

FREEDOM OF OPINION

Mary Moorman photo validity controversy

continued

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As to Josiah Thompson's negative remarks (Free Press, Jan. 5) regarding the validity of the #5 man in the Moorman photo (printed in the Free Press, Nov. 22, 1967), the professor made a number of erroneous and/or misleading statements, which should be corrected:

(1) He said, "... Marilyn Sitzman was standing only eight or nine feet from where this figure appears." This is incorrect. While it would be difficult to determine the PRECISE distance between the #5 man and Miss Sitzman (who can be seen in photographs standing next to her employer, Abraham Zapruder), it is certain, from examination of a surveyor's map of the area and various photos, that the distance is not less than 20 feet; and probably closer to 25 feet.

(2) He said, "Marilyn Sitzman... told me no one was in that area." This is misleading. Thompson should know that the Moorman photo corresponds to Zapruder frame 314 or 315; and at this time Miss Sitzman was facing the motorecade on Elm Street—and not behind her towards the #5 man. There is no indication — nor does Thompson supply any—that she diverted her



ARTIST'S SKETCH

The #5 image in the Moorman photo of the grassy knoll at time of Kennedy assassination. Complete Moorman photograph was in Nov. 22, 1967 Free Press.

attention from the President's car until (at least) after it disappeared beneath the underpass several seconds later. By this time, other photos show that #5 was no longer there—an absence to be expected of a probably conspirator and assassin once the shooting was over (his probably hasty exit to the park-

pedestal, and was standing there with Zapruder in order to steady him as he was taking his movie film.)

However, even if — contrary to the actual fact—she HAD been facing in the direction of the #5 man at the instant of the Moorman photo, she would not have been able to see him; for he was hidden from her view by the westerly concrete "shelter" section of the pergola structure.

(3) Although Thompson concedes "... that the (#5) figure shows up prominently in the published Ben

Day negative ..." he says that in "... Mary Moorman's original Polaroid picture ... without the Ben Day dots, the figure seems to disappear."

However, Professor Thompson did not inform your readers of the important facts that (a) Polaroid photographs can deteriorate much more rapidly than other types; and (b) that when he made his copy from Mary Moorman's original, it was more than three years old and, in fact, very badly deteriorated.

Nevertheless, despite the very poor condition of the original, it can be determined by closely comparing a copy of it with a print from the Ben Day negative, that the #5 image IS there. This copy of the original Moorman photo was supplied by Thompson himself. In an accompanying note, he said: "As you can see in the intervening years the Polaroid print has decayed quite a bit."

(You, Mr. Editor, have seen this yourself, I believe, as well as another earlier and better non-screened print, which also shows the #5 man.)

Further, his denial of the #5 man's validity while conceding it "... shows up prominently in the published Ben Day negative" implies that the image is an optical illusion, actually caused only by the dot pattern itself. Here Thompson chooses to ignore the signed statements of four photo experts, from MIT and UCLA, who made their judgments after viewing prints from this very Ben Day negative, and who stated that it was "... highly probable that this image indeed represents a human figure." He ignores also the sketches made independently by each of these experts, three of which show #5 hold-

Professor Thompson, in his book, places considerable credence in a small dark spot, visible above the fence in this same photo, on another part of the grassy knoll. This spot is TOTALLY indistinguishable as a human figure, or any other definable object. Because this

spot does not appear in a test photo taken in Dealey Plaza three years after the assassination, Thompson believes that it represents a man.

It is, of course, possible that his guess is correct; but surprisingly, he chooses not to apply this same reasoning to the far more compelling #5 man—who, similarly, is not present in test photos taken last year.

This spot, discovered by Thompson, appears in three reproductions of the Moorman photo presented on pages 126-128 of his book, "Six Seconds in Dallas." Again surprisingly, he does not present the full Moorman photo in his book, for in each of the aforementioned three versions, that portion of the photo containing the #5 man has been cropped out.

Professor Thompson is, of course, free to believe that his spot is a man, while at the same time choosing to believe that the visibly more substantial #5 image is not (which was discovered by Dave Lifton, and was well known to Professor Thompson). It seems odd, however, that he chose to crop the latter from his versions of the Moorman photo, thus preventing his readers from making an independent judgment as to its validity.