

Dr. David Mantik
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4/16/94

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of the 10th, for taking all that time and for what you say in it. And for reminding me that I once considered that the autopsy film might have been faked. I do not recall that. I suppose it was before I read the Clark panel report. As I now recall, I may then have had a question of the numbers of the film, whether there had been more than and accounted for.

I'm now 81 and I try to spend all the time I can leaving as much of a record as I can, so with regard to your offer of copies, I'll appreciate them even if I do not read them, depending on their volume, because I'd like that to be available to the students at local Hood College and for inclusion with all I have when it is deposited there.

If you or Gary can print for those high-resolution slides of the Z film I'll appreciate prints of what I get into to answer your question. Perhaps I repeat myself but I'd rather do that than not inform you.

I was suspicious that all the relevant frames were not printed. Simple arithmetic told me they had not been. So when I published that the Archives was embarrassed and added the nine frames the FBI had not copied for the Commission to use and publish. They stopped at 334. But there were to have published through 343. So I studied them with some care blown up to about 4' in width. It is in those nine frames that JFK is seen to start falling over on Jackie. As he does he turns toward her and the back of his head is visible. It appears to be intact. There is no visible blood on it, none on the shirt or jacket collars.

If you have either a transcript of your conversations with Ebersole or notes on them I'd appreciate copies. Not for more writing, for knowledge.

Your note on not being able to reproduce those blisters with intense light is fascinating. ^{NG} How else could they have been made? That is what concerned me about your damaging your reputation, based on what Ebersole had testified to.

You state a provocative question about no obviously missing tissue at the back of the head. I do urge you and Gary to find those slides and project them.

What you say about what is incumbent on those who say the X-rays have not been altered should also prompt you to examine those slides with care. It is not possible, as Livingstone says, for that film to have been doctored there. As I told him after he saw what I tell you about. That is what persuaded him that I led a gang to ruin him. We wanted nothing to do with him. *and I nothing to do with those others.*

I have a picture of the knot of the tie before they started taking it apart and re-knotting it. That nick is at the upper left extreme as knotted, not where it was

after they FBI started fooling with it. If you stop and think about it, when the nurses ^{slides} slides from the top down and the bottom up, holding the tie away from the body, they had a better chance of nicking the top of the knot.

Lattimer was transparent from the first. If not too much trouble I'd like for file what shows he was so grossly wrong in his X-ray drawings.

On phoning which I rarely do for a number of reasons, one is that from sleep apnea and a prostate condition I'm up often and wide awake much too early. The only way I can get a little more sleep is starting earlier. I ^{am} am for 6 pm in bed and once in a while make it. I'm not not often very much later. And I've found that those early hours have enabled me to be more productive. Never an interruption then!

You are right on the jiggle analysis. I have it in the first book. It was finished in mid-February 1965. When I put it in general distribution some of Alvarez' students raised with him that as I have in in Whitewash. But unlike Alvarez, I also used what Zapruder said and what he said he saw. That is what Alvarez did not want.

Gary put what I said correctly: enlarged on the screen I saw no defect in the back of the head and no indication of one obscured by hair or ~~any~~ anything else.

I want to pose a question for you, Gary and others for after you examine those few frames after 334 and assuming that ~~you~~ you do not see what I did not see: what does it mean and can it be only coincidence that Shaneyfelt and the FBI did not print those nine frames for publication. For publication that would dispute the story about what killed JFK. He ^{wad} wad in on the conferences Specter had with his experts and he knew the basic conclusions and what the autopsy protocol said.

An immediate question, I would think, is can he have had a shot hit him there and more than 20 frames later have it invisible?

I believe, as I wrote, that a bullet struck in the front of the head or Lyford the front and was of entirely different ammo than military, I believe I went into that at some length after Dick Bernabei's explanation. I doubt you knew him. He was a prof of classics and an expert gun buff.

You are ambiguous in your comment about believing in the jet effect. Are you suggesting that it was the reverse of Alvarez? Would it not work both ways?

Thanks again, best wishes and good luck!

Handwritten signature



EISENHOWER MEDICAL CENTER
PETER A. LAKE, M.D. CENTER

April 10, 1994

Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Rd
Frederick, MD 21702

Dear Mr Weisberg:

I am very flattered to have your kind and thoughtful letter of April 2, 1994. I am flattered because of your recognized position as dean of the critics. It was kind because of your concern about my reputation, especially now that I have declared publicly -- what must be true -- that the JFK autopsy X-rays in the National Archives are altered.

