

The research community has been shocked and saddened by the loss of two prominent colleagues this year:

Bud Fensterwald, 1921 - 1991:

Bernard Fensterwald Jr., founder and head of AARC, died of a heart attack on April 2, in Washington, after a bout with the flu.

In Jim Lesar's words, "Bud was one of a kind. He gave of himself generously and faced all of life's trials and tribulations with a buoyant sense of humor. As friend and companion, advisor and confidant, he will be sorely missed by all of us." (#1991.1, mailing to AARC members.)

The Washington Post obituary summarized Bud's career in the State Department, for Sen. Estes Kefauver, and for Sen. Edward Long's committee which investigated allegedly illegal wiretapping of Jimmy Hoffa. (#2, 3 Apr) It mentioned only two of his most prominent clients, James McCord and James Earl Ray. A similar obituary ran in the New York Times. (#3, 4 Apr)

An obituary by Lesar mentioned Bud's role in writing the original Freedom of Information Act, and later using it, on behalf of Harold Weisberg and others (and in conjunction with Lesar), to obtain many government documents. (#4, May, "The Third Decade") Bud's 1975 book with Michael Ewing ("Coincidence or Conspiracy?") remains a useful reference work.

"Relying largely on his own money and services, Bud made the AARC the unique and important repository of information on political assassinations that it is today." (#1) Because of "a legal Catch 22," the money Bud left to continue AARC is not immediately available, so AARC is short of operating funds. Lesar reports that the Fensterwald family has asked that donations in Bud's memory be made to AARC.

A perceptive and informal appreciation of Bud, by Scott Van Wynsberghe, appeared in the same issue of "The Third Decade." (#5, 3 pp.) "No measure of enthusiasm, encouragement and generosity... could squelch the persistent rumors about the 'other' Fensterwald." (However, I know that some people found Bud suspicious only until they got to know him.) Van Wynsberghe attempts to reconcile various accounts of Bud's initial active interest in the JFK assassination, which came as the Garrison probe was heating up and the Long Committee's probe became entangled with the Hoffa case. He also notes the Fensterwald-Lou Russell-McCord connection which got quite a bit of attention during Watergate.

"Pretty suspicious, right? Not really, because murky affairs often cut two ways at once. In the case of the Long subcommittee, the shadow of the Teamsters did not obscure the fact that the Kennedy presidency had left a legacy of electronic abuse that was not taken seriously until the Nixon era.... Moreover, Fensterwald paid a price for his role in Sen. Long's activities," as both the FBI and CIA built up their files on him.

"Fensterwald was far from being the sinister figure described in allegations. In fact, he was a victim of sinister figures. So why did the gossip continue? Partly because he liked it that way.... [As noted in #1991.2], he 'seemed to relish the air of mystery' engendered by stories of shady liaisons with the government. Fensterwald was, in the end, a spook buff and he saw no reason why that should interfere with his parallel pursuit of assassins."

Bud certainly accumulated the most amazing list of clients - McCord, Ray, Mrs. John Paisley, Ed Wilson, Lyndon LaRouche. Peter Scott noticed years ago that if there was a pattern, it looked like right-wing people with arguably legitimate left-wing causes - people who, even if they were guilty as sin, had been singled out or pushed around by the government in ways that people of all political leanings could get upset about.

Robert Ranftel, who once worked for AARC, suggests that Bud's relationship to the buffs was analogous to George DeMohrenschildt's to Oswald: he was

wealthier, well credentialed, and well connected, and we didn't quite know why he liked us - but we were glad to have his support.

Perhaps like Garrison, or like Oswald in a "Libra"-like scenario, Bud might have been someone who got involved for external, even spooky, motives, but who eventually became an independent actor.

Bud always went out of his way to make my whole family feel comfortable in his home. I first met him in the early 1970s; after some correspondence, he invited me to stay with him during a visit to Washington. I knew only a little about his background as a Harvard-educated lawyer with Senate staff experience. He was on the phone when I arrived, and handed me the Torbitt manuscript, suggesting that I would find it interesting. An hour later, I was thoroughly puzzled - why was someone like Mr. Fensterwald, Esq., taking this sort of thing seriously?

I never figured it out, beyond convincing myself that Bud really believed in keeping the pot boiling as a vehicle for getting to the truth, and that he was not going to put his energy into discarding research (or researchers) who might be effective just because they might be wrong.

We will miss Bud's tolerant and good-humored support, and his generous hospitality.

#### Greg Stone, 1949 - 1991:

Greg Stone, a leading expert on the assassination of Sen. Robert Kennedy, died in Los Angeles in January, by his own hand. A long and sympathetic article on his life, his work, and his troubles appeared in the Los Angeles Times. (#6, 17 Feb 91, 5 pp.)

Greg and his colleagues achieved a major success a few years ago with the transfer of the LAPD files to the California State Archives, and their release in 1988. Unfortunately, Greg had very high expectations that something would happen leading to a major official re-opening. Neither medication nor the support of his friends and colleagues was able to overcome his depression.

I had only limited contact with Greg - enough to concur in the LA Times' observation that he was "universally described as self-controlled, iron-disciplined, supremely rational, brilliant, compassionate." The integrity and concern which he and a few others brought to the RFK case kept me from simply dismissing the allegations of conspiracy, and convinced me of the inadequacy of the original investigation.

The last time we talked, Greg encouraged me to write in EOC about a major article on the RFK case by Dan Moldea, published in the June 1987 issue of "Regardies." It was difficult for me to evaluate the article, which featured the first journalistic interview of security guard Thane Cesar, since it was not clear to what degree the allegations against Cesar had been laid to rest. For an impressive overview of the old and recently released evidence, see Phil Melanson's book, "The Robert F. Kennedy Assassination: New Revelations on the Conspiracy and Cover-up." (Shapolsky Publishers, 1991)

#### JFK: The Movie

In Oliver Stone's forthcoming film, Kevin ("Dances with Wolves") Costner will portray the protagonist, Jim ("Dances with Facts") Garrison.

I am concerned that the film will perpetuate the mythologizing of Garrison's work, and the ongoing victimization of the late Clay Shaw.

The movie is expected to be out around the end of the year, almost 25 years since the Shaw indictment. Shooting has already taken place, in Dallas (starting April 15), New Orleans, and Washington. (#40)

The issues involved are too complicated for me to sort out and edit down to ten pages, so this is a double issue, with many quotations. I have tried

to balance my own negative views of Garrison (and, therefore, of the prospects for the film) with comments from Stone and his supporters.

I have included ideas from various people on how to "seize the day" and influence the publicity for, and reaction to, Stone's work. I hope you will find some new material and ideas in the later sections, e.g. on Clinton and Shaw. My writing is a bit rough; I would rather gather and analyze more information than try to make smooth arguments out of what I already know. I would particularly like to hear from people who would like my help with their investigating and writing.

Many articles are not fully identified when first referred to; they are listed separately, on pages 17-20.

#### [Characters & Actors]

"Garrison... has pronounced himself well-pleased with the script.... He should be even more pleased with the casting" of Costner. (#9) Garrison indeed seemed happy when he appeared on "Inside Edition" in May (but he also looked much older than he was in 1969 - he is approaching 70). Garrison has not been quoted much recently, perhaps because of his contract with Stone, and perhaps because of rumored health problems.

Barbara Lippert suggests that "(Kevin Costner's unique talent) is in recognizing the kind of male icons we grew up with... and embracing their virtues while correcting their flaws, [which] come from the social injustices of the times in which the myths were popularized.... Thus, we get a nonsexist baseball player ('Bull Durham') and a nonracist eco-frontiersman ('Dances With Wolves').... It's a brilliantly nonthreatening way of keeping the archetypes intact while adding emotion, spirituality and even, for the audience, absolution." (#48) It might be possible to fit into this pattern a Jim Garrison who symbolizes the anti-government and anti-war Sixties, and whose flaws are not in his character or in his investigative skills, but are instead the makings of Shakespearean tragedy.

The cast includes Joe Pesci (portraying David Ferrie), Sissy Spacek (Elizabeth [Mrs. Jim] Garrison), Jodi Farber (Jackie Kennedy), Steve Reed (John Kennedy), Gary Oldman (Lee Oswald), Brian Doyle-Murray (Jack Ruby), and Tommy Lee Jones (Clay Shaw). Actors unofficially linked to the film whose roles I do not know include Ed Asner, Kevin Bacon, John Candy (Dean Andrews, I guess), Glenn Ford, Sally Kirkland, John Larroquette, Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Michael Rooker, and Donald Sutherland. An AIC press release, quoted in the Grassy Knoll Gazette, includes Lolita Davidovich as Beverly Oliver (who claims to be the Babushka Lady). (Sources include #15 and #49.)

