LINEUP #1 (OPENING)
$TEXT: COPYRIGHT WARNING AND "NEXT" BUTTON

$TEXT: DISCLAIMER

$TEXT: AUDIENCE SUITABILITY

$GRAPHIC: (FADE IN) ROGER FEINMAN (DISSOLVE TO:)

-GRAPHIC: CONFERENCE PROGRAM MONTAGE

V.O. NARRATION: HELLO, MY NAME IS ROGER FEINMAN. THIS IS THE WEB VERSION OF MY PRESENTATION TO A CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2004. THE CONFERENCE WAS CALLED "THE WARREN REPORT AND ITS LEGACY." IT MARKED THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WARREN COMMISSION REPORT ON PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION. MY TOPIC WAS "CBS NEWS, ABC NEWS, AND THE LONE ASSASSIN THEORY." THIS IS THE FIRST OF TWO PARTS. I SINCERELY HOPE YOU WILL FIND THIS PRESENTATION INFORMATIVE AND WORTHWHILE.

$TEXT(SALANT QUOTE) (SILENT)
V.O. NARRATION:
It was the costliest television documentary of its time. It was so big that it filled four hours in prime time on consecutive evenings. It was so complicated that it took seven months to produce. In June 1967, CBS News joined the debate over the Warren Commission's report on President Kennedy's assassination. But was it impartial investigative journalism, or did it reflect favors among powerful friends? For the first time, evidence never before made public provides the answer.

(MUSIC: CBS Reports Theme Excerpted from "Appalachian Spring")

V.O. NARRATION:
January 2005. More than forty years after the murders of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, Mississippi, a suspect is arrested and charged. The former editor and publisher of a local newspaper says, "The case is just as current now as it was the night the murders were committed, legally and morally."

(MUSIC CONTINUES)
V.O.

NARRATION: THESE ARE HEADLINES FROM NEWS STORIES WITHIN THE LAST THREE YEARS. WE FREQUENTLY HEAR OF OLD MURDER CASES REOPENED -- SOME EVEN PROSECUTED TO A GUILTY VERDICT. BUT WHENEVER PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION IS BROUGHT UP, SOME PEOPLE -- INCLUDING THOSE IN THE NEWS MEDIA -- SAY, "IT'S NO LONGER NEWS," OR "IT HAPPENED SUCH A LONG TIME AGO," OR "IT'S TOO MESSY, TOO INCONCLUSIVE." RIDICULE AND DERISION CONTINUE TO PLAGUE STUDENTS OF THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION. THE MAINSTREAM PRESS EITHER IGNORES THEM OR MARGINALIZES THEM AS "CONSPIRACY THEORISTS" AND "BUFFS." PERHAPS THAT'S BECAUSE THEY FAILED IN THEIR WATCHDOG ROLE. INSTEAD OF RAISING QUESTIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ANSWER, THE AMERICAN NEWS MEDIA TRIED TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC THAT THE WARREN COMMISSION GOT IT RIGHT -- THAT LEE HARVEY OSWALD ACTED ALONE WHEN HE ASSASSINATED PRESIDENT KENNEDY.

(FADE OUT GHOSTLY RUBATO MUSIC)

WE'RE GOING TO LOOK AT TWO PRIME EXAMPLES: CBS AND ABC.

(MUSIC: GOSPEL INTERLUDE)
FIRST, YOU ARE ENTITLED TO KNOW MY BIAS. YOU ARE ENTITLED TO KNOW WHERE I STAND SO THAT YOU CAN JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES HOW MUCH WEIGHT YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE TO WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU. TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO, ON SEPTEMBER 7, 1976, I WAS FIRED BY CBS NEWS FOR SENDING MEMOS TO ITS SENIOR EXECUTIVES. I HAD WORKED AT CBS FOR SEVERAL YEARS. IN THOSE MEMOS, SPREAD OVER A NINE-MONTH PERIOD, I RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER TWO MAJOR DOCUMENTARIES ON THE WARREN REPORT VIOLATED CBS'S OWN STANDARDS AND PRACTICES. THE FIRST WAS BROADCAST IN JUNE 1967; THE SECOND IN NOVEMBER 1975.

I STARTED BY WRITING TO THE PRESIDENT OF CBS NEWS, RICHARD S. SALANT, ON DECEMBER 1, 1975.

IN THAT MEMO, I URGED SALANT TO APPOINT A COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THOSE DOCUMENTARIES FOR FAIRNESS AND ACCURACY. SALANT DECLINED MY SUGGESTION AND AFFIRMED HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE BROADCASTS.

I ENDED BY WRITING A LETTER TO THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF CBS NEWS, BILL SMALL.
HERE, I MOVED BEYOND RAISING QUESTIONS TO PROTESTING WHAT I BELIEVED THEN AND STILL BELIEVE WERE VIOLATIONS OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS IN THE CREATION OF THOSE DOCUMENTARIES.

ONE OF MY COMPLAINTS CONCERNED DAN RATHER'S INTERVIEW WITH DOCTOR JAMES WESTON, A FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST WHO WAS ASKED BY CBS NEWS TO EXAMINE THE KENNEDY AUTOPSY PHOTOGRAPHS AND X-RAYS IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES. CBS HYPED THIS AS AN INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION. THE VIEWING AUDIENCE NEVER KNEW THAT, WHEN THE INTERVIEW WAS TAPED, CBS PROVIDED DOCTOR WESTON WITH VISUAL AIDS PREPARED BY A UROLOGIST, DR. JOHN K. LATTIMER, WELL-KNOWN AS A LONGTIME DEFENDER OF THE WARREN COMMISSION'S LONE ASSASSIN CONCLUSION.

ALONG THE WAY, THE EXECUTIVES OF CBS NEWS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY WANTED ME TO LEAVE. THEIR ONLY HESITATION IN FIRING ME WAS THAT I WAS COVERED BY A UNION CONTRACT. THIS IS A FILE MEMO WRITTEN BY MY BOSS, EMERSON STONE, WHO WAS THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RADIO NEWS.

(PAUSE)
V.O.
NARRATION:

I obtained this memo from the CBS law department during discovery proceedings in later litigation. You'll see a couple more of those items as we go along.

Finally, as the end of my time at CBS drew near, I went outside the news division. Attached to this memo, I sent a copy of my small letter to Arthur Taylor, who was at that time the president of CBS, Inc., the parent corporation.

Notice that I told Taylor I was prepared to back up my allegations with proof.

