

WXPost

JAN 5 1976

'Assassins IV': Examining The Forensic Evidence

By John Carmody

CBS Reports concludes its four-part series on "The American Assassins" tonight with an examination of the circumstances surrounding the death in 1968 of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in Los Angeles and the attempt on the life of Gov. George C. Wallace in Laurel in May, 1972. It airs at 10 p.m. on Channel 9.

Continuing the technique used in three previous programs that probed the deaths of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., tonight's documentary keeps footage of the terrible events themselves to a tasteful minimum.

The bulk of the program is devoted to the forensic evidence and the unanswered questions surrounding each case as well as to the motivations of the assassins themselves.

In the Kennedy case, whether there was more than the one gun held by the convicted Sirhan Sirhan has been the overriding question. A nationwide CBS poll cited tonight by correspondent Dan Rather indicates 53 per cent questioned think others were involved with the Palestinian refugee.

Despite recent tests, the number of shots fired (eight? 12?) remains clouded as does the proximity of the weapon that fatally wounded Sen. Kennedy. Destruction of evidence by the L. A. police department has hampered a thorough reexamination of the questions.

Preview

Nevertheless, Rather tonight concludes that "the existing evidence" in the Kennedy case "is such that there is a chance that one day at least this case may be stamped completely closed in the minds of most reasonable Americans."

The case of Arthur Bremer, imprisoned for the attempt on Gov. Wallace's life, is another that prompts those polled by CBS to express skepticism—some 45 per cent believe he was involved in a conspiracy.

Gov. Wallace tells CBS tonight that he, too, thinks there was a plot involving others—but offers no further information.

Bremer was a pathetic outcast. In piecing together the events that led up to the assassination attempt, investigators have been in-

trigued by his well-financed ability to follow first President Nixon and then Gov. Wallace on the 1972 campaign trail and by his odd "diary" maintained prior to the murder attempt.

Tonight's program also focusses on a statement by White House "plumber" E. Howard Hunt that he had orders to fly to Milwaukee to enter Bremer's apartment after the shooting.

The Ford White House turned down CBS' request to hear any Nixon tapes that might cover the Hunt statement.

Yet, Rather returns to this point several times without making crystal clear why the juxtaposition of the statement from an unreliable witness and a tape that might not even exist is anything more than an odd footnote.

Thus, the viewer is asked to fill in the Bremer-Nixon White House blanks, a rhetorical device that is unworthy of an excellent series which has produced superior journalism just because it has refused to play the "conspiracy theory" game itself throughout.

Regardless, tonight's concluding program is worth the concerned citizen's attention.