I never had the opportunity before to thank you for joining our radio interview from Palm Springs in November 1992, so please accept my thanks now! Shortly after that you were kind enough to send me all of your books which I have since read at some length. In fact, after receiving your letter, I again reviewed in some detail your comments on the X-rays and photographs.

I do have high resolution 35 mm slides of the Zapruder film. I got one set via Gary Aguilar. A second set has just been loaned to me by Noel Twyman. He had high resolution copies made, using optical enhancement techniques, from a film in the possession of David Lifton. I also have an excellent copy of the Z movie on videotape. I believe, therefore, that I have the best possible data.

While in DC last October, the Archives personnel were very generous of their time with me; I had good parts of four days to carefully review -- and measure -- the photographs and X-rays. The most interesting part, of course, was the previously overlooked optical density study of the skull X-rays. These measurements are really quite simple: the transmission of a 1 mm beam of ordinary light is measured through selected points of the X-rays. This is entirely nondestructive and can be repeated by anyone else. It is, therefore, not necessary for anyone simply to take my word for any of these measurements. I am trying now to get Aguilar into the Archives so that he, at least, can attest to my sanity! An ophthalmologist surely should be able to see, don't you think?

You are welcome to request copies of my data and conclusions, if this topic interests you. I do wish to reassure you, however, on the issues you raised in your letter. I first read Ebersole's recently released HSCA testimony in November 1993. I have reviewed it many times since then as well. Moreover, I had two personal telephone interviews with Ebersole shortly before he died; these were in November and December 1992. I can assure you that the blisters¹ are still present and are very easy to see on the AP X-ray -- on the right side of the skull. They are fairly small and did not interfere with my work. My primary conclusions about the remarkable whiteness and blackness, in any case, are on the lateral X-ray, where there are no blisters. By the way, Ebersole's pencil lines also appear to be authentic on these X-rays. They are visible on one side of the film

¹ Amazingly enough, I cannot reproduce such blisters with a hot light! Was a chemical used? Was critical data destroyed? I don't know! I do know that my colleagues and I have never seen anything like this!

but not on the other side. This is best seen at a glancing angle to the surface, under good lighting.

In your letter you say, "However, I have never believed that any of the film was toyed with." I had not known that you had reached a final conclusion on this issue. I had, perhaps mistakenly, assumed, rather, that your position was more that of an agnostic on this question of X-ray authenticity. This surmise of mine was largely based on chapter 33 of Post Mortem (an excellent title, by the way):

"I was wrong in believing that, if they were ever brought to light, they would have to be manufactures -- fakes. They may or they may not be. Or they may in part be genuine and in part fabricated [that is my position]. As of now, I think they are genuine [quite a reasonable position at that time]."

With these new optical density (OD) measurements it is extremely difficult to maintain that these X-rays are totally unaltered. They do indeed consist of an image of JFK. That is quite easy to verify by comparison to the pre-mortem X-ray. I took a good quality black and white print (8" x 10") of this film into the Archives with me. I also had the dental X-rays from the HSCA. I agree completely that the fine bony features of the face and sinuses as well as the dental shadows are those of JFK. But that is not the pertinent question. The primary question now is -- and always should have been: why is there no obvious missing tissue at the back of the head? What we see instead on the lateral X-ray is a remarkably white area, where it should appear relatively dark, secondary to significant missing tissue. And at the front of this same X-ray, there is a very large and remarkably black area, where rather little tissue was missing.

It is now incumbent on anyone who maintains that these X-rays have never been altered to explain the following data.

1. On the lateral skull X-ray, why is the transmission of light at the rear over 700 times greater than at the front, whereas normal patients are in the range of 1 to 3?
2. Why is the OD of this large white posterior patch almost the same as the densest bone of the human body, the petrous bone, which surrounds the ear canal? This is also remarkably different from patient X-rays. In fact, the ODs in this rear area for JFK imply very dense bone from left to right -- in an area where most of the X-ray image should be due to the much lower tissue density of brain.
3. Comparison of this remarkably white patch on the right and left lateral X-rays clearly suggests that a physically very dense object must lie closer to one side of the skull. However, on the AP X-ray, not only is this asymmetry not seen, but such an inescapably obvious hyperdense object is nowhere to be seen on the AP! That is not possible in the physical world that I know!
4. Why is the shape of this very white area distinctly different on the two lateral X-rays along the superior border? Again, this is not the physical world that I know.
5. How is it possible for the frontal area on the lateral X-ray to be so incredibly black? It transmits about 100 times less light than ordinary dark areas on patient X-rays. Furthermore, these lateral X-rays do offer evidence of skull bone on both right and left sides of the skull (within this black area) and the Archives photographs show that the brain is almost entirely intact in this area as well. It is simply not possible for this area to be so black (measurably so), when almost no tissue is missing here.

