Date sent: From: Subject:

Wed, 12 Jan 2000 10:24:07 -0500 Michael Kurtz <mkurtz@selu.edu>

Re: Wrone request . . .

To:

Mike Briggs <mbriggs@newpress.upress.ukans.edu>



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Here are a few of the errors in WHITEWASH, taken from a very cursory scan of the book. All references are to the Dell Paperback edition: P. 46 - " Abraham Zapruder...got \$25,000 for his film and gave it all to the Tippits." As Wrone himself points out, Zapruder received much more than that and did not give it to the Tippits.

7 p31

P. 86 - "During this time[one minute, fourteen seconds] Oswald had to clean and hide the rifle... "Oswald did not have to clean the rifle its surface was not cleaned, and it had smudged prints on it.

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P. 104 - "But the startling meaning of Zapruder's testimony is this: He saw the first shot hit the President. He described the President's reaction to it." In fact, Zapruder never testified that he saw the first shot hit the president. As Weisberg himself admits on p. 103, Zapruder said "I heard the first shot and I saw the President lean over and grab himself..."Zapruder is describing JFK's reaction to the shot. By the time Zapruder heard the sound of the shot, it had already been fired, since bullets travel faster than sound. The first Zapruder film frame when JFK's reaction to the shot is apparent is frame 225, when the limo emerges from behind the street sign. That reaction continues for many frames afterward. From Zapruder's testimony, it is simply not clear as to which frame he saw the president react.

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J- 956

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Mike, I just don't have the time to elaborate any further right now. I believe that the above should suffice for your purposes. ------>From: Mike Briggs <mbriggs@newpress.upress.ukans.edu> >To: Michael Kurtz <mkurtz@selu.edu> >Subject: Re: Wrone request . . . >Date: Wed, Jan 12, 2000, 3:48 AM >

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Roviewby Mirhael Kurs

Review of Zapruder: The World's Most Famous Amateur Movie
By

David Wrone

Brief answer to Ouestions on TO OUR READER form

- 1. Zapruder presents a history of the famous Zapruder film of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. It begins on the morning of the assassination, when Abraham Zapruder took his Bell & Howell home movie camera to Dallas's Dealey Plaza to film the presidential motorcade through Zapruder's sale of the film to Time-Life, Time-Life's sale of the film back to Zapruder's heirs to the recent agreement between the U.S. government and the Zapruder family regarding ownership and copyright titles. Wrone argues that the film provides positive evidence of a conspiracy in the JFK assassination and argues forcefully that the government failed to protect the rights of the American people by allowing the film to revert to Time-Life, then to the Zapruder family. He believes that the film is a national asset and the federal government should retain all rights, including the copyright, for the American people.
- This manuscript makes an important contribution to the literature of the assassination since it is the only full-length study of the topic. It is a valuable corrective to many of the sensational, even bizarre, interpretations of the film.
- Virtually any work on the assassination has market potential for trade sales to the general public, and this one certainly does. It also has potential for textbook usage in both History/Political Science courses, as well as Film Studies.
- 4. In some places, the scholarship is sound, in others, it is quite weak. Wrone omits innumerable sources from his footnotes and bibliography. The work is highly subjective and quite argumentative. SEE ATTACHED.
- 5. The length is fine, but the organization is unwieldy. The writing style is forceful and impressive. SEE ATTACHED.
- 6. This manuscript has sufficient potential that I strongly urge UPK to encourage Wrone to make the necessary changes to put it into publishable form. Wrone has a tendency to be fixed in his views, so I am not sure that he can be persuaded to make the

changes. SEE ATTACHED for my recommended revisions, which I have separated into essential and discretionary.

- 7. This is a manuscript that has definite promise. With the recommended revisions, I recommend publication. Without them, I recommend rejection.
- 8. I have already relayed this to Mike Briggs.
- 9. Yes, you may reveal my name to David Wrone. Tell him that he is free to contact me about my review. Yes, you may use excerpts from my remarks for PR purposes.

General Commentary on Zapruder: The world's Most Famous Amateur Movie

By David Wrone

meaning of film

1. Organization

Parts of the manuscript deviate from its central focus – the history of the Zapruder film. There is too much material on the discovery of bullet 399, JFK's wounds, Connally's wounds, Oswald's guilt or innocence, etc. Wrone needs to focus on the topic.