During those nine months, I had prepared to do exactly that. So now, I'm going to take you beyond your TV screen, behind the cameras, and through the doors of executive offices that you, the viewing audience, never get to see.

(MUSIC: GOSPEL INTERLUDE)

By the summer of 1966, several books and magazine articles challenged the Warren report's conclusions and the adequacy of its investigation into President Kennedy's murder. Controversy mushroomed throughout the world.

(-MORE-)
IN AUGUST, GORDON MANNING, THEN A CBS NEWS SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, RECEIVED A SUGGESTION FROM BILL SMALL, THEN CHIEF OF CBS'S WASHINGTON BUREAU, AND DANIEL SCHORR, ONE OF CBS'S TOP WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENTS. THEY PROPOSED A CBS NEWS SPECIAL REPORT TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT KENNEDY'S DEATH. HERE, MANNING RELAYS THE IDEA TO THE PRESIDENT OF CBS NEWS, RICHARD SALANT. SALANT REJECTED IT. BUT AS THE CONTROVERSY INTENSIFIED, MANNING PERSISTED.

LIFE MAGAZINE WAS VERY WIDELY READ AND INFLUENTIAL DURING THAT ERA. IN LATE NOVEMBER, LIFE PUBLISHED EXTENSIVE STILLS FROM THE ZAPRUDER FILM, AND AN INTERVIEW WITH TEXAS GOVERNOR JOHN CONNALLY, WHO WAS RIDING IN PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S LIMOUSINE WHEN HE WAS ASSASSINATED. CONNALLY DISPUTED A KEY FINDING OF THE WARREN COMMISSION, THAT HE AND KENNEDY WERE BOTH WOUNDED BY A SINGLE BULLET. LIFE URGED THAT THE ASSASSINATION INVESTIGATION BE REOPENED. ON NOVEMBER 29, MANNING AGAIN PRESSES FOR A SPECIAL REPORT, TO BE CALLED "THE TRIAL OF LEE HARVEY OSWALD." HERE, A PANEL OF LAW SCHOOL DEANS WOULD EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE IN A MOCK COURTHOUSE SETTING --- --- INCLUDING EVIDENCE THAT THE WARREN COMMISSION IGNORED. THE POINT TO REMEMBER ABOUT MANNING'S CAMPAIGN FOR A CBS NEWS SPECIAL: HE FAVORED GIVING SPOKESMEN FOR BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE OVER THE WARREN REPORT A CHANCE TO BE HEARD.

(-MORE-)
NOW, MANNING IS JOINED BY AN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER NAMED LESLIE MIDGLEY. IN 1964, THE DAY THE WARREN REPORT WAS MADE PUBLIC, MIDGLEY WAS IN CHARGE OF TRANSLATING IT INTO A TWO-HOUR TELEVISION NEWS BROADCAST. MIDGLEY NOW SUGGESTS, INSTEAD OF PUTTING LEE HARVEY OSWALD ON TRIAL, THAT CBS PUT "THE WARREN REPORT ON TRIAL" HERE, HE SUBMITS AN OUTLINE FOR A MAJOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORT TO CONSUME THREE-HOURS, POSSIBLY ONE HOUR ON THREE CONSECUTIVE NIGHTS. ONE OF THOSE NIGHTS WOULD BE DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO WITNESSES WHOM THE WARREN COMMISSION EITHER DISCOUNTED OR TOTALLY IGNORED. THE THIRD NIGHT WOULD FEATURE A PANEL OF LAW SCHOOL DEANS OR STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES, WHO WOULD GIVE THEIR VERDICT.

(MUSIC: GOSPEL INTERLUDE)

(-MORE-)
V.O. NARRATION:
The power to devote time on the air for a CBS News Special Report did not rest with Salant. CBS President Frank Stanton made those decisions, with the consent of Chairman William S. Paley. The next day, Salant proposes the project to the President of the CBS Broadcast Group, John Schneider. He says he may also ask permission from the "C-N-E-C" for CBS News to state its own conclusions. "C-N-E-C" stood for "CBS News Executive Committee."
Little is known about the workings of this committee, but its existence, and Salant's role in it, indicate how CBS News was managed. To understand what happened next to the Manning-Midgley idea of an even-handed, two-sided debate over the assassination of President Kennedy, we need to put Salant's memo into context.

Who was Richard S. Salant? A son of privilege and a product of Exeter Academy, Harvard College, and Harvard Law School, Salant was a very bright lawyer with a sardonic and often scathing wit. In 1952, Stanton had recruited him to leave private practice and join CBS as a Vice-President and General Executive, focusing on legislative and public affairs.
V.O.
NARRATION:

SALANT BECAME STANTON'S PROTEGE, RIGHT-HAND MAN, AND CLOSE FRIEND.

STANTON, THE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OF CBS, WAS SECOND IN AUTHORITY ONLY TO ITS FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN, BILL PALEY. HE WAS ALSO A CLOSE FRIEND AND CONFIDANT OF PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON, WHO OWNED CBS-AFFILIATED RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS IN TEXAS. JOHNSON REPORTEDLY ONCE OFFERED STANTON A POST IN HIS CABINET.


(-MORE-)

(CUT TO:)

-GRAPHIC: MURROW
(SUPER: “EDWARD R. MURROW”)

(PHOTO OF STANTON APPEARS)

(SUPER NAME CAPTIONS)
V.O. NARRATION:

THIS COMMITTEE TOOK CHARGE NOT ONLY OF POLICY-MAKING FOR, BUT ALSO THE OPERATIONS OF CBS NEWS. IT WAS A RESPONSE TO THE VARIOUS CONTROVERSIES IN WHICH MURROW HAD CONTINUED TO EMBROIL THE COMPANY LONG AFTER HIS CONFRONTATION WITH SENATOR JOSEPH MCCARTHY.

AS PALEY ONCE FAMOUSLY SAID TO MURROW AND HIS PARTNER, FRED FRIENDLY, "I DON'T WANT THIS CONSTANT STOMACH ACHE EVERY TIME YOU DO A CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT."


