

D. P. Horne: WTF?

John P. Costella

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It might be unconventional to use the colloquialism “WTF?” in a book review, but it is the most concise way that I can express my surprise and dismay at Doug Horne’s creation. I trust that none in the assassination research community are so delicate as to take offence at my using this term in this day and age.

I received Volume IV of Horne’s five-volume set (the volume containing Chapter 14, on the Zapruder film, on which I have previously done some work) for review towards the end of December, more than three months ago now. Upon opening it, I found that the volume covered pages 987 through 1378 of the five-volume set. *WTF?* The pages are large (8 by 10 inches), the margins are tiny (half an inch), and the text is replete with underlining (in addition to boldface and italics, or both)—a practice that is almost never allowed in professional publishing. The Table of Contents for Volume IV contained just two entries: one told me that Chapter 13 started on page 987, and the other told me that Chapter 14 started on page 1185. *WTF?*

With a sense of foreboding, I turned to the back of the volume to look for an Index—and found none. Instead, I found letters written in 2009 by Horne to President Obama and others.

Perhaps, I thought, the Index was placed immediately before those Appendices—so I tracked back through the pages. I soon realised that I had stumbled into the narrative proper—and was dumbfounded to find “breakthroughs” being reported in the months leading up to publication. *WTF?* My sense of dread grew: for a five-volume set that was a dozen years in the making, the inclusion of last-minute “breakthroughs”—without time for checking or corroboration—was a sign that the author was either extremely gullible, or else was intent on obfuscation.

I turned to the first page of Chapter 14 (the only information provided by the Table of Contents), and started scanning forward. Four pages in, I found the following: “In 2009 an elaborate deception operation (explained in the Epilogue) was carried out against me by an intelligence operative who was obviously working for the U.S. government. Its sole purpose was to contaminate and discredit the contents of this book.” To this day, I have been unable to figure out which section is this “Epilogue”, nor where Horne describes this intelligence operation. Perhaps it is in there, somewhere. What I have gathered from his other volumes, and other information on the internet, is that the government man most prominently mentioned in Horne’s volumes is Douglas P. Horne: a man who spent most of his career attached to the Department of the Navy in various military and civilian roles (his biography reeks of intelligence assignments, but of course we will never know for sure), and who now works in the most sensitive area of the State Department: passport control.

Going through the pages, I tried to get some feeling for Chapter 14. My attention was drawn, naturally, to my own name. I was surprised by this: Horne had never contacted me, in any way, over the eight or nine years that I had been involved in Zapruder film research. Surprise turned to dismay when I started reading the details of those references. While superficially complimentary, Horne had ignored completely those findings of mine that I (and, indeed, my critics) consider to be the most important; he had focused attention on aspects that were trivial or irrelevant; and—most damning—he had misrepresented an *entire chapter* of mine from *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax*. It was clear that he had either never read my chapters of the book—or, if he did, that he was misrepresenting it in the worst possible way: as disinformation. Either way, his credibility was, for me, already shot.

More on this later.

Disgusted, I put aside the volume on my bookshelf, so that I could enjoy Christmas with my family.

Several days later, Volumes I, II, III, and V appeared in the post. Breaking open the box in front of my wife Sally, I pounced on Volume V, and flipped open the back cover.

WTF? Nothing. Page 1807, but no Index there either.

I then scabbled through the box for Volume I, hoping that a comprehensive Table of Contents would, at least partially, make up for the missing Index. But the Table of Contents was of the same bare-bones nature as contained in Volume IV: less than two pages in total, with the same two lonely entries listed for Volume IV. Following this was eight pages listing the Figures shown throughout the five volumes, and then a list of the Appendices.

WTF? I thought it was a brief list of Appendices, until I started reading the details. Apparently, none of them could possibly fit into the five-volume masterpiece, so they were all only accessible from a website. I groaned, but continued. What started out as a mere list quickly grew into an extended discussion of each and every Appendix, in such detail that the author was clearly implying that reading the overview was an essential prerequisite to understanding the five volumes to follow. The farce continued to grow: *34 pages* of descriptions of *86 Appendices*. The Marx Brothers' *A Day at the Races*, perhaps?

Following this was Horne's Preface—20 pages of it.

And then, finally, *literally* a quarter of an inch into Volume I, I came to Page 1.

WTF?

