

Dallas, JFK *Post Guide* Revisited *TV Guide* 2/28/92

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This week, Dan Rather returns to the scene of the crime.

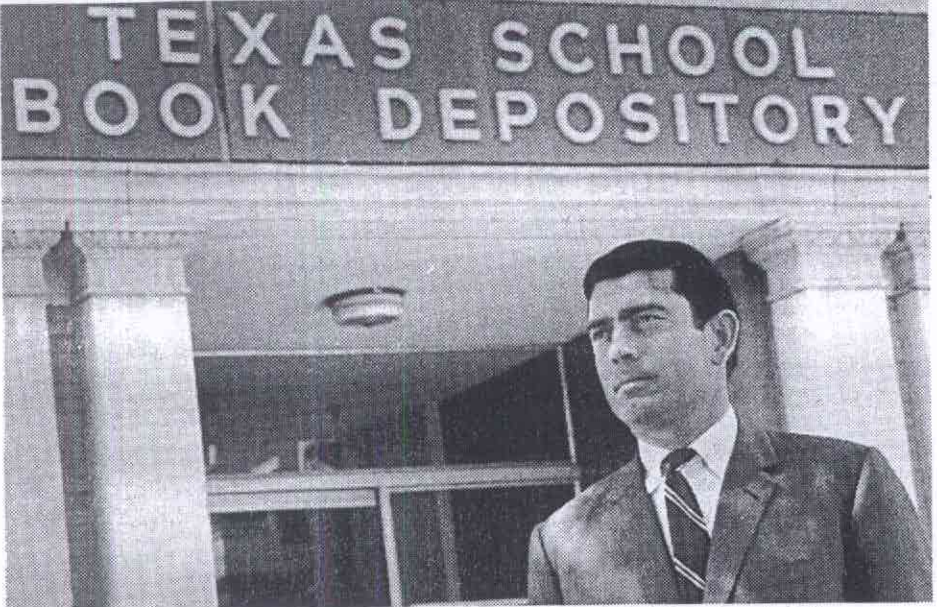
He'll be back in Dallas, where he was on Nov. 22, 1963, reporting for CBS, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

His visit there will be part of this week's "48 Hours" (Wednesday at 10 on CBS), which will attempt to sift and sort the pieces of evidence in the assassination.

And for a mainstream journalist these days, that means talking to, and maybe taking on, filmmaker Oliver Stone.

For it is Stone's film "JFK" that has succeeded in focusing and galvanizing skepticism about the official version of the assassination. Suddenly, the debate is on: Stone has been all over the TV magazine and talk shows, and efforts are being made to unseal archival material related to the Warren Commission and congressional investigations of the assassination.

And there has been abundant criticism of "JFK," with many journalists who have followed the story and other authorities in the field claiming that any number of Stone's points don't fly. It's all made for



CBS News' Dan Rather in 1967 outside the Texas School Book Depository in Dallas.

the most intense debate about the assassination in many years, and it has prompted this edition of "48 Hours."

Rather, who was a reporter feeding information to Walter Cronkite on the day of the assassination, has kept current on the killing and politely distances himself from Stone's interpretation of events.

"I have no argument with Stone," said Rather. "His is a different craft. He's an

artist. We have different value systems, goals and approaches to things."

Rather has taped a two-hour interview with Stone, portions of which will be a part of the program. A "48 Hours" spokeswoman said the interview session was cordial. The CBS anchorman will also revisit Dallas and the key locations involved in the assassination.

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Rather, who prides himself on having read all 26½ volumes of the Warren Commission report, said his approach to the program would be that of an unbiased presenter of evidence, trying to give the viewer a basis on which to evaluate information about the assassination.

"I'm trying to be an honest broker of information," said Rather. "I want this to be a neutral examination of the record, concentrating where possible on the known facts.

"There are thousands of unknowns, of course. I want to deal responsibly with what we know, what we think we know and what we know we don't know about the assassination."

A CBS documentary in the mid-'70s went further than that, largely concurring with the findings of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in shooting Kennedy.

"JFK" points broadly to a conspiracy including many individuals and interests.

Rather suggested that much of what can be conveyed by film

is driven by emotion. "A good filmmaker," he said, "never mind a great one, can take the kind of rich material of the Kennedy assassination and make it into a very good drama which, whether he intends to or not, can be manipulative of emotions."

Perhaps heightening the impact of "JFK" is the fact that so many Americans seeing the film were not even alive at the time of the assassination or are so young as to have no clear memory of the event and its aftermath.

"Almost a third were not alive then," said Rather. "Put that together with those alive but with little memory of it, it gives you an idea how later generations are susceptible to having their emotions manipulated. And whether that manipulation is done knowingly or unknowingly, I feel strongly about giving people as many facts as you can so they can make up their own minds."

The idea of making public material sealed away in the Archives intrigues Rather, but he would not expect dramatic revelations should the files be opened.

"I don't think there'd be anything explosive found," he said. "I

think there's a risk of raising expectations too high. I simply don't know. I'd love to be shown wrong, but I think it may be that there may not be much in them."

He added, "We know a lot, and that's what I want to concentrate on [on "48 Hours"]. And there are those things we don't know and many we will never know."

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But he said many of the treasures have been damaged or destroyed by their own caretakers, the Iraqi government. "This is a minority, Saddam Hussein's party, but this is a tragedy."

Crucial to Wood's historical documentary, Iraq was home to the Mesopotamian and Babylonian empires and to cities such as Uruk, the first city on earth; Arbil, the world's oldest continually occupied city; and the rich and fabled Baghdad.

Much of the series features Oxford-educated Wood, 43, an academic historian, walking the streets (or deserts or jungles) and talking about patterns of life and culture and key moments in the history of that place. In most scenes, Wood, a tall, blond Englishman, is literally head and shoulders above the crowds.

Certainly he is in the installment on India, which follows on Sunday, where he, director/producer Peter Spry-Leverton, and associate producer/researcher Chris Ledger filmed some of the 15 million people who gathered for the festival of Kumbha Mela at Allahabad, bathing at dawn in Ganges, 600,000 people each hour. "Only a country like India could have organized it," he said.

Monday, Wood takes us to another of the world's largest populations, China, whose civilization was shaped by Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism and whose eighth-century poet, Li Po, is still popular. Then on to Egypt, home of the legendary Nile, where the world's first unified state was formed about 3,000 B.C. and then overlaid with Greek and Muslim cultures.

Tuesday, the series goes to Central America, where Aztec and Mayan civilizations rose independently of the Old World, and finally to Western Europe and the New World, where the descendants of the Saxons, Goths and Franks settled.