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PROGRAM Larry King Live STATION CNN TV
 DATE September 9, 1988 8:00 PM CITY Washington, DC
 SUBJECT VEIL: An Interview w/ Sophia and Bernadette Casey

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to Larry King Live. Tonight:

BOB WOODWARD: I was somebody who had met and talked with Casey dozens of times.

ANNOUNCER: Sophia Casey, widow of CIA Director William Casey, answers the charges....

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LARRY KING: Good evening on this Friday night in Washington.

In his book VEIL: The Secret Wars of the CIA, Watergate sleuth, investigative journalist Bob Woodward, who was on this show on Wednesday night, claimed the late William Casey, Director of the CIA, confessed he knew of events that led to the Iran-contra affair. He further claimed that this interchange took place during the last of 48 interviews with Casey and that it took place at Casey's sick bed in his hospital room shortly before he died.

In Woodward's interview earlier this week, he stood firmly by that story.

WOODWARD: Oh, it's the easiest thing in the world....

KING: To break into a hospital and through security....

WOODWARD: You don't have to break -- you don't have to break in. You just have to walk in. And remember, I was not a guy who just came in off the street and said, gee, I'd like to

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visit this room. I was somebody who had met and talked with Casey dozens of times, somebody known quite well to the people who were security guards and other aides.

KING: But Woodward's allegations were met with skepticism by some and fury by others. William Casey's widow, Sophia, and her daughter, Bernadette Casey Smith, have requested that their side of the story be told, and they are both with us on Larry King Live at our studios here in Washington. On your left is the daughter of the late Bill Casey, Bernadette Casey Smith, and Bill's widow, Sophia Casey.

It's interesting before we even talk about that. Bill Casey, posthumously, has a book coming out. And while Woodward's book's called VEIL: The Secret Wars of the CIA, Bill Casey's book is The Secret War Against Hitler. And it's published by Raggerny-Gateway (?). And is this just out?

BERNADETTE CASEY SMITH: May. It'll come out in May.

KING: What -- how -- why didn't it come out sooner?

SMITH: All right, I'll tell you. Dad wrote this book ten years ago. He wrote it before -- it was completed before he went into the primary for Reagan. But he decided that since he was in the government, it wasn't proper for him to put out a book, especially about intelligence. So he kept it. And it is his story of the OSS, which is the forerunner of the CIA. And it is a very, very important book, because it tells the importance of intelligence and how intelligence during the Second World War saved lives and shortened the war. It's a fascinating, wonderful book. And it's interesting because Dad, being an intelligence man, never talked intelligence at home. So it's really a story that I never heard before.

KING: And the similarity in titles is just that, a coincidence?

SMITH: Yes.

KING: When -- Sophia, when Bob Woodward's book came out -- I don't want to put words in your mouth -- were you shocked?

SOPHIA CASEY: No, I wasn't shocked, because I know how Bob writes. I was shocked, Larry, when I came home from Florida and saw a headline in the Post this big: "Casey Gives a Deathbed Confession." I knew right then. I said to myself I have to do something. The very next morning I called a television station. I said I want to get on, and I want to correct that, because I know he lied about that. He never could get into that hospital.

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KING: Were you shocked?

SMITH: Oh, well, first of all, not by the book, because Bob Woodward told Dad he was writing a book. But he was writing a book of a 40 year retrospect a 40 year history of the CIA. Of course....

KING: You mean he lied to your father?

SMITH: Yes, he lied to my father: he lies in the book. He got away with it for years. But this time he's not getting away with it.

KING: Are you saying, Bernadette, that your father was meeting with him, talking with him about a history he was doing?

SMITH: No. Dad -- there -- you know, when we first saw this deathbed confession, it was something that, you know, was shocking, because Mom and I know it couldn't possibly happen. He couldn't get into the room. There was security. There was us. And my father couldn't talk. So I mean the whole thing is ludicrous, and it's downright atrocious.

But he told Dad that he was doing a 40 year retrospect. So Dad said you can talk to a few people, and he told other people he was doing a 40 year retrospect. If Dad didn't die, there was no way -- there was absolutely no way that that book could have come out the way it came out. It wasn't the same story. He couldn't publish that story if Bill Casey was alive. And without the end of the book, there's no story.

KING: Did he, did Bill meet with Woodward a lot?

CASEY: He said 48 times, but that's not true either. Whenever we'd see Bob at social events, we always -- he always work up to us and say hello, and, you know, Bill'd say "How is the book? How are things? How are you, Bob?" And it was just a friendly, casual meeting. We were not friends. We were not enemies either. We were just casual acquaintances.

