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FROM BEHIND THE LOOKING GLASS BY DAVE PERRY

You probably exited the theater feeling numb. Spending over three hours in a darkened room watching images of the sixties flash by, is more work than entertainment. You didn't dare go for popcorn when Garrison (Costner) gave the summation and showed the Zapruder film. You watched the actual assassination of an American President. From the first time you see that awful head shot at frame number 313, you know what the "assassination buffs" have been clamoring about for twenty eight years.

What is the problem here? Why all the articles, why are the Warren Commission proponents and opponents so upset? The reasons are as different as they are legion but there is one common element. Stone's movie gives balanced weight, equal time if you will, to truth as to fiction. If you haven't involved yourself in the subject for at least ten years you can't separate the accurate from absurd.

It was not necessary for Stone to use innuendo and composite characters to prove his point. There are some truly bizarre incidents contained in the Kennedy case. If you haven't seen the movie or plan to see it again, I am going to review some strange truths Stone glossed over. It might clear up the confusion hastened by the director's "keep the camera moving" philosophy and it might pique your interest. I hope you will do more reading and thinking of what went on during those terrible few days and the years that followed.

Be cautious and be careful. John Davis author of "Mafia Kingfish" will tell you, "It's a swamp. Once you get sucked in you never get out." If you do get pulled in, then expect to be labeled a "buff." The press calls defenders of the Warren Report historians while opponents are "assassination buffs." Maybe this is because they put their collective heads in the sand and let the story of the century get away.

Before we start, allow this longtime researcher some editorial comments. This is the best worst movie I have seen. Stone's predicament is threefold . . . wrong man . . . wrong book . . . wrong consultants. X

Stone's first mistake was making Garrison his "metaphor for the dedicated researchers." Many researchers and probably Clay Shaw's relatives do not share that view. The District Attorney's case against Shaw was as poorly framed as the Warren Commission's was against Oswald. Garrison decided to let one of his assistants, James Alcock, summarize and take the heat. The prosecution, having no real proof, found the jury returning in fifty four minutes with a not guilty verdict.

The book, "On The Trail Of The Assassins" makes interesting reading. There is much good research material there.

However, Garrison uses it as a platform to whine about everyone's shortcomings but his own. I like Garrison have views on the subject. You do to. If you and I disagree, we disagree. Differ with Garrison and you are an FBI informant or a CIA disinformation specialist.

The research community discredits many of the film's consultants. Every year around November twenty second they issue new proofs and new names of co-conspirators. They appear on Geraldo or express their revelations in tabloids like the "Inquirer" or the "Globe." One claims he doesn't care who killed Kennedy, he only wants to make money from the murder.

That said let us move on to the movie.

Rose Cheramie:

Images are flashing by at break neck speed. In black and white an ark of an automobile races toward the camera, a door opens and an unseen hand pushes a woman out into the gutter. Now she is in the hospital babbling incoherently that Kennedy will be shot. It's in the movie and more importantly it did happen!

Louisiana State Police lieutenant Francis Fruge picked up Rose Cheramie (Melba Marcades) on November 20, 1963. Fruge had traveled to Eunice, Louisiana in response to an injured person call. When he picked up the severely bruised Cheramie he felt she was under the influence of some drug. We now know she had a history of drug addiction. Fruge took her to the State Hospital in Jackson, Louisiana. Until the assassination she told the doctors exactly what she told Fruge. She was traveling from Florida to Dallas with two men who intended to kill Kennedy.

The House Select Committee looked into the episode and when they found a history of drug addiction, they gave the story short shrift.

The Paraffin Test:

Garrison doesn't believe Oswald fired a shot that day and neither do I. Costner briefly mentions this possibility in remarks about the paraffin test. Here is the reasoning.

The police gave Oswald the test while he was in custody. They spread paraffin (wax) over his palms and face. The police laboratory staff then peeled the wax off and chemically tested for the presence of nitrates. A rifle or pistol when fired will release nitrate particles that strike nearby objects including the hands and face.

Before the crime lab completed the test, reporters asked Dallas Police Chief Jessie Curry about the results. He responded that the outcome would be "favorable to our case." That could only mean the test was positive and Curry implied Oswald's guilt before trial.

