

George Gardner, newsroom
Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20071

12/14/91

Dear George,

Sitting and thinking over the last of my daily coffee station I decided that last night's CBS News treatment of Stone and his exploitation confirms your judgement that any attention will help the film. I also believe that this is not necessarily the result and that last night's treatment was lousy journalism, even for TV, and that what was aired was heavily edited in New York to eliminate some of what it got from Washington and to add what Rather wanted.

I realize now that my mind actually wandered while I was trying to pay attention to what was aired. I was asking myself what in the world they were doing airing so much of what Stone said that is not relevant to responsible reporting of his movie.

CBS was actually promoting the movie to Stone's generation at least and certainly to some current young adults. I suppose these two groups represent the majority of movie goers.

I found it hard to believe that there was any journalistic reason for Rather's invocation of the Warren Report as a model of perfection and correctness, for any mention of it at all. I certainly, from the questions he asked me here, believe this was not what Phillips produced, although some of his Stone interview can be interpreted otherwise.

As I think back, probably incompletely, over TV news of the past I cannot recall any segment so largely editorializing. The brevity from me is the only basis for any of that in this segment that I can recall and that little bit was not, I think, enough to warrant all that editorializing about his rewriting of history, use of theories and fiction.

Rather appears to be galled by the justified but enormously exaggerated criticism of his goofing in his first JFK assassination reporting, when he was permitted to see the Kapruder film and said the opposite of the truth, that it showed JFK moving violently backward. The violent movement was forward. Then also he has his participation in some bad CBS "specials" to justify, in his own mind, I think.

I'll be interested if when he gets here later this morning Brian ^{Phillips} had any comment on that segment. From what he said Nightline will not be as brief.

If you hear anything about how CBS evolved what it did, I'd like to know. Not about why they used so little of me but why so much that was so extraneous.

If the Post is invited to the preview of the movie on the 18th I'm sure it won't be you. I hope you'll ask the reporter to tape all that is said, particularly by Stone, because I'd like very much to have it for the historical record.

I do not expect much if any reaction to this but it is also possible that to the mass of the unthinking and uninformed the editorializing may be what they remember. I hope so!

Best,

George Gardner

What can be expected of the Rather/48 Hours Stone/JFK show:

First ~~if~~ I heard of this show, several weeks ago, was in a call from Mary Hoonan of its staff. I now (2/2/92) have no recollection of what she asked and I ~~replied~~ but I ~~am~~ certain that I responded truthfully and accurately, perhaps in more detail than she ~~wa~~ wanted, although I have no recollection of any indication of that. I believe it was not a brief call and that as always I offered access to ~~as~~ all I have and also said I could not ~~s~~ risk going to Washington.

I have offered access to my correspondence to all reporters who phoned so I ~~am~~ sure I offered them to CBS, along with all else I have that is relevant.

~~As~~ As soon as I learned that it was to be Rather's show I was certain I'd hear no more. Before learning that I believed ~~that~~ that CBS, having its own past to uphold if not defend it would not be interested in me or anything I could offer it.

By now the show must be completed and ready to show. I have not heard any more from anyone at CBS.