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in, right smack-dab—in the middle of the most half-ass crime scene search(es) in history.

What can we conclude? For openers, we can posit three very strong motives for the death of Jefferson Davis Tippit. First, his death drew already limited manpower away from the primary crime scene well before the entire area was secured or searched; second, Tippit's death gave authorities an excuse to arrest a suspect in a theater, and convince themselves, "Case Closed," to coin a phrase, on the other, more important murder that had occurred that day. And finally, it allowed the Dallas police to be purged of an individual who was giving the department a black eye with his "amour impropre," which was so obvious that both a cab driver in the neighborhood and a local tenant believed Tippit to be part of that landscape.

And if those two folks knew where to find good ol' J.D., we can posit with certainty that his real killers knew where he was spending his not-so spare time.

Real killers? What about Oswald? Consider the motives: Did Oswald kill a police officer so that fewer people would search the building in which he worked, assuming perhaps that they would abandon the place altogether? Not likely. Did Oswald kill Tippit to draw attention to himself, to enhance his suspect status, or, like his Belinesque motive for the murder of JFK, because he was a Castro Red? Hardly. Lastly, did Oswald kill Tippit because he was carrying on with a paramour localized in and around Tenth and Patton? Of course not.

Which brings us back to David Belin, who defends every Warren Commission word and punctuation mark to this day, dusts off his bow tie whenever necessary, and points to the 26 volumes of Warren Commission evidence on selected TV appearances and boasts of how deep the investigation went. Except, of course, for the two answers spoken to him that he ignored. So, Mr. Belin, let us seek final disclosure: I challenge any group of twelve objective Americans to read your book, November 22: You Are the Jury, and my first book, The People v. Lee Harvey Oswald, and let them be "the jury" and decide on the guilt or innocence of Lee Oswald. With all due respect, sir, you will never get a conviction. Never. And I say that with confidence because you didn't demonstrate much "conviction" in your search for the truth.

ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE ZAPRUDER FILM

by

Richard W. Burgess

A number of critics, including David Lifton and Harrison Livingstone, have claimed that the Zapruder film has been tampered with. [1] Most attention has focused on the head wounds. Since the Zapruder film does not match the eyewitness testimony, it is claimed that someone has darkened the back of Kennedy's head, thus obliterating the damage of the occipital-parietal area, and painted on what Livingstone calls "The Blob," a red area that covers Kennedy's face and seems to reproduce the wounds of the autopsy photographs.

[A]n altered film might also explain why the occipital area, where the Dallas doctors saw a wound, appears suspiciously dark, whereas a large wound appears on the forward righthand side of the head, where the Dallas doctors saw no wound at all. [2]

One gets the distinct impression that the effusion from the head is painted on those frames of the film, and that in one of the frames the entire image was superimposed on the background but omitting the face and top of the head forward of the ears. [3]

There is no medical or physical way to explain what is seen in the film other than to postulate that the Blob is drawn onto the film to make it appear that a shot from behind has removed part of the face. [4]

The Zapruder film was obtained at once by the conspirators and forged. The large hole extending into the back of Kennedy's head was blacked out to mask this exit wound, and a large, fleshy exit wound was painted onto the film on Kennedy's face. A new "original" was struck from the fake film. It took very little time to doctor the few frames. [5]

These are serious charges.

I have 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 to it or removed from it, apart from the splices that everyone knows about. Standard 8mm film has an especially small frame size—since it is just 16mm film split down the middle during processing, the sprocket holes take up much of the surface area— and is consequently particularly grainy. This small size and grainy quality make any kind of inconspicuous tampering almost impossible.

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First of all, arguments of fakery should arise from peculiarities within the film itself, not from comparison with other evidence. I have examined the entire sequence over and over again and there is absolutely nothing in the film itself that suggests tampering. The shadows on Kennedy's head are consistent in darkness and shape for the angle of the sun throughout the entire sequence and there is nothing about the damage to Kennedy's head that betrays any trickery. It looks horribly real. But if such tampering had been done, how would it have been possible?

Livingstone believes that all one needs to do is draw or paint on the surface of the film. This would result in a ridiculously amateurish mess that would not fool a four-year-old, even in the hands of a skilled miniature painter under a microscope. No one could paint, frame after frame, the details, the colors, the changing shape, and the movement of the flap of skull and scalp (for that is what it is) from one frame to the next, not least because Kennedy's head wound itself is probably only a half or quarter the size of the head of a pin (if that). Special effects are never painted directly onto film because it is impossible to repeat, frame after frame, the necessary details and precise location of the painting itself. There is simply no possible way it could be done and escape detection. A second problem with this method is 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 problem is well known to researchers who have long commented on the differences between the various copies of the Zapruder film in circulation and the camera original (or even the 35mm slides made from it).

Any attempted modification would necessitate the enlargement of the film to 35mm (to maintain clarity, and reduce changes in color saturation and balance, contrast, and grain), various types of optical printing with travelling mattes, and then reduction back to 8mm. 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). [6] Then an animator would have to animate the "blob" by drawing it onto the successive rotoscoped images of Kennedy's head. These drawings would then be transferred to animation cels and painted. The area around the painted wound on each cel would then be painted black. Another set of cels would then be copied, but with the wound painted black and the rest of the cel clear. These images would then be filmed with an animation camera onto two sets of film, one with the wound

surrounded by black (film 1) and the other with a black blob floating in mid-air on clear film (film 2). This is a travelling matte.

