Mr. Jerry Urban
News Room
Houston Chronicle
P.O.Box 4260
Houston, TX 77210

9/9/88

Dear Jerry,

"He was a very humane man," Stolley said of Abraham Zapruder. I was witness to his great humanity just before Thanksgiving, 1968, when I was interviewing him in his office.

I'd hardly had time to sit down when his secretary came in to tell him a woman she named had just quit and was asking to be paid.

My presence did not discourage his demonstration of his great humane feelings.

"Tell that bitch she's quitting at her convenience and I'll pay her at my convenience." Close to verbatim. It impressed me quite a bit. For Thanksgiving, too.

Man of real principle, too. Nothing could corrupt him or get him to testify to anything but the truth. And he did. Here's how.

The day of the assassination the Secret Service got a print of his film on a plane to Washington. (The official account is that the original and one print went to Life, via Chicago, where Life says that during the layover they made a black-and-white print; one Zapruder kept; and was given to the Secret Service.) With the print was a shnd-lettered memo, almost illegible in the copy I got at the Archives. It quotes Zapruder as saying that he heard a bullet come from over his right shoulder. Then he testifies, knowing full well that the official story does not permit his observation. So, he testified that he used to believe that the shot came from over his right shoulder but it was explained to him that it hadn't. Honest, isn't it?

Good story. Thanks. I think this is the first time any paper, in almost 25 years, has reported how they have commercialized this great tragedy.

Stolley's explanation of the reversion of rights is self-serving and misleading.

The film had been pirated and was being shown on TV. Life had had its earlier and painful experiences in suing Bernard Geis for using sketches drawn from the film. If they had not reverted the rights they'd have had to sue a couple of TV netd and others, including Groden, Geraldo Rivera and me. Geis published Josiah Thompson's book and I used prints copied from the Commission's publication of the frames it used.

I wonder a bit about the 1967 copyright. Life's use was 1963. But maybe Henry, a tax lawyer, saw a benefit in having title held by a corporation.

Sincerely,

Harold

Harold Weisberg

Houston Chronicle
P.O. Box 4260 Houston, Texas 77210 (713) 220-7171

Tuesday, September 6, 1988
Harold Weisburg
7627 Old Receiver Road Rd.
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Thanks for your invaluable assistance.
Let me know if you hear anything new on this subject.

Thanks again,

Jerry M. Urban

801 Texas Houston, Texas 77002

Dear Jerry Urban, 9/8/88

I write before getting your clipping, which will give me a better address, in part because of the limitations health imposes on me and in part in the interest of time, chiefly time for you and your paper to consider what I write about.

I'm 75 and have both arterial and vascular diseases and am loaded with clots that limit my physical capabilities. On the 29th I'm to be evaluated for what in others is outpatient surgery but for me entails considerable risks, cataract removal.

My reporting days are far in the past but by the standards of that day, if not of my present observations, there is a major, a really significant story, in the Zapruder film. I've told part of it in my books, which got little attention and none from any major papers. Inevitably, this will be in the litigation. Lesar, Selby and I have not been able to confer about this (it hasn't been safe for me to drive to Washington for more than a decade) but Jim and I have agreed that we will not this time file under the Freedom of Information Act. I believe that in this litigation we will use the Zapruder film to prove beyond reasonable question that the official account of the JFK assassination is, and to at least some of the official investigators was, known to be entirely wrong. Considering this involves what may be a major policy decision for your paper. And as I should have said first, please keep this also in confidence for the present.

If you and your paper are to consider this, you should know something about me and something about both the proof and how you can use it.

I am a former reporter, investigative reporter, Senate investigator and editor and World War II intelligence analyst. I've written seven books on the assassinations of President Kennedy and Dr. King. All have stood time's testing and official examination by the federal agencies I've sued at some length under FOIA. It was amended in 1974 over one of my suits, thanks to Jim Lesar's persistence and mine, to open the FBI, CIA and other files with the sordid disclosures of which you know. There is no substantial error in any of these books, and none in the many thousands of pages of affidavits I've filed in the FOIA suits, all of which were subject to careful examination by the agencies, particularly DJ and FBI and including the CIA. I made myself subject to the penalties of perjury in each very controversial submission, in part to serve history and make a record under the judicial system, with the agencies having every interest in trying to rebut or refute me. As Jim will tell you, they didn't, not once. Much as they would like to harm me and in other and pretty dirty ways did, they didn't once dare allege perjury, where they could have really hurt me if I'd erred.

