



February 2, 1991

David R. Wrone

Memorandum on Greg Stone

Dear Harold;

Your information today of the passing of Greg Stone leads me to compose this memorandum of him and his work on the question of assassination in American life, particularly the Robert Kennedy murder.

I knew Greg over a period of perhaps more than ten years reaching back to the days when he first moved to Madison to begin graduate work in Political Science. On several occasions I met with him in Madison where he raised the question of the assassination of Robert Kennedy in considerable detail, but always from the vantage point of interpreting or opening the case up to discover the murderers. In those days he did not focus on the central problem of the institutional order, the nature of these crimes in contemporary society, or ever raise the issue that the condition of the evidence (controlled, partially known, etc) might itself preclude any reasonable inquiry. Neither did he then, or as far as I can remember ever until the last five so years perhaps face the problem that the irresponsibility of the critics might also erect an insurmountable barrier to successful resolution or even to re-opening it without resolution emerging.

My first meeting is clearly etched in my memory in considerable detail, for I traveled the 120 miles to Madison expressly to talk with him and muse, perhaps, about the Kennedy cases. I encountered a bright, decent, sensitive young man with an intense concentration on the subject of the cover-up in the Robert Kennedy assassination, even to the exclusion of all other subjects, except for courtesy references. After several hours with him I left at the entrance to the University Book Store where ~~he~~ for a period of perhaps fifteen minutes he locked into a monologue in a high pitched voice with rolling eyes gradually raising his voice until he almost was screaming. Then, abruptly he cut it off, appeared embarrassed. At no time was he irrational; just incredibly tense, lost as it were within the subject matter, and I believe scared of the possibility of his own endangerment if he pursued the murder with full vigor.

From time to time in the years to come I heard from him. He would describe certain of his activities in extraordinary detail with excellent command of the language and a growing maturity of judgment pulling him it seems to me into the stark realization that he was running into a brick wall. The last few months of contact he displayed an almost resignation in terms of what he failed to do. He realized some successes, but knew they were minimal. Always he was exceptionally decent, kind, thoughtful, remembered earlier points I had made, and withall came forward as a gentleman.

My next to last phone call from him, his discussion of the Robert Kennedy case came from the perspective of a mountain top looking down upon the plains below. He was amazingly lucid, his judgments about possibilities being nil were well formed. He never expressed any bitterness toward any one person or persons in terms of a personal evilness, but saw the events at part of a larger picture. Then, as several times previously, I encouraged him to write down his experiences along with his philosophic insights gleaned along the road to serve both as a record and as a learning exercise for those similarly positioned in the future. I also thought he should do something concrete away from the cark and moil. Earlier I had encouraged him to establish himself as a political commentator in terms of articles, lectures, etc., on all subjects pertinent to politics, feeling his insights gained would infuse his work and help society. He was always polite.

My last telephone call came I believe on the evening of Friday the 25th of January. The day is confirmed in part by a number of functions I had attended this month, leaving just a few days when it could occur at about 8:00 pm cst. He spoke to me about the possibility of using Sylvia Meagher's name in connectinn with a proposed movie being shot by Oliver Stone who had offered 25,000\$ for the use of the name. (He said 25) This would provide a nest egg or fund to pursue a number of questions in the realm of assassinology (none of which were spelled out in concrete terms.) He reviewed the context of the offer, said the possibility of the film being skewed did exist, but that he would so sew up the contract nothing perverted to Sylvia Meagher's reputation would occur. (This in the back of my mind struck me as a contradiction in principles between the possibility of misuse of truth by Oliver Stone and associates and Sylvia's standards--just the opposite of her life's work.) He asked me for my opinion.

