

5/15/01

Dear Dave,

Jerry brought this on his way to a dentist and I finished reading it after my return from p.t. We both think you did a good job. His note is enclosed.

I hope you can read my few annotations.

What I have written is smaller than the thickness may suggest. 4 lines on the first page, 2 on the last.

One thing might be strengthened, what you say about the Kurtz misrepresentation about ^{depending} ~~depending~~ on Willis' testimony to prove that there was a conspiracy. This is not true. Your dependence here is on z 202. You use Willis 5 to confirm the timing. I had added on this that 35 years after its first publication there has been no denial or a refutation. It is fact, ^C ~~fat~~ that Kurtz missed.

You may also want to write Briggs separately that publishers seeking peer reviews are quite limited in the dependable available to them and not a single professional scholar is known to most of them who might ^{be} ~~want~~ a dependable reviewer.

My schedule is the usual one until I hear from Johns Hopkins and the fine specialist there told me it would be within a week. Tomorrow is the 7th day. ^{if} ~~and it~~ we are home Thursday, I have p.t. in the morning, as does ^{if} ~~we~~, an appointment with the dermatologist at 1:30 and in between we want to take ~~our~~ Caty (Catelein) out to Hana's for her 35th birthday, which is tomorrow, not Thursday.

You should get this tomorrow morning. I should be home by not much after 11 our time and I expect to be in the rest of the day. I've made a copy of what is enclosed so I can respond to any questions. Thursday I won't leave until 9 or 10 ^{for p.t.} a.m. and I should be home for the rest of that day by 2:15 our time. Friday I leave at 5:15 ^{5:30} a.m. and am back by 11, unless we get to Haas's then. Best of luck and best of wishes,

Harold

My comment on Kurtzas a peer reviewer begins with a means of evaluating Kurtz as other than a Ph.D. in history, and as an authority on the JFK assassination, ^{and its official investigating actions} as ^{dependable and} one enough of an impartial subject-matter expert to render impartial observations and beliefs.

Without~~f~~ doubt, Michael Kurtz is a scholar^{and} his field is history.

Without doubt his record as a professor of history was so ^{more than} satisfactory to his ^{university} college it promoted him until he is now dean of ^{its} the graduate school.

Also without doubt is it that Kurtz's work on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy is more than unscholarly: it is ignorant, with his opinions presented as facts.

~~ANNEX~~ In his book~~s~~ titled Crimes of the Century (Tennessee 1982) Kurtz flaunts his ~~ignorance~~ in a number of ways. Bearing directly on his scholarship, when he has, he says, 125,000 ~~pages~~ of FBI records alone in his ^{university} college library, in his book's notes he has not a single [↑] correct citation to any one of them. He cites merely "FBI papers," as he ^{does} ~~does~~ also with the CIA's records. But in fact each and every FBI report and each and every ~~CIA~~ disclosed CIA record ^{bears} a unique number identification. Kurtz cites not a single one of those records correctly ^{aside from ignorance this} which means that he has gone out of his way to make it impossible to check on him.

These excerpts from the Journal of American History review of his book should also be kept in mind in evaluating his criticisms of my book ^{and his opinions he presents as fact.} in his peer review of it.

Note particularly what this review says about Kurtz's footnoting and his lack of scholarship:

Journal of American History
Use only what is highlighted

Crime of the Century: The Kennedy Assassination from a Historian's Perspective. By Michael L. Kurtz. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982. xi + 291 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$17.50.)

In *Crime of the Century* Michael L. Kurtz laments that "professional scholars" have neglected the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; he also disparages the works of Warren Commission critics for their "obvious bias" and lack of "the careful analysis of objective evidence that characterizes the scholar." Having set the stage for his own entry, Kurtz announces "an original interpretation based on carefully calculated scrutiny of the most reliable and convincing sources" and promises "much new evidence." He vows to avoid speculation because it "is not within the realm of the historian."

