

**Documentary on super-journalist**

# I.F. Stone weeds fact from government fiction

By WARREN CLEMENTS

For 19 years, Isidor Feinstein (Izy) Stone researched, wrote, published, edited and proof-read the four-page mini-tabloid I.F. Stone's Weekly.

He drafted regular reports on the Cold War, the atomic arms race, the military establishment, imperialism, and the denial of civil rights to blacks and of civil liberties to radicals. And when he discontinued his weekly in 1971 to devote his time to writing books, Stone's subscription list had grown from 5,300 to 70,000.

I.F. Stone's Weekly, a 62-minute black and white semi-documentary by Montrealer Jerry Bruck, Jr., explains why those 70,000 paid their annual fees.

Simply put, they wanted to share Stone's opinions on contemporary issues, views formulated after meticulous studies of government transcripts and newspaper reports.

Stone could select a political issue, weed pertinent reports from an incredible volume of foreign-language periodicals and radio reports, and isolate conflicting statements handed out by government spokesmen.

"In the job of covering a capitol, there really are certain basic assumptions you have to operate on," he remarked. "The first is that every government is run by liars, and nothing they say should be believed."

"And second, a government always reveals a good deal, if you take the trouble to really study what it says."

When the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission tried to undermine disarmament negotiations with the Russians, by maintaining that a proposed system of atomic test detection stations would be too far-flung to be effective, Stone contacted agencies halfway across the globe to reveal that the stations would be quite adequate.

Following the 1964 "attack" in the Gulf of Tonkin by the North Vietnamese navy on the U.S. Seventh Fleet, used as a pretext for Lyndon Johnson's air war against North Vietnam, Stone charged that the U.S. Fleet provoked the Vietnamese attack by shelling a neighbouring island; it was, he wrote, as though the Russian navy had shelled Cuba and expected the U.S. to watch the incident passively.

Stone's reaction to the lies, half-truths and deceptions of the government in Washington recalled an Agatha Christie sleuth slogging through mires of falsity to get at the truth. Bruck's movie, filmed from 1970 to 1973, captures Stone at this work — an owl-like, chunky man with a squeaky voice, regaling student audiences with tales of his biggest scoops, or poring through massive volumes with an awesome speed and intensity.

Many of the scenes Bruck shot himself, such as Stone upsetting a staid assembly of the establishment press at the George Polk awards banquet by reminding them that Polk, "the first journalistic victim of the Cold War", was murdered by the Greek police in the '40s while trying to report on the agony of the Greek people; or Stone at a cocktail party congratulating Walter Cronkite for CBS' The Selling of the Pentagon, while Cronkite backs away embarrassed by being congratulated by this radical, and mutters something about "we must get together some time."

Many of the other shots are products of Bruck's endless hours of searching film archives.

"Once you've had dinner with the Secretary of State," Stone tells Dick Cavett, commenting on the dangers of being an establishment reporter, "and he's asked your opinion on a complex subject, and you've told them what they ought to do, you feel

like a statesman. You wouldn't think of criticizing the great man, and you 'understand' that there are certain things the public ought not to know."

Cut to an ABC correspondent playing tennis with ex-Nixon public relations ace Ron Zeigler.

The film cuts between incisive and funny scenes, patched together for strong ironic effect; in this respect it is less a documentary than a pointed filmic essay.

With its checkerboard style and highly individual subject, the film is right at home in this post-Watergate era, preaching to a converted

audience just as Milhous: a White Comedy, released a few years back, appealed to audiences of Nixon-haters.

But I.F. Stone's Weekly goes deeper than Milhous. For one thing, whereas Milhous showed only one side of Nixon (the corrupt schemer — but then, was there another side?), Stone's Weekly shows both the foibles and virtues of its subject, through a series of telling interviews with past associates.

Stone emerges as a workaholic, obsessed with his task of explaining the hurly-burly of world events to his readers, and driving his small staff

with the manic dedication of a zealot.

But for all his compulsive activity, Stone remained a paragon of integrity; and on a personal level, he appears as an inspiring and endearing man who, in his own wry words, has made the leap from pariah to character in the public's estimation, and is on his way to becoming a national institution.

The film ends its brief run tonight at Cinema Lumiere, at College and Spadina, with Peter Watkins' The War Game as a double bill.

## Art from roaring Chevys

By GREG MARTIN

What do roaring '55 Chevys and souped-up racing cars communicate to you?

To 28-year-old artist Charles Whetstone, they mean everything.

Whetstone, who graduated from York last year, has been drawing cars since he was a little kid; the first drawing he made was of a '55 Dodge.

A nostalgia freak Whetstone is not. He draws cars, landscapes and different hard-edge realisms because he loves doing it.

Yet despite his intense love for cars, he maintains that "essentially my paintings are color areas, not cars or landscapes".

A painting needs to be a painting, and not a photograph, Whetstone said. Too many artists are concerned with detail and not enough emphasis is placed on the visual, aesthetic, technical and communicative aspects of painting.

Several of his works are currently on display in the Fine Arts Building.

Whetstone doesn't intend his works to be masculine statements,



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