I replied by first giving him some of my memories of Sylvia, feeling that one ought to start with the foundation upon which the judgment ought be laid. I described how useful she had been in the process of reading manuscripts on the assassination for NYC publishers; she crushed the bad ones and kept them from surfacing to corrupt the minds of youth and the public. Next I gave him my appreciation of Sylvia, setting forth the admiration I held her in and why: she stood for integrity, for the pursuit of truth in chaos, for courage in the face of opposition, for quiet reflection in the storm that rested always on faithfulness to truth as close as we could get to it. Thus, I told him, she was an ideal and served as one in my classes and would increasingly be seen so in 150 years when this terrible episode is examined by more enlightened folk than we have around us today. ~~Then~~ I turned to the Oliver Stone offer.

I asked questions of it. Can one really tie down integrity in a contract? Would not the film have to be made and shown and the reality of a possible misuse displayed before being able to take legal action? Does not the law require an object to issue before action? etc. If this occurred the damage would have occurred and nothing could change its impact. I did not stress, but I mentioned the seeming irrational aspects of the offer. I put it more in terms of why use Sylvia?

I suggested that the money was really negligible amounts. He then went over the offer and how he looked at it in considerable detail attempting it seemed to me to make a logical case out of selling the right, but actually he was, it seemed evident at the end of the conversation, putting my comments into his mental apparatus somehow. It seemed to be his way of memorizing points. I repeated my basic comments. I never said do not do it. I emphasized what was involved in such a decision and what flowed from it in terms of the great quest for clarity in the Kennedy assassination and in sustaining Sylvia's ideas and ideals. If he had point blank asked me I would have told him do not do it. He concluded this part of the conversation by saying Oliver Stone might phone me to discuss the questions. I said fine I would like to converse with him and appreciated the opportunity to speak on the JFK subject to anyone of weight.

This fused off into the Meagher collection being held as I understand it in storage at Hood College. This subject came up incidental to the conversation, perhaps suggested by my comments on Sylvia and perhaps generated by his references to what to do with the possible 25 thousand dollars. He observed in terms that meant he was executor that that among the things to be done with the money would be having special conferences at Hood. I said certainly, and mentioned other things that could occur in academic terms and for scholars there, that are done the nation over all the time and usually funded by state grants from Humanity committees, Arts Councils, and the like, or federal grants from the Endowments or from foundations.

The papers at Hood did then come up expressly in my conversation with Greg Stone and he referred to them in terms of Hood's possession and use.

He asked me about Melanson's rotten book on Oswald at the end of the conversation. Did I review it? Obviously from the word choice he had been in conversations with Melanson and knew I had been selected to read it--although this was not clear to me how Melanson and thus Greg could have known it for the terms of the contract with Praeger were clear. It does not matter of course. I told him I thought it was a bad book, hastily done, with no references to the great bulk of material available and gave him several points I had just found in Harold Weisberg's archives and their import. He immediately in a voice tone change and a speed up in delivery asked me if I thought Melanson was a bad man? I said no. But that the book was bad. I kept everything on the book and steered away from character especially so as I had kept ~~this~~ this same thrust to my arguments and comments with him through the years; and, also, I think now, but perhaps I read this into it now--I do not think I do--I had a ~~rp~~ ~~sxxx~~ subliminal suggestion or sense from the tenor of voice, vocabulary shift, et al., that something bothered him on this point.

This last conversation with Greg ended on this note and with a promise to contact me quite soon to discuss the Oliver Stone thing. His manner of speaking, the flow of the conversation, and his tug and pull in points were quite different from previous conversations; he seemed to be at ease. He told me he was closing up shop in Los Angeles and abandoning the project, intending to move into something different. I remarked to my wife after the phone call that Greg seems to be in fine shape. Indeed all things pointed to the future in some way; not to an end. Saturday February 2 Harold told me he had taken his life on the 29th, The Post reporting it the 2d. David

Gregory Stone

A Remembrance

On January 29, 1991, Gregory Stone died. A young man of principle, of idealism, of concern, he possessed the courage of his high order convictions, a trait all too rare in this worn and lost world today. He deeply believed that a right-ordered world ought come into existence, clearly one was not present for his generation, but was possible he did firmly articulate. He principally structured his purposes around exceptional and in many ways heroic efforts to define and to preserve the documentary evidence of the Robert Kennedy assassination.