2. Head Shots

Wrone spends virtually no time discussing probably the single most obvious scene in the film – JFK's head movement at frames 312-314, ff. He needs to explain why he believes that the film shows JFK being shot from both behind and in front. He also needs to address the works of Warren Commission defenders, who try to explain JFK's head movement as the result of a "jet effect" or a neuromuscular spasm.

3. Citations and Bibliography

I am well aware of Wrone's infatuation with the works of Harold Weisberg, but since this manuscript concerns the Zapruder film, he needs to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the literature that discusses the film in some detail. For example, there are countless sources on the World Wide Web that are omitted from his citations. I have attached a sample of the works that he does not discuss.

4. Other Interpretations

It is imperative for Wrone to discuss those interpretations of the Zapruder film with which he disagrees. For example, Dale Myers, David Mantik, Jack White, Robert Groden, and Darryl Weatherly have all written(or posted on WWW pages) interpretations of the film that differ from Wrone's.

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Reviewer's Assessment of

Zapruder: The World's Most Famous Amateur Movie

By

David R. Wrone

General Recommendation

I believe that this manuscript has definite possibilities for publication. Its fundamental thesis – that the Zapruder film provides evidence of a conspiracy in the JFK assassination is sound, and Wrone makes a strong argument for it. He also argues quite persuasively that the film should never have been allowed to remain in Zapruder's legal possession, that Zapruder should not have been allowed to sell it to Time-Life, and that his heirs should not have been allowed to retain ownership of its copyright. A full-length history of the film is needed and would make a valuable contribution to the literature on the assassination. Wrone's writing style is strong and forceful and clearly conveys the points he tries to make.

Wrone, however, needs to make numerous substantive changes in the manuscript before I can give it an unqualified recommendation for publication. There are too many factual errors. There are too many statements that border on the libelous. There is too much material that deals only indirectly with the film. And Wrone needs to address some of the analyses of the film that conflict with his own. Below I have listed some of the major parts of the manuscript that need revision.

Commentary on Specific Parts of Manuscript

P. 6, 2nd Par. – The language is too strong. Wrone issues a blanket condemnation of the various bodies that have investigated the assassination and declares that they "permanently dishonored the nation."

P. 7, l. 6 – "the blossoming truth in the hinterlands." Wrone's hero, Harold Weisberg, lived in Frederick, Maryland, hardly the "hinterlands."

Chapter 1 - Excellent. A good, solid, factual account.

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P. 39, Il. 4-6. "The second shot missed..." The Warren Commission never said that the second shot missed. "The evidence is inconclusive as to whether it was the first, second, or third shot which missed." (Warren Report, p. 111).

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P. 40, 3^{rd} Par., l. 5 – "Oswald would be firing down and at a steep angle. This is incorrect. The angle was 17degrees, 43 minutes, and 30 seconds, hardly a steep angle.

Pp. 41-44 – This is a generally good summary. However, there are two glaring errors:

P. 43 – Frame 230, one of the sharpest and clearest frames of the entire film is omitted.

P. 43 – If Governor Connally is still clutching his Stetson at frame 255, as Wrone contends, then Wrone needs to explain exactly when he was struck in the wrist.

P. 45 1b) If Connally was not struck in the wrist by frame 255, then Wrone is providing evidence for the possibility that someone (Oswald?) fired one shot at 237, striking Connally in the back, then waited until after 255 to fire another shot. Oswald, according to Wrone's analysis, had sufficient time to fire the two separate shots and wound Connally twice.

P. 45 2 – "The film establishes a shot at about frame 190." The film does no such thing. As Wrone himself admitted on p. 42, frame 190 is blurred. There is no evidence from that frame that JFK has been hit.

P. 46, 3, ll. 1-4 – Wrone postulates that one assassin fired at 312, then a second assassin fired at 313, only 1/18th of a second later. It is physically impossible to have such synchronization. Humans simply cannot respond that quickly.