Kurtz concludes from his examination of the evidence that there clearly was a conspiracy to kill Kennedy and that the probes of the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations were seriously flawed. Although these conclusions cannot be faulted, there is virtually nothing of any consequence in this book that is new. With minor exceptions, its valid points derive from the very critics Kurtz deprecates. For example, Kurtz relies heavily on the work of Harold Weisberg and offers little information that Weisberg has not previously revealed.

This book lacks scholarship. The author makes blatant factual mistakes and important errors of omission: Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* (1966) is not the first book on the subject; the wounding of James Tague is totally ignored. There are falsehoods: the Warren Commission was not "[u]naware of the FBI's real attitude toward it"; to the contrary, its members stated in their secret sessions that the FBI "would like to have us fold up and quit," and they also asserted that the FBI had concluded that Oswald was the lone assassin without having "run out all kinds of leads." Kurtz relies on commission testimony by an FBI agent contradicted by FBI records and on the results of tests performed for the House committee on evidentiary items inexplicably different in size, shape, and weight from the original FBI specimens without evincing any awareness of the discrepancies. The book's footnotes retard rather than advance scholarship: they generally do not support the assertions made in the text, nor do they identify with requisite specificity the materials cited.

In his last chapter Kurtz forgoes his vow against speculation—already broken—and reconstructs the assassination. He hypothesizes that a shot that hit Kennedy in the back—he asserts at an upward angle—was fired from the second floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building. Here he whooshes across the line separating speculation from fantasy. His assertion that "the first two floors of the Depository were lower than the limousine at the time of the shots" requires a feat of levitation that is neither recorded on any film of the assassination nor testified to by any eyewitness.

Kurtz rightly calls attention to the need for professional historians to appraise the assassination of President Kennedy and the official investigations into the crime. Unfortunately, this book does not measure up to the demands of that gargantuan task.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JAMES H. LESAR

I will provide more ~~is~~ information or specifics if ~~is~~ desires.

My specific ^comments, fewer ^{much} and shorter ^{much} than is possible, follow~~s~~.

Subj:
Date: 05/13/2001 6:31:02 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: David.Wrone@uwsp.edu (Wrone, David)
To: jerrycatchall@aol.com ('jerrycatchall@aol.com')

Jerry: here is my draft of a reply to Briggs. Terse, pithy, with Briggs told I would provide extended comment on any point.. Please tell Harold to mail or return by expedite and I of course will pay any costs, even Fed Ex.

=====
David R. Wrone May 13, 2001

Response to Kurtz/Briggs April commentary on my Zapruder manuscript. My comments are divided into two parts. Part I on Briggs and Part II on Kurtz.

Part I. Briggs covering letter.

1. That the changes suggested by Kurtz will strengthen the manuscript and make it less vulnerable to criticism.

The reverse is true. His changes would weaken the book and make it vulnerable by opening it to severe attack from informed, scholarly, and serious readers. One stands on scholarship and the documentary record even though the heavens fall.

2. That this process of citing or relating to the less than scholarly authors or those others who have made contributions, etc., has as its aim to aid or move in the direction of consensus among dissenters, etc.

False. The ones suggested are all flawed; I must stay with the objective and scholarly and those who made the original contributions. This subject is different than all others in American history. There are ample reasons to believe that the assassination at its least was a coup d'etat. The Katzenbach memorandum written on Sunday the 24th demonstrates this, especially paragraph one "to make" the evidence show the public that Oswald is guilty and the last paragraph that officials had no case against Oswald.

Briggs' aim will actually dilute scholarship and weaken the book.

a. My approach is correct. Most of the information on the crime was published by Weisberg. The rule in scholarship is to credit the publication where the information first appeared. Most of these so-called critics can be characterized as playing detectives. Let me illustrate with a few of the critics.

Livingstone. His last book libeled everybody but the Pope and is full of factual errors, and theories. He does not eliminate the government's story and is undependable. Weisberg has a book written on the errors of fact and corruption of history in his books.

