **Kaiser** told **Sherrill** she could work six months for the *Post* and take six months off to work on other projects without having to go hat in hand to editors for permission. A similar deal has been offered to **Shales**.

"It's good news for everyone," says **Sherrill**.

That is, if you're a hot writer.

Ann's Friends

Through most of the twelve-year Republican reign, **Ann Devroy** dominated *Post*

White House coverage, sometimes scooping the competition and occasionally beheading colleagues like mild-mannered **John Yang**, who didn't last long as her number-two.

Though **Devroy** wrote tough stories that virtually hounded **John Sununu** out of the White House, it was well known in the newsroom that **James Baker** and his aides, **Margaret Tutwiler** and **Janet Mullins**, were among her best sources—and among her best friends.



Ann Devroy

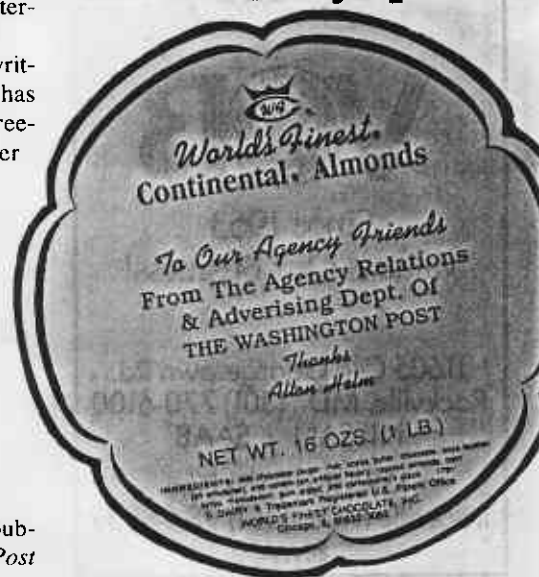
Post newsroom sources say that **Devroy** was somewhat skeptical when investigative reporters **Walter Pincus** and **Michael Isikoff** began to write that **Baker**, **Tutwiler**, and **Mullins** were neck-deep in the search of **Bill Clinton's** passport files. **Devroy** stopped pooh-poohing the stories after federal prosecutors began making loud noises.

Asked to interview **Mullins** and **Tutwiler**, **Devroy** said within earshot of reporters: "I can't. They're my friends."

Devroy took herself off the story and was "professional about the whole thing," says **Pincus**.

Devroy says she told *Post* editors four years ago that she and **Tutwiler** had been close for twenty years.

They Can Sell . . . But Can They Spell?



Washingtonian