

Oral History Interview

with

KEN HECHLER

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Independence, Missouri

November 29, 1985 by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library

Independence, Missouri
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In August, 2001, Mr. Hechler added several notes and corrections to this oral history. These changes are noted in square brackets throughout the transcript.

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JOHNSON: You are presently Secretary of State in West Virginia, isn't that correct?

HECHLER: That's right, since January 14, 1985.

JOHNSON: We're going to back up from that date. I'll back up and ask you for some genealogical information. Would you give us your full name, the place you were born, the date you were born and the names of your parents?

HECHLER: I am Ken Hechler, born September 20, 1914 at Roslyn, Long Island, New York -- that's about fourteen miles from Oyster Bay, where Teddy Roosevelt was born and brought up. My parents are both Missourians. My father was born at Dalton, in Chariton County, not

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too far from Columbia, where he attended the University of Missouri. My mother was born in Ballwin, near Kirkwood, outside of the city of St. Louis. They both moved to Roslyn, Long Island in the early 1900s to supervise a 600-acre estate where my father was superintendent for Clarence H. Mackay, the father-in-law of Irving Berlin.

JOHNSON: What were the names of your parents?

HECHLER: Charles H. and Catherine Hauhart Hechler. They were both very interested in education. My mother attended a small college in Warrenton, Missouri, now out of business -- Central Wesleyan College. My father graduated from the University of Missouri after which he taught animal husbandry at the University of Missouri. That is one reason he was called to Long Island by Clarence H. Mackay, because Mr. Mackay was interested in getting someone to supervise, to superintend, his 600-acre estate where they had a number of head of guernsey cattle. He came there in 1907, and I was born in 1914, the third and youngest son.

I must say that my father and mother having been

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born in Missouri, however, didn't get me my job with Harry Truman; that was just coincidental.

JOHNSON: I think there is mention in *Who's Who* that you had a grandfather who enlisted in the Union Army in West Virginia and fought in the battle of Antietam.

HECHLER: Yes, my grandfather George Hechler was born in Germany, not too far from Heidelberg, a little town of Schweigern, and he came over to this country in 1854. He settled in Marietta, Ohio, and enlisted in the 36th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment of the Union Army in Parkersburg, West Virginia, which was then part of Virginia. He fought in a number of engagements and was wounded at Antietam. My great uncle, John Hechler, fought in the same regiment and was captured at Chickamauga and died in Andersonville prison in Georgia. After the Civil War my grandfather, George Hechler, moved west to Missouri and settled in Dalton in Chariton County where he operated a large farm. And that's where my father was born in 1882.

JOHNSON: So he was a Civil War veteran, who maybe got homestead rights, or probably got cheap land at least.

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I guess it wasn't open for homesteading in that part of Missouri at that time.

HECHLER: No, that wasn't a homestead. It was an opportunity to purchase land, good farming land, good bottom land, and he was a very successful farmer. Of course, he carried on also his interest in education. He was head of the county board of education, as my father was in Long Island -- president of the board of education. Both my father and my mother drilled me in the necessity for a good education.

JOHNSON: Your mother was German in background as well?

HECHLER: Yes, her ancestors were German, although she and my father were both born in this country, in Missouri.

JOHNSON: I think you've already indicated that this influence passed down from previous generations, at least in terms of emphasis on education.

HECHLER: Very much so. Not in terms of politics, however. My mother and father were both staunch Republicans. My father was a Republican officeholder, a township councilman in one of the large townships on Long

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Island. My mother was a Republican committeewoman and also was vice president of the Nassau County Women's Republican Federation on Long Island.

JOHNSON: Could you tell us something about the period of your growing up, of your childhood years, your years in school? Where did you attend school as a child?

HECHLER: I was a graduate of Roslyn High School, the local high school, where I finished second in a class of 30. In the salutatory address I based my speech on journalism as a career. I was very interested in becoming a journalist at that stage of life. I then went on to Swarthmore College, right outside of Philadelphia. I had very great difficulty in measuring up to the high

academic standards of Swarthmore. It wasn't until about my junior or senior year that I began to see the light and learn how to study and learn how to write.

JOHNSON: In other words, a small town high school was not necessarily the best preparation for Swarthmore?

