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JFK

New film sparks reactions from valley residents who have their own ideas about the Kennedy assassination

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The Desert Sun

If you're obsessed with theories about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, you're not alone.

Director Oliver Stone's new film, "JFK," has re-kindled a national obsession that began 28 years ago.

Conspiracy theories abound in the Coachella Valley, home of former president Gerald Ford, a member of the Warren Commission that concluded a single gunman killed the President.

In 25 responses to a solicitation for opinions, only two readers said they believed Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

Those who responded all said they're after the truth. And they won't stop reading and asking questions until they get it.

"It's a very serious hobby," said 42-year-old Gary Stone of La Quinta, who works part-time at Pete Bruni's Golf Shop in Rancho Mirage. For 10 years, he has co-hosted a San Francisco talk show on KSFO with Noah Griffin on the anniversary of Kennedy's death.

After years of interviews with authors, witnesses and key players, he's formed his own conclusions: "It reeks of an intelligence agency coup." Why? To keep Kennedy from a second presidential term. Who? Anti-Castro Cubans, the FBI, CIA and organized crime, he said.

"380 of 400 books say the same thing," Stone said.

"It was definitely a conspiracy," said 78-year-old Marge Sigler of Indio. "I've read the books as they come out. It's beginning to become such wide knowledge that things aren't what they seem."

Sigler, a federal government employee for 13 years, said she has followed politics all her life. She said the latest book she read, Mark Lane's "Plausible Denial," helped her to tear aside "the curtain of lies."

"What is quite distressing to me, and any lover of truth, is that at a court trial in a United States District Court on Feb. 6, 1985, very credible evidence was brought forth that it was our own CIA that was principally involved in the Kennedy assassination."

Terry Masters of Palm Springs, known as Bob Clark as a radio personality on KPSI-FM, was hooked on intrigue after he heard an interview with David Lifton, author of "Best Evidence," on KPSI-AM talk radio 10 months ago. Since then, his quest for truth has included a live broadcast this November from Dallas on the anniversary of Kennedy's death.

"It consumes my extra time," said Masters, 36. "I never believed Oswald shot him. It is so obvious this is a conspiracy still being covered (up) today."

Masters is convinced the assassination was a conspiracy by the CIA covered up by the

FBI. After seeing the Hollywood premiere of "JFK" before its official release Friday, he calls Oliver Stone's venture "risky business" on a national scale. "He takes a chance with this film," Masters said.

Susan Christiansen of Yucca Valley, 41, started asking questions after a close friend was pronounced missing in action during the Vietnam War. She traced him to a hospital in Tokyo. After he came home, she became

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restless with the purported reasons behind Vietnam. So she called the Pentagon and asked, "Why?"

Receiving no answer, she spent the next five years talking to at least 300 people in the veteran community, she said. Her conclu-