None of my books pursues any conspiracy theory and I object to and oppose the irresponsible ones that have. Instead I've made a rather large study of how the basic institutions of our society worked in that time of great stress and since.

When James Earl Ray sought a trial, I was defense investigator and on the basis of that investigation we got an evidentiary hearing. I conducted the investigation for it and we actually exculpated Ray. The judge delayed well over a year in reaching his decision - that guilt or innocence then were immaterial. If this sounds unusual, we have the records and Jim, who did most of the legal work and all the briefing, will, I'm sure, tell you this is the actuality. We had formidable opposition, local state and federal, and I was the only investigator then.

All of my work, all my files which now take up about 60 file cabinets and many, many boxes, are all going, with no quid pro quo at all, to local Hood College where they will be a free-access public archive. If you want further credentials, please ask.

The official story is that Oswald alone fired three shots only from the easternmost window on the south wall of the Texas Book Depository Building, that

the first inflicted all seven non-fatal wounds on the President and governor, the second missed entirely and the third hit the President in the head and was fatal. The first shot, the Warren Commission concluded, was fired at what is in Zapruder's film as Frame 210 and that no shot was possible before then because of the density of the foliage of a live oak tree that blocked the car and its occupants from view. Senator Russell in particular had doubts about the shooting as stated in the Report, was induced to sign what he regarded as a compromise when it wasn't, and until his dying days, after he learned of this, encouraged my work while expressing regret that he could not then help it.

There is a timing device in the Zapruder film that proves this was impossible.

There is universal official agreement that Phil Willis took a 35mm picture of the motorcade in reaction to the first shot, after which he stepped off the south curb of Elm Street and took additional pictures.

As Zapruder panned his camera Willis is seen to disappear when the film is projected but in the 20 percent of area exposed but masked on projection he is seen taking the camera from his eye and stepping into the street. He was in the street in Frame 202, or before any shot was possible from that window. It also happens that there was a straight-line relationship between the two photographers and the President. And there is more that bears on this,

In his thesis documentary Sloby uses Frame 230 to show that it was then physically impossible for Connally to be holding his hat in his right hand if that wrist had been struck and as severely injured as it was in the official account. But that he was able to is also indispensible to the official account, which has him struck by the first bullet, before then. Chip has an Army doctor, who was then was expert in that area, for the first time on film on this. Tape, rather. I have other evidence on this, by which I mean official evidence that was ignored. The fact is that there was not even a gesture at trying to prove the known impossibility of that bullet having transitted both bodies, inflicted all that damage, including [redacted] to bones. Chip also has a widely-experienced pathologist, a doctor well-experienced in gunshot wounds, very effectively on this.

Also bearing on this is something I got from DJ under FOIA that got no attention after I published it in Post Mortem years ago, an FBI picture it did not give to the Commission that is a close-up of the President's shirt collar. It is quite clear. In the official story the bullet that allegedly hit the President in the back went through his neck and exited through the shirt collar, nicking the knot of the tie in so doing. The neatly-dressed JFK had his tie in place, of course. Only the damage to the front of the collar is not holes at all. It is two slits. And they do not nearly coincide, as they would if a bullet made slits instead of holes. Not only do they not coincide or overlap, they are of different lengths, materially different. And they also do not coincide with the extreme edge of the knot supposedly struck by an exiting bullet. In fact, as the Commission knew, the wound was above the collar and the damages to the shirt and tie knot were made by a scalpel with which one of the nurses, following the usual emergency procedures, cut the knot because there was no time to undo the knot.

There is more for which I do not now take your time. Whatever else your paper might want it can have.

