

Charles A. Halleck Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 03/22/1965
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Biographical Note

Representative from Indiana (1935-1969); House minority leader (1959-1965), discusses working with John F. Kennedy as Congressman and President, from 1947-1963, Congress' reaction to the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis, and JFK's effectiveness with Congress, among other issues.

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Charles A. Halleck – JFK#1

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Oral History Interview

With

Charles A. Halleck

March 22, 1965
Washington, D.C.

By Stephen Hess

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HESS: Mr. Halleck, when did you first meet John F. Kennedy?

HALLECK: Well, I think it was in 1947 after the 1946 elections. I had been chairman of the congressional committee—Republican Congressional Committee—in that campaign and we succeeded in carrying the House of Representatives for Republicans. Only one time since have we been able to do that. I think it was in that election that Mr. Kennedy was elected to the House of Representatives. We were all much younger then, of course. He was particularly younger at that time. But I remember seeing him and coming to know him, not real intimately but quite well. From that time on, of course, I knew him better.

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HESS: Did you have any first impression of him that you felt changed with his years in the House?

HALLECK: Well, I thought that as we went along he began to take a wider interest in the affairs of the House of Representatives. I don't recall any particular instance, but he was, generally speaking, interested in the affairs going on and like other members of the House doing what he could in connection with the legislation that was coming before us.

HESS: Did you have any personal contact with him on any of the committees if you happened to be on a committee together or sponsor any particular legislation—

HALLECK: No. As a matter of fact, Mr. Hess, after the '46 elections I became the Majority Leader of the Republican Eightieth Congress. I gave up second place on Rules, and second place on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. Since that time, in season and out, I have had no responsible or important committee assignments, although I'm on Public Works now. But for a

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number of years there I was the fifteenth man on House Administration out of fifteen on the Republican side. I wasn't on any committees with Jack Kennedy, but, as I say, I remember him very well from those years as one of the able members of the House of Representatives.

HESS: Did you have any particular dealings with him when he went over to the Senate either in conference committees or so forth?

HALLECK: Well, indirectly, yes. The Landrum [Philip Mitchell Landrum]-Griffin [Robert P. Griffin] Bill came along in his time. The McClellan [John L. McClellan] Committee had been holding its hearings and there was a very considerable amount of concern about some of the things that generally felt needed to be done in that field. Bob Griffin from Michigan headed up the operation over in the House side. I had a little something to do with that because I was the Minority Leader at that time, and then the bill, as you remember, went on to conference and I think it's to the credit of all the conferees that between the differing versions

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of the Senate and the House bills they did arrive at a compromise arrangement in respect to terms of the legislation that has since become law. Of course there are some people who do not quite like the provisions of the bill. Some thought it went too far; others thought it didn't go far enough. As I remember it, Senator Kennedy, Jack Kennedy, was the top man on the Senate conferees and of course had his own views that he wanted to prevail. But it was, as conference actions generally go, a matter of give and take and out of it did come, for better or worse, the Landrum-Griffin Bill. But to the final accomplishment of that I would say that Senator Kennedy did make a very definite contribution.

HESS: Did you have any social contact with him or his family during his period in Congress?

HALLECK: No, I didn't. The reasons for that I wouldn't know about, but we didn't have any social contacts until he became President of the United States.

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HESS: From your role in the 1960 Presidential election campaign, do you have any impressions about how he waged his campaign or how the Republicans waged theirs against him or mistakes that were made on either side or points in his favor?

HALLECK: Well, there were certainly mistakes made on our side. I, of course, was for Dick Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] for President. I am a Republican and had worked at it pretty diligently. It didn't involve any personal animosity towards Mr. Kennedy at all, but simply that was for my man because I thought he would be the best for the country. Now in retrospect I am quite sure that the debates were a mistake from our standpoint. The campaign was run—well, I don't want to be critical of our own people, but I was mixed up in the 1948 campaign with Mr. Dewey [Thomas E. Dewey] and there is such a thing as being too sure, too confident. Personally I always run better when I'm scared. I think that should be axiomatic in politics because if

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you want the job, believe me, you better hit the ball and get it. Now Jack Kennedy was really hitting the ball to be President of the United States and I think that contributed much.

