



Haverford College

HAVERFORD, PA. 19041 215-649-9600

Wednesday, February 5, 1969

Dr. Luis Alvarez  
Lawrence Radiation Laboratory  
Berkeley, California 94720

Dear Dr. Alvarez:

I can understand your desire to avoid the central issue and content yourself with a long blast of patronizing rhetoric. But the issue remains. Permit me to summarize it:

Your study of the Zapruder film (and a coordinate study by Wyckoff) turned up four periods of oscillation on the Zapruder film. You chose to correlate three of these periods of oscillation with gunshots, while explaining one of them, Z290ff, as due to Zapruder's startled reaction to the actuation of a siren on the Secret Service follow-up car. As evidence for the actuation of this siren at this time, you offer your observation that the Presidential limousine slowed down at this time. I presented an alternative explanation of why the limousine slowed at this point, citing Greer's testimony and the fact that the Zapruder film shows him turned far around towards the back seat at this point. You fail to comment on my alternative explanation. More importantly, you fail to comment on the list of evidence adduced to show that the siren on the Secret Service follow-up car was not actuated until well after the President was struck in the head [Z313] and probably not until Z368. I went on to point out that the Warren Report itself times the siren as having been actuated at some time after Z313 (see Report, page 116) and that I was unable to find a single shred of evidence to suggest that the siren had been actuated any earlier. You should know that in an accompanying letter your associate Paul Hoch said that my "argument against the 'siren' explanation for the oscillation starting about frame 290 is basically valid." Now if this argument is valid (and you have not deigned to offer me any suggestion as to why it is not valid), then it seems to me you are caught in the following bind. Your data shows four periods of oscillation. If you are going to correlate any of these oscillations with shots you must either (a) correlate them all with shots, or (b) offer some rationale why one or more are not to be correlated with shots. The validity of my argument concerning the siren (a validity recognized by your own associate, Paul Hoch) shows the failure of your rationale. You are thrown back on (a) -- all the oscillations are to be correlated with shots or none are. If none are, then your jiggle theory has reached a dead-end. If all are, then you are in the position of arguing for four shots, the last two fired no more than 1.3 seconds apart. Since the minimum firing time of Oswald's rifle was 2.3 seconds, you are in the rather odd position for one who desired to "restore some sanity to the American public" of having shown either (a) Oswald's rifle was not used in the assassination at all, or (b) Oswald's rifle and another weapon were used. Welcome to the club, Professor Alvarez, you've just become a Warren Report critic.



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-2-

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I understand your explanation of the differential blurring of Z227. It's a good one.

I am amused by your self-proclaimed banner of "responsibility." As I understand the facts, you and Wyckoff very early observed four periods of oscillation. [In a letter to Hoch dated Oct. 18, 1967 he speaks of 291-296 as "an oscillatory pattern somewhat similar to the other three disturbances" and goes on to buy your siren explanation for it.] But one can search the CBS transcript as well as an article in The Magnet (July 1967) written with your assistance, and find no mention of the fact that your data showed four periods of oscillation not three. You may have felt you had an explanation for the fourth period of oscillation but what notion of scientific responsibility is it that justifies the misrepresentation of the data itself? May I suggest that it is the same notion that substitutes patronizing invective for argument on the issues, the same notion that refuses to admit error when it is pointed out, and that thus decides this letter will receive no answer. As for me, I need no training in relativity theory to understand what this kind of "responsibility" is all about.

Very sincerely,

Josiah Thompson

JT:agt

cc: Paul Hoch  
Walter Menaker, M.D.