

question. His lack of response is thus preserved on the printed page: "Mr. Liebelser (no response)."

Zapruder's meaning is only too clear. Despite his excitement, it is patent in his continued exposition following Liebelser's silence:

"I believe it was closer down here where it happened."

As WHITEMASH points out (p.47), Zapruder was possessed of evidence the President was wounded before Frame 210, the first frame, according to the Report, at which the President could have been hit by a bullet fired from the sixth-floor window.

Again, Liebelser was silent, and Zapruder continued with a complaint about the consequences of the poor prints. He concluded with the expressed longing for a means of enlarging what he saw on the picture. Liebelser had no interest in whatever Zapruder saw or der away again, saying, "In any event, Frame No. 185 does look like it is one of the frames, sir."

A frame certainly being a frame, and the contents coming from his film, Zapruder agreed. He also agreed that "186 is similar also". Liebelser jumped to Frame 207, ignoring the shocking significance of it and falsely describing it.

"It appears," he said of Frame 207, "that a sign starts to come in the picture . . ." The sign that "starts to come in" on Frame 207 had "started" long before Frame 171 (18H1), the first frame made into slides and prints, how long can only be conjectured. It is a large sign, in the foreground, taking up almost the entire width of the frame when entirely in the picture. More than half is visible in Frame 171, where it takes up almost a fourth of the entire frame. Actually, by Frame 207, it had just begun to go out of the picture.

Much worse, however, is the clear doctoring of Frame 207, not as easy to detect in black and white, although quite visible (WHITEMASH 206). On the color film this tampering with the original evidence is brilliant, for it takes up much of the lower third of the picture and is a pronounced bluish color, as examination of the color slides at the National Archives showed when I studied them following the issuance of WHITEMASH.

Here again Zapruder spotted evidence, in even the doctored, black and white, indistinct and far removed from the original print of Frame 207, of which he said, "I think this was after that happened - something had happened" (7H573).

Again Liebelser sidestepped what Zapruder was trying to say, for anything said along this line jeopardized the entire Report. In avoiding this, Liebelser may have let still another cat out of the bag, for he implied a rehearsal in asking about this sign, "Do you remember when you looked at your pictures yourself?" that the sign was there? There had never been any question about it, to Zapruder or anyone else. The unfortunate presence of that sign blocked the camera's view of the President in all or in part for about 25 frames ending with Frame 225.

This part of Zapruder's testimony, with his unsolicited, unanswered and unwanted declarations, repeated twice in about a quarter of a single page, that the President had been struck before a shot from the sixth-floor window was possible, must have unnerved Liebelser. He next did not wait for the cat to jump out of the bag; he pulled it out himself:

"Now, what about picture No. 210 - however, there is no 210 here" (7H574).

Indeed it was not - and is not - there or anywhere else,

although it is, by the Report's own insistence, the crucial one in which the President could, for the first time, have been struck with a bullet from Oswald's alleged position. Of this there will be more, much more. Liebelser did not repeat the blunder. However, it is not only Frame 210 but Frames 208 through 211 that are missing, and Frame 212 has an unusually amateurish splice in it (WHITEMASH 45,206).

Abruptly and with consistent inaccuracy, Liebelser then jumped to Frame 222, saying of it, "You can see the President's car coming out from behind the sign". This is first visible in Frame 205 (18H16), not Frame 222.

From this point on Liebelser was playing with the clock, anxious for it to run out. He spent almost an entire page, which it must again be emphasized is a major portion of the but seven and a half pages of the testimony of this man who should and could have been a major witness, with endless repetitions of the numbers of the many frames in which the President's hands were visible clutching his throat. This questioning served no necessary purpose. It was a lawyer's filibuster, like the football quarterback freezing the ball until the game ended.

Still once more, however, Zapruder tried to say something but did not quite succeed. Liebelser had asked about Frame 235 and then of Frame 240:

Mr. Zapruder. There's only about 100 frames - they are so close.

Mr. Liebelser. Five frames is nothing - I believe.

Mr. Zapruder. How about 249?

Mr. Liebelser. No. 249 - I just wonder if it was the motion that he went back with that I don't remember . . . (7H574-5).

This is the most significant testimony, for it is involuntary reaction to a bullet hitting him from the front that would make the President move backward. The Report could not tolerate a front entrance wound for it explodes the entire Report. Liebelser with consistency, had no interest in testimony suggesting the President was struck from the front. Zapruder did not imagine this.

Liebelser questioned Zapruder about only two additional frames, first, 255, of which Zapruder said, "I know this - I have seen it so many times. In fact, I used to have nightmares. The thing would come every night - I wake up and see this" (7H575). Why this particular frame caused Zapruder's nightmares and not the last one to which Liebelser alluded, 313, the "horrible one" in Zapruder's words, showing the fatal bullet exploding in the President's head, prompted no question from Liebelser. Perhaps he knew the answer, which is obvious to those who have studied the record. Frame 255 is duplicated by the Algens picture, which was widely disseminated by the Associated Press and faithfully misused by the Report (WHITEMASH 45,202-3).

