

LIZ SMITH

The Press Rep and Marilyn

NEW YORK—"This isn't history—Alexander the Great is history. This is not history!" said public relations maven Patricia Newcomb last week when asked by TV's "Hard Copy" to contribute her remembrance of Marilyn Monroe's death "for history."

In two recent programs, "Hard Copy" seemed to want to put Newcomb in the wrong simply because she wants to keep her mouth shut.

Newcomb is a longtime friend of mine, and yet I have never been able to dig out of her any lurid tidbits or scandal about the many famous stars she served in her years working for the late Arthur Jacobs (who repped Monroe), for Rogers & Cowan or for herself.

On last week's show, the one that focused specifically on Newcomb, "Hard Copy" displayed a photograph of Monroe, which they said Newcomb gave to one of Jacobs' secretaries. "Hard Copy" touted it as Monroe's "last photo, the one she didn't want published, taken only days before her death." Really? I wonder how the great photojournalist Eve Arnold reacted, since it was actually a famous MM shot she took in 1960 during filming of "The Misfits."

"Hard Copy" offered a scenario that had the Kennedys more or less bribing Newcomb to remain silent by giving her a job in the U.S. Information Agency after Monroe's death.

I did get Newcomb at least to respond to that lurid implication: "The Kennedys never gave me a dime, never offered me anything, and never made a job available to me! On the afternoon of the night Marilyn died, I had been with her, but her psychiatrist advised me to go home, because he wanted to talk with her. I did go home and was awakened at 4 in the morning by the lawyer Mickey Rudin. He told me Marilyn was dead—an overdose. I rushed to Marilyn's house. It has been printed that I saw her body, but I never did. The press was there, and I *did* become overwrought and yell at them, calling them 'vultures.' Then I went home, knowing no more about how Marilyn had died than anyone else. . . ."

"I spent the next 48 hours tied to my phone, fielding calls from all over the world, saying to reporters what I believed to be true—that Marilyn had died of an accidental overdose. It could easily have happened. I have never believed she meant to kill herself. Everybody who knew her in that last year knows she was in just about the best physical shape of her life. She was also in a positive mood then, except for small things."

(Marilyn had just been reinstated on "Something's Got to Give," the movie from which she was fired—at double her contracted salary of \$100,000.)

"Hard Copy's" "come-on" for the Newcomb-Monroe show was explosive and misleading: "Pat Newcomb speaks for the first time about Marilyn's death!" they trumpeted. But Newcomb *didn't* speak; in fact she refused to talk to them about Monroe.

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