That is enough to give you the flavor of the new issues which have arisen from the OD measurements, but does not constitute the entire list of problems -- or of new findings. For example, the artifactual nature of the 6.5 mm, metallic-like object on the AP X-ray is yet another totally separate, but quite fascinating, discussion.

I have discussed at some length why these changes cannot be explained by technical factors: they do, after all, appear largely the same on two lateral X-rays. That is a very serious problem for any conventional explanation. I also show that skull reconstruction will not work. The problems with all conventional explanations are very serious; to believe in any of them requires a great deal of faith -- and hope! Speaking for myself, I prefer a scientific explanation, if one is available -- and it is in this case.

I have also explained that, in the 1960s, the technology for such alterations was readily available (but probably never used before, thank God). This is easily documented in contemporaneous textbooks and articles; I have numerous copies of these. I have also spoken to radiology techs who worked during that era, including Jerrol Custer, and they all readily recall how they used to copy X-ray film. Using current duplicating machines (a modest improvement over the old manual approach), I was literally able in a few minutes to produce such composites (shades of the mythological Greek chimeras). One of these is remarkably convincing; if the HSCA experts failed to identify the composite features of JFK's X-rays, they would never have spotted this one either. It would be a simple matter to produce any number (or type) of these for you. (Perhaps I should start a new business!) It would have taken only a little longer in the 1960s to prepare such composites. Any objections to the explanation of composites should not waste any time on feasibility issues. If any useful counter arguments exist to this proposal of composites, they must be found elsewhere.

But enough for now of the OD issues. I wanted to thank you also for your wonderful discussion in Post Mortem of the necktie! When I saw it at the Archives (and measured it) a whole range of arguments ran through my mind, too. I see now that you had preceded me by many years. I am now sure that JFK used the same standard necktie knot that I use. Such a knot would place the knick within 1 cm of the bottom of the knot, on the left side, just as described in your book. As the bottom of the knot would have been very close to the suprasternal notch (just try it on yourself), any bullet which caused this knick would necessarily have been only about 1 cm above the suprasternal notch. That, of course, is grossly inconsistent with the photographs and also with the Parkland physicians' testimony. There can be no question but that the bullet passed completely above the tie and the shirt, just as you stated so long ago. The most important consequence of this, of course, is that Lattimer's experiments (in which he shot bullets through simulated necks and collars and discovered that the exit hole was small -- presumably due to the restraint of the collar), although possibly true, are now totally irrelevant. If the bullet did not go through the shirt or tie, so what?

I was greatly amused to read your Post Mortem comments on John Lattimer! I have heard from another source that this is vintage Lattimer -- setting himself up as an instant expert in an area totally foreign to his past training and experience! By the way, did you know that, in his previously widely touted article in the Resident and Staff Physician, published after his visit to the Archives (from which he said that certainly Oswald did it), his X-ray drawings of the AP and lateral skull are grossly inconsistent with one another? I was incredulous -- even stunned -- when I first saw this nonsense. It's amazing, but I have never seen this gross error described in print anywhere. At any rate, so much for Lattimer -- and also for peer review, and for radiological editing, too!

Well, I've gone on long enough here. I'm sure you and I could talk for hours -- and probably agree on 95% of everything in this case. Perhaps we can yet do that! Do feel free to communicate at any time. My home phone number is 619-340-1964. The best time to phone is after 7 pm my time.

With warmest regards, and my personal thanks for keeping these issues afloat until I could awaken to them!

David


David W Mantik, MD, PhD

PS. I have just completed a paper on the timing* of the second head shot; the X-rays will not permit it to be where Josiah Thompson put it at Z 314. I now also believe in the jet effect a la Alvarez, but it is not what everyone thinks it is. (In my prior career, before medical school, I was a physicist, during 1962 to 1972.) Additional support (among others) for this timing argument comes from the so called jiggle analysis. I have credited you as the first to propose this. Am I correct in this?

* I would not expect the back of JFK's head to be missing at Z314 or shortly thereafter. What frames did you magnify for your review?

4-7-94

DAVID,

H. WEISBERG ASKED
ME TO TELL YOU
THAT HE SAW
IMAGES OF THE
BACK OF JFK'S
HEAD IN LARGE
BLOW UPS OF
2 FRAMES & HE
SAID NO REAL
DEFECT WAS VISIBLE
TO HIM.  (AQUILAR)