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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Interview and Viewer Call-In STATION C-SPAN

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SUBJECT George Bush's Early Association with CIA

BRIAN LAMB: Joseph McBride, you have a lead article in this week's Nation magazine that starts off like this: "Vice President George Bush's resume is his most highly touted asset as a candidate. But a recently discovered FBI memorandum raises the possibility that, like many resumes -- it raises that possibility, but like many resumes, it omits some facts the applicant would rather not talk about. Specifically, that the worked for the Central Intelligence Agency in 1963, more than a decade before he became its Director."

Why did you care about this?

JOSEPH MCBRIDE: Well, originally I was researching the Kennedy assassination and I was looking through FBI files that were released about ten years ago under the Freedom of Information Act, and I just came across George Bush's name. And it was a surprise to me. I didn't really know that he was with the CIA back then. And, however, I assumed at the time that I found this document that everybody must know this. And it was just stated in the document that J. Edgar Hoover had written to the State Department a week after the assassination to summarize a briefing that was given to, quote, Mr. George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency, and it was about the reaction of the anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Miami to the assassination.

And it kind of piqued my interest that George Bush was involved, but I put it aside. And when he started running for President in the current campaign, I began reading a lot more about his background, and I noticed that nobody was referring to this experience that he had. Obviously, everybody knows that he became Director in 1975, but nobody was commenting on the earlier period. And so I began studying this very carefully and found

out, according to his autobiography, he doesn't mention this period. And there is a biography of him written by one of his aides in 1980, and everybody says he was just an oilman at the time, in the late '50s to the early '60s.

So, I began doing a story on this. And this office denies this report, but I have sources who confirm that it was indeed the Vice President.

LAMB: What difference does it make?

MCBRIDE: Well, that's a good question. I mean I've been on some -- there's been a lot of interest in this story the last couple days and I've been on several shows in different parts of the country, radio shows and things. And some people -- people who like George Bush apparently think it's, you know, an asset to him. They think it's one more reason they might vote for him.

So, if you like the CIA, maybe there isn't anything wrong with it. But if you don't like the CIA, maybe there is something wrong. So I guess it's kind of a referendum on what people think of the CIA.

But basically, there's other issues. I mean why doesn't he admit this? That's an important issue. Why is he keeping this a secret?

LAMB: Let me read a paragraph that you wrote in this issue, and this is the issue dated July 16/23. A two-week -- what is it, a biweekly?

MCBRIDE: In the summer it comes out every two weeks, and this came out on Monday, hit the stands Monday.

LAMB: "Informed of this memorandum, the Vice President's spokesman Stephen Hart asked, 'Are you sure it's the same George Bush?' After talking to the Vice President, Hart quoted him as follows: 'I was in Houston, Texas at the time and involved in the independent oil drilling business. And I was running for the Senate in late '63. Must be another George Bush,' added Hart."

MCBRIDE: Well, this is what they said about -- this was maybe ten days ago when I first called them about the story. I was almost done with the story and I wanted to check their response. I asked Mr. Hart if he had any evidence that there was another George Bush, and he admitted that he didn't. He just was speculating.

And then I called the CIA and I spoke to a spokesman there, who told me that -- first of all, he seemed very surprised

when I told him about this memo. Then he called back the next day and he said, "I can neither confirm nor deny." That's all he would say.

STAT And then I told him what the Vice President's office had said about the possibility of another George Bush and I said, "Could you check to see if there was another one back in the early '60s?"

STAT And he seemed kind of confused, flustered. And he said, "Twenty-seven years ago? I doubt it very much." He says, "In any case, we can't comment on whether somebody was connected with the CIA."

So, that's where that thing wound up. But nobody has mentioned this other George Bush since the story hit the media on Sunday.

LAMB: Is there a chance that you're not right or that it is not the same George Bush?

MCBRIDE: Well, I'm leaving the benefit of the doubt open, although I do have sources who were close to the intelligence community who tell me that it's the same person. However, you know, I'm trying to leave him the benefit of the doubt, if somebody would come forward and prove that he's the other George Bush. I do think it's quite unlikely.

But I wrote the article to raise the question more than to, you know, set the words in stone.

LAMB: Why did Nation put it as their lead story this week?

MCBRIDE: Well, I guess you'd have to ask them. But I just -- this all happened rather quickly. I just sent them the article about a week or ten days ago. And I think it's -- from the response we're getting from the public, it's quite a topic of conversation.

LAMB: Okay. Put the worst case on it. Let's say this is accurate. What does it mean?

MCBRIDE: Well, you know, there's a lot of questions. What was the CIA doing in the early '60s? All kinds of things. And Bush himself, when he was confirmed in 19 -- when he had his confirmation hearings in 1975 as Director of the CIA, criticized the CIA for some of the activities they had done in the early '60s, such as the assassination plots against foreign leaders, Castro in particular. And he said it was morally offensive to him that the CIA had done these things, and he vowed that he

would not indulge in those kind of practices as Director. And he criticized what he called the excesses of the CIA. And this was around the time the Church Committee was investigating these plots, and there was a lot of highly critical comment in the public about the CIA at the time.

So, I -- this is speculation as to why he wouldn't want to admit this period of activity. If it is true, it creates a problem for him because he hasn't admitted this all these years. And I can see -- I mean there is a need for secrecy with agents of the CIA. Nobody disputes that. But if you're running for President, that's a whole different ball of wax, I think, because I think we have a legitimate need to know everything about Dukakis, Jackson, Bush. And I'd like to know whatever they did.

I mean if there's a period in Dukakis's past where we don't know what he did for several years, I think that would be a problem too.

