

was four of the 8mm movie frames or .22 of a second. Many of the turns were completed in five frames. Photographs were made of the various frames and the film was also transferred to video.

I would encourage and challenge researchers who do not believe frames have been deleted from the original Zapruder film to conduct your own experiment. You don't need to be a physicist or a photographic expert to verify this for yourself. There are many Super 8 cameras still out there. Borrow one from a friend who is over forty years of age. Super 8mm film is still available, although it may have to be ordered from Kodak in a ten roll minimum. I was fortunate to have a couple of rolls (cartridges) of film in the refrigerator and although they had an expiration date of 1984 they came out beautifully. My local camera store had the film developed at an outside film processing laboratory so you may have to shop around. The tests can also be made with a video camera with step frame playback. Sony video cameras play back at 1/30 (.033) second

per frame, so the equivalent number of Zapruder frames can be calculated by multiplying the number of frames by .033 divided by .056.

I would appreciate receiving correspondence from any researcher on the results of their experiment. If it is impossible for the turn of Greer's head to be made within one frame (with a camera operating at eighteen frames per second), how does Mr. Burgess explain what is plainly visible at Zapruder frame 302/303 and 316/317?

Notes

1. Richard W. Burgess, "On the Authenticity of the Zapruder Film," *The Fourth Decade*, September 1994, pp. 5-7.
2. Hearings before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Vol. 5, p. 160.
3. Chuck Marler, "Questioning the Limousine's Speed on Elm Street," *The Fourth Decade*, May 1994, pp. 19-22.

**THE DANGER OF RELIANCE ON
"AUTHORITY" IN THE QUEST FOR
TRUTH**

by
Jack White

The following comments are prompted by reading an article in the September issue of *The Fourth Decade* titled "On the Authenticity of the Zapruder Film" by Richard Burgess. Usually when I take issue with any Decade article, I correspond directly with the author about my concerns, and the resulting correspondence often is enlightening for both parties. Some authors are even nice enough to send me advance copies of articles.

But in the case of Mr. Burgess' article, I doubt that a personal letter would be fruitful, nor would it inform readers of the quality of his "expertise" regarding possible tampering with the Z-film. I do not know Mr. Burgess and I certainly do not wish to antagonize him by unduly harsh criticism. I myself am certainly no expert, but I do know enough about a lot of things to know that he is just "blowing smoke" in this essay. I suggest that readers of his article put his "expertise" to the test and judge for themselves whether his arguments hold up. I suggest the following faults and errors with his treatise:

1. Other than listing his University employer, he gives us no

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supporting evidence of his qualifications as an expert.

2. As a self-proclaimed "expert," he asks us to take on faith that he has, to quote him, "personal knowledge of the sorts of processes and effects that were available to film-makers in 1963 and I can state categorically that the Zapruder film has not had anything added or removed from it."

3. His entire thesis attempts to "prove a negative," which most "experts" claim is impossible. Proving something did happen is much easier than proving something did not happen. His claim that the film was not tampered with is not provable, since successful undetected tampering would appear no different than an untampered film.

4. Attacking Harrison Livingstone's claims of Z-film alteration is like setting up a straw man to destroy. Harry has done a huge amount of extremely important work on medical evidence, but he obviously is out of his element in the technical aspects of photography, and his mistakes about photographic techniques and procedures are woefully obvious. Burgess properly attacks some of Harry's weaknesses. But because Harry's technical expertise was faulty does not mean he was wrong in his observations and conclusions. In fact, I myself had observed many of the same things more than 15 years before Harry wrote about them, and have included them in my lectures for years.

5. Burgess exhibits a conspicuous lack of knowledge when he says "Standard 8mm film has an especially small frame size...and is consequently particularly grainy." The Z-film was exposed on Eastman's Kodachrome. It is fact that