There are a few more snatches of Liebelser's interrogation mixed with his "testimony" during Zapruder's appearance. It is a blend of Malaprop and maledroit. For example, in butting the emotional Zapruder (7H576), he said, "I want to tell you that your film has been one of the most helpful things to the work of the Commission that we could possibly have had because it has enabled us to study the various positions of the people in the car and to determine by comparing it with the re-enactment - by comparing it to the view from the window of the building, to develop with a fair degree of accuracy the facts here."

One less close to the Report might consider the importance

of the Zapruder film to be that it records the assassination.

The perhaps unintended inference would have been obvious had the editor inserted an "Oops!" after the dash, where one really belongs. Liebelser reveals what is a fact, that the Zapruder film was misused for the purpose of enabling the Commission to stage a reenactment that might seem plausible, given the existence of the film and the widespread publication of frames from it. Without it, for example, there could never be the pretense of fact, that a single bullet inflicted all seven non-fatal wounds on both the President and the Governor and remained undeformed, unsmashed and almost entirely intact despite the number of bones smashed. Only the misuse of the Zapruder film makes it possible to even suggest this theory that is in defiance of all facts.

Zapruder's last words of witness also went ignored, but they are important. This is the man with the telephoto lens:

"I know very few people who have seen it like that - it was an awful thing ..." (7H576).

Perhaps there were fewer than very few - none who saw what Zapruder did. Liebelser did not want to know, and he was not alone. There were a few other cute Liebelser bouncers.

He allowed it to appear as though Zapruder had contacted the Secret Service first, before the Secret Service could reach him, to offer his films, despite the above-quoted admissions of Dallas Secret Service Chief Forrest Sorrels, thus putting the federal police in a better than warranted light (7H571).

Knowing all about Phillip L. Willis and his pictures - Willis was, in fact, the next witness - Liebelser pretended otherwise for no apparent reason when Zapruder asked of "Hudson Exhibit No. 1" (really the fifth in a series taken by Willis), "were these pictures ever published ...?"

Liebelser replied, "This picture here is in fact one of a series of pictures that is being sold down here in Dallas by a fellow named Willis, I believe his name is Phil Willis ..." (7H570).

Much more significant is Liebelser's operation that reflects the undoubted balmwashing of Zapruder prior to his belated testimony. Zapruder had had many meetings with federal agents. He had been exposed to the full treatment in the press, carefully leaked and fostered by the Commission and the Dallas police, that all the shots had come from above, from the sixth-floor window to his left. In part, he forgot his contrary initial belief. During one of his volunteered statements (7H571) he said, "I remember the police were running behind me. There were police running right behind me. Of course, they didn't realize yet. I guess, where the shot came from - that it came from that height." After some amplification of where the police were all racing - to the Grassy Knoll behind Zapruder from which many witnesses believe at least some firing came - Liebelser asked:

"Did you have any impression as to the direction from which these shots came?"

Zapruder's reply was equivocal: "No, I also thought it came from back of me ..."

Under questioning the import of which soon became clear, he twice more repeated that he had thought the shots came from behind him. Then Liebelser posed this leading question, "But you didn't form any opinion at that time as to what direction the shots did come from actually?"

To which Zapruder, as desired, replied briefly, "No."

As Liebelser must have known, this was quite contrary to the truth, for the very day of the assassination, Zapruder reported an assassin had been behind him.

There is an almost illegible copy of a hand-lettered report hastily prepared by Secret Service Agent Max Phillips, dated 9:55 p.m. November 22, 1963, the night of the assassination. It is captioned, "8 mm movie film showing President Kennedy being shot." I obtained a copy of the very poor - unnecessarily very poor - copy in the Commission's files. The original is not there. This is filed in Folder 1 of Commission File 87. It begins by reporting that the enclosed film was taken by Zapruder and gives his office address and phone number. It identifies the enclosed film as a "third print" given to Sorrels and made from Zapruder's "master".

And it states without quibble or equivocation, for the official story had not then been decided upon, "According to Mr. Zapruder, the Assassin was behind Mr. Zapruder."

It is not at all surprising that Zapruder so believed, for according to Commission File 962, which I examined June 30, 1966, the Secret Service also did! Part of this file consists of a 126-page inventory of the Station WPA film and audio and video tape of and surrounding the assassination. On the 37th page appears this language: "Secret Service quotes indicate automatic weapon used" to describe one item. The last listing on this page is similar, "Bullet in - Secret Service believes that an automatic weapon was fired from the top of the knoll", or behind Zapruder.

To emphasize, these are not in the Commission's Report, not in Liebelser's questioning, but very definitely in the Commission's files!

One can only guess what the effect of such inadequate and incomplete testimony had upon the busy members of the Commission who were not in the backrooms in Dallas and had to go on the record made for them by the staff, the record based upon which the staff was to draft the Report for the Commission's approval, the record upon which the crime was to have been "solved".

One need not guess what effect this kind of "preparation" had on the subsequent use and interpretation of the evidence, especially the Zapruder film.

Not need one guess whether this was just an isolated bad job by Liebelser, a momentary departure from the high standards and performance one might expect from a lawyer selected to serve as assistant counsel on a Commission with the functions and responsibilities of this one. He did examine the other "photographic" witnesses that day.

Phillip L. Willis followed Zapruder.