LAMB: Go back and go over the years again. And what was Mr. Bush doing, according to your information, and what years was he attached to the CIA?

MCBRIDE: Well, that isn't totally determined. According to his official resume, he was in the oil business from the late '50s through 1966 in Texas, and it was based in Houston. It was a company called the Zapata Offshore Company. And according to the biography of him and the autobiography, he was focusing his activities on the Caribbean and off the coast of South America in those years, in the early '60s. And he was active in the Republican Party. The first activity he mentions is 1956, he was doing some work for Eisenhower, just campaign volunteer work.

In '62, he became the Chairman of the Harris County Republican Party in Houston and did that for a couple of years, and in '64 ran for the Senate against Ralph Yarborough and was defeated. Then he became congressman for two terms, and then he lost to Lloyd Bentsen in 1970 after Bentsen beat Yarborough in the primary.

So, that's what's officially known. But my sources tell me that Bush began working with the CIA in '60 or '61. So he apparently, and my sources confirm this, was using this oil business as a cover for activities that were clandestine.

LAMB: Tell us about The Nation. We've had the editor.

MCBRIDE: Victor Navasky.

LAMB: Victor Navasky on a program before. We talked to

him at great length. As a matter of fact, I think I remember him saying he went to school with Michael Dukakis.

MCBRIDE: Oh. I didn't know that.

LAMB: The Nation. Describe what kind of a magazine it is, if somebody had not read it.

MCBRIDE: Well, it's been around since 1865 and it has a very high reputation. And I was impressed by the fact that three weeks before the Bay of Pigs invasion, they broke the story. And very few other American publications -- The New York Times wouldn't run the story, for example. They had the story, and President Kennedy persuaded them not to run it. And Kennedy later said it was a mistake. But The Nation Had the Story. And, you know, I'm impressed by things like that. They're a pretty gutsy publication.

LAMB: Have you written for them before?

MCBRIDE: No. This is the first time I've done that.

LAMB: And you live in Los Angeles.

MCBRIDE: That's right.

LAMB: How long ago did you get this information?

MCBRIDE: Well, as I was mentioning, I was doing some research on the Kennedy assassination. This was some time ago. Actually, I think a couple of years ago that I was going through all these documents. There's a hundred thousand pages of FBI files on the assassination that were released in '77 and '78, and anybody can go look at them. They're either at the FBI or on microfilm in a lot of libraries. And I was going through this microfilm stuff, and a lot of it is chaff. You know, there's a lot of letters and clippings and field reports of different kinds. But there's a tremendous amount of real revealing information in these files, and very few people seem to have looked at these things.

I found some articles. At the time these came out, the stories said that the press didn't seem very interested. Like about ten reporters showed up to look at the material. And then the next day in The New York Times and The Washington Post, there were stories that there were no surprises in his batch of documents. Well, nobody can look at a hundred thousand documents in one or two days. So I don't know how they could say there are no surprises.

LAMB: Actually, when did you look at these documents?

MCBRIDE: This was a couple years ago, two or three years ago, I think.

LAMB: And you just found this particular...

MCBRIDE: Well, I was saying, I found -- this was just a document that was a peripheral kind of thing at the time, because I thought, "Well, it's interesting George Bush is mentioned in this document," but I didn't attach great significance to it because I wasn't familiar enough with his background to realize that this was not common knowledge.

LAMB: What kind of reaction are you getting when you go on talk shows or call-in shows from the public, and also from the journalists?

MCBRIDE: Well, I'm getting -- apparently, it's a subject of great fascination around the country. Oddly enough, I was on a show in Pittsburgh a couple of days ago, and people called in and they were saying that it was terrific, you know, great, that they were going to vote for Bush even more now because they liked the fact that he was with the CIA longer than they thought, you know. One man says it gives him an aura of mystery which he didn't have before, a kind of romantic derring-do quality. And another person said it destroys his wimp factor for all time.

LAMB: What's your reaction to that when you hear it?

MCBRIDE: Well, that's okay. I mean I think it's people see it according to how they see the CIA.

I think that there are certain issues that people might miss. For example, the question of accountability and secrecy. You know, it's like with the Gary Hart thing. There are two issues. One is he went off on the boat with the model. And the second one is that he didn't tell us about it. You know.

So, it's not exactly a question, do you like the CIA, or don't you like the CIA? It's more a question of why won't Bush tell us more about this.

LAMB: Give us your reaction to what Mr. Bush's office -- or, how Mr. Bush's office treated you when you came in with the questions. I know you specifically quote them in here. But what was the general feeling you had when you talked to them?

MCBRIDE: Well, they were quite polite, but they were a little -- you know, I think that they would like to just brush it off and hope the story goes away. And the reaction they gave to the other media after my story appeared was almost word-for-word what they told me. They just said, you know, the quote you read

about how he was in the oil business, and just deny it.

But, so far, I haven't seen any evidence of Bush being, you know, really grilled by the press on this. He's appeared a few places, but he hasn't -- as far as I know, he hasn't been put on the spot by a Sam Donaldson or anybody like that.

LAMB: Time to go to the phones. Our special guest, who is based in Los Angeles, is Joe McBride. He's a free-lance writer, has written a biography of Frank Capra, soon to be out.

MCBRIDE: Yeah. It'll be out in a few months.

LAMB: He's lived in Los Angeles for about 15 years, worked as a screenwriter and a reporter for Daily Variety, a trade magazine, also was a reporter for the Wisconsin State Journal in Madison, Wisconsin and for the Riverside Press Enterprise in California. Attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison, 1965-1969.

