

Network Deletes LBJ's Remarks on Warren Findings

By Ronald Kessler
Washington Post Staff Writer

The final scheduled installment of a Columbia Broadcasting System interview with former President Johnson omits at Mr. Johnson's request, a comment questioning some of the Warren Commission's findings on John F. Kennedy's assassination.

The deletion, made in an interview to be televised Saturday at 7:30 p.m., was requested by Mr. Johnson on the grounds of national security.

Richard S. Salant, president of CBS News, which purchased the right to film the interviews for a sum reported to be \$300,000, confirmed that deletions had been made and said the interview will include this message some 30 seconds into the program:

"Certain material has been deleted from this broadcast at President Johnson's request, made on the ground of national security."

Salant and other CBS executives declined to confirm or deny that the deletions were comments concerning the Warren Commission report.

But sources close to CBS said Johnson, asked by interviewer Walter Cronkite for his opinion of the commission findings, replied that he has never been "absolutely" satisfied with the report.

In particular, Johnson expressed doubts about the "motivations and connections" of Lee Harvey Oswald, the sources said. The reference was apparently to the accused assassin's attempted defection to the Soviet Union and claimed relationship with the Communist Party.

Mr. Johnson and his liaison with CBS, Tom Johnson, could not be reached for comment at the LBJ Ranch yesterday.

The interview, the third in the series, was filmed last September and October at the LBJ Ranch by a CBS crew from New York. However, it

was not until approximately three weeks ago that Mr. Johnson made the request, apparently after hearing a playback of the audio portion of the film.

The request touched off an internal dispute within CBS. Although he declined to comment, Salant was reportedly unhappy with the decision to accede to Mr. Johnson's request.

CBS news executives say such requests when made by Presidents or former Presidents have in the past been honored only when they were made immediately after or within a day of the filming and only when the material to be deleted clearly pertained to "military information."

In this case, the request was made many months after the filming.

According to Salant, CBS' contract with Johnson did not give the former chief executive the rights of censorship or review.

"The deletions were made because he (Mr. Johnson) requested them," Salant said.

However, Salant said there is "no agreement" at CBS on this point.

According to Burton Benjamin, executive producer of the interview series, called "LBJ," "The written agreement permits him (Johnson) to delete for national security (reasons)."

A lawyer in the CBS counsel's office said he was not familiar with the terms of the contract.

A "tease" episode at the end of the second show in the series, televised last Feb. 6, shows Johnson telling Cronkite: "Getting back to the Texas trip, I say much was written about that trip to Texas, Walter, and from my personal knowledge most of what's been written was wrong. And I think most of it was deliberate."