

## Reply to John O'Connor

*By Mark Feldstein*

John O'Connor's response to my book review is almost as inaccurate, vituperative, and incoherent as his book. Let me start by correcting some of his factual errors:

He accuses me of arguing that a journalist has no duty to act in the best interest of his source. I never said this and don't believe it. O'Connor simply makes this up out of thin air.

O'Connor says that I "support" the government's successful prosecution of W. Mark Felt, but my review neither supported nor condemned his 1980 criminal conviction; it merely stated the empirical fact that Felt authorized illegal FBI wiretaps and burglaries.

O'Connor writes that he is "largely in agreement" with my describing the *Washington Post's* Watergate journalism as being a "mythology" but then goes on to decry my supposed "enshrinement of the 'mythology'" of Watergate journalism. Hello?

In reality, it is O'Connor who promotes one of the biggest myths of Watergate journalism: that Felt's leaks were motivated largely by idealism rather than ambition and anger at being denied the job of FBI director.

I am well aware that O'Connor's father worked in the same law firm as William Ruckelshaus, the acting FBI director who forced Felt out of the bureau in 1973. That's why it's all the more indefensible that O'Connor ignores the evidence Ruckelshaus provided that directly contradicted O'Connor's heroic mythologizing of Felt.

O'Connor tries to wiggle out of his book's false statement that "any knowledgeable observer understood" that a 1972 government plot to assassinate columnist Jack Anderson was run by the CIA and was not "a White House initiative." In fact, the plot was instigated in the Nixon White House by special counsel Charles Colson, who delegated the task to White House operatives E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy.

I deliberately chose not to go down the rabbit hole of deconstructing the outlandish and discredited Watergate conspiracy theories that O'Connor embraces. Suffice it to say that what's true isn't original and what's original isn't true.

I invite anyone who might be interested in a more thoughtful treatment of this issues to read this 10,000-word article that I wrote, "[Wallowing in Watergate.](#)"