And it's hard to see -- and we will take a phone call here very shortly -- but this is printed in The Nation, and you've got a larger version of it. I'll hold it up here because it's real hard to read it. Although I'm not sure it makes a whole lot of difference, because the camera can get real close on this.

What is this?

MCBRIDE: Well, that's the FBI document. It's a memo from J. Edgar Hoover to the State Department, November 29th, 1963, on the assassination of President Kennedy. And in the last paragraph there, there is a reference to George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency.

LAMB: You're talking about this?

MCBRIDE: Right down there. Yeah.

LAMB: Right here. And we'll get a closeup of that so that our audience can see it. We should have that here, right where my finger is.

MCBRIDE: That's right.

LAMB: A reference to George Bush.

What do you plan to do with this story next?

MCBRIDE: Well, I'm here to follow up on it, and just checking around to see what else I can turn up.

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LAMB: Okay. Let's go to the phones. First call for this hour.

New York City. Go ahead, please.

MAN: I think it's quite interesting that this issues seems to surface [unintelligible] fashion. It was just over a month ago that a young woman reporter on your morning show was saying that one of the aspects of George Bush's resume which he could tout over the country was the fact that he had been CIA Director. And at that time I did call to express a point of view which I'd like to try and briefly reinforce and see what Mr. McBride's reaction.

In the British court system, much as a butcher may be prized as a useful profession, he is not permitted to serve on a jury. The belief being that the nature of his work, through no fault of his own, may desensitize him to the nature of suffering. And it seems to me that with respect to our CIA, through no fault of these -- through no fault of their own, these patriotic individuals are subjected to a type of training which teaches them to do a lot of things which the CIA is known for doing. And it may be all for America, but it is very often things which we would tend to consider illegal if they were done in our own country.

LAMB: How does this relate to George Bush, sir?

MAN: Well, what I'm getting to is the idea that perhaps, just as the British feel that a butcher, though he may be prized as a useful profession, should not serve on a jury, we might come to a point where we consider the need to carefully cordon off the CIA from the rest of our civilian government.

LAMB: Okay. Thanks.

Joe McBride?

MCBRIDE: Well, as I understand, I guess the question is, does being in the CIA possibly disqualify you from being President or holding political office? Is that the gist of it?

It's kind of a curious paradox that George Bush's background, whenever he was appointed to an important job, which he was appointed to a whole succession of jobs, as U.N. Ambassador, liaison officer to China, head of the Republican National Committee, etcetera, people would always say, "Well, what is his background? What is his experience?" And the U.N. thing, for example, people said, "Why is he qualified? What foreign policy experience does he have? He's just a two-term congressman who was defeated for the Senate," and all this. And apparently he

had a lot of background that we didn't know about that accounts for the Presidents appointing him to all these positions.

But the criticism that he got back then was that he was too much of a politician, and not a diplomat and not a professional intelligence man, etcetera. And it's very ironic, in light of this information, apparently the people who appointed him knew something that we didn't know, and even the members of Congress didn't know.

So, now the question is the other way around. Is an intelligence man the kind of person we want for President? I think there's some serious questions about that. Because, you know, Tom Wicker said in The New York Times a couple of months ago that a CIA man could be blackmailed as President because of things that he knows and things that he might have been involved in, or something like that.

LAMB: Pampa, Texas, for Joe McBride.

MAN: ...I have a couple of questions, or a couple of comments, I guess. It seems that McBride is editorializing as much as he is producing facts. And I don't know what difference it makes if George Bush later became head of the CIA and was a member of it some nearly 40 years ago. So I don't think -- I just don't know what difference it makes, unless it's just a matter of trying to get publicity for himself.

Number two, I don't think that people are real interested in the fact that Bentsen is going to be a Vice President candidate for the Democrats. And I think that, from my viewpoint and from this area in Texas, I don't think that Bentsen is going to help the Democratic Party one iota.

LAMB: Okay, sir. Thank you.

Is this a publicity stunt on your part?

MCBRIDE: Oh, no. I mean I'm really interested in trying to find out, just for my own personal interest, what goes on behind the scenes of our country. There's a lot of things in the last 20-30 years that we didn't know about that we're happening that -- you know, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, Watergate, all kinds of things that if we had known at the time what was going on, we might have voted differently.

And I think this could be a case of we're being asked to vote for a man for President we don't know a lot about. I mean we don't really know much about what he's been doing for the last seven years as Vice President, and he doesn't like to talk about it.

I was reading the other day that one of his aides was saying that Bush, off-camera, apparently is kind of an interesting guy to talk to. He's a relaxed, kind of candid fellow. But when he gets on-camera, he gets tense and stiff and all that. And the reason is that he doesn't like to be quoted for the record, is what the aide said.

And so maybe he has a problem talking about his record. And I think that -- you know, I'd like to know, if we're going to vote for somebody for President, what his qualifications are.

LAMB: This is the article in The Nation magazine for this week.

We go to Beverly Hills, California.

MAN: I wish the public will get something -- the public should know something which Mr. -- this gentleman doesn't explain. The Nation is a very leftist, communist-oriented magazine. There's a writer there by the name of Cockburn, an English guy, who's father used to be one of the heads of the British Communist Party.

Here in Beverly Hills, we call The Nation "The Communist Manifesto," by the way.

Regarding the article about Vice President Bush, his office never denied it. They said "no comment." I wish you'd get that fact straight.

Number two, you never criticize the KGB. You never criticize the KGB being in Nicaragua and organizing the one-billion-dollar armament which the Nicaraguan government is getting.

