Stone, guests make plans for 'JFK' premiere

By Jane Sumner 11-16-91
Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

JFK, the film that *Variety* calls "an incendiary political conspiracy thriller," premieres in Dallas at a benefit screening Dec. 19 at General Cinema's NorthPark I and II theatres.

Oscar-winning director Oliver Stone and guests will attend a recep-

FILM

tion at Newport's in The Brewery, 703 McKinney Ave., after the 7 p.m. screening. Gary Oldman, who plays Lee Harvey Oswald in the three-hour film, has been mentioned as one of the stars who may accompany Mr. Stone.

JFK, which filmed in Dallas in April and May, stars Kevin Costner as Jim Garrison, the New Orleans district attorney who prosecuted the only criminal case connected with the murder. Others in the all-star cast include Sissy Spacek, Tommy Lee Jones, Joe Pesci, Kevin Bacon and Donald Sutherland.

Proceeds from the premiere will benefit the Dallas Children's Health Project and the Children's Health Fund, which provide medical care for homeless children and their families, and the Film Commission of North Texas.

North Texas film commissioner Roger Burke says, "*JFK* is already the most eagerly awaited and talked-about motion picture of the year. With just word-of-mouth that Oliver will be here, we've already had many requests for invitations from a broad spectrum of people."

Tickets, which include the reception, cost $100. Call the North Texas Commission at 621-0400. Corporate sponsorships are available.

JFK slayers 'found' on grassy knoll

By Mark Potok 11-16-91
OF THE TIMES HERALD STAFF

You may not be too sure what Tom Wilson is showing you when he starts his video, but it's hard to ignore the retired engineer's words.

"You are looking right now into the eye of the assassin of President Kennedy," he says evenly as the tape rolls. "You're looking at a mole on his cheek.

"I can tell you right now, his eyes are brown."

Using sophisticated technologies known as "image processing" and "spectral analysis," Wilson, 59, has spent three years examining some of the most famous photographs and films of the world's most famous assassination. What he claims he's found seems incredible — even to the conspiracy buffs he addressed Friday night in Dallas.

The real killer, he says, is firing from the grassy knoll; on one side of him is another sniper, on the other, a collaborating photographer. The

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president's autopsy photographs are faked; so is a famous photo of Lee Harvey Oswald holding a sniper's rifle. There's a bullet in the president's back never before reported; and there's unreported metal in his head.

"Basic," Wilson says as his video plays. "Basic."

Hardly, retorted several authorities who heard about Wilson's claims to the Dallas assassination symposium. Said Robert Blakey, chief counsel and staff director of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which probed the killing in 1979: "You know the saying among computer people, 'Garbage in, garbage out?'

"This is garbage."

Agreeing was David Belin, counsel to the Warren Commission, which concluded that the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination was the work of Oswald acting alone.

"It's a series of massive lies," he said. "The man is basically making an outrageous claim."

'Hard evidence' offered

But Wilson, a soft-spoken, hard-of-hearing former U.S. Steel engineer, will not be deterred. Before Friday night, he had never gone public. He is doing so, he said in an interview, "because I have the first real piece of hard evidence."

The evidence, he said, is film — the same film that has been probed for the 28 years since Kennedy's death. Experts from NASA and the FBI, called by the House committee that reexamined the Warren Commission's controversial conclusions, studied it. So have many conspiracy theorists.

But Wilson said he's different.

He worked, in some cases, from copies of copies of photographs. His analysis of the famous Zapruder film of the shooting was done on a copy made on "a $3 tape in a $150 VCR." But Wilson said it doesn't matter.

What he does, he said, is measure frequencies of light that bounce off a photograph or film strip. The light is measured on 250,000 solid-state charge-coupled devices using a 256-shade gray scale; the human eye can perceive only 30 shades of gray. Then his computer program develops a kind of layered picture, sometimes adding lifelike colors.

'Nothing is speculation'

"Nothing is theory," he said. "Nothing is speculation."

The process, he said, is like looking at a photo of a darkened door leading into a hallway, which looks black to the human eye. His method "peels away" the layers of gray, going deeper and deeper and picking up shades invisible to the eye. In the end, with the computer enhancing the grays to make them visible, you will see the man who is standing at the end of the hall.

"Yes, some of these things can be done," said Michael Bove, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who has worked extensively on image enhancement.