Aguilar. He has never written on the Zapruder film so why use him? His work on the medical side is undependable.

Mantik. My purpose is not sensationalism. Mantik is an alterationist, a charge I refute in the book and in my commentary on Willis' reliability.

Even in the extreme, they add nothing, only duplicate, and have undependable sources.

To further illustrate. If one turns to Thompson's Six Seconds in Dallas error choked much of it was taken from Weisberg's Whitewash 1 and 2.

Groden's work is so corrupted it is unbelievable. He knows little about the subject matter, actually doctored some photographs to improve them, and is undependable. Weisberg has a book on Groden's errors and corruptions.

3. That references to the internet at least be put into the

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bibliography.

This is based on the erroneous assumption that a form of scholarly reality lies there and is without merit. Would any dependable scholar go to the internet for sources? I will reluctantly insert:

ADD: "Internet. Numerous sites on the internet contain references and information on the Zapruder film, but they are so compromised by misinformation, riddled with factual inaccuracies, and distorted by theories that only a subject matter master can safely use them."

consider

4. That information be added to the SBT chapters to relate or orient to the Zapruder film.

Sufficient information is already there. It is impossible to write about the SBT without the Zapruder film's role made clear. Contrary to Kurtz's unsubstantiated assertion these three chapters are unusual, powerful, and integral; they make a significant understanding not found elsewhere. But

ADD: I will examine the chapters and will add information if indicated.

5. That I should address any categorical statements of fact.

I deny that such exists, but if such is brought to my attention of course I shall change them. None have ever been brought to my attention by Kurtz; we only have his bald wild assertion. If categorical, state how and provide the evidence that it is so.

Confusion can arise when someone who knows the subject well and speaks from the informed authority of scholarship. Individuals without subject matter knowledge are often if not typically uncomfortable when encountering subject masters. Put confidence in my scholarship and walk into the light. I will not let you down. This is what genuine scholarship on a controversial subject does, is supposed to do, has done for centuries, and ought be expected to do in this singular instance.

6. That there is a reliance on the Warren Commission Report's information.

It is wrong and unscholarly to think there was no useful information in the official records.

Part II. Kurtz

1. That Phil Willis' testimony is not credible, due to his saying the car stopped and the back of the head was blown out.

Willis is rock solid credible. The lack of credibility is in Kurtz's unscholarly observations. [See attachment Willis Reliability].

2. That I should put in a chapter on Mantik's piece found in Fetzer's wretch of a book.

I refuse. If I open the door to examining this alterationist, error-soaked trash there will be no end to it for a dozen others will be in line. Further, emphasizing sensationalism misdirects from the scholarly purpose of my book. Also, my book provides the principles that a serious, candid reader can use to refute it.

3. That Wrone has an over reliance on Weisberg to the neglect of "other researchers" who have "contributed" to assassination scholarship. Kurtz names three. There are several sub-points.

Nonsense. In fact I utilized Weisberg almost too sparingly and always appropriately. The link of "other researchers" with "scholarship" is gratuitous, forced, and false. The avoidance of them is a mark of my scholarship. Kurtz does not provide a single instance where another author was the source of a point nor a single instance that was inappropriate when I gave Weisberg as a source.

4. A profile of Weisberg.

In general, Weisberg's research alone brought forth the majority of the facts we have today on the assassination, published them first, and did it without theorizing.

Correspondence. Weisberg's influence and force is attested first of all in his extensive correspondence with critics, researchers, the press, documentary film producers, and the general public. The quantity of these informative letters is staggering. Perhaps he has written 30,000

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On what I use him for

letters. In addition he has responded to each of over 20,000 letters sent to him by the general public. The point must be underscored. He was and is an intellectual and scholarly force of massive proportions in the evolving JFK controversy.