Unfortunately for law enforcement, the results showed positive for both hands and negative for the cheek. The test reacts functionally to any elements that contain nitrate particles including printers ink and urine. Oswald worked in the Texas School Book Depository. His job involved the handling of ink covered boxes. He likely also went to the bathroom. All the laborers probably would have had similar test results. The Dallas Police only tested Oswald something considered unacceptable today. X

What happened to the findings? For reasons unknown The Warren Commission suppressed the results for ten months. Buried deep in the report is a little over a full page of what can be best termed a disclaimer of paraffin tests! The Commission had come full circle from Curry's original pronouncement. X

As an aside, you have to chuckle at the glee with which the Dallas Police and FBI announced the discovery of several of Oswald's fingerprints on the sixth floor. Considering Oswald worked there, it is surprising they didn't find more.

The INCA Tape:

Over the years there have been claims that Oswald was involved in the shadowy world of espionage, that he was with the FBI, CIA or Office of Naval Intelligence. In early August, 1963 Oswald had an altercation on Canal Street in New Orleans. An anti-Castro Cuban accosted Oswald as he passed out Fair Play For Cuba literature. The police arrested Oswald and the Cuban. Local television station WDSU, alerted to a potential "demonstration" by Oswald himself had a camera crew on the spot. As a result WDSU staff invited Oswald to appear on a talk radio show sponsored by the INformation Council of the Americas. The format was that of a debate. Oswald handled himself very well for a twenty three year old. The three other panelists tried to put him on the spot concerning his defection to Russia. Y

One panel member, William Stuckey, asked Oswald how he lived in Russia? Did Oswald have some sort of government subsidy? Oswald became extremely flustered and replied, " I worked in Russia. I err um I was under the err protection of uh uh that is to say I was um not under the protection of the American Government."

The statement is strange when placed in context with the rest of the debate. Oswald was no dummy. He was very articulate, knew his subject and responded to most questions directly. Point of fact, Stuckey later concluded someone prepared Oswald for the program. Even more curious is that the Warren Commission's first transcripts of the program had this section edited. Oswald's abrupt

change in attitude could be the result of a Freudian slip. Could he have worked for the American Government? Possibly for FBI, CIA or ONI let us say under the cover of the Department of State for example? We now know this sort of thing was done frequently.

The Hosty Note:

Dallas FBI Agent James Hosty wandered into the office of his boss, Special Agent Gordon Shanklin after Oswald's assassination in the basement of the Dallas Police station. A few weeks before the assassination Oswald visited the Dallas FBI office and dropped off a note for Hosty. Hosty wanted to know what to do with the message. Shanklin ordered him to destroy it. Hosty tore it up. That wasn't good enough for Shanklin. He told Hosty to get rid of the note for good . . . Hosty flushed it down the toilet.

The Warren Commission had no knowledge of this until a journalist broke the story in 1975. Later the Senate Intelligence Committee and the Assassinations Committee interviewed Nanny Fenner, the FBI receptionist that originally received the note as well as James Hosty. Fenner claimed it was a threat to blow up the building. Hosty said it was a warning to stop pestering Marina.

At the time of the assassination the FBI, Secret Service, Dallas Police and the press were vying for the top spot in proving how violent and callous Oswald was. The group claimed Oswald beat his wife, made threats against Nixon and attempted to kill General Edwin Walker. He also dispatched Dallas Police Officer J. D. Tippit with four or five cold blooded pistol shots approximately forty-five minutes after he allegedly killed Kennedy. He even stiffed Julia Postal, the ticket seller at the Texas Theater. Oswald skulked in without paying.

The point here is, if the note said what either Fenner or Hosty claimed why wasn't it reported to the authorities? Of course Hosty was with the FBI and therefore was someone in authority. If the note was a threat in any form it would only support the contention Oswald was a hostile person. The official explanation makes no sense.

Time out for a quiz. The Secret Service, FBI and CIA all failed in their collective duty to protect the President. How many staff members were fired for dereliction of duty or failure to act responsibly?

The government censured or fired few employees because of the assassination. The FBI transferred Hosty to an office considered a "dead end" location. Remember Hosty was guilty of destruction of evidence in a capital murder. A transfer was a small price to pay. I think this is the reason for all the activity to prove Oswald a lone, demented nut. No one can expect the agencies of the

government to defend the President against that type person. At least that is what they have told us all along.

