

WXPost

OCT 3 1976

CIA (D)

Dan Schorr: 'Indigestible' Offerings for TV's Bland Diet

Book 11/3/76
By Sander Vanocur

"I think I ended up simply being indigestible." It sounded like an epitaph. But it was merely Dan Schorr's response, on the day he resigned from CBS News, to a reporter who had asked why he had come to that particular decision.

Schorr had made his decision not to return before he sat down with CBS News president Richard S. Salant, who seemed inclined to ask Schorr to return. He was through with television news. He knew he had become "indigestible."

The question is, why? The House Ethics Committee voted not to seek prosecution of Schorr for leaking a

House Intelligence Committee report on the CIA to the Village Voice. Schorr has said publicly many times that how he did what he did may not have been wise or prudent.

Television

The answer lies in the personality of Schorr and the character of networks. In an interview he gave to his CBS colleague Mike Wallace, broadcast on "60 Minutes" Sept. 25, Schorr was asked: "Why is it that Dan Schorr, more than any other reporter I know, and certainly more than any other reporter in television, constantly, over a period of

decades, has gotten into flaps? Why Dan Schorr?"

Schorr said he didn't know. That was disingenuous on his part. He knows, and so do the rest of us. He gets into flaps because he is aggressive, highly competitive, and takes chances. Those are character flaws bad enough by the mores of most Washington journalists. They are disastrous by the mores of contemporary television journalism.

Schorr. He does hustle. He has hustled from the time he was a boy. We are told that his colleagues at CBS News resented the way Schorr battled to get his stories on the air. They "offered" stories. He "hustled" them. It seemed his chief offense was that he

believed in what he was doing, that he really thought that television valued hard-hitting, aggressive journalism.

Television executives are fond of claiming how wedded they are to the idea of hard-hitting, aggressive journalism. They really believe that. But for the most part, with few exceptions, they live in a bigamous relationship. They actually are married to fear.

It didn't used to be that way. But it is now, and the fear will get worse, not better. The trend is toward young men and women who speak in tones that have been marinated in butter, through lips that have been resorted to prevent even the semblance of anger or outrage. Schorr was not one of those. He

didn't look or sound like he should have been practicing journalism on television. He had all the smoothness of a piece of sandpaper. He provided all the comfort of a dentist's drill.

There is a simple test you can try in determining how much he will be missed. Schorr was the kind of journalist who made you put down the evening newspaper when he came on so that you could see and hear what he was reporting. Note, in the months and years ahead, how many other reporters in television news can capture your full attention and make you wish for more when they go off.

As a former colleague of Schorr's might have put it if he were still alive: Dan Schorr, good night and good luck.