

My name is François Carlier. I am a Frenchman who has been studying the Kennedy assassination for years. I am currently writing a book on that subject. I was in Dallas last November, attending the conferences organised by JFK-Lancer and COPA. Below is an article in which I give my point of view.

not Mark 8/12/97

An outsider's view of the Kennedy assassination community.

I went to Dallas last November! I was very excited. I had been interested in the Kennedy assassination for years, I had read dozens of books, and there, for the first time, I was going to attend conferences by the best-known researchers in the world, I would have a once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity of listening to them and talking to them. Most important I expected to hear the most convincing arguments against the Warren Commission version.

Well, let me tell you very briefly what kind of guy I am. As far as making an opinion goes, I am a follower of the scientific method. To give you a good idea of my approach I read books by authors such as James Randi, Martin Gardner, Paul Kurtz, Joe Nickell, and other people from the CSICOP. I particularly like the way they debunk hoaxers. I am myself an amateur conjurer, and a founder member of a French scientific association that copies the CSICOP. One thing was important for me. I had twice read "Case closed" by Gerald Posner. I had been impressed. Then I had bought and read "Case open" by Harold Weisberg. And I had been very disappointed. I had hoped Weisberg would address the criticisms raised by Posner but he did not do that to my satisfaction, far from it. I was hoping I could ask every researcher what they thought of the book, and what they had to answer to the criticism. I expected to see debates; researchers and experts confronting arguments. Then the assistance could ask questions; I had hundreds of questions to ask. (But soon enough I would discover that that was not to be!). On the plane from Paris to the USA I was reading an American book by William D. Gray "Thinking critically about New Age ideas", a book which teaches critical-thinking skills and among others how to identify arguments, to recognize fallacies and other bad arguments. I wondered how many people in the JFK critical community had read that fascinating book.

I had registred to attend the COPA conference and the JFK-Lancer conference. Excitment grew as the JFK-Lancer conference began. I was all ears. I was impressed by what I was showed. The speakers were indeed very good! But the assistance had very little time - if any - to ask questions. And we came nowhere near having any kind of debate! But let me now give you an example that speaks for itself and illustrates the point I want to make. On day one, a researcher called Mark Oakes gave a lecture. It was about the Paschall film and Dallas witnesses. All right, I said, that's interesting. Then the day after, in the same room, under the auspices of the same JFK-Lancer, there was a lecture on the Zapruder film. The Zapruder film symposium, with David Mantik, David Lifton, James Fetzer and Jack White. I talked to Mantik and Fetzer afterwards. They were utterly convinced the Zapruder film was altered. But then, the day after, still in the same room, I saw Mark Oakes again and decided to go and talk to him. I asked him his opinion about the



possibility of the Zapruder film being a forgery. His answer startled me, to say the least. He wasn't aware that it was an issue, nor was he aware that some people had talked about that on the previous day, for he was out of town making filmed interviews! I then realized that the speakers were separate and had not met. All that was well, but here I was realizing I was not about to reach certainty on any given issue. It was clear to me that not everybody agreed with each other among the experts invited by JFK-Lancer. More important, some of them were not even aware of what the others were saying. All this showed me that I had overestimated the organizers's grasp of the zetetician way of thinking, the scientific method, the rational, unbiased and foolproof way of investigating. The day after, Mantik and Fetzter had an argument with Robert Groden during one of the COPA lectures, concerning the Zapruder film. It was clear to me that I would go back to France with more questions than I had when leaving. And I had better forget about any chance of having answers; thirty-three years after the assassination, the top experts in the field did not even agree on whether the film of the assassination was forged or not!