(-MORE-)

GRAPHIC: MURROW FIRST (MCCARTHY BROADCAST)

(CUT TO:)

GRAPHIC: PHOTO MONTAGE: SALANT, STANTON, PALEY

(SUPER CAPTION PALEY)
HE FREQUENTLY EXERCISED EDITORIAL SUPERVISION OVER CBS NEWS BROADCASTS. WHAT IS CURIOUSLY ABSENT FROM HIS MEMOIRS AND PUBLIC PAPERS IS ANY EVIDENCE OF EITHER HIS EDITORIAL SUPERVISION OR HIS LIASON BETWEEN THE NEWS DIVISION AND THE C-N-E-C. THIS IS NOT THE ONLY IMPORTANT GAP IN HIS PAPERS. NOT ONLY ARE HIS PUBLIC PAPERS COMPLETELY DEVOID OF THE MATERIAL YOU SEE HERE, BUT HIS MEMOIRS ARE COMPLETELY SILENT ABOUT THESE WARREN REPORT DOCUMENTARIES. IN THE DOZENS OF BOOKS THAT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE HISTORY OF CBS, VERY LITTLE HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT C-N-E-C. REGARDLESS, ITS VERY PURPOSE AND EXISTENCE BELIED SALANT'S FREQUENT PUBLIC ASSERTIONS OF CBS NEWS'S INDEPENDENCE FROM CORPORATE INFLUENCE.
V.O. NARRATION: EXCITED ABOUT SALANT'S PROPOSAL TO SENIOR CORPORATE MANAGEMENT, MANNING AND MIDGLEY IMMEDIATELY OUTLINE THEIR VISION FOR THE THREE-NIGHT SPECIAL REPORT, "THE WARREN REPORT ON TRIAL."

IN A COURTROOM SETTING, THE PROSECUTION WILL PRESENT ITS CASE THE FIRST NIGHT, FOLLOWED BY THE DEFENSE. THEN, BOTH SIDES WILL SUM UP TO A PANEL OF LAW SCHOOL DEANS, WHO WILL RETIRE TO CONSIDER THEIR VERDICT.

(SILENT)

THE NEXT DAY, HOWEVER – THE DAY AFTER SENDING THE PROPOSAL TO CBS CORPORATE MANAGEMENT – SALANT TELLS MANNING HE IS HAVING UNEASY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE TRIAL FORMAT. MANNING ADVISES MIDGLEY THAT SALANT'S ENTHUSIASM FOR THE TWO-SIDED PRESENTATION IS WANING.

(MUSIC: GOSPEL INTERLUDE)
LATER THAT MONTH, SALANT SENDS MANNING AND MIDGLEY TO CALIFORNIA TO MEET WITH TWO PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION. MANNING'S REPORT ON THE TRIP IS A HASTILY COMPOSED MEMO WITH NUMEROUS HANDWRITTEN INSERTIONS. IT MARKS AN IMPORTANT TURNING POINT IN THE WORK CBS NEWS DID ON THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION. ONE OF THE TWO LAWYERS IS EDWIN HUDDLESON, A PARTNER IN THE SAN FRANCISCO LAW FIRM OF COOLEY, GODWARD, CASTRO AND HUDDLESON. HE WAS RICHARD SALANT'S LAW SCHOOL CLASSMATE AT HARVARD. HUDDLESON IS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF THE RAND CORPORATION, WHILE CBS PRESIDENT FRANK STANTON SERVES AS ITS CHAIRMAN. IT IS HUDDLESON WHO BRINGS THE NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING PHYSICIST LUIS ALVAREZ TO STANTON AT CBS WITH AN IDEA ABOUT HOW TO PROVE THE WARREN COMMISSION CORRECT BY ANALYZING JIGGLES IN THE ZAPRUDER FILM. THE OTHER LAWYER IS BAYLESS MANNING, DEAN OF THE LAW SCHOOL AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY. BOTH HUDDLESON AND MANNING TELL THE CBS EXECUTIVES THEY ARE AGAINST CBS UNDERTAKING A MAJOR REVIEW OF THE WARREN REPORT. THEY CITE "THE NATIONAL INTEREST" AND "POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS" AS PART OF THEIR REASONING.
V.O. NARRATION: BAYLESS MANNING SUGGESTS THAT CBS IGNORE THE CRITICS, OR AT THE MOST CONVENE A PANEL TO REVIEW AND CRITICIZE THEIR BOOKS. ACCORDING TO GORDON MANNING OF CBS, BOTH LAWYERS TAKE THE SIDE OF THE WARREN REPORT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT. LET THE MATTER REST, THEY ADVISE.

(-MORE-)

GRAPHIC: EXCERPT OF MANNING TO SALANT, DECEMBER 30, 1966
NARRATION: CLEARLY SENSING THAT THE WIND HAS SHIFTED AGAINST HIM, GORDON MANNING, FOR FIVE MONTHS THE LEADING PROONENT OF A TELEVISED DEBATE, NOW DOES AN ABOUT-FACE. HE PROPOSES CHANGING THE PROJECT TO "IN DEFENSE OF THE WARREN REPORT," AND PRESENTING MORE CONVINCING EVIDENCE OF ITS LONE ASSASSIN CONCLUSION. CBS WOULD DISMISS WHAT HE NOW CALLS "THE INANE, IRRESPONSIBLE, AND HARE-BRAINED CHALLENGES OF MARK LANE AND OTHERS OF THAT STRIPE." HE INDICATES THAT MIDGLEY DOES NOT AGREE WITH THIS OBVIOUSLY DRAMATIC REVISION OF THEIR PREVIOUS PLAN. IN A MARGINAL NOTATION, MANNING TELLS MIDGLEY HE IS FREE TO EXPRESS HIS DISAGREEMENT, BUT MANNING HAS LEFT MIDGLEY OUT ON A LIMB BY HIMSELF.

BY THIS TIME, HOWEVER, ANOTHER INFLUENCE HAS POSSIBLY CONTRIBUTED TO MANNING'S TURNAROUND. SALANT HAS INVITED A NEW PLAYER TO JOIN CBS NEWS'S PREPARATION OF THE WARREN REPORT BROADCASTS AS A SECRET COLLABORATOR. HIS CLANDESTINE, BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE BRINGS THE INDEPENDENCE AND OBJECTIVITY OF THE CBS EFFORT INTO SERIOUS QUESTION.

(MUSIC: GOSPEL INTERLUDE)
THIS IS A DISCUSSION MEMO WRITTEN BY LESLIE MIDGLEY ON DECEMBER 14, 1966. IN IT, HE EXPLAINS HOW HE INTENDS TO APPROACH THE JOB OF PRODUCING THE CBS SPECIALS ON THE WARREN REPORT. ONCE AGAIN, HE ARGUES FOR THE INCLUSION OF "AS MANY PEOPLE AS WE CAN FIND WHOSE TESTIMONY IS PERTINENT, AND WHO WERE DISCOUNTED OR NOT EVEN HEARD BY THE COMMISSION."