P. 46, 4 – "Film shows the back of the head intact." This is not accurate. The back of the head appears in only two frames, or in one-ninth of a second. Those two frames are not sufficiently sharp and clear to state that the back of the head is or is not damaged. Considering the medical testimony and observations of more than two dozen physicians and nurses who saw the head in Dallas and at Bethesda, who reported substantial damage to the back of the head, it is presumptuous to assert, solely on the basis of two frames, that the back of the head was intact.

Pp. 47-59. Very good summary.

P. 60 – "Faculty...did not attend anything critical of the government." Perhaps Wrone slept throughout the 60s and early 70s, but given the massive faculty involvement in anti-Vietnam War protests, and numerous other causes, Wrone had better retract this statement.

P. 64 - Title - Change "NBC" to "ABC"

PP. 65-88 - Good.

P. 89 - 2nd Par., l. 4 - Change "1968" to "1967."

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- P. 89 last l. "shoddy workmanship..." This is an unfair, scurrilous attack on one of the most respected works of assassination scholarship.
- P. 91, Il. 2-4. Brennan did not identify Oswald at the lineup. He said that Oswald most resembled the man he saw in the sixth floor window.
- P. 92, 2nd Par., Il. 4-5 "If a shot comes prior to 210 Oswald could not physically have fired it." This is not true. He could have fired through the leaves of the oak tree. The gusty wind could have blown the leaves out of his line of sight. He could have fired from another window.
- P. 94 This constitutes a grossly unfair attack on Josiah Thompson, whose Six Seconds in Dallas remains a truly outstanding work.

Pp. 95-132 - Good

- P. 132 2nd Par., II. 4-5 "No credible evidence connects him[Oswald] to the assassination." Oswald's rifle was found on the sixth floor. Three cartridge cases from that rifle were found on the sixth floor. Oswald's prints were on the rifle and the book cartons and the paper bag on the sixth floor. Brennan saw Oswald in the sixth floor window just before and during the shooting. Oswald killed Officer J.D. Tippit right after the assassination. These are just a few of the responses Wrone would get from critics. This manuscript comes replete with such categorical statements. While Wrone is entitled to his opinion, with which I happen to agree, this does not absolve him from backing up these assertions with convincing evidence.
- P. 133, 1st Par., last sentence "Anyone who grew up..." JFK could have heard the sound of the first shot, which missed, and raised his arms to protect his face.
- P. 133, 2nd Par., 2nd sentence. "It was a frontal shot." Another of these categorical statements. If JFK was hit in the throat from in front, where did the bullet go? From where in front was it fired? What kind of gun and ammunition were used?
- P. 136 2nd Par., Il. 6-9 Bennett "saw that shot hit the President about four inches down from the right shoulder." Bennett must have had magical eyes, to be able to see a bullet travelling more than 2,000 fps and see its impact (a tiny 6-7mm. hole in the back of JFK's suit jacket).
- P. 136 last sentence Lattimer <u>has</u> debated the assassination at COPA conferences, in Dallas in 1992(where he debated Dr. Shaw),. Wrone's statement "As has been typical of defenders of the Warren Report..." Among the well-known defenders of the Warren Report who have engaged in public debate are: John Lattimer; J. Wesley Liebler; David Belin; Michael West, Gerald Posner, and Robert Artwohl.
- P. 138, ll. 7-8 "There is no blood on it[the back of JFK's head] or on the shirt collar." Wrone cannot <u>see</u> the blood in these two frames, but the blood <u>is</u> there. The back of the head was drenched with blood, as was the collar (front and rear). (H. Weisberg, *Post Mortem*, pp. 597-98).
- P. 145, 1st Par., last line "Manchester lied." Potentially libelous remark.

