

Mr William Katzberg  
The Palm Beach Jewish Journal  
601 Fairway Drive  
Deerfield Beach, FL 33441

1/16/92

Dear Mr. Katzberg,

Dear friend of my youth, Rabbi Sam Silver, asked me to send you one of my books when he sent a copy of the column you wrote for the 12/31-1/6 issue.

I decided that because it is the basic book on the JFK assassination rather than the multitude of theories about it, to send you the first despite its form, the only form in which we are now able to keep it available.

I should have said the first book on the Warren Commission and the assassination.


The beginning of your column reflects the skill <sup>with</sup> which Stone succeeded in deceiving and misleading almost everybody. The Commission's files do not require opening. They have never been closed. They did require processing, as to protect privacy, and that did take some slight amount of time, but they have always been open at the Archives.

Mostly Stone demanded that all agency files <sup>not</sup> be withheld, protesting that they were all suppressed. He knew better. He knew he could have examined 250,000 pages of them I got by Freedom of Information Act litigation. He had no interest. He is skilled at recognizing how he can get away with making lies serve his immediate interest. Toward the end he switched this demand to the former House committee's records. Most of them are already available, all that did not originate with the House. And there is no smoking gun in the small percentage of still withheld records.

Along with most others, I would agree with your opinion that Stone "is intitled to ~~take~~ take gross liberties"-if he had announced his form would be fiction. However, he promoted it from the first as factual, as non-fiction and he never really abandoned this false representation. His first formulation was that he would record their history for the people, telling them who killed their President, why and how. It is because this was impossible from Garrison's book that when Stone ignored careful and detailed warning that he would be lying to the people that I caused the first exposure, the first and I think legitimate criticism of him and his project. I think he has no right to lie to the people about a crime of this magnitude or to <sup>re</sup>write the tragic history and not be subject to criticism for it.

Sorry about my typing. It is always bad, sometimes worse. Can't be helped.

May I add another thought, that the reader can be the captive of the writer as the viewer can be of the director. I know of personal knowledge that Garrison's book was false from beginning to end as he rewrote his own history. This made no difference to Stone because he saw Garrison as the perfect vehicle he needed. Stone knew before he started shooting that he would be filming a "fraud and a travesty."

Best wishes, 

Harold Weisberg



# Adding cinema license to JFK's murder

**O**LIVER STONE'S NEW film *JFK* will surely cause untold numbers of viewers to doubt the Warren Commission's findings.

I spoke with people walking out of the theatre in Coral Springs who felt that the three-hour-plus film showed there was a need for re-opening the Commission's files. I concede this was hardly a scientific sampling... but.

*JFK* is a case of cinematic art re-writing a critical time in American history. The film dramatically points fingers at the military industrial complex, the FBI, the CIA — and not so subtly at President Lyndon B. Johnson, then Kennedy's Vice President... all seen as co-conspirators in the assassination. Whow!

Predictably, the press panned the wholesale liberties taken by Stone and the film. "How dare he!"

Indeed, much of the film is *chutzpah* with added artistic license. You remind yourself of Alan Dershowitz's line about the media: "The media (cinema, too) want every important institution of the country to be scrutinized — except the media. This is not consistent with freedom of speech. Hear, hear."

Surely Oliver Stone is entitled to take gross liberties with cinema art. We are currently celebrating the 200th Anniversary of The Bill of Rights — and *JFK* plays loosely with history, courtesy of the First Amendment.

Because large chunks of historical film-footage were mixed with freely used fiction, the film may persuade guideline movie viewers to accept the entire Stone package as proven fact. It's much like when undiscerning people will blantly tell you "I read it in the newspaper" ... or "I saw it on TV." It must surely be the epitome.

As a consequence, large audiences in America may be conditioned to uncritically accept Oliver Stone's conspiracy theme as responsible cinematic history. The film offered back-flashes and montages of familiar scenes (true and make-believe) — enough to confuse the viewer as what were truly the facts, man?

## CLOSER VIEW By William Katzberg



Many Americans (with good reason) still believe that JFK's assassination is largely an unsolved mystery with many overhanging questions. But Oliver Stone's *JFK* is a quantum leap into highly questionable fact. Anyhow, the artist is entitled, even if he employed considerable cinematic license. It's called art, folks.

Clearly, the power of the media (and cinema, too) as opinion-makers is so awesome and important that they (too often) bellow about their rights without facing up to their responsibilities. Methinks those ladies and gentlemen doth protest too much.

**Surely Oliver Stone is entitled to take gross liberties with cinema art. We are currently celebrating the 200th Anniversary of The Bill of Rights — and "JFK" plays loosely with history, courtesy of the First Amendment.**

The producers of *JFK* have every right to artistically play upon history. However, the viewing public ought to be given an introductory warning that this "docudrama" was super-imposed with fictional material.

Although no literate American will question the First Amendment rights of cinema-makers, the press, TV, et al., these opinion-makers should not squawk when the public heaps criticism upon them for excessive, imbalanced reporting and leaps of artistic license.

I have in mind the media treatment of the infatuation, a legitimate story, for sure. But its repeti-

tion for months gave that movement greater legitimacy than say, the Kurds revolt in Iraq or larger minority uprisings all over the globe. Silence.

When the American-Jewish community complained about the media's selectivity, imbalance and hyperbole, the media largely reacted like a hunt Oliver Stone.

The *New York Times* in an editorial, no less, blasted the film *JFK* with "It is disturbing to see entire episodes presented as true, especially episodes that have been virtually laughed out of court."

Oliver Stone responded in the *Times*: "I think what is clear from their efforts to destroy my film's credibility is that history may be too important to leave to newsmen. And that artists certainly have the right and obligation to step in and re-interpret the history of our times."

I found the film distracting at times, rivetting at others, gripping and compelling. There were too many discordant voices and faces. The incident of the single bullet that allegedly travelled from the stricken body of the President to Texas Governor John Connally — appears as the most significant question unanswered, not confronted.

Kevin Costner as the driver Jim Garrison, New Orleans District Attorney, tries very hard in a film that becomes a heavily conceded *zinnian*. Ultimately, it fails to make coherent sense other than to spread doubt all over the place.

People like me have always suspected the military-industrial complex. But this effort seems a bit much, even for me.

Despite its ambiguities and free license, the film *JFK* will likely provoke many reasonable questions from the thousands who get to see it. This may be its greatest virtue.

Oliver Stone concluded his *New York Times* piece with: "The real issue is opening all the files of the House Select Committee on assassinations, embargoed until 2029 today." Till buy that! William Katzberg, a weekly contributor to the *Jewish Journal*, is a board member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Fort Lauderdale.

p/2/91 DEAN HAROLD - SEND THE MAN ONE OF YOUR BOOKS.  
JEW JOURNAL  
601 FAIRWAY DRIVE - DEERFIELD BEACH, FL  
33441 - HAPPY NEW YEAR!  
Yours Sam