MIDGLEY WANTS TO CONDUCT EXPERIMENTS THAT ARE "MORE SCIENTIFIC" THAN "THE RIDICULOUS ONES RUN BY THE FBI." AND THE CRITICS HAVE CONVINCED HIM THAT THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE WARREN COMMISSION WAS "ALMOST INCREDIBLY INADEQUATE." AT THIS POINT, MIDGLEY IS STILL PUSHING FOR A MOCK TRIAL OF THE WARREN REPORT.

SOON, SALANT CIRCULATES TO HIS COLLEAGUES AN ANONYMOUS, PARAGRAPH-BY-PARAGRAPHERIBUTAL TO MIDGLEY'S BROADSIDE. ALTHOUGH UNDATED AND UNSIGNED, IT COMES FROM FORMER WARREN COMMISSION MEMBER JOHN J. MCCLOY. THE DOCUMENT CONTAINS A HANDWRITTEN ANNOTATION BY MCCLOY'S DAUGHTER, ELLEN. SHE WORKS FOR RICHARD SALANT AS HIS ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT AT CBS NEWS.
MCCLOY IS OFFENDED BY MIDGLEY’S DESCRIPTION OF THE WARREN COMMISSION’S ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION AS “INCREDIBLY INADEQUATE.” HE CHASTISES MIDGLEY FOR ACCEPTING A CRITIQUE BY EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN. AND HE ADDS, “THE CHIEF EVIDENCE THAT OSWALD ACTED ALONE AND SHOT ALONE IS NOT TO BE FOUND IN THE BALLISTICS AND PATHOLOGY OF THE ASSASSINATION, BUT IN THE FACT OF HIS LONER LIFE.”

BEGINNING IN MID-DECEMBER 1966, MCCLOY’S DAUGHTER WILL BE ON THE DISTRIBUTION LISTS OF MOST OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMOS, SCRIPT OUTLINES, AND DRAFT SCRIPTS RELATED TO THE WARREN REPORT SERIES. SHE WILL TAKE THEM TO HER FATHER AND RELAY HIS COMMENTS BACK TO THE EXECUTIVE SUITES. THIS COLLABORATION IS INTERRUPTED ONLY WHEN MCCLOY TRAVELS ABROAD FROM FEBRUARY UNTIL LATE APRIL 1967. PRESIDENT JOHNSON ASKS HIM TO NEGOTIATE A FOREIGN EXCHANGE OFFSET PROBLEM INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING BRITISH AND AMERICAN TROOPS IN WEST GERMANY.

HERE SALANT ASKS MIDGLEY: “IS THE QUESTION WHETHER OSWALD WAS A CIA OR FBI INFORMANT REALLY SO SUBSTANTIAL THAT WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH IT?” MIDGLEY ANSWERS: “YES, WE MUST TREAT IT.”
NO CRITIC OF THE WARREN REPORT IS GIVEN SIMILAR ACCESS TO CBS NEWS INTERNAL WORKING PAPERS. LOWER-LEVEL ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS REMAIN UNAWARE OF THE SECRET COLLABORATION, WHICH ALMOST CERTAINLY VIOLATED CBS NEWS POLICIES.

(MUSIC: GOSPEL INTERLUDE)

IN MARCH 1977, I WROTE TO MCCLOY ASKING FOR AN INTERVIEW ABOUT HIS BEHIND-THE-SCENES RELATIONSHIP WITH CBS IN 1967. MCCLOY DECLINED TO BE INTERVIEWED, CLAIMING HE COULD NOT RECALL GIVING CBS ANY ADVICE ON THE PREPARATION OF THEIR SCRIPT. ANXIOUS TO MAKE A RECORD THAT I HAD GIVEN MCCLOY A FAIR OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN, I WROTE HIM AGAIN, THIS TIME LAYING OUT THE DETAILS I HAD LEARNED.

THE NEXT DAY, MCCLOY WROTE TO SALANT AT CBS NEWS. THIS IS ANOTHER DOCUMENT I OBTAINED FROM THE CBS LAW DEPARTMENT. THE HANDWRITING IN THE UPPER RIGHT-HAND CORNER IS SALANT’S. HE IS INSTRUCTING LES MIDGLEY TO PULL HIS FILES AND DETERMINE IF THEY HOLD ANY EVIDENCE OF THE SECRET COLLABORATION.
MCCLOY DENIES THAT HE WAS EVER GIVEN OR SAW CBS MEMORANDA OR DRAFTS RELATING TO THE ASSASSINATION, BUT HE SUGGESTS THAT SALANT LOOK OVER WHATEVER RECORDS HE HAS. ANOTHER DOCUMENT PROVIDED BY THE CBS LAW DEPARTMENT. APRIL 11, 1977, SALANT REPLIES . . .

STATING EMPHATICALLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT AT NO TIME DID ELLEN MCCLOY EVER SERVE AS A LIASON OR CONDUIT BETWEEN HER FATHER AND CBS NEWS.

(SILENT)

(SILENT)

MCCLOY DIED IN 1990. BUT IN 1992, A REPORTER FOR THE VILLAGE VOICE CONFRONTED BOTH SALANT AND ELLEN MCCLOY WITH COPIES OF THE DOCUMENTS YOU HAVE SEEN AND THESE NOTES IN HER HANDWRITING. MISS MCCLOY ADMITTED ACTING AS A CONDUIT. SALANT, WHILE NOT DISPUTING AN ARRANGEMENT HE HAD ONCE VEHEMENTLY DENIED, NOW CLAIMED THERE WAS NOTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT IT.
BUT THIS NOTE, FROM ELLEN MCCLOY TO LES MIDGLEY, IMPLIES AT THE VERY LEAST THAT JOHN J. MCCLOY FELT UNUSUALLY COMFORTABLE IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EXECUTIVES OF CBS NEWS EVEN AS THEY PREPARED A PURPORTEDLY INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIVE REPORT ABOUT THE WARREN COMMISSION. THE REFERENCE TO “LUCI’S BABY” PERTAINS TO LUCI JOHNSON NUGENT, PRESIDENT JOHNSON’S DAUGHTER.

