

Stolen honor: The Moon connection

By Rory O'Connor
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The Sinclair Broadcasting Group – that wonderfully fair and balanced media firm that made news in April for refusing to run a Nightline program in which Ted Koppel read the names of American soldiers killed in Iraq – is up to its old political tricks again. This time the controversy centers on what WILL appear on as many as 62 television stations owned or managed by Sinclair: a suspect documentary highly critical of John Kerry's antiwar activities thirty years ago.

The film, "Stolen Honor: Wounds That Never Heal" is produced by Carlton Sherwood, a former reporter for the Washington Times, which of course is subsidized and controlled by the controversial Reverend Sun Myung Moon and his followers in the Unification Church.

Sherwood bills himself as a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist. According to its website, his film "investigates how John Kerry's actions during the Vietnam era impacted the treatment of American soldiers and POWs. Using John Kerry's own words, the documentary juxtaposes John Kerry's actions with the words of veterans who were still in Vietnam when John Kerry was leading the anti-war movement." And its publicity claims that Stolen Honor features devastating testimony by former POWs of the demoralizing impact of John Kerry's war-crimes accusations had on them more than 30 years ago. As Sherwood said in a March 12 story on (where else?) Fox News, "He knew as an officer that those were lies. It never happened. He was principally responsible for cementing the image of Vietnam veterans as drugged-out psychopaths who were totally unrestrained and who were a murderous hoard."

But what sort of investigations does Sherwood actually undertake? He won his Pulitzer for investigative reporting of a Catholic scandal involving the Pauline Fathers of Doylestown, Pennsylvania – but he also is well known for his subsequent spurious investigation of Moon's Unification Church. Sherwood maintains that when he began, he was hoping to uncover dirt about Moon, but ended up concluding that the

Rev and his followers "were and continued to be the victims of the worst kind of religious

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prejudice and racial bigotry this country has witnessed in over a century.”

A closer look at Sherwood’s “investigation” of the Moon organization, however, sheds considerable light on the Sherwood style of investigation – and thus on the credibility of the allegations contained in “Stolen Honor.” As revealed in my film “The Resurrection of Reverend Moon” which was broadcast in 1992 on the PBS documentary series Frontline, (<http://www.mediachannel.org/originals/moontranscript.shtml>) a Unification Church aide to Moon says he reviewed and changed Sherwood’s book before publication. As the aide noted in a letter I obtained, this was done in order to help the Unificationists best “silence critics.” Here’s an excerpt from the film transcript:

Narrator: “Is the New Birth Project continuing? In June 1991, *Inquisition*, a new, purportedly independent investigation of Moon’s 1982 tax fraud prosecution, was released by a Washington publisher, Regnery-Gateway. Its author, Carlton Sherwood, is a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter who once worked for the Washington Times.

“*Inquisition* has a curious history. It was printed once before, by an obscure publishing house called Andromeda. The phone number listed for Andromeda in a leading publishing directory is the home phone of former Reagan National Security Council official Roger Fontaine – also an ex-reporter at the Washington Times. When we called, Fontaine’s wife Judy answered and said she knew nothing about Andromeda.

“Then she told us that the company was bankrupt and that *Inquisition* was published by Regnery-Gateway. Alfred Regnery is the head of Regnery-Gateway.

“Regnery: ‘It is not unlike a lot of other books we have published. It is a story that deals with the First Amendment, which is something that is very dear to publishers, of course.’

“Narrator: Alfred Regnery was told by Carlton Sherwood that the Moon Organization would purchase one hundred thousand copies of *Inquisition* – at least according to former Washington Times editor James Whelan, another Regnery-Gateway author. But Alfred Regnery denies it.’

“Regnery: ‘I never said that to Jim, and I’ve never had any conversation with what’s his name – Bo?’

“Narrator: ‘Bo Hi Pak.

“Regnery: ‘I’m not even sure who he is.’

“Narrator: ‘One week after talking to Regnery, FRONTLINE obtained a copy of a letter addressed to Sun Myung Moon. The letter was written by James Gavin, a Moon aide.

“Gavin tells Moon he reviewed the ‘overall tone and factual contents’ of *Inquisition* before publication and suggested revisions. Gavin adds that the author ‘Mr. Sherwood has assured me that all this will be done when the manuscript is sent to the publisher.’ Gavin concludes by telling Moon, ‘When all of our suggestions have been incorporated, the book

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will be complete and in my opinion will make a significant impact.... In addition to silencing our critics now, the book should be invaluable in persuading others of our legitimacy for many years to come.' Although he refused an on-camera interview, Carlton Sherwood told Frontline that the Unification Movement exerted no editorial control over his book. When we visited Gavin's office in McLean, Virginia, our request for an interview was refused."

And here's how 'Stolen Honor' portrays Senator Kerry's antiwar activism, according to its transcript:

"In other wars, captured Americans subjected to the hell of an enemy prison were considered heroes. In other wars, they were not abandoned. In Vietnam, they were betrayed. Little did the American prisoners of war imagine that half a world away events were conspiring to make their precarious situation even more desperate. That an American Naval lieutenant after a four-month tour of duty in Vietnam was meeting secretly in an undisclosed location in Paris with a top enemy diplomat. That this same lieutenant would later join forces with Jane Fonda to form an antiwar group of so-called Vietnam veterans, some of whom would be later discovered as frauds who never set foot on a battlefield. All this culminating in John Kerry's Senate testimony that would be blared over loud speakers to convince our prisoners that back home they were being accused and abandoned. Enemy propagandists had found a new and willing accomplice."

Mark Hyman, Sinclair's vice-president for corporate relations (who doubles as a conservative news commentator on its stations) said the company would broadcast Stolen Honor because it is newsworthy. And as news, the documentary – which will be run commercial-free – may be exempt from federal regulations requiring equal time for Senator Kerry's campaign to respond. Instead, the Kerry camp is calling on supporters to boycott Sinclair advertisers and demonstrate against its stations, while a group of Democratic senators -including Kerry's mentor, Senator Edward Kennedy – are asking the Federal Elections Commission to investigate, charging that the doc is not news but really a political advertisement favoring Kerry's opponent, President Bush.

Sherwood's allegations in Stolen Honor echo those of the anti-Kerry veterans group Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, and two of the former prisoners who appeared in that group's veracity-challenged television ads – including one who was a Bush campaign volunteer – were interviewed in Sherwood's film.