

September 9, 1997

Mr. Paul L. Hoch
1525 Acton St.
Berkeley, CA 94702

Dear Paul:

Thank you for your letter of August 13, 1997 to Jeremy Gunn. Please be assured that the Review Board and staff always appreciate your informal advice and recognizes the time that you put into your correspondence. It was good to hear from you again and I appreciate your kind words at the end of your letter.

I would like to respond to some of your specific points, but first, please allow me to make a general comment. Because of the limited time that we have left to accomplish our mandate, it is not possible to give you a complete review of all of your previous submissions, in terms of whether or not they have led to the identification of additional assassination records. In addition, some of the projects involving the location of records are ongoing. However, I will provide you with as much specific information as I can at this time.

First, as I think you are aware, the Review Board has been "pushing the envelope" on its authority under the Act in an effort to make the record regarding the medical evidence as complete as possible.

Because this effort is ongoing, I am not able to provide details on what we have done to date. However, I am sure that you and many other people who have provided suggestions related to the medical evidence and the chronology of events surrounding the autopsy will appreciate this attempt to clarify and complete the record, to the extent possible so long after the assassination, when our records on this project are made public.

Second, I assure you that the Review Board and staff have been vigorous in the search for assassination records that may not have previously been uncovered. The Board's compliance program, under which all federal agencies will be held accountable with regard to their responsibilities under the JFK Act, is an aggressive effort to have all relevant parties on the record about what they did, or did not do, to comply with the Act.

Third, as you correctly point out, the Board was responsible for initiating an effort at the Kennedy Library to expedite the public release of assassination records. In fact, this initiative was so comprehensive that it resulted in the release of records dealing with Cuba that are not specifically defined as assassination records, but were nevertheless deemed important to enhancing the historical record. Another example of the Board's willingness to expand the universe of relevant records beyond what federal agencies have done, is its designation of additional FBI organized crime records as "assassination records," beyond what the agency itself had already designated.

Fourth, I would like to address what you termed an "emphasis" on "the processing of redactions - in documents which have been previously released in part, and in those more recently identified by the source agencies as assassination-related" by the Board. Rather than a choice by the Board to "emphasize" this area, it is an important part of the Board's mandate as articulated by the Congress. In addition, I assure you that it has not been at the expense of the search for additional assassination records.

Fifth, despite the efforts required to complete the review of existing assassination records held by federal agencies, we have also been able to pursue the "'attic and basement' searches." The result has been the acquisition of the J. Lee Rankin papers that add historically important context to the Warren Commission investigation, the Clay Shaw papers that add a different dimension to the New Orleans chapter of the assassination story, in addition to other acquisitions for the JFK Collection.

Sixth, to further emphasize the point that the Board is being aggressive in finding and moving assassination records towards public release, please allow me to describe a recent event at the Review Board offices. During the last week of July, the Board staff hosted an unprecedented meeting of several federal agencies (State Department, CIA, National Security Council, Joint Staff Secretariat, Department of the Army, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the US Information Agency) to declassify thousands of military records in which these agencies have equities. The Board determined that these joint meetings would be the most efficient and effective manner in which to declassify these important records. The week-long meeting proved to be a success and an important precedent for the Board, as well other agencies faced with records scheduled for declassification. The stage is now set for the declassification of these records which will enhance the historical record of the assassination.

Seventh, although I noted at the beginning of this letter that I was not able to provide details on everything the Board has done, I would like to address the issue of ATF records that I know are of interest to you. As you may be aware, prior to 1972, ATF did not exist as a separate entity within the Department of Treasury, but evolved from units/divisions with the IRS charged with regulating alcohol and tobacco tax law. This fact has complicated the search for potentially relevant records,

although determining what records exist, is part of an ongoing effort by the Board. I offer this information as an example of the difficulties that arise when dealing with the federal government bureaucracy and history.

Eighth, the issue of agency FOIA files is one that we are aware of and have had discussions about, but with no final resolution yet.

Ninth, as previously noted, we have added a significant volume of Garrison records to the JFK Collection (and intend to add additional records before we finish our job). However, we would certainly value and appreciate having copies of the internal memos that you have in your possession, in addition to the 70 pages of your correspondence with people associated with Garrison's office. Although there may be records from the Garrison files that we have obtained from other sources, your providing us with copies from your files will ensure that the record is as complete as possible. Please advise me if you are able to send the documents to us for copying here. We can provide you with a FedEx account number so you would not incur any costs. Your willingness to share your records is appreciated.

Again, thank you for writing to us. I hope this letter has been of some help to you. Although I am unable to give you the "laundry list" on everything that you have written to us about in the past, you should know that you have played an important role in many of the areas in which we have been involved. At a minimum, you have provided context and added to our understanding of a whole range of topics. That contribution alone, has made your efforts worthwhile to us.

I look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Samoluk, Esq.
Associate Director