August 19, 1996

Mr. Michael Nurko
24 Twin Lakes Drive
Monsey, NY 10952

Dear Mr. Nurko:

This is in response to your two letters, date August 12, 1996 and August 14, 1996 respectively, to Chairman Tunheim regarding the Board's review of the medical evidence related to the assassination of President Kennedy. He has asked me to respond to your letter.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to make some general points regarding the Board's mandate as it relates to the pursuit of the medical evidence. The Board is not authorized by the JFK Act to reinvestigate the assassination. The mandate of the Board is to make the JFK Collection at the National Archives as complete as possible and available to the American public. The Board had no specific mandate to delve into the controversies of the medical evidence. In fact, the Board is "pushing the envelope" on its authority under the Act in an effort to make the record regarding the medical evidence as complete as possible. Rather than be subjected to premature and unfounded criticism, the Board should be congratulated for having the courage to take on this difficult area.

Second, the only way to fairly and reasonably judge the results of the depositions of the autopsy doctors is to review the transcripts of the depositions. The Board has stated that those transcripts will be made public upon the conclusion of the Board's inquiry into the medical evidence; likely to be the end of this year. Since the transcripts are not available yet, any criticism at this point in time is unreasonable and baseless.

Third, through the passage of the JFK Act, the Congress created a part-time citizens board with a full-time professional staff. The Congress clearly envisioned an experienced and professional staff taking on major responsibilities at the direction of the Board. That is exactly what has occurred in this matter. The several members of the staff, including the Executive Director and the General Counsel, who were involved in the depositions were extraordinarily prepared. Significant time and resources went into the effort and the results will demonstrate it.

Fourth, as you have learned subsequent to the drafting of your August 12 letter, preparation for the depositions did, in fact, involve input from members of the research community, as well as outside medical consultation, study of relevant materials from all past government investigations, and a careful review of all the relevant available literature on the subject. From the very beginning of the Board's existence, correspondence have been received with suggestions, leads and requests, relative to the medical evidence. All of the information received has been carefully reviewed and, in many instances, has been helpful.

Fifth, although the unreasonable position apparently taken by some researchers in this matter is troubling, we have firsthand knowledge that there are many reasonable researchers who have substantively contributed to the Board and staff's knowledge in this and other areas, appreciate the work that has been undertaken by the Board, and appropriately withhold judgment until there is a basis for it.

Finally, the apology in your August 14 letter is accepted regarding misinformation about consultation with the research community. Please be assured, the Board is committed to making the record of the assassination as complete as possible and shares your desire to work together cooperatively.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Samoluk, Esq.
Associate Director