HECHLER: Well, it was good preparation, but Swarthmore had an extremely high and exacting standard. It was

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a college where I learned a great deal about exhibiting the necessary courage to take risks and also sympathy for minorities and exploited people, which was cultivated a great deal more when I was working with President Truman.

JOHNSON: Did you get experience in journalism in your high school courses?

HECHLER: Yes, I did, a good deal. In high school I was the correspondent for the local newspaper, particularly covering sports. At Swarthmore College I was on the student newspaper, as well as being the head of the press board with a staff of about 20 students who assisted in covering all college news for the Philadelphia and New York papers, and for other newspapers around the country.

JOHNSON: Sort of a public relations effort I suppose then too.

HECHLER: Public relations as well as straight news. Also it earned me about \$2,000 in my senior year, because the system that was operating at the college enabled the chairman of the press board, who had worked his

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way up for three years, to collect all the checks that came in from the newspapers. I had a number of other rackets at college that I supervised, such as a cleaning and pressing business, and I had the concession for *The New York Times* which sold close to 200 subscriptions in a college of 500.

JOHNSON: Where is Swarthmore located?

HECHLER: 11.2 miles from Philadelphia.

JOHNSON: Denominational, isn't it?

HECHLER: It primarily has the influence of the Society of Friends, although I am not a member of the Society of Friends myself. It had that predominating influence.

JOHNSON: What made you decide to go to Swarthmore?

HECHLER: I wanted to get reasonably far away from home, at the same time not too far away. I really didn't know enough about the advantages of Swarthmore. I since have found out that it had a tremendous influence on my career in terms of making me learn how to study and having the inspiration also to follow ideals that I've always treasured.

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JOHNSON: Maybe it was a stroke of fate as much as choice. Were there people in your hometown, a counselor in your high school, for instance, who had anything to do with you choosing a Quaker college?

HECHLER: No, I'd have to admit, it was pretty much a choice that came by chance. But I was very fortunate to go there, because where else can you find a college where the professors take you out for dinner, and spend an evening with you, helping you and inspiring you? The professors at Swarthmore were not as much devoted to research as they were to teaching and helping the students. It was a tremendous inspiration to study there where the standards were so exacting and the ideals were so high, and the atmosphere was so conducive to learning and intellectual development.

JOHNSON: Were there any particular professors that stand out as having an exceptional influence?

HECHLER: Robert C. Brooks, in political science, was the person who believed in cultivating diamonds in the rough and he felt that I was a diamond in the rough, so he spent a good deal of time polishing. I was

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pretty much of a C or C- student until I began enrolling in his classes. He would take me out to his home, or his farm, and would give me the kind of advice and inspiration which I found was necessary for intellectual development. He gave me a lot of encouragement.

JOHNSON: What years were you there?

HECHLER: 1931 to 1935. I graduated in 1935. Although I started out as a C student, I finally ended up with the highest average in political science, and this was largely because of Brooks' influence. I started as a major in economics, and when I changed to political science that incurred a lot of opposition from my parents who couldn't understand. They said that political science was just a "talkie" subject, and they felt that economics had more value for a person's business career.

JOHNSON: Well, especially I suppose in the depths of the Depression because you started at the end of Hoover's administration, and then the first two or three years of Roosevelt's.

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HECHLER: That's right. They were very shocked that I became a strong supporter of the New Deal when Roosevelt took office in 1933. I was one of the leaders on the campus to mobilize support for the Democratic Party, which kind of shocked my Republican mother and father.

JOHNSON: They were living where at the time?

HECHLER: On Long Island.

JOHNSON: They apparently were not affected as much as perhaps some other people were by the crash and the Depression that followed in that they did help pay your expenses, no doubt.

HECHLER: Well, I did pretty well work my way through college, with the kinds of commissions I could get by selling the *Times*, by being on the press board, and by my cleaning and pressing business, as well as waiting on tables. The Depression did affect them quite seriously because Clarence Mackay, the owner of the estate, lost very heavily in the stock market crash. Along about 1932 he moved into what had been our house, and we moved into what had been the tennis professional's

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house. Everybody sort of engaged in a game of musical chairs. My father's salary was cut about 2/3 at that time. He was pretty seriously hurt by the Depression, although he had many other outside activities, including the vice-presidency of the Roslyn National Bank and Trust Company, and he was also very active in real estate.

