

POLITICS

A New Look at the Zapruder Film

BY ROBERT GRODEN

Robert Groden, an optics technician, has been working for almost nine years on a secret copy of the Abraham Zapruder film of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassination. Groden has magnified the film frame by frame, from which he has drawn the conclusion that the film offers absolute proof of cross-fire and conspiracy. He first showed publicly the reframed film on January 31st, 1975, at the Assassination Information Bureau conference in Boston. Groden, 29, lives in New Jersey and works in New York City where he creates slides for industrial films and restores old photos.

The Warren Commission stated that:

1. Lee Harvey Oswald, alone and unassisted, shot President Kennedy to death and wounded Governor John B. Connally by firing three bullets at them from the sixth-floor easternmost window of the southern wall of the Texas School Book Depository Building (the Carroway-Byrd Building, 411 Elm Street, Dallas, Texas) with an Italian-made Mannlicher-Carcano 6.5mm rifle.

2. Three and only three shots were fired.

3. All of the shots were fired within a 5.6-second time span.

Abraham Zapruder was a Dallas dress manufacturer. On November 22nd, 1963, he stationed himself on top of a concrete pedestal which is part of an ornamental pergola near the middle of the Dealey Plaza section of Elm Street in downtown Dallas. With his secretary Marilyn Sitzman by his side and a Bell and Howell 8mm movie camera in his hands, he waited for the presidential motorcade to pass in front of him. As one of history's most ghastly and politically significant events was enacted before his eyes, Mr. Zapruder kept his finger pressed down on the shutter release and filmed the entire event. The result is a graphic film of a presidential assassination, a historical moment captured for posterity. But of far more importance: The Zapruder film provides absolute, incontestable proof of cross fire and conspiracy.

Zapruder died of cancer on August 30th, 1970, in Dallas. Between 1963 and 1968, *Life* magazine (the copyright owners of the film, having paid Zapruder somewhere between \$150,000 and \$250,000 for all commercial rights) printed many selected frames. For years it was to *Life* magazine that we looked for whatever photographic evidence we could find to investigate this case. But the selected individual frames, viewed out of context, mean very little.

The commission's "official" version of the events in Dealey Plaza states:

• Oswald fired his first shot between Zapruder frames #210 and #224 (the camera was running at 18.3 frames per second). This was safe for the commission, for during this entire time span President Kennedy was hidden from the view of Zapruder's camera by a large road sign. Therefore, an exact moment of impact is impossible to show. (The interval between firing and impact would have been one to two frames.)

• The second shot, missing completely, was fired at an unmentioned moment sometime later.

• Finally, a third and last shot at frame #313 was the shot that ended the president's life.

• The first shot struck the president in the base of his neck and exited from his throat. This same bullet then proceeded to hit Governor Connally in the back, shattering his fifth rib. It emerged from his chest, passed through his right wrist, shattering bones, and finally came to rest in Connally's left thigh. The bullet (some call it Superbullet) that inflicted these seven wounds and broke numerous bones was found in nearly perfect condition on a stretcher in Parkland Hospital. Its official designation is Commission Exhibit #399 (CE 399).

The account of CE 399's adventures has since become known as "the single bullet theory." It was postulated not because it was supported by evidence but because without a superbullet it was impossible to blame the shooting of the president on a lone assassin.

FBI tests prove conclusively that from the time President Kennedy would have first been visible from "Oswald's sniper's nest" (frame #207) until Governor Connally was shot at frame #234, the Mannlicher-Carcano could have only fired one bullet (a minimal 2.3 seconds is required for one shot). Since two shots could not have been fired from the one weapon in that time span, and since the commission did not admit the existence of another gunman, the commission was forced to conclude that JFK and Connally were hit by the same bullet.

The Zapruder film shows that by frame #224 JFK has already been hit. Connally is unharmed until frame #234, at least one-half of a second later. But when Connally was wounded, a rib was shattered at the moment of impact and his reaction is recorded on film. The time for the bullet to pass from Kennedy to Connally would have been at most two frames. There is no question that he was hit by a different

bullet than the one that the commission says hit JFK.

The third bullet hit President Kennedy in the back of the head—and in violation of the laws of physics thrust him violently backwards. In the published frames of the Zapruder film in volume 18 of the commission's evidence, two frames, #314 and #315, were "accidentally" reversed, leaving the impression that the president's head moves forward—the reverse of fact. Interestingly this was the only transposition of frames. (J. Edgar Hoover later acknowledged the "printing error.")