"But the point at which it starts getting to be a little bit less certain technology is when someone shows shows you a [blurry] picture and says I can identify all the cars, and worse, all the Fords," he said. "Fundamentally, all you've got to go with is what's on the film. Anything else you pull out of there, you're making assumptions about."

Sometimes, watching Wilson's video and listening to him explain its often indecipherable images is like watching the movie, "The Fantastic Voyage," where a miniaturized submarine crew enters the human body. Except in Wilson's case, zooming in on an autopsy photo of the president, you enter the hole in his throat where a tracheotomy was performed.

As you go down, Wilson points out what he says is the bullet hole and its configuration — a pattern he says proves the shot came from the front, meaning it could not have been fired by Oswald, who is supposed to have fired from above and behind.

Similarly, Wilson made these claims:

■ Looking at the president's brain by examining one spot in the Zapruder film shows that that shot also was fired from in front. Wilson also claimed to be able to pick out pieces of scalp and brain matter as it flies through the air in a backward arc.

■ Probing several autopsy photographs shows a shot in the lower left back and also shows that a picture of the rear of the president's head has been altered. Other conspiracy theorists have maintained that the photos were faked to cover up the direction of the shots.

■ A photograph of Oswald at his home holding a sniper's gun is actually of another man with Oswald's face superimposed. Part of the Zapruder film also has been altered.

■ A "white puff" on a Polaroid snapshot of the grassy knoll — long identified by some theorists as smoke from a gun — is just that. Wilson's computer program takes you through the halo of smoke, purportedly showing the

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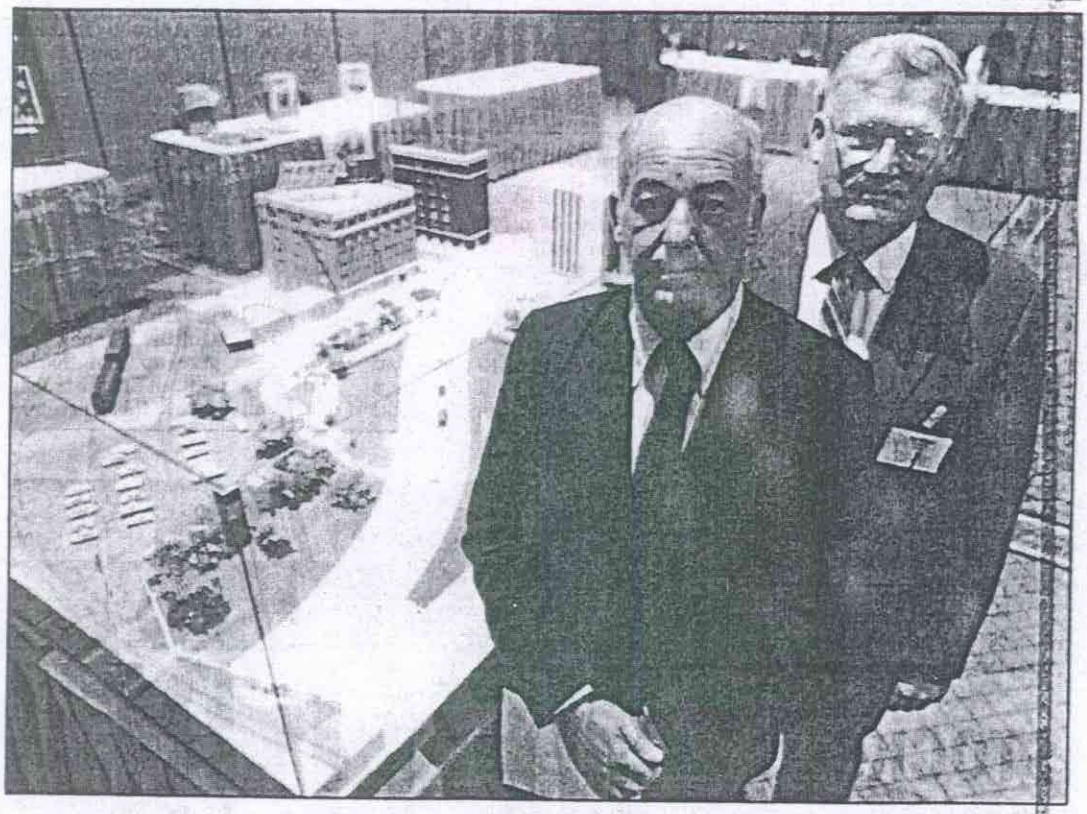