In Dallas I learned more about the quarrels between different researchers than about the Kennedy case proper. And at no time was I or anybody who was attending the conferences, for that matter, given a chance of asking pertinent questions to speakers. It was always a race inbetween lectures, to get an opportunity of interviewing some of them. Good thing I was French and coming from far away: it gave me the right to ask questions that was not granted to other people! Looking back it was a disappointed experience. I had thought the research community was a group of people working together with the common aim of getting at the truth (that would sound logical to me). On the contrary I found men speaking ill of their colleagues (so-and-so is a thief, so-and-so is a liar) and working each in their corner. But never did I find men having debates. Yet, that should be the thing to do.

Another thing which I would like to mention is the difficulty I have encountered when trying to have an answer to even simple questions. It seems as if the JFK assassination researchers are inaccessible men. There are so many of them to whom I wrote, asking interesting questions, but who never seemed to find the time to reply. I have to say that Doctor Wecht has always been very nice, always showing great patience, always replying to my letters rapidly and sending lots of interesting documents. I owe him a lot. But in contrast, I have got to say that some researchers are not willing to help. One of them, whom I will not name, to whom I had written in order to have his opinion on specific points, sent me a letter saying he had no time to answer, but remembered to put an order slip for his new book in the envelope!

Anyway my quest for clear-cut answers continues. On the Internet I have found lots of interesting articles. I hereby would like to mention two of them, which I urge everybody to read. 1. In the *Fair Play* section called *Miscellanea, Errata, Et Cetera*, I recently found a good article by a citizen called Tom Braun. In it he issues a challenge to JFK conspiracy advocates (*Fair Play* called it "a tiresome challenge"). Unfortunately, they declined the offer. How sad! Well, that's exactly what all the critics do; they decline to challenge the evidence found by other researchers. 2. Let me quote from Fred Litwin (1994-95) "*A conspiracy too big? Intellectual dishonesty in the JFK Assassination*": ...*the HSCA addressed many of the issues raised by the critics in the sixties. Since then, the literature has taken on a disturbing tone - one that rejects any piece of evidence contrary to findings of conspiracy...In the clash between evidence and theories, theories have to be discarded. It's true that evidence is often weak and open to multiple interpretations, but to argue that evidence is fraudulent is to undermine the possibility that any theory might turn out to be "true". To argue in such a style is to cause the collapse of the entire empirical edifice of*



*assassinology... So the critics are doing two things. They are rejecting many pieces of evidence. This rejection then forces them to paint a monstrous conspiracy and cover-up..."* . Litwin's article then goes on to show why he doesn't believe in a conspiracy. If he's right, let's have the guts to admit it, in the name of Honesty and Truth. If he is wrong, well, then address all the issues he raises and answer them. Don't decline this challenge, again in the name of the pursuit of Truth and Justice

Organise debates. Invite Gerald Posner and Jim Moore. Let them express their opinions, their beliefs, why they have come to such and such conclusions. Let a critic give a rebuttal. Then let the public decide. Let everybody decide together. And only then can you move on to the next controversial issue. All this has to occur in a friendly atmosphere. Facts are important, men are not, in our search for the truth, which is the element we all have in common. That's how you (and that means we, the public) will arrive at the truth. All right, I know now, the Failure Analysis work was not done for Posner primarily. As Weisberg has written, Posner has misappropriated the research of others. So what? You critics are begging the real issues. You are not challenging Posner. You are simply making fun of him. But that won't help getting at the truth. Jim Marrs, for example, in a taped interview I had the opportunity to make, kept on telling me the Oswald backyard photos were fakes, although he very well knows (even if he doesn't mention it) that the HSCA conducted tests which showed the photos to be authentic. He thinks Marina took other pictures, not the ones we have. Also I talked to Craig Roberts, who too claimed that Marina took a picture of Oswald with a rifle that may not be the Mannlicher Carcano. But what does all that mean? They admit that Marina took similar pictures of Oswald with a rifle. Why has Oswald done so? And why would anyone fake photos when they already have some? The point is Marina took pictures of her husband with a rifle. What the Warren Commission says is that it means Oswald was a violent man. Now, if all the critics can do is deny the authenticity of the photos (when a panel of experts say they are authentic), although they admit that similar real photos were taken with Oswald, then what the Warren Commission said is true after all. And what happened to the genuine photos? In fact the HSCA did conduct numerous extensive tests that answered or debunked many of the critics allegations. But regardless, the critics never learn and keep repeating these allegations instead.