The point is here: Thank God we have the CIA. If the Communists, the Russians have the KGB, we'd better have the CIA. And if Mr. Bush worked at that time, that is a secrecy. He never denied it. He said "no comment."

LAMB: Okay. Let's ask Joe McBride if that's true.

MCBRIDE: Well, I just want to say something about The Nation. I mean I think it's kind of a McCarthyite tactic to call The Nation a communist-oriented publication, whatever he said. I mean certainly it's more on the left than not. But I think it's a very independent-minded magazine.

And one reason I thought of The Nation is I admire a book by Victor Navasky called "Naming Names," which is a terrific study of the McCarthy period and the blacklist in Hollywood, in

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which he denounces the kind of statement that was just made about communist witch-hunting.

Second of all, he says Bush's office does not deny the charge. I don't know. What they said to me, this business about Bush says, "I was an oilman. I was running for the Senate," period. And then I called back, because we wanted to get them to expand on this a little more. This was before the article appeared. And the spokesman said that Bush had said, "I don't know. I don't have any idea of what he's talking about." But then they said, "Well, maybe you shouldn't quote this," or whatever.

But I notice that in the press since then there have been statements, "The Vice President issued a denial through his spokesman."

LAMB: I read a quote in your article from Stephen Hart of Mr. Bush's office: "I am a spokesman. However you want to write it, the answer is no regarding Bush's alleged 1963 involvement with the CIA."

MCBRIDE: Yeah. It's a little -- they are denying it, but they aren't putting out a lot of words from the Vice President himself. I sense a certain effort to distance himself from the denial a little bit.

LAMB: Roanoke, Virginia, you're on with Joe McBride.

MAN: Two points. Okay, one, could George Bush still be under oath of confidentiality, where he cannot reveal he was a member of the CIA?

Also, as the man before mentioned, that the CIA is too desensitized to serve in political office. Wouldn't it also exclude war veterans, like John Kennedy and George Washington, who would also be severely desensitized?

LAMB: All right, sir. Thank you.

MCBRIDE: Is he under an oath? I gather that they do feel that they have an oath that they should not reveal things that they know from their years as CIA people.

An interesting thing to think about. During the Warren Commission investigation, there was a secret session of the commission, which was later declassified, in which they were discussing the question, could Lee Harvey Oswald have worked for the CIA? There was a lot of talk about this. And they asked Allen Dulles, who was one of the commissioners -- he was a former Director of the CIA -- would the CIA ever admit if Oswald had

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been an agent? And Dulles said that the CIA would not admit, even under oath, that somebody had been an informant or an agent. And the only way they could be persuaded to do otherwise is if the President of the United States issued a direct order.

LAMB: What about his comparison with John Kennedy and George Washington?

MCBRIDE: Well, I mean the military is different from clandestine intelligence. I mean there's no secret that John Kennedy was in the Navy, for example. I mean books were written about his Navy service and there were people hating over the PT-109 incident. He never covered it up or anything.

LAMB: Auburn, Massachusetts. Go ahead, please.

WOMAN: If anybody's going to do it, The Nation will do it to start the ball rolling before an election.

You know, early in the '70s, when one of my sons was flying for the Navy, there was Nixon's impeachment and Church's investigation into multinationals and the CIA, I was so incensed that my son was going to go down in flames for a rotten government. I was a real person, a mother, that through the '60s and '70s kept her kids straight away from all the garbage that they had to see on campus. And I worried my son was going to go down in flames for a lousy government.

This is nothing new. And I'm glad you're bringing it out. And I want to ask you a couple of things about Bush's involvement. Because a few years ago on television, when Reagan invaded Grenada, he was seeing old friends in Grenada from his old World War II days as an OSS officer. And we all know that OSS became part of the CIA. I want you to talk about George Bush as CIA Director in '75 and '76, when Bill Colby, former CIA Director, became part of the Nuganhand network as chief counsel, when Secord and all that bunch worked for George Bush in this Nuganhand network for the same activity, weapons and drug-running, like this Iran and Central America thing recently revealed.

Would you also talk about the taxpayer-funded National Endowment for Democracy, Ollie North's [unintelligible], as Reagan bragged about, which has been involved all over the world to infiltrate and disrupt, create crisis through paid youth groups, unions, churches, educational institutions, with corporate laundering of the monetary contribution, to create crisis to enable us to overthrow leaders we don't like?

A recent article in The New York Times, 7/10/88, by Robert [unintelligible] revealing this NED activity right now in Poland, exactly as we're seeing in Nicaragua, Panama, and other

Central American countries, all funded by appropriations to the State Department for Charles Wick, who runs NED money expenditures, who is head of USIA, and to pay for these crooked CIA activities, for other Ollie Norths, Secords, and the bunch that are now being indicted.

LAMB: Okay. We'll let you go at that because we've got a lot of calls.

MCBRIDE: That's a real complex question, you know.

Generally speaking, I mean one thing I could say is that this information about Bush's 25-year, or longer, association with the CIA would certainly raise a lot of questions about the Iran-Contra business. And there's been a lot of allegations that Bush was involved with the resupply people and Oliver North and Felix Rodriguez and all these characters. And this would tend to put this in a much clearer perspective. Although, you know, Bush says he was out of the room when Shultz and Weinberger were objecting to the deal, etcetera, etcetera.

So, you can see patterns in Bush's career more clearly, perhaps.

And what he did as CIA Director, we don't know much about that, either. According to Gail Sheehy in this new book "Character," she says that Bush seems to have left little imprint on the CIA, and it on him." But this, I think, is just because we haven't managed to penetrate the secrecy, that history hasn't caught up with this period. And Bush's spokesman said to me that Bush doesn't talk much about that period.

