

Specter-will-sue-for-'JFK'-to-recoup-for-Anita Hill theory

Dear Arlen Specter, Howdy. How are things in the U.S. Senate?

Did you enjoy your visit to Allen High School the other day? It's important to stay in touch with America's youth. I'm sure you would agree. Not only are they our future, but our future voters. And without votes, where would you be? Just another lawyer without his own parking space, maybe.

Say, Arlen—may I call you Arlen? Listen, Arlen, I noticed that you're getting your hackles up lately about that new Oliver Stone movie, *JFK*. After speaking to the students at Allen High the other day, you said you're thinking about suing Warner Brothers. You also have made comments to the effect that you will "own" Time-Warner someday.

I have to admit, the thought of you owning a motion picture company is intriguing. Think of the possibilities: You could make your own movie about Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill. But this time, you could change the script so the audience would come away liking you, instead of getting the impression you behaved like George Bush's hack. That would be your prerogative as a movie producer—to warp and twist



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history to fit your own perceptions.

Anyway, when you said you might sue the people who made *JFK*, I just had to rush out and see the movie. I figured, if a movie has succeeded in ticking off a U.S. senator, it must be worth at least the price of a matinee ticket. One of the beauties of being a newspaper columnist is that I can go to a movie in the afternoon and call it work. In fact, with an Oliver Stone flick, I call it working overtime.

I probably would have seen *JFK* whether the film annoyed you or not. To be honest, as someone who was 3 years old when Kennedy was assassinated, I have felt cheated by history. Our generation was not able to share in the hope and youthful vitality of his administration. Instead

we got Nixon. For us, the '60s are like a movie that began 10 minutes before we walked into the theater. Faulkner, writing about the Civil War, said that every Southern boy can imagine a moment in July 1863, before the order was given for Pickett's charge at the Battle of Gettysburg, the defeat that signaled the beginning of the end for the Confederacy. He said every Southern boy can hold onto the hope of that moment just before it all began to fall apart, and nobody can take that away.

I feel the same way about Kennedy's assassination. The generation which never knew Kennedy can imagine a sunny day in late November 1963, when the clock is frozen at 12:29 p.m., Dallas time, a moment full of hope and cheers and boundless optimism, a moment before an open convertible turned into Dealey Plaza, before gunshots split the air. And that moment can never be taken away from us.

Forgive my romanticism, Arlen, but it's all my generation has of Kennedy, Camelot, the Cuban missile crisis, civil rights marches—it's all just newsreel footage to us. Of course, I'm not telling you anything new. You're afraid that Oliver Stone's movie, to us, will become

fact. And that's why you're threatening to sue. It's an election year, and suddenly you're portrayed on thousands of movie screens as an ambitious junior counselor who dreamed up "one of the grossest lies ever foisted on the American people."

The movie refers, of course, to your single-bullet theory, in which both Kennedy and Gov. Connally were wounded by the same bullet, thereby eliminating the need for a second gunman, thereby eliminating the need for a conspiracy. I think your single-bullet theory is probably correct, but even so, it will always be just a theory. Nobody knows for certain, and the Warren Commission's acceptance of your theory does not magically turn it into fact. Even three of the original commission members did not buy it.

But as a politician, you can't just sit back and be called a liar, especially in an election year. You must fight back. So you threaten to sue. Get off it, will you? The movie is overindulgent and paranoid. It's Oliver Stone and Jim Garrison's version of history. Who killed Kennedy? The CIA, the FBI, the Secret Service, the Pentagon, Exxon, Cuban exiles and the Russians. The only people they left out were the

Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders.

Even if Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone shooter, it will never prove beyond all doubt that he acted alone. It's open to debate, and will never be closed.

Movie-goers hear your name as part of a government cover-up, and they cheer. Are you shocked, when 75 percent of Americans believe there was a conspiracy to kill Kennedy? Or are you worried that the cheers betray a smoldering resentment of your treatment of Anita Hill, and what that could mean in the election?

Your concern about a lawsuit seems misplaced, at a time when the economy is a wreck and 1 million Pennsylvanians have no health care insurance. It cements in the public's mind the notion that politicians nowadays are more concerned with their own image than with getting a job done.

You can prove one of two things in your campaign this year: that you're concerned about America's vision of the future, or Hollywood's version of the past. Which will it be?

■ *Boyer's Neighborhood*, appears Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.