

WNEW-TV Officials Defend Film on Secret Service

By LES BROWN

A bizarre bit of newscast on WNEW-TV Thursday night, which many viewers have criticized as tasteless and as the exploitation of an unfortunate person, has been defended by news executives of Channel 5 as valid reportage that sheds some light on the laxity of the Secret Service in looking after the safety of 13-year-old John F. Kennedy Jr., so not the late President.

The report on WNEW-TV followed questions that have arisen over the competence of the Secret Service protection accorded young Kennedy this week, after he had been accosted in Central Park and his bicycle and tennis racquet were stolen.

In its 10 P.M. newscast Thursday, the station carried a

filmed interview with an elevator operator at 1040 Fifth Avenue, the apartment house where the Kennedys live, telling of an employe in the building with a history of mental illness who was never investigated by the Secret Service, although he was frequently alone with the Kennedy children, John and his sister, Caroline, 16. He then identified the employe as himself.

Asked by the reporter, Christopher Jones, whether he distrusted his own behavior with the Kennedys, the elevator operator, who was being interviewed in a Bronx bar and who the news executives said "had had a few beers," then began to weep and to declare that he would never harm the children because he loved them too much.

The operator was identified

as Robert Brandoff. According to Mark Monsky, managing editor of the WNEW-TV newscast, Mr. Brandoff called the station that morning to state that he had proof the Kennedy children were not being properly protected by the Secret Service. Mr. Monsky said his identity and mental history were "triple-checked" before the decision was made to put the filmed interview on the air.

Acknowledging that WNEW-TV had received "a few hundred disapproving phone calls" after the broadcast, Ted Kavanau, vice president of news for the station, said he had screened the film before it was aired and had no moral qualms about it, nor any hesitation about putting it on the air.

Last night, the Secret Service, reached by telephone, refused

to comment on Mr. Brandoff's televised remarks.