KING: Now the other night when Bob was on this program, and VEIL is now out in paperback, we discussed that hospital scene again. Your ire got all up again, right?

CASEY: Yes. Yes. I think -- I can't get over the arrogance of him, of starting this lie all over again. It's just to sell books; that's all.

KING: And someone would say, Bernadette, maybe the strategy should be just forget it; live with your memory.

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CASEY: Because it's too important....

SMITH: We can't forget it.

CASEY: Bill Casey was a wonderful man.

KING: He sure was.

CASEY: He built up the CIA. And this fellow, Bob Woodward, is pulling him down, saying he was involved -- saying, getting words out of a terribly sick man, that he had something to do with the Iran-contra thing. And I know as time goes on, I know that he had nothing to do with that.

KING: But yet he was mentioned in the hearings. It wasn't just Bob Woodward. I mean don't you agree that your Dad has become a convenient scapegoat for a lot of people?

SMITH: Yes, a scapegoat. I do. I do.

CASEY: True.

KING: I mean Ollie North said....

SMITH: It's interesting. There's a Time magazine interview with Dad that came out -- well, it was given on Friday, December 12th. Dad had a seizure on Monday. And he went through it. And he said he had no knowledge of the diversion of funds.

I'll tell you one thing. My father never -- I never caught my father in telling me an untruth. And....

KING: He may not tell you everything. But if he told you something....

SMITH: If he told me, it was true. Exactly. Exactly.

CASEY: That's right. He was too good of an intelligence man to make that mistake.

SMITH: Well, you know what? First thing, the Iran-contra affair was a very poor intelligence maneuver. My father would never do that. He was too smart.

CASEY: He was too smart an intelligence man.

KING: Our guests are Bernadette Casey Smith and Sophia Casey, the daughter and widow of the late Bill Casey. Bill's book, posthumously, The Secret War Against Hitler, is also out. This is Larry King Live. We're going to include your phone calls as well. We'll be right back.

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KING: Our guests are Bernadette Casey Smith, the daughter of the late William Casey, and Sophia Casey, his widow. We're going to take some calls as well. We're also going to meet Joseph Heller tonight. This is Larry King Live in Washington.

I know it's probably painful, but it's also essential to the other side of the story, what the last few days were like in that hospital. It was Georgetown Hospital, right? Was it Georgetown?

SMITH: That wasn't the last few days. He got home to Long Island....

KING: He died on Long Island?

SMITH: On Long Island, right.

KING: Bob Woodward says the scene occurred in what hospital? Georgetown?

SMITH: Georgetown.

CASEY: Georgetown.

KING: Yeah. So therefore he died a little while after that. But that was not a deathbed thing.

CASEY: No.

CASEY: No. No.

KING: Okay. You're saying that....

SMITH: That was January. He died in May.

KING: Okay. That was January.

SMITH: Well, I guess. I don't know. He tried once in January. January 21st he tried.

KING: To get in.

SMITH: To get in. And he just tried to push himself in; you know, "I'm Bob Woodward; I can go any place." Of course, the security said "No way." And they turned him away. After that, they beefed up security, and they had twice as many people, with two checkpoints, and Mom and I were in the room all the time. There's no way he got into that room.

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KING: Another thing. Did I see somewhere where you said he didn't -- he couldn't have spoken any way.

CASEY: No, he couldn't. He couldn't.

KING: Because he didn't speak.

CASEY: He didn't speak. I mean he was paralyzed on one side. His tongue was paralyzed on that side. He couldn't hear from that side. He could not -- there was no way he could talk with Bob Woodward. Never.

SMITH: He tried to speak. You couldn't understand. You know, it just got jumbled up, and you couldn't understand it. And it was infuriating for him, because he thought he was telling you what he wanted to tell you, but you could not understand. And Mom and I probably could understand better than anyone, because we spent our days and nights there.

KING: Was he in a lot of pain?

CASEY: Very much. But I guess he was sedated a lot. But with that sickness, you get a lot of pain.

KING: He was a fighter. They say you die the way you live. Did he go out fighting?

SMITH: I never thought he was going to die.

CASEY: We never thought he was going to die. We thought he would be stricken, but we never thought he was going to die. And the doctor told us when he did die, he said "Your husband died with great dignity." So he tried to live. He really tried until the last two days where I think he kind of gave up. So many things went wrong. But before that, he really tried, tried to do. Anything you asked him to do he did with a smile.

KING: Before we start the calls, wasn't he -- wouldn't he know that Bob Woodward, just knowing Bob Woodward, is not going to do a 40 year history of the CIA?