Kodachrome is Kodachrome, whether 8mm, 16mm, 35mm, 4x5 or 8x10. The tiny frame of 8mm is of the same superior quality as that same amount of area on an 8x10 transparency (size is irrelevant to quality). In 1963, Kodachrome was the finest-grain color film available. His statement that the Z-film is of "grainy quality" is indefensible. I have made enlarged color prints from Robert Groden's excellent color slides of individual frames without detecting noticeable grain. Burgess' comments about the grain of color film as expressed in his article show a total lack of understanding about the anatomy of color reversal film, such as Kodachrome. Three extremely thin layers of magenta, yellow and cyan dye are covered by three extremely thin layers of silver halide (the thinness of layers contribute to very fine grain). Light striking the silver creates three registered b/w exposures which are developed, and if left intact would have the similar grainy characteristics to any black and white film. But the reversal process exposes these images to the color dyes, and then removes the silver images, leaving only the dyes. The dye images, being transparent instead of opaque, display few of the grainy characteristics of the silver exposures (Kodachrome is considered virtually grainless). This is over-simplified, and I am no expert, but I don't think Burgess can contradict this explanation of why the Z-film is not grainy. Don't believe me, just ask Kodak.

6. He states, "...there is absolutely nothing in the film which suggests tampering." I suggest that there are at least three, perhaps more, activities pictured which are inconsistent with timing, logic, and witness reports. Let's begin with Livingstone's "Blob." More than 15 years ago, after projecting Groden's excellent slides, I saw that the head wound depicted in the frames following 313 was totally inconsistent with all witness statements. A "blob" of white, which appeared to me to have been bleached out of the film, showed massive damage to JFK's face, when all other evidence and testimony showed his face undamaged. Also, the "spray" of head matter goes forward, although other evidence showed it went to the rear, and the spray remains airborne for only one frame, when logic demands that we should see it for several frames. The sudden head movement of driver Greer seems too fast also; in frame 301 he is looking straight ahead, but in frame 303 he is looking to the rear (a complete 180-degree head turn in a ninth of a second), and continues looking directly at Kennedy through frame 313. Now this may be perfectly normal timing, but I would like to see proof of it.

7. He states that "...8mm film does not dupe very well. It is already rather contrasty and grainy, and a film to film copy would have noticeably reduced clarity and detail." This is

absolutely untrue. Kodachrome, whether 8mm or any other size, absolutely is not contrasty and grainy. And duplication, when done properly, should be almost indistinguishable from the original. Don't take my word for this. Ask Eastman Kodak if Burgess' statement is true. In my work, I have duplicated transparencies by the hundreds and from experience can say for certain that when slides or movie transparencies are copied properly, the dupes are often hard to identify. Indeed, it often is possible to make considerable quality improvements over the original through exposure controls, filtration and low contrast copy film.

8. He says that alterations would have to be done by things such as animation techniques, hand-painting on cels, travelling mattes, various types of optical printing, etc. on 35mm enlargements "to maintain clarity, and reduce changes in color saturation and balance, contrast and grain." Half-truths are proof of nothing. Naming several techniques and processes sometimes used in film production have absolutely nothing to do with any accusations of Zapruder tampering that I know of, except perhaps Livingstone's. I am among at least a half dozen JFK researchers who believe there are reasons to suspect tampering with the film. No one, with perhaps the exception of Harry's speculation, claims that animation was used. Much attention is centered on possible excised frames. Several researchers working on such things as the flashing lights on the limo point out that timing sequences may indicate missing frames. Jim Marrs has told me of material not used in pages 454-56 of *Crossfire* from his interview with Dallas surveyor Chester Breneman, who with fellow surveyor Bob West, performed measurements for FBI and Secret Service reenactments using government-provided enlargements of all the Zapruder frames for reference. Breneman told Jim, after examining the Z-frames published in Vol. XVIII of the Warren Commission, that "many of the frames he had used for positioning during the reenactments were not among those published, and that all the frame numbers had been changed." I know that it is possible to speed up a movie by deleting every-other frame, or to slow down the movie by adding extra duplicate frames, as Groden did to achieve a slow-motion effect with the Z-film; but I have no way of knowing whether selected individual frames can be removed without creating noticeable jerkiness.

