

EVIDENCE OF COMMERCIALIZATION AND EXPLOITATION in Oliver Stone's "JFK." 12/28/91

As soon as I knew the ^Xtile Stone gave his movie I believed he intended exploitation of the JFK assassination. This was fortified when I learned that although he has his own production company (Ixlan?) he for this film only (as I learned later) used the name "Camelot Productions," (same address as I had earlier for Alexander Kitman Ho).

Then he got into a very public fight with Dallas authorities to be able to use the Texas School Book Depository Building and to make alterations in it, including repainting it to the color of its 1963 paint. This convinced me that exploitation and commercialization, which includes the concept that it might help him and the film win additional honors, was basic to Stone. It was not necessary at all for the film.

He had less difficulty making alterations in the abandoned Texas Theater.

He began each effort with contributions, probably a polite word for bribes, \$50,000 to the historical society for doing this to the TSBD (and having the cost in both cases of ^Arestoring the building to how they looked before his changes, and \$10,000 for what he did to the theater.

The result was an extraordinary amount of publicity all tending to fix on the national mind that Stone was doing what he said, recording history, and that he was determined to be faithful to fact to the most minor detail.

Fidelity was never his intention but he kept pulling shyster tricks like this, even hiring a man who had worked for the Dallas undertaker to be a consultant and then ignoring what he advised and said.

The Philadelphia Inquirer ^{12/22/91} interview with Robert Groden at the time of the opening of the movie enabled him to prove, not realizing what he was doing, that Stone was staging a farce to commercialize and exploit the tragedy. Having made all this ~~big~~ fuss in Dallas for the deceptive and misleading publicity he got, he went to New Orleans where, Groden told the inquirer, its words,

"For JFK's scene in the emergency room of Parkland Hospital, where Kennedy was taken after the shooting (a New Orleans hospital served as the actual location) Groden supplied autopsy photographs from which Kennedy's wounded head and torso was built. 'It was so real, one of the doctors [at the hospital] mistook it for a real person.' (Groden) 'also played one of the doctors....'"

The TSBD paint color was vital to the picture but the emergency room where JFK was pronounced dead wasn't?

Groden told the Inquirer that Stone was "intrigued" with his work on the Zapruder film, especially because "(B)y slowing it down, he was able to pinpoint key frames..." This amuses me because while it is true that Groden is an authentic photo-optics expert his thinking and interest has always been conspiracy theories. It was not his idea to make a slow-motion print. He did it for me and as he worked on it came here weekends and showed me what he had done.... Note that he also says the film is history "to set the worlds straight." *He*

MOVIES

For him, 'JFK' is dream come true

Photo Inquirer 12/22/91

Robert Groden brought his assassination expertise to filming.

By Cynthia J. McGroarty

Special to The Inquirer

For Robert Groden, working on the set of Oliver Stone's new *JFK* was more than the glamorous fulfillment of a fantasy. It was the chance to set the world straight about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, an event with which Groden has been consumed for 27 years.

"We were documenting parts of American history that most people are walking away from," said Groden, a Boothwyn photo-optics technician who spent months on *JFK*'s Dallas and New Orleans sets. "It will give people a whole new feel for what went on."

In Groden's view — and in the view of director Stone — what went on in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, was a coup d'état engineered by the CIA, the FBI and the military-industrial complex, then covered up by the Warren Commission.

Before attending a screening of the movie last week, Groden, 45, recalled how he had received a call from the director early last year asking if he was interested in working on a film about the assassination. Stone had read the 1989 book Groden co-wrote, *High Treason: The Assassination of John F. Kennedy*.

The volume was the second Groden had written on the subject that has become his life's work. He began probing the assassination after he read the 1964 Warren Report and concluded it "didn't hold water."

Stone also was intrigued by Groden's enhancement of the famed Zapruder film, the home movie a bystander in Dallas' Dealey Plaza shot of Kennedy's

motorcade. Groden had obtained a copy of the film in 1966 (he won't say how), when the film still had not been publicly shown in its entirety. By slowing it down, he was able to pinpoint key frames that demonstrate the sequence of the shots and, he believes, prove that more than one gunman fired at the presidential limousine.