President Kennedy's throat wound was a threat to the commission. If it was an entrance wound, of course, the commission members could not admit it. This small hole, consequently, gave them license to further the "single bullet theory." The only problem: The hole in the front of the neck was approximately six inches higher than the wound in the rear. Oswald was supposed to have been six floors above the motorcade. If the hole in the front of the neck was made by the egress of CE 399, it would have to have been at least three to four inches lower than the back wound.

Faced with this problem, the commission simply performed verbal plastic surgery—and moved the back wound up by six inches, to a point in the back of the president's neck, just to the right of center and above the shoulder blades. This wound was described by the many who saw it at Parkland Hospital. Every one of them, including Secret Service men, place the wound in JFK's back. None place it in his neck. These witnesses include Admiral George Burkley, the president's personal physician, who in his original report placed the wound at the level of the third thoracic vertebra, approximately six inches below the shoulder blades.

There will be many who will loudly disagree with my analysis of the Zapruder film here. I can only say that I've seen the Zapruder film literally thousands of times. I've lived with it for almost nine years. I've done more investigative and optical research on clear copies of the Zapruder film than any other private citizen or agency. The findings here are the culmination of years of work and study on this one subject. Although some of the findings published here are the work of others, many are my own, published here for the first time.

FRAMES #133-153

JFK waving to the crowd in front of Texas School Book Depository, wiping

hair from in front of his face. All else is normal. The Lincoln is now approaching us.

FRAME #154

JFK is looking to his left. His right arm is resting on the car door.

FRAMES #155 AND #156

ARE MISSING

This is the first splice. Both the government and Time Inc. do not acknowledge that this splice exists. When the commission printed frames from the Zapruder film in volume 18 of its evidence, it began after this point to avoid questions. It is here that a "warning shot" is fired. In a split second JFK responds, and looks to his right to the road sign (frame #157) from where the "shot" was fired. It was probably not a bullet fired at anyone. It was, in all likelihood, a blank fired as a coordinating shot for the firing teams. JFK must have at that time known that something was up. Many witnesses have stated that there was a "different" sound to the "first shot."

It appears that JFK does not start to wave again until he feels that the sound was only a backfire, a firecracker or some similar sound, which were the descriptions of those witnesses reporting the sound of the "first shot."

FRAME #189

JFK starts to wave again slowly, nervously . . . until frame #188. At approximately frame #189 a shot (1) is fired. It misses the car completely. It was fired from behind. From all indications it was from a broom closet on the second floor of the Dal-Tex Building. The shot was high. It flew over the Lincoln and landed at the curb line on the far (south) side of Main Street—its closest point to Commerce Street, just east of the triple overpass. A section of curbing was struck by the bullet and a fragment of the concrete flew up and struck James Tague on the cheek. At this point JFK's right hand falls in an arc as he tries to comprehend what is happening.

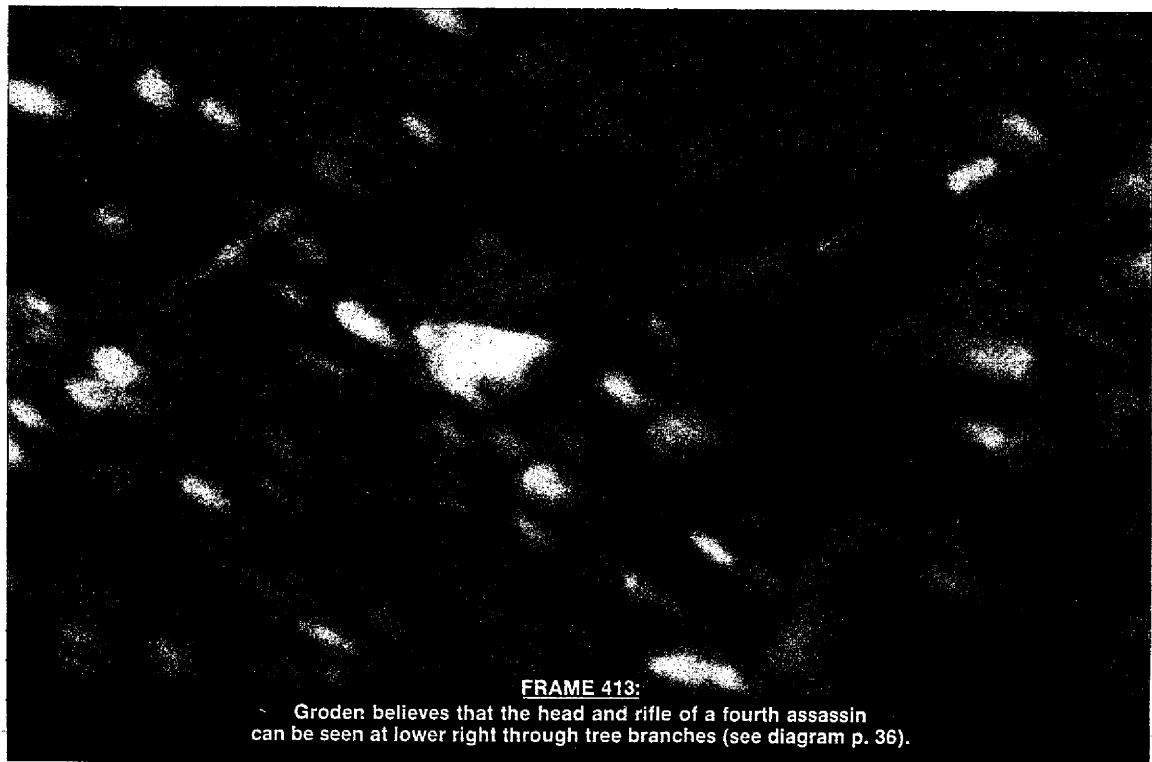
FRAME #206

JFK's arm has continued to drop at this point. His entire body is now obscured by the road sign announcing the Stemmons Freeway. Only his head is still visible.

At frame #207 we have one of the biggest points of discussion in the entire film. At #206 there is an obvious horizontal line running through the entire width of the frame just below the halfway mark. At frame #207 we have a similar line one-third of the way down. Only here there is a tree on the right side of the frame on the top section, but on the bottom, the tree is halfway to the middle. The reason is that frames #208, #209, #210 and #211 have been spliced out.