JOHNSON: He was not unemployed in the ordinary sense?

HECHLER: No. He had also had the advantage of starting a new incorporated village in which he served as the trustee and treasurer. The incorporated village was set up largely to save taxes for Clarence H. Mackay. Nevertheless, he did suffer a great deal in terms of principal employment, but he had a number of other activities which helped tide us over during the Depression years.

JOHNSON: Did we get the date or the year when your parents moved to Long Island?

HECHLER: My father moved there in 1907, and my mother moved shortly thereafter.

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JOHNSON: At Swarthmore, I guess the perception would be that that was a pacifist college.

HECHLER: That's right. The influence of pacifism was very strong at Swarthmore, and it helped me to develop that philosophy.

JOHNSON: Of course, there was not only a Depression but the way world affairs were developing toward war. Was there a high political consciousness on campus, not only about the economy, but about world affairs as well?

HECHLER: Yes, we had very many speakers that came in from the outside. Albert Einstein visited the campus. There was a number of leading isolationist senators like Gerald Nye of North Dakota, who as you know was on the kick of attributing the entrance of America into World War I to munitions makers. There was a very strong pacifist feeling on the campus. There was also a very strong anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi feeling.

One of our students, for example, Joseph Seligman of Louisville, enlisted in the anti-Franco forces in the

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Spanish Civil War. A lot of the students recognized what was going on during the Spanish civil war as a kind of a testing ground for fascism and nazism versus freedom. Even though there was pacifism on the campus, the feeling against the rise of Hitler and Mussolini was even stronger in those early 1930s, when they came to power.

JOHNSON: Could you characterize the student opinion as isolationist, or at least as a modified version of isolationism?

HECHLER: I think so. At that time it certainly would tend toward a combination of pacifism and isolationism, and yet with a realization of the threat of Hitler and Mussolini.

JOHNSON: Did you cover these events? Did you write them up for the college newspaper?

HECHLER: Yes. Not only for the college newspaper, but for the Philadelphia and New York papers. As speakers came to the campus, that was my primary responsibility.

JOHNSON: Did you interview these people as well as take

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notes on their speeches?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: So you interviewed Einstein, for instance?

HECHLER: Very briefly, very briefly.

JOHNSON: Do you have scrapbooks of those clippings?

HECHLER: I have some of them, yes.

JOHNSON: That would be interesting to have.

By your academic record, you're saying that you started out slow but you were on a roll by the time you were in your junior year?

HECHLER: That's right. Robert C. Brooks helped me, and really it was mainly the inspiration that gave me the self-confidence. I had a terrible inferiority complex when I went to Swarthmore, and he helped to shake me out of that, and gave me the confidence to go ahead and do what I thought could be accomplished.

JOHNSON: Did he publish, or is he known?

HECHLER: Yes, he's written several books on the government

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and politics of Switzerland as well as one on democracy and dictatorship, entitled *Deliver us from Dictators*.

JOHNSON: So then in 1935 you graduated from Swarthmore?

HECHLER: Yes. I immediately went on to Columbia University that summer for graduate work. My ambition at that time switched from journalism to teaching. I wanted to be a teacher because I had seen what great teachers could do at Swarthmore, and I wanted to emulate that type of teacher. The atmosphere at Columbia University was radically different from Swarthmore. Going from a campus with 500 students to a campus where the faculty was four times as big as the student body at Swarthmore was quite a wrench.

JOHNSON: What influenced you to choose Columbia?

HECHLER: I think it was largely the outstanding reputation of the faculty at Columbia University, in both American history and political science. There was also proximity to my home on Long Island. I felt that I could get both the advantage of the professors and the low expense of living close to home by going to Columbia.

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JOHNSON: You lived on campus in both places?

HECHLER: Some of the time I commuted from Long Island, but after I got a scholarship and fellowship at Columbia University I moved into the residence halls with an eating scholarship that covered my meals and room and board; I also had some additional funds through a fellowship called the George William Curtis Fellowship, which enabled me to pursue my graduate work towards a masters and Ph.D. at Columbia.

JOHNSON: Who did you work under? Who was your advisor in the graduate school there?