Books. Weisberg has published nine books on the assassination that are without conjecture and focus on the crime and its investigation. Critics have used him extensively and without citations. These include Mark Lane, Josiah Thompson, Jim Garrison, Robert Groden, etc.

Law suits. Weisberg did what no other person did. In twelve lawsuits he sued the government for records and obtained through this arduous battle over third of a million pages of records. In one case the FBI admitted in court that Weisberg knew more about the assassination than anyone in the FBI [see Weisberg attachment]. In the course of his arduous battles he amended the FOIA [see Weisberg attachment].

Personal archives. He opened his valuable and extensive private archive to the public without stint or restriction to ideology, left or right. He recently gave it and his books to Hood College, located near his home. Two large van loads were required to move it. Hood's Senior Vice President said of the collection in letter of 4-12-01,

... the work you have done is unparalleled in the world. You have compiled a legacy of immense value, both to researchers and to students and to the public at large. We are grateful to you for all of that work and for entrusting its safekeeping to our care. We will do all we can to ensure that the collection is kept secure and that the information is made available to as many people as possible and accessible in a user-friendly way. Your work is what makes all of this possible and we are grateful

Work with critics. Weisberg actively provided dissenters as well as supporters of the Commission findings access to his files and knowledge. Several score authors have approached the assassination through him. He oriented them to the subject, guided them to the complex records, suggested approaches, and if desired critically read their manuscripts.

For example, Howard Roffman's Presumed Guilty is a classical instance of a scholarly monograph and powerful still today. It emerged from his summer long stays at Weisberg's home and from the assistance Weisberg gave him. Roffman became legal counsel for Lucas films. Robert Groden of Zapruder film notoriety spent almost a year of week ends working with Weisberg who while not a film expert offered many suggestions on how to approach the subject. That Groden later abandoned objectivity for tinsel fame and money is a great tragedy.

Through the decades he provided copies of documents to critics. For example, to Wrono he gave without charge two file cabinets of legal documents, CIA, FBI, and other records. He provided others with documents without hesitation.

Direction of graduate work. Under Weisberg's direct tutelage he produced at least five doctoral dissertations relating to JFK, perhaps more. He served perhaps twice as many master's degree candidates, countless undergraduate honor theses and terms papers, assisted high school teachers, and college professors. He had more Ph.Ds and MAs than most professors do in a lifetime.

Public opinion. Weisberg not only maintained sound relationships with the press but also provided them with access to his files, gave them information, and sometimes when requested criticism. His files are thick with correspondence, aide memoirs on relationship with the national press, and similar things, from the Washington Post to the Los Angeles Times to CBS to radio stations. The New York Times referred to him as a "painstaking investigator"; the N.Y. Review of Books, "close analysis . . . intriguing and interesting"; London Observer, "impressive"; National Guardian: "careful examination . . . blows Report to smithereens."

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Bill then became public

led to an am ending

When Kurtz says my reliance on Weisberg will engender a hostile press reaction that is a canard. All history denies it. He does not cite one source for it. He invents it. Aside from the general antipathy the press has shown to the JFK assassination Weisberg's press relationship had been fine and outstanding.

Congress. He has worked with members from both houses of Congress, and with several committees from both houses. As detailed in the book the conservative Senator Russell of the Warren Commission held him in the highest regard and urged him to continue his fine work.

Scholarly personae. From the time he began his inquiries until the present Weisberg possessed a scholarly personae. He did not seek wealth, but the life of meaning. He turned down numerous occasions to profit by corrupting the subject. He lived in poverty, never took a vacation, and effaced himself. He assisted many historians and political scientists in their research, gave them the clues to documents, valuable insights, and access to his files and they did not mention him in their sources, it mattered not.

Manuscript books. Beginning in the 1990s when ^{as a} illness and restricted physical activity restricted him Weisberg approached the JFK assassination from a different perspective. He had read the FBI, CIA, and other agency files and decided to utilize that knowledge in examining the corruption of the subject inflicted upon the public by authors from both the right and left. Weisberg stands almost alone in the center.

