

JFK's Death in Dallas:

Too Much Lies Between the Lines In Warren Report

By Oliver Stone

GIVEN NEWSDAY'S otherwise commendable coverage of my movie "JFK" and the issues surrounding the film about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November, 1963, I was surprised to see Robert W. Greene's relentlessly lame-brained analysis of the film's facts (Jan. 19).

To start with, Greene's summary of the Warren Commission's version of the assassination is riddled with errors:

- The commission said that 5.6 seconds was the most likely time span of the three shots, setting the minimum at 4.3 seconds and the maximum at 7.9, depending on which of the shots missed. Greene simply tells us the time frame was a maximum of 7.1 to 7.9 seconds, a scenario that holds true only if the third shot missed, which the commission thought was unlikely.

- While Greene says the commission established that a bullet struck Kennedy in the back, 5 1/4 inches below his collar, this is false. The commission decided that a bullet struck Kennedy in the back of the neck, despite the fact that the autopsy photos showed a bullet hole below the shoulder blade. The misrepresentation of the location of the back wound was one of the commission's most glaring lies and it was officially corrected by the Rockefeller Commission on CIA Activities in 1975.

- The famous "magic" bullet (CE399) was not found on Texas Gov. John Connally's stretcher. The Warren Commission could not prove that it came from his stretcher, and, in fact, had very strong evidence that it came from the stretcher of another patient (who was unrelated to the shooting). Moreover, the commission was faced with the problem that none of the four people who handled the bullet when it was found at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas could later identify CE399 as the bullet they had seen. All four — two Secret Service agents and two hospital staff members — claimed to have seen a pointed-tipped chrome bullet, not one that was blunt-nosed and copper-jacketed.

But the Warren Commission Report is aware of these gaps in the evidence. Accordingly its writers used speculative language — "the weight of the evidence," "this suggests," "it is likely." Greene takes their tentative terminology and changes it into flat-out assertions. As for Greene's other "evidence":

- The number of shots: Greene takes G. Robert Blakey, the former chief counsel to the House Select Committee on Assassinations, at his word when Blakey says that he thinks the probability of a fourth shot coming from the grassy knoll is "actually closer to 60 percent" than to the 95 percent established by the scientists employed by the committee in 1978. In other words, Blakey is dissociating himself from the findings of his own committee. Why doesn't Greene point this out? And what is Blakey's evidence for his claim?

- The time required to aim and fire the gun. Greene claims that both the Warren Commission and the House committee determined that it took 2.3 seconds to eject, load, aim and fire the rifle Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly used to shoot the president from the Texas School Book Depository Building. This claim is false. Both panels established a 2.3 second "recycling" time for

Oswald's Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, which did not include time to aim.

Also, the rifle tests were not the success Greene makes them out to be. The rifle was fired from an elevation only half as high as the building's sixth floor and at a stationary target — not a moving motorcade. And the rifleman took as much time as he needed for his first shot, unlike Oswald. There is no evidence in Oswald's biography of his taking rifle practice after 1959, but the three test shooters were experts of Olympic stature. According to the Warren Commission volumes, only one rifleman scored two out of three hits in under 5.6 seconds in any of the attempts.

Greene also fails to note that the scope on Oswald's rifle was not aligned properly until the FBI fixed it. Had the marksmen fired with Oswald's rifle in its Nov. 22, 1963, condition, they would never have hit the targets.

Oswald was a bad shot. Oswald barely qualified as a Marine marksman — the lowest category — in 1959, his last known rifle practice. There is absolutely no record of him practicing with the Mannlicher-Carcano or any other rifle for that matter in the time leading up to the assassination. Even though his wife, Marina, claims he practiced dry-loading at home, this would not prepare him to aim and shoot with the great precision the Dealey Plaza assassination required.