So, again, what was he doing back then? We don't know much about that.

LAMB: Oxnard, California. Go ahead, please.

WOMAN: Offhand, I'd like to congratulate you for -- Mr. McBride for actually digging into things. It's been my impression from C-SPAN that the Washington press corps does nothing but just talk to each other too much and that they don't really go out and dig for facts. And I think maybe it takes somebody from the West to be a little bit more of a nonconformist.

My question, though, is, is it possible that this brilliant businessman -- they're always talking about how Bush was such a great businessman -- that maybe his company was a front, was a CIA company, and -- do you know what I mean?

MCBRIDE: Yeah. I think that -- well, my source, one of my sources that worked for the CIA in that period said that Bush

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used it as a cover for his activities, and that he would travel around, and while he was working as an oilman, he would be doing -- but this is a common thing the CIA does. They have businessmen who -- sometimes they just give information back and forth, or pass information, or they will do a job here and there for the CIA. Then they have fronts, which generally means that the company is a dummy corporation which is really a CIA asset masquerading as something else.

Now, I don't know enough about Bush's company to make unequivocal statements about what exactly -- how legitimate the company was.

LAMB: Joe McBride is a free-lance writer based in Los Angeles, has an article that leads The Nation magazine for July 16 and 23.

We go next to Tallahassee. Go ahead, please.

MAN: I want to get this straight. Now, this period is 1963 that we're talking about his involvement with the CIA?

MCBRIDE: Well, the document that I found, the hard black-and-white document, is November 29th, 1963, dealing with the Kennedy assassination, which took place a week earlier.

MAN: And when did Mr. Bush run for Congress?

MCBRIDE: Well, he ran for the Senate in '64, was defeated by Yarbrough. And then he was elected in '66 to the House of Representatives.

MAN: Well, I must tell you, I'm a candidate for public office here in Florida. And I'm really shocked that someone could have this kind of information in the background and really not make it available to the public. I think that's a violation of public trust. And I'm concerned that Mr. Bush would essentially hide something of a pretty significant nature.

If you're an intelligence agent and you're running for Congress, that raises several issues, to my mind, that I think would have to be thoroughly explained. I would like to know if the individual that was running for public office had severed his ties with the Agency. Were they getting assistance from the Agency when they were running for public office?

And this raises a very, very critical issue in my mind, and I'm a little disturbed. This does add a troubling edge to Mr. Bush's background that I hadn't really thought about.

LAMB: Caller, what office are you running for?

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MAN: I'm running for the local elections office, as a matter of fact.

LAMB: Which party?

MAN: Democrat Party.

LAMB: Okay. Thanks.

Joe McBride?

MCBRIDE: Well, I agree with the caller that this is something we should know about. I mean the President of the United States, we should know everything there is to know. And secrecy kind of goes by the boards. I mean look at the scrutiny of people's medical records and marital problems and all these things which we feel bear on the White House.

And certainly when you're talking about public office, when this is apparently George Bush's first job with the U.S. Government, that's important, regardless of what he did at the CIA. And then we have the question, what was he doing and why can't we know about this? What activities was he actually involved in back then?

LAMB: Dunedin, Florida. You're next.

MAN: ...I'm glad to see somebody digging into that Kennedy assassination and all them CIA boys down there, and Roosevelt -- Johnson having [unintelligible], and Ruby walking in and shooting that man in the Los Angeles jail. And I have a little background with the mob, and I've heard how they let him in there to shoot Ruby.

And just keep on digging into that deal, and that'll all come out someday, how they bumped him and the colored leader off, between the Kennedys and Hoover and Johnson, got the one, CIA, and Johnson got the other one. So you just keep digging into that. It'll come out sometime.

Thank you.

LAMB: Thanks, caller.

Your book on Frank Capra. Who is he and why'd you write it?

MCBRIDE: Well, he's the great movie director who made "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town," etcetera. He's a beloved filmmaker. "It's a Wonderful Life" is another film that he made that everybody talks about all the time.

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And he's a very political figure. Even though the book is a motion picture book, it's really more about politics and the American system. It actually is going to be quite a provocative book, in its own way.

LAMB: Politically. What do you mean by that?

MCBRIDE: Well, he -- people don't really know Frank Capra. They think they know that he is a liberal spokesman for the common man, etcetera. And that's really very misleading. And the facts of his life are not known because his own autobiography is largely a work of fiction. And so...

LAMB: So yours is not an approved autobiography.

MCBRIDE: Well, he cooperated with the book, but it's not an authorized book. I wanted the book to be independent. But I had him cooperating with me. He gave me a lot of interviews and things.

LAMB: So, after we read the book, what will be the label be that we'd put on Mr. Capra? The political label.

MCBRIDE: Well, he's much more conservative than people think, for example. But he's a very complex man, and his political views have been shifting and complicated. And he was a very political artist dealing with myths of American culture. and "Mr. Smith" is one of the most striking films in American political history. But the man who wrote that film, for example, Sidney Blutman (?), was later blacklisted and admitted that he was a member of the Communist Party, which is a real interesting paradox, because this is one of the great patriotic films of American history. And this caused Frank Capra a lot of consternation.

LAMB: Mr. Capra still alive?

MCBRIDE: Yes, he is.

LAMB: He's how old?

MCBRIDE: Ninety-one.

LAMB: Does he still live in La Quinta?

MCBRIDE: Yes, he does.

LAMB: Merced, California. Go ahead, please.

MAN: Two things. One is, on your program this morning you managed to come up with a candidate who doesn't know what he's running for in Florida.