HESS: Do you think the religious question, his Catholicism, helped him or hurt him?

HALLECK: I think it helped him. I might say parenthetically I'm a Methodist, but I am also a lay trustee at St. Joseph's College out in my hometown of Rensselaer, Indiana, from which school I now hold an honorary degree. The student center has been named for me because I have tried through the years to be helpful. I am a graduate of Indiana University myself. I have Valparaiso University, a Lutheran school, in my district as I have Purdue University, a great state school. But I have been close to St. Joseph's. In that campaign, of course, there was great question in the minds of many people as to whether or not a Catholic could ever be elected President of

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the United States. The religious matter has never meant anything to me. I have been for or against people as I thought they were the right people for the job to which they aspire. But I think there was a great effort in that campaign, and I hope I'm not unfair about this, to establish that, after all, religious conviction should be no bar and that's the reason I say that in my opinion Mr. Kennedy's Catholicism probably helped him more than it hurt him. I would be the first to admit that in some areas in the country it probably hurt him, but in many others I think it helped him tremendously. And after it's all said and done I don't think anybody ought to be elected just because of his religious beliefs. That's not what this

country's about. So every man ought to run on his own merits. While I think, as I say, that his Catholicism helped him, I would be the last to say that was the final determining factor.

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HESS: Mr. Halleck, when Mr. Kennedy was President and you were the Minority Leader in the House of Representatives, can you explain the machinery by which you discussed legislation and reached agreements?

HALLECK: Well, generally speaking, in all of my time here the bipartisan operations out of the White House and at the White House have been pretty much confined to foreign affairs and national defense. It was that way when I was Majority Leader in the Eightieth Congress with Mr. Truman [Harry S. Truman], when Mr. Truman was President. It is a matter of record that the principal accomplishments of his Administration were, first the Greek-Turkey aid, the Interim aid to France and Italy, and then the Marshall [George C. Marshall] Plan. I responded to the request of President Truman in White House meetings and brought to passage in a Republican Congress all three of those measures. Now that was generally the pattern under President Kennedy. It was with President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower]. The domestic affairs of the country were pretty much the partisan

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issues. They were the ones that you determined in your leadership meetings at the White House, your liaison with your own people in the Congress—I mean your own party people, your own political party. However, there were times with President Kennedy when we Republicans were called upon to help, in the accomplishment of legislation that clearly was in the domestic field and not in the foreign field. On those occasions I undertook to do what I could according to my lights and to what I thought was good for the country.

HESS: For example, what domestic issue had he called upon you for aid?

HALLECK: Well I think probably the civil rights bill of 1964 could not have been accomplished but for the assistance of Senator Dirksen [Everett M. Dirksen], the leader in the Senate, and Charlie Halleck as Republican leader in the House. I could go into some detail about the extended meetings we had in the White House. The matter was under consideration and we were trying to

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work out some sort of legislation that could be adopted and would be effective, reasonably effective, and certainly within the confines of constitutional limitations. I have had quite a bit of experience in this field before. Back in 1947, as the Majority Leader of the Eightieth Congress, I put on in the House of Representatives and brought to passage by an overwhelming vote a bill to abolish the poll tax, the anti-poll tax bill. At that time the poll tax

in some of the states was the device that was principally used to keep people from voting. That wasn't the only time I supported such legislation. We came along under President Eisenhower then and enacted what has been, I think fairly spoken of, as the first meaningful civil rights legislation to become law since Reconstruction days—for eighty-five years. That dealt principally with the right to vote. Now the right to vote was one of the matters that was involved in the new civil rights approach that

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President Kennedy and his brother the Attorney General [Robert F. Kennedy], and Mr. Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach], the Assistant Attorney General, were trying to bring to passage. It's a matter of record, I think sometimes too easily forgotten, that as the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives—Republican Leader—I was called to the White House three or four times. You may recall that the subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee had gone way off the deep end and was getting ready to present a bill that went way beyond what most people felt was reasonable. The problem then was to get that stopped and to get out a bill that would be effective and reasonable and that could be passed. The President spoke to me about it. I had reservations about the FEPC provision which was not included in the original Administration recommendation. There was great concern about the so-called public accommodations section. The other sections were pretty

