

Assassination theories don't have backing

By Joan Lenherr
Wausau Daily Herald

We don't know who shot John F. Kennedy.

We never will.

That's the contention of University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point historian David Wrone. He's spent 25 years investigating those few crucial moments in Dallas and the paper trail that followed.

None of the theories hold up, he said. The Warren Commission's report was an utter fraud.

"The federal government never investigated the murder of JFK and never intended to," he said, leaning his chair back in an office crammed full of books about Kennedy. "There's no basis to show who shot him and there never will be."

Wrone thinks politicians, lawyers and doctors used Kennedy's body as a stepping stone to higher glory, deliberately doctoring photographs and evidence to squelch the messy truth.

The Warren Commission's report is filled with lies established to support an inaccurate theory, he said. For instance, medical records show that Kennedy was shot in the back, not the neck. That wipes out the idea that a single gunshot hit both Kennedy and then Texas Gov. John Connally.

"There was more lead left in the bodies of the men than missing from the bullet (they recovered from Connally)," he said.

The bullet would have had to change direction several times in the space of inches between the two men, Wrone said.

"It's irrefutable that the damage to his (Kennedy's) body took two or more gunmen."

Wrone believes Lee Harvey Oswald was innocent. The chief witness against Oswald changed his testimony about Oswald's whereabouts after seeing television reports. Also, Oswald was seen walking on the second floor of the Texas School Book Depository less than two minutes after the shooting. FBI agents given all the help in the world, including doors held open and boxes moved, had to run like mad during a re-enactment to perform such a feat. Witnesses heard no running.

Why spend half a lifetime researching an unsolvable crime?

"That's life," Wrone said with a shrug. "I think (the assassination) is a turning point in American history. We wouldn't have been engaged in Vietnam the same way if Kennedy had lived."

'JFK' errors draw UW-SP historian's ire

By Joan Lenherr
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If you mention the Oliver Stone film "JFK" around David Wrone, a University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point historian and Kennedy assassination scholar, you'd better duck.

"Oliver Stone's (film) is one of the most perverted, lying deceptions of the public mind since the Warren Report," Wrone said, leaning in to make his fury even more apparent. "It will corrupt the public mind and he's only doing it for money and fame."

Wrone goes even farther.

"I don't think Dante's seven levels of hell will be enough to contain Stone. I think they'll need an eighth."

Wrone said Stone had ample access to "massive amounts of information and he deliberately

chose this route."

It isn't the first time Hollywood has mangled history. Doubtless it won't be the last.

"I think in general Hollywood has done a horrible job with historical films," said communication arts professor Roger Bullis. "Accuracy is not seen as being a responsibility."

In the desire to create entertainment, there's a need to create heroes whether it's deserved or not, he said.

New Orleans prosecutor James Garrison, the character at the center of Stone's film, is a good example of Hollywood creating a hero where evidence is to the contrary.

The 6-foot, 6-inch tall, gun-toting Garrison is being portrayed by ultimate Hollywood PC-man, Kevin Costner. That alone should elevate



David Wrone

Garrison's stature. That gets Wrone hopping mad.

"Garrison is a monster, validating categories for this are stupidity and lying," Wrone said. "It's the judgment of the whole DA's office who worked with him that he's trash."

Wrone called Garrison's conspiracy theories "whiskey dreams" and said his actions probably helped obliterate evidence that could have pointed to Kennedy's true assassins.

Truth isn't what sells movies.

The most popular historical drama of all time, "Gone with the Wind" is a prime example of historical fantasy, Bullis said. It pictures slaves as happy-go-lucky and prewar South as Shangri-La.

"For me, I can't look at it and not get upset," Bullis said. "They make Butterfly McQueen an utter

dingbat."

Hollywood shows the Eastern U.S. and European white man's view of history, Bullis said. Minorities and victims of history's crush rarely get screen time.

"It's kind of embarrassing to watch," Bullis said. "George Bailey's

world in 'It's a Wonderful Life' doesn't include minorities."

One thing Hollywood is good at is environmental detail. Costumes and sets for historical films are usually accurate, Bullis said.

That costs a lot of money, which is part of the reason there haven't been

many historical films in the past decade, Bullis said. It's also part of the reason facts don't get much attention.

"Is my film historically accurate?" is never a question a movie producer asks, but the question he does ask is "Can I make my \$25 million back?"

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