SMITH: No, my father was an optimist.

CASEY: Yeah, he would believe anybody. If Bob said that, he would believe him.

SMITH: My father doesn't lie. So he thinks Bob Woodward doesn't lie.

KING: In other words, he wasn't cynical about it?

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CASEY: No. No.

SMITH: He wasn't a cynical man.

KING: To Atlanta, Georgia. Hello.

CALLER: Yes. Have you taken any legal action against Woodward, or are you all planning on a follow-up book on Woodward's book? Thank you.

KING: Okay.

CASEY: Well, no, we're not taking any legal action. But we have a book that Bill Casey just had published called The Secret War Against Hitler.

KING: Did you ever consider legal action, or is it a case not winnable because what are the damages?

SMITH: Exactly. First of all, the story that Dad could not speak and could not get into the hospital [sic] would take maybe five pages, 25 at the most. The other things, the other lies that Bob Woodward dug from the book are very damaging to our national security. I don't think it makes any sense whatsoever to rehash the lies that he -- he did the damage already. He put wedges between our friends. And without friends in this world and colleagues, you don't have a system.

CASEY: Excuse me, Bernadette. And he disgraced Bill Casey. I mean Bill Casey was held in such high esteem all over the intelligence world. And this jerk came in and had to, you know, create this lie, which wasn't true. And it was just terrible.

KING: All right, let's -- what? We're going to take a break and come back with more calls. We're going to hold Sophia Casey and Bernadette Casey Smith. If we can measure a man by how his family loves him after he dies, Bill Casey was a man! Back after these words.

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KING: Our guests are Bernadette Casey Smith and Sophia Casey. By the way, Sophia recently donated \$155,000 to the Nicaraguan Resistance Education Foundation. The grant is from the William Casey Freedom Fighter Fund, presented on behalf of the Nicaraguan War Handicap Project.

We go to Atlanta, Georgia. Hello.

CALLER: Yes. I want to ask Mrs. Casey, is it true

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about Donald Regan's statement that he was asked by Nancy Reagan to get rid of -- to fire your husband while he was lying in the hospital?

CASEY: Gee, I can't answer that. I really don't know.

KING: Were you shocked by Donald's book?

CASEY: I read it in the book. Sure, I was shocked. But I don't know if it's true or not.

KING: Did you like the book, or didn't like the book?

CASEY: The book was all right. It wasn't very interesting to me.

KING: Did you read it?

SMITH: I didn't read it.

KING: We go to Dallas, Texas. Hello.

CALLER: Hello.

KING: Yes.

CALLER: I would like to say that I think Bill Casey was one of our greatest men ever in our history. And I also thought, and there's no doubt, that the author of that book -- I can't think of his name -- was lying about him. But was North -- you all think that North, Colonel North was lying about him when he said Bill Casey was involved?

CASEY: Well, I don't know how he meant that. I think -- I think Ollie used to go up and talk to Bill and tell him all his troubles. But Bill Casey was not involved in the Iran-contra affair. That was done by the National Security Council. And that was their job, and they did it, and he had nothing to do with it. He would not do anything illegal.

KING: North implicated him, didn't he?

SMITH: I was told....

CASEY: Go ahead.

KING: Go ahead.

SMITH: I was told my father would never cross lines into another agency. Now I don't know that firsthand. I don't think Dad would give orders to the NSC. First of all, it was

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against the law because of the Boland Amendment. My father was one of the best lawyers around. He knew the law; he loved the law; he respected the law, and he wouldn't cross....

KING: The lady, then, has a valid question. If you're angry at Woodward, justifiably angry, you should be a little angry at Ollie North too.

SMITH: Well, I think probably North and Dad talked. I think maybe North might have read too much into what Bill Casey said. Now one thing North said, and I know it just can't be true. I just know it in my heart it can't be true. The off-the-shelf CIA. My father would never talk about that. But he might have said, "My goodness, I wish I didn't have to talk to Congress," you know....

KING: Uh-huh.

SMITH: ...or "I wish we didn't have to do this." But to set up another CIA is ludicrous; it's ridiculous.

CASEY: Bill Casey had no -- as time goes on, I understand that Billy Casey had nothing to do with Iran-contra affair.

KING: Did Ollie North ever come to the house?

CASEY: He came when Bill was dead. He came to the wake.

KING: To the wake. But I mean he wasn't the kind of guy that....

CASEY: No.

KING: ...Bill was on the phone with a lot.

CASEY: Oh, no, no, no.