In the last decade he has written twenty-five thick manuscript books to leave a guide for historians of the future. These include books on Fetzer, Groden, LaFontaine, Lifton, Beliin, Mailer, Newman, Garrison, Posner, Hersh, and others.

5. That my chapter 14 Willis #5/z202 is a theory. Wrong. It is a fact. *Unrefuted after 35 years.*

6. That Kurtz cannot see JFK hit on Willis #5 *That's not the point. Besides that*
Kurtz ignores facts. a. JFK could have been reacting in such a way not visible to the lens. b. As the testimony before the Commission and other medical authority states, if a body is hit by a bullet and does not strike bone a delayed reaction is often the result. c. We speak of less than 2/3ds of second!! One cannot expect to see reaction in that unbelievably short time. d. In hunting, butchering, and wartime when a wounding bullet does not strike bones an immediate reaction is often not seen.

7. That he, Kurtz, denies a shot occurred at z190 and that I employed faulty reasoning.

Kurtz misrepresents me. He is egregiously wrong. How is it faulty reasoning? He just says it is, which unsupported assertion does not merit a response.

a. That Oswald could have shot through the trees.

Kurtz just makes up this point out of the blue--no evidence. If there is anything we do know it is there was no shot from the Depository prior to z210 because of the trees and there were none afterwards.

b. Even if a shot came at z190 Kurtz maintains 46 frames remained for someone to fire and hit Connally, [which is less than three seconds]. Again this is all made up, invented stuff. That rifle was defective and fired no shot that day. No shot was fired from the Depository at all; a shot from the 6th floor easternmost window was physically impossible.

Oswald was on the first floor. *Not a single person on earth has duplicated the alleged firing feat.* After the rifle was twice repaired the Army used three of the finest riflemen in America and could not duplicate the shooting--and Oswald was a duffer.

c. Other evidence for a shot at z190 is needed says Briggs.

The text includes several instances, not mentioned by Kurtz, and z202/w5 are valid as they stand. *NPIC*

*On page 287 I discuss Betzner's photograph that he snapped Thursday, May 17, 2001 America Online: JerryCatchall

not DW's purpose. Willis has camera down from his eye in 203 having been #5

Means 4th shot and no conspiracy WR

attach

*in action
cloud
is,
the first
shots in
a lower
could not
be shot
in a
Oswald*

at z186 and immediately heard a shot, ca. z190.

*On page 289 I discuss the Zapruder film's showing Agent Hickey's reaction to shot by standing and looking around and then sitting down that corresponds to a shot at z190.

*On page 288 I discuss the Zapruder film's depiction of JFK and his wife reacting to some disturbance that corresponds to a shot at z190.

*In chapter 14 I discuss frame 202 that in itself establishes a shot at z190. In that frame you see Willis' foot step onto the pavement, his camera coming down from his eye. He had just snapped his fifth slide in reaction to the sound of a shot.

*Also in the book I discuss Zapruder's testimony before the Commission where he testified to watching JFK grab himself. Since a sign blocked his view of JFK from 205-210 and JFK emerges at z225 already wounded with hands to his throat this can only have been a shot prior to z205 compatible with a z190 shot. This is sterling quality evidence from the best witness, one with what he saw in a room by a zoom lens.

*On page 288 I discuss that around frame 190 the Zapruder film shows blurring, corresponding to the emotional reaction to the sound of a shot at z190.

*On page 288 I discuss the expert testimony of a photographic expert for HSCA who stated a blur occurred on frames immediately after z190.

*In Fetzer's wretch of a book, cited by Kurtz but ignored when it comes to z190, he includes reproductions of the National Photographic Interpretation Center's notes on its study of the Zapruder film. Weisberg had years earlier reproduced several pages of this, but Fetzer does not cite him. This CIA unit is one of the world's finest film laboratories. Its first set of briefing boards places a shot at z188. The second set places a shot at z190.

