

To Andrew Sciemba
From Harold Weisberg

1/3/69

Recommended witnesses - Abraham Zapruder, Dick Billings, David Chandler

Zapruder will be an adverse witness. However, he is needed to authenticate his film. He also immediately said that the shots came from behind him, on the grassy knoll, not even saying that any came from the TSEB. His testimony makes clear that he was talked into saying they came from the TSEB. His testimony also makes clear he saw the President shot before Frame 210. I go into this in all the books except Oswald in New Orleans. In Photographic White Wash I reproduce the Secret Service Report quoting him as saying the shots came from behind him- the day of the assassination. This he can be used to establish fact, where he heard the shots come from, the manner of the "investigation", getting witnesses to say other than they observed, and other things. I should add he was immediately quoted on TV as saying what he told the Secret Service and I believe I have the Dallas TV ~~report~~ ^{reporting} so reporting. I know if I do not they can be gotten from the archives from the citations in WHITEWASH II.

He has other advantages as a witness. First, what he really sold LIFE is the right to suppress his film. He confirmed this to me, after first denying it, saying, by way of defense of LIFE, that it was his desire. He is a real, live, 1969 Judenrat, and will be an effective way of showing the jury what kind of people oppose us, are used for this purpose. Next, with the film actually, to all practical purposes, suppressed, it will be effective to how how wealthy it has made him. He got more than \$500,000, for more than a year ago Billings confirmed to me it was then about this amount.

Now if any of the LIFE people are later to be used by the defense, getting this in in chief would pull the teeth of all of that, besides telling an essential part of the story, how the basic evidence was suppressed and distorted. He cannot control himself, comes through as entirely irrational, will blurt out all sorts of things that will hurt him and his side, and should easily be declared a hostile witness. He has a contract with LIFE that is set forth in his testimony, a copy of which I left there in Xerox when I used this on WJOM-TV, about the time you originally subpoenaed the film. I have used it a dozen times on TV since, without a single peep from LIFE, and I've used stills on TV, again without protest. Now LIFE has never released the "missing frames", despite the puffery in the press. See the first chapter of PHOTO WW, and have never answered my request for copies after they announced they were "releasing" them. I there print the note prohibiting their use from the AP files, again without a peep from either LIFE or AP. I think this will help convince a potential unfriendly juror that he has been poisoned by the press.

More, Zapruder can be used to destroy the fiction the original cannot be shown because of danger to it. He told me he kept it in his office in Dallas for the longest time and showed it so often, after the deal with LIFE, that he cannot say how many times. He can also be used to show that the Commission knew the crucial frames were missing and was silent, remaining that way even after I brought this to light.

If you think there is a chance of the defense calling Billings, I would urge him also as a prosecution witness, easily declared hostile because of his writing, to be asked about the Zapruder and all other picture deals, where LIFE either suppressed the pictures or entirely misrepresented them. The amount of money they spent on this, to produce nothing significant, should also be effective to the jury. Then the CIA connections of LIFE management are considered, if that can be gotten into evidence, it will further reduce the effectiveness of any LIFE testimony, Billings', Chandlers', etc. Please consult the memo of my Chandler interview (which is on tape) and the FBI report saying that Oswald told them there was a lake camp with which ~~Chandler~~ ^{Chandler} was connected.