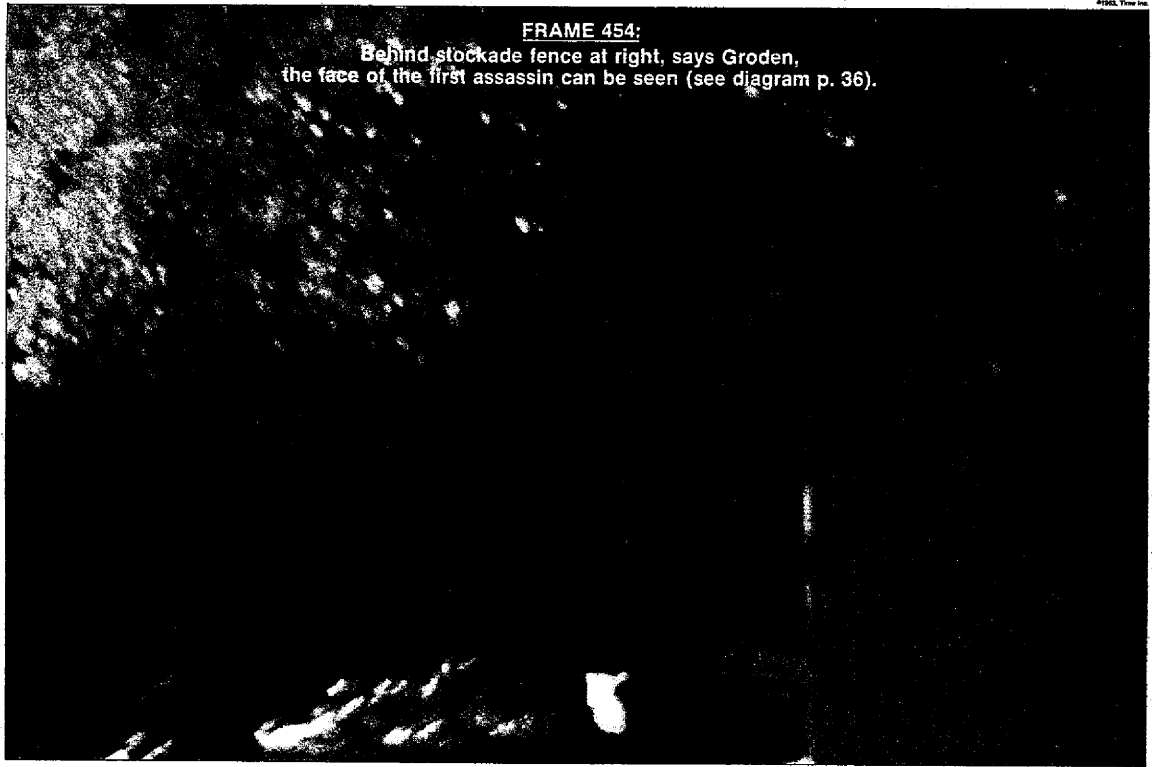
The official reason is that when the

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FRAME 413:

Groden believes that the head and rifle of a fourth assassin can be seen at lower right through tree branches (see diagram p. 36).

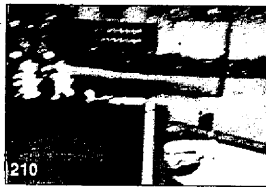


FRAME 454:

Behind stockade fence at right, says Groden, the face of the first assassin can be seen (see diagram p. 36).

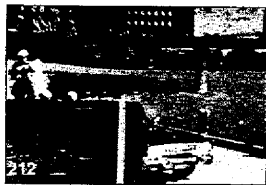
film was purchased by Time Inc., it was put in the hands of a junior member of the photographic department for enlarging purposes. It was during that process that the four frames were damaged. Also, frames #207 and #212 were damaged as well for the splicing.

In all there are ten missing or damaged frames in the film—not counting stress marks from the sprocket holes following the second splice (frame #212).



FRAME #210

It is here that the commission says JFK could have first been shot. For this is the first frame at which Lee Harvey Oswald could have fired at the president had he been on the sixth floor from the easternmost window. Prior to that point, there is a large oak tree blocking any line of fire from that window to the limousine. However, Oswald wasn't there, although someone else was. Someone in a red shirt who appears in an 8mm color movie taken by Robert Hughes is clearly seen moving in that window. There is also the moving shape of a man in the pair of windows next to "the sniper's nest" in the same room. This frame is also important because it is dead center among the missing frames between #207 and #212. This may be the reason it is missing: not for what it shows but for what it doesn't.



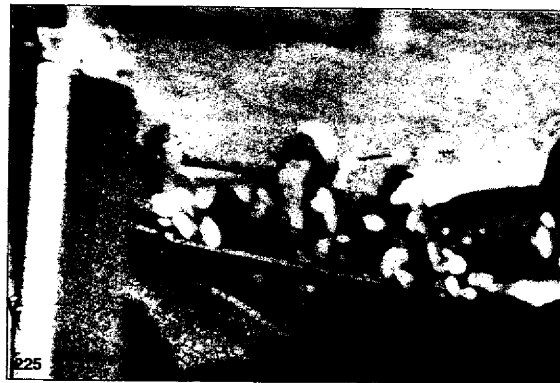
FRAME #212

Although it isn't generally known, the president's head is still visible after the splice. There has been no movement in the president's head. He was not hit at frame #210. The Warren Commission needed to have JFK hit as early as possible for Oswald to have a chance to get off a second and third shot by frame #313, but at the same time as late as possible for him to have been hit by the same bullet (CE 399) as Connally. If it were not for the oak tree and Zapruder's film, they might have succeeded in framing Oswald. But because of the tree they had to concede a first shot as late as #210.

Unfortunately for the commission, not one man in this entire country could duplicate the incredible feat attributed to Lee Harvey Oswald, who was, according to his Marine Corps records, "a rather poor shot."

The commission hired some of the nation's best marksmen, gave them every advantage, and they still couldn't duplicate the shots.

Right after the splice at frame #212, at the bottom of the frame and to the right of the sign we begin to pick up a strange object. By frame #221 it is clearly an open umbrella.



FRAME #224

JFK's left sleeve and shirt cuff now become visible from behind the road sign. As this happens, the umbrella starts to rise and twirl counterclockwise. This umbrella is being held by a conspirator now known for obvious reasons as "the umbrella man." This man is the only man in the entire motorcade route with an open umbrella. It was a sunshiny, windy day. Very impractical to have an open umbrella. Photographic evidence has shown that his umbrella was closed until JFK's car turned onto Elm Street. After the killing, while all around him ran away or dropped to the ground, he just stood there. He closed his umbrella, turned to look at the end of the motorcade, and slowly walked up Elm Street toward the Depository. He has never been identified.

