

The Nation

Dear Mr. Ligeian,

2/25/91

As I strive to do more than I am able to do at 78 and in impaired health in an effort to leave an accurate record of the JFK assassination and its investigations what I enclose relating to Cockburn's column and Stone's movie grew to greater length than I had intended - and is woefully inadequate and incomplete, so monstrous is what Stone has done.

If as I hope you ~~can~~ find interest in it, please feel free to edit and condense as you see fit. Or do anything else you'd like with it.

Believe me, it is understated!

You are welcome to copies of my correspondence with Stone and to anything else in what is now a fat file.

I want only that there be a truthful record and that those considering seeing his commercialization and exploitation have some reasonable notion of what it really is, aside from the talent with which he made it and his false representations of it.

The records I leave, about 60 files cabinets and innumerable boxes, will be a permanent public archive at local Hood College. Kai Bird and I think perhaps David Corn saw it when here to get some information for the planned book on John J. McCloy.

I am not an assassination conspiracy theorist. There is no conspiracy-theorizing in any of my seven books, six on this assassination, ~~and~~ ^{one} on Kings. They are factual, almost entirely error-free and I believe remain the basic factual books on those crimes and their investigations.

There is a truth that I intended to use and from haste and fatigue forgot: Stone is like his hero Garrison; both have difficulty telling the truth even by accident.

Can Stone have uttered a bigger lie than in repeating over and over again that all JFK assassination records are suppressed until the year 2039?

I understand that in the last minute he changed this in his movie. A friend who is a criminologist told me just this week that with great difficulty and effort he got past Stone's ~~palace~~ guard to wise him up and get him to demand the disclosure of the records of the House Select Committee on Assassinations for which he had worked. He and another friend have been campaigning for that for years and they wanted Stone's support in it.

Unlike Stone, they know very well that there is no smoking gun in those files. The ~~x~~ withholding, by the way, is not special. It is the law relating to Congressional committee records.

Their interest is in having as complete a record of how and what that committee did available to the people.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
Harold Weisberg

In "J.F.K. and JFK," his column ostensibly on the new Oliver Stone movie, that usually most perceptive of observers and commentators, Alexander Cockburn, does not distinguish between what Stone says his movie is and it actually is. This may be because Cockburn uses this column for a repetition of his oft-expressed opinion of the JFK administration ^{most of} in which he fails to recognize that for its last year the JFK administration was an entirely different one, with radically changed policies. ^{Cockburn} ~~In this~~ he beats his devil by saying ^{that} it not true but is the CIA's self-justification, that plots to assassinate Castro were "Kennedy's policy."

In announcing his movie Stone told the world that in it he would record their history for the people, telling them who killed their President, why and how. This clearly describes it as non-fiction. As recently as in his oped page article in the New York Times of the day of the film's opening, he was still referring to it as "history."

When Stone announced that he was basing his movie on Jim Garrison's "On the Trail of the Assassins," the one trail that to my personal knowledge he never followed, I wrote ^{in considerable detail} Stone based on my extensive ~~exper~~ experience with Garrison and my knowledge of that book. I told him how seriously ~~is~~ flawed and grossly dishonest that book is, that he could not possibly make an honest movie from it, and given the magnitude of the crime representative society required truth and responsibility of him and his film.

While most of the time I could spend in New Orleans was spent learning more about Oswald there came a time when it was devoted to damage control, independently and at the request of several members of his staff who were close to him. In about 4500 words I wrote Stone February 8, which was some time before he started shooting, plenty of time in which he could prepare a new script. I gave him a few examples of Garrison's overt dishonesty in rewriting his own ~~fragile~~ history of the fiasco of his baseless prosecution of Clay Shaw as co-conspirator with the late David Ferrie and Lee Harvey Oswald. On one extreme ~~it~~ it was ludicrous and on the other monstrous, what would have been another national disgrace and trivialization of the great tragedy of the JFK assassination.