WHILE PRODUCING THE 1967 SERIES ON THE WARREN REPORT, LESLIE MIDGLEY BECAME ENGAGED TO MARRY BETTY FURNESS, THE FORMER ACTRESS AND TELEVISION COMMERCIAL SPOKESWOMAN. LYNDON JOHNSON THEN APPOINTED FURNESS HIS SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS. HER MAIN QUALIFICATION FOR THE JOB SEEMED TO BE ELEVEN YEARS OF SELLING WESTINGHOUSE APPLIANCES ON TV. SHE WAS SWORN IN ON APRIL 27, 1967, LESS THAN TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE WARREN REPORT SERIES WAS BROADCAST. TWO WEEKS AFTER THE WARREN REPORT SERIES AIRED, MIDGLEY AND FURNESS WERE MARRIED. AT THE SAME TIME, MIDGLEY WAS PROMOTED TO EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE CBS EVENING NEWS WITH WALTER CRONKITE, MAKING HIM THE NUMBER ONE EDITOR AT CBS NEWS.

(-MORE-)
§BUMPER: LINEUP #9
(INTRO: "DESIGNED TO RATHER LOOSE STANDARDS")

-GRAPHIC: ROGER FEINMAN

V.O.
NARRATION:

WE HAVE SEEN HOW THE 1967 CBS SERIES ON THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION TOOK FLIGHT, AND HOW IT VEERED OFF COURSE FROM AN EVEN-HANDED DEBATE TO A DEFENSE OF THE WARREN REPORT, AIDED SECRETLY BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION. BUT HOW DID THESE DEVELOPMENTS AFFECT THE INTEGRITY OF WHAT THE VIEWING AUDIENCE FINALLY SAW OR NEVER GOT THE CHANCE TO SEE? WHILE IT’S IMPOSSIBLE IN THIS FORMAT TO EXAMINE EVERY ASPECT OF THE BROADCASTS, HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF SUPPRESSION AND DISTORTION.

LIKE THE WARREN COMMISSION, CBS’S THEORY CALLED FOR NO MORE THAN THREE SHOTS FIRED DURING THE ASSASSINATION. BUT CBS HAD TO FACE THE SAME PROBLEM OF TIMING THAT VEXED THE COMMISSION. THE FBI AND SECRET SERVICE HAD DETERMINED IN THEIR ON-SITE RECONSTRUCTIONS THAT AN OAK TREE PARTIALLY BLOCKED THE PRESIDENT FROM THE VIEW OF AN ASSASSIN LURKING IN THE SIXTH FLOOR WINDOW FROM ZAPRUDER FRAME 166 UNTIL FRAME 209, EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR A SINGLE FRAME AT Z-186 WHEN THERE MAY HAVE BEEN AN OPENING IN THE FOLIAGE. EVEN THE WARREN COMMISSION REJECTED THE IDEA OF A SHOT THROUGH THE TREE.

(-MORE-)
V.O.
NARRATION:

THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TIME TO REACT, AND THE ASSASSIN WAS ABOUT TO ENJOY AN UNOBSERVED VIEW ONCE THE PRESIDENT EMERGED FROM UNDER THE TREE AT FRAME 210. THE COMMISSION ALSO COULDN'T SWALLOW THE IDEA THAT A SHOT AT SUCH CLOSE RANGE WOULD HAVE COMPLETELY MISSED THE LIMOUSINE, AND THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT IT HAD PENETRATED THE TREE. WITH THE ZAPRUDER FILM SERVING AS A CLOCK STARTING WITH A FIRST SHOT AT FRAME 210, THAT LEFT A WINDOW OF 103 FRAMES BEFORE THE OBVIOUSLY FATAL WOUNDED OF KENNEDY.

HOW COULD ONE MAN HAVE CAUSED ALL THE WOUNDS TO BOTH KENNEDY AND GOVERNOR JOHN CONNALLY IN JUST 5.6 SECONDS? IN ITS BROADCASTS, CBS GAVE TWO ANSWERS INTENDED TO EXPAND THE TIME FRAME OF THE ASSASSINATION: OSWALD HAD INDEED FIRED THE FIRST SHOT THROUGH THE TREE AND MISSED. ALSO, ZAPRUDER'S CAMERA WAS RUNNING SLOWER THAN PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT. TOGETHER, THESE THEORIES ALLOWED MORE TIME FOR THREE SHOTS.

(-MORE-)
V.O. NARRATION: CBS NEWS HIRED PHOTOANALYST CHARLES WYCKOFF TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THE JIGGLE ANALYSIS OF THE ZAPRUDER FILM FIRST PROPOSED BY DR. LUIS ALVAREZ. AS BROADCAST BY CBS, DAN RATHER’S INTERVIEW WITH WYCKOFF SUGGESTED THAT HE HAD FOUND THREE “EVENTS” – JERKY MOTIONS IN THE FILM – INDICATING THAT ZAPRUDER HAD BEEN STARTLED AT THREE POINTS, PRESUMABLY BY THREE RIFLE SHOTS. BUT AS THIS MEMO FROM MIDGLEY TO SALANT AND DAN RATHER’S UNCU T INTERVIEW WITH WYCKOFF BOTH SHOW, CBS WAS AWARE THAT HE HAD ACTUALLY DISCOVERED FOUR DISTURBANCES. ONE OF THE FOUR, HE APPARENTLY DECIDED, WAS DUE TO THE SOUND OF A SIREN. HOW WYCKOFF DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN THE SOUNDS OF RIFLE FIRE AND A SIREN ON AN EIGHT-MILLIMETER SILENT FILM IS AN ELUSIVE QUESTION, BUT IT GAVE CBS NO PAUSE WHATSOEVER. WHEN THE SHOW A IRED, THE NUMBER OF BLURS WAS WHIT TED DOWN TO JUST THREE. IN FACT, THE ZAPRUDER FILM CONTAINS SEVERAL MORE JIGGLES.

(-MORE-)
CBS WAS NOT PERMITTED TO TEST THE ACTUAL ZAPRUDER MOVIE CAMERA. BOTH THE FBI AND BELL & HOWELL, THE CAMERA’S MANUFACTURER, TESTED ITS SPEED AT 18.3 FRAMES PER SECOND. CBS CONCLUDED ON THE BASIS OF TESTING SIMILAR CAMERAS THAT ZAPRUDER’S MUST HAVE BEEN RUNNING SLOWER. BUT THIS CONCLUSION WAS BELIED BY RICHARD SALANT’S OWN ANALYSIS THAT THE CBS TESTS WERE LOGICALLY INCONCLUSIVE AND UNPERSUASIVE.

