

Prof. John E. Wilkes, Jr.  
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Dear Mr. Wilkes,

Please do not be concerned about the time I spend in answering reasonable letters. While as a writer it is not my preference, circumstances have put me in a public role, particularly FOIA, with obligations I am not unwilling to try to serve.

It is not easy for me to address Kurtz and be both honest and dispassionate. I enclose a review of his book by a lawyer who happens to be the lawyer who handled my FOIA litigation. I'm sorry I forgot to note the name of the history journal that asked him to do that review.

Most of those writing about the JFK assassination had the same problem; they were scooped. While there were some who were honest, like Howard Roffman, most were like Kurtz and more recently Lifton and just adopted the prior and published work as their own. While there may be what I do not recall, I do not recall anything that is both factual and correct that I did not publish first. Even Lifton's biggest thing, the Sibert-O'Neill report. It is in facsimile in Post Mortem and I was, as ~~was~~ Bantam, distributing copies in 1966. (I told Bantam how to get a copy for itself when it wanted to use it to promote Epstein's Inquest.) So, what is there for the Kurtzes and Liftons and too many others? Kurtz's formula is indecent and not accidentally dishonest. You can make your own evaluation from one of Lesar's points, Kurtz's dating of the books, all of which are dated on their copyright pages. It is not by accident that he says Lane was first and it is not by accident that this is a lie. Kurtz was hung up on Lane to such a degree that he was able to corrupt a meeting of I think the Southern Historical Society at New Orleans some years ago, to have Lane appear alone and without opposition and as the one and only. Your best source on this is Professor David Wrone, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point 54481. Wrone was able to have Howard Roffman, then still a law student, on the same program and Lane just refused to show up, although scheduled to be the main speaker. Lane may kid others, but he does not kid himself. He is an unabashed, uninhibited plagiarizer. And he knows it. When you read my books you will see for yourself that what Kurtz pretends is his own original work is nothing of the kind. You will also perhaps recall more factual errors than those for which Lesar had space.

It occurs to me that you are thinking of another of JFK's Miami appearances when you refer to seeing his motorcade. I recall two, one related to the return of the Bay of Pigs prisoners and the other, the one where he did not have a motorcade, when he addressed the Inter-American Press Association. The latter coincided with a number of threats, the one of the Milteer tape and several involving Cubans of the far right. I have a series of Secret Service reports on these Cuban threats. I think the latter threats and helicopter trip were on the 19th, not the 15th, of 11/63.

Two of the possible explanations of the relatively slow speed of the motorcade in Dallas are the density of the crowd, which I think actually stopped the motorcade once on Main Street, and the extent of the curve from Houston into Elm. I see nothing sinister or in any way reflecting on the Secret Service in this, really.

Your fourth point asks about possible negligence of the agents in the limo. Manchester was rottener than usual on this. There just was nothing they could do. They were in a virtual cul de sac. Even if they had not been, in the few seconds of the assassination there just was no chance of any reaction that could have made any difference. If in fact humans can react at all in so short a period of time.

But if they could have reacted faster than five seconds, what could they possibly have done? They couldn't even make a turn and if they could, they'd have killed people.



I am so prejudiced against HSCA that you may want to discount anything I say about them, but I assure you that they never intended a serious investigation from the very first and did not even bother to hide it. Ledar, whose hopes interfered with impartial judgement, did not at first believe me but then he had his own personal experiences and I am certain that he today, and from before the committee's first hearing, agreed with me. (1000 Wilson Blvd, #900, Arlington, Va. 22209.) That committee also never investigated the crimes and never intended to. So, aside from pursuing their original intention, of putting all the critics down, what were they to do? There is no committee that will ever tackle the FBI, for example, head on. So, they avoided just about all the glaring omissions and errors in the investigations and made a few wrist-slaps. Based on what I know, which, admittedly may not be all there is to know, I see no real basis for charging negligence in "the arrangements for the motorcade." The sole function of the Secret Service is security. The arrangements usually are by the locals, with White House concurrence. Once the White House wanted a motorcade through the heart of Dallas, there just was nothing the Secret Service and local police could do. They could not place men at every window of every building or on every roof. JFK himself demanded removal of the bubbletop, which might have interfered with aim but could not have obstructed a bullet.

