

CUE TELEVISION

CBS Looks at The Assassins

By MIMI MEAD

Did Lee Harvey Oswald act alone? Watergate and the recent CIA investigations have re-opened this question and on Tuesday and Wednesday November 25 and 26 at 10 p.m., CBS News will re-examine the assassination of John F. Kennedy in the first two of a four-part series called *The American Assassins*, with Dan Rather reporting. It promises to be an unusual and controversial series.

The first program will show, for the first time ever on network TV, the original Zapruder film of the actual assassination. (*Life* magazine bought the home movie from Abraham Zapruder in 1963, and only bootleg copies of varying fuzziness have been seen on TV before. When *Life* folded, Time, Inc. sold the film back for \$1.00 to the Zapruder family, which has given CBS exclusive permission to air it.)

The program also contains a film clip of President Lyndon Johnson expressing his opinion that Oswald did not act alone. Several CIA and FBI agents are heard from, as well as other experts. Two later programs covering the killings of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and the attempt on George Wallace's life, will be aired in December.

Explaining why CBS is dealing with the assassinations now, Leslie Midgley, executive producer of the series, declares: "In 1964 we did a two-hour show when the Warren Report came out, and in 1967 we did four one-hour shows on it. Now remember, the X-rays and photographs of the autopsy were sealed by the Kennedy family. The fact is that the Warren Commission never got to see them. But our conclusion in 1967 was that, although we were very disappointed with the Warren Report, it was probably the best we were going to get."

There were those who disagreed with CBS's 1967 conclusions, among them Professor Josiah Thompson of Haverford College, author of *Six Seconds in Dallas*, who appears in the present show. But as Midgley notes, "The whole thing died down until Watergate came up with all that secret stuff and the CIA murders and all. Nobody believes what the Government says any more, so last spring we decided to take another look."

What CBS discovered was that the Jack Kennedy case has become much



Dan Rather examines evidence

more interesting to the nation. "The subject has become the hottest thing on the college lecture circuit," says Midgley. "Mark Lane [a noted Warren Report critic] is making a fortune."

The time limit on the sealed autopsy films finally ran out, so CBS, after getting permission from the Kennedy family, asked forensic pathologist Cyril Wecht to examine them for the program. Wecht maintains that there was more than one gunman. "There's no question that the autopsy was badly bungled," says Midgley. "It was done by the wrong people at the wrong time."

According to Midgley, the first segment of the series essentially looks at the questions of whether Oswald shot Kennedy and if he was the only gunman. The second hour deals with "what did the CIA know and do, what did the FBI know and do, and what was the Cuban connection?" Last summer's Congressional hearings on the intelligence services revealed, among other things, that Oswald wrote a note to the Dallas FBI office several days before the murder, saying that if they did not stop bothering his wife he would blow up their headquarters and

the police station; the FBI destroyed the note. On the program Rather interviews a one-time FBI informer who says Oswald was also an informer.

"The FBI behaved very badly, there's no question about it," Midgley believes. "They've admitted it. But we received no obstruction in our investigation, essentially. Of course the real problem," he adds wryly, "is that we don't have subpoena powers and the FBI and the CIA aren't going to see us too willingly. But Dan Rather and I went to see Bill Colby, who's an old friend; and of course he laid out the CIA's version of Oswald. Now, the buffs and the critics are not going to buy what Colby says, so to balance it we also interviewed Victor Marchetti [former CIA agent and an agency critic]."

FBI head Clarence Kelly allowed CBS to interview some people who are still in the FBI, and Midgley notes, "The picture of the FBI that comes out is not good and Kelly knows it. His position is difficult, but after all, he's not J. Edgar Hoover; he was out in Kansas City at the time."

Lyndon Johnson's remarks were made in 1969 during a filmed CBS interview with Walter Cronkite, and he later said he did not want them aired. However, when two of his intimates recently wrote articles saving Johnson believed in a conspiracy, CBS brought out the film.

Midgley declares that "most of the people in the United States don't believe the Warren Report. They don't want to believe it. Even experts find what they want to find in the autopsy reports. People who write for newspapers and magazines want us to find out that there was a vast conspiracy linking all the assassinations. Some people even think these murders are connected with the political fortunes of Richard Nixon, but that's not the important question. At the end of the series we'll try to come to some conclusion." Midgley won't say yet what that conclusion will be, but it seems clear that he would not be producing this program if he accepted the Warren Report unquestioningly.

One person who would not submit to filmed interviews is Marina Oswald. Her present husband is adamant about her privacy. She did lunch with the show's producers, but, says Midgley, "she will not answer any questions on the record. She's just a Texas housewife. She works in a dress shop and the kids go to school, but my impression is that she'd kind of like to find out if there was someone else, to take the onus off their father." ■