



Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch gets his closest scrutiny ever in "Murdoch."



Katharine Graham's career is charted in Carol Felsenthal's "Power, Privilege and the Post."

Wealth, power and publishing

Graham, Murdock bios depict inside world of media movers, shakers

By Robert Hoflinger

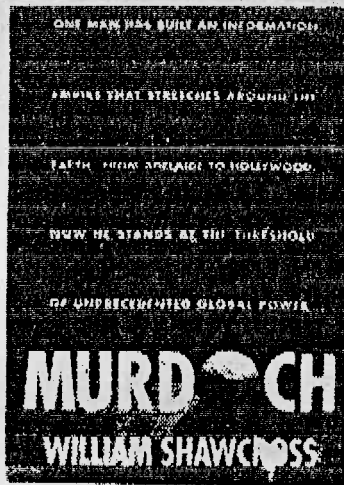
FOR THE JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

Although we may deny it, most of us are fascinated by stories about the acquisition of enormous wealth and massive power. We're all the more intrigued when that czarlike power has been attained by control and ownership of newspapers and magazines, radio and TV stations, networks and even movie studios — all of the elements that have made the world what communications scholar Marshall McLuhan calls a global village.

New biographies — "Murdoch" by William Shawcross and "Power, Privilege and the Post: The Katharine Graham Story" by Carol Felsenthal — follow the lives of two of the world's best-known movers and shakers in mass media.

In "Murdoch," journalist Shawcross has given us the closest view yet of Australian media magnate Rupert Murdoch, who in 40 years has seen his information empire grow from a single inherited Australian newspaper to a conglomerate of mass-media enterprises spanning the globe.

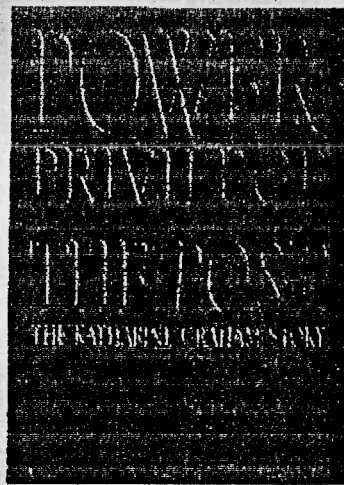
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"Murdoch"
William Shawcross. Simon & Schuster, \$27.50

and is dominated by one man. His acquisitions over the years (some of which he later dropped) include the Times of London, the Chicago Sun-Times, the New York Post, TV Guide, The Village Voice, the supermarket tabloid National Star (his own concept), New York magazine and his Hollywood holdings including 20th Century Fox.

Mr. Shawcross has provided in-depth information on Mr. Murdoch and his relationships



"Power, Privilege and the Post: The Katharine Graham Story"
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Carol Felsenthal decided to write this book after interviewing Mrs. Graham for another critically acclaimed biography "Alice Roosevelt Longworth." So, fortunately, we now have the first comprehensive book-length examination of the extraordinary person whom many believe is the most powerful and influential woman in the world.

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The Phil Graham story is itself an intriguing one. Given controlling power in the Post by his father-in-law, Eugene Meyer Jr., he used the paper's power to influence politicians such as Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy. In public, Mr. Graham was respected; in private, hisanness caused unbelievably bizarre behavior, including the verbal abuse to which he subjected his wife.

After Mr. Graham's suicide in 1963, Mrs. Graham took over the Post and Post-owned Newsweek magazine, and began her outstanding career as a journalism executive. She was not expected to succeed, but she did and thus began her transformation from a shaken and fearful widow to a dominant and courageous publisher.

Kay Graham's direction of the Post lasted almost 30 years, years of courageous and hard-headed decisions such as publishing the Pentagon Papers and broadly covering Watergate. She turned the paper over to son



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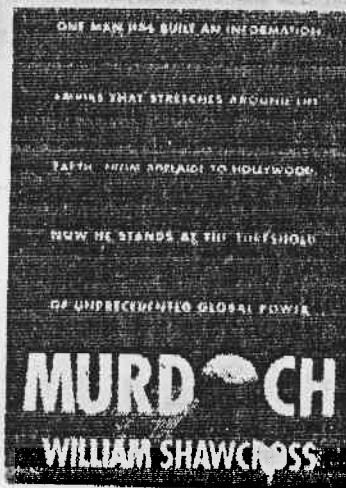
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Mr. Shawcross, who is perhaps best known in the United States for his earlier books, "Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia" and "The Shah's Last Ride: The Fate of an Ally," lives in England and first published "Murdoch" last fall in Britain. He has re-edited this edition to excise some of the situations and personalities that mean little to American readers and to expand the section on Hollywood.

Mr. Murdoch is both hated and admired but never ignored. He's the consummate businessman and is constantly in the process of maneuvering and dealing, sometimes to the point of almost losing everything. Of all of the business giants in media, only Mr. Murdoch's information empire covers the world

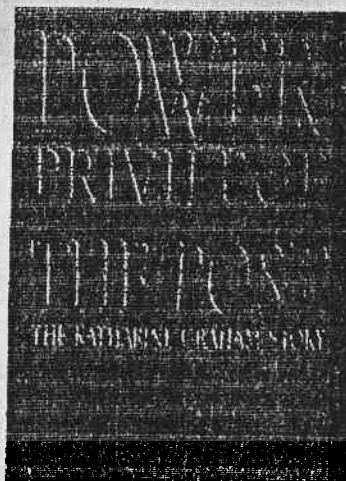


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Mr. Shawcross has provided in-depth information on Mr. Murdoch and his relationships with his editors and managers, but "Murdoch" is essentially a business biography. The reader is left to make his own judgments on the man and his motives. The author writes: "This book has attempted to show how the power of information is growing and how one man has made himself a uniquely important broker of it." "Murdoch" is a sound biography, a valuable contribution to the history of mass media.

For sheer reading pleasure and a brilliant picture of a complex woman, pick up "Power, Privilege and the Post: The Katharine Graham Story." In my view, it has already won a prize



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Although Katharine Graham is obviously the central figure in "Power, Privilege and the Post," Ms. Felsenthal has actually given us three books:

► One that relates the story of an emotionally fragile and withdrawn woman dominated by her parents (Eugene Jr. and Agnes Meyer) and by Phil Graham, her manic-depressive husband, but who changed dramatically and burst into full triumph in her work with her paper, The Washington Post.

► Another that brilliantly illuminates the Washington scene and the struggle for power by its dominant figures.

► And a third that provides a well-written account of the jour-

nalism world, the struggle for First Amendment rights and the influence of great editors like Howard Simons, Ben Bradlee and Len Downie.

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All of this is captured stunningly by Ms. Felsenthal. Her writing is breezy and anecdotal. Even her footnotes add verve and color. Overall, she sees Mrs. Graham as a study in contrasts: She can be kind and gentle, unsure of herself on occasion, and mean, tough, vicious and cruel to her associates, all of which has gained her the epithet "Old Lady of the Potomac."

Both of these new biographies are thoroughly researched and enhanced by excellent chapter notes, indexes and sections of black-and-white photographs.

Marletta writer Robert Holinger is professor emeritus of journalism at Ohio State University.