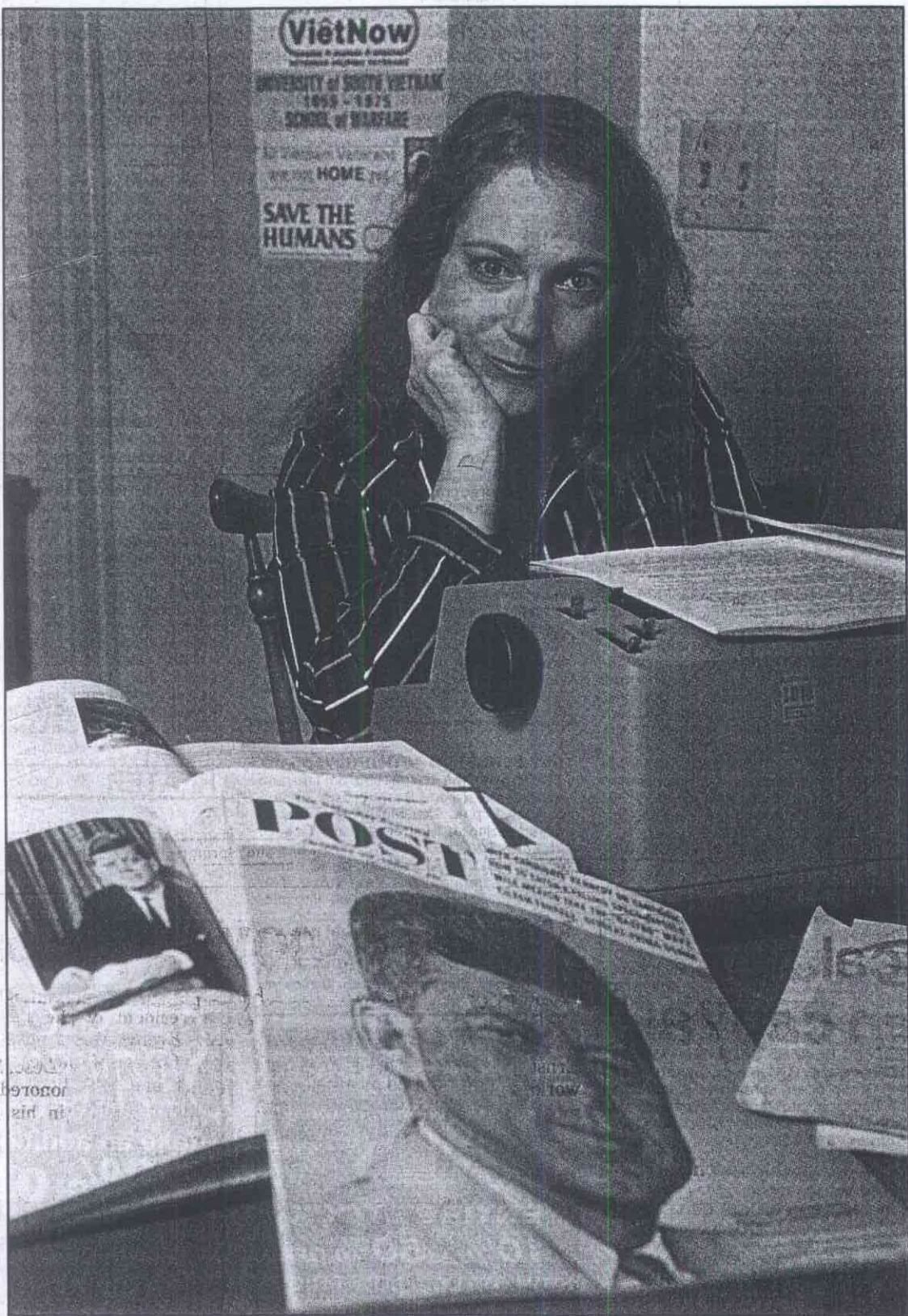
sion: She traces it back to the assassination of Kennedy as part of a Mafia conspiracy to keep drug trafficking open in the Golden Triangle.

"If only America had access to a time machine and could get a hold of records still sealed ..." she said. "We can't change our past, but we can make a decision about who we put in office today."

Ray Baca of Palm Springs, 69, spent 20

years in diplomatic service stationed in Central America, where he was at the time of the assassination. A common feeling among the Latin American countries, he said, is that then-Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson plotted Kennedy's death to assume the presidency.

"They still talk about it there today as the only way Johnson could have become president," Baca said.



RIGO PEÑA/The Desert Sun

VIETNAM, DRUG-TRAFFICKING LINK: Susan Christiansen of Yucca Valley sits behind her typewriter with some of her Kennedy assassi-

nation research. "If only America had access to a time machine and could get a hold of records still sealed . . ."

Ray Baca:

He was in diplomatic service in Nicaragua when news of the assassination spread. His reaction: "It was like losing someone in the family. The Nicaraguans came by the hundreds and stood in receiving lines."



Susan Christiansen:

At the time of the assassination, she was in grammar school in Chicago. She remembers people from janitors to teachers sobbing in the streets. Her reaction: "This can't happen in America."



Gary Stone:

In ninth grade in San Bernardino, Stone remembers being in woodshop when he heard the news. "I had plans to join the Peace Corps out of college, and two months after Johnson assumed the presidency, I was disheartened."



Marge Sigler:

Then 50 years old, Sigler was on vacation with her family in Oregon when the television report came on. "My heart just plummeted. It was just so shocking."



Terry Masters:

In third grade in Sacramento, he remembers hearing the principal's voice over the classroom public announcement system. "I just thought Kennedy was so good. It really affected me."