HECHLER: In American history, Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager; in government, Lindsay Rogers, Schuyler Wallace, Arthur Macmahon and Philip Jessup. They were all outstanding people in their field, and even though they did not devote as much personal time as had been devoted by Swarthmore professors, nevertheless I was far enough along to be able to work on my own at that time.

JOHNSON: Was that a three-year program at Columbia?

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HECHLER: Well, if you worked at it very hard you could get your master's degree in one year, and then of course, to get your Ph.D. there was not a specific time period. But after I had been at Columbia for about two years I got a telegram one day from the University of Nebraska; I had applied for a teaching fellowship, and I was very anxious to accept it because I had never had an opportunity to teach. The chairman of the department at Columbia, Schuyler Wallace, said, "Why do you want to go to a God-forsaken place like that? Maybe we can get you a job here at Columbia teaching."

So I started teaching in the Columbia University extension in 1937; this helped a great deal in terms of my expenses but it also lengthened the time that it took me to complete my Ph.D. which I finally completed in 1940. So it actually took me five years. It wasn't a specific year program, but it took that long because of the fact I was teaching at the time first at the Columbia University extension and then later at Barnard College, the women's college, and also Columbia College, the undergraduate school at Columbia University.

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JOHNSON: I think the average nowadays is probably even longer, more like six or seven years.

HECHLER: I wanted to get it over with as fast as possible, and I even tried to get it under my belt in 1939, but I couldn't quite get quick acceptance of my dissertation.

JOHNSON: At Swarthmore did you have an honor's thesis, or senior thesis? Was there any major paper that you did at Swarthmore that you can recall?

HECHLER: We had quite a few major papers to write. That was one of the great challenges at Swarthmore -- to develop a thorough analysis of many, many different subjects, all the way from reviewing the autobiography of Lincoln Steffens to analyzing the relationship between eugenics and politics. We had great emphasis on biography at Swarthmore, along the lines of the Carlylian theory of history -- that great men make events, rather than events developing men. This had a great influence in terms of focusing my attention on great American political personalities, which was the title of the course that I first taught at Columbia and Barnard.

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JOHNSON: I guess Mr. Truman had somewhat the same idea. His early reading included biographies of great men and great women, and he always felt that men did more to make history than did impersonal events.

HECHLER: I subscribe to that 100 percent. It actually started much earlier than my college career. I can trace it all right back to the first grade when the teacher one day brought out a nice little brown book called *Builders of our Country*, which had a very elementary discussion of the influence of Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Andrew Jackson, and other early leaders, on the development of the great constitutional traditions. I'll always trace it back to that, but got into courses in more depth in later years.

JOHNSON: That was a line of consistency. How about your master's thesis; could you recall the title of that for us?

HECHLER: Yes, this was written between 1935 and 1936. I got my master's degree in June of 1936, on the eve of the national conventions of that year. I selected

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as my topic the question, "Will Roosevelt be Reelected?" It was a very lengthy thesis which ran over 300 pages. The last chapter, however, was very short, the last chapter was one word, "Yes."

Fortunately, I got my degree before the election, because I had estimated that Alf Landon would carry perhaps a dozen states, whereas, of course history records he only carried Maine and Vermont.

JOHNSON: The *Literary Digest* poll didn't influence you very much, did it?

HECHLER: As a matter of fact, I won a great deal of money by betting fellow students and faculty members who had followed the *Literary Digest* poll. I had to give them odds, but still I think I made about \$150 which was pretty good, by betting on Roosevelt. A friend of mine working on Wall Street placed a number of bets for me, giving 5-1 odds on Roosevelt.

JOHNSON: That was quite a bit of money in those days.

HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: So you were vindicated more or less by the election in '36?

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HECHLER: Although I did accord too much weight, after having read the newspapers, that Landon might carry some of the breadbasket states.

JOHNSON: Or even his own state, Kansas.

HECHLER: Yes, that was amazing.

JOHNSON: Were you part of an organized lobbying group, or political action group, on campus? Did you get involved in any kind of demonstrations, or organizations?

HECHLER: Very much so, primarily on behalf of the Democratic candidates. I was a very outspoken advocate of the New Deal and FDR, both on campus and in my classes. Everybody realized that I was taking a position very strongly, opposite to many people, including my parents on Long Island.

JOHNSON: Your parents never moderated their Republicanism?

HECHLER: No. They brought me up to think for myself and then they discovered that I had taken that advice very seriously.

JOHNSON: The faculties of Swarthmore and Columbia -- would

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you characterize them as pro-New Deal?

HECHLER: I would say perhaps more liberal in their outlook. Objectively, they weren't necessarily pro-Democratic, but naturally Roosevelt's policies fell in line with the general philosophy of members of the faculty in large part. At Swarthmore one or two of the economics professors tended to be conservative, although one of them was a strong socialist, and we were exposed to all shades of opinion.

JOHNSON: How about Keynesian economics? Was that being taught yet at Swarthmore?

HECHLER: Not as strongly as later on.

JOHNSON: Did you take economics courses at Columbia?

HECHLER: No, I sat in on a few, but my major emphasis was in American history and political science.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the book, *The Middle Way* by Marquis Childs, that had a great deal of influence on the thinking of some of Roosevelt's advisors?

HECHLER: As I recall, wasn't that a book that was largely

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devoted toward emphasizing the government of Sweden and how well Sweden had developed its economy?

JOHNSON: Without going toward totalitarianism.

HECHLER: Right. Of course, Columbia contributed a large number of people to the New Deal. That's where the "brain trust" was recruited. Raymond Moley, for example, who was one of Roosevelt's early speechwriters and became Assistant Secretary of State, was a professor who influenced me a great deal in the course that he taught. As a matter of fact, when he went on leave from Barnard College, he was teaching a course in Great American Political Personalities which he asked me to take over while he was on leave. There are a number of other professors at Columbia who actively joined the New Deal in its brain trust.

JOHNSON: Did Moley end up as one of the more conservative of the braintrusts?

HECHLER: That's right. He broke with Roosevelt over Roosevelt's tax policies at the end of the first Roosevelt administration in 1936, and then in later life

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he became a columnist for *Newsweek* magazine and wrote some very, very strong and almost bitter anti-New Deal columns. His philosophy was clearly conservative. I might add, parenthetically, that he came to Marshall University in Huntington (West Virginia) where I had been teaching at a time when I was running for reelection to Congress, and he helped me considerably among the conservatives in my congressional constituency by publicly praising my teaching. They felt that if a person like Raymond Moley could say some nice things, why I wasn't such a wild-eyed radical after all, and that helped me a great deal politically.

JOHNSON: That would have been in the '50s?

HECHLER: Early 1960s.

JOHNSON: Well, I guess friendship sometimes transcends political differences.

HECHLER: I didn't think he really realized how much of a radical I had become.

JOHNSON: Apparently he had asked you to take over his classes at Barnard.

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HECHLER: At Barnard, yes. Well, that was a thrilling experience for a young bachelor in his early twenties to walk into a classroom with 40 gorgeous coeds. I sometimes had difficulty in concentrating on the subject matter.

JOHNSON: Were they pretty good academically?

HECHLER: They were, they were. In contrasting them with my Columbia students -- if you gave an assignment to Barnard students, you didn't have to check up on them; they always

completed their homework and always got in their term papers on time. Everyone did their outside work, which I required, on political campaigns.

JOHNSON: Would that have been the fall of '39 that you...

HECHLER: That's correct.

JOHNSON: You had finished your classwork on your doctoral dissertation?

HECHLER: Yes, I had pretty well finished my classwork, but I was still working on my dissertation.

JOHNSON: That happened to coincide, of course, with the

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beginning of World War II, in September of '39.

HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: Do you recall reactions to the invasion of Poland in September, there on campus?

HECHLER: Very, very strong, and there was great polarization on the campus. There were those who felt very strongly that we should stay out of this conflict and there were others led by the dean of Barnard College, Virginia Gildersleeve, who later became one of President Truman's appointees at the San Francisco Conference of the United Nations, who were strong interventionists. There was a great intellectual struggle going on at Columbia and Barnard at that time, over what position that America should take.

JOHNSON: Who was your chief advisor on your dissertation?

HECHLER: Although it was done primarily in the government department, which was then called Public Law and Jurisprudence Department, it had a distinct historical flavor and therefore I guess the principal advisors were Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager, both of whom gave

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unstintingly of their time and effort to enable me to develop a very lively dissertation.