I turned to Sally, dejected. "It's the bloody Warren Commission all over again." I had to explain to her how the Commission managed to use thousands of pages of red herrings and straw men to bury any evidence of real relevance in a cesspool of garbage—and then displayed the highest contempt of a reader possible, by failing to provide an Index. Government man D. P. Horne had continued this tradition into the twenty-first century.

In the weeks to follow, I would delve into Horne's volumes from time to time, trying to extract nuggets of gold from them. I failed. Ultimately, I read through every excruciating detail in Chapter 14, twice, as well as some of Volume I.

Now, I must immediately apologise for any errors or omissions in the discussion to follow. Despite having read the chapter, twice, in full detail, the lack of an Index or a sensible Table of Contents means that it is impossible to keep track of what Horne has and hasn't mentioned without keeping a personal set of notes that would be more voluminous than my Ph.D. thesis—and with only half-inch margins, annotation of the volumes themselves is impossible. To me, the feeling is akin to having a cart-load of fresh horse droppings dumped on your front lawn. Undoubtedly, someone will point out to me that I claimed there was no six-inch worm contained in the delivery, yet—look!—there it is if you dig long and hard enough in the right direction. I simply haven't the time nor the stomach for that sort of activity, so I apologise in advance for what will, undoubtedly, be a lengthy list of Errata in due course.

I will say that, on reading through Horne's Chapter 14, I was reminded of how many of the modern developments in the Zaprunder film mystery had been associated with Horne himself, from his time with the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB): Homer McMahon, who saw an assassination film at the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) on the weekend of the

assassination, seeing Kennedy hit “six to eight times from three different directions”; Kodak’s above-top-secret facility in Rochester (referred to as both “Eagle Eye” and “Hawk Eye”—we still do not know if either of these code-names is genuine); Roland Zavada, the retired Kodak film scientist, who was brought in by Horne to authenticate the “camera original” film prior to the U.S. Government’s taking of it; the astounding compensation of the Zapruder family for that act (was it \$16 million, as government man D. P. Horne reports, or \$25 million?—it has been reported that a member of the Zapruder family claims that they actually received the latter amount); and so on. After more than a decade, Zapruder film researchers would have expected Horne to flesh out these developments.

Such researchers will be sorely disappointed.

The biggest break in the case, as far as the Zapruder film is concerned, should have been Horne’s discovery of NPIC’s Homer McMahon. Remarkably, at least one of Horne’s interviews with McMahon was recorded, and that recording was made available to me in recent weeks. It is so important to understanding Horne’s work that I have posted the audio file, in full, on my website, at <http://assassinationscience.com/johncostella/jfk/horne-mcmahon-interview.mp3> (quite remarkably, a number of researchers and other interested parties, who had never heard the recording, appear to be dismayed that I have done so; whereas—if they were honest brokers—they should be relieved). I recommend that anyone reading this review, who has not listened to the interview, should do so before continuing. A warning: it runs to just over 100 minutes. I would also recommend that any serious researcher should listen to the recording using high-quality headphones, because the frequent glitches and step-shifts in background hiss and static reveal how heavily edited the recording is. Whether this editing was done by Horne; by his superior, Jeremy Gunn (who was present for the interview and can be heard in the recording—and to whom Horne’s five volumes are solely dedicated); by the National Archives; or by a subsequent possessor of the audio file, is beyond my knowledge. In Volume IV, Horne only mentions redacting the name of “Eagle Eye” or “Hawk Eye” from the recording—implying that he edited out no other pertinent material.

“*WTF?*” That’s all that Sally and I could say to each other, many times (and not in abbreviated form, either), when listening to Horne and McMahon for the first time. Any assassination researcher who has read the Warren Commission testimony at length will have frequently blurted out loud, “Ask the next question! Ask the next question!” Now, finally, with the Horne–McMahon recording, we get a glimpse into what such an interview—with ineptitude so severe that it cannot be interpreted as anything but a cover-up—sounds like in real time.

Despite being heavily edited, the interview is cram-packed with potential leads, left unexplored by Horne and Gunn. Within the first ten minutes we learn that McMahon had begun in photography just before the outbreak of World War II; that he had worked for the FBI, for the CIA, for Eastman Kodak, and had “other clearances”—not least of which military intelligence—that allowed him to work on “anything”; that, at the time of the assassination, McMahon “was CIA; that was my cover at the time”; and that the “work” they did on the assassination film was done under a special one-time-only clearance, unrelated to the many other clearances that McMahon already held.