Whenever a bullet actually strikes, and the moment is captured on film, this actual impact can be seen at the exact moment of contact. However, since JFK was behind the road sign (in relation to Abraham Zapruder's camera) we can't see the moment of contact.

We can only assume that he was hit at frame #218, give or take one, certainly no more than two frames. For as JFK becomes visible from behind the road sign at frame #223, his hands are still dropping in the arc started around frame #168. Allowing for one-third of a second for reaction time, with Zapruder's camera running at 18.3 frames per second, when his hands started to rise toward his neck in a protective motion at frame #225, we go back one-third of a second (7 frames) to frame #218. The bullet entered the president's throat after nicking the knot in

his tie. This shot (II) was fired from behind the corner of a wooden stockade fence on the grassy knoll in front and to the right of JFK. It did not exit.

JFK's arms are still dropping as he is hit. At frame #225 he reacts. His arms rise in a protective motion toward his throat. The rising arms continue until frame #227. At frame #227 a second shot (III) hits President Kennedy in the back, approximately six inches below the shoulder blades and just right of the spinal column. This was probably a second shot from the second floor of the Dal-Tex Building. The bullet entered, went in approximately two inches but did not exit. JFK is at this point compressed downward and pushed forward.

FRAME #234

Governor Connally is hit at this frame. His cheeks puff out as the bullet (IV) knocks the wind out of him. His right shoulder starts to droop and his hair becomes disarranged. This shot was probably fired from the sixth floor of the Depository Building's western corner, or from the roof of the County Records Building. The bullet enters his back, exits from his chest and enters his left knee.

FRAME #312

This is the last frame before the fatal shots.

FRAME #313

A shot (V) hits John Kennedy from behind in the right temple. At this point his head explodes. Since this was a glancing blow, he is thrown forward only slightly. I feel strongly that it was either this bullet or a fragment of it that caused Governor Connally's wrist wound.

FRAME #314

A high-powered rifle bullet (VI) en-

tered JFK's head from the right front, throwing him violently backward and to his left against the seat towards his wife with such force it actually lifted him out of his seat. The rear shot was possibly a second shot from the sixth floor of the Depository near the western end. The shot from the front came from behind the corner of a low retaining wall that is an extension of the concrete pergola on the grassy knoll to the front of JFK.

The driver of the presidential limousine, William Greer, testified that he speeded up prior to the head shots and that he had been facing forward at the time. At the moment of the head shots, Greer appears to be looking directly at JFK's head! Only after the president was dead did he begin to accelerate. If it were only a slow reaction time, why this inaccuracy under oath?

Immediately after the head shots, both Greer and Roy Kellerman, the Secret Service guard next to him, duck their heads down in reaction to the shots. They both knew what had happened. The question here is why the total nonreaction of trained men.

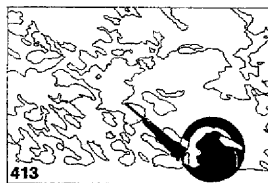
(Greer told the Warren Commission that he heard a sound which he took to be the backfire from one of the motorcycles flanking the presidential car. When he heard the same noise again, Greer said that he glanced over his shoulder and saw Governor Connally fall. It was then, he said, that he realized something was wrong and pressed down the accelerator as Kellerman said, "Get out of here fast.")

FRAME #345

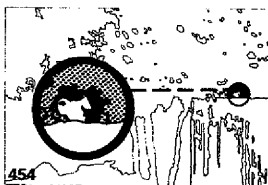
Jackie climbs out onto the trunk of the car to try to retrieve a section of her dead husband's head. A shock reaction. Secret Service agent Clint Hill finally reaches the car and climbs on at frame #367. He never reaches Jackie. She climbs back in by herself.

FRAME #407

Here another strange thing appears. It is round and near the bottom right of the frame. By frame #412 a man's head begins to become evident.



At frame #413 Zapruder stops panning for one frame, and the head, ears and rifle of the fourth assassin become clear. He then fades to the left as Zapruder pans right toward the triple underpass.



FRAME #448

Zapruder pans to the stockade fence on the grassy knoll. By frame #454 the first assassin can be made out with his backup man (not as clear). He stays visible until frame #478. At #486 Abraham Zapruder stopped filming.