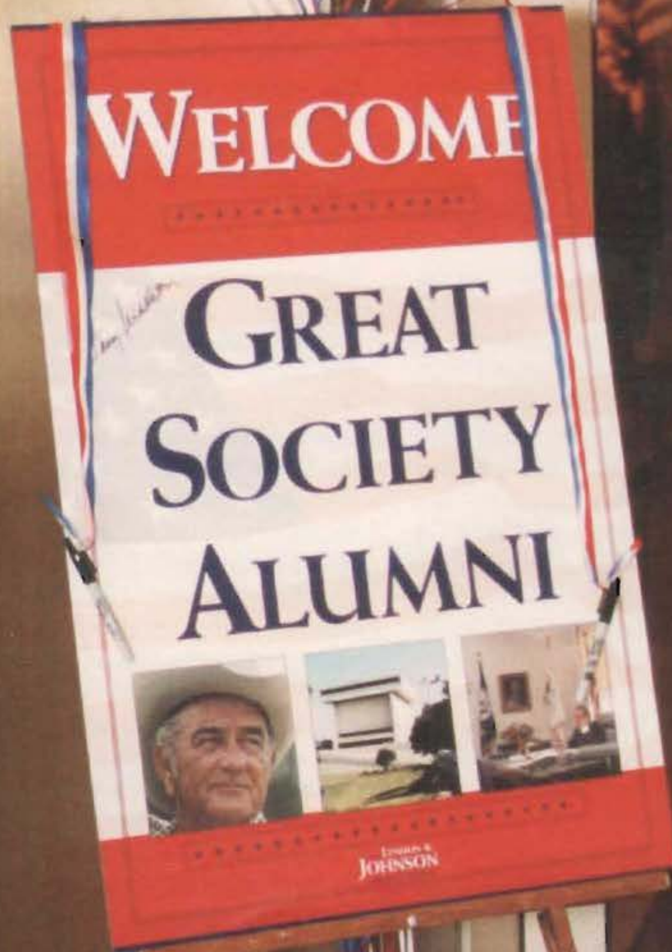
Legacy of the Sixties



A Symposium at the LBJ Library and Museum

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Sponsored by
The Lyndon Baines Johnson Libary and Museum
The Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs
The University of Texas at Austin

Legacy of the Sixties

A high point in the Library's 30-year history was reached in May, when a distinguished array of experts gathered to assess the effect on American life today of some of the major programs and impulses of the 1960s.

White House staffers and members of the White House press corps spent a nostalgic evening recalling the unique persona of Lyndon Johnson.

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. delivered the keynote address. From his perspective, the sixties display warts and beauty spots in about equal measure.

A scholarly panel dissected the multifacted counterculture of the sixties. Thirty years later, it has become part of the middle American mainstream.

Julian Bond led a session on civil rights. As gigantic as our strides in race relations have been, there is work yet to be done.

Jack Valenti was emcee at a joyous evening of sixties entertainment provided by Gregory Peck, Carol Channing, Van Cliburn, and Peter Yarrow.

Walter Cronkite was rapporteur for a panel on space, which included astronaut "Pete" Conrad. Tragically, only weeks later Conrad lost his life in a accident.

Joseph A. Califano, Jr. gave a masterful survey of the deep and lasting impact of Great Society legislation.

Four acclaimed presidential biographers strove to measure LBJ's place in history. They concluded that he is not going to go away.

Finally, how else to conclude the proceedings but with a Texas barbecue under the live oaks?

LBJ Remembered

The first event of the convocation was an evening of reminiscence by these Washington veterans. From left to right: Larry Temple; Sidney Davis; Bill Moyers; Bonnie Angelo; George Christian; Frances Lewine; Jim Jones; Hugh Sidey; Liz Carpenter. Following are excerpts from that rollicking exercise in nostalgia. (Titles are from the sixties.)

Sid Davis *(White House correspondent, Westinghouse Broadcasting Company):* In his retirement LBJ had me to lunch one day. The ***Dallas Morning News*** had published a story saying LBJ wanted to be chancellor of The University of Texas. He glared at me and asked, "Why in the hell would I want be the chancellor of The University of Texas? I've had enough problems." He paused. "But if I wanted to be the chancellor of The University of Texas, I would be the best one they ever had."

Hugh Sidney *(**Time** magazine Washington bureau chief):* This country never produced a man who understood the people, the process, the city of Washington, the organization, better. It was a thing of genius and beauty to behold, and it was filled with good humor besides. I don't know anybody in the process now that loves it as he did.

Jim Jones *(Special Assistant to President Johnson):* He had an instinctive feel for the Congress. A classic case was the Abe Fortas and Homer Thornberry nominations [to the Supreme Court]. We met every day to give him vote counts and reports. Then one day he said, "Boys, the ball game is over." We said, "Oh, no, Mr. President. We can still get it." But he knew precisely when the tide had turned, though he hadn't been on Capitol Hill. He just knew it instinctively.

Hugh Sidney: LBJ's love of the telephone was legendary. It was rumored that a phone at the Ranch was on a hundred-yard cord so that when he was down walking by the Pedernales, they could just reel it out to him like a garden hose.

George Christian *(Press Secretary to President Johnson):* I was out for a walk once when LBJ called. When my secretary told the President where I was, he answered, "Honey, you fix this thing so it rings wherever he is."

Hugh Sidney: The first time I met him, he clapped me between those big arms of his and said, "I never knew a reporter who didn't have a character flaw. What's yours?"

Bonnie Angelo *(Correspondent, **Time** magazine):* During the Manila Conference in 1966, Mrs. Johnson was getting wonderful press. The President complained to Liz Carpenter, "How come Lady Bird is getting all these good stories on the front page and I'm getting nothing but attacked on page two?"

There was a fantastic ball at the Malacañang Palace. The President danced with Imelda Marcos, and they made a striking couple, which I duly reported. My editors, in their wisdom, decided to use the verb "lumbering" to describe LBJ's movement across the dance floor. The White House dressed me down for that. He was a good dancer, and he was very, very concerned about being seen as such.

Liz Carpenter: LBJ always knew what was in the papers. Once we were traveling with Mrs. Johnson and reporters to the Big Bend, and Stewart Udall was along, making grand gestures, pointing: "Look at the mountain, Mrs. Johnson!" Mrs. Johnson was wearing a cowboy hat against the sun, and somebody took a picture of the two of them.

I called the White House early the next day and got the President because nobody else was up yet. I asked, "What's in the papers?" He said, "Well, it's good. You have a five-column picture on page one of the ***New York Times***. Lady Bird looks like the Lone Ranger, and Stewart Udall looks like Tonto."

Frances Lewine *(White House correspondent, Associated Press):* When LBJ announced that he was not going to run again, he invited all of the press around to come upstairs to the Yellow Oval Room ninety minutes after he made that broadcast. He was willing to share what must have been a very difficult, sad moment for him.

Jim Jones: One night at nine o'clock the President called me and said, "Bird is out of town. Why don't you come over to the Mansion and have dinner with me?" I said, "Mr. President, my fiancee has fixed this little meal at her apartment, and I was going to have dinner with her." He said, "Fine. I'll come too."

Larry Temple *(Special Counsel to President Johnson):* Late one day Walt Rostow said to me, "I came to the White House at seven o'clock yesterday morning, and I am going to go home and just get a shower and change clothes and have a martini with Elspeth." He left. In a little while the President asked, "Where is Walt?" I repeated what Rostow had said, and with genuine concern the President said, "Oh, poor Walt. If I had known, he could have had a martini with *me*."

George Christian: The President did have credibility problems. One of his most famous was his announcement in Korea that his great-great-granddaddy had died at the Alamo.

