

## JFK controversy continues

### Kennedy expert disputes Stone's version of assassination

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The Pendulum

Two top Kennedy experts will hold a forum discussion of Oliver Stone's controversial film *JFK* on Thursday, Feb. 20 at 8 p.m. in the Fine Arts Theatre.

Former "advance man" for Kennedy, Jerry Bruno set up much of the president's travels, as well as the fateful trip to Dallas. Also speaking is L. Richardson Preyer, chairman of a congressional subcommittee that reexamined the Kennedy assassination from 1969 to 1980.

November 22, 1963 is a date that many Americans will never forget, when President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated as his motorcade traveled through Dallas.

Lee Harvey Oswald was quickly pegged as the fanatical lone assassin, but once the smoke cleared, America smelled a rat. Almost 30 years and some 600 books of conspiracy theories later, the public is still looking for the killer of its king.

Renegade director Oliver Stone opened a new can of worms with *JFK*. The movie is based on the investigation of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, who brought the only Kennedy conspiracy case to trial. The film points fingers at the CIA, the armed forces, anti-Castro Cubans, the Mafia, and even Vice President Lyndon Johnson.

Critics are up in arms about Stone's blending of original and reproduced footage, of fact and theory, fearing that the movie may confuse the less informed viewer.

*The Pendulum* recently spoke to L. Richardson Preyer about the film, its repercussions and what he believes really happened that day.

**Pendulum:** How do you feel about Oliver Stone's film *JFK*?

**Preyer:** It's an exciting film. It moves along so fast, at such a rush, it stirs up such a cloud of dust that you don't stop to ask yourself if there's any basis in fact.

While it's an exciting film, it really has little relation to what actually happened. If you view it as fiction, that's fine. You can enjoy it that way. But I think it's pretty clear that Oliver Stone means for it to be taken as the truth. It's just a little alarming... that this will be the final image in people's minds about what happened.

**Pendulum:** You don't give any credence to any of his arguments in the film?



Photo courtesy of the *Times-News*.  
Onlookers greet J.F.K. and his wife at the airport. He was assassinated later that day.

**Preyer:** I agree and [the Committee] agrees with several of the points. One, that the Warren Commission did a limited job, that they did a very good job of pinning it on Oswald, but they didn't look beyond that.

And we also agree that there was a second shooter. That was based on acoustic evidence, backed up by corroborating circumstances. So we agree that the Warren Commission didn't go far enough and that there was a second shooter, but we disagree with his version of it.

As opposed to a first shooter and a second shooter, he says Oswald didn't do it. He also says he didn't kill Officer Tippett, although the murder of Tippett had six eyewitnesses. The physical evidence, the bullet, the ballistic test shows that Oswald's was the pistol used to kill him. You just can't deny evidence like that.

**Pendulum:** Why have the House Select Committee files been sealed [until 2029] and not been made available to the public?

**Preyer:** We have agreed that we ought to go ahead and release those things. [House Select Committee on Assassinations chairman] Louis Stokes, if he hasn't already done it, is going to make a motion in Congress to release them.

The reason they were sealed was because of James Earl Ray in the Martin Luther King report [also re-investigated]. A number of witnesses would not testify against Ray unless they were promised secrecy, promised that their names and testimonies wouldn't be revealed until after his death, because they were afraid he would kill them.

I don't think we're going to release the King files, although it may be decided to release all of them and protect the names.

In the Kennedy case, most of the stuff there is allegations and charges against people in very embarrassing activities for which there is absolutely no evidence. You know, the kind of thing where someone calls me and says, 'I know who killed the President,' so I said, 'Who?' and they said, 'Lady Bird Johnson.' So there's a lot of that kind of stuff with no evidence to support it.

**Pendulum:** Do you feel that Stone is leading people astray by the way he has created the film, especially the younger generation?

**Preyer:** I don't think there's any doubt about that. For example, making Jim Garrison the hero is totally false to the truth. The trial doesn't present the actual key witnesses of the trial. He has a make-believe witness who sums up the case, which is something that didn't even

happen in the courtroom.

I think it's very clear that the message he's sending is that 'This is what happened.' You don't get the feeling that he's speculating. I think it's really very disturbing that this is going to be the image left in young people's minds, that this is what happened and that they will have this fear of the establishment in control.

In a democracy, you have to have a certain minimum amount of credibility for your institutions, like your armed forces, your law enforcement. In a democracy, when you plant this idea that evil is being done by people behind the scenes, it really breaks down the democratic process.

**Pendulum:** Stone seems to feel, as Garrison said in the movie, that a government you can't believe in or that lies to you, which of course is speculation, isn't worth preserving. He is very adamant that there is corruption and that the government is going to continue to support that there's not.

**Preyer:** Well, recently there's been many reasons not to trust the government, with the Vietnam War, the Iran-Contra affair. The Thomas confirmation hearings were a disaster. But on the whole, through the years, the committee hearing and confirmation hearings have generally been implemented well.

There's nothing behind the scenes causing these things. It's just terrible leadership and a bunch of crooks.

And that kind of thing really got Stone stirred up, and I don't blame him. Vietnam, Watergate and some other things provided the motivation and the heat behind it.

We know who killed the president. The thing Stone finds hard to accept is that the standard example of an assassination in this country is not a political assassin. Most assassinations in the rest of the world are political, to remove somebody from power. But that is not the pattern in this country. Our pattern is the lone nut killer.

Garfield's assassination looked a lot like this. Like Oswald, [Garfield's assassin] was a 'loser,' a 'nobody.' But he got up the courage to assassinate Garfield by reading radical social papers. He read those, he got himself good and angry, and next thing you know, he shot him. Oswald was a leader of these radical groups.

**Pendulum:** What about the argument that most assassins make a big show of their attempt and don't deny it, whereas Oswald said, 'I'm a patsy?'

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