

CBS Reopens Its Own

JOHN CARMAN TELEVISION

Dan Rather returns tonight to the scene of the crime — the crime of the century and, by the by, a turning point in his own life.

In a special edition of "48 Hours" (10 tonight on channels 5, 10, 12 and 48), Rather and his CBS colleagues sift once again through the riddles of John F. Kennedy's assassination.

It's not the first time. CBS News devoted extensive hindsight reports to the killing in 1964, in 1967 and again in 1975, each time mulling tantalizing questions but never collecting enough evidence to up-end the Warren Commission's lone-gunman conclusion.

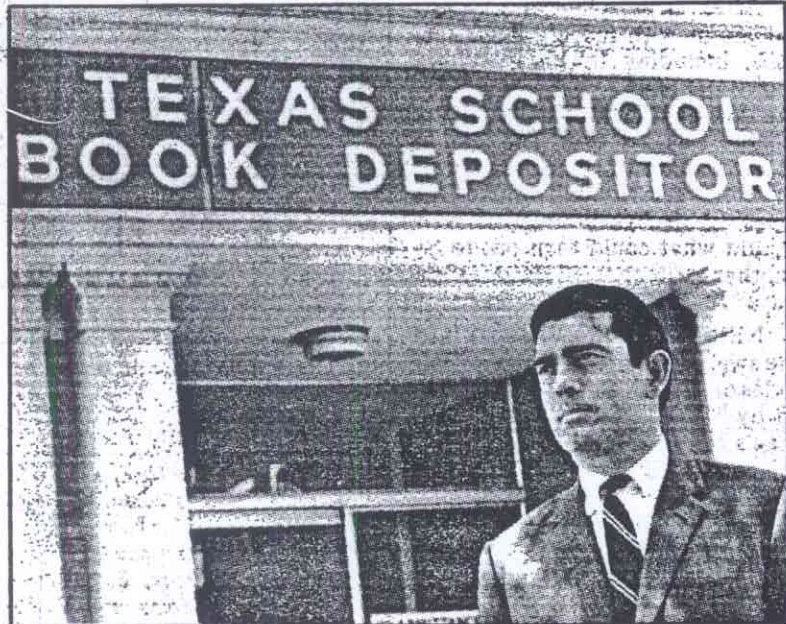
Oliver Stone Interview

This time, the shadow of Oliver Stone's film "JFK" hangs over the CBS effort. But CBS is promising nothing new to support Stone's grandiose dramatization of a broad conspiracy.

"We do not have a new smoking gun that's going to blow the lid off the record," concedes Rather's "48 Hours" producer, Andrew Heyward.

Rather himself said in a telephone interview that "I've spent a fair amount of my life and a fair amount of CBS' money" on the Kennedy story, and said it would be the greatest coup of his career if he could prove that Lee Harvey Oswald hadn't acted alone.

No such luck. Rather, who said he neither accepts nor rejects the Warren Commission findings, said he can't even



Dan Rather at Texas School Book Depository in 1967 for CBS' show on JFK killing: '48 Hours' takes a new look tonight

buy into the basic conspiracy contention that Oswald couldn't have fired three rounds so quickly from his

tion's population was born after Kennedy's murder in 1963, and may know little other than what Stone's film pur-

Dan Rather hosts '48 Hours' tonight, CBS' latest probe of the JFK slaying, and a story he's covered since 1963

perch at the Texas School Book Depository.

"Whether you believe Oswald fired those three shots or not, it's a fact that it can be done," Rather said, adding that CBS' 1967 report proved it was possible.

Generation Gap

Besides the "JFK" movie furor, Rather said, a justification for yet another CBS program on the assassination is the fact that a third of the na-

ports.

Also, a newly conducted CBS/New York Times poll found that 77 percent of the American public believe more than one man was responsible for the murder, and 75 percent now believe there was "an official coverup to keep the public from learning the truth."

"People simply do not want to believe that one man could do that," Rather said. "People keep searching for something bigger."

JFK Files

Tonight's "48 Hours" is divided into segments on the shooting itself, Oswald's actions on the day of the murder, the mysteries of Oswald's life up to the assassination, the leading conspiracy theories, and finally a Rather interview with Oliver Stone.

Rather said the Stone interview went smoothly after an awkward start. The film maker demanded and got one concession — that he be able to stop the interview and consult with an off-camera researcher. Rather said Stone "did that with frequency."

Rather Near Motorcade

Rather's personal connection with the story extends to the day of the murder, when he was a young CBS reporter posted near the Kennedy motorcade to await a film drop from a CBS camera crew. After the shooting, Rather ran five blocks to a Dallas TV station to spearhead the network's on-scene coverage.

In a later history of CBS News, author Gary Paul Gates wrote that "November 22, 1963 was, in career terms, the most important day in Dan Rather's life." Kennedy's death put Lyndon Johnson in the White House and Rather, because he was a Texan versed in "chill talk," was appointed to cover him.

Rather said he sensed on the day of the murder that the story would always cling to him.

"I'm wrong a lot of the time," he said. "But I did think in Dallas, during those four dark days, that this story is not going to end in my lifetime. I thought then, and I've thought continuously since then, that this is a story that will not die."