During the course of his speech to the troops up on the demilitarized zone, he talked about how the troops in Vietnam and the troops in Korea were defending the free world and so forth, and he got a little carried away and said, "My great-great-granddaddy died at the Alamo." I knew he didn't have a

great-great-granddaddy at the Alamo, and I hoped the press pool had no Texans in it.

I had to tell the President, "Mr. President, you said up there that your great-great-granddaddy died at the Alamo."

He said, "I did not."

I said, "I heard you say it, Mr. President."

He said, "I don't care what you heard. I didn't say that."

I said, "Mr. President, Sid Davis recorded it, and he's played it to the press, and they're making a big deal out of it."

The President said, "I don't care what Sid Davis recorded. I didn't say that."

So, unlike the defenders of the Alamo, I just surrendered.

At the end of the administration the President was going to make a speech at the National Press Club. Liz got a group together to write gags for it, and we came up with the line, "Now, about my great-great-granddaddy at the Alamo. Y'all didn't let me finish. It was the Alamo Bar and Grill in Eagle Pass, Texas."

The President changed it to read "The Alamo *Hotel* in Eagle Pass, Texas."

Larry Temple: In the press the Fortas nomination [to the Supreme Court] was treated as "cronyism," and the word "crony" just rankled the President something fierce. He didn't like that word at all. He once told George, "You go tell the press he's not any crony of mine. I think his wife is a friend of Lady Bird's but I don't even know him. If he were to walk into this room, I don't think I would recognize him."

George said, "Mr. President, I don't believe that's going to sell."

Bill Moyers: Many times he didn't mean what he told you to do. One evening he had a particularly furious scrap with McGeorge Bundy, who he thought was leaking to the ***Washington Post.*** I was in the bedroom late in the evening, and he said, "Would you mind hanging these pajamas in the bathroom and getting the others that are behind there?" and I said, "No, not at all." Then he said, "And when you've done that, would you go fire McGeorge Bundy?"

George Christian: Lyndon Johnson was a veritable tornado of a man who wanted to right every wrong, eliminate poverty and ignorance, and do it all by the day after tomorrow.

Bill Moyers: He was a man who drove like hell, cussed like a sailor, and showed the world the scar from his gall bladder operation; but here too was a man who thought poverty could be scourged, who nailed Medicare down, and who held a day-long festival of the arts, to which he invited everybody in the cultural world who hated him.

He was the most fascinating thirteen men I ever met, all rolled into one. I look back upon him as the best thing that ever happened to me, and I've had a lot of good things happen to me."

Jim Jones: President Johnson had a true reverence for public service; he believed in the good that you could do in office, which was your sole purpose for being there, and in working in a bipartisan fashion for the good of the country.

Bonnie Angelo: On the way to the airport this morning, driving by the Lyndon Johnson Memorial Grove, I looked at those tall and noble trees. And I thought, "There's a lot, other than these trees, that he left for us to admire."

"Lady Bird looks like the Lone Ranger, and Stewart Udall looks like Tonto."

Schlesinger Gives Keynote Address; Summons Memories of a Turbulent Decade

"The sixties, the sixties," Arthur Schlesinger intoned in his keynote address.

"They seem light years away now, a season of rebellion streaked with hysteria and violence, a surreal moment when the social fabric itself seemed to be unraveling, an alien intrusion in the history of a respectable nation."

Making sense of the sixties, Schlesinger said, first means coming to terms with the fifties. Though we remember the earlier decade as one smothered by a blanket of "Ozzie-and-Harriet" self satisfaction, there were beatniks and other rebels without a cause, "with their contempt for the squares of the world," and for America at large, "an old country ruled by old men."

The election of John Kennedy in 1960 signaled a seismic shift. A new generation was taking over.

The New Frontier and its successor the Great Society, with the shattering of our terrestrial bonds, and huge strides in civil rights, make up an extraordinary record of accomplishment. Yet, Schlesinger noted, "Before the decade had ended, the country appeared almost on the verge of falling apart. How could this have happened?"

Liberals blame the struggle for civil rights at home and the Vietnam War. Conservatives blame a permissive society which turned away from traditional values.

But beware of parochial explanations, warned Schlesinger, for the unrest of the sixties was a global phenomenon, far from being confined to the U.S.

What global developments were at play? First, the baby boom and the resultant separate youth culture. Social critics of the day argued "that it was up to the youth class to become the new vanguard of revolution." It was the Movement versus the Establishment. Only a minority joined the Movement, but they put their mark on the era.

Secondly, the affluence of the sixties meant that youth were free to pursue "their own thing," in the lexicon of the day.

Finally, there was the "global transmission belt" of television. The youth culture; the affluence of the age; the powerful immediacy of television; these three drove the explosion of the sixties.

Anarchical by its very nature, the Movement was splintered from the beginning. The flower children celebrated their rites in be-ins and love-ins, and generally left politics to others. Those who chose the scene of the communes unwittingly replayed "a century and a quarter before, of New Harmony and Brook Farm," with similar unsatisfactory results.

Some did yeoman work in promoting civil rights. "Nearly a thousand white students went South during "freedom summer" in 1964. . . . Nine civil rights workers were murdered that summer."

The Vietnam War became a central preoccupation for many. Students assailed their multiveristies for collaborating with the military-industrial complex.

The New Left part of the Movement denounced the entire system. "Its particular target was the methodology of liberalism: reason, compromise, free speech, uninhibited debate." There could be no dialogue with the great beast, the Establishment. Tom Hayden spoke in the tongue of the New Left when he said, "We must take to the streets. . . . It may well be that the era of organized, peaceful and orderly demonstration is coming to an end and that other methods will be needed."

Originally a peaceful and benign organization, Students for a Democratic Society was increasingly attracted to terrorism. "And so," lamented Schlesinger, "the sixties came to a dismal end."

What are the lasting legacies of that controversial decade? Lyndon Johnson's populist social legislation "enlarged the shield of social protection for the poor and powerless and did more for black Americans than any president since Lincoln."

As for the Movement, said Schlesinger, "it only marginally accelerated changes that were already under way," such as the civil rights struggle. Similarly, the Movement made a small contribution to ending the Vietnam War, but not nearly as large a contribution as did the growing opposition of the Establishment to the war. Revisions to the draft legislation, which made college students more vulnerable to service, also were more important than the militant protesters.

