

An Open Letter to Dr. Steven Jones by James Bennett, with replies by Steven Jones

Letter also posted at <http://screwloosechange.blogspot.com>

Dear Dr. Jones:

In a recent letter you criticized me, and Mark Roberts, for failing to notify you about questions that we had regarding your misrepresentation of a photograph of firefighters at Ground Zero searching for their fallen comrades with a flashlight. In this you expressed the hope that we would contact you in the future regarding such issues.

While it is true that I had failed to contact you directly, although I am not sure how you missed this issue since it was publicized throughout the 9/11 conspiracy theory community, I had in fact contacted you on concerns I had about your misrepresentations of fact regarding other 9/11 issues previously, but you failed to respond. Not being one who likes writing e-mails for the purpose of being ignored, I stopped trying.

E-mails did not reach me for some time, especially during my retirement transition – you should not assume that you were being “ignored.”

In any case, I presume that your new request can fairly be interpreted as an offer to actually respond to inquiries, so in that spirit I am sharing other concerns that I, and other 9/11 researchers have regarding the credibility of your research, in the hopes that you might address these concerns.

First of all, I would like to continue with the issue of the use of photographs. Although in the case of the aforementioned photograph of firefighters, I did not reach a conclusion as to whether the change in coloration was intentional or incidental, many assumed that it was intentional based on the fact that you have a long history of misrepresenting photographic evidence.

No, I do not have such a history – but let’s look at the examples you provide, and my answers.

Some additional examples of this are as follows:

1. A cut steel beam, given as an example of being cutting through the use of an as yet



unknown device employing thermite,

Actually, the metal-cutting device employing thermite is well known and documented; see the paper by Robert Moore published three months ago (January 2007) in the Journal of 9/11 Studies:

<http://journalof911studies.com/volume/200701/Answers-to-Frequently-Asked-Questions-Regarding-Thermite-by-Robert-Moore.pdf>

Robert made these data available to me long before he published them, and so I discussed the patented “thermite torch” long ago.

Furthermore, there is a demonstration of a “device employing thermite” cutting through a metal rod, here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wn-MCCZ3O1M> .

which is in fact more likely one of the hundreds of beams cut by iron workers during the cleanup, of which there are numerous photographs and examples which are similar to the one you use. An example of this may be found here.

<http://www.debunking911.com/thermite.htm>



The angle-cut beam in the first photo above has been the subject of much discussion. Recently, a first-responder has stated that he saw this particular cut-column (it is rather remarkable in appearance) when he arrived at the GZ scene on 9/11/2001. We are seeking a written statement from him to this effect to hopefully settle this issue. An analysis of the slag seen clinging to the inside and the outside (both) of this angle-cut column would also do much to answer questions about what did the cutting. I think you will agree that in the second photo, the worker is using an oxyacetylene torch to cut the steel.

2. A photograph on page 17 of your paper of workers using some sort of cutting device, which apparently even you suspect it is, because you only speculate that it "may show" proof of hot metal. You give no reason why it should be assumed to be anything other than the obvious, iron workers cleaning up, given that they would have no reason to be huddled around hot glowing metal otherwise. Some other examples can be found here. <http://www.groundzeromuseumworkshop.com/poster3.htm>



Look closely: these two workers do not appear to be “using some sort of cutting device” to generate the observed bright glow in this photo. The worker on the right has both hands by his sides, and the other worker is sitting with his right hand a little in front of him. Yes, I included the caveat that this photo “may show the glow of hot metal in the rubble” [thanking you for acknowledging the caveat] since this is not totally clear from the photo, and then I added, “; the second photo clearly does so. [See Photo below in this response.] It is labeled “Red Hot Debris” and is published in LiRo News, Nov. 2001, <http://www.liro.com/lironews.pdf> . Moreover, there is recorded eyewitness testimony of the molten metal pools under both Towers and WTC 7; see: <http://georgewashington.blogspot.com/2005/12/why-was-there-molten-metal-under.html> . . Video clips provide eye-witness evidence regarding this metal at ground zero: http://plaquepuppy.net/public_html/video%20archive/red_hot_ground_zero_low_quality.wmv , <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-3060923273573302287> .”



3. A picture of pancaked concrete floors on exhibit in an aircraft hanger, which you misrepresent as molten metal, despite the fact that the exhibit is clearly identified in resources available on the Internet, including close-up pictures showing items such as paper, which would not likely be found in molten metal. More on this can be found here.

<http://www.debunking911.com/jones.htm>



Next to this photo is this:

Large pieces of debris, likened to meteorites by preservationists, **are actually several floors of the towers compressed together** as the buildings collapsed. Furniture, twisted metal, pipes, cords and **even papers with legible type are visible**. The pieces are kept in a humidity-controlled tent in Hangar 17 of Kennedy International Airport. (Photo by Lane Johnson)



Actually, the above photo which appears first above (large rusty object) and in my paper was taken by Janette MacKinlay. Note that the people standing behind the object have had their faces “whited out” at her request for privacy reasons.