Jesse Hornbuckle/Dallas Times Herald

Dr. Cyril Wecht, left, says Tom Wilson has done "beautiful work" in delving into the JFK assassination.

gunman's eye, a mole on his cheek and a rifle's scope; a camera to the gunman's right, operated by another conspirator; and an adjacent puff of smoke, marking where another sniper fired a fifth of a second earlier, but missed. Wilson also claimed he can see the killer's eagle-shaped badge — indicating the assassin wore the uniform of a federal official — and the outline of his name plate.

Name on badge possible

"If I had an original [photo]," he said, "I could probably tell you the name on the badge."

Cyril Wecht, a Pennsylvania forensic pathologist and one-time president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, has examined Wilson's results and on Friday called it "beautiful work." Wecht — who gave a thunderous speech at the conference referring to conspiracy theorists' attempts to get at the truth as "this glorious quest, this magnificent struggle" — said he endorsed Wilson's work but was unsure if the photographs he worked from were authentic.

Gary Mack, a Texas assassination theorist who nevertheless discounted many of the theories being espoused Friday, said he'd interviewed Wilson for hours.

"He doesn't really know what information the computer is putting into the picture. The computer is just reacting to 'noise,' adding material, altering it, sharpening it. He doesn't really know *what* it's doing."

"It's like ink blot tests," he said. "Magic is a polite term."

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INTRIGUING TALE

Witness to slaying of JFK says she saw gunmen, gave chase

By Todd Copilevitz
Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

The truth be told, Jean Hill went to Dealey Plaza trying to attract the attention of a cute police officer. But that alone probably wouldn't have drawn 300 people to listen intently to her every word 28 years later.

No, Ms. Hill was the center of at-

■ 'JFK' film opening. 5C

tention Friday morning because for the first time she was describing publicly what she saw in Dealey Plaza the day that President John F. Kennedy was killed.

And for the assassination buffs gathered in Dallas for the three-day Assassination Symposium on John F. Kennedy, her account was captivating.

"I hope it went OK," Ms. Hill said after the first part of her panel discussion at the Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion. "I don't come out with what I have to say very easily."

For many of the people attending the conference, this was why they made the trip from 30 states and five countries. Seven eyewitnesses to either the shooting or the handling of the president's body were there to tell their tales and take questions.

Each audience member had a particular aspect of the assassination or subsequent investigation that intrigued them, and they came to learn more.

"Now that knoll where you saw a gunman has a tree on it. Was he on the right or left of the tree from your vantage point?" one man asked Ms. Hill, although the significance of the answer was not ex-

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The Dallas Morning News: Juan Garcia

Jean Hill, who saw the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, signs autographs Friday at a conference on the slaying.

Woman tells of gunmen at JFK slaying

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plained.

The assassination buffs were more enthusiastic than usual Friday after a high-powered keynote speech that morning by Dr. Cyril Wecht, an expert on Mr. Kennedy's autopsy.

He urged the crowd to hound local newspapers into reporting more on the assassination. He also rallied the audience in an attack on the Warren Commission report, which concluded that Mr. Kennedy was killed by a lone gunman, Lee Harvey Oswald, firing a rifle from the Texas School Book Depository.

Dr. Wecht got a thunderous ovation when he demanded that every library in the country move the report to the fiction section.

Later in the morning, the eyewitnesses got their turn.

Ms. Hill, a third-grade teacher from H.S. Thompson Learning Center, told of persuading a police officer to let her and a friend stand in the median so they could get a better look at the president.

"Well, actually there were a couple cute motorcycle officers that we were interested in, and they couldn't see us if we were in a crowd," she said.

The two women were looking at the book depository and the grassy knoll on Elm Street west of the depository — where conspiracy theorists believe the fatal shot came from — when the shots started to ring out. Ms. Hill insists that she saw two gunmen, including one who was firing from behind a picket fence on the knoll.

She decided to chase one of the men as he ran, but two men in trench coats grabbed her by the shoulder and instead took her to the Dallas County Records Building. There, she said, they disputed her account of hearing four to six shots, and then issued a stern warning:

"'You would be very wise to keep your mouth shut,'" she recalled one of the men telling her. "I never have been that wise, I guess."

