

March 28, 1997 (Revised)

Topic Outline: Reasons Why Some Researchers Doubt the Authenticity of What Is Purported to be the Original Zapruder Film

- I. Inconsistencies Between Eyewitness Testimony and What Is Observed on the Existing Film
 - A. Numerous Dealey Plaza eyewitnesses have said that the limousine stopped briefly during the assassination, but the film only shows it slowing down. Hence, some researchers believe a rather long, and contiguous segment of frames may have been removed, while other researchers believe that intermittent, alternating frames showing a greatly slowed, or stopped limousine may have been removed from the film, thus creating the impression that the motorcade kept moving at all times. The result would have been a photographically created "new" original.
 - B. Some Dealey Plaza eyewitnesses (e.g., Marilyn Willis, Charles Brehm, Beverly Oliver) have described seeing a pattern of debris exiting the back of the President's head, but no such exit debris can be seen on the existing film: thus, many researchers posit that the frames which should have shown this debris have been removed, and a new "original film" reassembled (photographically, not physically) from the remaining frames. (Frame 313 is an image of an apparent explosion, but whether it represents backspatter from an entrance wound, or exit debris, is dependent upon subjective interpretation; and in any case, the damage in this frame is on the right side of the head, vice the back of the head.)
 - C. Contemporaneous Parkland Hospital medical staff eyewitness observations of President Kennedy's head wound are almost universally of a defect in the posterior cranium; yet the film shows a large wound in the right side of JFK's cranium forward of, and above, the right ear, and the back of the head in the film appears quite dark, leading some researchers to deduct that the posterior head wound has been "blacked out," and that the right lateral head wound has been "painted on," during creation of a new "original" film through a sophisticated "aerial imaging" special effects process.
- II. Unexplained Apparent Anomalies Within the Existing Film

- A. Head turns by limousine driver William Greer, in two different locations on the film (between 302-303, and 316-317), appear to some observers to be made faster than humanly possible, and to these researchers represent *de facto* evidence of removal of frames.
- B. In some frames prior to the head shot (e.g., 303, 305-307, 309-310), both bystanders in Dealey Plaza, and the moving limousine, appear to be in focus at the same time when individual frames are examined: this seems an impossibility to some researchers (given an unaltered film with a continuously moving vehicle): they interpret these frames as proof that the limousine stopped at some point.
- C. In some individual frames, double images of some objects appear, while other objects in those same frames are not depicted by double images (e.g., 294, 308, 311, 313, 314); in the absence of a credible explanation for this phenomenon, some researchers suspect this to be *de facto* evidence of some kind of film manipulation.
- D. “Inertial Effect” (blue tint) appears at the beginning of the lead motorcycle escort sequence, but not at the beginning of the “jump cut” to the limousine coming down Elm Street, leading some researchers to believe that frames showing the limousine turning the corner at Elm and Houston have been removed. [In the absence of scientific control tests conducted with Zapruder’s camera, and an accompanying written report prepared by a competent, independent third party, no conclusive rulings can be made regarding whether the “inertial effect” is an intermittent phenomenon, or uniformly consistent each time the shutter begins operating.]
- E. The washed-out, or “silvery,” quality of the images between the sprocket holes causes some researchers to be suspicious that the cause for this difference in image quality may be an artifact of the creation of a “new” original in an optical printer with different apertures (i.e., an image aperture, and an edge print aperture) following the implementation of sophisticated special effects (e.g., removal of frames, alteration of wounds in images, etc.). [In the absence of scientific control tests conducted with Zapruder’s camera, and an accompanying written report prepared by a competent, independent third party, Kodak’s informally expressed opinion that the differing quality of the images between the perforations is likely caused by “vignetting,” “claw flare,” and “development turbidity” will remain nothing but an unsubstantiated opinion.]

- F. The perforated I.D. number "0183," punched in the processed film and carrier strip by Kodak in Dallas, is missing from the purported original in the National Archives.
 - G. The "home movie" portion of Zapruder's film (approximately 32 feet of domestic movies showing a child, an infant, and a woman using the telephone) is not present in the Archives with the original film. Its absence means that the quality of the images between the sprocket holes on the home movie cannot be compared with the images between the sprocket holes on the purported original; this may cause suspicion among some researchers.
 - H. The President's head moves forward quite rapidly for one frame between frame 312 and 313 (at about 69 feet per second), and then rapidly backwards between frames 313-319 (at about 94 feet per second). This rapid change in direction and velocity has caused some researchers to wonder whether filmed evidence of two separate head shots, separated by an interval of time, may have been removed from the film to make it appear as if there was only one shot to the head; they posit that the brief evidence of forward motion between frames 312 and 313 is evidence of a mistake (i.e., the inadvertent retention of one frame of forward movement) by those who may have altered the film.
- III. Some Early Observers of the Zapruder Film Have Described Observations Which Are Not Consistent With What Is Seen In the Film Today; That Is, Because the Film as it Exists Today Does Not Match the Recollections of Those Who Saw it Early After the Assassination, the Film Has Been Altered
- A. Dan Rather, on both CBS radio, and later the CBS Evening News on November 25, 1963, after watching the Zapruder film, stated twice that the President's head moved *forward* with considerable violence after he was shot in the head. Those researchers who assume that a reasonably careful observer would not mistake such an important matter (i.e., an accurate description of how the President was fatally wounded) when watching what he knew was an historic film for his network, posit that this is defacto evidence that the head shot sequence has been altered by removal of the violent forward motion described by Rather. (This argument posits that there were two head shots on the film, and that one--showing violent forward motion--was removed; it also posits that since Rather did not describe the violent head-snap to the rear which is on the film today, that a more gradual motion of the President's head to the rear after a