The obvious question arises: *WTF was the CIA doing investigating a domestic crime in the first place?* My understanding is that the CIA is only permitted to work on international matters; and, furthermore, that under the terms under which the CIA operated, the explicit authorisation of CIA Director John McCone would have been needed in order to request NPIC to carry out the work described. The McMahon interview, together with other research, suggests that NPIC was funded by the CIA, but that NPIC was much more highly classified than the Agency, reporting to both the Agency and the Department of Defense; and one gets the feeling that the more senior master was the DoD. Arthur Schlesinger’s journal relates that, within weeks of the assassination, the FBI had

told Robert Kennedy—the most important law enforcement official in the country—that only one man was shooting at his brother, but that CIA Director McCone had told him that there were two men shooting. It is logical that the observations of Homer McMahan—and, no doubt, others at NPIC who worked on the same film—formed the basis of McCone’s information. We also know that McCone met with President Johnson and McGeorge Bundy on the Sunday of the assassination weekend, suggesting that the work on the film at NPIC may well have been completed on Saturday night.

Of course, I haven’t cleared any of these speculations with government man D. P. Horne. Needless to say, his interview of McMahan clarifies nothing.

Later in the interview, we learn that McMahan was a trick shooter of such skill that he could have shot three balls in mid-air before they hit the ground. “*WTF?*” was our only possible response. To my knowledge, this detail has been systematically omitted from the public accounts given by government man D. P. Horne. The importance of McMahan’s experience, of course, is that his claim to have seen Kennedy shot six to eight times from three different directions is escalated in importance from a merely amateur observation made by a photographic technologist into the reliable testimony of a shooting expert.

And, of course, you can imagine, by now, what we said after McMahan volunteered the information about the shots, and Horne let the comments slide without further questioning.

Reportedly, the Chair of the ARRB, the Hon. Judge John R. Tunheim, has stated that he was never made aware of the interview of McMahan at all—a remarkable situation, given the importance of McMahan’s statements. In the latter part of the interview, McMahan himself reveals that he had abused drugs and alcohol in the years following his service with NPIC. Given McMahan’s habit of compartmentalising information (drummed into him during decades of work on highly classified projects, and manifestly evident throughout the recorded interview), we may reasonably infer, from this remarkably honest admission, that McMahan felt that his descent into addiction was caused, at least in part, by the work he did on the assassination film. Certainly, McMahan’s description of “Bill Smith” from the “Secret Service”—the name and affiliation given by the man who delivered the film from Kodak’s above-top-secret plant at Rochester to NPIC (McMahan seems to place no faith in the authenticity of either)—was “not interested” in McMahan’s interpretation of the film.

Neither, unfortunately, was government man Horne, nor his superior, Gunn.

In his Chapter 14, Horne laments the ARRB’s accepting the *pro bono* work of Kodak’s Roland Zavada in “authenticating” the six-foot strip of celluloid in the National Archives as a genuine 1963 strip of film, as it “later” became clear to him that Kodak was complicit in the fabrication of the fake film. Horne does not mention the fact that Roland Zavada pulled out of the 2003 Zapruder Film Symposium. (Horne may not have known that Zavada’s withdrawal was caused by my destroying Zavada’s bogus claims for “authenticity”, months before his intended presentation at the Symposium, in an email discussion including Gary Mack and Josiah Thompson.) But why did Horne introduce Zavada to the case at all? If his Chapter 14 is any guide, it was simply as a straw man for him to spar with, more than a decade later. Horne spends a disproportionate number of pages shooting down his straw man as an irrelevance—a conclusion that had already been reached by anyone with more than a passing interest in the Zapruder film, more than six years before Horne published his volumes.

