

TOM REDRAFT -- dieugen2.wpd in g/gunn/corresp

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Mr. Jim DiEugenio  
Chairman  
CTKA  
P.O. Box 3317  
Culver City, California 90231

Dear Mr. DiEugenio:

As Executive Director of the Assassination Records Review Board, I would like to take this opportunity to offer some thoughts and respond to your article entitled, "The Review Board's Public Comments (Part II)," which appeared in Probe, Vol. 5, No. 2 (January February, 1998). As a senior staff member who has worked closely with the Review Board for more than three years, I believe that I can provide some context and a useful perspective based on my experience.

In my opinion, the principal and single most important goal of the JFK Act was to declassify secret government files on the Kennedy assassination. The JFK Act established the Review Board not for the purpose of deciding whether President Kennedy was killed as a result of a conspiracy, but to open the secret files so that the information becomes fully available to the public. The Board was not asked to reach any substantive conclusions about the assassination. Congress wisely did not impose ideological criteria on Board members. As far as I know, the Board members were never asked their opinions on the substantive issues of the assassination. And Board members never asked for the opinions of staff members before staff members were hired.

It appears that the principal concern of your Probe articles was not the degree to which the Board has been successful in accomplishing this statutory mission, but whether Board members' public comments reflect agreement or disagreement with your own opinions on the assassination. With all due respect, it is my opinion that the Review Board should be judged on whether it fulfills its statutory mission and not on whether an individual member agrees with you on any particular theory of the assassination. By this measure—*the true measure of fidelity to the JFK Act*—the Board has performed admirably. The Board has fought vigorously to release as much information as possible. It has taken a firm stance against the CIA, the FBI, and other federal agencies in dealing with important issues related to the release of records. Similarly, the Board and the staff have worked hard to locate additional records both within and outside of the government.

A Board member's personal opinion about the assassination becomes relevant to the true statutory mission only to the extent to which a bias might lead to additional withholding of information from the public. I have attended almost every closed meeting of the Board where decisions were made on

*records, and never once did I hear any Board member even suggest that a record should not be opened because it contained information that did or did not comport with any theory of the assassination.*

The Board has scrupulously opened all information without regard to any particular belief about the assassination. That is a fact. And that is the type of fact that is much more significant and relevant than the personal opinions of individual Board members. It is the Board members' objectivity in releasing information that is noteworthy (and newsworthy for your readers), not their individual opinions.

On one additional matter, it would have been helpful if you had acquired the facts about Board-member compensation before alleging that the Board members "collect two full paychecks for working what is essentially a part-time job." In fact, Board members are compensated solely for the time that they are attending Board meetings in Washington, D.C., or traveling somewhere else on Board business, such as the public hearing in Los Angeles. Since becoming a Federal Judge, Chairman Tunheim receives no compensation for his time or work. It would be helpful if all assassination researchers would be scrupulous about ascertaining the facts before printing accusations.

(In all fairness I should note that the staff was, however, particularly enthusiastic about your intimation that they should receive higher compensation.)

Probe subscribers should be assured that Review Board members have consistently approached their task based on the facts and the law. As members of a Board created to promote openness in government, they have been more open than anyone reasonably could have expected. Their work demonstrates that there is no hidden agenda and that they are dedicated to making the record surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy as complete as possible and available to the American public. We would all do well to keep our eyes on this goal rather than allowing ourselves to be distracted by inquiries and allegations related to ideological purity and political correctness.

Sincerely,

T. Jeremy Gunn  
Executive Director