

4/9/70

Dear Chris,

I am responding to your letter of 2/23 accompanying your paper on the Z freemes through Gary, who may disagree with me and who may not repeat what I say if it also represents his belief.

You have problems because you are separated from most of us by distance and time, having come into this rather late. So, what we have long since forgotten seems significant to you. Perhaps, as a matter of ultimate scholarship, that may be the case, but I doubt it as of now. I'll be interested in knowing what reaction, if any, you get from LIFE.

I think you lay too much emphasis on selective interpretation of the least dependable source, eyewitness testimony, and I think you also interpret it to suit your purposes where other interpretations seem no less valid. Example, the repeated assumption, not alternative suggested, that Clint Hill turned in reaction to the shot. He may also have turned because this is supposed to be automatic with him. He is not looking where the shot is alleged to have originated (do not forget Altegns used a 2 long lens). Similarly with Connelly's testimony about his turn. He is and was unable to distinguish how far into the turn he was at the time he was hit.

I had to skim this in haste, for it is rather long and I do have little time. However, another thing that seems to me unwarranted is the statement JFK had begun to react at 223 or another very close frame. He was by then well into his reaction. On a related subject, you cannot assume that reaction is shown only by movement. With JFK it can be shown by the end of movement, by freezing.

And I did not postulate the front-movement in reaction to a hit from the rear was at 312. I am still not convinced the doubt hit was that close to simultaneous. I feel it was a little before. You assume the front source was the north grassy knoll and I do not. There are two, and it is possible to argue the south the more likely.

Are you suggesting JC was able to hold the hat in his hand after that wrist was that badly smashed? If not, when was it hit?

JC's right shoulder could have moved forwards and seemingly downward because of his terror as well as from just having been hit, could it not?

Are you certain you see all these things in the printed pictures to be able to make such unequivocal observations and, indeed, interpretations? If do you feel you can, I feel there is not sufficient clarity for me to have done it when I earlier studied those frames. Can you be certain you are not seeing what you want to see? How natural this is for all of us.

I think the paper is rather longer than necessary for your purposes, which makes added costs and problems for you and presents problems for others with little time, and those of us doing serious work, few as we are, have very little time. Unnecessary length is a liability rather than an asset.

You have not persuaded me. Please let me know how you do convince. And in general, with the handicaps you have, separation and less time for familiarization, I do think that before investing this great amount of time you might well check with Gary for his estimate of its worth as compared with other projects. Looking at it another way, with every serious student agreeing Connelly was hit separately, it is really that significant that he was hit at 224 rather than 227 or 237?

Unfortunately, I have not been up to snuff lately and my mind has been deeply preoccupied with other matters, so I cannot, off the top of my head, come up immediately with another project that really should be undertaken simply because it never has really been. One of Gary's associates, for example, has undertaken a real study of Craford. That has not been done and does provide the possibilities of contributing knowledge that is both new and significant. Other suspects is another. Other weapons reported, ~~xxxxxxx~~ cars reported involved, certain areas of the radio logs, for example.

There is much work that can be done without easy access to the Archives. Moreover, the pictures available to you in printed form cannot be as clear as the Archives slides, which have other advantages besides clarity. Often there is no possibility of sufficient magnification of the printed pictures, photoengraving screen precluding it.

Sorry I've not time for more. But I do encourage you to understand that our state of knowledge here, where we are closer to each other, closer to sources not accessible to you and have been working both longer and more intensively had progressed farther ~~xxx~~ than you can realize and renders redundant what may seem fresh and new to you. We cannot possibly communicate all of this to others. Thus I think it would be wise for you to seek counsel prior to investing large hunks of time and a fair amount of money. Before your next project, ask Gary's advice on what it can contribute and I encourage you to credit his opinion. He is pretty well up on what most of us know and are into. Thus your time and resources can be put to the best possible use.

Best regards,

Harold Weisberg