

Other Voices

John Kennedy misunderstood the fundamental political organization of this country. He THOUGHT he was president and that his job was to bring about peace in the world.

The Evening Sun

Monday, March 23, 1992

Two views of 'J.F.K.'

Show biz has overwhelmed the Kennedy assassination . . .

HOW BUSINESS has discovered the John F. Kennedy assassination.

Everybody is getting into the act. We have all sorts of phony theories that help hucksters sell themselves as expert witnesses, write and promote books and films and generally muck up the story of an American tragedy.

To those of us who have spent years in serious study of the assassination, the hype is extremely frustrating. We know what's wheat and what's chaff, what's based on solid evidence and what's

created from thin air to promote someone's half-cocked theory.

But the public doesn't know enough to differentiate, and that's the source of the frustration. It's like being close to discovering a cure for cancer after years of research, only to read a screaming headline one morning that the cure's been found and it's the application of leeches.

My own book, "High Treason," was on the *New York Times*' best-seller list for much of the last two winters, but what monkey I've made on the work I've plowed back into my research into the assassination. Unlike most others investigating the Kennedy murder, I've interviewed nearly every medical witness and examined hundreds of documents — those that have not been kept secret all these years. (I believe release of those documents will tell us next to nothing about what really happened. Former Pres-

dent Gerald Ford has seen them and says there is nothing there; I believe him. But the documents should not have been kept secret in the first place.)

All of this makes my evaluation of the various assassination theories worth something, and here it is:

□ **The Oliver Stone movie, "J.F.K."** Stone is right about a conspiracy, but polls show 80 percent of Americans already believed there was a conspiracy, so this film isn't likely to change many minds. Besides, it's badly flawed. By making a hero of Jim Garrison, it makes a cartoon of the case.

Some possible evidence of conspiracy is presented in the film's courtroom scene, but the opinions of "Mr. X," even if well-informed, are evidence of nothing. The problem with "J.F.K." is that evidence is presented in such a flash that it is lost in an avalanche of special effects, sensationalism, in a kaleidoscope of images that turns so quickly as to be meaningless.

We are assaulted with the personal crusade of a whimsical cartoon character (Kevin Costner, playing Garrison with a Southern accent Garrison doesn't have) and the disgusting atmosphere of the underground fringe. We cannot possibly understand what the conspiracy is about unless we have been violently sodomized, as one of the characters tells us is a prerequisite for understanding.

Moreover, the use of such awful profanity and obscenity totally destroys the real

meaning that we are told is there. How could anyone possibly care what happened to John Kennedy after seeing such an exercise in cinematic filth and pyrotechnics? Stone, a man clearly lacking in taste, is like so many writers of phony books on the case — a demagogue playing to the lowest common denominator. This is an amateur movie that cannot change minds at all, cannot move those who are already decided and cannot have the great power that a truly honest documentary might have.

□ **The accidental shooting theory.**

Another recent fraudulent theory (Other Voices, Feb. 27) is that the president was shot accidentally by a Secret Service man in the car following his. This theory doesn't work because it requires falsification of the autopsy findings on the trajectory of the bullet that killed Kennedy.

□ **The theory that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.**

The first of many improbable theories, of course, was that put forward by the Warren Commission: that just two bullets struck both Kennedy and Texas Gov. John Connally. But the bullet that exploded in Kennedy's head could not have been the same type that was alleged to have passed through both men and to have come out undamaged. Since that theory we have heard numerous crazy ideas, including the one that the president, like Elvis Presley, lives to this day (but in a 28-year coma).

What, then, did happen? There is considerable evidence that Os-

wald was framed. The nitrate tests of Oswald's face were negative, meaning he could not have fired a rifle the day of the killing. There were no fingerprints on either of the two weapons he may have had. There is no evidence the guns were fired that fatal day. Oswald was seen on the second floor of the Texas Book Depository moments before the assassination — and seen there 90 seconds after the last shot. He could not possibly have gone to the sixth floor and back in the time it took to kill the president.

Unknown to President Kennedy, three members of his administration, Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy and Dean Rusk, convened a secret commission which eventually issued a paper known as the "Report From Iron Mountain on the Possibility and Desirability of Peace." The paper's conclusion was that "lasting peace, while not theo-

retically impossible, is probably unattainable; even if it could be achieved it would almost certainly not be in the best interests of a stable society to achieve it."

John Kennedy misunderstood the fundamental political organization of this country. He thought he was president and that his job was to bring about peace in the world. The president was surrounded by men who wanted fundamental changes in the national structure, who wanted the Vietnam War and who plunged us deeply into it after they eliminated their president.

We were never supposed to see this outrageous plan for America and the world by truly powerful men for whom elections were merely an inconvenience.

Harrison E. Livingstone's second book, "High Treason 2," has just been issued by Carroll & Graf. He writes from Baltimore.

... And tarnished Earl Warren