It is rumored that at least one researcher is portrayed. There may be roles for Henry Cabot Lodge and Edward Lansdale, and "a small and unfavorable portrait of [Kerry] Thornley." (#28)

Garrison himself has a small role, as Earl Warren. Unintentionally, this is not just an ironic touch: the actions of both men did much to discourage or co-opt other investigations.

#### [Sources, Themes, Consultants]

The primary source is Jim Garrison's book, "On the Trail of the Assassins." (For a review which only touches on some of the outrageous arguments, see 11 EOC 1, pp. 3-6.) Zachary Sklar, who edited the book, is a co-author of the screenplay, along with Stone. (#15)

The film is not the Garrison story, Stone says. Nonetheless, Garrison's book will be retitled "JFK" when reissued in paperback. (#35) The film "does use the Garrison investigation as the vehicle to explore the various credible assassination theories, and incorporates everything that has been discovered in the 20 years since Garrison's efforts." (#10)

Stone will take an artistically licentious approach to details. "He has created composite characters from several real-life figures and events have

been condensed, but anything speculative, Stone says, is identified as such and shot in sepia tones to distinguish it from the rest. 'I take a "Rashomon" approach, showing multiple scenarios - Oswald as guilty; Oswald as innocent,' Stone says." (Not, I guess, Oswald as the lone assassin.) (#15) Stone says he is "using Garrison as a metaphor for all the credible researchers." But as George Lardner responded, "it's intrinsically illogical to take a real event, twist it, and describe it as a metaphor for truth." (#63)

Consultants include Gary Shaw, Larry Harris, and Larry Howard (all of the AIC in Dallas), and Robert Groden. Jim Leavelle of the DPD is a technical adviser. (#16) Jim Marrs' work is being used. (#38)

In an interview with the Dallas Morning News, Stone mentions the work of a number of researchers favorably, in addition to those consultants and Marrs - Fletcher Prouty, Sylvia Meagher, Cyril Wecht, photoanalyst Tom Wilson, Tony Summers, and Harold Weisberg. He has apparently talked to some of those people. He also mentioned talking with Beverly Oliver, John Connally, Madelyn Brown ("a friend of Lyndon Johnson"), and "a guy named Ron Lewis, who knew Oswald very well." (I do not know who Ron Lewis is.) (#16)

Early this year, Stone showed some interest in acquiring the rights to Meagher's book from Greg Stone.

Stone's people met with Ricky White; his story was reportedly rejected, but a White-like scenario for the death of Tippit (killed by Badgeman, the knoll assassin) was in an early script provided to George Lardner. (#9)

Stone may have talked with Perry Russo, who was willing to talk to one buff recently and may still have revealing things to say.

Aubrey Rike is a consultant - perhaps because he put JFK in the Dallas casket, and not because of the importance of his testimony to Lifton's case for a casket switch.

Robert Spiegelman, a professor of mass communications and sociology, is one of Stone's "technical advisors," and a supporter: "This outcry [against Stone] is a continuation of the assault on the 'L-word,' the liberal values and tradition which Camelot and Kennedy - and these days Oliver Stone - symbolize, and it constitutes a very dangerous precedent." (#15)

[Should our criticism be deferred?]

Mary Ferrell, a leading Dallas critic, has circulated a "Dear Fellow Researcher" letter saying that "it ill behooves the critical community to detract from Mr. Stone's efforts, particularly before we know the true contents of his production." (22 Jun, #17, 2 pp., including a letter to me (13 Jul), in which Mary explains that she did not intend to cause problems among the researchers. She did not intend criticism of Weisberg (for his assistance to Lardner); she may well not like the finished movie but objects to pre-release reviews.)

The propriety of drawing conclusions from a script, or writing about it, is arguable, and does not need attention here. (I have not seen any of the script myself.) In any case, we certainly can debate what Stone has said about his film and about Garrison, and discuss Garrison's investigation in light of the attention it will get.

I am not at all persuaded by Mary's claim that "recent attacks on Oliver Stone in Time magazine and in the Washington Post are ample proof that the forces who trained their guns on District Attorney Jim Garrison in the late 1960s are hard at work again."

The "Time" and "Post" articles are too substantive to be written off like that. It is noteworthy, I concede, that Jack Valenti (former LBJ enthusiast and now head of the Motion Picture Association) has already said some silly things. He would be "extremely concerned" if the film were based on the Garrison book, which he called "a piece of trash... and flim-flammy.... I personally knew every member of the Warren Commission from Earl Warren on down. They were men of extraordinary integrity and no one in the world can

convince me otherwise." (#50) Ironically, in presenting Garrison and his times to us, Stone may be trying to emulate Boswell on Dr. Samuel Johnson, but he risks sounding like Jack Valenti praising Lyndon Johnson.

It is not fair to criticize Stone's film as a film until it is released. But his comments on Garrison and other aspects of the case are fair game. Commenting on the work of the Warren Commission and the HSCA before their reports were finished did not give us much pause.

That Stone has even considered some of the craziness that got into the obsolete screenplay tells us something. If we hold our comments until the film opens, we will be competing with a major publicity blitz.

For example, the report that Stone has gone so far as to cast an actress for the Beverly Oliver role justifies a response. Jim Marrs' book, unfortunately, just repeats her story without any critical comment. The HSCA's failure to mention her in its final report is tossed in as if it were another suspicious HSCA coverup. At this point, I know of no reason to believe even Oliver's claim that she was in Dealey Plaza.

"As an actor," Costner says, "I object to the press revealing plot developments, printing entire speeches. I want to perform Garrison's closing argument in its virginal form so people can be moved by it - or think it's bullshit." As an actor, of course, Costner is entitled to manipulate audience reaction, and to make the audience focus on his character and his struggle, not the factual context. (#15)

In a letter to "Time," Stone asked, "After 25 years, don't our movie, JFK, and Garrison deserve a serious and fresh hearing, not old attitudes?" (#14) He has a point about the still-unfinished movie. Garrison, however, has had several chances to come up with a serious factual case - against Clay Shaw, against LBJ, whatever - and it has been clear that he can not deliver.

I do not want to overemphasize the parts of Lardner's article dealing with the early script. After reporting on it, I will try to focus my critique on Stone's own comments and Garrison's record.

#### [Highlights of the debate in the press]

The dispute over Garrison and Stone which had been simmering among people familiar with the case was brought to the fore in an article by George Lardner in the Washington Post on May 19. Entitled "On the Set: Dallas in Wonderland," it is based in part on an early script obtained from Harold Weisberg.

Lardner, who covered Garrison (as well as the HSCA), is blunt in his current evaluation: Garrison's investigation was "a fraud." "All the hoopla, of course, will obscure the absurdities, and palpable untruths in Garrison's book and Stone's rendition of it."

Lardner focuses on two matters where he has almost first-hand knowledge: the death of David Ferrie and the testimony of Perry Russo. In light of Russo's credibility problems, and Garrison's dubious handling of him, his complete omission from the script "is certainly a convenient device." (Stone said later that he is part of a composite character. (#59)

"How does Oliver Stone explain [the quick acquittal of Shaw] and still make it a heroic Garrisonian struggle against the feds?.... The movie needed a villain to explain it away, a double agent on the DA's staff.... In Oliver Stone's script, Bill Boxley [a.k.a. Wood] is depicted as an insidious insider who keeps scoffing at the idea of a conspiracy on the part of [the] intelligence community. At one point, Boxley tells Garrison he could buy the idea that the Mafia did it 'a hell of a lot easier.'" This is reminiscent of Garrison's "false sponsor" rhetoric. (See 9 EOC 3.9) (Boxley also serves as an excuse for Charles Spiesel's bizarre testimony.)

"What Garrison didn't say then [when he fired Boxley]... was that he was, with Boxley's help, about to indict... a man who had committed suicide in August 1962," Robert L. Perrin. "The DA's regular staff, alarmed that their boss was about to blow himself out of the water, tried to talk him out of it,

but all they could do was win a delay and appeal to Weisberg for help." Vincent Salandria accompanied Weisberg to New Orleans and convinced Garrison, apparently without direct evidence, that Boxley was a CIA infiltrator.

A rebuttal by Stone appeared in the June 2 edition (#10), accompanied by a response from Lardner (#11). Stone is particularly offended by Lardner's use of the first draft of a copyrighted script, and by his exposure of the ending. Stone is Garrisonian in tone - the rhetoric sounds good, especially if you do not know the facts well enough. "The Washington Post, and Lardner in particular, have stood by in silence while the CIA and FBI have allowed evidence of a crime and historical documents significant to our history to be stolen or destroyed. It is as hard for me to understand The Post's silence as it is to understand Lardner's attack on an entertainment project."

