

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES A. HALLECK

INTERVIEWER: T. Harrison Baker

September 19, 1968

B: If we could start with just the chronology, which goes back to the '30's. You were in Congress, a two-year veteran when Mr. Johnson arrived.

H: He was here with Dick Kleberg, wasn't he, as secretary?

B: Yes, sir, but I believe he left in '35, the year that you got elected to be NYA Director out in Texas.

H: How long was he here before he went to the Senate?

B: He was in Congress from 1937 to 1948.

H: Those were turbulent years. World War II and ---

B: Last throes of the New Deal. Can you recall freshman Congressman Lyndon Johnson about 1937?

H: Well, yes, I was conscious of his being here. It was later before I got closely acquainted with him.

B: About when would that have been, sir?

H: Oh, I wouldn't want to put years on it. Because it was obvious that he was an up-and-coming fellow.

B: What made it obvious, sir? How could you tell?

H: Well, he was competent on the floor, and always a skillful debater. Still is.

B: There's a good deal of talk about Mr. Johnson as a protege of some of the older hands in the House like Carl Vinson and Sam Rayburn. Was that apparent in those days?

H: Of course, that carried over, you know. Hell, after he went over to the Senate we used to have those meetings down in the Board of Education, when he was the Democratic leader and Mr. Rayburn was the Speaker, and as Carl Albert mentioned yesterday in some things he said about me, I was always welcome at the Board of Education. Actually, a lot of things that involved the work of the Congress. Didn't involve anybody selling out his own viewpoint. But it was manifest then that Lyndon was a helluva guy to get a lot of things done. Now, I hope before you get through, you understand they undertake to compare everybody with every other person that was ever out here, but these things that were accomplished after Kennedy was assassinated and Lyndon became President, I don't think they'd have gone anywhere but for Lyndon Johnson's big push as a President. And I have reference to Medicare and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and I was right smack in the middle of that damned thing, as you may recall.

B: How does the push from the President work? The treatment?

H: Well, he's a very persuasive guy. And he bears down. I'll tell you one thing. Some of these things might be helpful in the future to analyze the character of the man. I was trying to get an appointment to the SEC for my friend Hamer Budge of Idaho, who's a darn good man, incidentally. He got beat out there. And I started with Kennedy and we got along pretty good until the Democrats from Idaho lowered the boom. Of course, Hamer was a Republican. So then after Lyndon took over the Presidency, I started over again. And there was this vacancy. And I knew I was making a little progress, because the FBI was checking and all the things that happened would lead you to believe that Hamer was under very serious consideration. So one day the President sent for me. And he said, "Charlie, you're gonna help me with this Poverty Bill, aren't you?" And I said, "No." I said, "I can't be for that damned thing, Mr. President." Well, then he went through a helluva long list of things. The raise in the pay. I said, "Well, I'll vote for that."

But most of the things, he was really bearing down on me. But after it was all over and I'd given these negative answers,

"Well," he said, "I'm going to appoint your friend Budge to Securities and Exchange Commission," which indicates he didn't bear any grudges, or I never did think so.

B: Is that kind of thing effective? Did that do any mind-changing for you?

H: Oh, sure. I don't know as I reversed my position, but, of course, when he was up here, he drove like hell! There's one other thing I hope you'll get into. You know I called him up one time, and I'd been reading a lot of stuff about his responsibility for this Vietnam War. He inherited that damned war! I've cut a tape for President Kennedy, and I've made it clear on that tape, I don't know what they've done with it, but the first combat troops were sent in there by Kennedy and McNamara. I think that President Johnson was sitting there in the back of the room at that joint leadership meeting. How many troops were in there when Kennedy was assassinated?

B: Very few, sir.

H: Well, now, it was in the thousands.

B: Just in the thousands--

H: Oh, yes, because it was either ten or fifteen thousand, that's what he announced.

B: Still, as advisors rather than combat troops--

H: Yes, now of course after '64, President Johnson did escalate the damned war, and of course, my own view is that McNamara had too

damned much influence with the President. He should have listened more to the Joint Chiefs. We'd have been out of this mess. But I don't know whether you want that sort of thing in this tape or not.

B: That's exactly the kind of thing, sir, and along that line, do you feel that the President in regard to escalating the Vietnam War and its conduct has adequately consulted with Congress?