ANOTHER TACTIC USED BY CBS TO BOLSTER THE LONE ASSASSIN THEORY WAS TO TOTALLY IGNORE THE WOUNDING OF JAMES TAGUE, A SPECTATOR STANDING NEAR THE TRIPLE OVERPASS, 535 FEET FROM THE SO-CALLED “OSWALD WINDOW.” TAGUE’S FACE WAS CUT BY THE RICOCHET OF A MISSILE THAT STRUCK A CURBSTONE NEARBY. THERE IS NO MENTION OF THIS INCIDENT ANYWHERE IN THE TRANSCRIPTS OF THE FOUR ONE-HOUR BROADCASTS.
CBS WAS NOT PERMITTED TO TEST THE MANNLICHER-CARCANO RIFLE THAT THE GOVERNMENT ALLEGES OSWALD USED TO ASSASSINATE THE PRESIDENT. TO PROVE THAT HE COULD HAVE FIRED THREE SHOTS WITHIN THE TIME FRAME ALLOWED BY THE WARREN COMMISSION, CBS OBTAINED ITS OWN MANNLICHER-CARCANO AND SIMILAR AMMUNITION. THEY BUILT A FIRING RANGE WITH MOVING TARGETS TO SIMULATE THE GEOMETRY OF DEALEY PLAZA, EXCEPT THAT THE TRACK WAS STRAIGHT, NOT CURVED LIKE ELM STREET. THE TARGETS, SIMILAR TO STANDARD FBI TARGETS, FEATURED OVERSIZE ORANGE SILHOUETTES ON A FOUR-BY-FOUR-FOOT BLUE BACKGROUND. THEN THEY HIRED ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS SHARPSHOOTERS OF THE DAY, RETIRED ARMY COLONEL EDWARD B. CROSSMAN. CROSSMAN WAS THE AUTHOR OF MANY BOOKS AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES FOR GUN ENTHUSIASTS, WRITING UNDER THE PEN NAME “COLONEL JIM CROSSMAN.” CBS ALLOWED CROSSMAN A FULL WEEK TO FAMILIARIZE HIMSELF WITH ITS COPY OF THE MANNLICHER-CARCANO. THEN, AT THE END OF JANUARY 1967, THEY GAVE HIM SIX CHANCES TO DUPLICATE OSWALD’S ALLEGED FEAT. THIS MEMO REPORTED THE RESULTS.
CROSSMAN FAILED TO BREAK SIX-AND-ONE-QUARTER SECONDS. HE SCORED TWO OUT OF THREE HITS IN ONLY ONE-HALF OF HIS ATTEMPTS.

THE MEMO DESCRIBES CROSSMAN’S DIFFICULTY WITH THE STICKY BOLT ACTION OF THE RIFLE. CROSSMAN ALSO HAD TO COMPENSATE FOR A FAULTY SCOPE. (THE FBI HAD FOUND IT NECESSARY TO ALTER THE MOUNTING OF THE SCOPE ON THE ALLEGED ASSASSINATION WEAPON.)

DAN RATHER INTERVIEWED CROSSMAN ON FILM IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE TEST. CROSSMAN DESCRIBED THE RIFLE AS “NOT VERY ACCURATE.” HITTING THE TARGET WITH TWO OUT OF THREE SHOTS, HE SAID, WOULD REQUIRE A LARGE ELEMENT OF LUCK. CBS COMPLETELY DISCARDED THE CROSSMAN TEST AND HIS INTERVIEW, AND MADE NO MENTION OF THEM ON THE AIR.

IN ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO PROVE THE LONE ASSASSIN THEORY, CBS ASSEMBLED ELEVEN EXPERT MARKSMEN. AFTER GIVING THEM AMPLE TIME TO PRACTICE WITH THE RIFLE AT AN INDOOR RIFLE RANGE, CBS FILMED THEM AT ITS OUTDOOR MOCK-UP OF DEALEY PLAZA.
V.O.
NARRATION: Time was recorded in only 20 out of 37 attempts to fire three shots at the moving target. In the other 17 attempts, either a bullet jammed during the bolt-cycling process, resulting in no time, or the sticky bolt slowed the rifleman so much that the target completed its run before he could get off his third shot.

Only three of the eleven marksmen were able to score at least two hits in less than 5.6 seconds. Howard Donahue scored the best on his third try, but only after his first two attempts failed completely.

Although CBS claimed an average recorded time of 5.6 seconds, they failed to tell viewers that those 20 results averaged only 1.2 out of three hits. Still, CBS proved that it was physically possible for three out of a dozen expert marksmen to operate a rifle similar to the assassination weapon within the commission’s time frame.
WHAT IS STRIKING ABOUT THE CBS RIFLE TESTS IS NOT THE ACTUAL RESULTS, BUT HOW MANY TIMES ITS MARKSMEN FAILED TO GET RESULTS; BECAUSE, ANYTIME THE RIFLE WAS LOADED WITH LIVE AMMUNITION, THE BOLT ACTION JAMMED MORE OFTEN THAN NOT. SOME OF THE RIFLEMEN HAD TO TAKE THE RIFLE OFF THEIR SHOULDERS BETWEEN SHOTS TO GET BETTER LEVERAGE ON THE BOLT. THEN THE PROBLEM BECAME REACQUERING THE TARGET THROUGH THE SCOPE, TRACKING IT, AND SQUEEZING OFF A SHOT. USING IT IN THIS ASSASSINATION WOULD HAVE REQUIRED AN EXPERT EXPERIENCED ENOUGH (AND PRACTICED ENOUGH) TO COMPENSATE FOR ITS STICKY BOLT ACTION AND FAULTY SCOPE. AS CROSSMAN SAID, AN EXPERT USING THIS WEAPON HAD A REASONABLE CHANCE AT HITTING SOMETHING – NOT NECESSARILY PLACING HIS SHOTS PRECISELY WHERE HE WANTED; SOMEONE WITH OSWALD’S ABILITY USING THIS WEAPON WOULD HAVE HAD TO HAVE A VERY LUCKY DAY. EVEN IF HE WAS A HIGHLY SKILLED MARKSMAN, THE WARREN REPORT OFFERED NO EVIDENCE THAT OSWALD HAD FIRED ANY RIFLE – LET ALONE PRACTICED FIRING THE ASSASSINATION RIFLE – DURING THE TWELVE MONTHS BEFORE THE CRIME. REGARDLESS, CBS CONCLUDED THAT OSWALD COULD HAVE FIRED ACCURATELY AND FAST ENOUGH.

