

draft #2

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Evil

by

gore
David R. Wrone

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Bonar Menninger. Mortal Error. The Shot That Killed JFK. New  
York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. Pp. xviii, 361. Appendices  
A, B, C, D, 257-334. Notes, index.  
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After years of not being able to peddle the most cockamamie of the
innumerable irrational and impossible JFK assassination theories,
Howard Donahue, former Maryland gunsmith and his writer, Bonar
Menninger, got it published in the wake of the rekindled interest
misdirected by the Oliver Stone rewriting of the assassination in
his movie JFK. From the outpouring of literary trash Stone
spawned it was apparent that publishers would publish anything at
all to capitalize on the market interest, never higher on such
books, satisfied to rip off the national mind while ripping off
the national purse.

To get past the first page of this wretchedly bad, really evil book, one must be willing to believe that a Secret Service agent could stand on the back seat of the car only about five feet behind the President's, on which all eyes were focused, fire a AR 15 rifle and not be seen or heard by hundreds of onlookers or picked up by any of the many cameras clicking away. And not perceived by the other occupants of the Secret Service follow-up car, agents and men close to the victim, like Dave Powers. Or, one must believe that not seeing this violent action they did not hear the loud report of its discharge in their ears.

Donahue asserts the first shot necessarily fired at Zapruder frame 210 missed with pieces skipping, one large fragment buried itself in the skull of the President, near the surface, which an X-ray of the skull reveals, while another piece cracked the windshield on the inside at the level of the rear view mirror. The second shot transited the bodies of JFK and Governor Connally in the manner the Warren Commission concluded, inflicting all non-fatal wounds. A third shot accidentally fired by Secret Service Agent George Hickey exploded President Kennedy's head. An AR 15 bullet disintegrates into tiny pieces of metal. Only the first shot then could have left the large fragment in President Kennedy's head and it must have also cracked the windshield.

To convince the reader he is an expert in firearms Donahue makes the astounding claim he duplicated the shooting feat attributed to the accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. In 1967 CBS television had re-enactment tests done as part of its four part series on the assassination and Donahue participated as a

marksman. He claims to have fired three rounds from a Mannlicher-Carcano in 5.2 seconds, well within the 5.6 second limits of the Warren Report. He deceives by erecting a type of Potemkin Village for the trusting reader.

In fact Donahue failed to duplicate the firing. Note the deception with the type of weapon used. Donahue should have told the reader he fired not the original weapon but a different one, which was not a duplicate, but one of different quality. It was in good repair with no danger to blowing out his eye in backfire; it had an accurate scope; it had an easily operable trigger pull and bolt--none of which the original possesses.

Furthermore, the gunsmith-scholar omitted that as a master marksman he had fired not at a duplicate dummy target, but one twice life size, which even a non-firearms expert knows greatly enhances one's ability to hit a target. At the same time he did not provide information on where he hit the huge target, a sine qua non in this case and deception on Donahue's part by any measure of judgment and by any jot of commonsense.

While claiming duplication Donahue shot with considerable advantage over the theorized shooting conditions of the alleged assassin, whose official stance and firing method is conveniently chopped out of the text. The machine driving the target on a little railroad drove at a uniform rate of speed on a straight line, which meant he had knowledge in advance of what to see and where to shoot, could uniformly lead the target, turn his body in rhythm, know when to squeeze the trigger, and so on--all denied to the alleged assassin Oswald and inhibiting conditions to accuracy.

Donahue fired from a false stance. He wrapped the rifle strap around his arm in a deep kneel with his hand resting on the simulated window sill to provide tripod stability. None of this was used by the alleged assassin. According to Howard L.

alleged
Brennan, the eyewitness, used by the Warren Commission, the man in the window: *Donahue's rifle had no support up to him and study the rifle picture, and the unusual nature of the design of the window denied him all the best firing...*
... was standing up and resting against the left window sill, *positive* with gun shouldered to his right shoulder, holding the gun with his left hand ...(63)

this was impossible to not see
This is not a stable firing position for accuracy or speed and stands in striking difference from the fake stable position taken by Donahue.

Furthermore, until the results of the CBS tests are examined with a guarantee of objectivity they cannot be accepted as a faithful duplicated ^{copy} of actual conditions. The basic rule of scientific scholarship is to have the evidence independently judged. To assume the centuries old rules of data evaluation have to be overridden because Donahue and CBS deigns to conceal it is patently absurd and an insult to history.

argument
twist?
elaborate?
Throughout the text from time to time Donahue pulls up his self-defined expertise in firearms to evaluate facts or witness testimony or critics.