The Killing Of J.D. Tippit:

The Warren Commission claimed Tippit's killing was the Rosetta Stone of the case. If true it is curious they paid so little attention to it.

The Tippit killing occurred at approximately 1:10 P.M. near the intersection of Tenth and Patton Streets in the Dallas suburb of Oak Cliff. The Warren Commission claimed the shooting occurred at 1:16 P.M. They needed to. Oswald could not have left his rooming house at roughly 1:00 P.M. as the Commission decided and arrive at the "killing field" if some witnesses were accurate as to the time of the shooting. One witness, T.F. Bowley, claimed he looked at his watch as the shooting occurred and he read 1:10 pm. The Commission did not call him to testify insisting his watch was slow! X

We now come to a serious problem with the evidence in the Tippit case. Warren Commissioner Ford and Counsel Belin always link the shell casings found at the scene by the police and a private citizen as well as the bullets taken from Tippit's body to Oswald's gun.

Read The Warren Report and you have to agree. However, over the years, thanks in part to the efforts of researchers such as the late Sylvia Meagher we made a discovery. The Warren Report is not supported by the Warren Commission Volumes!

To prove the point I will use some direct quotes from both sources.

Warren Report page 69 . . . " This bullet (Q13) was fired from the same weapon that fired the test bullets to the exclusion of all other weapons."

Joseph D. Nicol

Warren Volume XXIV page 263 . . . " The bullet, Q13 . . . is so badly mutilated that there are not sufficient individual microscopic characteristics present for identification purposes."

Cortland Cunningham

Warren Report page 69 . . . Virginia and Barbara Davis "each . . . found an empty shell."

Warren Volume XXIV page 414 . . . " Barbara and Virginia Davis could not identify their shells when asked to do so."

Warren Volume VII page 48 . . . "and (Dallas Police officer) Poe showed me . . . three spent jackets (shells)."

G. Hill/Dallas Police Department

Warren Volume VII pages 68 and 69 . . . " Poe told the Commission he had only two shells."

Warren Volume XXIV page 415 . . . " Poe indicated he marked the two shells with "JMP" but could not find his identification on any of the shells."

Granted I am not an attorney but I should think this is a gross misrepresentation of the evidence. Neither Poe nor the Davis' were able to identify the shells shown to them by the Commission as those they picked up at the scene of the shooting.

The Three Tramps:

Through black and white imagery we see Dallas Police officers taking three ragtag individuals into custody. The trio with the two escorting officers marches solemnly past the Depository and on to the jail. Using a voice over technique, Coster as Garrison discusses "the three tramps" who he claims the authorities somehow let get away. In this instance that isn't quite the case. Stone stretched poetic license to the limit for this portion of the film.

The public first became aware of the "tramps" in late 1967. Jim Garrison showed photographs of them when he appeared on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson. Kennedy assassination researcher Richard E. Sprague provided Garrison with copies of the prints. Sprague was a collector of assassination site photographs. He became convinced that the "tramps" were involved. This despite Lee Bowers, the railroad tower operator, and police testimony to the contrary.

Unfortunately, Garrison was not only suspicious of the "tramps" but the "arresting officers" as well. In his 1988 book, "On The Trail Of The Assassins" Garrison claimed the police were culpable because they wore ill fitting uniforms, carried their weapons incorrectly and one officer had a radio receiver in his ear. Apparently, the radio receiver allowed the lawman to talk with his confederates.

Canfield and Weberman identified the police as Officers Bass and Wise in their 1975 book "Coup d'Etat In America." Even so Garrison refuses to modify his story. } X

Here is what Canfield and Weberman discovered:

The first search of the trains behind the Texas School Book Depository revealed little. Officer Harkness "shook down a long string of boxcars but found nothing. A 'clearall' was sounded and the trains were allowed to leave." } X
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Later the police decided to check out a northbound freight. Bowers pulled the train up opposite his tower. The police pulled the "tramps" from a rail car originally located behind the Postal Annex well to the south.