"We can only hope that the free thinkers in the world, those with no agenda, will recognize our movie as an emotional experience that speaks a higher truth than the Lardners of the world will ever know." When I hear anyone talking about a higher truth, I worry about his approach to facts, especially annoying ones.

Stone gives an unconvincing defense of his version of the facts on such matters as the tramp photos, the acoustical evidence, and Pershing Gervais. For example, Lardner criticizes the script for showing Ferrie murdered (by two of the gunmen, in fact). Stone's rebuttal notes that Lardner "claims he left" Ferrie alive at 4 a.m., and that the HSCA "heard testimony" about Ferrie's CIA and Cuban links. Lardner wonders if Stone is "suggesting that I interviewed a dead man." In fact, Stone has darker suspicions; elsewhere, he referred to Lardner as a "CIA agent-journalist" (#12). I heard that this allegation was retracted, but that is clearly the way Stone and Garrison think about some of their critics.

To my surprise, Lardner stands by the HSCA's acoustical evidence as "more plausible than any of the criticisms," including that of the Ramsey Panel. He correctly disputes Stone's claim of acoustical evidence for six shots, an uncommon misunderstanding of the HSCA's screening tests which seems to come straight from Ch. 12 of "High Treason." This suggests that Groden's influence on Stone is strong.

Stone makes some revealing comments in response to a non-hostile interviewer for "Lagniappe," the entertainment magazine of the New Orleans Times-Picayune. (#12)

It is clear from his general comments that he does indeed often think in cinematic terms - he really is a director, not journalist or a lawyer, and (unlike Garrison) he has some excuse for not being skeptical enough. He may not appreciate how much unverified junk on the JFK case has been published.

"More than once, Stone alludes to highly placed enemies bent on sabotaging his film projects for political reasons.... 'Politically, it's been weird (since) 'Born on the Fourth of July,'" he says... I (still) see this (business of) trying to politicize me as a filmmaker, when my main concern as an artist - you may not believe this - is to be a good dramatist."

Stone is critical of Alan Parker for giving undue credit to the FBI in "Mississippi Burning," "but," he says, "I don't see how you can accuse me of that (kind of distortion)."

He is, I think, quite wrong about the relationship between Garrison and the critical movement. He makes it clear that he does not begrudge Garrison the spotlight he barged into. "Jim Garrison was the only person ever to bring official charges in the case, thereby throwing a hook of doubt into the official Warren Commission explanation.... Other researchers were there - Mark Lane and those people - and they did a good job. But they never could get that publicity and that national attention that Garrison got when he brought official charges."

The "Cinema" section of "Time" ran an article based on a copy of the script, with references to Lardner's article. "Garrison is considered

somewhere near the far-out fringe of conspiracy theorists, but Stone appears to have bought his version virtually wholesale.... In the early draft..., we learn that Oswald was just a pawn in an elaborate plot that ranged from seedy gay bars in the French Quarter to the corridors of power in Washington." In this account, the coalition of culprits includes the Mafia. "In a key scene, the crusading D.A. has a rendezvous in Washington with a mysterious unnamed figure who describes how security for the President's visit to Dallas was slackened. It was all part of a plot, he tells Garrison, to eliminate Kennedy and put Lyndon Johnson in office so that the Vietnam War could be escalated. 'This was a military-style ambush from start to finish,' Garrison tells his staff later...." (#13)

David Belin "calls the script 'a bunch of hokum.'" Weisberg calls it "'a travesty' that dredges up bogus theories and unfounded speculation," e.g. about the three tramps and the last-minute motorcade route change. (See 11 EOC 1.6 on the route change.) "Stone, with some justification, has objected to his film's being dissected even before it is finished.... (The Ferrie murder scene, for example, has been eliminated.) Stone compares the Post's attack on his film to the Hearst newspapers' efforts to suppress Citizen Kane five decades ago.... 'I'm not making this film for money,' the director says.... 'I want to pay homage to J.F.K., the godfather of my generation.' But if his film turns out to distort history, he may wind up doing more harm than homage to the memory of the fallen President." (#13)

In response to Stone and Costner, Lardner said, "My story is a public service and if Stone were truly interested in accuracy, he should be grateful." (#15)

[History or dramatization?]

"This isn't history; this is moviemaking. I'm not setting out to make a documentary," Stone told Aubrey Rike when he pointed out minor (and irrelevant) factual errors in a Parkland scene. (#15) "It does not purport to 'solve' this murder mystery." (#10)

Joe Bob Briggs must be one of the CIA agent-journalists ganging up on Stone. He mocks Stone's apparent desire to have it both ways: "I don't think the whole story has been told, but, after all, we're just making movies here. Are you CIA? I don't think this is a valid issue to be discussed in the press. Marina Oswald's KGB contact has, however, been following me for 12 years." (#58)

Stone's position may be disingenuous in another way: unlike many dramatizations, there may be very little in "JFK" which is clearly fiction. I fear that all the speculative scenarios will be ones which have been presented elsewhere as factual. The Marrs book is certainly full of allegations which are so tenuous that even the author draws back from them.

Appearing on "Personalities," David Lifton noted, based on his mail, that the public wants "closure" and will expect truth from the film. Indeed, consultant Larry Howard of the AIC said that "Since we may never be able to get the case in court again, this film may have to be the historical record of what really happened in Dallas on November 22, 1963."

As drama, the film will be formed by Stone's view of the historical truth: "For me, the key event [of the Sixties] is the Kennedy assassination. Anyone who believes that Oswald was the lone assassin is doomed to sleepwalk through his or her entire life." (#32) "'No American believes Oswald shot the President,' [Stone] asserts. 'The Warren Commission was bunk.'" (#8)

[Stone as film maker and Garrison fan]

Stone's view of history gives Garrison an honored place. The extent of Stone's criticism may be that Garrison made mistakes - which is basically Garrison's own line, if it means that he trusted the wrong people and failed to spot infiltration and disinformation directed at his investigation.

By linking the film with Garrison in a single plea for a "serious and

fresh hearing," Stone tends to undercut his emphasis elsewhere on the "dramatization" aspect of his work.

On the positive side, Stone is concerned about accuracy. He hopes to be remembered as "a good historian as well as a good dramatist." (#7) This quote is from a sympathetic profile of Stone (who is now 44), focusing on his background (Establishment, Yale), his Vietnam experience (infantry), and his left-liberal politics ("Stone is prone to making speeches that sometimes leave his colleagues in Hollywood nervous or annoyed.") His previous films ("melodramas for the masses") and scripts, for which he has won three Oscars, include "Platoon," "Born on the Fourth of July," "Midnight Express," "Wall Street," "Salvador," "Talk Radio," and "The Doors." "Pulpy, acerbic, tough, broadly entertaining, they have been criticized by some reviewers for a lack of subtlety and humor and an underlying machismo."

Any filmmaker aiming for accuracy risks diverting that concern into Ruby's-mother's-dental chart details. Stone worked hard to get access to the sixth floor of the TSBD, not just the seventh. "It's always better to be accurate if you can.... I really think it makes a difference from the exterior angles." (#16) "Stone restored the Texas Theater... and altered the facade [of the TSBD].... He hired a landscaping company to cut nearly 30 years' growth off the live oak trees beside the building and even changed the street signs to 1960s-style lettering." (#40) The motorcade itself was carefully re-enacted.

Unfortunately, Stone, like Garrison, is inclined to over-use his considerable rhetorical skills. Many of us excused that in 1967, as Garrison reached out to a skeptical audience, and we expected (wrongly) that enough supporting facts would eventually be presented.

Columnist Jon Margolis "called Stone a 'man who sees conspiracies everywhere' and dismissed the bulk of his movies as the product of 'simple-mindedness.... There is a point at which intellectual myopia becomes morally repugnant.'" (Quoted in #15 from a Chicago Tribune article I do not have.)

From my own viewpoint as an analyst, Stone's approach to a solution is stunningly backwards: "I think 'why' is a very important question. I think that people always get off the track with 'who' and 'how.'... If you understand 'why' he was killed, then you begin to understand 'who' and how.'... I don't have a documentarian's responsibilities. I have a dramatist's responsibilities to an audience." (#16)

Stephen Talbot has written perceptively about Stone's fact-based work: "Whether he likes it or not, Stone has become a de facto historian for a generation whose ideas and views are increasingly shaped by movies and TV.... He sometimes jeopardizes his own credibility when he reshapes the facts into a dramatic structure.... I get queasy when Stone says that he feels free to alter facts as long as he doesn't 'violate the spirit' of a real event.... [As a Sixties person himself,] Stone, I think, must be held to a higher standard of honesty and accuracy." "The power of the media to define and redefine reality is nearly godlike. Stone knows it, and he wants to use it to his advantage." "'I'm trying to reshape the world through movies.'" (#8)

"Stone identifies closely with his protagonists, as they struggle with their personal demons, torn between self-destruction and salvation." "[Jim Morrison] had the obsessive energy typical of all Stone's main characters."