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much agreed upon early in the game. As you know, the FEPC provision was added. I remember very well that President Kennedy said to me several times, "Charlie, that's the Republican FEPC bill." It was, to a degree. It had been drafted by certain of our members on the Education and Labor Committee as a better approach than the bill that had been reported by the Education and Labor Committee majority, which probably had no chance of passage at all. I was reluctant to add that section to the bill, because I was concerned that it might jeopardize passage. The last meeting that we had at the White House—and I don't want this to be too self-serving because it couldn't be self-serving to some people because there is still considerable controversy out my way about the validity of the arguments for this legislation, but be that as it may, we were down there, right down to what we would say in Indiana "the short rows." We had to fish or cut bait. We had fourteen Republican

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members of the Judiciary Committee. The Democrats, the Administration, were having trouble on their side with their people, trying to get the sort of a bill that the Administration wanted. I recall very well that the President said to me, "Now Charlie, you can do better than half of those Republicans." I talked to some of my boys about it and we thought at the outset that if we could give them a 50/50 split since they were in the majority they ought to be able to wheel the rest of it, and when the final showdown came nine of the fourteen Republicans voted for the bill that the Administration wanted with my approval and some say under my

very definite urging. It is no secret that I felt that something needed to be done. I was trying to do what I thought was right and in cooperation with President Kennedy.

Now whether or not we did the right thing, I don't know. As of today we are again in something of the same trouble that

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we've been in, and I don't know what we are finally going to accomplish by legislation. I've had a feeling all along that with Eisenhower as with Kennedy there has been a conviction that many of these things can be accomplished by legislation, but on the other hand much of it has to be done finally and brought about finally in the hearts and minds of the people of the country.

HESS: Did you generally work directly with the President or was it with his congressional liaison officer, Mr. O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien], and his staff?

HALLECK: Well I worked with Mr. O'Brien many, many times on many different things. I must say it was always a kind of a two-way street. It wasn't just that I was being asked to do something here and there. Once in a while I had some ideas, and I transmitted them. But on many of these very important matters it was a direct contact with President Kennedy. I recall another time we were getting ready to do the Alliance for Progress and I think

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the original request from the Administration was that we provide for a four-year authorization. My memory may slip a little about the figures, but I think it was 8.8 billions of dollars just to cut loose with no further congressional control. Well, I didn't like that and I said so. This was, of course, more in the matter of foreign affairs. We were trying to bolster the situation of our friends, and I hope they are our friends, to the south. President Kennedy knew of my opposition and one evening he invited me to come down and talk to him about it. He and I discussed the matter at some length in his quarters. I guess we had a drink. Not very much, but a friendly gesture, and I pointed out to him that I just couldn't buy that arrangement. Well he, I think, said the Government Corporations Act would require a yearly accounting, but that didn't quite satisfy me. I thought the Congress, if it was going to appropriate that money, ought to

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have a yearly accounting and an opportunity every year to take a look at it. We had the same arrangement when we enacted the Marshall Plan. There were some people then that thought you ought to do it willy-nilly and just let it go forever, but I think Congress has the responsibility, and so I insisted that time on that sort of arrangement. Now on that occasion my view finally prevailed, but I must say that President Kennedy didn't evidence the

slightest bit of—anger is not the word—well, he gave me credit for being sincere in what I believe and the meeting broke up between the two of us on a very friendly note and with the hope generally between us that somehow or other we'd try to work out some sort of arrangement that would be fairly satisfactory. And I think by and large the rightness of the determination has been pretty well established.

HESS: In foreign affairs, for example, when was the first time that you were aware of his plan

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for the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba?