Garrison planned to commemorate ^{its} the fifth anniversary of the JFK assassination by

making new charges against additional "assassins." His staff had persuaded him to reduce his ^{new} victims to two. Two of his staff asked me to try to convince him to abandon the entire insanity. I then conducted an investigation in which I was assisted by his own investigators. When it was finished I gave my investigative report, of which I still have a carbon copy along with xeroxes of some of the attached documentation, to Andrew Scianbra, known as "Moo," his most junior assistant district attorney and the one who spent most time with him.

One of the men Garrison was going to charge as a Grassy Knoll ^{ass} assassin was Edgar Eugene Bradley, then west-coast representative of the right-wing Cape May, New Jersey preacher Rev. Carl McIntire.

^{the} Garrison's "evidence" that Bradley was a JFK assassin consisted of Garrison's "identification" of him in Dallas news photos taken in front of the Texas School Book Depository as he and two other men were walked past it, escorted by two policemen and a deputy sheriff - a little more than an hour and a half after the assassination.

Garrison referred to these three men as "tramps"; ^{and Oliver Stone} persists in ^{calling} saying they were "hoboes", ^{and} in some unspecified way involved in the crime.

Investigation, never made by the famed New Orleans ^{Black} Panther, disclosed that the men were not tramps. They were winos. When after the crime the police searched the entire area they were found ^{drinking} it up in a parked railroad boxcar. This was a block west of the scene of the crime and more than two blocks south of it. They were walked ~~off the tracks~~ past the NSB because that was the only way to walk them off the railroad tracks to where the authorities could dry them out. Stone parroting Garrison, insists they were arrested and ^{that} the records of the arrest were destroyed because they, ^{too, were somehow part} were part of the all-^{encompassing} plot both ^{imagined} visualized.

Garrison ^{also} would not abandon his plan to ~~indix~~ charge Robert J. Perrin ¹⁹⁶³ as assassin. Perrin, formerly married to Nancy Perrin Rich, a Warren Commission witness, had to Garrison's knowledge, killed himself in New Orleans in 1962!

The "evidence" to back this up was produced by the late William Wood, who used the name "Bill Boxley" and who ^{was} Garrison had hired and paid from private funds. Between them

they manufactured quite a case - all false.

When Scianbra confronted Garrison with my report and its documentation Garrison had few real choices. He fired Boxley, alleging in his press release that the CIA had infiltrated him onto Garrison's staff to wreck ^{his} the investigation.

The truth, specific in the first paragraph of my report, is that Garrison cooked ~~the~~ these irrationalities up and Boxley went out and made up "proof." Boxley's real offense was an excess of loyalty to Garrison.

These are understated and condensed versions of only some of the accurate information I gave Stone in that letter. I offered him all the documentation he might want and ~~got~~ to respond to any questions he might have.

He never responded. Knowing that he was proceeding with a fraud and a travesty he made a few minor changes in the script and started shooting in Dallas in April.

Believing that so dishonest a movie, with Stone's reputation and Warner's money, would deceive and mislead more people than anything since the Warren Report, including Garrison, who was no slouch at it, when Stone did not respond and when I was given a copy of an early script, and believing also that with a good story the story would carry itself, I gave the script and access to all my relevant documentation to George Lardner, of the Washington Post. His "Dallas in Wonderland" story, completely accurate and fair, was published May 19. It was the beginning of what Stone has since ^{assailed} labelled as a CIA campaign against him, Garrison's canard to explain away his own indecency, joined in by Eastern Establishment ^{reporters} working for the CIA and somehow "recipied."

This was the beginning of Stone's ~~cut~~ successful campaign to portray himself as the victim of powerful, sinister forces in their effort to prevent his unique public presentation of his "solution" to the JFK assassination that would expose his unnamed enemies as the assassins. It was as crafty and successful as it was false and dishonest.

It all began with me. Neither the CIA nor "The Establishment" looks with favor on me.