Stone allegedly "refuses to renounce marijuana and psychedelics. He says that drugs have played an 'ambivalent' role in his life, stimulating his creativity and threatening his health." (I know of no curiosity about Oswald's possible interest in LSD, however.)

Other writers on film or politics must have made relevant observations about the role of popular culture in shaping perceptions of historical events, or about the standards to which "docudrama" should be held. If you know of any comments that might be useful when the film comes out, please share them.



["JFK" and public opinion on Vietnam]

The film will probably have more impact on public opinion on the assassination than any book published in years. In addition, it may well stimulate a revival of the important debate on the origins and escalation of the Vietnam War. However, there is reason for concern that it will also distort that debate, by predisposing people to assume a connection between any policy changes after the assassination and the intent of the assassin(s).

Lardner attacks Stone's interpretation vigorously, but not quite persuasively. "Since this is Oliver Stone, the 'why' of the assassination should come as no surprise. It's Vietnam, of course. In a peroration that might have been written by Garrison himself, DA Costner assails the murder as 'a coup d'etat' - hold your breath - ordered up by 'a shadow government consisting of corrupt men at the highest levels of the Pentagon, the intelligence establishment and the giant multinational corporations,' carried out by elements of the intelligence community and covered up 'by like-minded individuals in the Dallas Police Department, the Secret Service, the FBI and the White House - all the way up to and including J. Edgar Hoover and Lyndon Johnson, whom I consider accomplices after the fact.'" (#9)

"The screenplay ends the Sunday Oswald was killed with a White House scene of Johnson meeting with his Vietnam advisors. 'He signs something unseen' and tells them: 'Gentlemen, I want you to know I'm personally committed to Vietnam. I'm not going to take one soldier out of there till they know we mean business in Asia.'"

"That is nonsense. In a memo LBJ signed after that Sunday meeting, he explicitly stated that the 1,000-troop withdrawal would be carried out. And it was. There was no abrupt change in Vietnam policy after JFK's death."

In rebuttal, Stone charges Lardner with misinterpreting, if not misquoting, NSAM 273. Stone notes that, according to a book by William Gibbons, "the withdrawal of 1,000 troops was achieved on paper only, by 'juggling the figures to make it look like there were 1,000 fewer men.'" (#10)

In response, Lardner says that NSAM 273 includes an endorsement of the objectives of JFK's statement of October 2. "Historian Gibbons told me the withdrawal did take place and was offset in succeeding months." He says Kennedy would have done the same thing; the withdrawal was a device to put pressure on the South Vietnamese. "'Any thought that it had anything to do with getting out, withdrawing entirely,' Gibbons said, 'is absurd.'" (#11)

The Vietnam issue is too important, and too complicated, to be debated primarily in the context of a possible motivation for the assassination. It is a long stretch from the existence of an actual reversal after the assassination to a plausible case that the reversal was the goal of an assassination conspiracy. There is a risk of giving the 1,000-troop withdrawal too much weight, whether it happened or not. There were so many forces in play both before and after the assassination that the risk of fallacious logic is high.

I think this question was dealt with in an appropriately tentative way in Peter Dale Scott's 1972 essay (reprinted in "The Assassinations"), when NSAM 273 was unavailable. I understand that important documents relevant to this issue have been released, and more attention by historians can be expected. I am not familiar with the facts; I have only a sense of the difficulty of the issues - for example, determining JFK's intentions when they may have been ambiguous in his own mind.

Attributing LBJ's Vietnam escalation to a conspiracy, for which only a small group was responsible, is in some ways an easy answer for the nation. That is no reason to rule out the possibility, but it does call for careful analysis, starting with an attempt to define the questions and decide what kind of evidence can be given weight. I think that JFK was quite capable of saying different things about his goals to different people.

Stone might be right on this important point. We should wait and see.

[More thoughts on the impact of the film]

This movie may be a \$35 million gorilla: whatever Stone chooses to emphasize - on the screen, in his publicity, or in his statements about how the case should be pursued - his views will have a major impact.

Ferrell says that "If Oliver Stone's efforts cause massive attention to be focused on the John F. Kennedy assassination, our interests will be well served." I hope to encourage even Garrison's supporters to question the assumption that any attention generated by Stone will automatically serve our interests. If it is possible to channel some new energy productively, fine; otherwise, exactly what do we gain?

Lardner quotes Henry Wade as comparing the film to "Executive Action" (1973) which did not make much of a splash - thanks to the good sense of the American public, Wade says. (#9) More to the point, Watergate was starting to heat up, and soon it was clear that a real investigation, not a movie, was the way to look for the truth. In today's quite different atmosphere, using "JFK" to generate progress on the case will be a challenge.

Stone's "Wall Street" may lack subtlety, but could still provoke an interesting discussion about what was behind the fictional action on screen. In the case of "JFK," however, encouraging more speculation about the facts of an actual event such as the assassination can have its disadvantages.

Is all publicity good publicity? For Stone, maybe; for the case, I think not. If people have not already been drawn into the case by "Conspiracy" and "Best Evidence" and "Accessories" and the other good books, what kind of role will they play in the critical community?

Carl Oglesby, who is working on a piece for the Boston Globe, said that "the debate... is bound to escalate. 'What we're seeing is the beginning of an enormous row on the level of popular culture,' he says. 'After all these years, the question of who killed John Kennedy is still a very impassioned one, and people, setting themselves up as experts, are saying that it can't be addressed from certain standpoints. But since the government, thus far, hasn't told the truth, artists have to fill in the blanks.'" (#15)

The possibility exists of damage to other film projects. Stone has reportedly "signed a horde of witnesses and researchers to exclusive contracts." (#15) In his defense, it has been said that those contracts only prohibit people from talking about his project, not from working elsewhere. However, at least one Texas documentary filmmaker has experienced difficulties attributed to Stone's contracts.

"Time" reports that "according to Hollywood sources, the director has worked hard to block a movie based on Don DeLillo's 1988 book, Libra." Stone says that this suggestion is "outrageous." (#13-14) A later report says "Libra" will be made, under John Malkovich's direction. (#62) It could be a very good film, if it reflects the book's sensitivity to the ambiguity of the evidence in this case, and of motive.

[Thoughts about influencing Stone]

Those of us who have something to say to Stone should do so. It may still be possible for outsiders to affect Stone's editing. It is certainly not too late to have an impact on the studio's publicity for the film.

Stone's research coordinator, Jane Rusconi, has a rather good grasp of the case, and understands why Garrison has been controversial.

Stone and his staff have sometimes replied to letters from buffs. Rusconi told me that comments should be directed to Camelot Productions, 916 San Vicente Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90402 (213-451-4300); they will be read.

There may be major changes during editing. "The script is so big," Stone said in April. (#16) "Right now it looks like a three-hour movie."

"Costner maintains that there have been substantial changes since the early days. 'I've seen Oliver erase a lot of things that didn't turn out to

be true, kill a lot of [scenes he was fond of] and took a long time to create." (#15) In June, Judy Stone (sister to Izzy, not Oliver) wrote that "reporters noticed that Costner seemed on edge last Sunday when he was given more page revisions from Stone who has been changing the script as his controversial production proceeds." (#52)

Those sympathetic to Stone as a committed artist can hope that he will not stumble on this one. Unfortunately, he is starting to sound as put-upon as Garrison. On "Time": "There's an agenda here. Let's not be naive. They're the Establishment, Doberman pinschers trained to protect the government." (#15) Elsewhere: "And (I'm afraid) all the Garrison-bashers and all the CIA agent-journalists... will wheel out [their] old, conservative George Wills to smash Garrison again and try to keep the lie going.... In 2039, when we get in [to the WC files?], they'll have absconded with all the secrets anyway, as they already have with the brain." (#12)

It could be worth trying to discourage any tendency Stone has towards paranoia, and to remind him that dissent among students of the case, especially about Garrison, is legitimate and widespread.

Although he can not back down very far, Stone still ought to hear contrary views of Garrison, even very harsh ones. On "Personalities", James Phelan said it was hard to see Garrison as a tragic figure when he "took an innocent man and destroyed him with his own obsessions," and Lifton called him "intellectually dishonest, a reckless prosecutor, and a total charlatan."

Garrison, like Earl Warren, needed to be challenged more strongly by those who worked in limited areas but developed reasons to suspect that, overall, things were not quite right. (I regret that I said little during the Garrison probe. My only regular contact in his office was Tom Bethell, who did not defect until the trial neared.)

