

Stone and the Re-Writing of History

by

Harold Weisberg

Response to the editor of the New York Times
Op-Ed editor on 'Oliver Stone's piece

Table of Contents

	Page
I. Stone's December 20 Op Ed Piece.....	1
II. Weisberg's history of his battle against the movie JFK.....	2
III. Stone and his claim to portray accurate history.....	4
IV. Weisberg's personal history.....	4
V. Weisberg's work on the assassination.....	6

December 23, 1991

Op-Ed Editor
The New York Times
229 W. 43 St.
New York, N.Y. 10036

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Md. 21702
12/23/91

Dear Editor,

I. Stone's December 20 New York Times Op-Ed Piece
Oliver Stone, like the hero of his crass and obvious
commercialization and exploitation of the JFK assassination, has
great difficulty telling the truth even by accident.

He asks in his December 20 op-ed page article, "Who Is
Rewriting History?" with unparalleled arrogance and contempt for
truth because he knows that in his movie as well as in this
article he rewrote the history of the JFK assassination and his
own history in making the movie and because in his article he
rewrites the history of criticism of his movie, in fact, what it
is all about.

"History may be too important to leave to newsmen," he says.
The record is clear: it cannot be left to the Oliver Stones who
exploit and commercialize great tragedies and present themselves
as serving the people and democratic society in their greed and
dishonesty.

Because I am the one who caused the exposure of the fraud and
travesty of Stone's movie I not only know why I did it - I wrote
and warned/told Stone before he started shooting, on February 8,
1990.

He prefers fighting the battles of Viet Nam all over again in his article but I made no mention of it.

II. Weisberg's history of his battle against JFK

I enclose copies of my letters to him and you can see for yourself that this was not only not what I wrote him about, it was not even in my mind.

When some time passed and Stone did not respond and I was given a copy of his script and was shocked at its crude and political rewriting of the fact of the crime and of Garrison's incredible irresponsibility I decided, not the CIA, as Stone has said over and over again, that what he was up to required exposure.

It is obvious, my first letter preceding his first shooting by several months, that if Stone were an honest man determined to make an honest movie he had ample time to junk the script based on his embellishment of what he knew was a deliberately dishonest book and begin fresh.

I have known George Lardner for 25 years. While there is much on which we do not agree I know him to be a conscientious and accurate reporter. I gave him the script and those records he wanted of my own work in New Orleans relating to Garrison. His article was completely accurate. Stone's response was, to say the least, not accurate.

My interest in New Orleans and most of my work there had to do with Oswald's career there. It turned into damage control before the Shaw trial. In my first letter to Stone I told him how

when Garrison's staff was unable to talk him out of his outrageous plan for commemorating the fifth anniversary of the JFK assassination and asked me to try I did it.

Among other things he was actually going to charge Robert Perrin, former husband of a Warren Commission witness, who to Garrison's knowledge had killed himself in New Orleans in 1962, with being a Grassy Knoll assassin in Dallas in 1963!

Like Stone, Garrison just made "history" up as he went. I offered Stone all the documentation and information he might want about this and all else. I did not go into much of what I could have because what I had written was already too long and because I wanted to know that he was interested before revealing all the absolute insanity of Garrison's that alas too late I was able to prevent.

I did not, for example, send him my copy of the report on Perrin's suicide that Garrison himself underscored.

I have enough of my report on my investigation of this monstrous adventure in my files and Lardner had all of that before he wrote his greatly understated and completely accurate article. I have copies of a number of relevant Garrison staff memos and of some of the work his investigators did for me to save him and the nation from what he was about to do.

You can make your own evaluation of Stone and what he intended if you read my letter to which he did not respond. You can evaluate his proceeding with what he knew was dishonest after getting this letter.

The false accusations Stone hurls at those who reported

honestly what he does not like he cannot address to me. In fact, he never mentions my name except once to the Washington Post. I wrote the first book on the Warren Commission and five more on it and the other official investigations. I filed a series of difficult, costly and time-consuming FOIA lawsuits through which I obtained about a quarter of a million pages of those very records that Stone, knowing this, uses your column to demand to be released!

Everybody working in the field knows that I give unsupervised access to all who write on the subject. Stone knew it and his so-called "research coordinator" knew it. Neither had any interest at all. The one response I got for, not from Stone, also enclosed, is a thinly-disguised offer of a bribe.

III. Stone and his claim to portray accurate history

Stone began promoting his movie and himself by telling the world that he would be recording their history for the people and in it would tell them who killed their President, why and how. He knew he could not and would not and would instead give his rewriting of it based on the mendacity of the Garrison vehicle, his book, "On the Trail of the Assassins". That is the one trail Garrison never took.

IV. Weisberg's personal history

Unlike the authors of other assassination books that get attention, I am not a conspiracy theorist. My books are factual and they amount to a rather large study of the working of the

basic institutions of our society in that time of great stress and since. They brought to light most of what is factual and has been published about this crime. When it is possible I expose the contrived theories as invalid or worse. But I am, in fact, the most severe critic of the Commission and the executive agencies.

My earlier experience is that of a reporter, an investigative reporter, a Senate investigator and editor, and of a World War II intelligence analyst (OSS). I came to this work with a different background, with prior professional experience in related fields.

What I have that is factual is more than enough to make a book on this hoax but I am not up to that now. By coincidence, before the mail brought me a copy of Stone's indecent diatribe that he knew very well would promote his movie, having heard that he had written this article, I began the draft of a lead and summary for a proposed Sunday Magazine article. These sanctimonious monsters who toy with our history and our tragedies for their personal benefit cry out for exposure. I am not sure that I am up to it and I know that anything I now write will require editing. I explain.

