

CBS

Of all the major electronic media no component has been as diligent, as persistent, as determined and undeviating a supporter of and apologist for the official assassination mythology <sup>of</sup> CBS-TV. This has been true through all ownerships. It is ~~had~~ <sup>and</sup> has always been so unconcerned with truth and accuracy that it did not ~~even~~ get even the time of airing right on its transcripts of its Posnerian-~~title~~ titled 30th-anniversary special, "The Final Chapter?" It gives the time of airing as "November 19, 1993/ 9:00-10:00 PM." The show ran for two hours, until 11:00 p.m.

It began with Posner's substitute for fact and evidence, ~~psych~~ psychological ~~accus~~ accusation. It was, as usual, a selective rehash. And for all its research staff and the time it took to prepare its show it still had not learned that Posner cribbed from that boy David <sup>Lui</sup>. It aired him saying, "We can look at the Zapruder film, and with new enhancement and new technology, that film can answer exactly what took place on November 22nd." Posner then diminished the basis of his book a bit - it does require that the first shot have been fired earlier than in the official ~~mythology~~ <sup>version</sup> and that it have missed - in saying, emphasis added, "There is some evidence <sup>on</sup> the film itself of this early missed shot." (transcript, page 35)

In this, as the characteristically uncritical media always is ~~when it~~ in its support of the official mythology, he was not asked, if it is this uncertain, only "some", how he could base his book on that ~~conjecture~~ conjecture and condemn all others as theorizers, claiming he is not himself.

In its own files CBS News has had since the winter of 1965 the actual evidence of that earlier shot in a copy of the limited edition of ~~NEGATIVE~~ Whitewash. By then the refusal of publishers to consider publishing the first book on "the crime of the century" was so clear I took it to CBS <sup>S</sup> News and offered to give it to them free. The producer, Palmer Williams, was impressed with it and wanted to use it. Leslie Midgeley, ~~has~~ his superior, declined it. (And before long his wife was an official of the Johnson administration.)

With the information in its files, with the ability to consult Zapruder's testimony cited in that book, with the capability of obtaining the abundance of confirma-

tory evidence and testimony so grossly misrepresented in Posner's book, CBS instead adhered to the official party line in steadfast <sup>unquestioning</sup> support of it until toward the end of this reformulated continuing support of it, it used Posner, as cited above.

Deservedly, the ratings for the show were poor.

What Rather, whose show it was, says to the press is not what his shows ~~and~~ <sup>or in</sup> CBS say. He told Paul Rosenthal of the Los Angeles Daily News in an interview it published on November 17, 1993, two days before that special was aired and thus a promotion for it, the sixth of CBS-TV's assassination specials:

"Rather does not claim to be an expert on what happened in Dallas, 30 years ago, merely a student who now has spent nearly half his life examining and ~~me~~ re-examining it with an open mind.

"The longer I go the more I think there are no experts on the assassination. ... There are a lot of facts. Not everything is known. Some things may never be known. ...

"I spent eight years working a police beat. ... You learn from detectives that if you've got a murder case, the first thing you look at is the physical evidence. There's quite a bit of physical evidence connected to the killing of President Kennedy."

If "the first thing you look at is the physical evidence," what better explanation can there be for neither Rather nor anyone working for him or on those six CBS specials nor anyone at CBS, including CBS News, ever asked me a word about all the thousands and thousands of pages of FBI reports on it that <sup>on that "physical evidence"</sup> obtained through all that litigation. <sup>the FBI's</sup> Two of those suits were for the results of that testing of that "physical evidence."

And it did answer some of those questions Rather said might never be answered.

insert where poll on JFK assassination/CBS-TV special mentioned

Not only did all the specials and all the extraordinary attention to Posner's book not influence public opinion in favor of the Posner/official account of the assassination, and not only did the percentage of those who do not believe it increase to nine <sup>w</sup>/<sub>t</sub> of ten, but public regard for the press also was lower. As the Washington Post's Ombudsman column reported ( December 19, 1993) the National Opinion Research Center found that confidence in the press was lower than at any time in the past 20 years.



Post 12/19/93

Joann Byrd

## Few Votes For the Press

Public to the press: You're not getting it.

That's the message I read in a new poll from the National Opinion Research Center. The survey says the public's faith in the press has fallen to the lowest level in the 20 years the NORC has been measuring America's confidence in its institutions.

The numbers, to get it over with, are these: Only 11 percent of those surveyed say they have "a great deal" of confidence in the press. Another 39 percent say they have "hardly any,"

### Ombudsman

and 49 percent told the interviewers they have "only some." In 1993 the "great deal" group had fallen 5.7 percentage points, and the "hardly any" people had grown from 28 percent.

Since 1973 the NORC's General Social Survey has been asking the public the same question about Congress, the executive branch, the press, the military, major companies, organized labor, the Supreme Court, banks, medicine, television, education and organized religion.

Tom Smith, who directs the survey, points out that 11 of the 13 institutions fell in the public's esteem this year, six to their lowest point ever. He thinks the drop in confidence in the press is part of a general disenchantment with institutions.