Oswald's fingerprints on the rifle. Oswald's fingerprints were never found on the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle by either the Dallas police or the FBI. The latter noted that the rifle was completely devoid of prints of any kind. Oswald's partial palm print found by the Dallas police on the underside of the disassembled rifle did not reach the FBI lab until several days after the assassination. The FBI was puzzled that it could find no trace of the print on the rifle or any evidence that a palm

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print had ever been lifted from that area. Of course, Oswald's prints were found on book cartons on the sixth floor — he worked there filling book orders. The fibers allegedly from Oswald's shirt that were found on the rifle are also highly problematic. As the Warren Commission Report noted, "There is no way to eliminate the possibility of the fibers having come from another identical shirt."

The "magic bullet." Greene tells us that neutron activation analysis showed that the bullet that left fragments in Connally's wrist was the same bullet that was found "near" Connally's stretcher. Not only is this not true, it is impossible. The Warren Commission and the House committee couldn't prove that the bullet that was found at Parkland Hospital had anything to do with the assassination. The bullet fragments the committee tested were only allegedly from Connally's wrist — and they were definitely not the same fragments tested by the Warren Commission. Those had already vanished from the National Archives. Even more damaging to the government's case, the total weight of the "original" wrist fragments (documented by the Warren Commission in 1964), plus the total weight of the "new" wrist fragments (discovered by the committee in 1978), exceed the total weight missing from the magic bullet, making it impossible that both sets of fragments are authentic as the House committee claims.

Greene's reporting to the contrary, the autopsy did not conclude that the bullet passed through Kennedy's neck. When Lt. Col. Pierre Finck, a pathologist who participated in the autopsy at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, testified at the Clay Shaw trial in New Orleans, he admitted that the military autopsists were under orders not to dissect the bullet track through the president's neck. An important FBI document known as the Sibert-O'Neill Report — written by two FBI agents attending the autopsy — shows that the bullet, that entered the president's back, went in only about two inches and did not enter through the neck. Another autopsy

concluded that the bullet entered the neck. (Continued on Next Page)



Oliver Stone is the director of the movie "JFK." He won Academy Awards for his 1975 film "Midnight Cowboy" and his 1976 film "Taxi Driver."

Fancy Footwork Can't Cover Up Gaps in Report

— Continued from Preceding Page

doctor, Cmdr. "J" Thornton Boswell, confirmed this in an interview with independent researcher Josiah Thompson in 1967.

The Zapruder film and the president's backward head snap. The House committee's medical panel explained that the backward snap of the president's head — normally consistent with a shot from the front and inconsistent with a shot from the rear — was the result of a "massive neuromuscular reaction." Such a muscle reaction, however, only takes place when there is damage to a major coordinating center of the brain. The damage shown by the X-rays in the president's autopsy report is to the right cerebral hemisphere, which is not a neuromuscular coordinating center and not capable of causing a neuromuscular reaction.

The autopsy was controlled by the military. While Greene does not dispute this (which is well documented), he fails to grasp the crucial point made in the movie "JFK" during autopsy doctor Pierre Finck's testimony at the Clay Shaw trial. Finck states that the doctors were ordered not to dissect the path of the bullet through the president's back, which order was later corroborated by technicians present at the autopsy. Given that the superior officers had no pathology credentials, it is clear that the autopsy, if not rigged, was

an undeniably compromised affair.

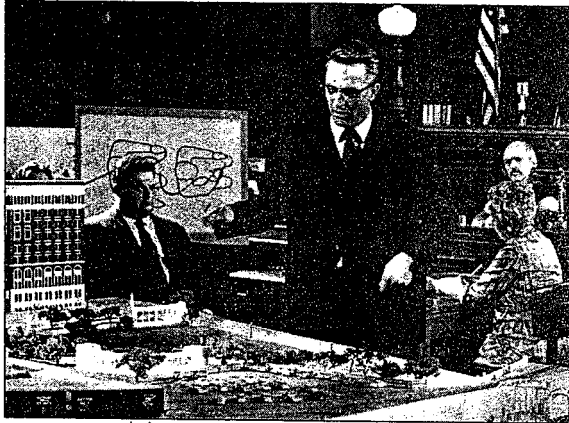
Kennedy's brain is missing. It is absolutely not true that the brain had been fully examined prior to its disappearance. The brain had been put in formalin, a fixingsolution, so that it would be easier to examine after it set. The brain was never sectioned; thus, we don't know the bullet's path through the brain.