HALLECK: Well, as I remember it, on a Tuesday morning, the date I don't remember, but there had been the regular Democratic leadership meeting at the White House. Apparently this situation down there was going from bad to worse, and that evening I got a call from the White House to come down there, and as I remember it Styles Bridges [H. Styles Bridges] (who's gone now), Ev Dirksen from the Senate and I were present. At that point it was obvious that the thing was really going sour and great concern was expressed about what finally ought to be done. The President—President Kennedy—was obviously shocked, upset as anybody would be. Prior to that time I had had no intimation about this operation. I don't think I had; I don't think I had been called down there. Now, that's no complaint on my part. This is the sort of thing that you don't broadcast to the world. You have got to make these determinations and carry them out.

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The next evening, it would be Wednesday evening, the Democrat and Republican leaders were called to the White House, and by that time apparently the matter had resolved itself, had come out to the point where it was not a matter of making the operation a success, it was a matter of trying to get the poor devils out of there. I remember Arleigh Burke [Arleigh Albert Burke] was there, who was Chief of Naval Operations, but we were told then that our ships were within the three-mile limit. Well, history records that we didn't get those people out of there—not very many of them. Most of them were captured. I well recall the President reading a letter or a report from some Marine Colonel, I believe, who had gone down to wherever these people were training and had reported back (the President had it) that they were ready to go. I think the meeting broke up with the President reading that letter and saying as we left, "That sounded real good at the time but now it

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doesn't sound so good."

HESS: Did he ask anything of you as the Republican leader in support of the operation?

HALLECK: Well, there was general discussion about what we ought to do at that point. But I don't recall specifically that he asked as to what he ought to do. I don't think so. I think it was more of a matter of informing us and that, you understand, has been what many of these bipartisan meetings are at the White House. It's more a matter informing us a little ahead of time of what was going on and what we might expect. Very seldom have we been called upon to approve or disapprove. I think that was generally true under Mr. Eisenhower. I recall that under President Truman generally we were called in to have it announced to us that such and such a course had been determined and here it is.

HESS: Were you made aware by the President or members of his Administration of the Cuban missile crisis before he went on television

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and told the American people?

HALLECK: Well, let me think a minute about that. I think I was out west campaigning and I got the call to come back and I came in a little jet which picked me up out west. Senator Hickenlooper [Bourke B. Hickenlooper] and Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] were aboard. I guess we picked Hubert up somewhere in Minnesota on our way back. I'll never forget the trip in that little jet. We came down so fast that I had to go to the hospital out at Andrews Air Force Base to get my ears unplugged. My inner ear doesn't work very well, and I had that terrific pressure that was really causing me tremendous discomfort. Frequently it is the sort of thing that grounds me. I have to have my eardrums lanced to get air into that inner ear and to get rid of the fluid that collects there. But we went on then to the White House and were told about this situation and I think that was one occasion when everybody said, "Let's get going." But the President was obviously greatly concerned

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about it and determined that something had to be done and of course the actions that he took were approved by all of us. One other time when the situation in Laos, South Vietnam, was going so badly, we were called down there, I think maybe that was Dirksen, Bridges, and Halleck. I didn't know enough about it to really express any opinion about what we ought to do. Quite some time after that it was written, and I am sure without President Kennedy's knowledge, by a columnist that Bridges, Dirksen, and Halleck had agreed to disengagement in Laos and engagement in Vietnam. Well, there were actually no commitments asked and none were given; it was just a discussion of the difficulties of the situation and different things that might be done. I recall calling Larry O'Brien right after that story appeared—this was some months later after we had been there, pointing out that I didn't appreciate, after I was willing to cooperated every way I could, having these

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stories come out of the White House that were just not true. Larry said he would check it out and he called me back some days later and he said, "We're sure that no such report was ever given any foundation by anybody from the White House," and I'm very sure that President Kennedy would not approve of any such, because in my experience with him, as with Eisenhower and with Truman, if they had a responsibility they stepped up and took it.