While trying to wade through the swamp of Horne’s writing, a remarkable predilection comes to light: although Horne superficially expresses scepticism of almost every agency, organisation and person involved with the case, he treats every word of Abraham Zapruder’s story as if it were

gospel truth—despite it having been established for over a decade that it simply does not add up. Possibly, government man Horne, who moved to the Holocaust Museum immediately after finishing up with the ARRB, may have shared the sensitivities of many assassination researchers with regard to investigating any Jewish connection in the assassination. Whether his immediate superior, former ACLU lawyer Jeremy Gunn, shared the same reluctance is unknown. But we know, from the ground-breaking work of Jack White more than a decade ago—subsequently spectacularly confirmed—that Abraham Zapruder was not holding his camera at the time that the assassination film was recorded. There are no photographs establishing his presence on the concrete pedestal: those that do show figures on the pedestal do not show Zapruder, but rather a man half a foot shorter; and the Ike Altgens photo apparently showing him from behind was disowned by Altgens himself: it was likely staged, days or weeks afterwards. Zapruder’s movements on the weekend of the assassination are subject to the most extreme doubt; the locations of the various films taken of the assassination are likewise confused. What film was it that was returned to the Zapruder family in 1975 for \$1? Certainly not a genuine film of the assassination. And what secrets allowed them to extort \$16 million (or \$25 million) from the U.S. Government in the late 1990s? Certainly not the “taking” of the six fake feet of celluloid: we know that Judge Tunheim urged the Zapruder family to simply turn the film over to the government, as a gesture of goodwill—the family having already gained hundreds of thousands of dollars of profits from the film over the previous 35 years.

Now, it is reasonable that Horne might disagree with any or all of these points, that have been made numerous times in the past decade; and it would likewise be reasonable for him to refute any or all of them in his Volume IV. Instead, we find silence—or worse: the implicit assumption that “there’s nothing to see here, folks; move along” when it comes to the complicity of the Zapruder family in the fabrication of the film evidence of the assassination.

Horne’s gullibility (or worse) extends beyond the Zapruder story itself. He quotes from the amazing Paul Mandel article in the Memorial Edition of *LIFE*, emphasising the sentence claiming that “the 8 mm film” (*LIFE* never attributed it to Abraham Zapruder—ever) showed Kennedy turning far to the right to receive the throat shot. Horne’s comment? “This is pure bullshit, of course. The film shows no such thing—JFK never turns to his rear at any time in the extant film.” Horne then proceeds to consider various logical possibilities as to why Mandel made that statement in print, settling on the idea that the government forced him to make the statement—but *he never once contemplates the possibility that Mandel viewed a different film*. For someone who professes to believe that the extant film is a fake, this is a remarkably narrow-minded point of view: since the limo turn has been excised from the extant film, how do we *know* what a genuine film might have shown? Why didn’t Horne ask Homer McMahon whether the film he saw agreed with Mandel’s description? Why didn’t he ask McMahon whether any of the “six to eight shots” to Kennedy occurred way too far up Elm Street to have come from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository? No: instead, Horne subtly tries to convince us that the official story of the Zapruder film is *almost* all true: his only point of departure is to insert some alteration steps along the way, away from Dallas. Resurrecting this “small-‘a’ alteration” viewpoint—shown to be impossible for almost a decade—points to someone that is either out of touch, or wants to steer the reader away from the truth. Government man D. P. Horne is simply unable to extricate himself from the horns of this fundamental dilemma.

The same subtle form of manipulation contaminates Horne’s treatment of my own work on the Zapruder film. On page 1339, Horne has a heading, “Is the Extant Zapruder Film A ‘Complete Fabrication’, or Simply an Altered Film?” This is not only a direct reference to the title of my main chapter in *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax* (“A Scientist’s Verdict: The Film is a Fabrication”), but Horne moreover refers to both my chapter and that of David Healy explicitly. But instead of dealing with the central physics arguments of my chapter, he goes off on a tangent about the possible

timeline for the fabrication of the film. My simply placing upper bounds on the time possible to fabricate various parts of the film is escalated by Horne into the central question—a bogus straw man that he then attempts to shoot down. In doing so, he seems to convince himself that he has, by implication, answered the question he posed in the heading: since he disagrees with some of my upper bounds, therefore (he deludes himself) my physics proofs of the film being a complete fabrication are wrong; and he can *imply*—he never actually answers his own question—that the film could be “a little bit altered”.

If Horne wished to disagree with my conclusions, then he should have mounted arguments against my proofs. This is what critics of my work, such as Craig Lamson, Joe Durnavich and Josiah Thompson, do; and, while I am confident in the knowledge that their attacks are wrong (Lamson refuses to answer even the most elementary questions of optics, for example), I acknowledge that they fully understand and embrace the logical consistency of my arguments: that the only way to disprove my assertion that the film is a complete fabrication is to disprove my proofs of gross alteration, such as of the Stemmons Freeway sign, the lamp-post, and the lack of blurring of Frame 232 appearing in *LIFE* magazine.