And the other thing is George and the CIA. And I don't think that George Bush's participation in the CIA ought to disqualify him. I think that it ought to open us up just to examine what he says more closely. For instance, if he said he's for affirmative action, you know, you've got to question that and look at it more in depth, no matter what he says, because the CIA is a master of illusion.

The second thing is, one of the callers hit on, and that is, was George Bush's successful business ventures done on business ventures like the Iran arms/Contra scandal with Ollie North, where millions of dollars of profit were made illegally? I think his company should probably be examined in detail, using the Freedom of Information to check on any of the situations that may be government-related. And if Bush has a clean record, then he's going to come through, and therefore none of the things should be held against him. If he doesn't, then it should be addressed.

LAMB: Joe McBride?

MCBRIDE: Yeah. I would love to see other journalists pick up the ball on this story, and I gather that some people are.

You know, I asked to speak to Bush when I was doing the story, and they said, "There's no way we can let you do that." I don't know why. But I would love to have access to him myself. Or failing that, I would love to see the people that cover his campaign really ask him a lot of searching questions.

Bush, as we know, doesn't like to give too many interviews. You know, the last big one I remember was the Ted Koppel thing, which he seemed very uncomfortable doing.

LAMB: Cape Girardeau, Missouri. You're next.

MAN: If I called The Nation a neo-Marxist, anti-democratic publication, that wouldn't make me a McCarthyite, would it?

Okay. I think that's pretty well much what it is. But I haven't read The Nation. Okay.

Since you come from a publication like that and you're trying to be a credible journalist, wouldn't it give you more credibility if you gave the names of the sources that you have?

MCBRIDE: Well, I answered the characterization of The Nation. I mean I'm an independent journalist and...

LAMB: You don't work for The Nation.

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MCBRIDE: No. I just sold them this article. So it's not like I'm representing The Nation. I'm a free-lance writer who wrote for The Nation, and I have a high regard for the magazine. But when the guy says it's neo-Marxist, or whatever, and then in the next breath he says he's never read it, I don't know what he's basing this on. I mean...

LAMB: Let me ask him that.

If you've never read it, how do you know what it is?

Unfortunately, he's not there.

MCBRIDE: You know, it's kind of hard to reply to a charge if somebody hasn't even read the magazine.

LAMB: The next call's from Knoxville, Kentucky.

MAN: Tennessee, sir.

LAMB: That's what I thought. Thank you. Go ahead, please.

MAN: There is one unspoken underlying thing here that I seem to detect, and I don't know how many people agree with me. I think there are hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of Americans who believe that John Kennedy was assassinated in cooperation with some renegade members of FBI and CIA, not directly acting under the Bureau, but acting in a renegade status, along with some anti-Castro Cubans. If this be true --and the rest of that scenario is that after the assassination the whole CIA and FBI apparatus was thrown into a cover-up operation to keep this renegade connection with the assassination quiet.

If that be true, then what we'd really be talking here would be about a man running for President of the United States who was an active member of a cover-up of the death of another President. And I'm sure this is the underlying thought of many, many people who listen out there.

And I would think it would be very important to find out where Mr. Bush was during this period. And I think maybe the fact that he's so anxious to cover this up is an indication, in itself, that it needs to be looked into more deeply.

LAMB: Thank you.

Joe McBride?

MCBRIDE: Well, I don't want to get into speculation about, you know, Bush's knowledge of the assassination. The CIA

conducted its own investigation after the event. And obviously, here we have a week after the assassination, Bush is being briefed by the FBI on things. And this document wasn't public knowledge for ten years.

So, obviously, there were things that were going on that -- this was never published in the Warren Commission records or things of that sort. So he -- you know.

LAMB: So it's clear to our audience, though. You have the document that says that George Bush was a member of the CIA -- a George Bush was a member of the CIA in 1963. And you also have his office saying he was not.

MCBRIDE: That's right.

The question was more, you know, should he talk more about what he knows about the investigation of the assassination?

LAMB: Where was he at the time of the assassination?

MCBRIDE: Yeah. What did he know about the investigation? The source that I quote in the article said that he knows that Bush was involved in the suppression of things after the Kennedy assassination. And he went on to say that they were worried that these anti-Castro groups would conduct unauthorized raids against Cuba and attempt to blame it on the CIA. And as we know, there were a lot of anti-Castro people who were conducting raids against Cuba with the support of the CIA for a couple years there, small raids. And then there were the assassination attempts against Castro.

This memo says that they were -- the tone of the memo is that they were hoping that these people will not conduct raids now that the President has been assassinated. And they were afraid that these people would take this as a signal that we were now going to move against Castro, and they didn't want them to do that.

So, it's -- there's a lot of questions and mysteries about this.

LAMB: Joe McBride is our guest. We go next to Tacoma, Washington.

WOMAN: I resent the implication that he's making here. I live in a town of 150,000 people, and there are three George Bushes alone. He's assuming that this is the George Bush who's running for President. I suggest he check other phone books. The statistics will prove out that there's going to be several hundred thousand.

Thank you.

MCBRIDE: Well, as I said before, I leave the question partly open. I give him the benefit of the doubt. And, you know, I put the question to the CIA and to Bush's office. But I did check it with reliable sources, and they said it is the same person.

LAMB: What does it do to you if it turns out they prove that it's not?

MCBRIDE: Well, I wrote the article as a question mark. I didn't write it as, you know, as a message from God or anything. It's a question mark raising a legitimate question during the campaign: Is this the same person? And if not, I say in the article that they really ought to come forward and prove that it's not and tell us who this other person is. But so far they haven't done that.

LAMB: Atlanta, Georgia. Go ahead, please.

