

SF Examiner-Chronicle
25 June 1967

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CBS Joins JFK Probe



And now tonight, at 10, it is CBS-TV's turn to mount an intensive review and further investigation into the Warren Report on the assassination of President Kennedy.

It will be of unprecedented scope for television — an hour a night for four nights, Sunday through Wednesday, 10 to 11 o'clock, via Channel 5 in this area.

Was there one assassin? Was there a conspiracy? Could one bullet have struck Gov. Connally and the President? Did Oswald shoot Tippit? Did Oswald know Tippit? Why is the Warren Report not completely accepted by the public?

Questions, questions, questions — and possibly some revealing answers during the next four nights.

CBS News has been laboring on its Warren Report project for seven months. The technique is called investigative journalism, extensively practiced by newspapers, magazines, wire services and authors of books, but seldom embarked upon by comparatively timid television.

NBC last Monday uncorked a provocative hour that undermined some of the shaky timbers propping up the Jim Garrison accusations down yonder in New Orleans.

The CBS series will be fronted by Walter Cronkite, Dan Rather and Eddie Barker of KRLD-TV, Dallas. The backstage master-minding was mostly supervised by producer Leslie Midgley and CBS News vice president Bill Leonard.

In New York, recently, I participated in a CBS News conference with Cronkite, Midgley and Leonard. Some of their comments were printed in last Tuesday's column. Herewith a few more:

Q: "Can you tell if anything sensational has been discovered in your inquiry? And if so, if it's of a nature that would make headlines the day after?"

Midgley: "I don't know if sensational is exactly the right word. The answer to the second one is, I think it will. It's very interesting, maybe. Fascinating, perhaps. Sensational is a little — kind of going overboard."

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Q: "Do you really believe it is best to put this show on over three individual nights, rather than run it in a straight three hours time?"

Leonard: "It was our experience, in observing other efforts, that it was simply asking an enormous amount of an audience to sit there for three hours in a row. It was our considered judgment that this would make it more convenient, that the subject matter was of such importance that people who watch television at a certain hour a night are likely to be able during the week to watch it three nights in a row." (It subsequently was extended to four nights in a row.)

Q: "What about from the standpoint that in UN coverage, three hours isn't too much?"

Leonard: "Well, we don't control the UN coverage. If we did, we might indeed put the UN on for one hour a night, three nights a week, instead of . . ."

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Q: "Will the fresh material that you're supposed to have in the program be in the nature of hard evidence, or merely relating to conclusions?"

Midgley: "Hard evidence. We decided that we ought to make some tests of our own. We couldn't fire Oswald's rifle, since it's in the Archives. We got a collection of exactly the same rifles and set up a test which, in my opinion, is better than the tests the FBI made. Also we conducted some very extensive photo analyses of the Zapruder film to see if there were things in there that we could discover new facts on. And there are."

Q: "Have you disclosed this to the police?"

Midgley: "It isn't that kind of information, it really isn't. I mean, if we found the missing bullet, we'd go to the police."

Q: "Could you, or would you say that, so far as this inquiry of yours has gone on to this point, would it tend to support the Warren Commission Report?"

Leonard: "I can't say. That's a conclusion we were going to put in our broadcast."