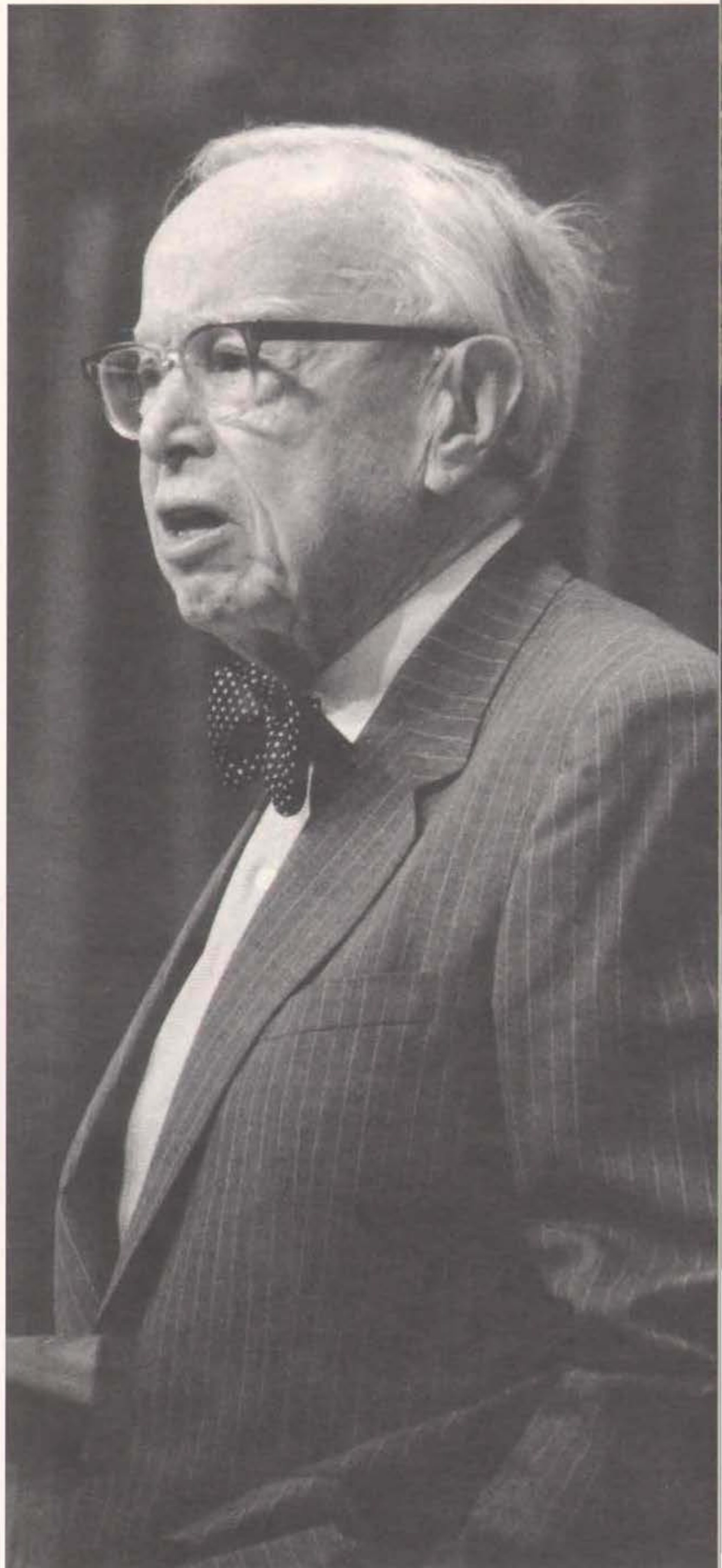
One ironic development was that "right-wingers did their best, and with great success, to conflate the New Left with liberalism and thereby turn 'liberal' into a dirty word."

"The insurgency helped bring vital issues to the top of the national agenda, not only war and race, but women's liberation, the protection of the environment, the control of nuclear weapons, the implications of a runaway technology, abortion, sexual candor, and homosexual rights."

As the baby boomers aged, the furor subsided. Schlesinger quoted Old Leftist Hal Draper: "Ten years from now most of them will be rising in the world and in income, living in the suburbs from Terra Linda to Atherton, raising two or three babies, voting Democratic and wondering what on earth they were [doing in the Movement] . . . trying to remember and failing."

Summing up the sixties, Schlesinger was not nostalgic. "It was not an especially creative decade," he judged. "What are its great novels, great plays, great operas, great paintings, great works in philosophy or economics, or even its great movies?"

"The sixties provided exciting political theater, and the decade did enlist honorable men and women in honorable causes, but the insurgency was disabled . . . by its contempt for reason and by its historical illiteracy. One must hope that the democratic movements of the future will learn from the follies and delusions of the sixties."



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Drugs, Sex, and Rock and Roll: The Counterculture of

What was the counterculture of the sixties? Where did it come from, what did it attempt to accomplish, and what happened to it in the end?

To consider these riddles, four scholars of the counterculture formed a panel moderated by Seldon Hackney, former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities: Morris Dickstein, Professor of English at the Graduate School of the City University of New York; Todd Gitlin, Fellow at the Media Studies Center at New York University; John Diggins, Professor of History at the Graduate School of the City University of New York; and Allen Matusow, Professor of History at Rice University.

Dickstein asserted, and the others agreed, that the counterculture did not magically spring up out of nowhere, but traces its roots to the late forties and fifties. Those years of Truman and Eisenhower are disdainfully viewed as a time of conformity, if not actual repression. It was the time of the man in the gray flannel suit; the corporation hack; the housewife in suburbia. Black people and the poor were invisible. Shamefully materialistic, stiflingly family-oriented, the mood was reflected in the arts. "Fiction and poetry were often more conventional than they had been before the war," asserted Dickstein.

But beneath the surface a revolution was brewing. It showed its face in painting, in the work of Jackson Pollack, and in music, with bebop and Charlie Parker replacing the big bands. And there were Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and of course Elvis.

In literature there was the contentious fiction of Norman Mailer, Salinger's ***Catcher in the Rye,*** and Kerouac's ***On the Road.*** Hollywood mirrored similar themes of smoldering discontent in films like *The Wild Ones; The Blackboard Jungle,* and *Rebel Without a Cause.*

Allen Matusow: ". . . [If] you take drugs, you can have mystical experiences and ecstasies, but you can also wind up with what Haight-Ashbury became by 1969."
John Diggins: ". . . the slogan 'make love, not war,' misled radicals and horrified conservatives, neither of whom expected that a political leader could do both and watch his ratings soar."

Sheldon Hackney: "Among the social justice movements that had their origins in the sixties, the women's movement was the one that survived in the most robust form . . . and is . . . still going."

the Sixties

And then the sixties exploded onto the scene.

Gitlin noted that culture wars, which have always been a part of American life, escalated to fever pitch after 1960. "One of the most American things about America," he said, "is the argument about what it means to be an American." The tumult of the sixties left behind "a society which is far more free and far more equal . . . than any society in the history of modern times . . . but not with respect to poverty. In that respect it is even more unequal than before."

John Diggins underscored a point from Dr. Schlesinger's keynote address: the counterculture had little impact on public policy. It did not end the Vietnam War, and it only increased the momentum of other movements already powerfully under way. But in education it has had a significant effect, and for the worse. The New Left, with its romanticization of the poor and oppressed, has strongly colored the way history is taught today: The driving notion is that America is not a success story but a squalid failure. The New Left of the sixties failed to revolutionize society. But it partly succeeded in revolutionizing how we view our past—to the detriment of the classroom.

Allen Matusow disagreed with the concept of "the Movement." There were many movements, he believes, and "their differences were more impressive than what united them." Black nationalists, feminists, the New Left, the hippies, all had agendas, a good many of them mutually exclusive in important respects.

Still there were unifying themes: drugs, sex, and rock and roll, a trinity which is still very much alive. The sexual revolution, for example, was a real revolution. What were once regarded as perversities in many cases now receive the protection of the law.

And yet, Matusow argued, the dominant culture won. Far from escaping the consumer ethic, we are working harder all the time, and consuming like never before. Our ecological conscience is based not so much on an idealistic attachment to nature as it is to a pragmatic desire not to get sick from pollutants.

Much of rock and roll has morphed into "soft rock," available on car radios and Muzak.

The mainstream has tamed and coopted the sixties rebellion. Is our society saturated with sexual themes? Yes, because sex sells jeans and Pepsi Cola.

"Well, there you have it, laughed Chairman Hackney, "complete unanimity from this panel of experts."

Todd Gitlin recalled an early ***Whole Earth*** *catalog, which proclaimed: "We are as gods; and we might as well get good at it."*
Morris Dickstein: " . . . both sides in today's culture war seem to agree that all our social conflicts go back to the sixties. . . ."

Civil Rights: The Work Not Finished

The civil rights legislation of the sixties is widely regarded as the chief jewel in the crown of President Johnson's Great Society. But what has happened in the 30 years since that landmark legislation was passed? What legacy has the civil rights movement left in its wake?

Julian Bond, chairman of the National Board of Directors of the NAACP, moderated a panel to consider these questions. Vincent Harding, Professor of Religion and Social Transformation at the University of Denver, led off by observing that the civil rights movement was part of the sixties counterculture, because of its reliance on Gandhian nonviolence, and also because it drew its leaders from decidedly nontraditional molds.

Their struggle taught us that young, nontraditional, nonviolent people can change our society, Harding told the audience. They helped move LBJ, "the white Texan president, to sing our songs and share our hope and march our marches with us," Harding added. (Although, he said with a grin, "we don't want it to go too far because that might lead some folks to want to play our saxophone solos, too.") As to the legacy of civil rights: "I saw right out here in Austin some street signs that read, 'Martin Luther King,' and 'Cesar Chavez.' Now there is a legacy."

Why do we revisit, over and over, the story of civil rights? John Maguire, President Emeritus of Claremont Graduate University, declared that it is imperative to remind young people that their "privileges and opportunities did not come without somebody suffering and sacrificing for them," and because America's race problem has not disappeared. "The work remains unfinished," as President Johnson

In December of 1972, LBJ ignored his angina, and his doctor's advice, to drive through an ice storm from the Ranch to the Library which bears his name. His purpose was to attend a symposium on civil rights and to make one more appeal for that cause. "We must overcome unequal history before we overcome unequal opportunity," he told those attending. "It's time we get down to the business of trying to stand black and white on level ground."

It was his last public appearance. He died the following month. Excerpts from this last address of his were shown to the audience at the opening of the panel.

Elaine Jones (far left): Her battle is "to fight the erosion now under way." John Maguire (immediate left): "The work remains unfinished." Karen Narasake (right): Pernicious stereotypes are hard to break.

said late in his life. A new black middle class has sprung to its feet. But in economic terms the black underclass is worse off now than in 1968.

Karen Narasake, Chairperson of the National Network Against Anti-Asian Violence, affirmed that Asian Americans are also a victimized minority, as witness the tragic experience of Japanese Americans in World War II. She cited the post-war case of one prominent Chinese scholar who spent his student days in Tennessee. He was so bewildered and traumatized by the "whites" and "blacks" segregation signs that he would not take the bus. He walked everywhere.

Immigration reform and the civil rights acts have improved the lot of Asian Americans considerably, but the stereotypes are hard to break, and examples of their pernicious effect persist.

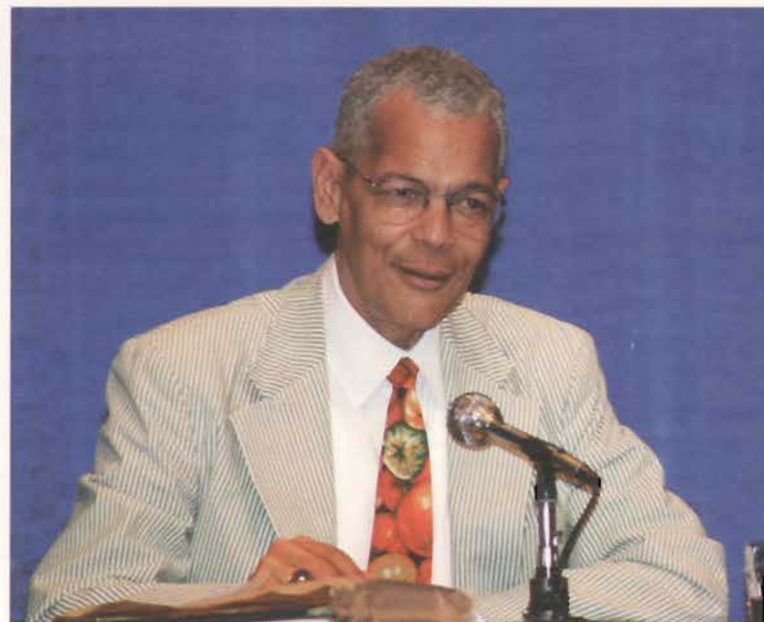
Harry Pachon, President of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, recalled how President Johnson's early experience with poor Hispanic students in South Texas was a formative experience in his life. In those days Hispanics were concentrated in a few locales—the Southwest, New York, and Florida—and there were few new immigrants among them. Today Hispanics are in every section of the nation; they are more numerous, and count many recent arrivals in their ranks. The issues confronting them are complex: How to provide equal education to children with poor English? How to get computer literacy programs into impoverished Hispanic schools? What entitlements should legal immigrants have, and what human rights do illegal immigrants have once they get here?

Elaine Jones, President of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, was in the graduating class which LBJ addressed in his Great Society speech. Since the passage of the sixties civil rights acts, Jones' great battle has been to fight what she called the erosion now under way in the legal system. Recent "color-blind" decisions handed down from the bench have eviscerated affirmative action, she declared, and she warned that there is "great danger that our judges are turning the clock back far too much, far too soon."

Vincent Harding (below): Young, nontraditional, nonviolent people can change society.

Julian Bond: ". . . even here in Austin, Texas, we remain unsure about whether and how we ought to punish crimes of hate.

Harry Pachon (left): Where do Hispanic immigrants fit into the civil rights picture?



Containment and Aid:
The Foreign Policy of Four Presidents

Digest of an Address by Elspeth Rostow.

It is perhaps the central paradox of President Johnson's term in the White House: Why did Lyndon Johnson, the consummate politician, allow himself to fall into a situation in Vietnam which historians are now prone to say wrecked his presidency?

The paradox may be resolved in part by recalling Lyndon Johnson's deep commitment to human rights, whether in the ghettos of the United States or the rice paddies of Southeast Asia. It helps also to recall that the policy of containing communist aggression dated back to 1947, when another president announced the Truman Doctrine: if asked, the United States would come to the aid of free peoples against such aggression. In his famous "Point Four" message of 1950, President Truman set out that the United States has a vested interest in the economic and social progress of all peoples. The Congress agreed, and passed the Act for International Development to further the "cooperative endeavor of all nations to exchange technical knowledge and skills and to encourage the flow of investment."

These two elements, containment and Point Four, continued as basic elements of U.S. foreign policy through the four presidencies of the sixties. LBJ stuck to Vietnam when it was politically costly because he believed he was doing the right thing and that it was imperative for the United States, in that moment of the Cold War, to stand for the principles that had animated this country for over 200 years.

Vietnam sometimes blinds us to the fact that LBJ had problems and policies in other parts of the world. In Europe he successfully coped with the growing independence of the NATO nations and the intransigence of Charles de Gaulle. Johnson encouraged the idea of regional development in many areas, but nowhere with more telling results than in the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which revolutionized the economies of so many peoples.

In Latin America the spirit of cooperation evidenced by the Punta del Este Conference has blossomed into NAFTA. The beginnings of real detente, and the SALT talks on nuclear disarmament, are found in the Johnson Administration. There are strong positive elements on many fronts in the foreign policy of LBJ.

H. H. Munro (Saki) wrote in 1912, "The trouble with the Balkans is that they produce more history than can be consumed locally." The sixties produced more history than could be consumed by any country. But the U.S. made a valiant effort to play with the cards that were dealt, did it with a belief in human possibility, and in the need for our leadership and action, and in a deep conviction that the United States was possibly the best answer to the organization of individuals that has yet been attained—imperfect, unfinished? Absolutely.

The United States, in a way, has its confirmation in the ending of the Cold War. Who would have believed that the Cold War could end with a whimper, not a bang? Who could have believed that the triumph of liberal democracy over the alternative could have been developed so successfully?

