



Tell the Truth! 2004

Media Reality ✓ Check

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CBS Anchor Buys Hillary's Ignorance, Bill's Couch Sleeping, Outrage at Kroft; Glosses Over Buckraking

Dan Rather Nods Through Clinton Whoppers

No one really expected Dan Rather to play Tim Russert on *60 Minutes* last night, and probe Clinton on his every factual inconsistency. But Rather sat idly through a series of Clinton whoppers and forwarded them without objection to the audience at home. To avoid rehashing every scandal and policy dispute of the Clinton era, here are a few items on Clinton's personal behavior that could have used less gullibility from Rather:

Hillary's Months of Ignorance.

The least plausible story in the autobiographies of both Clintons is the idea that Hillary reacted to the outbreak of Monicagate by believing her husband totally, and that he told her he was lying in August, and she was "gulping for air" in disbelief.

Rather bought that whole incredible story: "Not only had Hillary believed the lie the President told the country, Mrs. Clinton had gone out on a limb to defend her husband in public." After showing Hillary's "vast right-wing conspiracy" clip, Rather suggested: "Before the ultimate facts came out, Mrs. Clinton, then the First Lady, went on television, and she was a tigress defending you." But last year, a *USA Today* poll found 56 percent didn't believe Hillary's claim of ignorance.

Sleeping on the Couch. Underlining the doghouse story, Rather relayed Clinton's account of an upset family on the August vacation just after his public admission: "She and Chelsea barely talked to him. And he spent months, he said, sleeping on the couch." This contradicted the memoir of Clinton staffer Sidney Blumenthal, who claimed he could hear Bill and Hillary chatting amiably during that vacation. And are we to believe that in the White House, with many bedrooms, the President had to sleep on a couch?

Outrageous Steve Kroft. Rather recalled Clinton's first scandal, when Gennifer Flowers said they had an affair in 1992: "In an effort to salvage his campaign, he took the risky step of doing an interview on *60 Minutes* in front of a huge audience right after the 1992 Super Bowl....Even though the interview rejuvenated his campaign, he writes in his book that he was so furious at Kroft for prying into his personal life that he wanted to, quote, 'slug him.'"

Rather related this, and then moved on to asking how Bill convinced Hillary to do the interview. But as an employee of CBS, doing an interview for *60 Minutes*, couldn't Rather have noted that it's a bit odd for Clinton to resent Kroft for asking questions about Flowers when Clinton booked the interview (at least in part) to address the scandal?

The "Money Machine." Within minutes of Ronald Reagan's death on June 5, CBS was airing a Jerry Bowen story highlighting "the nagging perception" that "the Reagans were cashing in on" the presidency. But last night, Rather was not critical: "Since he left the White House, President Clinton has, among other things, become a money machine, writing his book, giving speeches and paying off his legal bills. Now he wants to slow down, do more public service, like his work to fight AIDS in Africa."

Rather didn't mention Clinton's speech fee (averaging over \$150,000), or even the reported \$10 to \$12 million book advance. He asked: "Do you have a sense of the lightness of being now that you're out of the presidency?" He certainly had a sense of the lightness of Dan Rather.

— Tim Graham

New York Times Rebuts Rather

"But while Dan Rather...has already compared the book to the memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, arguably the most richly satisfying autobiography by an American President, *My Life* has little of that classic's unsparring candor or historical perspective."
— *New York Times* book reviewer Michiko Kakutani on Sunday.

"I'm not a book reviewer and I yield to their superior insights." — Dan Rather responding this morning on *The Early Show*.

To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Katie Wright at (703) 683-5004