Sometimes Stone suggests that Garrison's mistakes were just tactical: "he had hubris, he had arrogance, he was blind like King Lear was blind, and he trusted too many people. All over the book, you'll see those mistakes. The question that we had as filmmakers, is do we dramatize all the mistakes, and show him in a realistic light, or do we, in that time period, forget the mistakes and get on with the larger story, which is why Kennedy was killed, and how we think it was done, and who did it? Which is a larger issue than Jim Garrison's mistakes." I can see why Garrison would think it is. (#12)

However, remarks published in June suggest that Stone can still back away from his endorsement of Garrison's conclusions: "Though Garrison's theories are riddled with mistakes, I admire his argument and courage." (#15) Maybe some reporters reading this will ask what mistakes in particular Stone is aware of. Perhaps Stone will realize that the way Garrison reached his mistake-riddled theories demonstrates that his arguments were bad, and that courage alone is not enough to make a District Attorney admirable.

#### [Time to focus on the HSCA files]

Researchers can certainly hope to educate and influence the media, both now and when the film appears. If you have relevant information or analysis, let people know. As discussed below, I am inclined to focus on the Shaw case. The unjustified prosecution of a closeted homosexual is an offense people are probably more sensitive to now than in 1969.

Kevin Walsh has suggested to Stone and Lardner that attention be paid to the HSCA files which are still withheld. "We do rely on bits and pieces of information because so much is locked up.... You both could help fix this problem. Again, I appeal to you to use your considerable stature and audience interest to have HSCA records released in our lifetimes." (Letter to Stone, 25 Apr, 2 pp., #18; to Lardner and Stone, 21 Jun, #19)

Stone seems to share the common misconception that key Warren Commission files were locked up by LBJ for 75 years. I would like to see the small fraction of WC documents which are still withheld, but the HSCA files would be

much more productive for serious investigation and analysis.

I suggest supporting Kevin's efforts; write him at the Association for Advancement of Historical Research, P.O. Box 15232, Washington, DC 20003.

One note of caution: many FBI and CIA records which were given to the HSCA have been released under FOIA, but they have not been reviewed, listed, or indexed as much as they deserve. AARC has plenty of this material. A small fraction of the cost of Stone's film could fund a research project which would at the very least shoot down many of the wilder allegations and allow future investigators to focus their work more effectively. Productive document research does not need to await the release of more files.

[Investigative opportunity #1 - Clinton in context]

When pressed on specific valuable evidence coming from Garrison's investigation, his supporters often bring up the Clinton witnesses. Along with the Permindex connection, they provided the best support for the belief that Shaw had an active secret political life. Both matters seem ripe for further scrutiny, especially by reporters who can go after original sources.

If the Clinton witnesses were truthful, they also represent Garrison's most substantive original contribution to the body of evidence about Oswald: that he was in the company of David Ferrie and Clay Shaw when he tried to register to vote a couple of months before the assassination. Whether or not the Clinton incident is in the film - I can not be sure - I would like to know the true story.

The HSCA referred simply to "a voter registration drive," but the reality was a bitter struggle marked by official and unofficial intimidation and red-baiting of the disenfranchised blacks and their white supporters. The Clinton story needs to be thought through, with that context in mind.

My comments here assume some familiarity with the basic story. Refer to the HSCA report (pp. 142-5), Ch. 19 of "American Grotesque," and pp. 105-9 of Garrison's book. My earlier analysis of Clinton (based in part on Larry Haapanen's observations and the book "Southern Justice") appeared in 3 EOC 7, pp. 3-5, also available as #1991.20.

We know so little that the range of plausible explanations is unusually broad - from Oswald actually roaming around for some reason of his own (or of his handlers), to the whole story being created from next to nothing by someone who thought he was doing Garrison a favor.

Viewed as a true story, there are problems of logic and motivation. Try thinking about the actions of Oswald and each of the people he encountered. Oswald supposedly wanted a job at the Jackson hospital, went to a barber who referred him to State Rep. Reeves Morgan, and then contacted Morgan. The barber and Morgan both suggested it would help if he were registered to vote, which Oswald tried to do - accompanied by the conspicuous Shaw and Ferrie, in a conspicuous car. Did anyone think Oswald, a nonresident, could register? He was turned down, of course, as the registrar testified. He applied for the job anyway, but the application disappeared, after being seen in 1964.

Garrison has no problem making sense of this - it was "another touch of sheepdipping." But couldn't the CIA just have gotten him the job? Garrison suggests that the CORE drive - which made Oswald so conspicuous to several observers - was a fortunate coincidence. I suspect that, if anything like this incident happened, it was about CORE and its friends. As noted in 3 EOC 7 (and in Hurt, p. 295), I would not be surprised to learn that people like Banister were trying to link people like Oswald to CORE.

How trustworthy is Garrison's work with these witnesses? His book says that Clinton marshal John Manchester had the limousine's license plates checked by the state police, and learned that the car was registered to Shaw's International Trade Mart. It is hard enough to believe that a sensitive operation used an easily traceable car, but the truth is even worse: Manchester testified that he approached the driver to get an identification,

and that "he said he was a representative of the International Trade Mart in New Orleans." (6 Feb 69 testimony, p. 60; #21.)

Some suspicion has been voiced that at least some of the Clinton witnesses said what they had been pressured to say. The ethnic diversity of the witnesses may mean less than some people thought, given the situation of the blacks. Hugh Aynesworth's inquiries, reported by Kirkwood, concluded that some witnesses were intimidated and others were unreliable. I am afraid I would not put it past Garrison's office to refresh their memories too effectively. As far as I know, they were not hypnotized.

As an example of the unexplored context: the day before the assassination, a Louisiana court was looking into allegations that CORE was involved in "perjury, criminal anarchy, extortion, subversive activities," and so on. Among those testifying were Emmett Collins (father of Clinton witness Corrie), Clinton registrar Henry Palmer, and Rep. Morgan. Before deciding to believe the Clinton witnesses, should we not know what that case was all about?

There has been much comment on the absence of the Mafia from Garrison's otherwise far-reaching conspiracy scenario. Another suspect which got much vague attention in the sixties, but which also gets short shrift in Garrison's model, is the Southern anti-integrationist movement. Kennedy was widely hated in New Orleans and Dallas as a race-mixer - that is evident from the Times-Picayune when Oswald was reading it. Segregation was certainly a major concern of Banister and many of the people of Clinton.

By focusing on the Feds, Garrison's investigation appealed both to the left and to anti-Federal feeling in New Orleans. It may have had the effect of distracting us not just from the Mafia but from vicious segregationists of the sort that the HSCA focused on in the King case.

Guy Banister's involvement in the linked anti-Communist and anti-integration movements goes back for years, and deserves systematic scrutiny. A tidbit uncovered by J. P. Shinley: In the spring of 1956, when Oswald was working in New Orleans as a tenth-grade dropout (WR 680), hearings were held there by James Eastland's Senate Internal Security Subcommittee. They were preceded by a raid on the home of Hunter P. (Jack) O'Dell, a "Negro seaman" later branded (along with Stanley Levison) as a key Communist adviser to Martin Luther King. The assistant police chief, who called his take "the finest collection of Communist literature in the South that I have ever seen or heard of," was Guy Banister. The NOTP carried a photo of Banister posing with some of that literature, including the Worker. (#22, 31 Mar 56)

O'Dell was "exposed" as a Communist around the time Oswald was making noises about finding a communist cell to join. (William Wulf, 8 WCH 18; see Oswald's Game, pp. 64-65.) I would guess that, as a sometime New Yorker, Oswald felt a bit like a Yankee outsider, and even in 1956 he was probably well to the left of most of his friends on the integration question.

Unfortunately, the HSCA did not settle the Clinton issue. The Committee believed the Clinton witnesses, and treated them as important because they established a post-defection Oswald-Ferrie link. (There is much less other serious evidence of that than is generally believed.) The HSCA danced around the Shaw-Banister issue: Oswald was in Clinton with Ferrie "if not Clay Shaw." The report noted, but not emphatically enough, that the FBI found no record of a call from Morgan, the only witness who claimed to have reported his Oswald sighting right after the assassination.

In this context, it is particularly unfortunate that the HSCA did not present any of the Clinton witnesses in public session, and did not even publish any of their testimony. I fear that part of the reason is that the questioning was not as critical as it should have been, perhaps subconsciously to avoid having to throw out the Oswald-Ferrie baby with the Shaw bathwater.

Perhaps the HSCA obtained the FBI's files on CORE in Clinton, the Clinton witnesses, and Banister. Some of those files might have been released - and they might be sitting, mostly unread, in the AARC offices.

Another place to look would be in the released (and microfilmed) FBI files from the time of the Shaw trial, when the Clinton witnesses surfaced. The FBI generated a lot of paper on the allegations circulating during the Garrison investigation. Books on CORE, the CORE archives, and the Times-Picayune might contain useful background information.

