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A BOOK REVIEW REVIEWED

A rebuttal to the book review on kill zone.

By Craig Roberts, Author

DATELINE: OKLAHOMA

I recently read the "Elf On The Shelf" book review (Sept. 30, 1994) written by Walt Brown (Ph.D).concerning my book, Kill Zone: A Sniper Looks At Dealey Plaza. I could not believe the amount of arrogance and egotism Mr. Brown exhibited in his vitriolic attack on a mere book.

For whatever motivation, Mr. Brown attacks the book as if it were in the same category as Gerald Posner's Case Closed. In self defense I would like to address his comments. First, Mr. Brown followed his comments about the "horrendous tripe put between covers" that "cause credibility problems for "good" books with his "review" of Kill Zone. With this biased and opinionated dissertation as a lead-in, the reader becomes jaundiced before word one of the so-called review.

To begin, Kill Zone is not about the assassination of JFK. It merely opens with that event, then carries on with the rest of the thrust of the book: what power could have pulled it off, covered it up, intimidated (and often eliminated) the witnesses, and managed to hide the investigatory documents away until the year 2029?

Upon reading Mr. Brown's diatribe, it became evident that he had not read the book past page 93, as his comments in the review ended with page 80. Evidently he did not see fit to read the rest of the book, which contained three more sections beyond the Kennedy assassination, before he drew his learned conclusion. I would like to speak of qualifications before going any further so that the reader will understand my background. First, as Mr. Brown states, I was a sniper. That was in Vietnam, in the Marines--what Mr. Brown refers to as an "odd resume." But, unlike what the reader would be led to believe by the writer's omission, it is not my total resume, nor the end of it. He failed to mention that I was a 25-year career police officer (hence a professional investigator), a pilot, an aircraft maintenance technician with Boeing 707 experience, and a military intelligence officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

In fairness, however, I will be the first to admit that I am not a Kennedy "researcher." Instead, I'm a professional investigator with a background heavy in covert operations. Perhaps someone in the "research community" will appreciate this fact, as few others have my qualifications--or contacts.

Now to the review. Mr. Brown exposes the fact that the book "suffers from a dreadful lack of editing, and grammatical infelicities will overcome the zeal of even the most serious reader." (NOTE: For those impressed at this point by our man's command of the English language, but are clueless on what he just said, "infelicities" means inappropriate or unpleasing). In this, he is absolutely correct and I agree 100%. However, it appears that Mr. Brown had acquired a copy of the first print run, which admittedly had typographical errors and computer errors due to typesetting problems on 36 pages. These have all been corrected in the second edition and no first edition copies (of a print run of 2,000) remain available through commercial sources. More on this later.

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Mr. Brown then launches into the rest of his attack with "Roberts admits that the assassination did not shock or upset him, many people actually felt relieved." Yes, that's correct, as well. The assassination, on the 22nd of November 1963 did not shock me (due to the huge number of rumors floating around the country at the time that someone would "get" Kennedy), nor did it upset either myself or many of my friends simply because in this part of the country, at the time, Kennedy was looked upon much as Bill Clinton is today. Any questions? This is all history, and it is factual. Still, it does not excuse the fact that a murder was committed, and that the government--the same government I fought for in Vietnam --lied about it and covered it up. It was this last part that motivated me to investigate the assassination, not because a president had been assassinated and I felt obligated to join a crusade. Everyone has their own personal reasons to "get involved." The government's dishonesty and resultant cover-up was mine.

Note: The error in title listing of Kill Zone: A Sniper Looks At Dealey Plaza has not been corrected as of 3-24-95, but is available in some bookstores.

Mr. Brown then states: "Beyond that, it is difficult to decide whether the work suffers from a lack of understanding of the case, or whether the author's purpose was to sensationalize." I'm afraid I probably know more about this case than 90% of the researchers. Not because I've read all of the volumes of the Warren Report, or because I've interviewed dozens of witnesses, but because I have contacts in places that no one else has. I was given information that no one else was privy to, and this led me out of Dealey Plaza on my quest to find the entity responsible for the event--and more important, its agenda and where it is today. I did not set out to solve the Kennedy assassination, but to see where the trails led.

Mr. Brown then states, out of context, that "Oswald is seen as a 'known Communist with mental problems.'" What he failed to point out is the rest of the paragraph. Taken in context, what I actually wrote was that while I toured the Sixth Floor, I studied the diagrams and displays, and already "knew the story; Lee Harvey Oswald, a known communist with mental problems, had shot President John F. Kennedy. He was later apprehended by the Dallas police, but before he could go to trial, he was shot by Jack Ruby. Every American school kid knew this version of the events of that day. We had been taught it as part of our history classes, and even the encyclopedias recorded the Oswald/lone gunman scenario as gospel truth."

So what's the problem? This is exactly what we had been taught. I merely pointed out that this was what I had been told before I entered the TSBD that day. I spend the rest of the book proving this notion wrong!

Mr. Brown notes that I mentioned a shooter "on the fire escape of the Dal-Tex building." What he did not mention was that I was describing a scenario of possibilities that match the ballistic evidence, and was merely an opinion concerning what pieces of the puzzle seemed to fit in a hypothetical situation. What I should have written was that "many authors feel that a shooter was on the fire escape or inside the Dal-Tex building on about the second floor." Okay, this sentence could have been better written, but let us not throw the baby out with the bath water because of sentence.