I am now almost 79. I have survived a number of surgeries two of which I was not expected to survive. As a result of them and what caused some of them I am weak and severely limited in what I can do and am medically-permitted to do. I cannot stand still other than momentarily, am limited in the use of stairs when most of these records are in our basement, and thus I have only limited access to my own files. I have violated medical instructions in not getting up and walking around the house while

writing this. When I forget as I did the blood does not return as it should from my lower extremities and that tires me more. I must sit with my legs elevated, which means the typewriter to one side.

V. Weisberg's work on the assassination

But my work is accurate. For all the effort by a number of agencies and those who do not like my work, no serious error has been complained of and there are almost no minor errors.

Those at the Times who knew my work, like Peter Kihss and Martin Waldrom (Mo became a dear friend and visited us when he could) are dead or, like Wendell Rawls and John Crewdson and perhaps others I do not remember, seem no longer to be with the Times.

David Wrone, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point and Gerald McKnight, professor of history at local Hood College, are among those who can give you credentials as evaluated by professionals who are also subject experts.

All I have, which includes about 60 file cabinets of the records Stone has long complained are suppressed, will be a permanent, free public archive at Hood, with no quid pro quo. Thus as they are now, they will always be available, including to the Times.

I add that when Stone talks about "research" and "information" he is talking about theories and not fact. He had mostly conspiracy nuts as his consultants, plus a few on whose

names he could trade. I will not see the movie, I have read only an early script, but I am well familiar with Garrison's rewriting of his own history and that compendium of all the nutty theories by Jim Marrs, "Crossfire", the basis of Stone's movie. There is no fact in the movie other than that the President was assassinated and that Jack Ruby killed Oswald. This tells the people only what they knew. The rest misleads, deceives and confuses them and in this still another of the many works that amount to and are used as self-justification by those agencies that failed to meet their responsibilities. Please excuse my typing and my haste.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

Home Video

Peter M. Nichols

■ **Movie Monitor** rates films for rental stores as they come out ■ **Less quality but under \$10.**

Rating the Films

Customers may not be aware of it, but many video stores play their own rating game. Each week The Movie Monitor is sent to 5,000 stores nationwide by Entertainment Resource Associates of Glen Rock, N.J. It grades movies that are about to be bought by stores for rental.

The Monitor assesses films according to genre, star power, reviews, box-office performance and how long the film can be expected to continue renting. The ratings send strong signals to dealers: stock up on the winners and avoid the losers as assiduously as they were ignored at the local cineplex.

Take the film "Ruby," released on tape yesterday by Columbia Tri-Star. Despite generally favorable reviews ("rudely entertaining ... unreasonably watchable," wrote Vincent Canby in The New York Times), the film about the man who shot Lee Harvey Oswald had a fleeting theatrical run in the spring. Whatever its merits, "Ruby" played in the shadow of "J. F. K.," the Oliver Stone blockbuster. The Monitor predicts it will have the same problem on tape.

"Big flop in theaters. Enough J. F. K. Buy light," the Monitor advises in its thumbnail summation. Some of "Ruby's" letter grades are-



Triumph Releasing

Movie Monitor magazine, which rates how films will fare in the video rental market, predicts that the cassette version of "Ruby," which stars Danny Aiello, will go the way of the movie.

n't encouraging. In star power the film, which stars Danny Aiello, scores an M for medium. Graded by reviews on a scale from A to F, "Ruby" scores a C. But the crucial mark is in the rental longevity column, where the film scores a V for very low, meaning one to two weeks.

For other films, Monitor summations are also to the point: "New Zealand import looks as dumb as it sounds"; "Cheap horror sequels aren't cutting it"; "why pay big bucks for a TV pilot re-run?" But the service doesn't hesitate to pick sleepers. For example, "The Mambo Kings," to be released in September, "Good film!" says the Monitor. "Will rent much better on video" than it played in theaters.

Under \$10

In the fall, Paramount plans to release 14 films taped in an improved extended-play mode developed by Rank Video Services America, the country's largest duplicator. In the past extended play, which slows the recording speed and allows more film to be packed onto less tape, has meant a poor visual image, but Paramount says the quality has been improved enough to allow the studio to try some movies in the stores. Don't expect "Wayne's World" or other big titles. In the first batch of films are "Blood and Roses," "War of the Gargantuas" and other titles with a B flavor. Still, the price will be under \$10, and retailers say sales could explode.

New Video Releases

Juice
1992. Paramount. \$91.95. Laser disk, \$34.95. 1 hour 35 minutes. Closed captioned. R.

It's a familiar scenario: four young friends from Harlem succumb to violence. When Bishop (Tupac Shakur) lets his machismo get the better of him, the others get caught on his murder spree. Q (short for Quincy) (Omar Epps) is the sensitive, talented one. Steel (Jermaine Hopkins) and Rahcem (Khalil Kain) are good sorts who might have taken a different turn under other circumstances. The director Ernest R. Dickerson is Spike



countryside the large families of an engaged couple settle down for an hours-long feast that will both try them and unite them. The bride is a farm girl from a rough-hewn family given to earthy repartee and free style dining that at one point includes the accidental discharging of a shotgun at the table. On the other side of the marital equation, composed and abashed, are the groom's people, aristocratic types from Bologna. Despite the differences, Pupi Avati's film celebrates their reaching out for one another and the most "minute" details, from the dough-kneading to the rabbit cleaning, and indeed, to