Among its many importances the Zapruder film is the only timing device of which we know or is in the official investigations. It was misused and misrepresented in the official investigations. It has, in effect, been suppressed by the Zapruders. The father let Life decide who could have what and Life let others have, at high cost, only what it decided to use. And what it decided to use is only what could not dispute the official story. When I established in 1966 that some of the crucial frames

were missing in the original, blandly ignored by both the FBI and the Commission, Life said it was making them available and gave prints to Wide World. Only about 20 percent, the exposed film in the sprocket-hole area, was not included and could not have been reprdduced from duplicates (not) of the original. And then Wide World would not let prints out. I tried and I had a New Yorker try for me. However, Wide World sold me other prints from time to time. I was to get a copy of the film in a FOIA lawsuit against the FBI, and Zapruder's son agreed that I could make slides, but in at least five years he hasn't given the Archives authority. As you know, he's asked a high price of Chip, I think $30,000. Aside from his high cost in time Chip has, I think, invested at least $20,000 in his project and unless there has been a change of which he has not told me, he has not sold it but has a tentative offer of $10,000 for use of it. He is hardly commercializing the film, which is not much of his documentary.

Despite what he told you, father and son have both commercialized the film.

The father's story, under oath, is that he gave the proceeds, $25,000, to the widow of J.D.Tippit, the policeman who was also killed that day. But he confirmed to me, while refusing to show me the contract, that he did not get a flat $25,000 from Life. I can't confirm and am inclined not to believe what a Life editor told me, that by 1967 it had paid him more than $400,000. But it is clear that since the father died the son has been getting large sums for use and they can come only from wealthy corporations which have never had any interest in analyzing the film and never have. Scholars, on the other hand, almost never have large sums available and Chip and I do not.

Moreover, as I consider FOIA makes me, I am surrogate for the people. As I've told you you can have anything I have, this applies not only to you. it applies to everyone, including those with whom I do not agree and even some I do not like at all. It has been this way, my practise, since FOIA was amended in 1974 over one of my suits against the FBI. This is explicit in the Senate debates. Chip is only one of hundreds who can confirm this. My copies, if and when I get them, will always be available in the public archive already arranged for and thus serve the people and no personal interest.

In short, Zapruder is using the copyright to commercialize and to suppress what disputes and I think beyond question entirely destroys the official account of what I regard as the most subversive of crimes in a society like ours.

I suggest that there is no more appropriate an observation of the 25th anniversary of that great tragedy than the beginning of the telling of truth about it. There are other commemorations of which I know but I have no reason to believe that other than Chip's, which was not intended to be one, there will be more than one responsible one. It is a British documentary I've helped a bit and it will have some new information because I gave it to them. They may have more on their own.

What I am saying is that the observances of which I know will be largely more disinformation, misinformation and deception. And just plain crap. They are the real commercializations. One is particularly disgusting and one is pretty wild but has a big name. And yes, I'm answering their questions and giving them copies of what they ask for.

Please excuse my typing. I have to sit with my legs elevated so I type sort-of sidesaddle.

All of what I say above is in the public domain and I see no reason why it has to await the filing of the compliant, although I've not discussed this with Jim. As of the last time we spoke he said it will be about two weeks until he can get to the legal research he wants to do. And years ago I did make public use on TV, of the frames I refer to above, without compliant from Life or any Zapruder. I had them photographed from the Warren volumes and used 8x10 glossies.

If what I suggest is of interest I'd appreciate knowing as soon as possible. I've

not even thought of mentioning it to anyone else because you and your paper are alone in having the interest reflected by your story.

I begin each day with walking therapy at a nearby mall. I'm generally home by 10 a.m. our time and most days am home the rest of the day.

Perhaps you and your people may have difficulty understanding how what I only indicate above could happen. Of the many explanations I can provide I think one that is documented in the FBI files I have may suffice: the crime itself was never investigated. Hoover had an instant vision of Oswald as the lone-nut assassin. It came to him almost instantly and while he did not provide a precise time he is specific in stating that it was before he heard from LBJ the day of the crime. This is recorded in a memorandum for him by Cartha DeLoach, his then No. 3 man, who was present when Hoover said it. The Commission was in terror of disagreeing with him. I also got all but one of the Commission's executive sessions from which even staff was banned. They actually spell it out, Hoover wanted them to fold their tents and disappear. He was able even to prevent Warren's appointment of general counsel of his own choice, the usual practise. The Commission thought they'd destroyed that transcript by saying that it be done. But the stenotypist's tape survived and under FOIA they had to transcribe it for me. If you have my Post Mortem, it is there beginning on p. 475. Or if you'd like I can send you a xerox. About 14 pages.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg