

CONSPIRACY!

by John Judge

WHAT WAS DAN RATHER DOING IN DEALEY PLAZA?

"Uh - I was in Dallas - uh - the day of the Kennedy assassination - uh - to co-ordinate our coverage. Uh - my location at the time of the assassination was - uh - just past the overpass - uh - past the Textbook Depository. I was waiting for what is known in the business as a film and audio tape drop, that is, someone in the motorcade was going to drop me some material at that location."

- Dan Rather on Lou Staples Talk Show, KLRD, Dallas, 10/24/74

"From that date (November 22, 1963), it soon became clear that a sophisticated military dictatorship has destroyed our democracy and has us all in a death grip. Now let us all pray that this is a horrible nightmare."

- Fern Jones, FORGIVE MY GRIEF

The idea that a lone, crazed gunman, Lee Harvey Oswald, firing with a cheap, inaccurate weapon three times in 5.6 seconds, wounded Governor Connally in five places, wounded a bystander, and caused three wounds to President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, 1963, has not stood the test of time. A recent national public opinion poll shows that 68% of the American public believes there was a conspiracy to kill JFK, and 45% want the case to be re-opened. And CBS found in a poll that 46% of the country believe that all four major political assassinations of the last decade (JFK, RFK, King and the Wallace attempt) are somehow linked. Senator Schweiker (R-Penn) is currently looking into allegations of FBI and CIA cover-up in the Dallas murder, as part of his work with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. And Rep. Henry Gonzales (Tex) has over 60 sponsors on legislation to force full Congressional investigation into the major assassination plots.

Into this growing dissent and support for further action, as they have in the past, step the major news media. One of the major offenders, doing biased reporting on assassinations, has been the stalwart *New York Times*.⁴¹ But such large circulation newsmagazines as *Time* and *Newsweek* do their share of distortion. Not only do they reprint misleading information, but these publications have refused in the past to print the corrections sent in by the critics. All the major media are to blame for such rapid-fire sycophantic praise of the Warren Commission's work before any of them even had time to read it, or assess the printed evidence.

But looming large in the field of newsmaking and dangerous credibility are the Ponderosa family of electronic journalism, CBS's Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather and Ike Pappas. And when public doubts about the Commission flourished in 1967, Cronkite, Rather, and Eddie Barker helped produce a series of four one-hour specials on JFK that can be seen in retrospect as pure whitewash.

CBS WHITEWASH, 1967

"Please pardon the personal reference, but it seems advisable in this instance to note that this reporter was in Dallas when Kennedy was shot, followed closely by the Warren investigation, and conducted for CBS News

and with CBS News' full resources an independent investigation. Then, and ever since, this reporter had defended the Warren Commission and its conclusions."

- Dan Rather, CBS

First Line Report, August 10, 1973

"...enough..." - Walter Cronkite's description of circumstantial evidence suggesting Oswald's guilt, CBS, 1967

The "conclusions" of that series of specials in 1967 backed up the Warren Commission findings. Using torturous logic and selective pieces of information, CBS found Oswald guilty without trial. On a recently aired CBS Special Report, November 25, 1975, on *American Assassins*, (different somehow from Latin American or European?), Rather reviewed the 1967 suppositions of CBS as if they were a set of established facts. With the help of visual aids, instead of hard facts, he went over them again, recanting the cant.

Did Oswald own the rifle that killed President Kennedy? Yes, said Rather, without a pause. The rifle first discovered in the Book Depository was a 7.65 German Mauser, according to reports from the Dallas police and the District Attorney. Three days later, the rifle changed into a 6.5 Italian Mannlicher-Carcano. The Commission said Oswald ordered it by mail from Kline's. The ad they reprint for evidence is for the wrong gun. The name used to order the gun was Alex Hidell, an alias they did not link to Oswald. Oswald's signature could not be linked to the post office box Hidell used. They said Oswald carried the gun in luggage too small to hold it. They said he wrapped it in a blanket in the garage of the house his wife Marina stayed at. No fibers from the blanket were found on the gun, no oil from the gun was on the blanket. The stretch marks on the blanket did not fit the gun. The photo of Oswald holding the gun on the 1964 *Life* cover was a planted, doctored photograph, pasting Oswald's head on another body.⁴² Oswald was never seen with the gun, carrying the gun, practicing with the gun. Exhaustive FBI search could not establish that Oswald bought ammunition for the gun. The only bullet the Commission could link ballistically to the gun was the "Magic Bullet", Exhibit 399 (see my earlier article, "Biting the Bullet"), found miles

from the scene, beneath a stretcher unconnected to the care of Connally and JFK. A mysterious man walked down a hall, bumped the stretcher, and an attendant saw a bullet fall out. The incident occurred at a time when the best evidence suggests Jack Ruby was at the Parkland Hospital in Dallas, though the Commission denies it.

Did Oswald take that rifle to the Book Depository the day of the assassination? Yes, again, claimed CBS. The Commission said Oswald made a special trip to get the gun from Marina's garage the night before, and rode to work with it concealed in a paper bag. Marina said he never had a paper bag, never went into the garage that night. Wesley Frazer, who took him to work, and others who saw the bag, all agreed on its length. It was too short to hold a gun, even broken down. It was curtain rods said Oswald; Frazer agreed. There were no fibers from the bag on the gun, no oil from the gun on the bag. No fingerprints of Oswald on the bag or the gun. Not even a bag in the photos of the floor of the so-called "sniper's nest", though police claim that's where they found it.

Was the gun fired from the Book Depository? You guessed it: yes, said CBS. There were three bullet shells lined in a neat row against the wall of the alleged nest, said Deputy Roger Craig. In the first photos of the scene they were scattered across the floor, as if fired and ejected. One of them disappeared. Two others were sent to the FBI - one so damaged it couldn't be loaded. The main witness said he looked up and saw a man standing and firing from that window. Visible in the Zapruder film in a hard hat, he never looks up. The window was open only slightly; a man standing would have had to fire through the glass. He was unable to identify Oswald in a line-up that day. Oswald's hands and cheeks were paraffin-tested and under neutron activation analysis; graphite present was too little for a rifle blast. And to fire from that window, Oswald had to have been on the sixth floor.

Where was Oswald? "Definitely in the building", says Rather, "and probably on the sixth floor." Mae Brussel, west coast researcher, found this wavering laughable. After all, if not on the sixth floor, then what are we discussing? Oswald was seen drinking a coke on the second floor ninety seconds after the shooting ended. A Dallas cop ran into the building, saw Oswald in the cafeteria, and as if on cue ran in and thrust a pistol into his stomach. The elevator wasn't in operation at the time. The only accessible stairwell from the sixth floor was occupied by Virginia Hill, who saw no one come up or down. She, and six other eyewitnesses saw Oswald on the first floor. James Altgens took a photograph of the motorcade at the time of the first shot, and a man matching Oswald's dress and facial features can be seen in the first floor doorway of the Depository, watching JFK go by. The only witness who placed Oswald on the sixth floor, a half-hour before the