8. That Kurtz levies a criticism for not having incorporated the releases by the ARRB and cites as his sole proof Nathan Pool's records.

Nonsense. Both the quantity and quality of the records displays his lack of subject matter knowledge. There are over 5,000,000 pages in the ARRB releases. In my lifetime I cannot begin to examine such a mass. No scholar can. The ARRB forced these disclosures from several agencies. In those pages are many little things, trivialities such as Pool. But more than that not a word of these disclosures can be safely used without careful checking because of the inaccuracies. Some is fine stuff, but some of it is also deliberately false stuff.

I reject Nathan Pool. My book is thus far free from conjectures and I want to keep it that way. Pool is unbelievably bad. He lies, invents, gets basic things wrong, testifies to impossibilities, and has been influenced by the press and theorists accounts. [see Pool attachment]

9. That certain frames of the Zapruder film should be used.

I reject Kurtz's suggestions. Several are for sensationalist purposes, such as frame 313, which is not the purpose of this book as I have said. It is scholarly. Also, they would alienate serious readers. Others such as z230 is immaterial to the text.

Aside from the black and whites from CE 885 on the damaged frames already sent I believe that I require only z202 and z337 [including sprocket matter]. Each disproves the Warren Commission findings and establishes a conspiracy killed JFK. In a world of unlimited expense the sequence associated with Willis, z190-205 [including sprocket matter] would be good, but obviously out of range.

10. That I explain where on the Zapruder film the various shots were recorded.

This is the theorist in Kurtz speaking. Not even the NPIC of the Thursday, May 17, 2001 America Online: JerryCathall

about me!

Remember Willis' pp 47-8 on this

as Z testified - he had a zoom lens

was recorded?

you really want them

How could the W.C. (if guessed and made up

CIA could determine that—the world's best—and I certainly cannot. My book is not a sensationalist approach to the subject.

----- Headers -----

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Received: from rly-xd02.mx.aol.com (rly-xd02.mail.aol.com [172.20.105.167]) by air-xd02.mail.aol.com (v77_r1.36) with ESMTP; Sun, 13 May 2001 18:31:02 -0400
Received: from ems6.uwsp.edu (ems6.uwsp.edu [143.236.12.46]) by rly-xd02.mx.aol.com (v77_r1.36) with ESMTP; Sun, 13 May 2001 18:30:33 2000
Received: by ems6.uwsp.edu with Internet Mail Service (5.5.2653.19) id <KS7650YZ>; Sun, 13 May 2001 17:30:32 -0500
Message-ID: <349418BDE835D51194AE005004606D240127AB12@ems7.uwsp.edu>
From: "Wrone, David" <David.Wrone@uwsp.edu>
To: "jerrycatchall@aol.com" <jerrycatchall@aol.com>
Subject:
Date: Sun, 13 May 2001 17:30:25 -0500
MIME-Version: 1.0
X-Mailer: Internet Mail Service (5.5.2653.19)
Content-Type: text/plain;
charset="ISO-8859-1"

What
Comment on Dave's rebuttal re: Kurtz.

Top of page 4 Kurtz adds that too much of a Weisberg diet will antagonize the press. Really! With only a few notable exceptions (Lardner is the only one that comes immediately to mind), has the Fifth Estate done in its retelling of the assassination to bring some closure on this question? If anything, the media abdicated its role on this question long ago and doggedly remains faithful to its initial irresponsibility. Since Kurtz is so fond of dipping his obstructionist toe in that fetid pond called Fetzer's "Murder in Daley Plaza," then he should be familiar with Barbie Zelizer's excellent work on journalists and the JFK assassination, "Covering the Body." Even Fetzer, in a rare moment of lucidity, has read this book and has praise for it. Her work is a devastating account of how the print and TV journalists have done all they could to discourage any genuine historic treatment of the murder in Daley Plaza.

Pass this onto Dave in case he is not familiar with Zelizer's work.