HESS: Do you feel that he was open and frank with you—

HALLECK: He was always, and I would like to say one other thing in respect to our personal contacts. Earlier you asked me about whether or not we had had any friendly relations, personal relations, social relations before he became President. We didn't have. It's just the plain matter of fact that the Kennedys had moved in a little different circle than the Hallecks which is not to either approve or disapprove of the actions of either side of

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us. But after he became President on occasion we would go down to the White House, Mrs. Halleck [Blanche Annetta White Halleck] and I, and he was always most gracious in his treatment of us. Always very considerate, and I appreciated that to no end, as did Mrs. Halleck.

HESS: What sort of functions were these? Were they White House dinners?

HALLECK: Oh, they were these dinners that they would have. I don't recall the particular ones. I think on one evening the President—their rooms had been done over and he asked Mrs. Halleck if she would be interested in seeing how they had done over some of these quarters. So he personally saw to it that she had a chance to see what had been done. She and I both appreciated that very much. It was a very gentle and gracious thing to do.

HESS: Carrying forth, I was asking about the Cuban missile crisis which took place during the 1962 congressional elections. Do you feel it had an impact on the election and may have

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made a difference in the eventual outcome?

HALLECK: Oh yes, I'm sure. Senator Capehart [Homer E. Capehart] was running out in my state. He'd put all his eggs in the Cuban basket, against my advice. After that White House meeting I was due to make a speech at

Logansport, Indiana, in my district that night. Homer was to be there. After this White House meeting they flew me back to Bunker Hill Air Force Base and I rushed from there by car to Logansport, some fifteen or twenty miles. I got there late. There isn't any question but what the timing, I don't impute to the President any ulterior motives in connection with it, but we will say it was completely coincidental, but it was a really remarkable coincidence from the political standpoint because there had been great concern in the country about the developments in Cuba following, shall we say, the disaster at the Bay of Pigs and the establishment of a communist beach-head within ninety miles of our own shore. A great deal

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had been made of that in the campaign and of course with this last development that shot the ground right out from under those people had been pressing that point pretty sturdily. Fortunately, for myself, I didn't have all my eggs in that basket. I had some other arrows in my quiver and so I survived. But there isn't any question but what it did have a great political impact.

HESS: As you had been traveling around the country making speeches and speaking to leaders in the different parts of the country during the first two years of the Kennedy Administration, what did you feel was the reaction on the part of people? What did they sense were the strong points or the liabilities of the Kennedy Administration?

HALLECK: Well, of course a great many people supported Mr. Nixon in the '60 election. There are even some people who think if they had counted all the votes maybe he would have been elected.

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But you recall it was just an eyelash sort of ending. Those people worked vigorously and I suppose many of them have never been quite satisfied about what happened. Then as we got going with the new Congress the sheer numbers of proposals that were sent up to the Congress by President Kennedy began to just overwhelm everybody. They almost overwhelmed me. I had some things to say about a "message a day" without much apparent consideration being given to just how much some of these things might cost. I think there was a growing feeling that we were getting too many proposals. We were getting more proposals than any Congress could debate and consider and act upon within the time limits of proper congressional action. Of course, many of those proposals didn't come about, weren't enacted into law. Many of them, I would say, weren't enacted into law in spite of the Democratic majority in the Congress. I'd said several times that that

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was the result of the fact that there was very little support for them in the Congress and in the country. Now the assassination of President Kennedy was, of course, one of the tragic

happenings of my time certainly, and in the history of the Republic. Some people wonder, I've been asked this, whether the advent of President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] was the real determining factor. I think many of these things, had President Kennedy lived, ultimately would have been enacted into law. Many of them are just in this session receiving more favorable consideration. Appalachia has been enacted into law. I guess the Poverty bill is pretty much President Johnson's idea. But there was resistance to many of those proposals and, as far as I am personally concerned, I'm still in pretty vigorous resistance to many of them. But our numbers are now cut down to the point where it's becoming a little more difficult to do much about some of them.

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HESS: How would you rate President Kennedy's effectiveness with Congress?