SMITH: I understand also that in the journals -- now this is secondhand knowledge too -- that Bill Casey's name isn't mentioned much. But you know, I don't know. So that's a fact we don't really know. So how can we fight something we don't know. The death scene we know never happened. It's a total, outrageous lie. Complete. And without that last scene, there's no book. What does that book have? It's rehashed news stories, hearsays. Many of the people who were interviewed said, well, you know, I talked to him, but nothing we talked about is in the book. There's something that was in the newspapers that he wrote about, and he got it all wrong any way. I mean there's no book. There's nothing new but that last scene.

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KING: We go to Sparta, Tennessee. Hello.

CALLER: With all due respect to you ladies, since Mr. Casey was intelligent and secretive enough to be head of the CIA, do you really think he would tell you of this book and of his visitors while he was in the hospital?

CASEY: Of course not.

SMITH: But the thing is that we were in the hospital 24 hours a day. He couldn't be there.

KING: Somebody is not telling the truth, right? Now obviously about that last two days in the hospital, somebody is not telling the truth.

CASEY: That day, whatever it was, that he supposedly got through.

KING: You never saw him in the hospital room.

CASEY: Oh, no. No. Neither did security. They saw him come in once, and they chased him. And then they watched for him very, very carefully. Never saw him again.

SMITH: And then it was interesting. He wanted to put that story in The Washington Post, and his editor said "No, it's too flimsy; there's nothing to it. We can't print that." So even The Washington Post didn't believe him. He said nobody else contradicted him. Why, his own paper wouldn't print the story. Supposedly he wanted to have it printed, and they said no.

KING: Is it -- "weird" is the wrong word. Sophia, there's an anger you have for someone who is not here to respond for himself.

CASEY: Sure.

KING: And that has to be unusually kind of painful. I mean it's sort of a surrogate pain you're carrying, right? You're carrying the pain of a memory.

CASEY: That's right. But that has nothing to do with me standing up and saying....

KING: Yes, but is it possible that Bill may have done things that you didn't know about?

SMITH: He did things I didn't know about. But I know he didn't do anything against the law. I know that.

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CASEY: He wouldn't do anything against the law.

SMITH: He wouldn't do it. He had too much respect for the law.

CASEY: Why should he get into the Iran-contra affair?

KING: How do you react to this whole thing that happened since he died? People thought he didn't die. There were all these kinds of things. And I think a lot about what the family thinks when they hear these kinds of jokes. Bill Casey's on the phone. You had to hear that.

SMITH: Mom was watching television when Dan Rather got on the tube and was -- I think it was with Bill Colby, ex-Director of the CIA -- and said, "Well, you know, Bill Casey isn't dead, and he's, you know, someplace else." And Bill Colby said "What do you mean? I went to the funeral. I went to the wake." You know, it's just outrageous. It's just, you know -- for someone like Dan Rather to....

KING: Did Rather say it as a fact, or he said it....

SMITH: As a fact, on the news.

KING: Well, he said there were stories to the effect, right?

SMITH: No, he said it as a fact.

CASEY: He said no. You know....

SMITH: You know Bill Casey isn't dead.

CASEY: I couldn't believe my ears.

SMITH: He must have been kidding.

SMITH: No. And Mom was sitting there.

CASEY: Colby was there, you know, the ex-CIA Director, and said "That's not right, Dan, because I was to his funeral."

KING: Is it possible that you....

SMITH: I wish it were true.

[Laughter.]

KING: But you didn't react -- did you react with pain when those stories went around?

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SMITH: Mad. Just furious.

KING: Someone said were you that much in love that you would both lie for his memory.

CASEY: No, that's not true.

SMITH: No.

CASEY: He would never want us. He'd never do anything for us to lie.

SMITH: I wasn't taught how to lie. And I had a very good teacher.

CASEY: Bill Casey was not a liar.

KING: Do you miss your husband a lot?

CASEY: Oh, sure. I'm getting used to it. But I do miss him. Of course, when he was alive and sick, we always thought he'd get better.

KING: You miss your Dad, huh?

SMITH: He was fun. He was my best pal. He was a true friend.

KING: He lived a hell of a life, too. One cannot say that he did not live to the fullest.

SMITH: Yeah. He was just a dad, though. I really didn't, you know, think of him any more than a Dad until really the last few years.

KING: Thank you both for coming.

CASEY: Thank you, Larry. It was really a pleasure.

KING: Sophia, thank you. My pleasure.

SMITH: Thank you.

KING: Our guests are Bernadette Casey Smith, the daughter of the late Director of the CIA, William Casey, and Sophia Casey, his widow. And Bill Casey's posthumous book, The Secret War Against Hitler.