

June 10, 1997

Mr. Burke Marshall
Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Professor Emeritus
& George Crawford Professional Lecturer
Yale Law School
127 Wall Street
Drawer 401A Yale Station
New Haven, Connecticut 06520

Dear Mr. Marshall:

It has been one year since Henry Graff, David Marwell, and I met with you in New Haven. We appreciated that meeting and enjoyed our discussion with you. I am writing to you now to raise two important issues with you concerning the autopsy photographs that are stored at the National Archives. The Board understands that the autopsy images are specifically excluded from the JFK Act and recognizes that you have consistently provided reasonable access to these images pursuant to the provisions of the deed of gift. The access provisions recognize a public interest in the content of these images and at the same time restrict access to ensure that only serious researchers with suitable qualifications are permitted to view them.

The first issue I would like to raise involves two discoveries made in our examination of the color and black-and-white images that were taken at the autopsy of President Kennedy:

(a) We have discovered three very dark, but recognizable, images that appear to be of the autopsy of President Kennedy on the roll of 120 film that was described in a November 10, 1966 National Archives document as "processed but showing no recognizable image."

(b) We have noted that some of the black-and-white negatives and color transparencies contain significant information that is not available in the respective photographic prints that were made from them. Cropping and other darkroom techniques appear to have obscured information in the prints that is contained in the negative and positive transparencies.

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We recommend that necessary steps be taken to scan and enhance the images described in (a) above and make new and uncropped prints from all of the negatives and positive transparencies exposed at the autopsy, as discussed in (b) above. The Kennedy family recognized the importance of preserving this material and making it available to serious researchers and government investigators. Making the best possible copies available is clearly within the spirit of their gift.

The second issue involves the analysis of the images. As you know, the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) subjected the autopsy images to various tests that took advantage of the most advanced technology of the day. The Review Board believes that examinations using the most advanced technology of our day would serve the public interest in several cases where the technological advances promise to clarify the record beyond what was possible in the late 1970's. We, therefore, recommend that the images be scanned and analyzed by independent professionals using state-of-the-art techniques and equipment. As in 1978, the images would have to be removed from the archives and transported to the site of the testing, in this case to Kodak in Rochester, New York. The Review Board, the Archives, and Kodak would take all necessary precautions to prevent unauthorized access and to guarantee the physical safety of the material.

These actions present us with an important opportunity to clarify the record in this matter. I hope that you will agree with the recommendations outlined in this letter and look forward to hearing from you. Please call me if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John R. Tunheim
Chair