

185 Chestnut Hill Ave.
Boston, Massachusetts - Apt. 11
May 22, 1967

Mr. Richard Sprague
University Club
New York, New York

Dear Dick:

Some of the following will be rather distasteful to write, but I really feel I must set the record straight, both for reasons of fairness and accuracy, self-serving though it may appear.

David Lifton has made no valid original contributions whatever regarding observations in the Zapruder film. This may come as a surprise, because he has made considerable efforts -- and has been quite successful -- in transmitting the opposite impression. His "Case for Three Assassins" was based, in its Zapruder portions, almost entirely on material I gave him.

In particular he has been widely credited with having discovered the 314-315 transposition. It was discovered by me, and I informed Lifton about it. On other occasions he has received credit for the co-discovery of phenomena in the Zapruder film which he in fact had nothing to do with. I note that he recently has been credited with having originally placed the witnesses on the Dealy Plaza chart. This, again, was my work, copies of which were made available to Dave, Life, Esquire, and other critics.

Lifton first contacted me in March of '65, by which time, working independently, I had completed (and afterward distributed to other critics) my hypotheses re the Zapruder film, as follows:

1. JFK first hit (probably in throat) at 189-190.

(based on, (a) sudden lowering of his right hand to chin-throat level immediately thereafter, and, (b) Jackie's sudden turn towards him as determined by the change in her hair-line/hat-line angle.)

(Lillian Castellano independently arrived at the conclusion that a shot had been fired prior to 210. She did this by proving that Willis #5 was coincident in time with Zapruder 202, and not with 210 as Shaneyfelt said. Harold Weisberg also concluded that an early hit had been struck -- he feels at 185-186 -- based on his interpretation of Zapruder's testimony and Lillian's find.)

Dear Spin - your revision of the 314-315 transposition is complete. Dave & I. May 22, 1967

2. JFK hit for second time at 226-227 -- probably in back.

(based on upward thrust of elbows and hunching of shoulders immediately thereafter) Vince Salandria also came to this conclusion.

3. JC not yet hit at 232.

(based on fact that his wrist and hand are elevated so as to preclude, beyond reasonable doubt, the possibility that it had already been shattered)

I consider 232 to be the most important single Zapruder frame, for it destroys the single-bullet theory -- and with it the government's case -- all by itself, even if no other photographs were available.

4. JC struck at 237-238 while turning to his right.

(based primarily on the sudden dip of his right shoulder between those two frames),

and that this shot, while obviously coming from the rear, could not have originated from the TSBD because JC's back was no longer facing that building by that point in his turn.

5. That the force which hurled JFK's head back and to the left after 314 had to come from his right-front.

(Salandria had arrived at the same conclusion, and was in print with it in his early Liberation article when I was writing up my own hypotheses. Harold Weisberg says he also came to the same conclusion quite early in his investigation.)

(Later, in June, '65, I began to suspect a double-hit to the head and felt quite certain of it by December, '65, at which time I had made a greatly enlarged version of my JFK-1 photo panel. I first wrote about it to Ramparts in an unpublished letter in June, '66, but Lifton -- who was working closely with them at the time -- managed to convince them I was wrong. It first appeared in print in my letter in Ramparts in March, '67.)

(I felt the first head shot was from the left-rear, followed almost immediately by one from the right-front. Tink Thompson and Harold Weisberg -- both independently -- came to similar conclusions, although not specifying the left-rear as the source of the first head shot.)

6. That frames 314-315 had been transposed and mislabeled in Volume 18, and that only by taking this into account (when relying on the reproductions in Vol. 18) could the head-motion following 312 be properly analyzed.

(I noted this on my original JFK-1 photo panel. In December, '65, about nine months after I showed it to Lifton, he wrote a letter to Hoover -- using a friend's name -- and received a reply confirming my observation of the 314-315 switch.)

When I said Dave made no valid original contributions re the Zapruder film, I did not mean that he made no observations. He did put forth one plausible hypothesis; that the sign was hit, and resulting stress marks thereon were visible in the Zapruder frames.

I raised a difficulty with this theory at the time he first mentioned it to me: that a shot from the knoll at JFK's head, hitting the lower-left corner of the sign (from Zapruder's position) would indicate a miss of at least five feet in the vertical plane -- a highly unlikely occurrence for any marksman worthy of the name. While I felt this difficulty should not automatically rule out his theory, I told him alternate possibilities should be considered before he publicly propounded it.

Dave and I then visited a photo-expert who examined the Vol. 18 reproductions and stated an alternate hypothesis; that the lines were stress marks on the film itself and not on the sign. He felt this was caused by added stress on the film during projection for several frames following the overlapping double-thickness necessitated by the splice at 208-212. Taken with the aforementioned difficulty, I felt this hypothesis the more likely to be correct, and again urged Lifton to hold off, pending further study.

But Dave insisted on pushing on and was able to convince Lane of his view, which Lane then began including in his lectures. It also appeared in Lane's Playboy interview and in the paperback "Rush to Judgment".

When I saw the slides at Life and at the Archives for the first time, I was immediately convinced that the photo-expert's theory was correct; the lines emanated from the sprocket holes; they clearly had the appearance of cracks in the film; and they appeared even where the sign did not.

While this was Lifton's only plausible hypothesis, it was by no means his only discovery re the Zapruder films. At one time or other he has also professed to see in them -- and in other photos -- evidence of tunnel structures, helicopters flying low over the area, roller coaster strung among the trees, a platoon of soldiers in uniform, construction equipment behind the fence, lifting devices, an amphibious tank, a backward-racing presidential car, papier-mache trees, and elaborate camouflage. I may have left some out, and I don't know how many of these he still believes, for I haven't heard from him in some time.

However, Dave has made one contribution which I believe is not only valid, but of crucial significance, and that, of course, is his discovery of the images behind the wall and the fence in the Moorman photo. I always make it a point to give him full and proper credit for them. (The corroborating image for #2 was discovered in Willis-5 by Mrs. Ronnie Solomon of Beverly Hills. I discovered corroboration for #5 in Nix fr. 18 -- the same frame published by Esquire which Itek examined, employing 30 people two full months and issuing a 55-page report, to destroy Jones Harris' stationwagon strawman.)

Formerly, when I raised questions with Lifton on occasions when I felt he had been erroneously credited with my work, he acknowledged the fact of my authorship and protested he had no idea how the interviewer could have gotten the wrong impression. I pointed out this was particularly puzzling in view of the fact that interviewers never got a similar wrong impression from me concerning his work -- whether valid images or roller coasters -- and at any rate, accepting his disclaimers in good faith, he had failed to exert effort to correct the errors.

I am sorry to belabor you with this as I am to spend time writing it, but since I have no present intention of further writing for publication and since you do, I feel you would want to have the necessary information so that proper credit can be given for specific contributions.

Since much of what we write becomes part of the record of this case, and because questions of who-contributed-what constitute a not-insignificant part of that record, I think such credit is important for reasons of historical accuracy, as well as legitimate ego considerations.

Sincerely,


Ray Marcus