When he visited the elderly critic Harold Weisberg in rural Maryland, Weisberg criticized his Secret Service Agent theory as untenable. He pointed out that the Ike Altgens photograph of the assassination taken from the inside of the grassy park and toward the Depository, at Zapruder frame 255, right after the first shot

was fired, contains two facts that ruptures Donahue's theory.

First, Altgens shows the windshield glass is not cracked. This means that a first shot did not hit the pavement two and one half seconds earlier at frame 210 and ricochet to put a fragment in President Kennedy's head and smash the windshield.

This physical constraint means the large fragment could not have come from this first shot. It could not have come from the second shot. It could not have come from the AR-15 bullet that does not leave large fragments. This means Secret Service Agent Hickey did not fire his weapon and kill President Kennedy.

Donahue dismisses Weisberg. "It was obvious Weisberg knew absolutely nothing about firearms and ballistics." He pointed out that bright sunlight might have made the crack invisible. Also, a "bystander wearing white was visible through the windshield at exactly the place where the crack was later found. This likely further masked the presence of the broken glass in the Altgens photo." But as in most of his factual points Donahue is wrong, a wrongness however that flows not from his perceptual abilities, but from his bizarre theory. In fact the picture is clear, sunlight would have glistened off the crack near the rear view mirror on the driver's side because of the nature of the silica molecules to reflect light. It is near the side of the mirror and behind it the light bystander did not obscure the crack. There is no damage. Weisberg is correct.

Second, Harold Weisberg also pointed out to the gunsmith that in the Altgens photograph SSA Hickey in the follow up car is seated on the rear seat looking backwards without the weapon in

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The agents look in all directions, Hickey to the rear

hand, a normal condition. The head shot came less than three seconds later. SSA Hickey would not have time to react and then seize the weapon hidden apparently on the floor (there are differing accounts given for its location), stand, get the weapon in firing position, and fire. No human could; it is impossible.

This refutes the theory. Only Donahue can imagine this in his delusional mutterings.

I also told him to look at Z again, can not speed up until after headshot & later frame in which Hickey moved

An ordinary reader would not be aware that Mortal Error is suffused in errors, small ones, major ones, errors of commission and errors of omissions. And many of these are calculated ones.

Oblivious to the serious scholarship in the field in a studied calmness Donahue simply asserts the reality of scores of mythologies. *too many to detail* For example, he states Oswald carried a package into the Depository that morning; that he owned the rifle found on the sixth floor, that President Kennedy's and Governor Connally's bodies were not lined up in the automobile, that the .38 caliber slugs in Police Officer Tippit's body matched Oswald's pistol, *his connections* when all of the evidence refutes these points and many more he makes. Let us take two instances and demonstrate his corruption, the location of the rear wound and the damage to the front of the shirt collar, *of which Wessley loaned him an FBI laboratory picture*

Donahue embraces the single bullet theory. For it to function properly the bullet must enter high on the back, in the neck *more than* of President Kennedy. It did not. The bullet entered about four inches below the collar. Donahue falsifies the record to make the shot hit high.

Death certificate & Bunkley "verified" letter
Secret Service Agent Glenn Bennett saw the shot hit low;

ignores this father pilot one evidence
Donahue just tosses him aside. But then Donahue was confronted with the physical evidence of the hole in the jacket and in the shirt being low. To rebut this he calls in as his authority John Lattimer to say a photograph on Houston Street shows the jacket riding up in a wrinkle as Kennedy raised his hands. Thus the bullet hit high. He simply ignores the vast body of criticism of *and photographs showing it* Lattimer's scholarship. We have two points to address. First, what does this say about the shirt with its low hole, and is it correct to say the jacket rode up in a wrinkle.

But did the shirt also ride up? Donahue just ignores the shirt, apparently trusting the attention of the reader will not be able to follow the logic of the complicated affair and would have trust in the author's integrity.

In fact when a jacket wrinkles the shirt does not ride up on a well tailored man, which Kennedy was, but functions independently of the slippery silk lining of the jacket wool cloth. In fact of the evidence in existence the shirt did not ride up that day, rendering the hole on the shirt low with a hole on the outside jacket high, which is irrational and the collapse of Mr. Donahue's slight of hand feat. But he is wrong on the jacket too, absolutely wrong, and what is more damning knowingly wrong.

Phil Willis took a series of 35 mm slides that day, one of his first shows Kennedy just in front of the Texas School Book Depository, less than one second ^{after} from the first shot, and his coat is not riding up, but is properly and smoothly alligned with his shirt collar. This is definitive. SSA Bennett was correct. Donahue knew of this slide, but chose instead to rummage around

the trash bins of blind supporters of the official findings until he got a rotten fish for his stew. He lied.

