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Fighting for the Press: The Inside Story of the Pentagon Papers and Other Battles

James C. Goodale. *CUNY Journalism*, \$20 (310p) ISBN 978-1-939293-08-4

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Former chief counsel and vice chairman of The New York Times, Goodale calls the early '70s battles between the press and the Nixon administration over the Pentagon Papers "a case for the ages." "[T]he first of its kind in American history," it tested the notion of free speech as, at the president's behest, the federal government had "tried and failed to use the courts to censor the press" with a "prior restraint" order. In this meticulous but occasionally dull volume, Goodale describes the efforts of reporters, editors, and lawyers to publish the papers—classified documents that showed how "the U.S. had waged a secret war against North Vietnam to provoke them" to attack—and the fall-out that ensued. Invoking contemporary politics, he points out similarities with the government's case now against Julian Assange and WikiLeaks: "In many respects, President Obama is no better than Nixon." As an attorney would, Goodale lays out information cleanly and carefully, re-creating events before, during, and after the publication of the papers. Legal and political wonks who want facts might be satisfied, but general readers looking for captivating prose or true suspense won't be. (May)

Reviewed on: 06/03/2013

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