

June 16, 1997

Welcome to Washington! On behalf of the members and staff of the Assassination Records Review Board, let me extend our thanks to you for coming to work with us, especially during your summer vacation. It says a great deal about you that you are willing to do this on your own time. I hope that you will enjoy the week, and that you will get as much from your work as we will from having it done.

I have included in your briefing packets a brochure describing the Review Board and its history, as well as a number of news articles written about us and our efforts. This should give you a little background into who we are, and what we do.

The Board and its staff began working at full strength in the spring of 1995. As of March 1997, we have released, either in full or in part, over 11,000 documents that had been previously classified for national security reasons. In addition, tens of thousands of other documents have been released by various government agencies in light of Board guidelines or in anticipation of Board action. As of May 1997, over 3,750,000 pages of previously classified material have been released to the National Archives as a direct result of the Review Board's existence and activity.

The other aspect of our work is to search out previously unremembered or unknown assassination records in order to add them to the JFK collection. An example of this was the discovery of unedited news film from the day of the assassination, taken from the cutting room trash can of a Dallas TV station the day of the shooting by a cameraman who worked there. Upon its rediscovery in 1996 by ARRB investigators, the film gained international attention, proving once again the worldwide fascination with the Kennedys. A few months ago, the Board held a public hearing to discuss how it should handle the original Zapruder film; this hearing was carried live on C-SPAN and was covered by CNN, Fox News, the Associated Press, and other national media. And just last week, the Board acquired and added to the JFK collection the personal diary of Clay Shaw, who as many of you know was the only person ever tried for the murder of John Kennedy, back in 1967-69.

In the days to come, I hope you will both learn a great deal, and have an experience you will not soon forget. It is my pleasure to work with you, and I look forward to a great week!

Christopher Barger