Also, this field seems ripe for a graduate student in history who wants to focus on the context of the assassination controversy without becoming an assassination buff or getting into guns-and-bullets details. I would be glad to help if I can.

[Investigative opportunity #2 - Shaw and Perminex]

Was Shaw involved with an "industrial exhibition" organization with a sinister intelligence history? Many people think so; I'm skeptical.

For the basic story, see (e.g.) Garrison, p. 87-90; Marrs, p. 498-500; 11 EOC 1, p. 5; 6 EOC 1, p. 10; and the article by Steve Dorril discussed there (#23, 1983, Lobster, 4 pp.)

Dorril's work presents Garrison as the victim (not the source) of disinformation. It looks as if a company which had been in some apparently ordinary trouble was portrayed by the Communists as a sinister intelligence operation, mostly for reasons of internal Italian politics.

I do not know if Garrison and his supporters have ever checked out the "Paese Sera" reports. Someone should carry this further than Dorril did. AARC reportedly has extensive files on Perminex, and may have set off much of the analysis which made Perminex central to the conspiracy theories of Lyndon LaRouche's followers.

[Who will speak up for Clay Shaw?]

I have been increasingly skeptical of Garrison since the Shaw trial in 1969. The nature of the case against Clay Shaw is crucial to an evaluation of Garrison, I think, and trying to figure out the Garrison phenomenon is an important part of the work of those of us trying to figure out the assassination.

However, some researchers - and, I fear, Stone - seem willing to write off the persecution of Shaw as "collateral damage." In Stone's words:

"The Clay Shaw business is... very emotional in New Orleans, but ultimately I have to tell you that I'm not that concerned about whether he was innocent or guilty. I don't think that Clay Shaw was a particularly important figure in this thing. He was definitely - we know from information that emerged in the 1970s, from testimony - that he was a CIA-related person. We know that. So Jim was certainly partly right (to prosecute Shaw), and maybe wholly right." (#12)

Nonsense. Even some full-time CIA employees did not conspire to kill Kennedy. Someone sensitive to victimization, as Stone is, should not ignore what Garrison did to Shaw, even though he had talked to the CIA.

My critical view of Garrison is in some ways a moderate one - I will not argue that he was corrupt, or blind to the Mafia in a sinister way. If you evaluate all the published researchers on a spectrum according to their conclusion-to-evidence ratios, or their analytical styles and abilities, Garrison is not anomalous.

It has been said that a language is a dialect with an army, and that a religion is a cult with state power. Perhaps Jim Garrison was just Michael Eddowes with a grand jury. (I can think of buffs whose style is closer to Garrison's, but I don't want to debate this with EOC subscribers.)

Figuring Garrison out is complicated by a general recognition that some of the evidence he talked about - such as Oswald's associates and activities in New Orleans - indeed includes some of the most promising conspiracy leads. Also, the elements of his overall scenario matched those of many researchers. It took many of us a while, however, to see that his analysis of the evidence

often did not strengthen his general statements, and did not support many of his specific charges.

Attention to the Shaw case makes it more difficult for Garrison's supporters to argue that, although "mistakes were made," Garrison basically had the right overall answer. That is a complicated issue, and I find it particularly difficult to interpret Garrison's apparent lack of interest in the Mafia and in Ferrie's links to Marcello.

One aspect of the prosecution of Clay Shaw is not heavily complicated by such considerations, and has not received the attention it deserves: There was, arguably, a major homophobic component to Garrison's probe.

This should be especially important to the politically sensitive, who presumably include many of Stone's and Costner's fans - and the case for an irresponsible prosecution of Shaw can be argued without getting into unresolvable questions about who killed Kennedy.

In response to some of my comments about Shaw's homosexuality, Garrison wrote in a letter: "Throughout our trial, in everything I have ever written and in every public statement I have ever made -- I never once have made any reference to Clay Shaw's alleged homosexuality.... For all his faults or virtues, Shaw is dead and unable to defend himself from that kind of off the wall canard. No matter how virtuously Hoch might couch it, a smear is still a smear."

Did Garrison not appreciate that being "outed" is less damaging to Shaw's reputation than being charged with conspiring to kill Kennedy?

Refer to 8 EOC 1, p. 9-10; 8 EOC 2, pp. 5-7; and my review of Garrison's book (11 EOC 1, pp. 3-6). If you do not have back EOC's, you can ask for those excerpts and relevant pages from Hurt's book as #24 (10 pp.)

I think the film is open to criticism on these grounds even if Shaw's role is minor (as I hear it is). In an early draft he is allegedly portrayed receiving a friendly whipping.

At the very least, Garrison apparently failed to weigh the likelihood of a secret but social and non-conspiratorial relationship between Shaw and Ferrie. By refusing to do so - and targeting someone who would not come out of the closet in his own defense - I think Garrison crossed over the line into objectively homophobic persecution.

"Personalities" reporter Marc Bailey noted that Garrison "initially maintained [the plot] was a homosexual thrill killing," later broadening the conspiracy. I heard that theory attributed to Garrison long ago, and I never gave it much attention (in the absence of confirmation that he believed it, or that it played a major role in his analysis), but I now think it may have been important.

An analysis by A. E. Weeks of the British names in Shaw's address book shows that he was a handshake away from a member of the Philby "Homintern." (#25, Lobster 20, 9 pp.) Should Stone or Garrison make something of that?

#### [More thoughts on evaluating Garrison]

My general perception is - and has been for some years - that Garrison grabbed center stage in 1967, just as the movement for a new investigation was gathering steam (thanks to some newspapers, some Congressmen, and "Life", as I recall); that he held it for over two years with the promise of having solved the case, and ultimately gave us very little except eloquent generalities.

I hate to sound like an old fogey, rather just a curmudgeon, but: I think it is hard for those who got interested in the case as recently as, say, 17 years ago (in the post-Watergate era) to fully appreciate the role Garrison played. Those of us who spent two full years (early 1967 through March 1969) focusing our research energy in the directions prompted by Garrison, and waiting for him to deliver, have a very different perspective on his failure to make a serious case against Clay Shaw. I recently came across the 1968-69 newsletters of the San Diego Assassination Inquiry Committee,

which effectively reminded me of the initial optimism, misplaced trust, and eventual disappointment which was widespread among the critics.

Some of us went through a phase of "let's not fight among ourselves, let's all support Garrison - look at his enemies" at the time, and we are not inclined to make the same mistake again. It is easier to support Garrison "despite his flaws" if you did not get sandbagged by that approach in 1969.

For critiques of Garrison, I recommend James Kirkwood's book, and the chapters in books by James Phelan, Henry Hurt, and Robert Sam Anson (who is now working on a major article on Stone). Surprisingly, the 1976 book by Peter Model and Robert Groden contains a critical discussion of Garrison, and of the "absurd... skein" linking Shaw to a big conspiracy. (#26, 2 pp.) Many other books and articles have useful information. (Again, the released FBI documents could give valuable background on some of Garrison's stories.)

Here are mini-reviews of one new book and an old one:

[Kerry Thornley]

"Idle Warriors," the manuscript featuring a protagonist loosely based on Oswald which was written before the assassination by fellow Marine Kerry Thornley, has finally been published. (It was introduced into evidence when Thornley testified to the Warren Commission but not published because of its "length and negligible relevance." [21 WCH xx]) The book is \$10.98 plus \$1.50 p/h from IllumiNet Press, P.O. Box 746, Avondale Estates, GA 30002.

In an introduction (#27, 2 pp.), David Lifton says that the special meaning of the novel "is that it constitutes a slap at District Attorney Jim Garrison, and his inability to take Kerry's Warren Commission testimony and the book he wrote... at face value.... Garrison reversed cause and effect...." Garrison charged Thornley with perjury, and "in an eight page press release, Garrison explained his view of the role Kerry played in a conspiracy to frame Oswald: 'It was necessary to have a major witness testify in great detail to create an early image [of Oswald] as a Marxist so that there would not be too much public curiosity about the reasons for Oswald's abrupt departure from the Marine Corps to sail to Russia.'"

Garrison told Lifton in 1967 that "after the fact there is no truth. There is only what the jury decides." Lifton was then "alarmed at [Garrison's] character and capabilities," and is now "astounded" that he is a judge. "To this day, efforts continue in some quarters to rewrite history, to transform a man who was regarded by sensible people as a demagogue, into some kind of folk hero - someone who found the truth but, alas, just wasn't able to prove it in court." Garrison "got swept away in a paranoid fantasy, misused the powers of his office, and made Kerry's life grist for his mill."