Lee Bowers referred to the tramps as "winos." ". . .the most frightened winos I've ever seen in my life since there were possibly fifty policemen with shotguns . . ." around them.

Bass and Wise turned the men over to Sheriff Harold Elkins. Elkins turned them over to Dallas Police captain Will Fritz. Fritz believed he turned them over to the FBI. Canfield concluded, "From the gist of Fritz's statement it seems as if the FBI questioned the tramps, cleared them, and let them go." } X

Remember the commotion in front of the Texas School Book Depository after the assassination? Look at any of the tramp photographs and Dealey Plaza looks positively deserted. The assassination took place at 12:30 P.M. The police brought the tramps in after 2:00 P.M. } X

You are probably wondering why I bring up this aspect of the case. It is to prove a point. Earlier I mentioned the problems with the film's consultants. I also mentioned the Kennedy tabloid groupies. When Stone decided to include the "tramp" story, the following happened.

In August, 1991 two private detectives "found" one of the tramps! His name is Chauncey Marvin Holt. He lives on the West Coast and freely admits he was in Dealey Plaza to "provide forged } X

Secret Service identification pins and weapons" to the potential assassins. The January 14, 1992 issue of the "Globe" headlines . . . Revealed JFK'S REAL KILLER. Mystery tramp charges: CHEER'S STAR'S DAD SHOT KENNEDY - AND I GAVE HIM THE GUN. X

The Cheer's star's dad is a reference to Woody Harrelson's father Charles. Charles Harrelson is in prison, serving a life sentence for the contract killing of a federal judge. Some researchers feel Charles Harrelson is the "tall tramp."

The whole episode makes a terrific story line for a movie. To bad it's the invention of Sprague and Garrison. Look how it snowballed over the years.

David Ferrie and Oswald:

Without doubt Ferrie is one of the strangest characters to emerge from the New Orleans end of the assassination. Stone assigned Joe Pesci the formidable task of playing the Ferrie role in "JFK."

David W. Ferrie adept pilot, militant anti-Castroite, chemist, hypnotist and homosexual was a bishop of the Orthodox Old Catholic Church of North America (An outgrowth of the Roman Catholic Church not recognized by the Vatican.) The church expelled Ferrie from two seminaries for "erratic personal behavior." He also suffered from a rare disease alopecia. David Ferrie had no head or body hair!

Ferrie's associations were interesting. For Stone, he is the primary link to Jack Martin (Jack Lemmon) and Guy Bannister (Ed Asner). There is no question the three knew and probably worked in concert together. The stretch occurs in the link to Oswald. The one solid clue to a potential tie is the building in which Oswald "worked." Remember Oswald's August 1963 arrest after distributing Fair Play For Cuba leaflets on Canal Street? The address on some of those leaflets was 544 Camp Street. The very building from which Bannister operated his detective agency. Martin and Ferrie both worked on and off for Bannister so little imagination is need to link this anti-Castro group with the pro-Castro Oswald.

It is surprising that Stone did not link Oswald and Ferrie through what has become known as "the Clinton incident." The episode really requires more analysis than can be given here. In essence, Oswald was seen in Clinton, Louisiana in late August or early September, 1963 registering to vote, but curiously for a black voting drive sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality. He arrived in a luxury car with two other men. Oswald popped out and got in a long line of voter registrants. The townspeople became concerned that the only white in a line of blacks was there to make trouble. Officials closely checked the vehicle in which Oswald arrived. They identified the driver as a look-a-like of either Clay Shaw or Guy Bannister. Witnesses had no trouble describing the passenger as a white man who had hair and eyebrows "that didn't seem real."

I hope this article has given insight into some of the unusual background of this case. Of course it was impossible for Oliver Stone to cram everything into a three hour movie. When you consider he primarily covered the Garrison Investigation, a small portion of a much larger scenario involving four countries and thousands of individuals, he did an admirable job. You may disagree with his motives. You may object with the content of his film. No matter, he has raised the conciseness of all Americans on this subject. We are not the people we were in 1963. We have been through Iran-Contra, the Pentagon Papers and Watergate. We have lost faith in our Nation's institutions. It looks like the furor surrounding this film has prompted the bureaucrats to react. React by giving us access to what Americans have had the right to see all along . . .the Kennedy assassination files.

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