What Cockburn was not alone in missing ^{is} Stone's unhidden intent to exploit and commercialization. ^{the crown of the century" P} Having an existing and successful production company, he ^{got it} took a special name for this movie, "Camelot Productions." It disappeared when the movie was

completed. Although the movie is not about JFK and is a fantasy about his assassination, Stone titled it "JFK." Warner Books, on paying ~~aggrisen~~ Garrison a reported \$157,500 for the right, imposed this inappropriate title on its paperback reprint.

When it was not ~~at~~ all necessary in the production of the movie Stone began a well-publicized fight in Dallas to be ~~able~~ ^{allowed} to make changes in the USBD, which had become a county building the sixth floor of which was a sort-of museum in support of the official assassination mythology. Stone began with a reported \$50,000 gift that is more of a bribe.

In the resultant publicity he ~~was~~ was portrayed to the world as a man so intent upon being completely faithful to fact about the assassination that he would go to all this cost and trouble in his determined fidelity to fact. ^{in both the most minor detail} He ever repainted, ^{it} and then repainted, ^{it again} as though the color of the building's paint made any difference at all even if his had been what he never intended and wasn't, a movie faithful to fact. He did the same thing, with less cost, to do the abandoned ^{theater} movie in which Oswald was captured, ^{over}.

Stone was Orwellian in his exploitation and commercialization of fact. On the one hand he protested loudly, in varying formulations, that the government was suppressing all its records relating to the assassination and its investigations until at the earliest the year 2039. He knew this ^{is} was as big a lie as it is a popular fiction.

He knew, for example, that by means of about a dozen Freedom of Information lawsuits I obtained about a quarter of a million pages of these supposedly suppressed records and made them available to all who write in the field. He also knew that I did not have all that were released and that ~~there was an additional~~ ^{records are} 200 cubic feet of available records in the National Archives.

^{Simultaneously} ~~at the other hand~~ he boasted that he drew for his film on all the "information" that had come to light and that in this he was assisted by a small army he described as "respected researchers." In fact most of them ^{are} were little known advocates, inventors, commercializers and adopters of the many conspiracy theories unsullied by ^{the known} established fact.

In plain English, most are nuts.

Notwithstanding the ^{your} effort to foist off on his the disgraceful concoction of one Mickey White that his dead father had been one of the assassins, Stone gave the self-

described Dallas Assassination Information Center \$80,000 to be among his "consultants."
They could not do anything for him except permit the use of their ~~unjustified~~ ^{misleading but impressive} name. The
founder, Larry Howard, boasts about never ~~reading~~ ^{having read} a book on the assassination.

If this is true he is less disqualified than the other nuts in Stone's pay!

(And the gruesome reality, after exposure of White as a ~~commercializing~~ commercializing fraud,
Stone had White plagiarized an completely impossible explanation of the killing of officer
J.D. Tippit in the early script + have. The plagiarism was ~~from~~ ^{this from} a novel! ~~at that!~~)

There is much more that is contemptible ~~and~~ -worthy, many more such indecencies, considerable
detail, and other letters to Stone in which he was informed that he was making a dishonest
movie ^{the nation as he rewrote its history,} more than enough for a fat book. ^{movie that would deceive and mislead}

Stone did not even have to buy the rights to Garrison's book. All that was in it
save its lies was already public domain. He bought the right to ~~use~~ ^{exploit} Garrison's ~~name~~, ~~another~~
~~another exploitation~~

This is a mere glimpse at what is behind the movie that Stone says expresses his
love of JFK. ^{records their history for the people and tells them who killed JFK why and how}

As I told Stone, without any exaggeration at all, as an investigator Jim Garrison
could not find pubic hair in an overused and undercleaned whorehouse - at rush hour.

And as I told an interviewer about this pair and their sycophants and hangers-on,
people who sell sex ^{are} ~~and~~ more respectable.

When the great tragedies of our history are not ^{safe} sacred, nothing is ^{safe} ~~sacred~~.