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- P. 145, last par. Why is Zapruder such a credible witness? Numerous witnesses in Dealey Plaza presented clearly erroneous accounts of what they thought they saw and heard. Does Wrone have any evidence that Abraham Zapruder was such a reliable witness that we are to accept everything he related with total acceptance?
- P. 147 1st Par. There is no evidence that the sound of a shot caused Zapruder to jiggle the camera at 190. In fact, the film contains numerous jiggles, so numerous that if each resulted from the reaction to a shot, the assassin(s) must have been firing a machine gun. It would take at least one second for Zapruder to respond to the sound of a shot by jiggling the camera. Therefore, according to Wrone's own analysis, the first shot must have been fired at 172, or before.
- P. 147(bottom) and P. 148(top) Why is it wrong for Kaplan to put his article on his resume, but not wrong for Wrone to put his JFK works on his?
- P. $156 1^{st}$ Par., l. 5 -"firing through the glass..." The Warren Commission specifically said that Oswald sat or knelt when he fired and that he did not fire through glass.
- PP. 157-59 These are straw men, which Wrone has set up for cheap shots. No serious assassination researcher has ever placed credence in either theory.
- P. 159 1st Par., last sentence-potentially libelous.
- P. 1603rd Par., l. 2 "five inches" change to "four inches[10cm.].
- P. 160, 3rd Par., 1. 3 change "ulna" to "radius."
- P. 160, 3rd Par., 1. 4 "All other medical authorities..." No citation of even one. In fact, among the medical authorities who believe that a delayed reaction was possible are: John Lattimer; Robert Artwohl; Charles Petty; Michael Baden; Russell Fisher; and Werner Spitz.
- P. 162, 3rd Par., 1, 2 "Posner lied." Libelous?
- P. 162, 3rd Par., l. 4 "a man without a soul." This is hardly a scholarly judgment. A Higher Authority than David Wrone must judge the status of Posner's soul.
- P. 163, 2nd Par., Il. 8-9 "the film's factual content was 80% false..." How does Wrone know this? Where is the documentation?
- P. $164 2^{nd}$ Par. Wrone obviously has not seen "JFK." The entire film is replete with Stone's attacks on the FBI, Warren Commission, etc. Stone was vilified in the press for the film. Wrone implies that it was a pro-establishment film, when it was just the opposite. Wrone does not cite a single source for this account of Stone.
- P. 165, 1st Par., 1. 9 "Willis #5 shows JFK hit.' It does no such thing. Willis #5 shows JFK from the rear, with only the top of the shoulder and back of the head visible. No response to a shot is evident on the slide, even under 5x magnification.

P. 171, 1st Par., l. 3 – "the dove JFK...the hawk, LBJ" This is Wrone's opinion. JFK nearly doubled national defense spending, authorized the Bay of Pigs invasion, sent 18,000 troops to Vietnam, presided over the militant Operation MONGOOSE against Cuba, rattled sabers with Khrushchev in the Cuban Missile Crisis, and approved (through Bobby) the repeated CIA-Mafia assassination plots against Castro – hardly a dove. P. 173 – last sentence – "Academics, lawyers, and congressmen uttered not a single word[critical of the government's lone assassin theory]." This is simply not true. Straughton Lynd (academician), Theodore Kuperman (congressman), Cyril Wecht (doctor/lawyer), Vincent Salandria (lawyer), Milton Helpern (doctor), and Mark Lane (lawyer) are among the early dissenters from the official conclusions.

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P. 178, 1st Par. – Here Wrone argues that the sound of a gunshot fired at 188-189 caused Bronson to snap the shutter of his camera at frame 220. Yet, somehow, Willis reacted to that same sound by snapping his camera shutter at 202. Why the different reaction times for Bronson and Willis? Where is the documentation?

PP. 178-82 - Very good analysis.

P. 187, 2nd Par., Il. 2-3 – "...since 1959 Oswald had fired weapons only twice." How does Wrone know? Where is the documentation? There is evidence that someone closely resembling Oswald fired a European weapon at a Dallas firing range shortly before the assassination.

P. 205, 1st Par., last sentence — "Aside from those two works..." This, again, is a cheap and totally unjustified shot at numerous serious, responsible assassination researchers and scholars, who have uncovered much evidence and written highly incisive analyses. Wrone apparently thinks that even the work of his idol, Harold Weisberg, Case Open, is not worthy of admiration, since it is not cited in the footnote. Works by such authors as David Lifton, Henry Hurt, Anthony Summers, Michael Kurtz, Harrison Livingstone, James Feizer, and many others have added immeasurably to our knowledge of the assassination. All have flaws, as do all of Weisberg's works. Wrone needs to exercise a much more balanced judgment in this manuscript.