The grassy knoll witnesses. The Warren Commission did take the testimony of about 20 witnesses who claimed they heard shots coming from the grassy knoll overlooking Dealey Plaza, but it also had the sheriff's department, FBI and Secret Service affidavits of another 130 people who cited the knoll as the source of the shots. In never following up on these statements, the commission never was able to explore the possibility that some of these witnesses — among them Secret Service agents, war veterans, expert hunters, policemen and sheriffs — might have been correct about the direction of the shots.

Secret Service "imposters" on the grassy knoll. Greene notes that one Dallas policeman reported encountering a man with Secret Service credentials on the knoll after the shooting. In fact, there were several policemen who reported having similar encounters, and several more people in Dealey Plaza, including Lee Harvey Oswald, who reported running into men showing them "Secret Service credentials." This issue has never been resolved.

Someone had to have fired from the grassy knoll. In what ranks with the most ludicrous of conspiracy theories, former Chief Counsel Blakey says that he thinks the grassy knoll shooter — if in fact he exists — was there to kill Oswald. There is no evidence of this and, typically, Greene does not ask him to substantiate his claim; he simply prints it. A clear shot from the grassy knoll to the sixth floor of the Book Depository Building is all but impossible — the knoll is behind trees, the depository window is behind trees and at a difficult height and angle for a shooter from the knoll. In short, there is no line of sight.

Garrison's case against New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw. Greene says that New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison (unlike the character in the movie) made no claims about a plot by the military-industrial complex to kill the president but instead "merely hinted" at a plot by homosexuals and anti-Castro Cubans. Garrison's court case focused on destroying the Warren Commission's no-conspiracy hypothesis and establishing Clay Shaw's ties to David



Warner Bros., Inc.

Kevin Costner, as New Orleans DA Jim Garrison, in Oliver Stone's "JFK."

Ferrie, Lee Oswald and U.S. intelligence. But Garrison did bring out the larger picture of the assassination — i.e., the military-industrial complex — in his summation speech, as well as in a 1968 Playboy interview and a prime-time reply to a 1968 NBC program.

Former CIA Director Richard Helms' statements on Clay Shaw. In "JFK," the epilogue says only that Shaw was a CIA contact, not that he was a contract agent.

Garrison's work did give credibility to the conspiracy theory. Blakey claims that the House committee felt that the Garrison investigation was a "fraud." But a quick look at the committee's material — which apparently neither Blakey nor Greene availed himself of — proves otherwise. The committee followed many of Garrison's leads in New Orleans and took testimony from many of his sources and witnesses. More often than not, they were found to be quite credible. It is far more truthful to say that the House investigation confirmed Garrison's case for conspiracy. In its final report, the committee "candidly acknowledged that it could not explain Oswald's associations with anti-Castro Cubans in [New Orleans]" and it found "an association of an undetermined nature between Ferrie, Oswald and Shaw less than three months before the assassination."

For a seasoned Newsday editor, Greene's performance is puzzling. Not only is his analysis faulty, he doesn't quote accurately from government documents or properly question his sources. If we don't ascribe it to ineptitude, one is left with the disturbing thought that Greene approached the article with considerable and unconscionable bias, assuming from the start that a "Hollywood" filmmaker can't be historically truthful. But what we're actually seeing in this case is that it's the journalist who can't get the facts straight.



AP Photo

The president and first lady ride in the fateful motorcade, Nov. 22, 1963.