H: Oh, I think so. Course after '64, you see I got beat for leader on account of my hookup with Goldwater, which was a helluva mistake. And so I wasn't consulted as regularly as I had been before that time.

B: But from your vantage point the consultation was adequate?

H: Yes. At that time at the White House. Matter of fact, well, I think yes, as far as I know because I know many times the boys were down there. Ev (Everett) Dirksen, I found out about it through Jerry (Gerald) Ford. They were there many times you understand and that's the way it's gotta be. I used to go down there with Truman. You don't go down there to help make the decision particularly. Generally, it's a matter of going down there to find out ahead of time what's already been decided.

B: I want to back up into Mr. Johnson's Congressional years. Now, I intend this to be flattering. There seems to be a great deal of similarity between Senate Leader Lyndon Johnson and House

Leader Charlie Halleck.

H: Well, I think that's true.

B: You're both masters of the technique, and what I am going to ask is, how does it work?

H: Well, he was a master at it, and I guess maybe I came along second-best or somewhere. But the matter of getting things done up here, it's a matter of persuasion, and frequently, of just asking very politely, and sometimes hammering on the table. And President Johnson, well, as Senate Leader, he could do that very, very well. And he did. He exercised a great influence up here. And there again--those meetings we used to have in the Board of Education, he'd come over; and there were times that he and Speaker Rayburn disagreed. I know a lot of people have thought he didn't do anything that Mr. Rayburn didn't direct or dictate. Well, that wasn't true, because he and Sam disagreed many times. And that was to be expected. But generally speaking, when a course of action was decided upon, why everybody went to bat. I mentioned that 1964 Civil Rights Act. There was a meeting that I am sure he arranged over in Speaker McCormack's office. It has never been publicized that I know of. But it was obvious that the effort for that Act had to be on a bi-partisan basis. The Democrats didn't have enough votes to do it, and we didn't have enough votes to do it. So we had to have people of like minds bearing down on it.

Well, the first Bill that was reported out was too rough. I was sure it couldn't have been enacted into law. But as I remember Nick (Nicholas) Katzenbach, who was then Assistant Attorney General, came up and sat in with---well, I was there and Bill (William M.) McCulloch, Speaker Rayburn, Carl Albert, Manny (Emanuel) Celler, Chairman of the Committee, the fellow from Chicago, Lippy (Roland V. Libonati, D. Illinois; House 1957-1964), what the heck, well, anyhow, we Republicans were insisting that it had to be toned down some. Then the question arose, well, how are we going to do that? And so I took the position that we weren't going to offer all the amendments toning it down on the Republican side and carry that burden. That probably of most of those amendments, we agreed to handle some of them. But a lot of them should come from the Democrats side and not from Southern Democrats.

And so this gentleman from Chicago whose name slips me, but Mayor (Richard) Daley (of Chicago) took him out right after that time in the primary. He was to offer the first amendment, but overnight he changed his mind and he backed out. And the whole darn thing darn near went down the drain. But it finally got squared away, and I'm sure that back of it all was Lyndon Johnson's active efforts.

Of course, a lot of things have happened since then. But at the time that was certainly heralded as a real accomplishment, and it was, when you figure public accommodations and all the other things that we had in there that were anathema to a lot of people. But it finally was accomplished.

B: What you're saying is that, if I understand it, is that Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson is also active in the House arrangements, too?

H: That's right. And actually there should be a liaison. We attempted to do that when we had going what we called the "Ev (Everett McK. Dirksen) and Charlie Show." But that was simply Ev Dirksen and me talking about what happened in a joint leadership meeting of the six Republican leaders in the Senate and the six in the House. And I'm sure that the same liaison was carried on, and certainly, when Lyndon Johnson was the Leader in the Senate.

You asked about how he gets things done. There were times when they'd ask me for something that involved a kind of a personal favor. I remember one time that Mr. Rayburn sent for me to come down to the Board of Education. When I got there, Lyndon Johnson was there. And it developed that they'd appointed Bob Bartley (Robert T. Bartley), Rayburn's nephew (Rayburn's great-nephew)

I think it was, to go on the FCC. And they said "We gotta get a quorum of the sub-committee there, " or whatever committee it was handling it, "to be sure it can be confirmed." And they put it up to me to get three guys there. And I got 'em there. (John W.) Bricker of Ohio was one of them, and they were all pretty busy people. Andy Schoeppel, I think of Nebraska [sic] (Andrew Frank Schoeppel of Kansas, Rep., Senator, 1949, until his death in January, 1962), but they were all there and Bob was confirmed. Now, a little while after that I had some sort of a darn little Bill that I had to get through the Senate. I walked over to see Lyndon and I told him what my problem was. So he said, "Well, get me a copy of the Bill." So we got a copy of the Bill, he read the Bill, took a quick look at the report-- he interrupted whatever was going on on the floor and put my Bill through for me just right now.

A guy may be hard-driving, but he can be a real helpful, gentle person, too; and I would say Lyndon was that; those are the sorts of things you never forget. I never did anyway, because it was for me a personal matter, didn't involve anything earthshaking, it didn't involve his selling out any party position or anything of that sort, but just being a good friend to somebody

that he liked. He always kidded me a lot about being a Halleck man, and I've kidded him about being a Johnson man. And as a matter of fact, well, right after he got to be President, we used to come down Upton Street, where I live out in Spring Valley, He had a house out beyond there somewhere. And they'd come down in this big retinue of motorcycles and limousines and what have you. And so one morning I was just walking out the door to get in my car to go on down, and he stopped the car and had me get in and ride down with him. And we had breakfast together down there. I well recall the reporters asked me about the breakfast. I said, "Well, we had thick bacon. That's what the President likes, and I like that too." And that stuck around; that got quite a ride.

B: I've read about that---

H: Charlie Halleck having thick bacon at the White House.

B: That was within two weeks after the assassination, I think.

H: It was real soon, I know that.

B: Do you recall what you talked about at the breakfast?

H: I don't remember. I think it was just mostly a social sort of a visit.

B: In this maneuvering, if that's the right word, in the Senate and the House, did you get the impression that, in Mr. Johnson's activities, such as the one you just described, there's any kind of calculation, or is it just a friendly gesture?

H: Oh, I would say it was just a friendly gesture. But, of course, many things---if you get things done around here as a majority leader in either the House or the Senate, you've got to do a lot of figuring, and you've got to calculate. And I don't mean by that, that you equivocate or give up any position, but it takes a lot of doing and to know what you're doing. And, of course, Lyndon Johnson was a master at knowing where the votes were. On both sides of the aisle. And of course he and Ev Dirksen, and that continues to this day, you know.

B: And Charlie Halleck.

H: Well, I'd like to believe that he's a good friend of mine as I am of his, because I'm devoted to the guy. As a matter of fact, one campaign I made a couple of speeches with these intensely partisan outfits out my way. And I took occasion to remark that Lyndon, President Johnson and I were great friends. And that I thought very much of him. Well, some of my friends said, "You can't say that, Charlie. Hell's fire, the people out here don't understand that. You're just supposed to look at one another like a couple of strange bulldogs."

So I toned the speech down, but it didn't change my attitude a damned bit, because I always felt that way about him.

B: During Mr. Johnson's years in the Senate, particularly during the Eisenhower years, you were, I know, very close to President Eisenhower. What was the relationship between Eisenhower and Johnson?

H: Very, very close. Very close, and I would say a high degree of mutual respect and admiration. Now there again, it didn't submerge any real party interest, but you know, in those years Lyndon and all the Democrat leaders would say, "Well, we'll support the President if he's right. Of course, we reserve the right to oppose him if he's wrong." Gosh, that's opening the barn door pretty wide. You could always say, "Well, he's wrong, so we're going to oppose him."

But I think particularly as I have attempted to do in my own affairs, when the security of the country was at stake, why, Lyndon Johnson could always be counted on.

B: Do you remember any specific instances of that?

H: Oh, time and again, I mean the aid programs. You see along the last there, I got a little burned up. I was having trouble with the Foreign Aid Program myself. I've always supported it, and I'd be the only Republican from Indiana that would. The darned thing out there is just anathema to most people, Democrats and Republicans. Starting with the Marshall Plan, which I put through as a leader

of the 80th Congress, the thing is a heavy load, but in the last Eisenhower year, I don't know how much Lyndon participated in it as the Leader in the Senate, but I know Mr. Rayburn told me real plain, he said:

"All right, now, Charlie, you get the votes to pass the darned thing."

Well of course obviously, we couldn't get them all on our side. And so even though that was announced, when the chips were down, why, those programs have had---they started way back with Truman when he sent for a few of us to come down there, and I think the first thing we did was maybe the Greek-Turkey aid plan, but there has been pretty much consistent support without regard to partisanship, and I would say that President Eisenhower depended tremendously on Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson for that sort of bi-partisan support. And that, in my book, and going clear back to 1947 when we started the whole thing, has paid off in respect to the security and the well-being of our own country. As Senator (Arthur) Vandenberg used to say, our own national self-interest.

B: That relationship between President Eisenhower and Mr. Johnson, was it a personal relationship, too, as well as ---

H: Oh yes, I'm sure---well, there were many times that President Johnson was down at the White House, I'm sure just by himself at President Eisenhower's request. I know from talking with

President Eisenhower many, many times, of his great personal friendship and respect for Lyndon Johnson. And he would attest to that if he were able. He has actually, I am sure, in his writings and in his public statements. He certainly did to me in private statements, when we were trying to get things done.

B: We hope very much to be able to interview Mr. Eisenhower, too, if his health---(Mr. Eisenhower had just suffered a heart attack.)

H: I would say if he gets so he could give you a little time, it would be probably a greater contribution than just about anything you could do to what you're trying to do here with this Oral History.

B: Now, sir, I know you're a believer in the Congress. What was your reaction when you heard that Lyndon Johnson had accepted the vice-presidential nomination in 1960?

H: Well, it surprised me. And I must say that I rather wondered at his giving up that powerful position that he had as Senate Leader to be Vice-President. But you know, I think there's probably starting with him, and maybe before that with Eisenhower and Dick Nixon, a growing awareness of the fact that the vice-presidency can really be quite a position. And it was that. Although as I remember it at those joint meetings that we'd have, at the White House, that Vice-President Johnson would be there, but he wasn't in it too actively.

And I've often wondered how much self-restraint that took because I know darned well there must have been a lot of things that didn't particularly suit him. But he didn't say so, he moved along. Well, there again the business of being Vice-President--- I was asked one time, at a time back before 1948 when I thought maybe I'd be Vice-President, if I'd rather be Speaker or Vice-President. Well, at the time it looked like maybe my best chance to be something was to be Vice-President, so I said, well, I'd rather be Vice-President. And of course the way it's turned out, I haven't been Vice-President, and I haven't been Speaker either. But I got pretty close to it.

It did surprise me, but there's no question in my mind but what it was a very fortunate choice. I don't think Jack Kennedy could have been elected if he hadn't had Lyndon Johnson with him.

B: During those vice-presidential years, did then Vice-President Johnson exert any influence over Congress? Could he from the vice-presidential office?

H: Well, he had many friends up here. And I don't recall in those years any specific instance of his interceding. I think that, from what I remember of it, generally speaking, President Kennedy did look to him very much for help up here. Of course, President Kennedy had himself served in the Congress. And as we all know,

in the House and in the Senate. And so he wasn't a complete neophyte up here by quite a bit. Although he never achieved that position or distinction in the Congress that Lyndon Johnson achieved.

B: Did Congress in any way resent any kind of pressure, I guess, from what was then the Administration?

H: Well, I don't think so. Let me put it this way. Every Administration pushes. They ought to. Now not to the point where they usurp legislative responsibility. And I recall during the Eisenhower years one time we were getting a little help from some of our Cabinet people, and there was quite a squawking on the floor from some of the Democratic people about the activity of these Republican Cabinet members. And with great protestation that no, the Democrats never did anything like that. Well, of course, gee whiz, that wasn't true at all, because through all my time here, I have been subjected to those pressures from downtown and I think rightly. If the Postmaster General has got something that he thinks important with respect to the Post Office, he ought to let people know up here. I don't mean by that you withhold patronage. And I don't know whether that's ever been done or not. I suppose it has been, but it certainly hasn't been any frequent occurrence, as far as I know.

B: After the assassination, in that period when Mr. Johnson was taking over the Presidency, he was working pretty closely with Congress in those days, wasn't he?

H: That's right. And I think when something like that happens, and I go back to when Roosevelt died, and Mr. Truman took over, there's a kind of a feeling of everybody, well, let's call a truce on some of this rough stuff or maybe extreme partisanship and do what we can to get this thing going again. Get re-established. Get established stability. And of course, there's a lot involved in that sort of a transition. I felt sorry for Mr. Truman, because I know I walked down that funeral train up at Hyde Park. And he motioned me to come in. And he said:

"We're going to need all the help we can get."

Well, of course, I thought he got it. As a matter of fact, the Republican aid in Congress gave him his position in history if he has one. But for our efforts, we were rewarded by being called the worst Congress in history; we won't go into that. But the same was true of President Johnson. And I couldn't help but think --- I went out to Andrews (Air Force Base, Washington) when the body was brought back, and what a terrific responsibility to recognize that the President of the United States who had been top guy is now gone and all at once here Johnson was President. But that's easier

said than done. Because he had to be considerate of other people, and particularly at a time like that. And I must say I thought he handled it magnificently. All the way through. And I can't think of any more trying sort of an experience than that.

B: To what do you attribute, I guess what amounts to a flood of legislation, in '64? Is this attitude you just described a part of it?

H: I have been asked whether or not, if Mr. Kennedy had continued as President, these things would have all transpired. My answer is no. I think when President Johnson took over he just had the fortitude and the stamina and the know-how to really get a lot of things done, and they were done. And I participated in much of that accomplishment. And was glad to do it. There were some of the things that we disagreed, as I said a moment ago, and that was understood. And he would be the first guy to understand that.

B: I was going to ask that. He respects honest disagreement and understands it?

H: That's right. I don't think he ever bore any grudge. I don't think so.

B: Does the Johnson treatment work out of the White House as it worked out of the Senate majority leader's office?

- H: I wouldn't think as well. When you're up there in that Senate majority, you're sitting right close in the driver's seat. And it's a little more difficult to operate from downtown. I would say that in spite of that, he did get a lot of things done up here that amazed a lot of people.
- B: I don't mean this to be embarrassing, but the future historian is likely to run across it and wonder, and I think you ought to be given a chance to talk about it. Your son's (Charles W. Halleck) appointment to the D.C. Court (Court of General Sessions) here caused some surprise in Washington. No reflection on your son's qualifications or anything, but from your point of view is that just appointing the best qualified man, or an act of friendship, or was it a deal?
- H: Well, there was never any deal. I will record for history that I spoke to the President, because this boy of mine is quite a guy. My only regret is that he didn't go out to Indiana and follow me here in the Congress, but he'd gone to school in the East. Now, personally I think he was eminently qualified for the job. And I think he's demonstrated that since. He may have been on occasion a little too impulsive to suit some people, but as we say, he shook up that Court down there. And it is a tough assignment,

but I would say that, well, there were other people that were trying to get the job at that time, but I think it's worthy of note that my boy was endorsed by the District of Columbia Bar Association. And I say he was, in my book, eminently qualified. He'd gone to St. Albans here in Washington, he'd gone to Williams College in Massachusetts, graduated, went into the Navy as a seaman recruit, came out as a lieutenant, had worked nights, finally got on through law school, passed the Bar exam, was Assistant D. A. for a year and a half, and then went with the Hogan and Hartson (Washington law) firm, where he was doing very well. He was a little young, I suppose, according to some people, but I don't think too young. I must say that I really appreciated what the President did for him. And I suppose it's fair to say that it was in some measure at least, a gesture of continuing friendship, but if it was, I certainly appreciate it the more and as to just how much of it was merited---I don't think the President would appoint anybody that he didn't think could do the job.

I know when --- I mentioned my friend Hamer Budge of Idaho, who was appointed to the SEC --- you see, there was a big story in the New York Times that 50 percent of the staff of the SEC was going to resign if Hamer Budge was confirmed.

Well, I remember I remarked at the time maybe that'd be a darned good thing. And there was some squawking to the President. I know that. But he stood his ground. Now, in the meantime, the New York Times a year afterwards wrote a great story praising him to the skies as one of the best, most judicial members of the SEC that they had ever observed down there. So I think the President understands the people, and of course he knew Hamer Budge too.

B: Now, sir, this gets into a knotty question, but what do you supposed happened to create the considerable unpopularity of President Johnson? Where did he lose his consensus of the people generally? If in your judgment he did.

H: I've mentioned it. Let me go back. This darned war in Vietnam is just unpopular as can be. I've supported it right down the line, I've stood with the President, and actually I was on a trip over to Vietnam here a while back and had lunch with (Henry) Cabot Lodge in the Embassy, and some State Department jerk across from me says:

"Well, the thing we're afraid of is that if the Republicans win the Presidency, they'll pull the rug out from under the war effort."

Well, actually, it wasn't the Republicans that started breaking ranks; the ranks were broken in the Democratic Party. And by a lot of people who should have known better. And I won't go over the list of names, but that's the way it is.

Now, I said that President Johnson inherited this darn war. I haven't liked the way the war has been conducted. I personally blame Mr. McNamara for that and of course, President Johnson I guess, inherited McNamara. The only regret I have is that he didn't get rid of him sooner. Now I would say that his unpopularity just stems completely and wholly from the Vietnam war. The frustration that American people feel, the continuing loss of lives. Now it just so happens that he's the President of the United States at the present time when this war is a heck of a mess. And he just caught the whirlwind, that's all, the backlash. I want to go back and make this real plain, as far as I'm personally concerned. There were less than 1,000 American people, government people, in South Vietnam when Eisenhower finished his term as President. And they were there pretty much in accord with the terms of the Geneva Agreement of '54, which we didn't sign, but I guess we've always undertaken to pretty much comply with it. There were a few

more than we were supposed to have had, but they were not there in a military sense. Now, it was late '61 or early '62 when with others I was called to the White House. And it was announced by President Kennedy, with Mr. McNamara sitting there, that we were going to send our first, I remember--- I think it was 10,000 troops. We were going to engage in Vietnam. There was a lot of talk at that meeting about what to do about Laos. And it was talk that we couldn't do much there, because it's a land-locked area. The reason I remember that very well, as though it were yesterday---and one of the things that burned me up--- Two or three months after that, you understand this was supposed to be a hush-hush secret meeting. One of the Alsops wrote quite a story to the effect that Dirksen and Halleck agreed to a disengagement in Laos and agreed to an engagement in Vietnam. Well, we didn't agree to anything. This announcement was made, and there was a little more conversation and I broke up the meeting, I think, by saying:

"Well, now, Mr. President, you've made this decision." This was President Kennedy. "You've made this decision and I stand with you. My interest in my country is ahead of everything, but it looks to me like we're getting ready to get a lot

of American boys killed, and if we are, we'd better let the American people know what's coming."

Now I don't know how many troops were in there when Mr. Kennedy was assassinated, but I'm sure it was more than the original 10 or 15,000. But we were already committed there. And then I think the question developed, are we going to see it through and try to win it, or are we going to pull out, and I think that was the decision that President Johnson had to make. Whether as Vice-President, how much he may have participated in the original determination, I don't know.

B: What was your reaction when Mr. Johnson announced that he would not run again this year in '68?

H: Well it surprised me and yet it didn't. I've spoken facetiously a time or two that if I had thought that my announcement that I was not going to run again would have persuaded the President not to run, I probably would not have done it. But I think his position in history is sound and safe. And I think I can understand the motivation. Because in a much lesser degree, I feel the same way about it. You begin to think after a bit that you've done a pretty good job and you say, "Well, why should I continue to carry these burdens?" And if you back off from the war, the

things that generally control elections or the popularity of the President are all on Mr. Johnson's side. Heck fire, the economy is going well, we've got the lowest unemployment; farm-plot prices are lousy. I remember one time we took over and, "Well, what are we going to do about a farm program?" I said, "Hell's fire, let's just pray for a drought. And that'll bring prices up." So by and large, the President has done a lot of things that were calculated to help the less privileged people, the civil rights legislation, we've talked about that, the various programs to take care of more people. I've been a little unhappy with a lot of them, but --- I didn't vote for Medicare and I didn't vote for the Poverty Program. Certainly, those were the things that to the average rank and file voter should endear him to the voting public. But in my opinion, the whole darned thing is just overshadowed. By the unpopularity of the war in Vietnam. And a growing feeling, and I happen to share this feeling that we probably, under Mr. McNamara's leadership, we violated every concept of the art of war. If you got the power, you'd better go in and use it and win. I remarked one time to some of the top military brass, I'm a member of the Armed Services Committee now, that I wished the hell we had

that Marshal (Moshe) Dayan from Israel running our war. It didn't take him very long. They had the power and they used it. And that's my one complaint about the war and I can't hold President Johnson completely blameless on that score. I realize of course that when you talk about bombing or closing the port of Haiphong, or bombing this area or that area that has been restricted so long, that there is a real concern for about how much you enlarge the war. Who else you bring in. But I pointed out one time to some State Department people in secret hearings before our Posture Committee of Armed Services that as we added more targets and really developed the thing further, why --- the Chinese are in. My own views is that the Communists, Chinese, Russia, whoever, you name it, if they want to go to war, they're going to pick the time. They ain't gonna let us pick it.

B: One last thing sir, how would you rate, as he now stands, Mr. Johnson's strengths and his weaknesses? As a man, or as a President, or however you can divide it?

H: Well, I still think he's a strong man. I've never thought anything different. I'm still his friend. I'm still a Johnson man. Of course, I'm a Republican--I wouldn't vote for him--that's understood. But my respect for him has not been in the least

diminished. Not a bit.

B: As a man who has served in five Administrations, do you care to play president-ranking?

H: Well I remember one time, I think I was asked on "Meet the Press," (television interview program), or something, how I would rate the presidents as politicians. And I said, "Well, as I go back over it," and you understand when I say politician, I'm one. It has to do with the science of government, it's the biggest business in the country. And so I don't use the word "politician" as a word of derision, but rather actually complementarily. Roosevelt, with his fireside chats, he did take over, and he did pretty good, and was a pretty good politician, and Truman was pretty fair in his way. Eisenhower wasn't worth a damn as a politician. He was a great President, but he wasn't a politician. Well, Jack Kennedy was fair, but when it comes to that heart of government that most people refer to as politics, Lyndon Johnson had 'em all beat. History will be kinder to him than the immediate judgment of a few people.

B: Sir, is there anything else?

H: I must say that I didn't appreciate some of those attacks that were launched by Democrat aspirants to the White House.

B: You mean the attacks on ---

H: Yes, on President Johnson and everything that was going on.

That's their right, I suppose, but it doesn't represent to me that degree of party position that --- and of course, I think actually they just saw that this darned war was awful unpopular and they just set out to take advantage of it, and did.

B: You feel they should have closed party ranks?

H: I think they just carried it 'way too far. That's my opinion. You know, I was in World War I a little bit. Eighteen years old, just out of high school. And I didn't know what the war was all about, but I had a kind of maybe an old-fashioned notion that when the country is in a war, there's only one thing to do and that's to win it. Now, somewhere along the line, damned if it doesn't look to me like we've lost sight of that. I know that Pearl Harbor, gee whiz, our government under Roosevelt's leadership had clamped down on Japan, stopped scrap-buying and oil, and I listened to the State Department guys before the Rules Committee say that if we did that, it would mean war overnight in the Pacific, and yet they didn't get these people alerted. And I knew all of this background, we went through that campaign in that year --- '40?

B: What are Mr. Johnson's weaknesses? How would you rate them?

H: I couldn't catalog. He's the subject of the same frailties that all of us are, I guess. Actually for me to pinpoint something that I would say was, what you refer to as a weakness, I wouldn't

undertake to do that. I don't mean to say by that he hasn't got some. As I say, we've all got faults and failures, there's no question about that, but there've been times when people, I don't know as I felt that way, felt to be pushed too hard to accomplish what he had kind of had in mind.

B: As President, and as Senator and Congressman?

H: Yes. I'll tell you--the one time when maybe I just got a little burned up. We were trying to adjourn the Congress. My wife was down in North Carolina. I had driven down there the week before and left my car and left her down there with some friends of ours, and I was going to fly down to North Carolina and go on down to Florida for Christmas with one of our youngsters. And they had a proposal up here that I described as a deal to give Khrushchev a credit card to buy wheat and stuff. And I didn't want it, and we beat 'em two or three times. But I found out since, it's one of the few times I ever really got in a kind of bitter altercation with Mr. (John W.) McCormack and Mr. (Carl) Albert. But, gosh, it was 'way late at night and the weather was terrible and it was Christmas, the day before Christmas. And I couldn't understand why in the hell the President wouldn't let us off the hook. And I exacted a promise in a little meeting that if we beat them once more, they'd quit. Well, we beat them once more and they didn't quit. And then I was to get word. And of course, John

and Carl jumped all over me on the floor. Well, I had to defend myself. I said, "It's pretty late, that you're coming in here now. That wasn't the deal we had."

And I found out since that it was just President Johnson's absolute insistence to get that damned thing through. Well, I don't think it has ever been used, but he really kept us right here until Christmas Eve. And I didn't particularly appreciate it, and I don't think the members did. I don't think that was called for. He thought it was, and they finally won. But, heck, we'd had a lot of guys go home, and they had airplanes to get them back. And we didn't have, and I think maybe one of the things we were fussing about that night was a bad snow storm and my boys were up in the air flying around trying to get down. And I wasn't going to let them vote until the next day. Much as I dislike holding over, and I think we came back at 7 o'clock, and it was still dark, the day before Christmas.

B: There are some people who say that Mr. Johnson just doesn't like to lose.

H: Well, that's right. I don't like to lose either; I don't give a dang whether it's football or whatever it is, the average guy if he's got any get up and go, he doesn't like to get beat either, and he probably has got that more than just about anybody. Now if that's a weakness,

I don't know. He's generally come out with what he wanted.

But sometimes there are a few upset people along the route.

B: Is there anything else that stands out that you'd like to have recorded?

H: I just know this. That I go down to the White House once in awhile, not as much as I used to, because I'm not Leader any more. Be no occasion to have me down there. But at the inauguration and oh, every time I'd be around the White House and President Johnson, he and his wife have always been most gracious to Mrs. Halleck and me, and friendly. I go down the receiving line there at some ceremony and he's always just as nice to me as he can be. And I have always appreciated that. And, of course, that's a side of the man that I suppose a lot of people have never experienced. But I have many, many times and it has always been a matter of great satisfaction to me.

B: Certainly appreciate it, sir.

H: Well, you're entirely welcome.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By CHARLES A. HALLECK

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I Charles A. Halleck hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.
4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed

Charles A. Halleck

Date

Sept 19, 1969

Accepted

Harry J. Winston - for

Archivist of the United States

Date

April 9, 1975

Note: See p. 2
Donor wishes to restrict
for his lifetime

Preparation of "Gift of Personal Statement"

- A. If you do not wish to impose restrictions on the use of your tape and transcript and if you do not feel the need to retain literary property rights upon the material, please sign the enclosed statement and return it to the Oral History Project.
- B. If you wish to restrict the use of your transcript for a period of time beyond the date of the opening of the Johnson Library, a new statement will be prepared (either by you or by us) deleting paragraph 2 and substituting the following, with one of the alternatives:

It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument available for research in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507 (f) (3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) this material shall not,

for a period of _____ years

or

during the donor's lifetime

or

for a period of _____ years or until the donor's
~~prior death~~

or

for a period of _____ years or until _____
years after the death of the donor, whichever occurs
earlier

or

for a period of _____ years or until _____
years after the death of the donor, whichever occurs
later

be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it.

- C. If you wish to have the restriction imposed above apply to employees of the National Archives and Records Service engaged in performing normal archival work processes, the following sentence will be added to paragraph 2:

This restriction shall apply to and include employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including the National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes.

- D. If you do not wish to have the restriction imposed above apply to employees of the National Archives and Records Service, the following sentence will be added to paragraph 2:

This restriction shall not apply to employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including the National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes.

- E. If a restriction that extends beyond your lifetime is to be imposed in paragraph 2, the following paragraph (appropriately numbered) will be completed and added to the end of the "Gift of Personal Statement":

I hereby designate _____ to have, after my death, the same authority with respect to authorizing access to the aforesaid material as I have reserved to myself in paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 above.

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The donor retains to himself for a period of _____ years all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument. After the expiration of this _____ year period, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

or

The donor retains to himself during his lifetime all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. After the death of the donor, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.