(-MORE-)
ON THE AFTERNOON OF THE ASSASSINATION, TWO OF THE DOCTORS WHO TRIED TO SAVE PRESIDENT KENNEDY HELD A NEWS CONFERENCE AT PARKLAND HOSPITAL. THE NEWS MEDIA QUOTED THEM AS SAYING A BULLET HAD ENTERED THE PRESIDENT’S THROAT, AN OPINION INCONSISTENT WITH AN ASSASSIN SHOOTING FROM BEHIND. TESTIFYING TO THE WARREN COMMISSION, THEY REPUDIATED THESE NEWS REPORTS. FOR YEARS, ASSASSINATION RESEARCHERS WERE UNABLE TO LOCATE A TAPE OR TRANSCRIPT OF THE NEWS CONFERENCE. ONE AUTHOR ALLEGED THAT THE FBI HAD SEIZED ALL AVAILABLE TAPES AND FILMS FROM RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS. BUT IN MAY 1967, CBS WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT ROBERT PIERPOINT DISCOVERED AN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT IN THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS OFFICE.
THE IMPORTANT POINT ABOUT THIS TRANSCRIPT IS NOT WHAT THE DOCTORS SAID OR WHETHER THEY WERE CORRECT. IT IS THAT THE WARREN COMMISSION HAD ALSO SOUGHT THIS DOCUMENT. THE COMMISSION ASKED THE SECRET SERVICE FOR A TAPE OR TRANSCRIPT, BUT THE SECRET SERVICE REPLIED THAT THEY COULD NOT LOCATE EITHER AFTER AN EXTENSIVE SEARCH. YET, IT WAS IN THE WHITE HOUSE ALL THE TIME. ON THIS COPY FOUND BY PIERPOINT IN MAY 1967, THE PRESS CONFERENCE IS NUMBERED 1327-C OF THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION. IF IT WAS PART OF THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION’S RECORDS, ONE MIGHT HAVE REASONABLY EXPECTED IT TO GO TO KENNEDY’S LIBRARY IN MASSACHUSETTS.

INSTEAD OF ASKING THAT QUESTION, CBS REFUSED TO RELEASE THE DOCUMENT OR SAY WHERE THEY FOUND IT. HERE IS THE RELEVANT PORTION OF THE CBS BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT. NOTE THAT DR. PERRY WAS NOT "RUSHED" INTO THE NEWS CONFERENCE. IT BEGAN MORE THAN TWO HOURS AFTER PRESIDENT KENNEDY WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD. THIS IS HOW CBS PROTECTED THE JOHNSON WHITE HOUSE FROM EMBARRASSMENT OVER WHY THE TRANSCRIPT WAS NEVER GIVEN TO THE WARREN COMMISSION.

(MUSIC: GOSPEL INTERLUDE)
MIDGLEY RECOGNIZED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT HE HAD. FORSAKING THE USUAL ROUTE THROUGH SALANT’S OFFICE, HE WROTE DIRECTLY TO JOHN J. MCCLOY, ASKING HIS HELP IN GETTING AN INTERVIEW WITH HUMES, WHO HAD ALREADY REFUSED TO GO ON CAMERA. 

AS MIDGLEY NOTED, THE PROBE X-RAY COULD RESOLVE ISSUES THAT WERE CENTRAL TO THE LONE ASSASSIN THEORY. INDEED, ONE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED THE GOVERNMENT TO SEEK WORLD-WIDE PUBLICATION OF THE X-RAY – IF, THAT IS, IT SUPPORTED THE OFFICIAL CONCLUSIONS. AT THE INTERVENTION OF ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK, DOCTOR HUMES AGREED TO BE INTERVIEWED BY DAN RATHER IN JUNE 1967. BUT RATHER DID NOT ASK HIM A SINGLE QUESTION EITHER ABOUT THE PROBE OR RESTRICTIONS ON THE AUTOPSY, AND CBS NEVER DISCLOSED THIS INFORMATION. THIS IS JUST ONE INSTANCE IN WHICH CONCEALMENT BY CBS MAY HAVE ASSISTED AN OFFICIAL COVER-UP.
THE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS NEVER KNEW ABOUT THE HUMES-PROBE STORY WHEN THEY INVESTIGATED THE CASE TEN YEARS LATER. BUT THEY DID FIND THREE WITNESSES TO THE AUTOPSY WHO INDEPENDENTLY TOLD THEM SIMILAR STORIES. WERE IT NOT FOR PUBLIC PRESSURE INSPIRED BY OLIVER STONE’S “JFK” MOVIE, YOU AND I WOULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN. THE COMMITTEE TRIED TO LOCK UP THIS TESTIMONY FOR FIFTY YEARS. MEDICAL TECHNICIAN JAMES CURTIS JENKINS RECALLED X-RAYS BEING TAKEN OF THE PROBE PROCEDURE. DOCTOR ROBERT KARNEI RECALLED PHOTOGRAPHS BEING TAKEN WITH PROBES THROUGH THE BODY. ALMOST TWENTY YEARS LATER, KARNEI REPEATED HIS STORY TO THE STAFF OF THE ASSASSINATIONS RECORDS REVIEW BOARD.

ROBERT KNUDSEN WAS A MEMBER OF THE WHITE HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHIC STAFF. FOLLOWING PRESIDENT KENNEDY’S AUTOPSY, KNUDSEN WAS INVOLVED IN PROCESSING THE PHOTOGRAPHS. IN SWORN TESTIMONY, HE TOLD THE HOUSE COMMITTEE STAFF THAT HE HAD SEEN PHOTOS OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY’S REMAINS WITH PROBES INSERTED.
(CUT TO:)

-GRAPHIC: EXTRACT OF KNUDSEN-HSCA TESTIMONY

$BUMPER: LINEUP #12
INTRO: "ROADS NOT TAKEN"

$GRAPHIC: MIDGLEY & CRONKITE

V.O. NARRATION: THERE ARE NO SUCH PHOTOGRAPHS OR X-RAYS IN THE COLLECTION HOUSED TODAY IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES. THE MYSTERY OF AUTOPSY X-RAYS AND PHOTOGRAPHS KNOWN TO HAVE EXISTED AT ONE TIME BUT NOW MISSING PERSISTS TO THIS DAY. CBS NEWS RECEIVED THE FIRST CLUE TO THE MYSTERY LONG BEFORE THE TRAIL RAN COLD. THEY BURIED IT.