What do I know of the Justice Department's analysis of the Dallas police tape? From my reading of it and the press accounts of it it is incompetent and obviously biased and angled. I think the later panel faulted it. You ask if I agree that HSCA was wrong in relying on the tape, and that is more complex than is apparent.

Literally, yes, but not, I think, for the reasons you may have in mind. They were wrong because they considered it without context. They had no choice because they had already undertaken to destroy the critics. Except me. They never once mentioned me. So, their dishonest conclusions limited what they could do. The real story of that tape and HSCA is that the wretched Blakey intended it to be the putdown of putdowns, only it backfired. Then he used it to escape bankruptcy. The plain and simple truth is that the world's best shots have not been able to duplicate the shooting attributed to Oswald and on that basis alone there had to be another shooter. There is, of course, much more than this and you will come to it.

Yes, I am saying that the cancellation of the trip to Chicago was not in any way related to alleged threats. It was entirely the VN crisis. "If so, how did the mythology about the cancellation arise?" Well, again a literary thief. I was checking out the Valle story and used a former reporter friend then in Chicago. (He is again reporting elsewhere.) A character named Sherman Skolnick learned about it, stole copies of what I'd sent my friend, claiming he needed the copies to help, and then went crazy with the wildest improvisations and fabrications. If you are ever here you may be interested in my Skolnick file, which I've kept for archival purposes.

The test of which I know for determining whether a firearm has been fired since it was last cleaned, the correct formulation, is a swabbing of the barrel and examining the swab for residues. It was not done in either the JFK or King cases, to the best of my knowledge. Except, incredible as it may seem, the FBI did swab the rifle Ray returned and the FBI knew was not capable of being fired because of encrustations of cosmoline. This is an everyday test. You ask why it wasn't done? In the King case I am certain that it is because the FBI knew the recovered fragment of bullet proved it was not fired from that rifle. Instead of saying this, the FBI said it was too deformed for comparison purposes. So it never even recovered test specimens. But as Ray's investigator I had an accredited expert examine the ~~remnant~~ remnant. He evaluated it as a good specimen. I'm inclined to believe that it knew from the outset that the lone-assassin story was false and in the JFK case it just avoided all that could cast doubt on the initial and persisting preconception. I have much on this. You may want to remember this in the event you have a student interested in a thesis. I've deposed FBI agents in FOIA litigation and have the transcripts. They never even made the quantitative spectrographic analysis, although they pretended to. They did only the qualitative analysis. Having thus proven that

a piece of bullet metal is a piece of bullet metal and no more they led the Commission to believe that all the fragments had common origin. Which they never even tried to establish, incredible as this may seem. I got it on deposing a Lab agent. The self-portray<sup>al</sup> of the FBI in my litigation is pretty shocking.

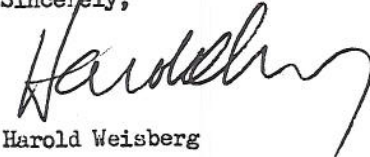
If you ever have a student who might have such an interest, the case is C.A. 75-0226, federal district court, District of Columbia. I have a complete case file, as Lesar also does.

There is so much like this! They never tested the unfired bullet found in the rifle. On deposition Gallagher testified that he had been ordered not to so that it could be preserved because of its historical value! I was unchallenged when I attested that the bullet could have been pulled, a minute specimen removed for testing, and that the entire thing would have been preserved if it was really believed that it had such historical importance. Indeed, this is precisely what Guinn~~W~~ later did for HSCA. When he could no longer authenticate the other specimens, not one of which matched its official description. Knowing this did not deter his offering an "expert" opinion on his tests!

Does this, an<sup>d</sup>/so much like it relating to the CIA, give you reasons other than they advance in seeking amending of FOIA?

Thanks if you can learn anything, either way, about Jean Davison. I think this is something that it would be good to be able to leave without question, either way.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg