

**NR\_key\_name:** F85D6C7950C96BEF86256683007ADE6F

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**Subject:** Re: your piece in the Globe  
Eileen, I really thanks for sending out the story to the board. I got a copy of the globe from the local paper's and the piece is certainly prominently displayed. Trying to inject a little color into the D Magazine piece, I've come up with the following lead: is it accurate? The part about the fire-proofsafes? (I thought I saw some on one visit? As for the offices being vacant by the time this story appears in November, I guess I'll just take my chances. BEGIN D MAGAZINE PIECE There's not a scrap of classified paper left, nor any of the thick, fire-proof safes that used to dot the unassuming suite of offices. Indeed, barely a month after being vacated, there is no clue left to suggest that a national trauma was relived daily, for more than four years, in Suite 208 of this nondescript office building in downtown Washington. Beginning in 1994, five presidential appointees embarked on an unprecedented exercise in the history of federal record-keeping: the declassification of the paper explosion that occurred inside the federal government after the echo subsided in Dealey Plaza. Traditionally, the balance between secrecy and openness has always been tilted heavily in favor of federal agencies. But after Oliver Stone's JFK catalyzed a firestorm of controversy in 1992, Congress created a temporary panel called the Assassination Records Review Board, charged with but one task. The panel was to secure and make public every piece of paper and artifact concerning the assassination that it could lay its collective hands on. The panel, which consisted of a Minnesota federal judge, two historians, a college dean, and a university librarian, labored in complete anonymity during its first year of operation. Just getting organized--the mundane chores of hiring a staff, obtaining office furniture, and alerting other agencies to its bureaucratic existence--was a formidable hurdle to overcome. "We invented ourselves," observed board member Henry Graff, professor emeritus at Columbia University. That's no small accomplishment in the vast, clanking machinery of the federal government. The next hurdle was defining exactly what constituted an "assassination record" under the 1992 statute. Some documents manifestly fell under any definition, such as FBI or CIA files on Lee Oswald. But what about policy papers on Vietnam? The ARRB decisively cast as wide a net as seemed reasonable, encompassing most (but never all) of the flourishing conspiracy theories. That still left the daunting task of bringing more than 30 federal entities, ranging from the obvious (FBI) to the seemingly tangential (National Labor Relations Board) into full compliance. Some cooperated without a hitch, others had to be brought arduously to heel. "We're not going to release this document because that's the way it's always been" was the initial response from many agencies, recalls Judge John R. Tunheim, the ARRB's former chairman. Unless they pierced this almost knee-jerk penchant for secrecy, the Board realized, the entire effort would be for naught. On September 30th, when the ARRB closed its doors for the last time, the panel's legacy was a

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