HALLECK: Well he was really effective with the Congress. I, once upon a time not too long ago, was asked in a press conference about the political abilities of President Johnson, and I remarked that in my opinion he's the best I ever saw. I thought Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] was pretty good; I came here in '35, the fireside chats were started and we really had great goings on around here. Truman was quite a politician. Eisenhower wasn't much of a politician; he got a lot of things done but when Mr. Johnson—Lyndon—became President, he really began bearing down. Now I think that raises a question. When you say how effective was President Kennedy—I am a fierce believer and I think President Kennedy, were he sitting here right now, would agree, that after all this is a tripartite system of government and the legislative branch is one of those equal and coordinate branches of the government. I have

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never felt that it's the duty of the Congress to just rubber stamp everything that is sent up here, and I don't believe that President Kennedy thought that. Now there is a school of thought in the country which holds that whatever the administration proposes, whether it is Democrat or Republican, just willy-nilly, it ought to be enacted by the Congress of the United States. I have never felt that President Kennedy had that conviction. My contacts with him were more on this basis: "I think this is right," he would indicate, or "I think this ought to be done." Well, if I happened to agree—as a matter of fact, I think many times I gave him the benefit of the doubt to the great discomfiture of some of my friends around the country. But there were times when I didn't think the proposal was good and when I felt that way about it, I did what I could to defeat it, but so far as I could discover it never made the slightest difference in the personal relations between

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President Kennedy and me. By the same token when I helped, like in the civil rights, he was quite outspoken publicly in commendation of my efforts as was the Attorney General Bobby Kennedy. As a matter of fact, that got such widespread publicity that some of my people out

home began to suspect me. But I was still glad to get whatever credit I was due for the accomplishment of that legislation.

HESS: How did you determine minority policy in the House of Representatives, whether you would support or oppose part of the Kennedy program? What was the machinery for the minority leadership?

HALLECK: You may recall that I was Majority Leader in the Republican Eightieth Congress and then Majority Leader in the Eighty-third Congress, the first two Eisenhower years. Then to get to your question, I was elected Minority Leader in the 1958-59 session, the two years before President Kennedy came to office. At that time we had quite a change in the makeup

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of leadership responsibilities among the Republicans in the House of Representatives. For the first time we elected a separate chairman of the policy committee, that is, theretofore the leader had been also chairman of the policy committee. We decided that maybe there should be a diffusion of responsibility and John Byrnes [John William Byrnes] of Wisconsin was elected chairman. Now that carried over into the years when I was Minority Leader after the 1960 election when President Kennedy was in the White House. That policy committee was chosen by geographic distribution across the country, north, south, east, and west, with a few members, three to be exact, appointed at large, and the leadership people serving as ex-officio members of the committee. Now we met regularly each Tuesday afternoon, and these important matters that were worthy of the consideration of the party as a whole were brought before the policy committee. We had some real knock-down, drag-out fights

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trying to determine just which way he ought to go. But by and large that is where those determinations were made. Now I ought to say in connection with that that we never undertook to state a party of policy position in respect to foreign affairs by and large, or matters involving the national defense. We tried to keep those out of the area of partisan operation as best we could. There again that position didn't meet with the approval of some of our members, some of whom criticized me pretty severely on occasion. But as I said earlier, I started with this sort of operation under Mr. Truman, I continued it under President Eisenhower, and I continued it under President Kennedy. There were times when I was the lone fellow from out west, middle west on the Republican side, almost the only one who'd vote for foreign aid. But, and I recall discussing that with President Kennedy who felt as did those who came before him, that this was an operation that probably was pretty

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important in respect to our foreign affairs and our national security.

HESS: Then how was joint policy made between the House and the Senate leadership in terms of support or opposition?

HALLECK: Well after I became leader in the House and Ev Dirksen became leader in the Senate, the last two Eisenhower years, we held press conferences in front of the White House, something of an innovation. After we lost out in '60, at President Eisenhower's suggestion, we continued our joint Senate-House Republican leadership meetings, with the press conferences held by Senator Dirksen and myself, came to be known as the Ev and Charlie show. We met with some ridicule at first, but the only thing I was concerned about was whether we could keep it going, whether we could attract enough attention to really make it worthwhile, and to my very considerable amazement and pleasant surprise we just kept getting more coverage and more coverage and more coverage

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all the time. And I think it was a very valuable thing for the minority as a means of getting the minority viewpoint across. Now many times as a result of those joint leadership meetings we supported the administration in matters where it was felt that we should support them, and there were other times when we were quite critical of some of the things that were being done or were proposed to be done. It did bring about an arrangement by which we were better able to coordinate the minority position.