The dog didn't bark in the night. The war didn't come. This was, perhaps, the greatest legacy of the 1960s.

Elspeth Rostow: President Johnson's foreign policy addressed far more than Vietnam alone.

Echoes from the Past: An Evening of Sixties Entertainment

Jack Valenti emceed the proceedings as four headline performers provided a Thursday evening of sixties entertainment.

Reading a passage from Harper Lee's classic novel ***To Kill a Mockingbird,*** Gregory Peck powerfully echoed his Oscar-winning performance as Atticus Finch.

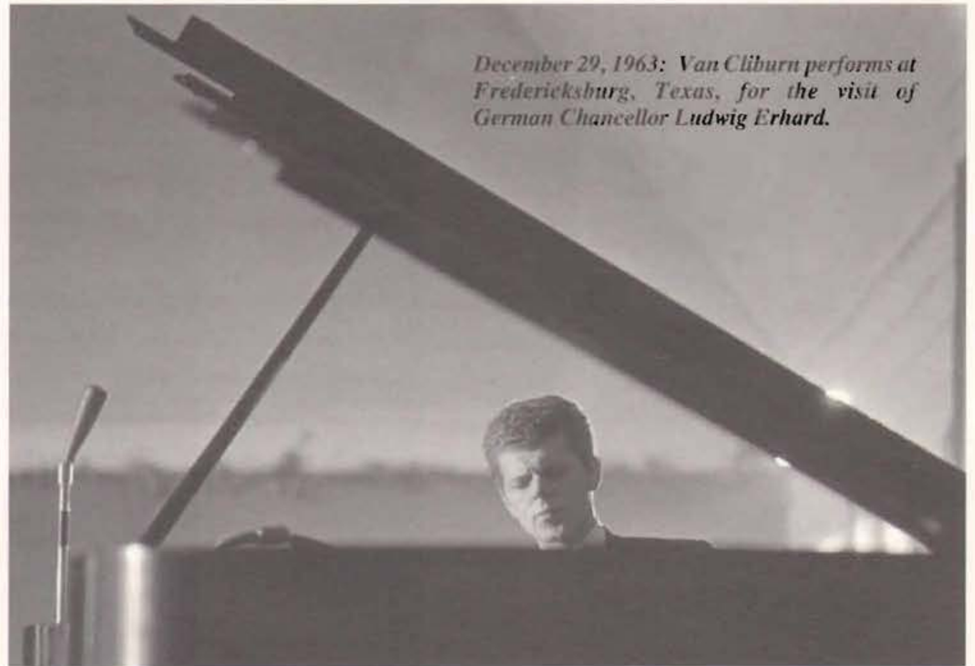
Carol Channing delivered a delightful and inimitable takeoff on her title role in the Broadway hit "Hello, Dolly."

Van Cliburn, the first American to win the International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow, rendered two beautiful classical selections, including Schumann's "Dedication."

Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul and Mary) put the final and definitive sixties stamp on the proceedings when he led the audience of two thousand in a thundering singalong of "Puff, the Magic Dragon." The City of Austin's Palmer Auditorium had never heard anything quite like it.

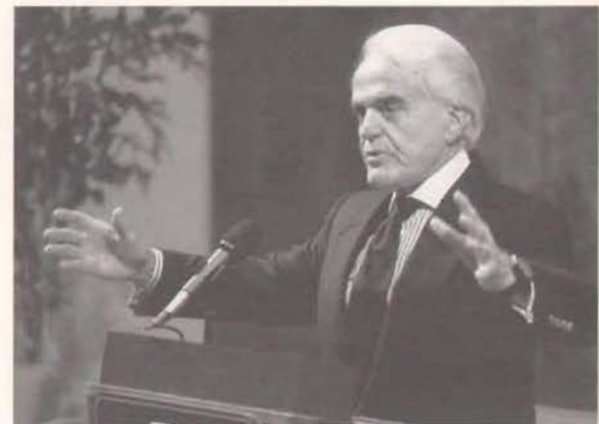
No pictures were allowed during the performances that night, so photos from the past of Cliburn and Yarrow are reproduced here instead. But all were as good as ever.

Mrs. Johnson greets old friends Gregory and Veronique Peck.



December 29, 1963: Van Cliburn performs at Fredericksburg, Texas, for the visit of German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard.

In the First Lady's Gallery exhibit, Carol Channing points to the headdress she made famous in "Hello, Dolly."



*Emcee **Jack Valenti** (above), president of the Motion Picture Association and one-time LBJ aide, and a formidable entertainer in his own right, warmed up the crowd.*

***Peter Yarrow** (far left) performs at the White House for a State Dinner honoring United Nations Secretary General U Thant, August 8, 1964.*

"One Giant Leap for Mankind. . . ." Space: The Great

Jim Hartz, well-known science journalist, opened the panel on space by pointing out a decided irony. The two episodes most identified in the public mind with the space program are, first, John F. Kennedy's announcement that we commit the nation to a landing on the moon; and second, the landing itself by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, which took place in the Nixon Administration. Sandwiched between Kennedy's remark and the flight of Armstrong and Aldrin was the LBJ Administration, where nearly all of the actual work went on. "Well," said Hartz, drawing a laugh, "as they say in show business, timing is everything."

Helping to interpret the space program and its lasting impact were NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin; former astronaut "Pete" Conrad; Gerry Griffin, NASA Flight Director for all the manned moon missions; Kathy Sawyer, science writer for the ***Washington Post,*** and John N. Wilford, science correspondent for the ***New York Times.*** (Tragically, astronaut Conrad died in a motorcycle accident not long after the symposium.)

Administrator Goldin recalled Senator Johnson's strong reaction to Sputnik, which led him to call for the creation of NASA. Later, Vice President Johnson's characteristic reply to those who opposed the space program because of its cost was, "Now, would you rather have us be a second-rate nation or should we spend a little money?" LBJ, said Goldin, "was the brains, the muscle, and the heart and the soul behind it all."

The spin-offs from the space program are staggering in their scope: Noninvasive and "virtual" long-distance surgery; accelerated intercontinental travel; greatly enhanced national security; the whole system of communications satellites. Hundreds of innovations affecting everyday life are already in place and more are coming. Conrad remarked that the capacity of the four IBM computers in the old mission control can now fit into a single desktop machine. Plans now afoot for a colony of intelligent robots on Mars, followed by human habitants, flow directly from the accomplishments of the sixties.

NASA's saga has not been without mishap, and even mortal disaster. But there were lighter moments. In the early years, recalled reporter Wilford, test rockets had a habit of blowing up on the pad. One headline story in a British journal stated: "Cape Canaveral: A jealous husband shot and killed his waitress wife last night. It was the only successful shot here in weeks."

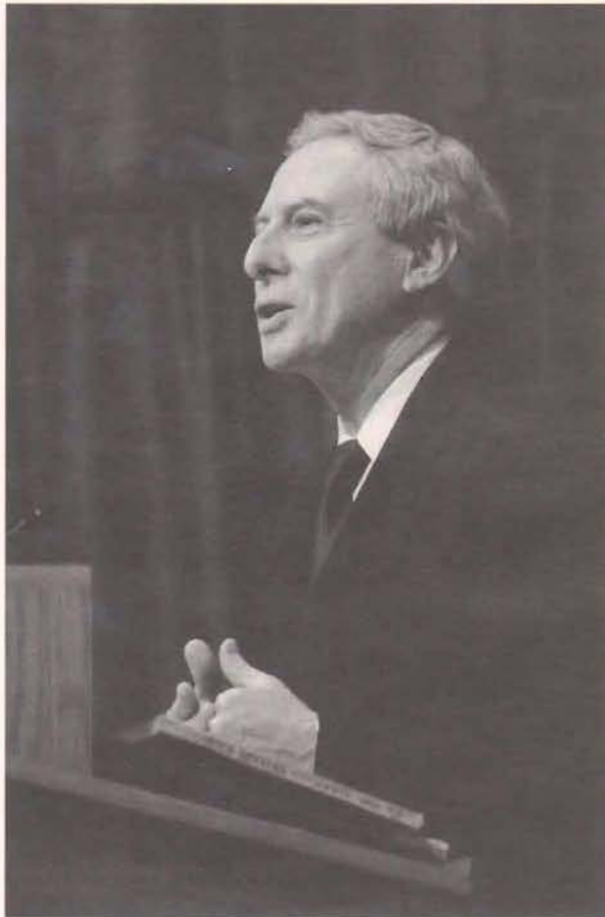
The space program was about more than simply making the trip, and the resultant spinoffs, mused Sawyer. Mainly it was about beating the Russians to the moon. It was that competition that fired the national imagination and got the public behind the venture.

The days of the glorious Apollo missions, of quick gratification, are over now. Today the watchword has to be patience, patience, patience, and the public and the Congress are not patient. Progress has slowed, both because the next steps are so difficult and because the national will to beat the Russians, so important in the past, is no longer there. But the Mars program is in place. Planning goes on. The development of hardware continues. We still look to the stars.

Gerry Griffin: ". . . we were very aware of the Russians, and . . . we wanted to beat them, and we kept that in mind thoughout."

John Wilford: ". . . now we look back and say, 'Oh, going to the moon . . . was inevitable.' But it wasn't."

Adventure



Dan Goldin: "NASA has an ambitious agenda . . . [it follows] the example Lyndon Johnson set. It was never meant to think small."

Jim Hartz: Lyndon Johnson, "more than any other national leader, ensured the success of the U.S. space program."

Charles "Pete" Conrad: ". . . there was a great deal of thought amongst the doctors that we humans weren't going to do well in space." Kathy Sawyer: "The watchword for space aficionados today has to be patience, patience, patience."

Walter Cronkite (below) put it in perspective: "Through all the turmoil of the sixties, all of the wrenching of the American psyche, our morale was constantly getting these booster shots from Cape Canaveral. Five hundred years from now, what's the date that kids are going to remember? Not 1492. July 20, 1969, the day man escaped his earthly environment and landed on a distant orb."

The Great Society 30 Years Later: "The Ship Sails On."

Joe Califano brought the crowd in the LBJ auditorium to its feet with a sweeping address declaring that the time has come for history to recognize that President Johnson's Great Society, long dismissed as a failure by its opponents, is instead an enduring success. Johnson, Califano said, "set the federal government on a course that it continues to steer to this day despite the conservative, even reactionary, waves that have washed over its bow. . . .

"It is time now for history to recognize that no president ever cared more, tried harder, or helped more needy Americans. Johnson's greatest quality was one not often mentioned: his courage. His means were often Machiavellian, but he was a true believer. . . . Lyndon Johnson didn't just talk the talk, he walked the walk."

To support his claim, Califano offered an impressive array of evidence, based on an extensive research effort, showing the effect programs enacted in the 1960s continue to have on American life today. Excerpts:

—EDUCATION. Since 1965 the federal government has provided more than $120 billion for grade and high schools and more than a quarter of a trillion dollars in 86 million college loans to 29 million students. Today, nearly 60% of full time undergraduate students receive federal financial aid under Great Society programs.

—HEAD START. More than 16 million pre-schoolers have been through Head Start programs in just about every city and county in the nation. Today the program serves 80,000 children a year.

—HEALTH CARE. Since 1965, 79 million Americans have signed up for Medicare, and since 1966, Medicaid has served more than 200 million needy citizens. The 1968 Heart, Cancer and Stroke legislation has created centers of medical excellence in every major city.

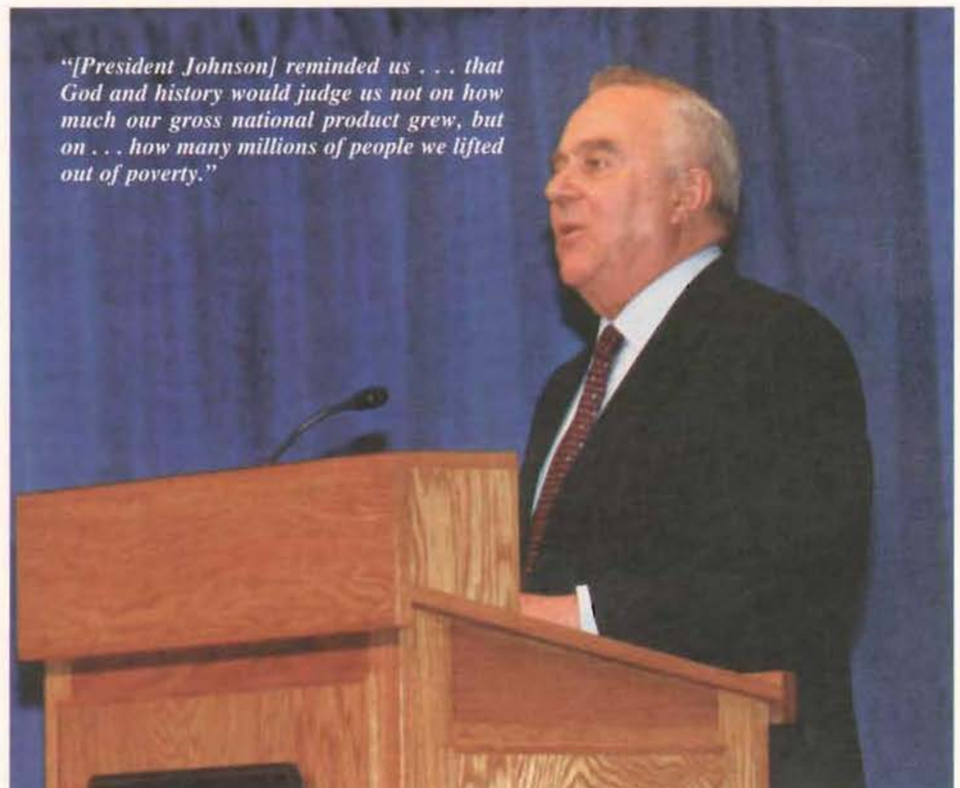
—CULTURE. The National Endowment for the Arts has given birth to more than 420 playhouses, 120 opera companies, 400 dance companies and 230 professional orchestras in all 50 states.

—RECREATION. Americans today are enjoying the 35 national parks and the 800 scenic areas created during his administration.

—THE WAR ON POVERTY. Of this much-maligned target, eleven of its twelve programs are "alive, well and funded at an annual rate exceeding $10 billion," having grown by almost 1,000% since their inception in 1965 at the urging of every president since then, "despite the political rhetoric" attacking them.

—CIVIL RIGHTS. Legal segregation is a distant, if ugly, memory. Black participation in the political process is increasing significantly, as LBJ had foreseen when he proposed the Voting Rights Act of 1965: "In 1964 there were 79 black elected officials in the entire nation. By 1998, there were some 9,000 across the country, including 6,000 in the south." Great Society programs have also increased black life expectancy (from 63.6 years in 1960 to 71.2 years in 1997) and seen a dramatic increase in the education of black youth (from 20% high school and 3% college completion in 1960 to 75% high school and 13% college in 1997). Perhaps equally important if less easy to document: those programs "have been a critical element in creating a substantial black middle class, an affluent black society, in a single generation."

"The waves of [LBJ's] critics may crash against the bow of his efforts and his record," Califano declared. "But the record is there. The ship—his ship, our ship—sails on."



"[President Johnson] reminded us . . . that God and history would judge us not on how much our gross national product grew, but on . . . how many millions of people we lifted out of poverty."

LBJ's Place in History: An Assessment

The symposium concluded with a panel of four historians—Doris Kearns Goodwin, Michael Beschloss, Robert Dallek and Haynes Johnson—who have written about Lyndon Johnson and his presidency. Now, assessing it, and him, three decades after he left office, they endorsed Califano's judgment. "The record of [LBJ's] revolution is solidly in place; it won't go away," Haynes Johnson said. Doris Kearns Goodwin agreed: "We can clearly see now from the advantage of three decades since, when we took so much social progress for granted, that his gigantic accomplishments in civil rights will never be forgotten by history. Indeed, the accomplishments of the entire Great Society loom larger and larger and larger the more time goes by." "Just look at what still remains in place," said Dallek. "Civil Rights, Voting Rights, federal aid to education, clean air, clean water, Medicare, Medicaid, major reform of immigration, the Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, safety regulations, safe tires, safe roads, safe mines, consumer protection, the National Endowment of the Arts and Humanities, the Freedom of Information Act, food stamps, Head Start, National Public Radio and Television, Urban Renewal — these are all part of his record and they all affect our lives today."

Did Johnson do it all himself, Moderator Harry McPherson asked, or were the Great Society measures "part of a liberal agenda" that had been long pending? Johnson was a president who "knew the Congress like the back of his hand," Haynes Johnson acknowledged. "The conditions were right for seizing the opportunity . . . and, happily, the man in the White House understood it and wanted to do something; [moreover], he had an agenda of his own that he cared deeply about. He seized that moment and he pushed through." "I think it's probably true," Goodwin said, "that most periods of substantial social change in the country come in part from impulses that are coming up from society toward the government. The growing movements that were there [civil rights, women's and environmental] were critical to the possibilities that Lyndon Johnson had. But what the president has to do is to harness that energy and to make things happen. And the timing and the way in which [Johnson] harnessed that energy should never be taken for granted."

Inevitably, the discussion turned to what McPherson called "the obvious big elephant of a question, Vietnam." Were the President and his advisers "wrong to believe that there was no political way out of the Vietnam war?" he asked. And "if they were wrong, what might Johnson have done [that] would present us with a different historical picture tonight?"

Dallek believed there were "two fundamental errors." The first was "the failure to try to create a proper consensus for the war. . . . When the President decided to send ground troops in, in July of 1965, he should have prepared the country more directly." The "second error": not getting out in 1967 after the elections that year "established constitutional democracy in South Vietnam."

Kearns agreed that 1965 was the "critical moment" for trying to forge a consensus, but "I would guess that what was on his mind was that if he could somehow not force the country to face the war straight, he would still have the leeway for his beloved Great Society. [He knew] that World War II had ended a part of the New Deal, and the Great Society was so deep within

Doris Kearns Goodwin: "Lyndon Johnson . . . is . . . an unforgettable figure full of enormous passion, full of desire to make life better for every American . . . using his unbridled energy, his wit and his humor to do everything he could for the people he loved."

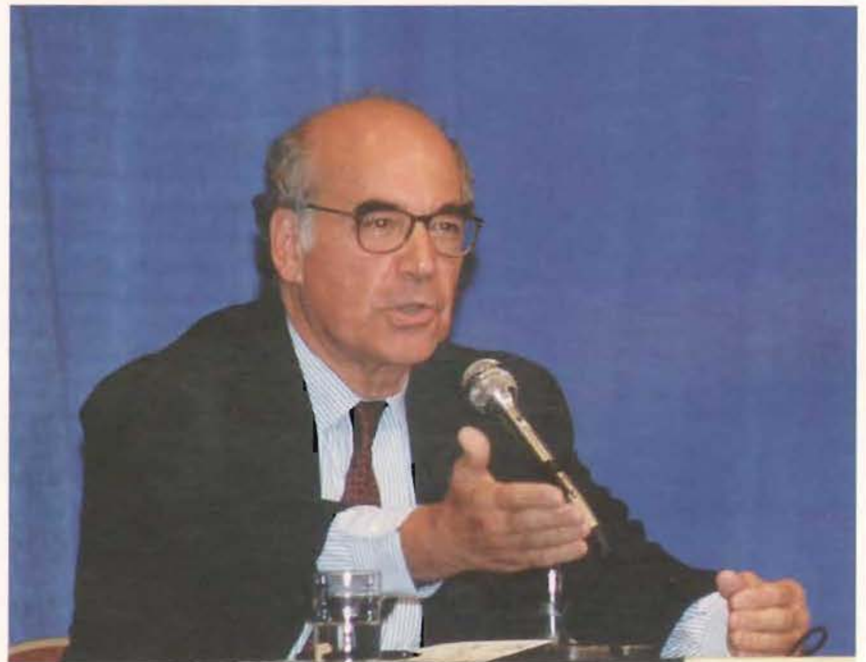
LBJ's Place in History (cont.)

Michael Beschloss: "[Where civil rights and poverty are concerned,] Lyndon Johnson . . . leaves you in no doubt that this was someone for whom these were not just intellectual issues . . . this was someone who felt these things in the pit of his stomach and was willing to take risks . . . to get these things through Congress. . . ."

his heart, he thought he could have them both as long as he kept the war in the back corner. It turned out to be a fatal mistake, because in some ways he lost a part of the Great Society as a result. . . ." As to why he could not have pulled out in 1967: "I think the one thing none of us can ever understand is what it must be like for a president to assume the responsibility for the people who've already died and to make those lives worthwhile." He could not "persuade himself that that solution [was] good enough."

Vietnam is the "question that still haunts our times," Haynes Johnson submitted, "and we'll probably never be able to answer it entirely," but "we do know that there was miscalculation on both sides" and something "even more tragic: the naïveté or the hubris or the arrogance of Americans at that time [believing] we can do anything, we're history's winners."

The "obvious big elephant" did not dominate the panel's discussion. Indeed, Vietnam seemed to be losing some of its ability to affect President' Johnson's reputation. When McPherson posed the question of how "our successors, in another 30 years sitting here discussing him, would regard LBJ," both Goodwin and Dallek maintained that it is already possible for historians to assess him shorn of the controversy spawned by Vietnam. Goodwin quoted a recent article by her husband, Richard Goodwin, contending that "as the passions of the war have subsided over time, we can now see that Lyndon Johnson did more for the cause of civil rights than John Kennedy, than Franklin Roosevelt, more than any president since Abraham Lincoln, that he was the firmest ally the black man has ever had in the White House." Dallek agreed: "I think the Vietnam War is



Haynes Johnson: "Lyndon Johnson, with all of the force and power . . . of his intimidating personality and energy beyond measure, couldn't have done it without Lady Bird."

Robert Dallek: "He wanted to bring the South into the mainstream of the country's political and economic life, and he understood that the first thing that had to happen was that the South had to overcome segregation."

fading now in importance in terms of evaluating and seeing the Johnson presidency. And as a consequence, his stock has been rising. There is more of an inclination to see him as an effective president, which of course he was, and a strong leader."

Said Beschloss: "Lyndon Johnson's reputation today is much larger than it was five years ago. And I would predict that that's a trend that we will see continuing."

Along with the passage of time, the panel members considered LBJ's taped telephone conversations, which the Library has recently been releasing, to be a decided factor in the upturn of his reputation. Through "these incredible tapes," Goodwin said, history is seeing a Johnson "the country never knew. . .an unforgettable figure full of desire to make life better, using his unbridled energy, his wit and his humor to do everything he could for the people he loved."

Beschloss, who spent years reviewing and annotating the tapes of the President's first nine months in office and compiling them in his book, ***Taking Charge,*** said: "Listening to Lyndon Johnson on issues like civil rights and poverty leaves you in no doubt that this was someone for whom these were not just intellectual issues. This was someone who felt these things in the pit of his stomach and was willing to take monumental risks to get them [enacted]. What you get is a president with very deep commitment, which is one of the tests that historians use to measure presidents."

"I think there's one thing we can confidently say about him," Dallek offered in summation. "He's not going to be forgotten. Lyndon Johnson will be remembered."

Harry McPherson: "Lyndon Johnson was anything but naïve or unsophisticated about what he was heading into [in Vietnam]."

The Grand Finale:
A Pedernales Barbeque: May 15, 1999

The symposium was over, but the final event of the four-day affair was a reunion at the LBJ Ranch on Saturday afternoon. The occasion was a barbecue for the "alumni" hosted by Lady Bird Johnson. Almost six hundred people gathered on the banks of the Pedernales for "One More Hurrah."

In a great tent on the riverfront, Bill Moyers emceed the finale. "President Johnson has been well and thoughtfully remembered in the symposium," he said, "remembered as an historical figure. Now, in the final minutes of our time together, let's remember him as we knew him—those of us who served him—the colorful, complicated man who for a time dominated our lives as he dominated the history we shared with him."

Moyers played excerpts from LBJ's speeches and telephone conversations to bring to life the man as a "domineering," "arm-twisting," "wheeler-dealer:"

—When Senator Richard Russell declined to serve on the Warren Commission. LBJ retorted, "You're my man on that commission! And you're gon' do it! I can't arrest you, and I'm not going to put the FBI on you, but you're goddamned sure gonna serve, I'll tell you that."

—Senator Abe Ribicoff was worried about "losing face" if he supported the President on a certain bill. "Your face is just fine," LBJ cajoled. "I'll see to that. You save my face and I'll save yours."

—Senator Dirksen called the President to ask for presidential favor. LBJ granted it, and promptly called in the debt: "Now don't you kill my goddamned tax bill tomorrow. Quit messin' around in my smokehouse!"

There were memories of LBJ the storyteller, as well. A favorite tale of his was one in which the town drunk approached the county judge on the steps of the courthouse, and asked for a nickel to buy a cup of coffee. The judge was a stern man. "Hell, no," he said. The drunk disconsolately began to shuffle away, and at this sad sight the magistrate relented. "Here," he called the derelict back, "here's a quarter for a pick-me-up." The drunk brightened, accepted the coin and said knowingly, "Judge, you've been there, haven't you?"

"These are the kinds of stories we delight in recalling," Moyers said. "But they are not the glue that binds us to the memory of LBJ. At the heart of our experience, we remember him—and even after the passage of so many years, feel the ties that bound us to him—because of what he wanted for America, and why we believed in him."

In summary, Moyers quoted LBJ's own words: "I want to be remembered as one who spent his whole life trying to get more people more to eat and more to wear, to live longer, to have medicine and have medical attention, nursing hospitals, and doctors' care when they need it, and to have their children have a chance to go to school and carry out what the Declaration of Independence says, 'All men are created equal.'"

Mrs. Johnson enjoys a visit with former members of her Secret Service detail. From the left: Warren "Woody" Taylor, Mrs. Johnson, Jerry McKinney, Jerry Kivett.

Beneath the live oaks in the front yard of the LBJ Ranch.

Former National Security Adviser Walt Rostow and one-time Secretary of Commerce "Sandy" Trowbridge share a moment.

From the Mailbag: Reflections on the Symposium

The symposium brought the greatest volume of mail containing the richest accolades in the Library's 30-year history.

"It would be hard to see how [it] could have been improved upon," **Harry McPherson** wrote. Actually, there was some complaint that the panelists in the Counter-Culture session were all white men. But for the most part, the mail carried a general agreement with the assessment of **Sherman Mazel:** "It was one of the best symposia I have ever attended. Since, as a former professor, I have attended hundreds, this is not idle praise."

The letter paid tribute both to what **Dan Holt** called its "historic significance" and its content. "The speakers and format were outstanding," **Gerald Richman** said, and **Joe Allbritton** thought the participants were the most talented group of people "I've ever seen accumulated."

President Johnson dominated much of the correspondence, as he had the conference itself. "One cannot look back upon the 60s without serious consideration of LBJ," **Dr. Daniel Lindberg** wrote. "Even so, I was amazed to have the chance to hear formal reviews of the range of his legislative and social accomplishments." "It was wonderful to be reminded of the incredible amount of ground-breaking programs he brought about," said **Bonnie Angelo.** And **Arthur Schlesinger,** moved by Lady Bird's message of thanks for his keynote address, wrote to her: "I have no doubt that future administrations will [return] to LBJ's grand themes and purposes." "Once again," said **Christy Carpenter,** "I was reminded of the high caliber of talent and vision LBJ attracted to his administration."

For many, the review of what **Helen Voss** called the "awesome legacy of the 60s" had an emotional pull. **Sherwin Markman** spoke of the "almost unbearably evocative contribution to the accelerating appreciation of LBJ." From **Marcia Maddox:** "It was grand to be able to look back, 30 years afterward, and to begin to understand the impact and lasting consequence of our great adventure. It was enormously rewarding to be told, now, that 'the ship sails on'." **Charles Haar** said "it revived the can-do, or, rather, the must-do spirit of LBJ." Wrote **John Crooker,** "We have told our children and now will be telling our grandchildren how greatly the nation was changed for the better. . . . The gratitude felt by those of us privileged to serve during those years is endless."

Inevitably, discussion of LBJ summoned not only the programs and policies of his time, but the endlessly intriguing character brought to life in the reminiscences and recollections of the staff members and reporters who launched the symposium on the first night. "I remain fascinated by the number of LBJ stories that continue being told," said **Sid Davis,** himself one of the storytellers. "Certainly no President of the modern era," wrote **Clark Tyler,** "could inspire the litany of stories and reminiscences that so captured the essence of LBJ." "I have found myself virtually speechless each night," **James Coney** reported, "just reflecting upon and replaying in my mind the wonderful anecdotes, memories and opinions shared by all the panelists."

The capstone of the four-day event—a "grand finale to end all grand finales," in **Marjorie Wicklein's** words—was the reunion of Great Society "alumni" at the LBJ Ranch. Lady Bird's one request was that the reunion be inclusive, and mail came from members of just about every department of the government, from the White House secretaries and telephone operators, Secret Service agents, military and social aides, cabinet secretaries, advance men and the plumber who was delighted to discover that "the President finally got the shower he wanted." Wives and children of departed alumni were there, too, as was another notable group: "I want to send a special word of thanks," **John Reilly** wrote, "for including the Humphrey staff in this event."

Almost 600 people gathered on the banks of the Pedernales that afternoon. "It was like being in a Preston Sturges film made in heaven," **McPherson** said in his letter, "with almost all of the characters from Act II of one's life strolling by in the hot May sun." "Love was everywhere," according to **Haywood Smith.** The reason, **Ervin Duggan** suggested, was the "rare phenomenon" of the Johnson "extended family, which, to use a phrase of Robert Frost's, 'has made all the difference.'" **Fran Lewine** summed it up this way: "I believe we all had a magical connection and felt that those wonderful years we all shared will never be equaled."