

8 May 1969

Dear David, (LIFTON)

Thanks for your letter of the 3rd, which crossed with mine of the same (or the next) day. I am glad to hear that you now have another print of the Zapruder and need not depend on gracious co-operation or largesse from a person who believes that his judgments supercede all other considerations.

As I do not have a movie projector or access to one, I will not take advantage of the offer of the 8 mm. print--in any case, I am not much good at photo analysis or research. And, as you know, I have seen the excellent LIFE (NY) copy, in many repeated showings.

For what it is worth, on the subject of the missing frames 208-211, I should perhaps remind you of my conversation in the summer of 1965 with Herbert Orth. I had been to the archives to see the Zapruder slides; the staff there was not aware that these frames were missing and could not explain it. I called Shaneyfelt from the archives, at the Justice Department, and he could not explain why the frames were missing either (this is from memory, so I cannot be more explicit) and seemed to me to be evasive and very, very careful about each word he said. When I got back to New York, I phoned Herbert Orth and asked him whether the original Zapruder film had sustained any damage; and whether the color slides he had delivered to the Warren Commission omitted any frames or was a complete, uninterrupted sequence. He told me without hesitating for a second, and quite emphatically, that the original was in no way damaged and that the color slides were complete, with no frames omitted.

I am afraid that you have only my word for this conversation. Orth might very well deny it, today. If I recall correctly, wasn't Orth a witness at the Shaw trial? I may be wrong on this; but if he was, the opportunity to question him on this point was certainly lost. I think that after talking to me on the phone, Orth had second thoughts and subsequently refused to say anything to anyone, merely referring inquirers to his "testimony" to the WC.

Your analogy of the alternating "pink" and "blue" segments is very graphic and I understand why you are aroused about the implications. But the timetable continues to bother me and I wish you would comment on it when you next have time to write. Zapruder went to the Eastman Kodak plant in Dallas on the afternoon of 11/22/63, accompanied by some Dallas police (?) and/or Secret Service men (?) and (I think) a LIFE representative. By about midnight, the original, or what we have all assumed was the original, was in LIFE's New York photo lab, where Orth (presumably) blew up the frames that were published in the next LIFE issue.

This outline of events seems to me to pose a vital series of logistical questions, which must be considered in any hypothesis of fraudulent alteration of the Zapruder film prior to its delivery to LIFE in New York. The kind of multiple patchwork you suggest is a sophisticated, time-consuming operation, probably requiring more than one photo technician. The kind of thing, perhaps, that could be done in the FBI photo lab, given sufficient time. But how could it be attempted in the context of 11/22/63, with a mixed group of civilians, local officials, and federal officers present or hovering nearby, within the time constraints (barely an hour or two seemingly available), and above all, why in the immediate aftermath should such a sinister and fraudulent exercise

be attempted, with all the attendant risks, when it could simply not have been known so early what kind of official "findings" the Zapruder film had to be brought into conformity with. We know of no photo establishment other than Eastman Kodak in Dallas, and later LIFE New York, where the film was handled or processed in any way. Were the technicians at Eastman Kodak privy to the assassination plot? Why should they have tampered with the film, even if they could? And the same questions would apply to the LIFE technicians (Herbert Orth and perhaps others, presumably)--especially when Orth was willing to say what he said to me in July 1965? Or, can we legitimately theorize that there was another photo lab (e.g., Dallas police? no indication of any elaborate photo set-up there) where the film was taken before being transported to New York?

I realize that all of these questions may seem irrelevant to the film analysis which is in progress and I would agree that it is important first and foremost to determine all the ascertainable facts about the splicing, elision, or destruction of the film or any part of it. Once all that data is clear, one can look for supporting evidence and for motivation. But I do think it is legitimate and necessary, even now, to raise the problem of time-factor in relation to any hypothesis of elaborate alteration of the "original" before its delivery to LIFE New York.

Apparently you do not yet have any firm dates for visiting New York with your finished ms. I should mention~~d~~, by the way, that my whole office is being co-opted to work in Boston from the 6th through the 30th of July. We will be at the Sheraton-Boston Hotel. Should you wish to write me, send the letter care of the World Health Organization, P.O. Box 328, Prudential Center Station, Boston, Mass. 02199. Telephone (person to person): 617 - 262-8100.

I guess that's it, for now.

All the best,