9. Burgess seems to have no knowledge at all of transparency retouching, another possible way that tampering can be done. Even in the 60's, transparency retouchers were extremely skilled. In my job as executive art director for a large advertising agency for 27 years, we frequently had to rely on transparency retouching when it was not possible to reshoot

a selected photo. Using transparency dyes, airbrush, very fine sable brushes, bleaches and high magnification, these artisans first enlarged the transparency to a large working size like 8x10, performed very sophisticated and undetectable changes, and then reduced it back to a copy reproduction dupe, usually 4x5. Things in the photo could be removed or added, or colors changed. Of course, computers have now put these skilled artists out of work. I think it is possible that frame 313 and several following ones may have been altered by transparency retouchers. Especially suspicious are the white "blob" (very simple bleaching) and the forward "spray" from the head (looks like airbrush work to me) along with the possible removal of rearward fragments, which could have been bleached out and replaced with grass color. This part would have all been "easy"; the part which may have been "hard" (I say "hard" because I have no knowledge in this area) is the ability of someone to have equipment sophisticated enough to re-insert the altered frames (including the material between the sprocket holes) into a new master which appears to be a camera original. Because existence of such a process and equipment (and who might secretly possess it) would be very difficult to prove, I have never attempted to pursue the Z-alteration issue.

10. Burgess says, "The conspirators would have to begin by rear-projecting each frame onto the back of an animator's drawing table and tracing each successive frame of Kennedy onto a piece of paper. This is known as rotoscoping. (Robert Groden uses this term completely incorrectly when he refers to his image stabilization of the Zapruder film.)" This is baloney. Rotoscoping has nothing to do with making tracings on paper. Years ago when I first met Robert, I asked him what rotoscoping is. Robert then worked at a professional film lab in New York, doing various things including operating a Rotoscope. A Rotoscope is part of a movie film duplicating setup which allows the operator to do selective cropping of each frame image through precision controls, as each frame is individually exposed. Motion picture producers and TV commercial producers are the chief customers of rotoscoping. The most frequent uses for the Rotoscope are to reformat film to change the aspect ratio; that is, a film originally shot in Cinemascope (letterbox format) can be recopied and cropped to the more familiar 4:3 TV aspect ratio; also, a commercial shot with unwanted things showing in the background can be enlarged slightly and the unwanted things cropped out at a much lesser cost than reshooting; or several different formats, such as 8mm, 16mm and 35mm can all be combined onto a single 35mm master (as Oliver Stone did in JFK); or film from hand-held camera shots can be steadied or stabilized using the Rotoscope, which is exactly what Robert did at the lab, working mostly at night with the approval of the lab owner. I

personally have never seen a Rotoscope, but I trust that Robert's knowledge of the film duplicating equipment he was using daily is more accurate than Burgess' inexperienced assessment from afar.

11. Burgess' explanation of a travelling matte process is fairly accurate, but irrelevant, since nobody has alleged any tampering using the process, as far as I know. Hollywood developed the travelling matte technique in the 20's and perfected it in the 30's, and it has long been a highly successful undetectable special effects trick at the command of Hollywood directors. The tedious explanation of why this would not work with the Z-film amounts to a non sequitur, since animation and matte-insertion are not seriously considered to be involved in any tampering.

12. By concentrating solely on Harry Livingstone's speculation (which is obviously technically deficient, but does expose obvious tampering possibilities), Burgess ignores, except for his first footnote, the real issue here. That is, IF TAMPERING OCCURRED, WHO HAD THE TECHNICAL SOPHISTICATION TO DO IT? Certainly not ordinary individuals. Probably not most commercial film labs. Nowadays, a good operator with a Macintosh and programs like Photoshop and Morph could tamper with the Z-film with spectacular results, maybe even showing that Jackie fired all the shots! (Did you see Forrest Gump?) But we know that the military and intelligence agencies work about 20 years ahead of the general public in developing and using such scientific technical advances, and it is all top secret. Who knows what technology the CIA had in 1963? We do know they then claimed that they could from a miles-high U-2 airplane photograph a golf ball on a putting green. Burgess' footnote 1 refers to David Lifton's Best Evidence, pages 555-57, which reveals the existence of CIA Item 450, which shows that the CIA's National Photo Interpretation Center had possession of the Zapruder film, possibly on the night of November 22, and produced a "master positive and 4 prints!" That is the real issue!

Instead of the futile piece of misinformation he has written, Burgess could have done a real piece of investigative research and addressed the real question which Lifton raises: Did the CIA have the ability and technical expertise to have tampered with the film through secret technical abilities and equipment? Did they have the ability to do transparency retouching? Probably. Did they have the ability to excise certain frames without detection? Possibly. Did they have the equipment with which, after retouching was done on a large copy transparencies, to reinsert altered frames back into an apparent "original"? I don't know.