Will I come to Dallas next November? I doubt it. Unless you critics accept to challenge Posner and Tom Braun (the burden of proof is on your side), unless you answer Fred Litwin in a conclusive way, if you can, I see no point in attending another JFK conference. You see, I have come to think that the big mistake that is being made is to rely on not-yet-released-documents or future new discoveries. The point now is not to uncover new evidence. We have all the evidence, all the data we need. The only way to have the truth one day lies with the people, the researchers attitude. I think the only way to get to the one-and-only truth, the universally accepted truth, is to round up every researcher, put them in the same room and allow no-one outside until the mystery is solved. I know the tough part will be to make some people admit that they had been wrong. I know that is going to be very hard for some of the researchers to acknowledge publicly that their theory was wrong, or that what they wrote in their book with great conviction was off the mark. Well, let's face it, this will have to happen. Indeed there are so many different versions of the assassination, not all of them can be true. No everybody can be right. David Lifton, who is on the conspiracy side, says there were no shots from the rear. Robert Groden who is also on the conspiracy side, says there were shots from different locations, among which the rear. Jim Moore, who is on the Warren side, has a reconstruction of the shooting (Kennedy raising his arms upon hearing the first shot, making his suit and shirt bunch up, explaining the hole in the

shirt lower than the neck) which is not that of Gerald Posner, who is also on the Warren side. David Mantik, like Robert Groden, is a conspiracy theorist, but unlike Groden, he claims the Zapruder film was altered... And I could go on and on... What a mess! I mean, there was only one way the shooting occurred. But there are so many different versions. Well everybody, at the outset of this "big and final meeting", would have to agree on the most important thing; that what matters is the interests of your country, the USA, not the pride of any single individual. But there is no shame in having been wrong. On the contrary, every researcher should be praised for their work, and the millions of hours of work and sacrifices spent in the name of truth. That was so noble of everybody. In a way everybody in the community helped everybody. No one can ever be said to be the winner. Or rather, either we all lose if we can't reach the level which I call "the solution", or we all win, your country the USA wins and the principals for which you Constitution stands win. I say, and this is no overstatement, that the whole world will be a better place to live when the truth - whatever it is - is finally known (and that's when you will all agree, when you all together push your own reasoning until you get to the point where everybody joins, because it will have become the inescapable conclusion!). At the end of his video, David Lifton says that, in light of the new evidence he has found, a national investigation is warranted, focusing on the chain of possession of the body, etc... Well, you can make it. Just gather. Just set your petty quarrels aside and meet and work together. Use the JFK-Lancer 1997 conference. Instead of having different people talking at different moments about their own research, make everybody debate and work together. Everybody has to have an open mind and behave like a scientist. No bias. Posner is not the only one to have written against the critics; lots of "laymen" have written sound and enlightening articles on the Internet which convincingly debunk some claims made in the conspiracy literature. Invite them all. If you are right, you'll inevitably end up proving it and convincing everybody. It is now or never. Indeed, you are in the situation where you have lots of experts who have spent their lives studying the case. They know all there is to know. When they die, lots of knowledge will be lost. In the future a lot will be forgotten. One last effort has to be made now by all of you. It is well worth it. You owe it to History and mankind, no less. It is in everyone's interest. Then at last we'll know... It's up to you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. E. Groden', written in a cursive style.

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I have sent this article to (*in alphabetical order*):

Walt Brown, Mrs Debra Conway, Robert Groden, Henri Hurt, John Judge, Michael Kurtz, David Lifton, Jim Marrs, Jim Moore, Carl Oglesby, Gerald Posner, Craig Roberts, Antony Summers, Cyril Wecht, Harold Weisberg, Jack White.