Donahue also just chucks out the body chart descriptive sketch signed by Dr. ^{an ex} ~~Thomson Boswell~~ ¹ and appearing in the published records of the Commission, which locates the wound low on the back, as the product of hurry and not valid. But this is the work of a doctor describing the wounds on a president. By what authority can this be dismissed by a Maryland gunsmith? On his expertise as a repairer of guns Donahue says it is false? But what he also does not tell the reader is this sketch is ^{not the official record} faked. The real one is reproduced and discussed in a volume on the autopsy by Weisberg entitled Post Mortem which Donahue read and cites and knows well.

On the real sketch Weisberg located ^{hidden} in the archives Dr. Burkley, the President's doctor, ^{"verified"} also signed and annotated with the word ^{who saw it} "verified." Two medical doctors ^{down in the back} then located the shot low. When government bureaucrats published this sketch they ^{avoided the original which Burkley} blanked out the Burkley signature to have only the Boswell signature appear,

enabling its authenticity to be attacked a la Donahue. Weisberg personally informed Donahue of it. Again we have a clear instance where Donahue ^{misrepresents} scissors the evidence to forward his bogus theory. Perhaps this is why he goes out of his way to ^{fake criticism} pommel Weisberg in his text and state he was "put off" by Weisberg's books. If one is promoting a calculated lie it is best to put a hex sign on the source that would prove you are.

Donahue also just ignores the death certificate. Dr. Burkley filled this out and signed it. It places the bullet hole in the ^{at the level of the ribs} back, low. Weisberg discovered the death certificate ^{along with the original and official body} hidden in ¹¹ ~~drawings~~

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The one place not likely to be searched, the full of what the Commission sent to be published, the
the records of the Commission and published it in Post Mortem. In
his living room he pointed it out to Donahue, explained its
importance to him, and Donahue took a copy of the book home with
him.

in his dishonesty
However, Donahue is consistent. He states the autopsy

photographs show the back wound is high. He reproduces a good

sketch of the autopsy photograph. *The President was sitting erect when he was shot. This photo*
As usual he misrepresents.

graph was taken when he was flat on the autopsy table, face down
The President's head is pulled back, the arms pulled forward, the
back muscles ride up in this photograph, you can see the wrinkles,

thus moving the skin with the hole in it higher on the body's

artificial position *and blocking any probing of the wound*

That the bullet hit this low in itself creating the contrived single-bullet theory as essential for Donahue
as for the Commission and as president
The shot is low, the single bullet theory is inoperable.

Donahue must have the bullet transit the shirt collar, both

to render the SBT plausible as well as to sustain his argument on
as did the Commission
an entrance wound? He is explicit on this. Here again he

deliberately falsifies the record, *knowing better.*

For the single bullet to transit the President's neck and
continue on its path to strike Governor Connally in the back of
the right arm pit the Warren Commission had to have it exit low on
the front through the necktie knot and shirt collar, *which has*

damage. If it did not the angle of declination would not be steep
enough to enable the bullet to hit where it had to. However, the

damage to the shirt collar and necktie is not from a bullet, but
nurse's scalp in the usual haste
from the emergency-room scalpels used to cut off the President's

saving previous records
clothes, *was actually*
The bullet passed through the Adam's apple above the
shirt collar. The definitive work on this again is Weisberg's
Post Mortem. *and again Donahue knew it.*

Weisberg interviewed Dr. Charles Carrico, the surgeon who removed the clothing of the President, who told him it was cut off. Carrico was the only doctor to see the body before the clothes were removed. He also testified before the Warren Commission that the bullet hole in JFK's front throat was above the collar. The nurses who cut it off with scalpels also so testified before the Warren Commission. Damage to the shirt collar and the slight nick in the necktie knot was made by the scalpels. The cuts on each side of the neckband do not coincide *one is much higher than the other, which is also much shorter,* when the collar is buttoned, one is horizontal, one vertical, one high, one low, one long, one short, and so forth. Moreover, Donahue not only borrowed Weisberg's clear photographic copy of the shirt collar with its damage clearly showing it not to have been made by a bullet, but had it explained in clear and objective terms by the expert along with supporting documentation. Donahue acknowledges receiving the photograph in a letter to Weisberg. (K. Donahue to Weisberg, October 20, 1985)

When Donahue faced the problem of the size of the bullet hole in the President's throat being smaller than the back wound and clean not jagged as is typical of exit wounds, he used the false scenario of the bullet passing through the throat without informing the readers there is a controversy here. Donahue rebuffs the critics who claim the size of the holes are proof of the throat wound being an entry wound, by saying:

the flesh on Kennedy's neck was surrounded and restrained by his buttoned shirt collar. As a result, Kennedy's skin stretched as the bullet pushed through from the inside--but

only until it was tight against the collar. At that point the bullet punctured the skin, leaving a neat, clean hole .

