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NBC's Tom Brokaw reflects on the 25th anniversary of the Watergate burglary and the way the scandal transformed the journalism profession.

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Transcript

Watergate: 25 Years Later: What Has Changed

TOM BROKAW, anchor:

We’ve been talking tonight about the Watergate burglary, 25 years ago today. Everyone keeps looking for lessons in Watergate, and there are so many, beginning with the most important. It was an event that bitterly divided the country and yet, once the Supreme Court ruled, and the great lie was revealed, Nixon had to go, and he did go, with no troops or tanks in the street, no suspension of laws or even civility. A great deal has changed in 25 years of course, including the press and how it covers the political arena and the presidency. Before Woodward and Bernstein, the Washington press was a little too benign, a little too cozy. Then, in a determined effort not to let that happen again, it became a little too cynical, a little too judgmental, and “gate” was attached to every hint of a scandal. Watergate stands alone. It was a monumental abuse of the laws and the system. Two reporters, who were not then famous, knocked on doors and worked the phones into the night, week after week, printing their stories only when they had the goods. For politicians, Watergate was a lesson in what happens when you confuse political power with personal power. For reporters, it was a lesson that getting the big story right is about facts, not about celebrity or the presumption of guilt for everyone who enters the public arena. Big lessons from a bungled burglary and all that followed.”