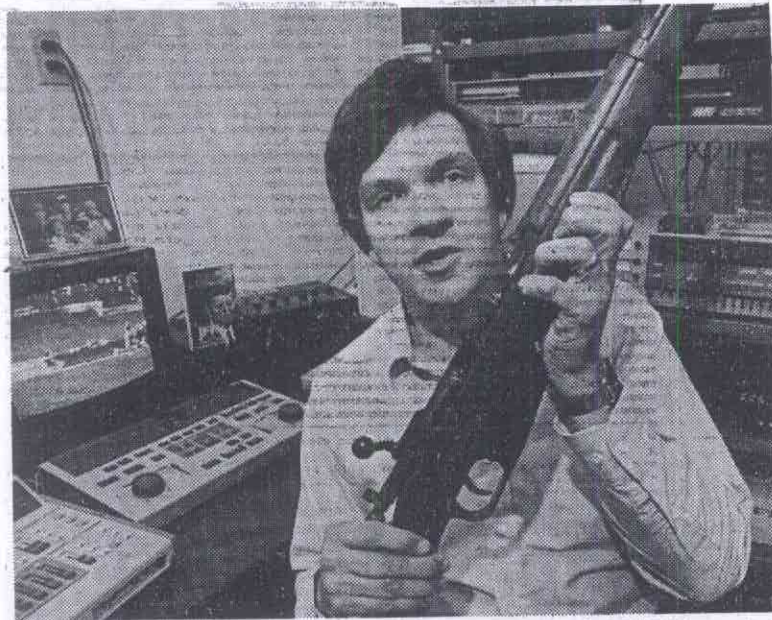
Groden's film enhancement resulted in the 1975 reopening of the investigation into the murder. And when the House Select Committee on Assassinations formed that year, Groden was appointed one of the committee's photographic consultants.

When *JFK* began shooting in the fall of 1990, Groden became a fixture on the set, consulting closely with Stone and the production crew on several scenes and garnering a few brief on-camera appearances.

"I was there in the plaza for every run-through" of the assassination, he said. "The Zapruder film was the guide, and the cues were the sounds of the shots themselves. I would stand off-camera and give cues for when the shots should be fired."

Timing was crucial to the authenticity of the scene, said Groden, who is now devoted full time to writing and lecturing on the assassination. One of his most bedeviling tasks was getting stunt men to perform their moves at precise moments: "They practiced again and again."

For *JFK*'s scene in the emergency room of Parkland Hospital, where Kennedy was taken after the shooting (a New Orleans hospital served as the actual location), Groden supplied autopsy



Robert Groden with the type of rifle allegedly used to kill Kennedy.

photographs from which a dummy of Kennedy's wounded head and torso was built. "It was so real, one of the doctors [at the hospital] mistook it" for a real person, he said. About half of the doctors in that portion of the film are actually physicians, Groden said. He also played one of the doctors, though his line was cut from the final film.

A startlingly graphic scene of the autopsy at Bethesda (Md.) Naval Hospital reveals what Groden calls "the real horror of the coverup." It was there, he believes, that military officers forbade doctors to record what they really saw: that half of the President's brain was missing from a front-entry gunshot.

JFK's New Orleans courtroom scene was Groden's "strongest contribution" to the film. In that segment, taken from court records of the Clay Shaw trial in 1968, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison (played by Kevin Costner) uses a pointer and drawing to debunk Warren Commission member Arlen Specter's "magic bullet" theory, which posits that one of three bullets fired from the Texas School Book Depository traveled circu-

itously through Kennedy and Texas Gov. John Connally.

For weeks, Groden, Stone and Costner spent part of each morning alone in the courtroom choreographing Costner's demonstration to the jury. "It was like a dream. The doors would close behind us and I'd go to a higher level of reality," said Groden, who also plays a court projectionist in the scene.

The JFK technical adviser, as he's billed in the credits, was able to bring his wife and three of his four children to New Orleans for a few weeks during filming. And though his schedule was "physically tiring," it was also exhilarating.

"You were so psyched with what you were accomplishing and what this picture would mean to history that you always had enthusiasm for the next day's shooting," he recalled.

The actors and the crew were "remarkably devoted," Groden said. And Stone was "a true gentleman dedicated to his art. . . . Oliver actually did a better investigation of the crime than the government did."