Through the years, Ms. Hill has never made a secret of what she saw. Although she has answered questions from some authors, she has been hesitant to discuss it with people investigating the conspiracy.

Then this spring, movie director Oliver Stone came to visit. He was working on *JFK*, his soon-to-be-released movie about the assassination on Nov. 22, 1963.

"Oliver had dinner with me, and really he was the one who gave me the courage to tell my story," she said.

So she has collaborated with Dallas author Bill Sloan for *JFK: The Last Dissenting Witness*, which is due out next year.

In the meantime, she saw her experience re-created in the Dealey Plaza scenes of Mr. Stone's movie.

The combination of the movie and her book is likely to lead to more speaking engagements, Ms. Hill conceded. Her appearance Friday already brought a request to appear on *The Maury Povich Show*, a syndicated TV talk show.

It's all rather overwhelming for a woman who's real motivation that infamous day was landing a date. Which begs the obvious question about the success of her romantic endeavor.

"Yeah, I definitely caught his eye," she said. But that's one of the secrets she is keeping.

Last year's hot JFK theory conspicu

Nov. 17, 1991

Meeting missing man who swore dad was killer

By Mark Potok
OF THE TIMES HERALD STAFF

It was an absence that spoke volumes.

As three days of Kennedy assassination conspiracy theorizing drew to an end Saturday, one of the most remarkable things to emerge was the lack of virtually any mention of Ricky Don White — the man who was supposed to unlock the mystery.

After all, just 15 months ago, officials of the JFK Assassination Center in Dallas — the same group that co-sponsored last week's Assassination Symposium on John F. Kennedy — presented a huge fanfare for the unemployed handyman. Wearing a baseball cap, White announced that his father, Roscoe White, killed the president on the orders of the CIA.

His story was carried around the world. But then it died.

The diary that told all could never be produced. White's mother, who supposedly knew everything, was too sick to be interviewed. White's handlers refused to name co-conspirators they said they'd identified. The secret cables giving Roscoe White his orders were gone, too — a private investigator, center officials said, absconded with them.

"When I hear some of this nonsense, I feel a little like Dr. Frankenstein," said Mark Lane, known as the grandfather of the conspiracy researchers be-

DALLAS TIMES HERALD

ously absent

cause he wrote the first book questioning the Warren Commission conclusion that a lone gunman killed Kennedy.

"The monster is starting to move on its own."

It wasn't the first time that JFK Assassination Center officials had presented the "solution" to history's most famous homicide. Several conspiracy researchers attending the symposium that ended Saturday said it had happened before.

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"Let's face it," began Jim Marrs, author of "Crossfire: The Plot That Killed Kennedy," a comprehensive 1989 book that reviews the literature of conspiracy theories.

"The center said we have solved the assassination: It was Charles Nicoletti firing from the grassy knoll accompanied by Johnny Rosselli. They were emphatic about it. Less than three months later, they said we have solved it: It is Roscoe White.

"That tends to detract from their credibility."

On Saturday night, Gary Shaw, a co-director of the center, helped present yet another "revelation" — the identities of the "three tramps," shabbily dressed men supposedly seen near the assassination site, and their supposed role in the slaying.

"It's the assassin of the month club," said Gary Mack, a researcher who, with Lane, feels unsubstantiated theorizing discredits their own serious questioning.

To be fair, Shaw and co-director Larry Howard now say that they do not sponsor theories, only provide a forum for them to be heard — although they both said Friday that they still believe most of Ricky White's story. But many don't remember it that way.

"I think it is fair to say it was center-sponsored," Jerry Rose, a New York sociology professor and assassination research journal publisher, said of the White story.

Howard said the White story — which also was being backed by a for-profit corporation hoping to sell book or movie deals — was floated before being fully checked out because of a possible risk. "We had the news conference at that time period because we thought there was a danger factor," he said. "We felt . . . our lives were in danger."

And he said much remains untold; he kept Ricky White away from the conference because his investigation is continuing. White's account, he added, is "absolutely true."

Several researchers also criticized the for-profit center for making money off the conference — as well as for getting an $80,000 payment from filmmaker Oliver Stone to act as a consultant on his about-to-be-released movie on the assassination.

Said Lane: "The exploration of the death of a president should not be a business."