

'Inside Edition' says it can link CIA to assassination

By Ray Richmond
The Orange County Register

On what could be dubbed the "Battle of the JFK Assassination Theories," the nightly news/tabloid series "Inside Edition" says it will reveal tonight previously sealed files that tie Lee Harvey Oswald directly to the CIA.

The show airs just three hours before CBS News checks in with its own "48 Hours" report on the assassination of President Kennedy. Host Dan Rather promises to address conspiracy-theory questions. "Inside Edition" co-host Bill O'Reilly said in a telephone inter-

view Tuesday that he and "Inside Edition" gained access to the mounds of sealed files that emerged from the House Assassination Committee investigations of the late 1970s.

Those files, stored in hundreds of cartons inside the National Archives in Washington, DC, contain what O'Reilly calls "raw data with conclusions that emerged from police reports, the Justice Department, the Secret Service... a variety of sources."

Sealed in 1979, the files were supposed to remain private until the year 2029. But O'Reilly says he has been working to uncover the file contents "for 12 years" and man-

aged through secret sources to lay eyes on "a good portion" of the material.

O'Reilly says "Inside Edition" (7 p.m. on KABC-TV) will link Oswald to the Central Intelligence Agency and therefore the CIA to the assassination.

O'Reilly says he will note in tonight's report that a paid CIA operative was seen in the company of Oswald "many times" in the months leading up to the assassination.

"The CIA has denied having had any contact with Oswald whatsoever," O'Reilly said, "so this is obviously incredibly significant. It

means the CIA was at least an accomplice in the assassination."

Also included in the "Inside Edition" story is an on-camera interview with Sylvia Odio, a onetime fund-raising volunteer for anti-Castro Cubans in Dallas.

Odio told the Warren Commission and the House Assassination Committee that she was present at a meeting attended by Oswald and a pair of unidentified men who discussed assassinating Kennedy, O'Reilly said.

"This is Odio's first TV interview ever," O'Reilly added.

O'Reilly declined to say how he managed to view the sealed docu-

ments, noting, "If I told you specifics, people could go to jail."

O'Reilly was adamant that none of the material to be presented is fabricated. "This is not a joke or a promotional stunt," said O'Reilly, who added that his access will be further confirmed on screen through pictures of numerous letterheads and documents.

Why was O'Reilly permitted to view the locked files now?

"I think with the 'JFK' movie and all of the publicity surrounding it, the feeling is that the files will be opened for public and press consumption this year, anyway," said O'Reilly. "I think I simply got there first."

PREVIEW

Rather, '48 hours' seek to present facts of JFK assassination

By Marc Gunther
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

He stood on the route of the presidential motorcade on the afternoon of Nov. 22, 1963, a block or so from the Texas School Book Depository, and when he saw the open limousine rush by at high speed, Dan Rather knew he was onto the biggest story of his life.

Rather, then 31, grabbed the story and never let go — not that day, when he was the first television newsmen to report the death of President Kennedy, and not in the weeks, months and years that followed.

He has read the 26-plus-volume Warren Commission report, and he can now be fairly described as an assassination buff, able to discourse at length about the homemade Zapruder film, which captured the moment the president was struck; about Lee Harvey Oswald's marksmanship skills, even about the use of neutron activation analysis to compare the bullet fragments from John Connally's wrist to the remains of the single bullet recovered at Parkland Hospital.

And so, when Rather heard about Oliver Stone's "JFK," he went to his bosses at CBS News and asked if he could return to Dallas, to take a just-the-facts approach to the story that would contrast with Stone's imaginative but fanciful version. The result, after initial resistance from the CBS brass, is this week's "48 Hours: JFK" (tonight at 10/channel 2), a look at what's known and what's not known about the murder of John F. Kennedy.

"I haven't wanted to do anything so badly in a long time," Rather said with his usual quiet intensity at a breakfast with reporters last week, where he discussed Stone's

"JFK," CBS' program and his own beliefs about the assassination.

It isn't that Rather wanted to pick a fight with Oliver Stone. To the contrary, he describes "JFK" as "good entertainment" and "skillfully done." But Rather could not sit still once it became clear that some moviegoers were buying into Stone's version of history. "A lot of it is not true," he said.

Nevertheless, research by CBS indicates that the movie is having an impact. About 77 percent of Americans believe there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy, according to a CBS News poll conducted last month. The proportion climbs to 91 percent among those who have seen "JFK." What's more, roughly 75 percent of the respondents say they think there was "an official cover-up" to keep the public from learning the truth about the assassination.

While "48 Hours: JFK" inevitably will be seen as a rebuttal to Stone, Rather and Andrew Heyward, the executive producer, insist that is not by design.

"The purpose of this program is, No. 1, facts," Rather said. "It is to inform, not to persuade."

Such claims won't persuade the conspiracy theorists. For one thing, Rather and CBS News are building on a tradition of assassination coverage that began with Rather's own work that day, which earned him a promotion to the White House beat and set him on course to become anchor of the "CBS Evening News." CBS News itself has done three prior investigations of the assassination, resulting in an hour-long program in 1964, a four-hour inquiry in 1967, and two more hours in 1975.

While CBS spent a small fortune on the programs, once even building a track and recreating the entire scene at Dealey Plaza, con-



Dan Rather, shown at left during a 1967 report at the site of his biggest story, returns to Dallas again for '48 Hours: JFK,' on CBS tonight.

spiracy theorists say the network has served as little more than an apologist for the Warren Commission.

Unsurprisingly, Rather denies it. "CBS News has, from the very beginning, run independent investigations," Rather said. "I do not consider myself an attacker or a defender of the Warren Commission report."

Does Rather believe that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone? "I don't know," he said.

What Rather will say, however, is that he believes that Oswald was a shooter, if not the lone shooter. "Oswald does fit the classic pattern of a malcontent loner who shoots at somebody," Rather said. "All he was missing was 'The Catcher in the Rye' in his pocket." It's at that point, Rather said, that questions arise. "The gut question is — well, was he the only shooter? A lot of the doubt starts right there," he said.

Rather's own doubts are fed partly by Oswald's history. "What was he doing in the Soviet Union?" he said. "What was his involvement with Fidel Castro?" They also stem from the morass of forensic evidence, which has provoked debates about the timing of the rifle shots, the so-called "magic bullet" theory and the autopsy report. "We're now into the mangrove swamp of detail," Rather said.

That swamp of detail is one reason why the crime remains, to many people, an unsolved mystery. As Heyward of CBS put it: "No hypothesis explains everything. You can take any of the conspiracy theories, or any other theory, and point out gaps."

Another reason, Rather says, is that "it's maddening" to believe that the course of history can be changed by a crazed gunman.

About the only certainty is that Wednesday's "48 Hours" won't be the last word on the subject. Even Rather plans to remain ever alert to the possibility of a break in the case, improbable as that may be. "Face it," he said. "If I could prove that Oswald didn't do it, or Oswald didn't act alone, it would be the greatest accomplishment of my career."



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