But I do know this. Maybe the film was tampered with;

maybe it was not. But it is a disservice to JFK research for Burgess to assert as the Voice of Authority, "It is simply impossible that the wound on President Kennedy's head is anything other than a true image of the wounds he received that day in Dallas." It is simply an issue of legitimate suspicions which should be studied and resolved if possible.

Burgess does not even seem aware of all relevant information on the subject of possible tampering with the Z-film. Perhaps one of the strongest reasons to suspect tampering is anecdotal rather than photographic, and I doubt that Burgess is familiar with it. It is a three-page personal letter written April 9, 1973, by Chester Breneman to his nephew Rich explaining the uncle's experiences with the investigation of the assassination. Breneman, a Dallas surveyor who along with fellow surveyor Robert West assisted both Life Magazine and the Secret Service with motorcade reconstructions, was provided with big enlargements of all Z-frames to determine locations and distances. The following excerpt from page 3 of the Breneman letter describes how West and Breneman saw frames which no longer appear on the film:

"...On THREE FRAMES after a frontal entry shot, WE SAW BLOBS LEAVING THE BACK OF THE PRESIDENT'S HEAD and disappearing on the fourth frame." (emphasis added)

Breneman states that on November 26, 1963, he and West were employed by "Mr. Bruder, Special Investigator for Life Magazine...to prepare a map with the help of the Zapruder film...With the aid of FILM ENLARGEMENTS ABOUT 12" square of the Zapruder films, we placed the FIRST SHOT FROM THE REAR at a line of sight distance of 156 feet from the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository. We placed the next shot from the front at a line of sight distance of 250 feet. Those were the two shots that entered into the President (emphasis added)."

Here we have two professional men, surveyors whose livelihood depends on making accurate observations, who four days after the assassination were provided by Life Magazine with huge enlargements of the Z-frames. On three of the frames, Breneman and West "saw blobs leaving the back of the President's head."

I have looked at each individual frame of the Zapruder film many many times without seeing such blobs. What has happened to them? Are the frames missing, or have they been retouched? I don't know. But I prefer to give more weight to the observations of two competent witnesses rather than the theories and speculations of self-proclaimed experts who are not even aware of all the facts.

THE CURIOUS CONNECTIONS OF CLEM H. SEHRT

by

Peter R. Whitmey

Amongst the many exhibits included in the Warren Commission volumes is an FBI report prepared by Special Agent Regis Kennedy of the New Orleans office (CE 2207) dated Dec. 24, 1963—a two page summary of an interview with attorney Clem H. Sehart. [1] There is no clear explanation as to how the interview came about, but presumably Sehart contacted the FBI, in that he had known Marguerite Oswald since childhood, along with her family, who were regular customers at his father's bakery, where Clem had worked. Brief reference in the report is made to Marguerite's brother and sister, both of whom had died. Sehart had also known Marguerite's former husband, Eddie Pic, during high school, where they both played basketball.

Although Sehart recalled having been in contact with LHO's mother in connection with a disputed estate involving some property "over twenty years ago", he indicated to SA Kennedy that he had not had any further contact with Mrs. Oswald since then. He went on to state that "it was not until he saw her photograph in a magazine that he recognized her as the person he had known in his youth and as a young, practicing attorney." Finally, Sehart "advised" that he had never "seen...Lee Harvey Oswald...did not know Jack Ruby", and had no knowledge of any associates of either one.

However, much of what Sehart had stated was contradicted two months later when Marguerite Oswald testified before the Warren Commission [2], as she described her attempt to help Lee Oswald obtain a false birth certificate in October, 1955, so he could join the Marines before he turned seventeen. Marguerite stated that her son had tried to convince her to "falsify his birth certificate" [3], which she initially refused to do. She did, however, contact "...a very good friend, Mr. Clem Sehart, who is an attorney in New Orleans, La. I called him and told him I had a personal problem. I had not seen Mr. Sehart since early childhood. I knew the family. That Lee was not of age and he wanted to join the Marines. And he quit the school and told them we were going out of town." In response, Sehart indicated to her that it would be "unethical" for him to give her any advice, although he did suggest that a "...a lot of boys join the service at age 16."

Mrs. Oswald indicated to the Warren Commission having been encouraged to let her son join up, despite being under-

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