

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Open JFK Files

Editor — While columnist Anthony Lewis is satisfied with the Warren Commission's findings he can hardly quibble with those wishing to open the files (Chronicle, January 9). If Lewis is right the evidence will support his views, but his selective presentation of evidence cries out for further exploration.

The medical testimony on the rearward head snap he accepts as proof of a shot from behind is far from convincing and is clearly not accepted by many authorities: "The motion of Kennedy's body in frames 312-313 (the rearward head snap in the Zapruder film) is totally inconsistent with the impact of a bullet from above and behind. Thus, the only reasonable conclusion consistent with the laws of physics is that the bullet was fired from a position forward and to the right of the president." With that, UCLA's physicist James Riddle dismissed Lewis' "neuromuscular reaction" theory of the head snap.

The ballistic "evidence" he finds so convincing includes the acceptance that "magic" bullet 399 successively passed through Kennedy's back and neck, Governor Connally's rib, then smashed his wrist and penetrated his thigh with no loss of bullet mass and with no significant deformity to the bullet itself. Not only does this make no common sense whatsoever, but tests to duplicate this were laughably non-confirmatory of such a possibility.

Although Lewis "solves" the problem of two of three shots being fired accurately at a moving target at 88 yards from a single bolt-action rifle within 5.6 seconds, he conveniently ignores that only 1.7 seconds elapsed between two of the shots. No experts called upon to try this feat came close to succeeding. The minimum firing time for Oswald's rifle was determined to be 2.3 seconds. The fact that Oswald was a mediocre marksman who was supposedly firing a mis-sighted, notoriously unreliable weapon cripples Lewis' explanation.

While the truth may never be

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known, Mr. Lewis should not dismiss those who search as foolishly paranoid. Only the release of the remaining documents will quell the fears shared by many in this country that the government occasionally conspires against its own citizens and shields its actions with legally enforced silence. If only to lessen those fears in this post-Cold War era should Mr. Lewis support opening all the relevant files.

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### Sealed in Silence

Editor — The generally negative reaction to Oliver Stone's re-creation of the conspiratorial theory in "JFK" is a reaction that itself is dangerous and unwarranted. The very people who cannot conceive, who cannot even allow themselves to believe that a government conspiracy could have existed, are the very people who historically have blindly and uncritically allowed fascism to exist. And we only need look at Hitler's popularity in 1939 to see this.

Criticism today connotes negativism, but the real meaning of the word from Greek is "to discern or judge." "JFK" forces us to question, to examine with the kind of healthy skepticism that keeps us free, that unfinished business of President Kennedy's death: the files that have been mysteriously sealed in silence.

Why is it that many Americans naively believe that our government is the only one on Earth exempt from corruption? This is what we hope

and it is our ideal, but when we examine the facts of Watergate, Iran-Contra, the S&L scandals, we see that we are not perfect, that we can fall short. To think otherwise is to invite the very corruption we seek to avoid.

Our founding fathers were nothing if not critical. Criticism is the basis of freedom, and as the wise Socrates said: "The unexamined life is not worth living."

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