I think Lifton is basically correct about the way Garrison put things together. Thornley's own preface, however, complicates the issue: "As much as I agree with Lifton about Garrison's slipshod dishonesty, I think his case against me nevertheless brought up some disturbing questions worthy of respect. Why was I introduced to Clay Shaw a week or two before the assassination?... Why [in 1961] was I introduced to Guy Banister? And why was Banister so interested in the book I was writing?... Contrary to Garrison's theories, I was not one of those who took part in directly framing Oswald. But Lifton's assumption that I was not involved at all is wider of the mark...."

Lifton assured me that, in their extensive conversations at the time of the Garrison probe, Thornley never believed that he was involved in anything other than having written about a future assassin. His later views raise psychological questions rather than evidentiary ones, and establish the unfortunate power of Garrison's rhetorically enhanced illogic. Garrison could charm the birds down from the trees, a staffer once said, and I suppose he would not be the first prosecutor to lead an innocent man to believe in his own guilt.



What Lifton was too diplomatic to describe in his introduction is how, after the Garrison affair, Thornley's mind went into orbit. "Between Lifton's theorizing and Garrison's hounding, Thornley began to wonder if maybe he had been an unwitting pawn of the CIA.... By the time [journalist Jonathan] Vankin tracked him down in 1989, Thornley's brooding seemed to have gone over the edge into outright paranoid delusion.... He told Vankin he now believes that he and Lee Harvey Oswald was both products of genetic tests carried out by a secret proto-Nazi sect of eugenicists, the Vrill Society.... Unless he was pulling Vankin's leg. It couldn't be the first time Thornley had spun wild theories for a lark. In certain circles he's famous for it." (#28, NY Press, 19-25 Jun, review by J. Strausbaugh, 2 pp.)

[Milton Brener's 1969 book]

I have re-read "The Garrison Case: A Study in the Abuse of Power," by New Orleans lawyer Milton Brener. It is worth some attention.

The book had very little impact when published (by Clarkson N. Potter). I think I dismissed it in part because I was waiting for Garrison's own account of the evidence I assumed that he had, but could not use in the trial.

Also, Brener's book was not about the Kennedy assassination. While crediting Garrison's eloquence, he conveyed no sense of the real evidentiary mysteries in areas from "guns and bullets" to the FPCC and 544 Camp Street.

Brener was parti pris, as attorney for some of the less obviously virtuous recipients of Garrison's attention. He failed to include what I considered relevant background details about people he mentioned like Walter Sheridan, Shaw, Carlos Quiroga, and Sergio Arcacha Smith.

In comparison with Garrison's two books on the case, Brener's analysis now looks rather persuasive. Brener's accounts of apparently dubious conduct and analysis by the DA's office, notably in connection with Russo's testimony, are not weakened by the kind of analysis presented in Garrison's writings.

Brener concluded that the important thing about Garrison's case was "that so many believed it in the face of all the evidence, not because of anything Garrison said, but because of the convincing way in which he said it." He conceded Garrison's sincerity, but in the context of "almost uniquely erratic and unfathomable behavior."

I suspect that Brener was basically right about Garrison's approach to evidence - on various occasions, first he convinced himself what had happened, so he knew who "must" know more, and then he went looking for the evidence. That search for evidence was (at best) not intellectually scrupulous enough, with tactics that, from Brener's account, at best bordered on the unethical.

I would find it hard, in a debate with Brener, to defend my relatively generous interpretation of Garrison's flaws.

[Principal sources]

This section consists of a sample of major articles quoted above.

- #7. 22-24 Feb (Sean Mitchell, USA Weekend, 2 pp.) "Stone's Sixties"
- #8. Mar-Apr 91 (S. Talbot, Mother Jones, 5 pp.) "60s Something."
- #9. 19 May 91 (George Lardner, Washington Post, 3 pp.; for a less reduced copy, ask for #9A, 6 pp.)
- #10. 2 Jun (WP, 2 pp) Stone's response to #9.
- #11. 2 Jun (WP) Lardner's rebuttal.
- #12. 24 May ("Lagniappe" [NOTP], 4 pp.; not a very good copy.)
- #13. 10 Jun (Richard Zoglin, Time) "More Shots in Dealey Plaza"
- #14. 1 Jul (Time) Stone letter, responding to #13.
- #15. 24 Jun (Elaine Dutka, LA Times, 2 pp.) "Oliver Stone fights back"
- #16. 14 Apr (DMN, 4 pp.) Stone interview. "Unofficially, I hear that many people inside the government - [including] military intelligence and the [CIA] - are very happy that this movie is being made. There is a younger generation of people that want some elements of the truth to come out."

## [Additional clippings]

(Q) indicates "already quoted." Items 17-28, which are not clippings about Stone, are described in the text, above.

#29. 12 Aug 90 (previously listed as #1990.30) (NOTP) In addition to Garrison, Stone talked to Pershing Gervais, who refused to help "glamorize" his former boss. For more comments by and about Gervais, see #9-11.

#30. 28 Dec 90 (NY Post) In this early and perhaps completely inaccurate account, based on Hollywood sources, Stone was reportedly planning to use documentary footage of JFK and Jackie, with no actors in those roles. Stone's researchers were looking at a Watergate connection: "One investigator says photographs have been discovered of two men involved in the Watergate burglary who bear an uncanny resemblance to an American and a Cuban national who were arrested in a roundup in Dallas after the assassination."

#31. 5 Feb 91 (R. Dodds, NOTP) "Before it was over [in the Sixties]... many friends and colleagues turned on Garrison, branding him irresponsible, paranoid and out of control.... But now one of the most influential directors in Hollywood is working on a movie that could paint an entirely different picture of Garrison.... As movie-goers may now think of Earl K. Long as a lovable scoundrel who looks like Paul Newman, thanks to the movie 'Blaze,' Costner's boyish earnestness may become the nation's lasting image of Garrison."

"He [Garrison] said it is wrong to say, as some have, that the movie will focus on the late Clay Shaw.... 'It's bigger than that.... The subject is the murder of Jack Kennedy.' Garrison said he has met with Stone three or four times a year for two years. He called the finished screenplay [perhaps the version Lardner got, now being dismissed as a first draft] 'a beautiful job.'" Critical comments by reporter Rosemary James, and (more mildly) by Garrison's former assistant, William Alford.

#32. 24 Feb (Gene Siskel, Chicago Tribune, 2 pp.) Mostly about Stone's latest film, "The Doors." (Q)

#33. 25 Feb (F. Swertlow, in SFC) Describes auditions in Dallas.

#34. 26 Feb (C. Conconi, WP) "'John Kennedy was the godfather of my generation and a lot of us believe he was murdered for political reasons,' Stone said. 'And like Hamlet, we have to try to look back and correct the inaccuracies.'" [In one unpublished account, JFK's ghost appears to Garrison. Garrison had some mysterious sources, but I don't think he has ever claimed an actual ghostly visitation.]

#35. Mar-Apr (Surveillant) "Assassination in the arts" (Q)

#36. Four short items on one page:

A. 5 Mar (NYT in SFC) "Dallas frets over filming of 'JFK' [at TSBD]"

B. 12 Mar (SFC) Stone has found it difficult to get "Hollywood film makers interested in a movie about Harvey Milk," whom he described as "an interesting man who, among other things, happened to be gay." [Perhaps Stone thinks of Shaw as a suspect who just happened to be gay - which would lead to a misinterpretation of Garrison's case, I believe.]

C. 15 Mar (NYT in SFC) "Dallas OKs filming in Book Depository," but only the seventh floor; Stone wanted the sixth.

D. 15 Mar (WP) Actors John Candy and John Larroquette, who are better known for comedy, have been signed for "JFK."

#37. Three short items on one page:

A. 16 Mar (Liz Smith in SFC) O. Stone to "Rolling Stone": "A woman who is intelligent and beautiful is very sexy.... At the same time, you know as well as I do that a beautiful woman without a brain in her head can still be exciting to you." Unfortunately, the last observation also applies to conspiracy theories.

B. 27 Mar (Detroit FP) Dallas County Commissioners turn down Stone's request to use the sixth floor.

C. 4 Apr (Detroit News) That decision is reversed.

#38. 12 Apr (M. MacCambridge, Austin American-Statesman) "People give Stone what he asks for [e.g., the sixth floor] because filming is big business. The production is expected to drop \$10 million into the Dallas/Forth Worth economy in just over a month."

"The Marrs book is a compendium of conspiracy theories that some observers felt led to an economically prudent move by Stone. By purchasing the rights to Crossfire, he was in effect buying the rights to dozens of different conspiracy theories without buying the rights to dozens of books." The high level of secrecy surrounding "JFK" is typical of Stone.

#39. 14 Apr 91 (P. Wuntch, DMN, 2 pp.) "A maverick who's become a power" A profile of Stone, who is not universally popular in Hollywood. "When he does stumble, Hollywood probably will cackle. Mr. Stone is, after all, an independent, defiant [and liberal] spirit...."

