SIXTEEN YEARS AFTER YELLING AT BUSH THE FIRST, CBS ANCHOR STAYS MELLOW WITH DEMOCRATIC CONTENDERS

DAN RATHER MAKES NICE, NOT NEWS

In a 1993 speech to a radio and TV news directors convention, Dan Rather deplored how reporters kiss up: "Do powder puff, not probing interviews. Stay away from controversial subjects. Kiss ass, move with the mass, and for heaven and ratings' sake, don't make anybody mad – certainly not anybody you're covering, and especially not the Mayor, the Governor, the Senator, the President, or the Vice President, or anybody in a position of power. Make nice, not news."

But last night on the *CBS Evening News*, Rather interviewed three Democratic candidates face to face. He made nice, not news. He moved with the mass. He didn't make anybody mad. In excerpts CBS showed last night, the candidates were treated to non-ideological horse-race questions and soft-touch inquiries. These were the only questions viewers saw on the eve of the New Hampshire vote:

TO HOWARD DEAN: "You know, it's not uncommon when a campaign reaches this stage, for those who are working with a candidate to say, you know, I cannot get my candidate to stay on message. Have you heard that from your staff?"

TO WESLEY CLARK: "True or untrue, that you expect to finish third, that's where you're hoping to finish? ...**What's the basic Wesley Clark message in this campaign?...And General Wesley Clark's strongest argument against another four years of a Bush administration is?**"

TO JOHN EDWARDS: "If you finish fourth or below here, can you, will you carry on?...You must have had a moment that you said to yourself, you know what? I don't think this is going to work...**What question bores you the most on these bus rides from one stop to another?**"

Dan Rather knows how to be rough on a Republican candidate. Sixteen years ago this week, on the January 25, 1988 *CBS Evening News,* Rather famously yelled at then-Vice President George H. W. Bush about the Iran-Contra affair: "**You made us hypocrites in the face of the world!...How could you sign on to such a policy?**"