

*Inside the AARB, Volume IV*

Douglas P. Horne

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As a comprehensive examination of just two aspects of the Kennedy assassination, Douglas Horne's *Inside The Assassination Records Review Board, Volume IV* (henceforth *IA4*) symbolises the ultimate difficulty of moving through the rabbit hole of minutiae, some five decades after the killing. This is the fourth volume of a projected five-volume series, pages 987-1378, or two chapters of the whole. Apparently the entire book runs 1880 pages, which is only two-thirds the length of Vincent Bugliosi's apologia for the Warren Commission. But in his admirable effort to get at the absolute truth, Horne might as well have extended to the realms of Bugliosity. Because once you have cut through the prolix information, with every minor point of research, debate, opinion stated and repeated and footnoted, once you've realised that a good copy editor could have cut these 400 large pages considerably, and tightened the argument, you realise that the argument itself resolves into another cul de sac. Horne, who was a researcher into military records for the AARB (remember the autopsy was a military event), has done research that is exhaustive, but despite providing us with much fact about what happened, he moves us no closer to any real understanding. The advantage the Bugliosis and Posners have is that they don't need to do that, and the reviewers who praise their books in the mainstream media don't really need to read them at all.

Basically, Horne deals with only two points, both crucially concerned with the manipulation of evidence. The first is the infamous Bethesda autopsy. The second is possible alteration of the Zapruder film itself. The latter, which is admittedly not his own area of expertise, has become a hot potato of charge and countercharge among researchers, and the further I delved beyond Horne's book the more exhausted I became.

And even more frustratingly, Horne, who comes off as being scrupulously honest and open about arguments, accepts that his position (that the film is not 'authentic') is still the minority one, diametrically opposed to that of the

AARB's expert, Roland Zavada. The arguments around the evidence are too technical for me to even begin to summarise here, and they have been debated hotly before Horne even got to them.

What seems incontestable is Horne's finding that the National Photo Intelligence Center in Washington received the Zapruder film from a CIA lab at Kodak in Rochester, and that the anonymous 'Bill Smith' who delivered it said it had been 'developed' there, which would mean it was Zapruder's original film. Or, it occurred to me, perhaps some other original film was created and altered while the 'other' Zapruder footage was being moved around Dallas. Or, it also occurred to me, that a CIA agent posing as a Secret Service agent acting as a delivery boy might not have known or cared about the difference between 'developed' and 'printed'. After examining all these conundrums, however, suffice it to say that regardless of how and by whom the Zapruder film may or may not have been altered, what was left was still compelling enough evidence of a conspiracy. The real question then becomes whether, having done such a bad job of covering-up the ultimate evidence of the frontal shots, they might have been trying to cover up something else.

The more compelling section deals with the autopsy, and here Horne goes far beyond David Lifton's original research in *Best Evidence* to prove there were two separate brain examinations, there were three copies of Doctor James Humes' autopsy report, and, most importantly, that post mortem surgery was performed in Bethesda to change the nature of the appearance of the wounds. Horne breaks down the time line of the shell game played by Roy Kellerman and the Secret Service with the president's body, and with the various testimonies of doctors Humes, J. Thornton Boswell, and Pierre Finck, particularly where Boswell actually contradicts the official autopsy findings. The conclusion is inescapable: these doctors were ordered to destroy or suppress evidence of a frontal shot.

The problem in both cases is that what has been proved is ultimately a post-facto conspiracy, one designed to protect organisational failures, cover bureaucratic asses, hide complicity by agents or assets, or indeed even avoid what may have been presented to people like military doctors and secret service agents as the possibility of global nuclear war if the truth, or what may have been suggested as wild speculation, became public. But we knew all that a long time ago and although Horne marks out the turf, and puts paid to the Posner/Bugliosi argument once and for all, none of it gets us any closer to the places the orders originated, which would be where the evidence of the actual assassination conspiracy lies. The implications are clear, that the conspiracy must have reached deep into the government itself. And perhaps that is where my ultimate frustration lies, in that after nearly fifty years, we are counting the

conspirators on the head of the pin, but only fiction writers have come close to sticking the pin into the donkey's behind.

This was the argument being presented by James Douglass in *JFK: The Unspeakable*, which I reviewed here in *Lobster*, an effort to try to narrow what might be called suspects in the macro conspiracy. Work like Horne's is admirable, because of his devotion to honesty and completeness. We could ask for it to be more concise, better written, easier to follow. But that's not the real point, the reason why this book brought on such a feeling of frustration. We need clarity, and after five decades, we continue to dive deeper and deeper and the water gets muddier and darker, with the wreck at the bottom nowhere in sight.

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