Mr. Brown goes on to spotlight an error in vehicle identification concerning LBJ's car. In the first edition of Kill Zone I mistakenly wrote that it was a Cadillac (probably due to thinking of the Secret Service follow-up car), when in fact is was a 1964 Lincoln four door convertible driven by Texas state trooper Hurchel Jacks, with Secret Service agent Rufus W. Youngblood riding shotgun. I hope this sets the record straight to Mr. Brown's satisfaction. It was corrected in the second edition.

The next issue is the color of Kennedy's Lincoln. In the first edition of the book I had written about the "black" limousine. Before the book went to press, I had caught the error and attempted to find all references and change the color to blue--hence Brown's so-called "magic car" reference of sometimes black, sometimes blue. I apologize for the inconvenience, but the second edition was corrected before printing.

Mr. Brown mentions that "Roberts tells us that one shot was fired 'to immobilize Kennedy's head for the high powered rifle shots to come later.'" Again, Mr. Brown is not telling the reader the whole story. What Kill Zone says is this regarding the throat shot: "it is possible that this shot was fired by a small caliber rifle--probably a CIA-issued .22 caliber Model 74 Winchester silenced sniper rifle--to immobilize Kennedy's head for the high powered rifle shots to come later." The reader will note that this is the first time they have seen reference to the existence of the Model 74 silenced sniper rifle used by the OSS, and later the CIA. (Must be my "sniper" resume shining forth, eh?). I am not the first to mention that the throat shot might have been an immobilizing shot--I believe some writers have suggested a dart, with poison? However, if it were me, I would have attempted a kill with the first shot.

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Mr. Brown then goes on to attack the code book stories concerning SAC and the cabinet plane bound for Tokyo (I mentioned one version that included the SAC bombers), and the statement that the doctors in the autopsy room in Bethesda were outranked by almost everyone in the room (a known fact). Mr. Brown makes a blanket statement that Secret Service agents and FBI agents don't outrank navy doctors in a naval hospital. I beg to differ. Since I am a lieutenant colonel, and served in the Marines, and in a naval hospital, when the Secret Service or FBI show up, they are accorded very senior "rank" status, indeed. Ask anyone in the military who has dealt with such "visitors."

Mr. Brown ends with "...Mr. Roberts' expertise could be drawn upon in that venue (sniping) by those who know

the case--and the players--far better." Instead of taking Kill Zone in the vein it was written, probably because he did not read the book, Mr. Brown misses the entire thrust of the work: exposing the powers who had the capability of pulling off the ambush and covering it up. Those who think they can "solve" the case by remaining in Dealey Plaza, or dissecting the Warren report, will never progress beyond either of those points until they do what I did: follow the money, follow the power, and see who is at the top of the pyramid. Mr. Brown did not do that.

In my opinion, what we saw exhibited in his biting "review" was a case of classroom intellectualism, He should be less concerned about grammar and punctuation, and more about new material being offered to the community--even if he personally disagrees with the validity of some the writer's offering. After all, maybe some of the "newer" (read "fresh") observations just might contain a few items of value.

As for Mr. Brown's attack on the book as not being a so- called scholarly work, it might interest the reader to know that Kill Zone was utilized as research material for a brigadier general's Masters thesis, Somalia--Doorway to Hell; Operation Restore Hope and Continue Hope. (BG Ed Wheeler, Tulsa University, 1994). What does Kill Zone have to do with U.N. activities in Somalia, you ask? It's obvious Mr. Brown would not know either, as I feel he never finished the book to see what it was really about.

About the author: Craig Roberts, a professional police officer and Army Reserve officer working in intelligence, has written or co-authored twenty-one books.

Point of View

I was never one of those people who had doubts or suspicions about the Warren Commission's report on the president's death. But five years after Jack died, I was having dinner with Kenny O'Donnell and a few other people a Jimmy's Harborside Restaurant in Boston, and we got to talking about the assassination. I was surprised to hear O'Donnell say that he was sure he had heard two shots that came from behind the fence.

"That's not what you told the Warren Commission," I said.

"You're right," he replied. "I told the FBI what I had heard, but they said it couldn't have happened that way and that I must have been imagining things. So I testified the way they wanted me to. I just didn't want to stir up any more pain and trouble for the family."

"I can't believe it," I said. "I wouldn't have done that in a million years. I would have told the truth."

"Tip, you have to understand. The family--everybody wanted this thing behind them."

Dave Powers was with us at diner that night, and his recollection of the shots was the same as O'Donnell's. Kenny O'Donnell is no longer alive, but during the writing of this book I checked with Dave Powers. As the say in the news business, he stands by his story.

And so there will always be some skepticism in my mind about the cause of Jack's death. I used to think that the only people who doubted the conclusions of the Warren Commission were crackpots. Now, however, I'm not so sure.

From the book, Man Of The House; The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neil, with William Novak.

"We must today prepare for those who are our heirs. The steps we take in conservation and reclamation will have very little effect upon all of us here immediately, and in this decade. What we are doing in the real sense is preparing for those who come after us..."
John F. Kennedy, September 25, 1963