HESS: Which other members of the Kennedy Administration did you have the most contact with, cabinet members and so forth?

HALLECK: Well, of course I had discussions with Attorney General Kennedy—Bobby Kennedy—I had frequent contact with him. Likewise with Nick Katzenbach who is now the Attorney General. I found Mr. Katzenbach to be a man of complete integrity, a man of his word in those difficult days when we were trying to

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work out the provisions of that civil rights bill, there was a give and take that in my opinion was in the best American tradition. Now I don't recall having too many—Postmaster General Ed Day [J. Edward Day] came to see me several times about increasing postal rates. I was glad to be helpful. When did Doug Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon] become Secretary of the Treasury? Wasn't he appointed by President Kennedy? Well, I saw Mr. Dillon who'd been, of course, part of the Eisenhower Administration from time to time when we were talking about various problems before the country. I don't recall too many—I probably if I had the time to sit around and reflect or run back through some of my files or scrapbooks, I could find many instances where I've had contact with the people in the Kennedy Administration.

HESS: Were you consulted on any questions of patronage or appointments and so forth?

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HALLECK: Very seldom. I had one person that I wanted very much to have a Republican appointment on one of the bipartisan commissions. I talked to President Kennedy personally about it and to Larry O'Brien and we had it pretty well moved down the road until the people out in the state of the person involved lowered the boom, and I've been around here long enough to know that was fatal. When that happens church is out. But it wasn't any lack of interest downtown in my effort to be helpful to someone who incidentally has subsequently got the assignment he wanted and is doing a very good job with it. But by and large I wasn't consulted about patronage matters. I well remember that the then Speaker Sam Rayburn and the then Majority Leader in the Senate, Lyndon Johnson, were quite put out with President Eisenhower sometimes because of lack of consultation on appointments that had to go to Democrats. I don't recall that President Kennedy was too conscious of that.

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I think President Johnson now is fairly conscious of it because he had had the experience on the other side of the street. I doubt whether President Kennedy ever had that experience because probably in those days he wasn't in a leadership position, and probably would feel no offense at what might be done.

HESS: Were your impressions of the President and his brother, the Attorney General, very different? Did you find them different in dealing with them?

HALLECK: No. I thought they worked very much alike and certainly together. I felt that the President was always very much interested in what the Attorney General felt about not only matters coming before the Justice Department but in problems generally, whether it was the Bay of Pigs or whatever it was. I think he had great respect for the Attorney General's opinions and views, and solicited them, which as far as I was concerned the proper thing to do. I never chafed at it.

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HESS: Were there any particular issues that you would like to mention other than those that you have? Such as civil rights, the Alliance for Progress, on which you feel that the Republican leadership made a considerable impact in changing the direction of the President's legislation or making additions or improvements as you saw them?

HALLECK: Well, we had constant controversy, I guess you would call it, about federal spending and fiscal responsibility. There was a resistance on our part, about the cost of these programs, money involved in carrying them on and

a feeling that that wasn't too good. Now the tax reduction bill—I didn't vote for it the first time. You'll recall that we had a motion to recommit that would try to put a kind of ceiling on spending, with the idea that if we had that ceiling then a tax cut would really be meaningful, because if you didn't put some sort of a ceiling on spending we could run into inflation

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and that's about the cruelest tax of all. Well, when we got our boys going, taking the lead, I have got to claim a little credit for this, but I think we cut about six billion dollars out of the appropriation. Now obviously we had to have some Democrat help in the Congress but when we made those savings in spending and appropriations then we voted for the tax reduction bill. That's the third one. I put on a tax reduction bill in the Eightieth Congress and also in the Eighty-third, but we did it within the limits of what I felt was fiscal responsibility. I think we made a very definite contribution there, probably not too upsetting to President Kennedy.

HESS: Thank you Mr. Halleck.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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