P. 207, fn. 6 – Wrone claims that Weisberg's Whitewash is infallible. This is an outrageously false claim, originally made by Weisberg. His works, all of them, contain numerous errors and inaccuracies. This is not intended to attack Weisberg. He has made inestimable contributions over the years. My point is that Wrone's sole reliance on Weisberg (with an occasional nod to Sylvia Meagher and Howard Roffman) gives him a bad case of "tunnel vision," and leads him to ignore the equally significant contributions of others.

- P. 208, First full sentence. Once again, the Warren Commission never said that the second shot missed.
- P. 210, second and third lines from the bottom Once again, Willis#5 does <u>not</u> show JFK reacting to a shot.

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P. 213, 1st Par. - Potentially libelous statements.

P. 214, 2nd Par. – "If a responsible..." Potentially libelous statements.

P. 226 - Wrone needs to supply a copy of Willis #5 and show exactly where in this slide does JFK show a response to being hit.

P. 228 - 1st Par. "Yet as a..." How does Wrone know? Numerous people in New Orleans have quite different opinions of Garrison's performance as D.A.

P. 234, fn. 5 – Add the recent works by Patricia Lambert and William Davy.

P. 238, 1st Par.-"That Zapruder..." Why is Zapruder an infallible witness, while numerous others in Dealey Plaza, who gave different opinions, were not?

P: 332, 2nd Par. - "He shot cold, not having fired a rifle for four years." Wrone does not know this.

P. 332, 3rd Par. - "The Aberdeen tests proved...that a conspiracy killed JFK." No. These were ballistics tests, whose results are subject to opinion. The director of the Aberdeen tests, Dr. Alfred Olivier, specifically testified that the single bullet theory was possible. P. 333, 2nd Par. "The Connallys never changed their opinions." Governor Connally admitted to Gerald Posner that he and JFK may have been hit by the same bullet. Pp. 336-82 - Good.

Pp. 401-403 – Oswald is not in the Altgens photograph. This has been disproved by careful, detailed examinations by experts. The man in the doorway is Billy Lovelady, a Depository employee. In Wrone's account, the shirt the man is wearing is the critical factor. However, people are usually identified by their face. There can be no doubt that the face is Lovelady's. A good photograph of Lovelady, taken less than two hours after the assassination, appears in Dale Myers, With Malice, p. 196.

P. 404, 2nd Par. – Once again, Weisberg was not perfect and infallible. He made mistakes.

Partial List of Works That Discuss the Zapruder Film in Some Detail That Wrone Omits From His Footnotes and Bibliography

Books

Anson, Robert Sam, They've Killed the President.

Cutler, Robert, Crossfire.

Groden, Robert and Model, Peter, JFK.

Groden, Robert, The Killing of a President.

Harris, Larry and Shaw, Gary, Coverup.

Itek Corporation, Life-Itek Kennedy Assassination Film Analysis.

Kurtz, Michael, Crime of the Century.

Belin, David, Final Disclosure.

Groden, Robert and Livingstone, Harrison, High Treason.

Menninger, Bonar, Mortal Error.

Marrs, Jim, Crossfire.

Moore, Jim, Conspiracy of One.

Articles

Anson, Robert Sam, "The Greatest Cover-Up of All?

Groden, Robert, "A New Look at the Zapruder Film."

Model, Peter, "Killing the Kennedys."

Prouty, Fletcher, "The Guns of Dallas."

Stolley, Richard, "What Happened Next?"

Multimedia

ABC, "Goodnight America: Dick Gregory."

BBC, "The Kennedy Cover-Up."

CBS, "The American Assassins."

"The Kennedy Assassination: 48 Hours."

"Who Killed JFK?"

PBS, "Who Shot President Kennedy? Nova"

"Who Was Lee Harveyu Oswald?" Frontline

A&E, "The Men Who Killed Kennedy."

Showtime, "On Trial: Lee Harvey Oswald."

COPA, Video Tapes of Annual Conferences."

Internet
Web sites by:
John McAdams
Clint Bradford
Jack White
Robert Groden
John Kelin

Wrone should also run extensive searches on www search engines. Alta Vista alone has over 4,000 hits for "Zapruder Film."