MAN: There are two things, Mr. McBride, worth repeating. A CIA agent signs a secrecy agreement before becoming active in the field vowing not to divulge the fact that he was ever a member of the CIA. Okay.

Another thing. Hoover would have never put the real name of a member of the CIA in a memo.

And one other thing, Mr. McBride. The CIA, by charter, is not sanctioned to operate in the United States. Hoover knew that and would have not involved any CIA operative in a memo, directly or indirectly.

Now, if there's any truth in your allegation, the name George Bush was a cryptonym used by a person other than George Bush.

I'd like to have you answer one question. Do you think coming forth with an article without definite proof that it is a true story is despicable, or is not despicable?

LAMB: What do you think, caller? Caller, what do you think?

MAN: I think it is.

LAMB: Mr. McBride?

MCBRIDE: Well, as I just said, I have sources who I trust who told me that it's the same man, and I checked this out.

However, I quote the Vice President's side. I'm not -- you know, I gave him every opportunity to comment, and I asked to speak to him personally. I wasn't trying to not get his side of the story.

And I mean when he says that the CIA doesn't conduct domestic operations, it's well known that in that era they had a whole station in the Miami area with several hundred American operatives dealing with hundreds of Cubans, conducting these raids and all kinds of other things. So that was kind of a fiction. And then there were many other things they did that were domestic which they were not technically supposed to do.

LAMB: New York City. You're next.

MAN: I'd like to ask your guest, I've heard some reports recently that there's evidence that some people, some journalists have that George Bush had met with Iranian representatives before Reagan took office, and in fact in that meeting had worked out with them for them to hold on to the American hostages until after Reagan was nomi -- took office. I was wondering if you'd heard anything about that.

MCBRIDE: Well, there's been a lot of talk and articles about this so-called October surprise, which I guess is what you're referring to. For an example, the book "Out of Control" by Leslie Cockburn talks about this supposed deal the Reagan Administration made before they were elected, that once -- if the hostages were kept until after the election, they would make an arms deal.

I don't have anything to say about Bush's alleged involvement. I was curious where you get the information or what -- have you read this?

LAMB: He's not with us anymore.

Westchester, California. Go ahead, please.

MAN: Mr. McBride, do you believe that George Bush's election is part of a CIA bloodless coup of the United States?

LAMB: Do you, caller?

MAN: At one time I did. I don't think so now. When he was first running against Ronald Reagan, I thought so. And I don't think so at this time.

LAMB: Okay.

Mr. McBride?

MCBRIDE: Well, I mean that's strong language.

I mean there's concern, getting back to what we said before, the CIA, should they be involved in American politics? And if this is true that Bush were a longtime CIA man, what does that say about -- if he becomes President, will he have a special relationship with the CIA? Will he be doing more clandestine things than the Presidents normally do? It raises a whole ball of wax.

LAMB: Virginia Beach, Virginia. Go ahead, please.

MAN: I'm referring now to the caller a little while ago that talked about The Nation being neo-communist, I guess was the word he used, and if this wasn't a form of McCarthyism that is being employed by Mr. McBride. Which, to me, is a form of planting seeds of doubt in the minds of the public, because Mr. McBride has been very vague, extremely so, in trying to pin down whether this is the Vice President Bush or another Bush, as this lady who called from Tacoma, I guess it was.

Anyway, I have a comment. And I think that this man and some of these other liberal media types are operating more as nosy people rather than as investigative people. And maybe the public doesn't want to hear anything that's nosy. We want the facts, and we want hard facts. We don't want this routine of taking that label McCarthyism and turning it around, which is what the liberals do when they're attacked.

LAMB: All right, sir. Thank you.

MCBRIDE: Well, I mean one thing maybe I should point out. This might make the guy who just called think things are a little more complex. Back in 1982, I wrote a show for the USIA called "Let Poland Be Poland." It was a television special that went all around the world, which was, you know, Ronald Reagan's, under his aegis. The Warsaw army newspaper said the script of the show was written by, quote, that degenerate cowboy, Ronald Reagan.

So, I don't think that I'm a card-carrying communist, radical, or whatever the person wants to say. I think I'm just an independent journalist trying to find out the truth.

And I think that -- I mean nosy. I don't know what he thinks is important for us to find out if we aren't interested in the history of people running for President. I think that, actually, very little has been written about Bush's background. People don't seem to have gotten to the bottom of it.

I mean like while I've been doing this book on Frank Capra, I realized how little known this man is to the public,

even though he's a very familiar figure, been on the cover of Time magazine, and television specials about him. And I wrote one myself.

LAMB: You're talking about Frank Capra?

MCBRIDE: Frank Capra. This was very educational for me, that I spent four years studying the totally deceptive public record of this guy, and finding out the real truth that lay behind the image. There's a tremendous mythical component to a lot of American public figures.

LAMB: Do you think he was devious in his ways of preventing the American people from knowing what he was really all about?

MCBRIDE: To a certain degree. His autobiography is very deceptive, as all autobiographies are. But his is -- and the people in Hollywood like to write fictional treatments of their lives and touch them up and improve them. But in a lot of cases, what we think we know about him is totally the opposite of what's true.

LAMB: Corpus Christi, Texas. Go ahead, please.

WOMAN: Brian, this gentleman is outrageous. This is one instance where he has mentioned his sources over and over again. Who are the sources? He's been asked that three times now this morning. And we need to know who his sources are.

The gentleman calling before is correct. The American people are no longer going to take fairy tales. They want facts. They'll make up their minds.

Please give us your sources. Then Brian can have them on and they can provide the proof that this George Bush is actually George Bush running for President.

