

INTERVIEW WITH

Charles Halleck

by

Thomas Soapes

on

April 26, 1977

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

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Charles A. Halleck
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This interview is being conducted with Mr. Charles Halleck at his home in Rensselaer, Indiana on April 26, 1977. The interviewer is Dr. Thomas Soapes of the Eisenhower Library. Present for the interview are Mr. Halleck and Dr. Soapes.

DR. SOAPES: Eisenhower is elected in '52; he comes into the White House in '53; the Republicans have a very narrow control of the Congress at that point. How would you assess the state of the Republican party in 1953 when Eisenhower comes into the White House?



MR. HALLECK: Well of course he carried Indiana by about, I don't know, a big majority, three hundred thousand. But by and large as was indicated by the fact that in the Congress, both the House and the Senate, we hadn't done very well. The Republican party clearly was in the minority across the country. It was too bad that we didn't have more of a majority, although I think that by and large if you consider the work of the coalition which was an anathema to the liberals and the wild-eyed radicals, we were able to pretty much do what we wanted to do. I was called one of the chief architects of the coalition, which as I say was either good or bad according to the spot from which you were looking at it. My own view is that not only in '53 and thereafter, but long before that, that coalition of southern Democrats, with some exceptions, and a few northern Democrats on occasion kept this country from going over the precipice. I've made no apologies for it, although the Drew Pearsons would ride me from hell to breakfast about the operation. But we knew what we were doing all the time. On the Republican side we had the good whip check, and on the Democrat side with Judge [Howard] Smith of Virginia and Bill [William M.] Colmer of Mississippi, Graham ^{Barden}~~Barton~~ of North Carolina, some of the Texas boys, we had a headcount; we could pretty well call it. And the President, of course, was giving

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us a lot of leadership and doing it in a way that wasn't too offensive to the southern Democrats or whatever Democrats there that would like to go along on the various programs.

SOAPES: Leadership in what way?

HALLECK: Well, of course we went down to the White House. We started the Tuesday morning leadership meeting, and those were very informative. And as Republican leaders in the Congress, we had a full opportunity to speak our piece. I always spoke mine, and I think sometimes to the aggravation of some people. I didn't always win, but after I'd had my say I'm sure the President understood that I'd do the best I could to put his program through.

SOAPES: Talking about the coalition, are you saying that this coalition of southern Democrats and Republicans was essentially carrying out Republican party principles?



HALLECK: Right. In other words, I was a candidate for speaker three times. Now we just didn't have the votes on the Republican side in my time. Key Democrats, when it came to the issues on the floor that were really vital, why they were voting with me. But when the time came to elect a speaker, why they were Democrats and often they'd tell me, you know, after some particular rough battle on the floor, "By God, Charlie, now the next time we'll support you for speaker," but that just never happened.

SOAPES: They were Democrats for organizational purposes only.

HALLECK: That's right. And we had some Republicans that were

Republicans for organizational purposes only. We had one man from California, I'd raised--I don't want this to be about myself, it's about Eisenhower--but before he came on the scene I had raised quite a bit of money in Tennessee and Harry Carmel of Chattanooga was an active man, but I used the money and they said don't worry about Tennessee at that time. Spend it where you can get some people. Well one guy from California, been there a long time, came to me and he wanted a thousand dollars--I was chairman of the congressional committee. And he said, "Charlie, what's the most important vote any man can cast around here?" I thought a little bit and then I knew damned well what he had in mind. I said, "Well, I suppose for Speaker." He says, "I'll vote for the Republicans for Speaker." That's about the only time he ever did. But, as I say, the operation was pretty effective.

SOAPES: In his memoirs, Eisenhower claims that these leadership meetings that you mentioned were the most effective of all the administration liaison efforts with the Congress. Do you agree with that judgment?

HALLECK: Most in respect to what?

SOAPES: In terms of--

HALLECK: In comparison with others.

SOAPES: Yes.

HALLECK: Well I think they were very effective. I think one of the first blowups we had, Bob Taft was alive then and of course he had



been pretty hot after the Presidency himself. And, of course, incidentally, these damned fools out here in Indiana wouldn't let me be a delegate that year.

SOAPES: That's right.



HALLECK: I could have beaten the hell out of them on the convention floor, but that would have been pretty disruptive. But the end result of it was that our state chairman--and I since have persuaded Eisenhower to take him for a federal judge and I guess he probably never did forgive me for that. But anyhow, they didn't want me to be a delegate because I wouldn't sign in blood for Bob Taft, because I wouldn't sign in blood for anybody. They figured with the background I had, going with Willkie and Dewey, that I was not a dependable guy. Well I'd have been committed to vote for him, Bob Taft, the first ballot because under our primary system that would have been the situation. But to get to the matter of the meetings there at the White House, Ev Dirksen had taken over in the Senate, and you know he was just a walking encyclopedia. Kind of a droll guy, but very effective. And, of course, when he had those press conferences in front of the White House, that's a pretty important place and I'd say a heck of a good place to announce what went on. And, of course, it was at Eisenhower's insistence that we carried on with those that came to be known as the "Ev and Charlie Show." He expressed himself several times as saying, "You got to keep it going." I didn't know whether we could keep it going. I was afraid we'd be ignored.

But instead of that, I think a lot of the smart-assed reporters that kept trying to ridicule us, and the more they pulled off that ridicule why the stouter we seemed to get. And as we went along, it was a very effective operation. We still had our leadership meetings, and we had diverse people and we had diverse opinions and ideological beliefs, like a Tommy [Thomas H.] Kuchel of California, a Barry Goldwater or Lev Saltonstall from Massachusetts. It was a good cross-section.

SOAPES: You felt everybody spoke their mind freely?

HALLECK: That's right.



SOAPES: Was the President educable on issues and political processes?

HALLECK: Yes. He made some mistakes in my book, according to what I believe. And I think maybe I've been proved right since, but he was willing to listen. I mentioned one of those early meetings when I think George Humphrey was Secretary of the Treasury and Bob Taft--the budget was announced as maybe eighty or ninety billion dollars--and Taft just hit the ceiling. He just raised unshirted hell. And George Humphrey finally got him quieted down a little. But by and large the meetings were very amicable and I think effective. And as far as the President was concerned, he was ready and willing at all times to listen to whatever advice anybody had to offer. And then he felt free to make up his own mind and did.

SOAPES: You mentioned that he made some mistakes in your book. Would you give me an illustration?

HALLECK: Yes. One, now you understand that I am devoted, was devoted to President Eisenhower, and I think he realized that because he personally asked me to put his name in nomination in 1956. But, well for instance Art Summerfield was chairman, and Art and I had been great friends. As a matter of fact, I went up to Michigan and we got a bunch of guys together and persuaded Art to take on--he was then state chairman--national committeeman, whatever it was, and he was chosen. And he became a great power in Michigan politics. And of course Eisenhower picked him to be national chairman and subsequently made him Postmaster General.

In '52 Art sent for me and I went down to Washington, just forgot about my own campaign out here pretty much, and ran, along with Karl Mundt, the tour committee and the speakers bureau. We had some problems. There was a gang, not necessarily a gang, a group pretty much in New York and they're the ones who rode the train after he set it up, and the airplanes.

SOAPES: You're speaking now of the Tom Dewey, Herb Brownell, Adams--



HALLECK: Well, I don't think Adams was featured, maybe he was. I don't know. But Fred Seaton was in the deal and I don't know who all, but I was kind of suspicious of it because I rode the Willkie train for five weeks and I was the only politician in the whole damned bunch, which was neither here nor there. But anyhow Art says, "We're going out to Colorado and we'll talk to our candidate about the campaign." Well, in the course of that

conversation I said to Mr. Eisenhower that in my opinion one of the strongest arguments that he could make for his election would be that if he was elected he could bring some semblance of equality or justice in the judicial system, because then we could get to appoint some judges. Well he bought that and I'd say at least a couple of times in the campaign he stressed that issue. And I think it was effective.

Well, all right, he wins and we get him elected and the first choice he made for judge was Earl Warren. I knew Earl Warren when I used to go to the American Bar meetings. I met with him at the Bohemian Grove thing first, and then subsequently in an official way when I was out there trying to get our candidates elected. Incidentally, got a lot of them elected including, this is '46, including Dick Nixon. Well, Eisenhower appointed Warren, which didn't suit me a damned bit because, for instance, I asked all of those guys running in California for the House if they would like to have had him come to their districts and make a speech. And the only one he'd say anything for was one black man who was running in some district--didn't get elected. Well, you know, that's not the way I play the game. And so I was suspicious of him and well, of course, as it turned out--.

I said to the President one time, something had been enacted, passed through the Congress, that impinged on what the Justice Department--and I think anymore that ought to be "Just-Us," J-u-s-t dash U-s! But, it was Herb Brownell and Bill Rogers, they wanted us, the Congress, to correct this bad ruling. So I listened till it was all through and finally when it came maybe



the time for me to say something, I said, "Mr. President, maybe I shouldn't say this but I'm going to. I expected to be correcting the Supreme Court's decisions through the Congress when the Democrats were naming them all, but I never dreamed we'd have to do the same damned thing after we got a chance to appoint." Well, of course, that was a slight bombshell and the President's response, as I remember it, was that he'd sent Herb Brownell out there to see Warren before he appointed him to be sure he felt like we did. And that was it.

Well I raised a little hell, too, about [William] Brennan. He was recommended by one of the top jurists, Justice Sutherland would it be of New Jersey?

SOAPES: I don't know the name.



HALLECK: He was recommended by him. Well I said, "Mr. President, all you needed to do was read that guy's record. He's not our kind of a guy." And on that occasion and some others I think the President really regretted some of those appointments.

SOAPES: He's frequently quoted as having said that the appointment of Warren was the biggest damned fool mistake he ever made. You think he--

HALLECK: I think he felt that way. And he should have, you know, because he, hell he realized the importance of the very thing that Art Summerfield and I'd been talking to him about when we were out there as the campaign was getting ready to go. I also was terribly unhappy about his veto of the natural gas bill.

I worked my heart out to get that through, did it first when Truman was President. And Louie Johnson, I saw him at the Bohemian Grove, he told me, he was a kind of intermediary and he had a definite promise from Truman that he wouldn't veto the bill if we could get it through. Well on that occasion we were three votes behind and I went up to the desk--I was sending some of my boys down to see how they were recorded to stall for time. I said, "Sam, can you do anything?" He said, "Charlie, I'm done, I can't do a thing." I said, "By God, I'm not!" And I went back and changed four votes and we win by one vote and then Truman vetos.



Well then Frank Case, and if I do say it I made him a national figure overnight. Goddamn it, we had a labor bill--you couldn't get any labor legislation, so-called, out of the labor committee because it was stacked solid. But we, oh Judge Smith, Graham ^{Barden}~~Barton~~, and others, we'd get stuff out of the Military Affairs Committee at that time probably. Let's see, well, we came in '47. I was leader and I had to implement that 1946 reorganization act which cut the committees from forty or fifty down to eighteen. That really was murder for some of my good friends. But we had a bill and Joe Martin didn't want me to introduce it. I'd become kind of an expert on the labor law because of, well, I served on the Smith Committee that went into this whole business of the operation of the National Labor Relations Board, which at that time was being run by a bunch of guys, some of whom have since admitted they were communists at the time. Well we got to get that bill through again. I should mention Frank Case, Les Arends

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and I went down the list of the members and we got to the C's and I said, "Well there's Frank Case, South Dakota, pretty smart guy." So we gave him what became the Case Bill. And he rode that to glory in the Senate.

Well anyhow, some guy name of Patman had, no relation to the [Wright] Patman in the Congress from Texas, but apparently offered Frank Case twenty-five hundred dollars for his campaign. So instead of just saying, "No, I'd rather not take it," and keeping his mouth shut, which all of us--I've had to do that many, many times. I never tried to make myself a hero out of it. So, damn, you know, he just blew it all over the papers as though they'd attempted to bribe him. Well we get the bill through again, and you understand in the light of the situation today that bill should have become law. And I was particularly upset about it because I was in the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee when we passed the National Gas Act. Because that's transportation and the pipeline operation needed to be regulated, but we specifically said this shall not apply to the production and gathering of gas. Well, hell, the Federal Power Commission, that meant nothing to them, and the then Supreme Court, meant nothing to them, so you had this regulation that has just raised hell with production.

Well anyhow, we're down at the White House. I wrote a memorandum. I got word that Eisenhower was thinking about vetoing the bill. And so I wrote a memorandum, a copy of which must be somewhere around. And I was back home here making speeches, Lincoln Day speeches, and I got a call from the White House. They

sent a little bitty airplane out, picked me up at Indianapolis. Most uncomfortable damned little plan that I was ever in. Think we left about midnight, flew to Washington, and we had the meeting then about vetoing this bill. And Herb Brownell was leading the drive to insist that Eisenhower veto it. Well I just, I really blew my top I guess. Boss didn't get mad at me, I don't think. At one time he did say I was pushing something pretty hard in the Oval Office. He said, "Charlie, if it'd been anybody else but you I'd have had you thrown out of here a long time ago." Well, the whole burden was that somehow or other this thing involved corruption. It was a real bad thing. And I, among other things, I said, "Mr. President, you veto this bill on those grounds and I voted for it, you'll be going right along with Drew Pearson who says, 'Why would Charlie Halleck be for this deregulation? There's no oil or gas in his district?'" Well that s.o.b. never understood that once in a while you do something for principle. Well during the course of this thing, I said, "Herb, what you going to indict Patman for?"

"Well, hell, with bribery and depriving the government of services of--", something, I don't know.

I said, "Well, Herb, you may indict him but I'll bet you a hundred dollars," I got out--I don't know whether I got the money out or not, but I meant it--"I bet you a hundred dollars you never convict him." Well they wound up taking a plea of guilty to having failed to register as a lobbyist. And as a trained lawyer, that to me simply meant that whatever he had done, this guy Patman, if



he had registered as a lobbyist would have been perfectly all right and legal.

Well I guess maybe I stormed out of the White House, went back to the airport, said, "Get me back to Indiana." Well the next day Jerry Persons called me up, said, "Charlie, why did you leave town so early?" I said, "You know damned well why I left town." Well he said, "The Boss knew you were upset and he wanted you to come in and have a drink with him and talk this thing over." Well I said, "I'm sorry, I'm out here now and I got some more speeches to make. I'll see him when I get back."

Now having mentioned those things, I want to say again that my association with President Eisenhower was one of the happiest, greatest experiences of my life. And understand I had served thirty-four years, had been majority leader twice, minority leader three times, I've been through wars, depressions, and whole ball of wax and I knew them all. I didn't know Roosevelt very well. But otherwise, Truman, I enjoyed working with him. He's undoubtedly got a place in history, but if he does it'll be because the Republican 80th Congress gave it to him--Greek-Turkey aid, [INAUDIBLE] and the Marshall Plan. And we passed the Taft-Harley over his veto and it was, well Taft, you know, took the chairmanship of the labor committee and he was going to start there. Well, that was fine with me, but he came over to see me and he said, "Charlie, you'll have to go first and give me plenty of trading stock because because I can't control my committee."

Well when Eisenhower became President there were a few things where we disagreed but not really anything of any consequence.

Rather, it was my pleasure to get up there and really go to bat. Now I took a little blistering both from radicals or liberals and from some of my southern conservative friends when we had to monkey around with that public housing, federal aid to education, and some of those things that I know damned well that President Eisenhower wasn't too hot about, but maybe things were just inexorable. But, as I say, it was for me a great experience.

I played a lot of golf with him out at Burning Tree and his boy, John, would be along and hit further than his Dad I'd jumped about a foot. They sent a letter around they're going to build a new little room and I didn't know what the hell that was all about. So, "Do you want to stay where you are or move?" I said, "I'd like to stay where I am." I knew all the guys around me. So the next time I go out there I couldn't find my locker where it was; then I find it in this new little locker room. Have you ever been out there?

SOAPES: No, I haven't.

HALLECK: Well, it was nice. Looks right out down the 18th fairway with a little private shower and telephone and table down at the end where you could play a little cards--any maybe seven or eight lockers on each side with a bench running down the middle. Well that's where R finally found my locker. And so I stormed around with the colored boys, and I got out on the course, and Colonel Belchey [?]-I think he did a lot of the planning for things



up at Gettysburg and so forth--but I started storming to him. Now he said, "Wait a minute, Charlie. You know why you're there?" I said, "No." "Well the President of the United States asked that you be put right back to back with him there." Well you never saw a guy quiet down so damned fast as I did. And that was always--he was darned nice. I'd have people come down from home like Doc Johnson, my doctor here, great golfers, and he was just always so gracious and nice. Of course Hamer Budge of Idaho was a tough little cookie. He was running the IDS, mutual funds out of Minneapolis, you know. But one time we're there, he began playing and I said, "Mr. President, this Hamer Budge is a great guy, but he isn't going to be with us tomorrow." Hamer damned near died. And the Boss put him at ease right away.

[Interruption]



SOAPES: You wanted to tell me about the first time you got to know Eisenhower.

HALLECK: Yes. As I remember, he came back and addressed a joint session, either during the war or right after the war, at which time I was tremendously impressed. And I was invited to make the address at the Waldorf in New York to the Pennsylvania Society of New York, and there was a lot of top people there. Well, at my immediate left was General Eisenhower. So I chose to speak about my idea about division of power and authority and taxing and spending between the federal government as opposed to state and local governments. And of course I came down on the side of more of that operation to be in the states and the local communities.

And as I sat down, General Eisenhower reached over and grabbed me by the hand and said, "Congressman, you put your finger on one of the most important problems before this country." And I'm sure he thought that then and I'm sure all through his presidency he pretty much felt the same way, which to me was a kind of a fundamental proposition. He got the gold medal of the Pennsylvania Society and I don't think at that time he had any idea of running for President.

I was down in Florida, Art Summerfield was down there on his boat, somewhere around Riviera and he got in touch with me and said he was going over to Europe to try to persuade Eisenhower to run for the nomination.

SOAPES: This is '51?



HALLECK: This is coming up to '52. And I said, "Now, Art, Bob Taft and I drew up kind of a declaration of principles and policies of the Republican party." A lot of people of all sorts of opinions were in on it. But anyhow, we did the same thing come up to '46 and we elected the 80th Congress on that, and then that declaration of like '51 or such a matter became pretty much the platform of the party in 1952 at the convention. So I said, "Art, you go over there and take a copy of this declaration, and if the General will think that this is--not every line in it, but generally speaking--is his philosophy, as far as I'm concerned I'm ready to go right down the line." And Art came back and reported that the President had read it and said to him that, while he couldn't agree to every particular small item in it, that by and large the

philosophy expressed there suited him, was in line with what he thought.



SOAPES: The argument that's frequently given as to why Eisenhower did decide to run was that he did disagree with Taft very strongly in foreign policy. And the suggestion has been made that he might have been more conservative than Taft in domestic affairs, that Taft was not the ardent conservative that he's been pictured.

HALLECK: Well Taft was not. You know, he was for federal aid to education, and we were getting ready to quit, it was way into the night and he was supposed to be at a deal in Philadelphia the next morning. Jesse [P.] Walcott of Michigan was chairman of the Banking and Currency Committee, and the thing was in conference and Taft was holding out for federal public housing. And Jess and I said to hell with it, won't be. Well we finally outmaneuvered him, and I'll never forget that damned conference report, part of it was just handwritten in sheets and no copies, no nothing. But we threw it together and adopted the conference report.

Taft, in my book, and in the eyes of most conservatives, when he came out for federal aid to education and federal public housing, it upset a hell of a lot of people, including me. Now there were people who said, "Well, he's just done that for political purposes." But in my book, that would be even worse. If he didn't really believe in it but went for it anyway why I think that in itself was bad. My doctor here now, you know, he contends that Eisenhower was a communist. Well, of course, nobody knows better than I that that's ridiculous. But this was a

hotbed of the, who's the fellow, ultra right wing--

SOAPES: John Birch--

HALLECK: --John Birchers, yes. And of course Goldwater set up committees here, hooked me in to seconding his nomination, which proved to be just, I couldn't survive that damned thing. All our guys got beat, and I got beat for leader. That's for [Gerald] Ford. There was a lot of damned underhanded operations which I don't, you know, that's all past and I don't bother about it.

SOAPES: Did you feel that Eisenhower's legislative program, during that first term when he had a Republican Congress to work with, was essentially what most Republicans were ready to support?

HALLECK: Yes. I really think so. At least it didn't cause me any problem out here. And this state was supposed to be a red-hot conservative state. Of course I went down to Birmingham once in Alabama to speak to Sigma Delta Chi, that whole outfit.

SOAPES: Journalism fraternity.

HALLECK: Yes. And, God, I got to looking around and Alabama had more Republican congressmen than we did. We were five Republicans, six Democrats and they were six Republicans and five Democrats. But by and large I would say that the President's program was pretty much in line with what Republicans generally felt ought to be done. And I must say, well you know like when he insisted we keep these leadership meetings going and hold press conferences, which was all the Ev and Charlie Show was, that I took over--I



finally, first two times I was ready to do battle with Joe Martin. Matter of fact, I should have run for Speaker after '52, but Taft's top guys, my great friends, John Hamilton--greatest man I ever knew--and Tom Clovine [?] of Wisconsin, but they just couldn't wait to call me up the next morning, "Charlie, you don't dare oppose Joe Martin for the Speakership." Well, I said, "Okay, I'll agree to put his name in nomination." Well he never treated me with that degree of respect. But I had blood in my eye when Joe was going to drop back and take my job as minority leader. So I went down to the White House and the Boss said, "Don't do it." Sherm Adams, too. And he said, I don't know what it meant if anything but he said, "You know your name was one of four or five I gave to the people in '52 I'd be glad to have run with me for vice-president." He said, "I'd put you even higher than that now and I don't want you to make any unnecessary enemies." So, that was that, I just pulled out. I had to go ask Joe Martin, if something was on the floor and we were getting the hell whipped out of us, to get permission to get down on the floor to take them on. And it was just an intolerable situation. I made up my mind, I'm either going to be leader or I'm going to quit.

Well the third time around the Boss just didn't tell me not to do it, he didn't tell me to go, he didn't give me--some people claim he was supporting me which isn't true.

SOAPES: He didn't tell you not to run.

HALLECK: He had told me twice not to run.

SOAPES: This time he didn't.



HALLECK: And this time he didn't. A lot of people read into that--I don't know as it was a matter of public knowledge or not, but probably the knowledgeable people around there knew what the score was. So then I became minority leader for his last two years and Ev Dirksen took over in the Senate. And I am just cocky enough to believe that those last two years of Eisenhower's term maybe were as productive as even the first two when we had that paper-thin majority. I think he went out looking damned good.

SOAPES: Did you ever sense on his part a dissatisfaction with Martin's performance?

HALLECK: Well he never expressed it. He insisted that I come to the leadership meetings at the White House and often when we'd have to go outside and say what went on, that's before the last two years, why Joe Martin would say, "Well, Charlie speaks for us." Nobody could really get mad at Joe Martin. And I wasn't mad at him. Hell, I had no animosity, but I'd reached the point where I was either going to be the top dog in name as well as I had to do all the work there for four years and I had to drop back. I was fifteenth man on our side out of fifteen on the House Administration Committee. Talk about a come down! And my staff was all dissipated. Well, of course, then Joe Martin told me we had to extend the excess profits tax six months in order to have a tax reduction bill come along at the same time.

SOAPES: This is '53.

HALLECK: Yes. Well, I couldn't get it out of the Ways and Means



Committee. Uncle Dan Reed was just giving me hell all the time. And so finally I talked to the President about it and I said, "You know, there's just one way to do this, Mr. President, and you've got to get the Rules Committee just to report that bill out, bypassing the Ways and Means Committee." That's what Sam Rayburn used to call a major operation. I had six votes easy, but Carroll Reece was on the Rules Committee and Clarence Brown. So I finally--I had to get the seven votes because I knew [Leon] Jere Cooper was the top dog on the Democrat side and I knew damned well the minute that hit the floor the whole outfit that was just holding it up, trying to embarrass us, would have to vote for it. So I finally had the President call Carroll Reece. He couldn't do a damned thing with Clarence Brown. He never liked Eisenhower and he was a wild-eyed Taft man, guess a Brown man, much for himself--loused up a lot of things. But anyhow, Carroll Reece agreed to go. Well, so I called it up on the floor, the Rules Committee reported it. And Dan Reed just gave me unshirted hell. Well then they all collapsed, except Uncle Dan. But the Ways and Means Committee then reported the bill out and the Rules Committee reported it and I didn't have to go through this pretty bad situation and my prediction about everybody voting for it came true. But I've got pictures that were taken--I was up there in the Rules Committee room and just jampacked, just all by myself. Noah Mason was there raising hell (he subsequently put my name in nomination for leader against Joe Martin), but it was the roughest day of my life. But the Boss said it had to be done, and so I did it.



Somebody was saying to me here just the other day, "Charlie, you never say you like me or--." I said, "Now, wait a minute. I once knew a great guy named President Eisenhower and he'd never tell you that he thought you were a good man, but he'd tell everybody else." And I said, "I guess maybe that's the way I am." So, as I say, he didn't say to me--well he did, too, on occasion, he'd call up or send word if he wanted something particularly important brought to him.

Of course when he asked me--my recollection is that I was delayed at the office and the damn phone rang and I answered it, everybody else was gone, and it was the Boss. He said, "Charlie, the boys tell me that I got to pick somebody to put my name in at San Francisco. Would you be willing to do it?" I said, "Mr. President, that'd make me the happiest man in the world." So it fell on my birthday, August 22. I was out there with a bunch of folks and fur-bearing animals, had big suites and what have you-- I just had a little room there at the hotel. But after we got it over with, we began to celebrate and then the boss found out it was on my birthday and he wrote me a nice note and said, "If I'd have known it was your birthday I'd never asked you to do it." I said, "Well that's the best birthday present I could possible have."

He wanted you to cut down on the length of a speech, and after I chopped and chopped the thing from beginning to end, then we had to cut out a lot more of it. And I couldn't remember, nobody could I don't think, just where you took it out--a phrase or a sentence. So we're doing it with a teleprompter, and I had a little trouble with it, but I guess it was a good enough speech.



I know it went very smoothly for which I was grateful.

SOAPES: When you think about the source of effectiveness of the President's congressional relations we talk about him, but he also had a congressional liaison staff. In fact I think he was the first one to setup a publicly acknowledged congressional liaison office, with people like [Edward] McCabe and [Bryce] Harlos, [Wilton B.] Persons. How would you evaluate their performance?



HALLECK: Well in my book there wasn't anything near as good before that and there's been nothing approximately even with it since that time. You understand [Richard] Nixon had a bunch of jerks that had had no political experience at all and J. Walter Thompson hotshots and public relations hotshots and with a lot of ideas, most of which were bad. Now, you understand Jerry Persons was the liaison man for the army for a long time. Gerry [Gerald D.] Morgan had been a legislative counsel. I arranged in Detroit when we really wrote the Taft-Hartley Act--I spent two days up there in Detroit, and Art Summerfield set up the meeting. And I said, "We've got to have Gerry Morgan to tie this bill together." Well right away somebody says, "How are you going to pay him, and what should Chrysler [Inaudible]?" Someone said, "Well, we'll put him on the Chrysler payroll." I said, "You will like hell. The national committee's going to pay." I said, "This has got to be clean all the way through." But he'd had that legislative drafting experience.

Bryce Harlow came on, he was up there I think maybe with the

Military Affairs Committee, or naval affairs, so he was knowledgeable. Ed McCabe, you know it infuriated a lot of the people, I mean left-wingers, but when Graham Barden took over as chairman of the labor committee, why he picked Ed McCabe, as I remember it, to be their chief counsel. And that certainly shook up the animals in some places. But that group--now Sherm Adams, now he was in Congress, but he was never what I would call a top-notch politician as such. I was a politician and I make no apologies for it. It's a pretty good business. It's unique; there's nothing in the world like it. But it's not, it isn't an exclusive sort of thing, it's different, and yet I watched businessmen, preachers, doctors, come to the House of Representatives and just take on the political end of it just without missing a beat, taking it in stride. Bruce Barton was one of those. A big shot, some advertising--Batton, Barton and Dirsten and somebody--Roosevelt coined the phrase of Martin, Barton and Fish. But those guys, after Sherm left--I say nothing derogatory about him--but Jerry Persons and these other people that you know took over, really it was a damned smooth operation. You understand Bryce Harlow's been a Democrat from Oklahoma and Gerry Morgan was a registered Democrat from Virginia, but they all had the respect, on both sides of the aisle, of people who were knowledgeable, who'd been there a while and knew what these guys were.

SOAPES: Respect for their knowledge of issues or their political tactics?

HALLECK: Both, I would say. They were effective and good. And

when they took over I think the whole atmosphere around the White House changed and for the better.

SOAPES: Are you saying that Sherm Adams was an impediment to good relations between the President and the Congress?

HALLECK: Well, yes. And I don't want to downgrade Sherm. He was always my friend, but New Hampshire kind of politics--I wouldn't put Styles Bridges in that category because he was a damned good operator--but Sherm was not what you'd call a real political operator. On the Willkie train we had Johnny Hollister of Cincinnati, who had been in the House but he never was really a politician as I understand a politician to be. And so those people that came in there with Ike, they really were effective, and, as I say, I'm sure that, particularly with those last two years, he went out a pretty happy guy and the public generally, people just admiring him no end.



SOAPES: Can you think of a particular episode--I realize it's going back quite a long ways--can you think of any particular episodes where this congressional liaison staff really showed its mettle?

HALLECK: Well, I ought to be able to just name dozens of occasions like that, but they were effective. They were effective just all the time. I don't know as I could recall or properly state any one particular incident.

SOAPES: I was thinking perhaps of some of the more controversial episodes, for instance the Landrum-Griffin Bill or the civil

rights legislation.

HALLECK: The Landrum-Griffin Bill, they were very helpful on that. Of course, we put that damned thing together, Fred Smith and I principally. And then we decided that instead of having--oh, the guy from Michigan, Claire Hoffman--our guy from the labor committee, or Graham Barden--both of whom, you know, were just completely tagged as opposition guys against organized labor. So we decided to get some people that nobody had ever heard of. So the Judge picked Phil Landrum and I went clear down to eighth place to pick Bobby Griffin and then caught a lot of hell from the guys ahead of him on the committee. But it worked out very well and Bobby's a smart kid. Of course he helped cut my throat, which was I thought a little unsuitable, but that's the way the ball bounces and that happens.

So I didn't cry when Howard Baker beat him out. And I had my problems with Howard Baker. First his dad you know, as a freshman had talked me into putting him on the Ways and Means Committee. And I think that might have been his first term. Well anyhow the committee was divided fifteen-ten and time and again why the committee vote would be sixteen to nine and Howard Baker voting with the Democrats. So young Howard got me in a hell of a mess down there to make a speech in Knoxville that I thought was just an organization meeting. But it turned out that people over at Chattanooga had a guy they were running for the nomination for the Senate and a damned good guy and I just caught hell from my friend Harry Carbaugh. He was quite unhappy about it, so I had to go through with it.



SOAPES: Did Eisenhower neglect the rank and file members of the Congress as some commentators have suggested?

HALLECK: No. Didn't he institute the deal of having them come down in groups?

SOAPES: I think he did do some of that.

HALLECK: Yes. I never felt that he cut anybody out. I think on the contrary he was just--I'm sure he instituted that deal of just picking them maybe by the alphabet to come down there in smaller numbers. And so far as I know he was accessible to anybody that had anything to talk about, Democrat or Republican.

SOAPES: Some commentators have tried to make the argument that Eisenhower neglected both the junior members, dealt really only with the leadership; and that he also cut out some of the liberal Republicans who'd been responsible for his nomination--people like [Jacob] Javits, Erving Ives.

HALLECK: I don't know how responsible they were. I suppose they were active in his nomination. I went up to the convention. I had a suite at the Conrad Hilton, kind of a hospitality deal for all my people here, and then I had another place across the street at the Blackstone, where I just holed up to get out of the ruckus.

And there was no question, there was a great lot of animosity towards Eisenhower here in Indiana and I'm sure many places across the country--they were wild-eyed half fanatics--and so there was no way you could do much about it. I determined to open the campaign in Indiana and we had at the headquarters there, and Bob



Humphrey who was a sharp, and he really was, I'd say in a large measure responsible for the stuff that came to be the Ev and Charlie Show. He was a damned good newspaperman and a good writer. But he was very helpful.

But to go back to this starting out here, I had Art Summerfield call Cato Holder [?], who was our state chairman, to arrange about opening the campaign at the Butler Field House. And I was on the other wire, and Cato doesn't know that, but he said, "Hell, don't bring him out here; you couldn't get anybody to come to a meeting. You couldn't even fill the [unintelligible] Tabernacle." Well I said to hell with that. So I just arranged--we got right down to the grass roots, and the Boss came to Indianapolis. Put him up at the old Claypoole Hotel, been torn down now. And I was there with him. I don't think he'd ever monkeyed with a teleprompter before. And there'd been some changes made, and that's the time, you know, when the guy wasn't keeping the thing going fast enough and the Boss says, "Turn the goddamned thing up." That went out over the air and there was a little yammer about it. But here was Bill Jenner, you know, and was calling Ike an S.O.B. right up to the election. (They just had an event honoring some of us down at Indianapolis, and when I saw the headline--Bill Jenner--I didn't go.) But anyhow, we filled that Butler Field House with a great crowd, brought them in school buses, you know. I went right through the organization down to the bottom--to hell with the state headquarters. At that time Jenner, he understood, he was in deep water, after all the hell raising. So every time Ike would stand up to receive--the crowd was just terrific, they were really

going for him--but he'd grab Ike by the arm. And so Ike kind of got up a little close and he says, "Charlie, take me out of here. I'm going to hit that damned guy." So I grabbed him and by God we got out of there and were back down at the Claypole, left all the bodyguards, the whole damned retinue, and got back down to the Claypoole. And the Boss was glad to get out of that deal.

[Interruption]



SOAPES: Were you able to get a feel for how effective Bill Knowland was in his leadership in the Senate? I know you're on opposite sides of the building, but--

HALLECK: I never thought he was too hot a leader. I guess he inherited Taft's role.

SOAPES: Right. Taft really had appointed him.

HALLECK: Yes, that's what happened. I have no quarrel with Bill Knowland but I just never thought he was too effective. And I think, too, when you're the leader, if you got some disagreement you shouldn't be rushing into print with it. Play it down. If you didn't see just the way the President did, why don't pop off about it. That was always my position. I don't think you can find anywhere, anyplace, where I ever openly, publicly criticized Eisenhower for any thing.

SOAPES: Historians have frequently commented also that the Democratic leadership in the House, particularly Sam Rayburn, were as important if not more so than the Republican leaders in

helping Eisenhower with legislation. How do you react to that?

HALLECK: I don't buy that. It wasn't Sam Rayburn. Now, of course, there was always that affinity of Texans and what have you. And Lyndon Johnson was always, I'm sure, an admirer of President Eisenhower. But the critical stuff, we didn't get any help from Sam Rayburn. Joe Martin would say at the meeting, you know, at the White House, "Well I'll have a talk with Sam," but, you know, that was his way of doing. Well, I never could see where, if he had any such conversations that it meant a damned thing in the way of votes on the floor of the House.

SOAPES: When you were leader then the last two years, and of course Rayburn was still Speaker, do you feel you really had to do it on your own and work with Democrats individually rather than going through their leadership?

HALLECK: That's right. And you understand, Sam had the "Board of Education," it goes clear back to [John Nance] Garner, and [Nicolas] Longworth and it's now been abandoned. Somebody wrote that Carl Albert was having orgies down there, you know. In the first place, there was no place to have one; hell it wasn't but about half as big as this room and you get more than twelve in there and you couldn't sit down. Well, now Sam, he was the Democrat top dog and he was playing them as he saw them. I think probably he could have been more active maybe and more aggressive against some of the things Eisenhower wanted, but as far as getting the things through, why, it had to be done with the coalition that I've talked about.



SOAPES: I asked you earlier about whether or not Eisenhower's program matched up with Republican viewpoints and you said that it generally did. Was this equally true in foreign policy? Was there still an isolationist wing of the Republican party in the House?

HALLECK: Yes, and there is today, although it just depends on whose ox is being gored. But by and large, those were the toughest votes for me, foreign policy operations, because I'm right under the gun of the Chicago Tribune. Everybody reads that through here, and the next worst was the Fort Wayne News Sentinel and it hit the whole east side of my district. And boy, oh boy, they were all rabid isolationists. So when I took part, well it really began with my operations when Truman was President, and it carried over into Eisenhower's term. But now, like in many other things, you've kind of fought one another into each other's overcoat.

SOAPES: Do you think Eisenhower was in any way responsible for changing viewpoints within the party on foreign policy?

HALLECK: Oh, yes. I don't recall too many specific instances, but he did get the Korean War stopped and it's still stopped. I don't know, I hope it is. And, of course, some people said he really got us into Vietnam and that's a damned lie. I've read that and I've said to him after he went out as President that he ought to try to clear that up. And he did to my satisfaction. The guy that really got us into Vietnam was a guy name of Jack Kennedy. And I sat right there in the White House when he and

McNamara said we're gong to engage in Vietnam. We must talk about engaging in Laos but it's landlocked so we couldn't do much there but we could in Vietnam and he said he was sending first ten thousand troops, combat troops, to Vietnam. Well I think Dick Russell, Senator Russell squawked and [J. William] Fullbright squawked some; there weren't too many squawking. But I guess I broke up the meeting by saying, "Mr. President, you made this decision and I stand with you. But it looks to me like we're getting ready to get a lot of American boys killed, and if we are we better let the people know what to expect." And he said, "Charlie, if it gets that bad we will." Well I guess when he was assassinated we had some forty thousand combat troops there. And the whole thing, as I say, they try to get Eisenhower as the originator of the whole thing, which isn't true. He talked about aid; that wasn't what was really involved. And later on, of course, we got into a hell of a mess. But you can't make the extremist believers in the Kennedys believe that he was the real culprit, but he sure as hell was. And poor Lyndon, when he started to escalate, he should have escalated it and taken off the damned restrictions and told our forces to go get them. It could have been done, but he monkeyed around so damned long there was no way of winning it. If Eisenhower had been President I don't suppose we'd have been in it because he always admonished us, didn't he, to keep out of a land war in Asia?

SOAPES: I'm not sure that he was really the one who had said that; it may have been Bradley or one of the others. But I was going to raise the question with you: Did you notice a reluctance on his



part to use military force or to build up the military?

HALLECK: No. No. He was, the flier that got to be chairman of joint chiefs--

SOAPES: LeMay?

HALLECK: No. No. Curt LeMay was famous for his milk run to Rio. [Laughter] I put that in a speech at the Gridiron and I think it made him unhappy as hell. But oh--his locker was right next to ours at Burning Tree--.

SOAPES: We can check that and insert it. [Nathan Twining]

HALLECK: I asked him, this was after we'd been into Vietnam quite a while. He said, "Charlie, we could have won it just right off if we had really gone in and let them have it." But he said, "Now, I don't think it's possible to win it."

SOAPES: This is his comment after he was out of the White House.

HALLECK: This was this general, air force general, hell I can see his locker was two lockers down from mine. But, well I tell you if Eisenhower had been President at that time he wouldn't have let the State Department run the war. That's the worst damn thing that can possibly happen. And even with the Boss, you know, I put through a trout labelling bill--a lot of these trout people, Idaho, and Pennsylvania, and around, raise trout commercially. And we were getting imports from the Scandinavian countries mostly and labelling them Rocky Mountain brook trout. So the bill, we were



getting ready to adjourn, I'd put it on and we had nothing else to do and finally I'd walk them out, put the damned bill through. I had no intimation that the President didn't want it. But you know to my utter amazement the damned State Department got him to veto the bill. Well I didn't say much. The State Department said we'll offend somebody.

When Kennedy was still President, I argued down there at the White House, he had a number of us down, "Let's close the Port of Haiphong; let's bomb the hell out of them." Well, that will enlarge the war; that'll bring the communists in, the Chinese or the Russians. Well, if we get in trouble with them we're not going to pick the time; they're going to pick the time. No question in my mind about that. But it finally got to the point where there wasn't anything we could do about it. But if we'd have had strong leadership of an Eisenhower, the damn thing I think in the first place would never have happened. In the second place, I think he probably believed, I know he did, like I did: If my country's in the war zone, there's only one thing to do and that's win the damned thing. But that turned out, of course, to be an awful--I was over there three or four times and what a mess.

SOAPES: You were an advocate of three men who got the Republican nomination in the 1940s and '50s: Willkie, Dewey, and Eisenhower. Could you place those three men on the political spectrum for me of who you thought was the most liberal and who of the three was the most conservative?



HALLECK: First of all Willkie, I knew him. He was a member of my fraternity at Indiana University, along with Paul McNutt, Beta Theta Pi. Willkie was a Democrat, but I really went for him and at the risk of political suicide in 1940 because I'd heard him-- he had the big fight then about the Holding Company Bill and he was president of Commonwealth and Southern. And he came up before the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, of which I was a member at the time, and I thought he made the best presentation defending the competitive enterprise system that a guy ever heard. So I had confidence in him in that respect.

Dewey was, of course, just known as a trust buster and I never-- and of course he really shafted me, you know, in '48 because his guys all came to me and said, "Charlie, if you bring Indiana in solid for Dewey and make the last seconding speech, you'll be on the ticket as vice-president." Well that was guys like Russ Spragg, national committeeman, Ed Jackle, the state chairman, Len Hall, chairman, and John Foster Dulles. And, oh, a whole bunch made that promise to me and reiterated it on the floor. Well, three o'clock in the morning some guys lowered the boom on me who should not have done so, including Senator Vandenberg and Roy Roberts of the Kansas City Star. So at three o'clock in the morning, Dewey called me up and [inaudible]. And the essence of what it was, he told me that he couldn't put me over as vice-president, which was a bunch of bullshit and I knew it. I got my eyeteeth cut and sat in on the meetings when we picked them, you know, you name the vice-president. Well, as he talked to me about why I wouldn't do, it was obvious

to me he was running out on the record of the 80th Congress. So I wound up by telling him, "Tom, it looks to me like you're getting ready to run out on the record of the 80th Congress and if you do, I'm sorry I had anything to do with nominating you." Then he took Warren and he lost the election. If he'd had taken me and made a fight, he'd have been President. And I made him admit it at a big soiree the polls boys had after a big Gridiron dinner about five or six years later. But he was first of all a politician.

And Russ Sprague, he finally even made Russ come down and Len Hall, and Russ had tears in his eyes. He said, "Charlie, I'll never be able to look you in the face again." And then subsequently I went up to Nassau County to make a speech, he had a little group in and he says, "Charlie, you know, that arrangement we made with you was at Tom Dewey's direct direction."

Anyhow I've had, you know, not too happy of experience. I did get nominated or seconded the nomination of four different guys in national conventions and got one of them elected, name of Eisenhower. Which to me is a great satisfaction.

SOAPES: Would you say that Dewey was more conservative than Taft on domestic issues?

HALLECK: Well it's hard to catalog--. Dewey never, he wasn't down here voting. He wasn't in Washington voting; Taft was. And Taft, as I say, he sure flew the track with the conservatives with his stand on federal public housing, federal public aid to education. But I wouldn't undertake to put him in much of a category there either way.

SOAPES: What sparked the question was the comment that I read from some historians that some of the Dewey people, in '48 in particular, were for Dewey because they feared that Taft was too liberal on domestic affairs.

HALLECK: I don't think that. I think actually in that affair the conservatives were pretty well lined up back of Bob Taft. They just wouldn't believe that he really was for these things that they didn't like.

SOAPES: You mentioned to me several times that you did have association with Eisenhower in the '60s after he'd retired. What sort of things were most on his mind during that period? What sort of issues did he respond to the most?

HALLECK: Well, I think Ev and I went up to Gettysburg to see him every once in a while and we'd take Bob Humphrey along, and maybe some of the White House people.

SOAPES: I think Harlow and Morgan.



HALLECK: Yes. And we discussed various issues and problems and always sought his advice. And on occasion he felt free to talk about it, guess we always did as far as that's concerned. I wanted him to come out to this area to make a speech, and he promised Ev and he promised me that he'd make one appearance for each one of us. Well Ev signed him up for a fund-raising speech in Chicago and the Boss didn't like that worth a damn, I don't think. And he said so.

We were seeing him again and I said, "Mr. President, you

come to my hometown and we're going to have a big chicken barbecue and it's going to be an enormous turnout of just good people from all over the state and adjoining placed. And the tickets are going to be a dollar and a half apiece.

Well we had it out at the St. Joe College where I've been a trustee for years. I'm a Methodist, but I'm a trustee of this Catholic college and the student center's named for me, Halleck Center. But he came out here and well, there was yacking in town about not having something downtown. So my dad was county commissioner when they built the courthouse so we had just kind of a short remarks by the President up there in front of the courthouse on the steps. You never saw such a sea of people in your life.



We got a thing here, grade school, called the Wee Singers, cute little devils and Eisenhower turned around and he just beamed. He just loved that. And well we worked him too damned hard; he laid the cornerstone of Halleck Center and then made a talk in the afternoon.

We fed seventeen thousand people. That's the truth. And there were thousands of people there who figured they wouldn't be able to get any food. I had twelve counties, and we had twelve double serving lines. Every chicken and broiler producer in Indiana was here and great concrete block with iron grills over them. And broiling chicken crazy. Tents and bales of hay for seats for people to sit on at the table. And with those twelve double serving lines, it just went off slick as clockwork.

Well Ike said, "I'll eat some of that chicken, but I don't

want any of that barbeque stuff on it." So we get out and get up where he could sit down, and I was a little disturbed by some of my people. Hell, they just get, look right over his shoulder, you know, when you're eating a piece of chicken. And then when we started to walk up to the platform, people were pawing at him and he turned to me, he says, "Why, Charlie, that lady was pawing at me there, she must have been fifty years old." Well I said, "Mr. President, I remember one time you complained to Mamie about people grabbing at you and pawing at you, but she reminded you that if they didn't you wouldn't like it." And he just smiled.

Another episode, a lawyer from over at Logansport got drunk and somehow or other he got up on the platform. TV was all set up. We had a lot of plain clothes state policemen and other guys, and I knew damned well that if we had him thrown off the platform that'd been the whole business in the TV. So I got a couple of these big husky guys and I said, "Now, look, we could sit one of you on each side of that guy and tell him that if he opens his trap or attempts to make any kind of a move, you're going to cold-cock him and he'll go down on the floor, nobody will see him." Well they moved in next to him and I'm telling you they really kept him under wraps.

But the Boss made a great speech which was, for me, a great satisfaction. Probably the biggest meeting ever was held in Indiana and probably never be another one like it. Just a sea of people. Just terrific. He was President; he was General; he was everything. And the people just idolized him. They realized, even the wild-eyed right wingers, that he'd been a terrific



President. I wish to hell we had him back.

SOAPES: Was there a particular role that he played in his years out of office for the Republican party?

HALLECK: Yes, I, well--as I said we were going up there to Gettysburg to see him every once in a while about what we should do and what our position should be.

SOAPES: Was he giving you counsel that you could use?

HALLECK: That's right, yes.



SOAPES: So the role that he was playing then was giving advice on legislative matters?

HALLECK: I think so. I don't recall. He probably was filling some speaking engagements, but I think he, just like I am now, I'm just beset all the time to go around and make speeches and all sorts--hell, I must have made fifty 4th of July speeches on the centennial and raised flags and what have you. But I'm just trying to get out of it. I'll be seventy-seven in August, but I can still get up there with the best of them. And when I was leader there, and then when I wasn't leader, but to do battle on the floor for Eisenhower, boy I was ready to take them on any damned time as many as they wanted to bring up.

SOAPES: One final question: Your general evaluation of Eisenhower as a politician. Was he a man with political instincts?

HALLECK: Yes, I mentioned earlier I think that, like a guy like Bruce Barton, just took to the politics like a duck takes to water.

Now plus the fact, a lot of people don't realize it, but in the military or in the big corporation you have to be something of a politician. It's a little different kind of an area in which you operate, but Eisenhower had to handle people, organize them, get along with them all his life, although in the military. But it's the same thing. Politics, insofar as running for office and so forth, that wasn't in his line. But I would say that he mastered it damn fast and simply because he had a terrific mind, he grasped things very quickly. And he had a great intuition, it seemed to me, for knowing the right thing to do. And, as I say, when he quit he was just a great national idol. And not only of mine, but of many, many people, all the people.

SOAPES: Thank you very much for your time this morning.