. ." (35)

Donahue simply fabricated. A calculated corruption of known fact. *as he knew without question. But if he did not want to risk he had no books with to promote and enrich himself*
~~No bullet passed through the collar, the explanation is a humbug.~~

To link SSA Hickey to the murder of President Kennedy Donahue uses an array of ~~approaches~~ *phony conclusions, distortions*, witness testimony, *and concepts* geometry, physiology, and ballistics.

One would think that an act so blatant, so public, and so loud as the discharge of an automatic rifle in an open car in front of hundreds of people would at least have several people *hearing and seeing* heard it or snapped ~~a~~ *we* a photograph of it. Such is not the case and ~~their absence~~ *this also* alone disproves the wacky theory. Donahue's logical fallacy is: *he will use whatever he proves it, moves his* in the absence of evidence, the conclusion ~~is~~ sustained. He has only S. M. Holland, a railroader who watched the motorcade from atop the triple overpass, to trot forth as a witness, but his testimony is to after the third shot was fired and is worthless.

omit.
not
clear

Donahue states when the ^{*when*} presidential limousine sped up SSA Hickey ^{*was*} tumbled backwards inadvertently discharging his rifle. But when did the car speed up? The motion pictures and witness testimony are united in saying the President's car sped up after the head shot at z313, then the follow up car sped up. Here is what the driver of the car, SSA Roy Greer, said:

Mr. Specter. Do you recollect whether you accelerated before or at the same time or after the third shot?

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As you need this?

Mr. Greer. I couldn't really say. Just as soon as I turned my head back from the second shot, right away I accelerated right then. It was a matter of my reflexes to the accelerator.

Mr. Specter. Was it about that time that you heard the third shot?

Mr. Greer. Yes, sir; just as soon as I turned my head.

(6H119)

A viewing of the Zapruder film confirms the acceleration occurred immediately after z313, the head shot. (A copy is to be found in the National Archives ^{where Donahue was} as well in numerous private hands.)

The acceleration took some portion of a second to feed the gas and move the heavy ^{while} machine. The follow up car ^{could not speed up until after it} would have a delayed acceleration ~~because it was geared to the movement of the first car.~~ ^{did and it did not} In other words Mr. Hickey ^{been} could not have tumbled backwards, ^{indirectly} initiating a reaction which caused him to fire the head shot ¹ until ^{been} after the head shot bullet had hit and the drivers had reacted, which means he could not have fired the head shot.

This is irrefutable.

But more than merely irrefutable. Donahue knew this and hid it from the reader! In October 1985 in Weisberg's Maryland home, the dean of experts on the assassination went over the Zapruder film with Donahue, clearly showing that the film reveals the fact the speed up comes after the third and final shot. (Letter of Weisberg to Wrone, May 13, 1992; letter of K. Donahue to Weisberg, October 20, 1985). This is a vile corruption of the evidentiary base by Donahue.

Donahue's geometry is likewise false. For Hickey's shot to strike the President the angle of the moving bullet must be carefully determined to see if it is possible. ^{he adds, "5"} Since we are not provided with the raw data and measuring systems utilized by him, ^{we therefore} ~~a reader~~ must take his word on faith alone, ^{This} which is not acceptable scholarly procedure ^{it} and always suggests there is something to hide, ^{otherwise} there is no way to check his accuracy, and in a controversial speculative subject such as the murder, rife with fuzziness, his bald assertions and imperative conclusions cannot be accepted. But his gross facts as published are ^{simply false} ~~in error~~.

The Maryland gunsmith asserts the Secret Service car lined up with the President's, like two rectangles squarely end to end. From this he draws his conclusion that the angle from Mr. Hickey to JFK's head was proper for a flightpath of a bullet from the AR-15 to have hit JFK's head. And, on a chart he draws a line between the two, a meaningless strip of black ink on paper. The cars were not lined up squarely. The Altgens photograph among others shows the Secret Service car over to the left of the President's car about two feet, ^{straight,} ~~distorting the angle of firing,~~ ^{if} severely enough to miss the President, if not the car.

Furthermore, the cars were moving on a slightly sinuous street, curving toward the triple underpass, forcing the Secret Service car even further out of line with JFK's car. This would make the distortion even more pronounced. Donahue's procedure was to falsely define and falsely present the problem and then to make an argumentum contra mundi as if one is in the presence of truth by

^{phony}
the fact he can set a theory down in print.