(The paper is here:

http://journalof911studies.com/volume/200609/Why_Indeed_Did_the_WTC_Buildings_Completely_Collapse_Jones_Thermite_World_Trade_Center.pdf)

To determine whether the metal in the object quietly photographed by J. MacKinlay in fact contains residue from a thermite-analog (such as thermate), it will be necessary to perform analyses on samples from the actual object. I explained this already in my paper:

“The abundance of iron (as opposed to aluminum) in this material is indicated by the reddish rust observed. When a sample is obtained, a range of characterization techniques will quickly give us information we seek. X-ray energy dispersive spectrometry (XEDS) will yield the elemental composition, and electron energy-loss spectroscopy will tell us the elements found in very small amounts that were undetectable with XEDS. Electron-backscattered diffraction in the scanning electron microscope will give us phase information; the formation of certain precipitates can tell us a minimum temperature the melt must have reached. We will endeavor to obtain and publish these data, whatever they reveal.”

One might expect burned papers associated with the hot slag, as in the detailed photo you provided – but we cannot say for certain the origin of the slag until we perform XEDS/elemental analyses as I stated in my paper (and quoted for you in the previous paragraph).

Do you believe that because, either intentionally or through carelessness you have repeatedly made claims regarding the use of photographic evidence which are not backed up by fact, others may have serious questions as to the reliability of your research? How would you answer such critics of your work?

I have answered your questions, and shown that your statement “either intentionally or through carelessness you have repeatedly made claims regarding the use of photographic evidence which are not backed up by fact,” is itself not backed up by fact. I answer “such critics” with an appeal that they read my paper in full and support the additional research work (such as XEDS analyses) called for in the paper to get at complete answers, and that they allow me to answer specific questions.

Additionally I have questions regarding the standards and practices at the Journal for 9/11 Studies, particularly the "peer-review" of your paper. You have stated on several occasions that your paper underwent another series of peer-reviews organized by your co-editor Kevin Ryan. There are two issues raised by this process.

First of all, is Kevin Ryan, who to the best of my knowledge has no experience editing a scientific journal, who has never published peer-reviewed scientific research, and does not even have a graduate degree in any field, have the necessary academic qualifications and experience to carry out this process to any standard generally accepted by any serious academic body?

Secondly, given the fact that you yourself founded this journal, and that you most likely also appointed Mr. Ryan to this position, after Dr. Judy Wood resigned, protesting the lack of

standards at this journal, does it follow normal standards of academic ethics to have him in charge of the review process of your paper. Does the fact that Mr. Ryan himself is a major citation in your paper affect his unbiased discharge of his responsibilities? Can you point to any respected academic journal which allows this type of conflict of interests, where the founder of the journal has peer reviews for their own papers organized by people they appointed, which cites works written by that very person? Is it unreasonable for outside observers to conclude that Mr. Ryan may have a difficult time being unbiased in this matter, and conduct this process in the most rigorous manner expected under generally accepted academic standards? Given all of this, on what basis do outside observers have to place any trust whatsoever in the integrity of the papers published?

I find that Kevin Ryan, a chemist, is very insightful and careful in his editing practices, based on his comments now on over thirty published articles and letters in the Journal of 9/11 Studies. Furthermore, Kevin supervised several PhD's at Underwriter Laboratories while he worked there. At the time Judy Wood resigned as a co-editor, I recall that she mentioned that she had done essentially nothing to that point and that time was a factor, not that she challenged the "standards at this journal." The Editorial Board which oversees content and standards has not yet expressed concerns about the standards. The board has eleven members, seven of whom hold Ph.D. degrees, and one is a structural engineer (retired).

Frank Carman (Ph.D.), Alex Floum, Prof. Marcus Ford, Derrick Grimmer (Ph.D.), Prof. Richard McGinn, Kimberly Moore, Robert Moore, Joseph Phelps (MS, PE), Prof. Diana Ralph, Lon Waters (Ph.D.) and Prof. Paul Zarembka.

Based on these facts, as well as my own experience in editing scientific publications before this one and authoring or co-authoring over forty peer-reviewed publications, yes, I think that people should take the Journal articles seriously. Now even Physical Review Letters (where I have published several papers) has retractions from time to time. This may happen especially in an area of very active research such as 9/11 Studies. If there are errors, we expect the authors to point out corrections. This is expected in front-line research.

In addition, my paper (an earlier version of it) was published in a volume edited by David Ray Griffin and Peter Dale Scott, *9/11 And The American Empire: Intellectuals Speak Out*, Northampton, MA: Interlink Publishing, 2006. One of the editors (Prof. Griffin) has explained that there were four reviewers for my paper, all Ph.D's, two were physicists. Thus, the paper was peer-reviewed also under the independent editors, Prof. Griffin and Prof. Scott. Are you challenging their qualifications to supervise a suitable peer-review? Both are experienced, I think you will agree. The paper has been thoroughly peer-reviewed.

Thank you for your time, and I am looking forward to your responses to these questions, so that we can clarify some of these issues.

James Bennett

Screw Loose Change Blog

You're welcome.

Steven Jones 4/20/2007