#40. 17 Apr (M. Schnurman, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, in SFC) "Oliver Stone's Texas Connection" Mostly about the economic impact, and efforts Texas makes to attract filmmakers. (Q)

#41. 20 Apr (E. Hudson, WP, 2 pp.) "Film Crew Transforms Texas 'Sniper's Perch' into Stage for Painful Memories" A nice overview. They would have liked to put the Hertz sign back up, but the roof is too delicate. Some comments on Dallas' reaction; less than a quarter of the city's people were there in 1963.

#42. 29 Apr (D. Denison, Boston Globe) "Dallas, again: Film on JFK taps dark memories"

#43. ?? Apr (DMN) "Oliver Stone has new takes on JFK assassination site" At least five locations for gunmen are being considered (two on the sixth floor, the knoll, the top of the Records Building, and the second floor of the Dal-Tex Building." Even some crew members were puzzled by the last one, but not Larry Harris of the AIC, who showed "a very faint smudge in one window [in the Altgens photo] that looks sort of like an arm - and sort of like an astronomer's snapshot of a distant galaxy."

#44. May 91 (D Magazine, 2 pp.) "City of Hate: The Sequel" Columnist Laura Miller is particularly concerned that Stone will follow Garrison's book in accusing Dallas Police officers.

#45. 13 May 91 (People, 3 pp. with photos) "Dallas Revisited" Garrison says Stone "has cracked the problem of telling conflicting versions of the same story. In one scene, Garrison says, Stone will show Oswald shooting at JFK, and 'in the next he's showing it from another point of view, and you can sense the impossibility of it.'" Sen. Arlen Specter says that "The Commission's findings have stood the test of time, including the single-bullet theory." Mort Sahl calls the script "prosaic crap. It skirts most of the major issues." Sen. Ted Kennedy declines to comment.

#46. 20 May (NOTP, 7 pp.) "They're here!" Some local color, and information on the actors and characters.

#47. 28 May (Star [Tabloid]) Taking advantage of the unwillingness of Stone's people to discuss the film, this account - which could result from a deliberate attempt to discredit Stone - alleges that the film will push the "outrageous claim" that Jackie was having an affair with a Secret Service agent (Clint Hill is unnamed) and was trying to protect him by helping him into the car. Jackie's family is "stunned."

#48. From an essay on Costner in "M inc." magazine, quoted briefly in SFC, 29 May 91. (Q)

#49. Jun 91 (Grassy Knoll Gazette, 2 pp.) (Q)

#50. 2 Jun (SF Examiner) Valenti comments (Q)

#51. 8 Jun (WP) Four letters in response to the Lardner-Stone exchange. Anti-conspiracy buff Johann Rush's own experiences with Stone convince him that Stone "doesn't want any of the people who actually met Oswald to confuse him with the facts of the case." That includes Rush, who filmed Oswald for WDSU in August 1963, and also Carlos Bringuier and Bill Stuckey, who both (Rush hears) will be portrayed.

Buff H. C. Nash objects to Lardner's "half-truths and superficialities" and wishes the Post had spent more time over the years "on an open-ended and honest probe" instead of putting down critics. The other letters are pro-conspiracy, one bringing up - un rebutted - the FBI's November 29, 1963, briefing of "George Bush of the CIA."

#52. 9 Jun (Judy Stone, SFC, 2 pp.) Mostly about Costner in "Robin Hood," this story mentions that he has "become friends with the President."

#53. 9 Jun (M. Dowd, NYT, incomplete) Costner, no less articulate than his friend Bush: "And just like in this movie ['Robin Hood?'], it shouldn't be thought of as a factual kind of thing. But it should be pretty thought provoking and fall into the guise of entertaining and some real things. For those who would paint Garrison as a complete kook, they're missing the point. There is within us an ambiguity that exists within all people. But that's not what we're discussing. We're discussing complete blockages of justice."

#54. 14 Jun (M. LaSalle, SFC) "Robin's a Sensitive Hood" This might give us some idea of what to expect from Costner as Garrison: "You don't believe [Costner] for a second as Robin Hood - he's too reflective, too decent, too grounded - but you do believe him as Kevin Costner, and that might be what matters most. In 'Dances with

Wolves,' he was sincere in feathers; here he's sincere in green."

#55. 15 Jun (NOTP) A letter from J. Albarado, a member of the 1967 grand jury, defends the decision to bring Shaw to trial.

#56. 20 Jun (NOTP) Reporter Rosemary James now takes a hard line on Garrison: he and his assistants "deliberately selected a scapegoat for purposes totally political, totally petty, and then set about destroying one of the most creative business and cultural leaders this city has ever produced." Garrison's case "probably prevented serious inquiries by reasonable people" and may have been a smoke screen, distracting from "reasonable theories.... involving underworld figures like the late Meyer Lansky." (Yes, it looks odd not to mention the not-yet-late Carlos Marcello.)

#57. 27 Jun (NOTP) Stone responds to James. The film is not "the Clay Shaw story," it explores "who killed Kennedy and why." (Well, did Shaw do it?) He is not a documentarian but he is making the film because he wants the truth.

#58. 30 Jun (Joe Bob Briggs, SFC) Check it out. (Q)

#59. 28 Jul (R. Bernstein, NYT, 2 pp.) A not-unsympathetic portrayal of Stone "under fire," with quotes from criticism published elsewhere.

#60. July? (NOTP?, 2 pp.) What is it with these Louisiana barbers? Gerald Stovall of New Orleans remembers cutting the hair of Oswald, Shaw, and even his almost-bald acquaintance from the Civil Air Patrol, David Ferrie. Shaw and Ferrie talked about killing Kennedy. Tellingly, Garrison doesn't remember Stovall's story (which he said he gave to the DA's office), but thinks "he's probably telling the truth" about this Oswald-Ferrie-Shaw link.

#61. 10-16 Aug (TV Guide) John Williams has done the musical score for "JFK."

#62. 11 Aug (D. Maychick, Sunday Record; incomplete) (Q)

#63. 11 Aug (J. Carr, Boston Globe, 2 pp.) As quoted above, Stone and Lardner exchange barbs. His "script allows for six shots," based on the acoustics. "Among other things, we're presenting the Zapruder film in a new and hopefully enlightening context." Eleven researchers whose work has been consulted are named. "Garrison was the first to see that the JFK assassination wasn't just a matter of trajectories and bullet fragments...."

#64. 13 Aug (San Jose Mercury-News) Toronto artist Raymond Mackintosh created a "historically exact Kennedy replica" in rubber for the autopsy scenes of "JFK." He is convinced that the neck wound was altered between Dallas and Bethesda. He also sculpts in butter.

Alleged CIA study in 1964: From "The Crisis Years," a new book by Michael Beschloss: "Richard Helms found Lyndon Johnson distracted well into 1964 by his worry that Kennedy had been assassinated by conspiracy. As Helms recalled [in an interview with the author], the Agency was 'very helpful to Johnson on this' and met the new President's request for an independent CIA study. Motion pictures of the Dallas motorcade and autopsy photographs were sent over the the Agency." (Emphasis added.)

#65) I hope someone who thinks this is worth pursuing (but does not constitute proof that the CIA altered the autopsy photos) can find out more about this CIA study.

Credits: Thanks to B. Adams (13, 43, 45, 64), R. Bonds (27), D. Bryson (38), R. Cutler (49), D. Dahlin (9-11), J. Davis (9), J. Davison (7), R. Dorff (17A), M. Ferrell (17B), J. Goldberg (9-11, 13, 34, 36D, 41, 51), J. Lesar (1-2), D. Lifton (12, 15-6, 39, 55-7, 60, 63), J. Mierzejewski (37BC), C. Oglesby (9), J. Shinley (22, 44, 59), D. Stager (35, 46, 61, 64), J. Stevens (47, 53, 62), S. Van Wynsberghe (45), K. Walsh (18-9), S. Weinstein (30, 59), and D. Williams (42). Also, thanks and apologies to all who have written - I am now further behind in my correspondence than ever.

Phone number change: The area code for the East Bay (including Oakland and Berkeley) changes on September 2; my home number will be 510-525-1980.

Query: Evan Marshall, a retired police officer with 20 years of experience (including Homicide) in Detroit, would like to hear from other buffs interested in the investigation by the Dallas Homicide bureau or the activities of the ATF in Dallas. Write him at Kirtland Community College (Criminal Justice Dept.), 10775 St. Helen Rd., Roscommon, MI 48653.

An "Assassination Symposium on John F. Kennedy" will be held in Dallas on November 14-16, 1991. Write ASK at Box 4999, Austin, TX 78765.

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