(MUSIC: “GOSPEL FANTASIA (AMEN)” – 1ST CHORUS)

V.O. NARRATION: THIS IS REALLY THE STORY OF HOW TWO GREAT JOURNALISTS – LESLIE MIDGLEY AND WALTER CRONKITE, WHOSE ROLE IN THIS AFFAIR WAS ESSENTIALLY LIMITED TO READING A SCRIPT THAT WAS HANDED TO HIM – WERE USED AND ABUSED BY THE CBS CORPORATE MACHINERY. ULTIMATELY, THE WARREN REPORT SERIES DID NOT REFLECT THE CONCEPTS AND JUDGMENTS OF EITHER ITS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER (MIDGLEY) OR ITS ANCHORMAN (CRONKITE). IN HIS MEMOIRS PUBLISHED MORE THAN 20 YEARS LATER, MIDGLEY WROTE THAT HE STILL FOUND IT HARD TO ACCEPT AS FACT THAT LEE HARVEY OSWALD DID THIS TERRIBLE THING ALL ALONE. AND HE REAFFIRMED HIS BELIEF THAT THE FBI’S INVESTIGATION OF THE CASE WAS "UNBELIEVABLY SLOPPY."

(-MORE-)
But what about Dan Rather? He conducted a number of interviews and witnessed some of the tests. Even if he had not been familiar with what was going on in the executive suite, Dan Rather was close enough to the project to make out its odd tilt in one direction – the official theory of the crime – just as critics had said of the Warren Report. What about Dan Rather?
EARLY IN 1975, THE 60 MINUTES UNIT BEGINS A SERIOUS INVESTIGATION TO FIND A LINK BETWEEN LEE HARVEY OSWALD AND JACK RUBY. AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS OF RESEARCH, HOWEVER, RICHARD SALANT KILLS THEIR PROJECT AND, IN APRIL 1975, ORDERS THE 60 MINUTES TEAM TO TURN OVER ALL THEIR RESEARCH TO LESLIE MIDGLEY. BY NOW, IT IS CLEAR THAT MIDGLEY OWNS THE ASSASSINATION STORY AT CBS FOR ALL PURPOSES WHILE SALANT REMAINS PRESIDENT. HIS CORE PERSONNEL ON THE STORY HAS REMAINED CONSTANT SINCE 1964. BUT MIDGLEY UNDOUBTEDLY RECALLS THE STING OF REJECTION YEARS EARLIER FOR HIS IDEA OF PUTTING THE WARREN REPORT ON TRIAL. NOW, BOTH HE AND CBS NEWS HAVE TOO MUCH INVESTED IN THE LONE ASSASSIN THEORY. MIDGLEY TELLS HIS STAFF AND DAN RATHER THEY WILL AVOID GOING DOWN THE SAME ROAD THEY DID IN 1967. THEY WILL NOT RE-EXAMINE THEIR SUPPORT OF THE LONE ASSASSIN THEORY.
Dan Rather was not in Dealey Plaza when President Kennedy was murdered. He neither saw nor heard the shooting. He covered the aftermath from inside a studio at CBS's Dallas affiliate KRLD. For decades afterward, this connection enabled both CBS and Rather to promote themselves as authoritative and credible narrators of the assassination saga. But in their repeated retellings and reconstructions of that afternoon, self-serving myths have sometimes overtaken the facts, embedding Rather deeper inside the story and enlarging his role.

As late as March 2005, for example, CBS continued to claim that "Rather was the first to report Kennedy had died, before the official confirmation of the President's death." It's an outright falsehood. The first reporter to broadcast that Kennedy had died was Eddie Barker, then the local news director of KRLD.

(-MORE-)
DAN RATHER'S STATURE AT THE NETWORK GREW, AT LEAST IN PART DUE TO HIS PUBLIC IMAGE AS A MAINSTAY OF CBS'S REPORTING ON THE ASSASSINATION. IN 1981, RATHER SUCCEEDED WALTER CRONKITE AS ANCHORMAN OF THE CBS EVENING NEWS. BUT HE STRUGGLED TO FILL CRONKITE'S SHOES AS THE SHOW'S RATINGS STEADILY DECLINED OVER THE NEXT 24 YEARS, AND IT FELL TO THIRD PLACE BEHIND THE OTHER NETWORKS. WALTER CRONKITE RECENTLY TOLD CNN: "IT SURPRISED QUITE A FEW PEOPLE AT CBS AND ELSEWHERE THAT, WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO PULL UP THE RATINGS BEYOND THIRD IN A THREE-MAN FIELD, THAT THEY TOLERATED HIS BEING THERE FOR SO LONG."

ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2004, RATHER CITED PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN MILITARY RECORDS AS PROOF THAT PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH ENTERED THE TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD DURING THE VIETNAM WAR THROUGH POLITICAL INFLUENCE, AND THAT HE RECEIVED PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT DESPITE DISOBEYING ORDERS. AFTER VIGOROUSLY DEFENDING RATHER'S REPORT FOR TWELVE DAYS AGAINST QUESTIONS OF FORGERY, CBS NEWS CONFESSED THAT IT COULD NOT SUBSTANTIATE THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE DOCUMENTS USED IN THE STORY.
RATHER SAID, "I'M OF THE SCHOOL, MY NAME IS ON IT, I'M RESPONSIBLE."

AND HE ADMITTED, "I DIDN'T DIG HARD ENOUGH, LONG ENOUGH, DIDN'T ASK ENOUGH OF THE RIGHT QUESTIONS." THE STORY'S PRODUCER WAS FIRED. THREE EXECUTIVES WERE ASKED TO RESIGN. ANOTHER EMPLOYEE WAS PUBLICLY DEFAMED AND DISGRACED, BUT ALLOWED TO STAY. ALTHOUGH DAN RATHER ABDICATED HIS ANCHOR CHAIR UNDER A CLOUD OF SCANDAL, BY THE TIME THE PRESENTATION YOU ARE WATCHING WAS PLACED ON THE INTERNET, HE REMAINED A CORRESPONDENT FOR CBS NEWS, WHICH PAID HIM A ONE-HOUR TRIBUTE RARELY ACCORDED TO LIVING TELEVISION PERSONALITIES.

THE CBS DOCUMENTARIES FAILED TO PERSUADE THE PUBLIC THAT ONE MAN ACTING ALONE ASSASSINATED JOHN F. KENNEDY. QUITE THE OPPOSITE, IN LATER YEARS PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SHOWED A GROWING BELIEF IN A CONSPIRACY – LONG BEFORE OLIVER STONE'S "JFK". DESPITE CBS'S FAILURE TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION, ITS INFLUENCE ON OTHER NEWS ORGANIZATIONS CANNOT BE SO EASILY DISMISSED

(-MORE-)
"BEYOND DISHONESTY: ABC LOOKS AT THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION"

(ABC TITLE ANIMATION)


(MUSIC IN: SOLEMN STRINGS TO FADEOUT)

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