And also the second thing. I watched an interview with Frank Capra, and he spoke in depth about his background and what all he went through and the films that he made during World War II as his part of the war effort and everything that he went through. It seems to me that this gentleman, and The Nation in general, is strictly -- I think they used to call it yellow journalism.

And also, are you going to do the same type of in-depth background check on Michael Dukakis?

LAMB: All right, Corpus Christi. Thanks for the call.

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MCBRIDE: Well, I would love to see Dukakis's background explored as thoroughly as possible. I'm not personally doing that, but I just happened to find this thing on Bush.

I mean my sources, aside from J. Edgar Hoover, who is a pretty good source, as a journalist, we don't reveal sources that are given to us in confidence. And certainly when you deal with people who are in the intelligence community, it would be highly dangerous for them to be revealed as sources.

So, I don't want to talk about my sources, but it's a reliable person. And I have other sources besides him. So, I don't want to go into that. And I made it clear in the article, you know, what kind of background the person has.

But, you know, the article, as I stated before, largely deals with this memorandum. And the burden of proof, it seems to me, is on Bush's people to come up with the other George Bush if there is such a person.

LAMB: Santa Fe, New Mexico. You're on with Joe McBride.

MAN: I'm a professor at the University of New Mexico and I'm a political scientist. And I would like to say that, yes, I do read The Nation from time to time, and it is a neo-Marxist magazine.

Secondly, Mr. McBride, I think you should disclose your resources to make your article, or your story, a little more creditable. The fact that you just say so, I don't believe that's enough for me.

And another thing, that Mr. Bush being with the CIA, or if he was or was not with the CIA, back in the '70s, whenever, or the '60s, so what? I mean who cares? I mean this is not a big thing, is it? I mean why have you decided to make a story about this?

And last but not least, I would hope that somebody from your magazine would do something on Mr. Bensten [sic]. Because, outside of Texas, nobody knows who he is.

LAMB: All right, sir. Thank you.

MCBRIDE: Sure. I mean, you know, I'm for investigating everything about everybody that's going to be President or Vice President. I mean if Gary Hart is no longer running for President because he didn't tell the truth about that he spent a weekend with a model, it shows that the American public has a real aversion to people not leveling with us. And that's a kind

of a relatively trivial matter. But the issue there was not that he spent a weekend with the model, but why wasn't he telling us the truth?

And here we have George Bush on a much more serious, profound question.

LAMB: Huntsville, Alabama. Go ahead, please.

MAN: I'd like to say that I find this kind of reporting particularly distasteful. I see a serious double standard here. For instance, you're asking George Bush to come clean and tell everything he knows about this situation. Yet you have been given several opportunities to do the very same thing about your own sources, and you've refused to do so.

MCBRIDE: Well, let me -- could I ask the caller...

MAN: I've got a couple other more comments, if I could, please.

I find something else rather difficult to appreciate, and that is that you've invited others to jump on the bandwagon and to help blow this thing up, while you sit back and sort of take credit for a story.

And the other thing that concerns me is that you read this article two years ago, and I'm supposed to believe that you're so naive, you didn't know who George Bush was at that time. But now that he's the presidential candidate for the Republican Party, all of a sudden this story becomes something that's jogged in your mind.

Those three things bother me. And I'm going to hang up and listen to your response.

Thank you.

MCBRIDE: I would have liked to have asked the caller why I should reveal my source. This is a thing in journalism that is quite accepted practice. In certain kinds of stories, you can only get people to talk, especially in very sensitive positions, if they will be quoted as an unidentified thing. The people in the Reagan Administration do this all the time. Sources -- you know, "high sources in the Justice Department," or the State Department, or whatever. Background briefings, you know.

If you had to rely on quoted sources all the time, you would not be able to get certain facts.

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What was the last question? It was interesting. He was -- the last thing he said. Oh, why I waited two years on it.

LAMB: Yeah.

MCBRIDE: I mean he says I was naive, I didn't know who Bush was. I knew who George Bush was, but I didn't know a great deal about Bush's background. But his autobiography came out last September, for example -- it was just published in paperback -- and so I had the chance to read that when it came out. And I was surprised that he hadn't gone into this, and this piqued the thing in my mind.

LAMB: We're running out of time. We've got a Pittsburgh call, and that'll be our last call.

MAN: It amazes me how the left-wingers always try to say that Kennedy's assassination was due to a right-wing group. Oswald was definitely a communist. He lived in Russia and he visited the Soviet Embassy before the assassination. Ruby knew that he had cancer and would never go to the electric chair, and he paid off his debts to the Mafia by assassinating Oswald. And I think that all these facts ought to be out.

And I think your connection with Bush and the Kennedy assassination is a figment of your leftist imagination.

LAMB: Thank you, sir. We are just about out of time.

Final comment?

MCBRIDE: Well, it's not a figment of my imagination that this memo is about the assassination, and J. Edgar Hoover wrote it and it mentions George Bush. I mean it doesn't -- I'm just presenting the memo as it appears, and I'm not speculating about more that's behind it. And as I say, the burden of proof is now on the Bush camp, I think.

LAMB: We're out of time. And our guest has been Joe McBride, who has written a free-lance article for The Nation, in this issue, and this is the July 16/23 issue. It's the lead story here, "George Bush: CIA Operative?" And that's a question mark.

Mr. McBride is from Los Angeles, a free-lance writer, as we said. He's lived there for 15 years. He has a book coming out on Frank Capra in a short while. And he's originally from Wisconsin area, where he attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison and also worked for the Wisconsin State Journal.

Thank you very much.