What Horne wishes to overlook is the fact that *all* commentators on the Zapruder film—including Lamson, Durnavich, Thompson, and friends—agree with this crucial, second part of my proof: *The physics properties of the inter-sprocket area are such that the extant Zapruder film must be either completely genuine* (apart from possible painted-on artwork), *or else completely fabricated*. The double-exposures in the inter-sprocket area of the film inextricably link every frame of the Zapruder film with its two neighbours; and when you take into account the motion blurring and claw shadow (and their interaction) in this area, then it is *physically impossible* to remove frames from the film, or alter any aspect of them that intrudes into the inter-sprocket region, without creating the frames from scratch, from other photographic material (Jack White and I call them “pilot films” in *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax*) mixed with genuine imagery from the assassination itself.

Indeed, in recent weeks, Horne’s good friend David Lifton has expressed to me his complete understanding of this crucial aspect of my work in *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax*. Why, then, is Horne himself so ignorant of the issue? Why did he believe that he could so smugly dismiss the “complete fabrication” proof? Did he believe that I would be so vain that I would simply look through his book for superficial compliments, without checking what he actually wrote? If so, then he completely underestimated me.

I must emphasise that this issue is not about me feeling injured, personally: this is crucial to the entire question of the Zapruder film. Horne rightly points out that early copies of the various films taken of the assassination show the presidential limousine turning the corner from Houston Street onto Elm (there are at least two people still alive—a retired government agent, and a prominent television newsman—who saw this on the weekend of the assassination, or afterwards; plus countless others—including Abraham Zapruder himself, under oath—who are no longer with us). Horne also highlights the importance of the “limousine stop” (whether it slowed significantly or came to a full halt is a red herring, in my view; the extant “Zapruder” film shows neither). As Horne’s friend David Lifton highlighted so strongly at his 2003 Zapruder Symposium presentation, removing this limo stop—even in a quick-and-dirty film to be projected at full speed only—required the removal of many frames (indeed, an increasing number of frames as the limo slows, and then decreasing as it speeds back up: watch Lifton’s presentation on YouTube for a good, simple explanation). My “all or nothing” proof means that the extant “Zapruder” film we now have *cannot be the result of simply removing frames in that manner*: each and every frame of the extant film, during the period of frame removal, would have needed to have been created by photographic means. Optical printing and travelling mattes—techniques that government man D. P. Horne spends

countless pages promoting—*could not* have been used. It's as simple as that.

Since *The Great Zapruder Film Hoax* was published in 2003, every serious student of the Zapruder film has understood that its authenticity is literally “all or nothing”: either the film is genuine (apart, possibly, from superficial paintwork), or it is a complete fabrication. Just as you cannot be “a little bit pregnant”, the Zapruder film cannot be “a little bit altered”. All students of the film today sit in one or other of these two camps. *Except government man Douglas P. Horne*: he continues to persist with the 1990s view (understandable at the time, but not today) that you can have a bet each way.

Again, one must ask the question: is Horne simply incompetent, or is he a whited sepulchre? The hysterical reactions of researchers such as Peter Janney and Jim Fetzer to the mere suggestion that Horne is an agent of disinformation are astounding, given that the presence of such people within the research community is beyond any doubt. A clue to the true state of play may come from greatest fan of Horne's five volumes on amazon.com: Secret Service specialist Vincent Palamara. Having edited two of Palamara's books for online distribution three years ago, I was acutely aware that at no time did Palamara ever question the Warren Commission's version of events; and so it was no surprise at all when Palamara issued a gushing YouTube review of Bugliosi's recent Posnerian tome, claiming that it had caused him to see the light and accept the government's version of the assassination. For such a man to claim that Horne's volumes are “the finest 5 volume set of books written to date on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. They deserve a Pulitzer Prize!” tells me exactly where D. P. Horne sits in the big picture.

I feel some sympathy for Horne: as a government man, his hand was forced as to what he could investigate or publish. (Indeed, during the time I worked for the Department of Defence, I felt it inappropriate to work on assassination research at all.) And so, regardless of his disclaimer at the end of his last page of his five massive volumes—page 1807—that his words do not represent the views or opinions of the U.S. government, one cannot fail to feel that Horne's work is, indeed, the final chapter of the government's cover-up of the brutal assassination of the thirty-fifth President of the United States.