Next the Zapruder film enlargement would be run through an optical printer with film 2 on top in correct frame register, producing film 3. This film would show a black hole where the wound should be. Film 3 would then be rewound and film 1 (the wound surrounded by black) would be run through the printer exposing film 3 again. Since black does not expose the film, the surrounding black of film 1 wouldn't expose the already exposed Zapruder film and, if the copying of the cels was done exactly and the job was done properly on a high quality optical printer, the painted wound would fit right into the unexposed hole in film 3 like a moving jigsaw-puzzle piece. Film 3 is reduced back to 8mm and there you have it: faked Zapruder film.

Unfortunately this would and could never work, for a number of important reasons. The first is that the final version is three generations removed from the original. Given the generally poor quality of the image to start with, the final version would be so murky as to be almost useless, even with fine grain, low contrast 35mm masters and specialized color duping film (a new development in 1963). The second problem would be one of paints. How could the animator achieve a realistic-looking wound that didn't look like paint? The flap in the Zapruder film is obviously glistening flesh; reproducing that to match the colors, tonalities, and light source of the Zapruder film would be a job for a master. Third, the film into which this animated wound was to be set is very grainy; yet the animated wound would not be. It would show up instantly, since it would share none of the surrounding original grain (which it obviously does in the existing film). There is no way this could be faked. Even if the animated wound were filmed on 8mm film first and then enlarged to 35mm, the shifting grain structures would be different enough to reveal the joint, especially when blown up (as all images of the head by necessity are). Fourth, no matter how good the equipment the wound is so small on the original film (as I noted above, probably no bigger than a half or quarter the size of the head of a pin) that any image would lack sharpness, a problem exacerbated by the grain and the low quality optics of Zapruder's camera. This lack of sharpness would create a "matte bleed", that is, there would be an obvious "line" around the matted wound where the image of film 1 did not fit exactly into the hole in film 2 (everyone has seen such "matte lines" in films; they are usually blue because they are created with an automatic process, rather than the manual process I have described here). Even if the problems I have mentioned above

could be overcome, these problems of grain and matte lines would still give it away (this lack of grain, of course, would be even more noticeable if the image were simply painted onto the surface of the film).

The greatest problems, however, are of blurring, registration, and adding missing background. Since Abraham Zapruder had his camera set on maximum telephoto and had no tripod (apart from his secretary), the images jump around quite a bit even when Zapruder is relatively steady; hence the importance of image stabilization. Once he saw the result of the head shot, he reacted emotionally and the blur becomes even greater. It would have been impossible in 1963 to add anything to the film or alter any successive images and duplicate a realistic blur, caused either by the movement of the objects photographed or by the camera itself. Images might look fine on the individual frames but when those successive frames were run together the animated additions would take on an obvious life of their own, moving and shifting independently of the true images on the film.

Added to this impossibility is the problem of registration. It was easy above to describe the process of rotoscoping and optical printing, but it would have been impossible for anyone to have been able to maintain perfect registration of the wound on the head. Without perfect registration the wound would move around on the head, as if it weren't attached. This goes for movement in all three dimensions. Not only would the animated wound have to move back and forth and up and down in perfect synchronization with Kennedy's head, but it would also have to shift with changes in depth and angle; it would have to show foreshortening in exact calibration with Kennedy's head movements. This is impossible since even half a grain's shift would cut the animated wound free of Kennedy's head and make it look like some grotesque free-floating balloon. In the film, the wound is firmly part of Kennedy's head. Indeed, part of the flap in front actually flops about in reaction to the violence of Kennedy's head movements. Such virtually invisible "finessing" in a process already unbelievably complex is simply impossible.

Also impossible would be the replacing of background material not originally in the film. As Kennedy's head bounces forward from its backwards thrust, it is obvious that a chunk of the top and side of his head is missing. As it moves forward one can see Jacqueline's face and shoulder right through what ought to be Kennedy's head. If the film were fiddled, this portion must have originally been covered by Kennedy's intact head. There is no possible way that this background material could have been added as well as the flap. It is one

thing to add an element that is completely different from its surroundings, it is quite another to add something to what already exists on the film and achieve any kind of realistic match.

It is simply impossible that the wound on President Kennedy's head as seen in the Zapruder film is anything other than a true image of the wounds he received that day in Dallas.

Notes

1. David Lifton, Best Evidence (New York, 1980), pp. 555-7, Harrison Edward Livingstone, High Treason 2 (New York, 1992), pp. 155-6 and pp. 2-3 of photo insert following p. 320; Livingstone, Killing the Truth (New York, 1993), pp. 77, 89, 306-7, 540-1.
2. Lifton, Best Evidence, p. 557.
3. Livingstone, High Treason 2, p. 155.
4. Livingstone, Killing the Truth, p. 77.
5. Livingstone, Killing the Truth, pp. 540-1.
6. See Livingstone, Killing the Truth, p. 339.