second shot must have been artificially accelerated by the removal of exit debris frames, and that the resulting creation of a new movie inadvertently created the artifact of the violent head-snap. In other words, a “politically correct” violent forward motion may have been removed because a timing problem, in relation to other shots, may have constituted proof of conspiracy; however, the accompanying removal of rearward exit-debris frames from the remaining footage inadvertently created the dramatic--and unacceptable--impression of a shot from the front, causing the film to be “placed under wraps” and not shown as a motion picture for years. This scenario is one possible explanation for why Time-Life paid an extra \$ 100,000.00 for motion picture rights to the Zapruder film, but never exploited it as a motion picture.)

- B. Independent researchers have interviewed Mr. Erwin Schwartz, Zapruder’s business partner in 1963, who has said he viewed the original Zapruder film about 15 times the weekend of the assassination, and that he saw tissue debris flying to the rear--something not seen on the extant film today. He also has said that he did not see a head snap to the left rear. Many researchers feel that, providing his recollections are correct, the removal of exit debris frames from the film must have created the “head snap” as an unintended artifact of “cleaning up” the film, which could explain why Time-Life never exploited the film as a motion picture after paying an extra \$ 100,000.00 for the right to do so--because projecting it as a motion picture transmits the clear impression, to the lay observer, that the President was shot from the front, vice behind.
- C. Chester Breneman, one of the two surveyors hired by Time-Life to study blow-ups (approximately 12" square in size) of each frame of the Zapruder film, and create an accurate plat-map which diagrammatically recreated the assassination, wrote a letter to his nephew in April, 1973 in which he said: “On three frames after a frontal entry shot, we saw (on November 26, 1963) blobs leaving the back of the President’s head and disappearing on the fourth frame.” Providing this recollection is accurate, it proves to some researchers that the Zapruder film has been altered by removal of frames.

IV. Circumstantial Evidence of Possible Frame Removal in Warren Commission Documents

- A. Reportedly, CE 585 (survey plat map of Dealey Plaza) lists distance from 6th floor window of TSBD to the rear of the limousine at the head shot as 294 feet.

- B. Reportedly, CD 298 (FBI Memorandum to the Warren Commission dated January 20, 1964) lists the distance from the 6th floor window of the TSBD to the impact point on the President as 307 feet; this appears reasonably consistent with subpara A above.
- C. The Warren Report, on page 110, lists the distance from the sniper's nest (6th floor, TSBD) to the President of the third shot as 265 feet (vice the answers given in A or B above of 294' to the bumper/307' to the President), a clear discrepancy. Some researchers feel that the reason for this discrepancy is that the measurements in A and B above were obtained by study of an unaltered film prior to removal of frames, and that the changed distance to the sniper's nest in the published Warren Report reflects study of an altered version of the Zapruder film--a version with many frames removed.

V. Apparent Inconsistency Between Zapruder Film and Nix Film

- A. Rearward motion of the President's head is seen in the Nix film, but it appears to many observers to be much less rapid, and less violent, than the head-snap in the Zapruder film. If this perceived difference is not a photogrammetric problem (i.e., a problem of viewing angles and perspective), it may be circumstantial evidence that frames have been removed from the Zapruder film head shot sequence, creating a more violent head-snap.
- B. Although no head-snap of any kind can be seen on the Muchmore film, that appears to be because immediately after the head shot, the President is blocked out of view by bystanders standing in the field of view in between the photographer (Marie Muchmore) and the limousine.

VI. Motive for Altering the Zapruder Film, and Not Simply Destroying It

- A. It had become publicly known that Zapruder had taken a movie.
- B. If wounds were altered (i.e., a rear head wound blacked out, and a large wound painted onto the right side of the head) on the Zapruder film (the President's head wound), then one possible explanation is that use of selected frames from that film could be used, when necessary, to impugn the Parkland and Dallas eyewitness observations of the President's head wound. Without a Zapruder film showing a massive wound to the right side of the President's head, and no clearly visible wound to the back of his head, "all medical witnesses are equal," and Parkland eyewitness

observations would theoretically carry equal weight with Bethesda eyewitness observations; however, an altered Zapruder film, this explanation posits, would discredit Parkland and Dealey Plaza observations, support the Bethesda autopsy conclusions (regardless of the head-snap), and defuse the Parkland vs. Bethesda dichotomy in wounds observed by relegating the Parkland observations to “error typical of Trauma room observers--made cursorily and in haste.”