*some question
P. Hickey if
he was
not holding
one rifle with
this wrong
not be
true*

He is also ignorant¹ of physiology. To achieve the correct angle to hit JFK's head from a standing position, Mr. Hickey would have to shoot low, from the hip, which Donahue depicts in a sketch. On the basis of no evidence he has Mr. Hickey hold the AR-15 in his right hand, like a pistol with its barrel pointed downward toward JFK, as the SA Agent tumbles backward. But one does not hold the rifle that way and it does not fall to that position when the body is pushed suddenly backward. The rifle is always up barrel towards the sky, butt near the pelvic area, unless aimed to shoot. If one is suddenly forced back by acceleration, the hands do not go down to the side as Donahue must have Mr. Hickey do, but they go up and out to gain the center of balance; they do not drop down to the hips. Donahue's treatment here is akin to what one would expect from his ideological progenitor P. T. Barnum.

On the very area of his touted expertise Donahue also corrupts the evidence. His assertion that the fragments in the head wound was caused by a rear shot is not the inference to be drawn. The dispersal pattern is the ^{more likely} result of a frontal shot by a fragmenting ^{soft} bullet, ^{with the tiny particles - "dust-like" becoming thin} which, ~~as they do,~~ lost its energy quickly upon impact ^{depositing} scattering the fragments in the front of the skull where it hit, not at the rear. ^{appears more like} it is a frontal shot, ^{of soft rather than} ~~hardened~~ ammunition. ^{no way}

A final note addresses the diabolical, if the reader can hold ^{no meaning} his or her credulity-alive. Thomas McCormack, chairman of St. Martin's Press, in a publisher's note (pp. 250-254) states that he is not certain Mortal Error is accurate and truthful, but the

decision to publish the book turned on whether they had been fair to Hickey, [although there is no evidence any informed expert had read the manuscript.] Since St. Martin's and Donahue had repeatedly tried to contact Hickey for a response by several means--phone calls, certified letter, letter, pounding on his front door to get him to talk to them, and by badgering his friends and associates, and by other ways--and had received only silence, they did not feel that Hickey's "muteness" should "silence Donahue." The fact the subject was the assassination of a President made it imperative, wrote McCormack in a splendid instance of post hoc, ergo propter hoc reasoning, to override the attempt by Hickey to silence by silence the Donahue ^{conclusion} findings. Thus after Hickey refused to answer McCormack's final letter it was published. Or, as Donahue's hack Menninger put it (236):

If George Hickey didn't pull the trigger, why didn't he make an effort to put an end to Donahue's speculation once and for all . . .

But what is the reality? Of course, Secret Service Agent George Hickey was under no obligation to do anything. But what McCormack, Menninger, and Donahue hide from the reader is that Donahue had hired a private investigator, Nicholas Beltrante, to investigate Hickey. In 1987 Beltrante related to a reporter that Hickey had retired from the Secret Service one year and a half before and had suffered an emotional breakdown. "He lives as a recluse. He refuses to answer the telephone. We have him under surveillance." (Jerusalem Post, September 14, 1987, p. 4) Donahue, Menninger, and McCormack's studied and sustained harassment of

*was it
before or after
the assassination?*

this emotionally damaged, reclusive, retired, dedicated public servant, to promote a sick theory that passes as a book is an unspeakable act.

In conclusion, we have not seen fit to mention all the factual errors and perversions of evidence that fills this corrupt attempt at history. It is assumed an intelligent reader would infer from the illustrations that major and consistent corruption would be found throughout the book. Neither has attention been drawn to the lack of research in critical areas of the subject matter.

From an overview of the assassination the Secret Service role in Dallas can be seen as honorable, it did what could be expected in a crisis of a few seconds beyond its power to control. Each of the agents would have instantly given his life for President Kennedy; Clint Hill almost ^{did} died. To libel them in private, in public, in the press, in the media, in a wretched book that will survive in libraries for generations to poison the minds of youth with one of the most wicked and false of charges is beyond belief. It amounts to cultural treason. ^{of these} Has Donahue and Menninger and St. Martin's and McCormack no shame? ^{of} Is the lust for money and the pursuit of the bubble of fame and the pining to wallow for a few hours in the sump of publicity, followed by an eternity of certain public knowledge of their personal corruption and baseness, really what they ought to have done with their brief lives? No. Each should admit in public: mea maxima culpa.

Does ^{the} a fair nation not deserve a fair history? ^{and honest}

26 on pop war ressing,
too much Latin