And the press is in good company down in the basement of the public's confidence. Only 7 percent had "a great deal" of confidence in Congress, and 41 percent had "hardly any." Organized Labor inspires "a great deal" of confidence from 8 percent and "hardly any" from 32 percent. In absolute numbers, the press is third from the bottom (and hadn't dropped so much as six other institutions).

I wish I could find some comfort in that.

And I wish I could find tidy, logical correlations: that in 20 years, what the

press is proud of would bring more public confidence and its embarrassments less. I can't.

Along with journalism's greatest public service in the two decades, the investigation of Watergate, and its worst moment, the fiction of Janet Cooke, there were controversies over coverage of Gary Hart and the 1988 presidential campaign, Arthur Ashe, Grenada and the Persian Gulf War, the S&L scandal and Iran-contra.

But in the years where those might show up, confidence levels got better and worse at the same time, better when it seemed they'd be worse, or the numbers changed too little to mean anything.

Individual successes and failures don't predict changes in public trust. So the explanation must be somewhere else.

I wouldn't pretend that people who unload on the ombudsman are a scientific sample. But perhaps readers who voice complaints about The Post and about "the media" provide some clues to why the public has so soured on the press.

People who write or call find as many ways of saying this as there are stories and pictures and headlines and news judgments to use as illustrations. But the objections they raise gather themselves into four public conclusions:

- News judgments and news reports are filtered through biases.
- Coverage is immaterial or incomplete, out of touch with what's important to readers and what they value.
- Journalism is cynical, refusing to see or reflect anything that's good or wholesome.
- Journalists and newspapers are self-serving and self-important.

Journalism has been talking about its disconnect with the public for, oh, a dozen or so years now. And all this time, the public faith has been, despite small blips and plateaus, steadily on the decline.

I think individual journalists and newspapers believe they can't do anything about the public's perception of the press. Or they're satisfied that they are the exception. Or they think readers don't recognize quality journalism when it lands on their doorstep.

Mr. Smith says people answering the question about the press are reflecting whether they are satisfied with the newspaper they're getting.

The press is not a monolith that can right itself. But, one by one, writers, reporters and photographers and editors can stop giving individual readers examples that collectively tell them that the press is biased or irrelevant or inaccurately negative or arrogant.

One thing's certain: If almost nine out of 10 people have "only some" or "hardly any" confidence in the press, then I doubt that we can say anymore that that's the public's problem.

11:00

(Computer animated version of how the shots were fired)

Mr. NORMAN: (Voiceover) Then, click-click--boom! Then, click-click--boom!

(Excerpt from Warren Commission's reenactment of the assassination)

RATHER: (Voiceover) Here's the Warren Commission shooting scenario of those three shots. Oswald did not first pull the trigger until the limousine went past the tree. Two shots hit; one missed.

(File footage of Kennedy's assassination)

RATHER: (Voiceover) Using the now-famous Zapruder film, the Commission calculated there were about five and a half seconds between the first shot and the third, fatal shot. Using just a stationary test target, the Commission concluded Oswald could have done it.

(Footage of marksmen shooting at a target)

RATHER: (Voiceover) CBS News did its own independent test in 1967. We built a target and test track to match exactly the dimensions of Dealey Plaza and asked 11 volunteer marksmen to see how quickly they could fire a Mannlicher-Carcano. They shot at a target moving at the estimated speed of the motorcade. One shooter, a weapons manufacturer, made three hits within five and a half seconds. Only three others managed two hits in that short time; all 11 had several chances. So it can be done, but the odds are against it, supporting the theory that there, perhaps, was more than one gunman.

(Computer animated version of how the assassination)

RATHER: (Voiceover) But what if the Warren Commission scenario of five and a half seconds is wrong? What if Oswald had more time--much more time? What if he took his first shot before the car passed the tree, (shot fired) and missed, giving more time for the second shot (shot fired) and making the third and fatal shot the easiest of all (shot fired).

Mr. POSNER: Oswald, in fact, had eight and a half seconds for all three shots. To be able to readjust your sight and your aim is what makes the difference in this shooting.

RATHER: (Voiceover) Author Gerald Posner's findings are provocative, but are they provable?

(File footage of the Warren Commission's re-enactment of the assassination)

Mr. POSNER: (Voiceover) We can look at the Zapruder film, and with new enhancements and new technology, that film can answer exactly what took place on November 22nd.

RATHER: (Voiceover) The first shot, said the Warren Commission, might have struck the president.

(Computer animated version of the assassination)

RATHER: (Voiceover) Posner disagrees, saying it was deflected by the tree (shot fired).

(File footage of Kennedy's assassination)

Mr. POSNER: (Voiceover) There is some evidence on the film itself of this early missed shot. The president is just bringing his hand down from a wave, and I believe this is part of what you'll see in his reaction to the first shot. And there's key testimony from a young girl, Rosemary Willis, with a white jacket on and a red skirt,