The utilization of these records by scholars would open a window to examine the institutional order of society at a particularly key juncture, leading to definition of the right organizing principles of these systems of law, justice, civil rights, press, academic freedom of inquiry, investigative agencies, and politics. The dynamic regnant in the act of inquiry itself revitalizes the social order. Such was the ennobling vision of his life's purpose, a purpose not given to him in a ready-made plan or discovered in a book, but one he defined in the course of his toil.

He entered into social concerns fresh out of Oberlin

College when he joined the political campaigns and purposes of Congressman Lowenstein of New York City. When Senator Robert Kennedy ran for the presidency in 1968 Congressman Lowenstein and a coterie of young people around him, all highly idealistic, joined with vigor. The assassination of Senator Kennedy crushed not merely the hopes of Gregory Stone that sound principles of government concerned with construction of a better world could be put in place, a positive view, but also shattered his ideals that the system functioned properly. A more fundamental inquiry into the nature of society was needed.

Almost immediately the failure of the investigation into the assassination revealed itself to anyone of candid views. With Congressman Lowenstein he investigated the crime; their findings revealed not only a conspiracy slew the Senator, but also that the investigation had been controlled by local and federal officials. When Congressman Lowenstein died, Gregory Stone continued to work on what he perceived as a major issue; a careful scientific study of the evidentiary base devoid of theory or speculation was imperative. Soon he realized more fully the records necessary to his investigation's proper conclusion had to be obtained. The Los Angeles Police Department and Federal Bureau of Investigation held the records.

These institutions resisted in every way possible efforts to force the release of their records, a problem of monumental difficulty. But a second problem emerged. Among

the citizens who had delved into the crime there had appeared a number of critics, individuals whose approaches and attitudes clashed frequently with objectivity and who raised a barrier of a second kind to obtaining the necessary evidence. Gregory Stone's activities turned for many years around resolving these twin problems.

A major strength turned out to be a major weakness, a paradox not readily understood except in the context of the arena in which he worked. He enjoyed the company of others, was a good conversationalist, polite, sensitive to the feelings of others, alert to issues, possessed of a keen sense of humor. In normal situations this works to the advantage of the man, but not in his quest. So frequently comrades not similarly motivated or endowed with higher qualities or flawed in some mundane ways can inculcate distorted estimates of evidence, suggest paths to follow not based on hard experience, draw conclusions not braced with insight.

In driving to reach his goals he consequently had to come to terms with the problems of friends. In questions of great moment like the inquiry into the Robert Kennedy assassination one must perforce stand alone; yet, how to stand alone when one's mind, one's tools of judgment, one's approaches to issues have not been perfected. But it was one of the qualities of Gregory Stone that he realized the contradiction and the paradox. In the later weeks of his life he clearly was reaching to render judgments detached

from the personal and was persistently grappling with the issue of standing apart from yet in the issue.

His task was great and it was hard to know even how to proceed, yet rally support, financing, press, and politics to its standard. That he persisted as long as he did is a mark of great courage. Near the end of his life he had concluded that he would divest himself of the subject and turn to other fields, ones he not share with me, but ones he obviously had thought about and with some clarity of purpose. He had successfully aided in the release of a vast amount of records, had raised the issue of Robert Kennedy's assassination to the level of respectability for inquiry, and had defined some pertinent avenues for future investigation.

To one not privy to the nature of his undertaking and to the extraordinary issues involved his accomplishments might seem to appear average. But to those who have intimate knowledge of the federal and local difficulties, the barriers raised to freedom of information, and the inordinate impediments posed by the failure of media, politics, and often critics his accomplishments were exceptional.

All who knew him respected him. They might differ with his approaches, his judgments, his plans but they knew he carried no secret agendas; he was a man of principle and integrity. To every one who had grown to know Gregory Stone over the years his death saddened them.

David R. Wrone

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Stevens Point, Wisconsin