JOHNSON: What was the title of it?

HECHLER: It was called "Insurgency: Personalities and Politics of the Taft Era." It focused around the revolt of the pre-Teddy Roosevelt progressive Republicans in the House of Representatives and the Senate, who fought against the policies of William Howard Taft, and fought for progressive measures like postal savings and railroad rate reform. They fought

against the high tariffs, the Payne-Aldrich Tariff, and the dictatorship of Speaker "Uncle Joe" Cannon in the House of Representatives. This group of primarily Midwestern Republicans teamed up with Democrats in the House of Representatives and the Senate to form the type of coalition that carried forward Teddy Roosevelt's policies. In the area of conservation, for example, you had the Pinchot-Ballinger controversy, which evolved around the extent to which the national forests and parks should be preserved against exploitation by private interests.

JOHNSON: Was that published as a book?

HECHLER: Yes. Every Ph.D. dissertation at Columbia was required to be published. Mine was published and

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actually I still get royalty checks on it. It was a very exciting venture to put it together, because it involved not only research in documents that were available around Columbia, but I hitchhiked through the Middlewest into Wisconsin and Kansas and Iowa and got a lot of inspiration from people like William Allen White, the editor of the *Emporia Gazette*, and from some of the older insurgents who had served in the House and Senate in the early 1900s and were still alive in the late 1930s, people like ex-Congressman Victor Murdock of Kansas, Senator George Norris of Nebraska and the LaFollettes of Wisconsin. I uncovered a vast storehouse of new material and new documentation. I know how Robert Ferrell and Monte Poen and others felt coming to the Truman Library to see some of the rich new materials on Truman's letters because I was able to at that time get the thrill of finding new documents in the basements of banks, and in the haylofts of former United States Senators who didn't realize the value of these documents, and nobody had ever touched them. I was able to persuade them to open these up so that I could get some firsthand material, not only through interviews, but also through documentation of otherwise unavailable materials. Former Kansas Senator Joseph L. Bristow's letters were in the basement of a Salina, Kansas bank.

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JOHNSON: You had to travel quite a bit, it sounds like.

HECHLER: Yes. There was a vast amount of travel, although, as I say, I did it largely through hitchhiking. I found spots at the YMCAs where I could share rooms with other young people. I even found one place in Ottawa, Kansas, where -- this must be a world record -- I was able to stay for 35 cents a night and they even provided an alarm clock.

JOHNSON: This was in 1938, '39?

HECHLER: 1938 and '39, that's right. Yes, primarily during the summer and during vacations.

JOHNSON: You were interviewing and you were uncovering certain collections, private collections. Did those collections ever end up in archives, or libraries afterwards?

HECHLER: Yes, for example, there were the papers of Senator Miles Poindexter, who was a Representative and later a Senator from the State of Washington, who was one of the insurgents. He had his papers in an old barn down near Natural Bridge, Virginia. I spent

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about four or five days down there at his house and came back several times. Later, I persuaded him to transfer them to the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia where they now are.

JOHNSON: Was this your first trip, your first visit, to the Midwest?

HECHLER: No, I had frequently gone out to visit my grandparents along with my parents, who lived in Dalton, Missouri. Also on my mother's side, there were relatives outside of St. Louis. So I had that exposure to the Middlewest, although I was amazed at the openness and the generosity of people in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota and other states who opened their homes and their hearts and helped tremendously. I had been used to the kind of impersonal atmosphere around New York City where lots of people don't know their next door neighbor in the apartment building. There's a good deal more unselfishness, I think, in the attitude of a lot of people in the Middlewest.

JOHNSON: It's still in print, is that right?

HECHLER: Yes, in print in the Columbia University Press,

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and it was also printed by Russell and Russell in London.

JOHNSON: This provided you some of the background that you were to use later on in working for the Truman White House, I suppose, including some valuable practice and experience.

HECHLER: Yes -- research tools and interviewing techniques, and I suppose the ability to put facts and figures together which was pretty well schooled by the Columbia faculty, as well as the Swarthmore faculty before them.

JOHNSON: Were they into quantitative methods at all?

HECHLER: Not then, not that early, no. No, that was not emphasized until the Michigan school of thought began to dominate.

JOHNSON: Did it acquaint you with some of the local color, so to speak, that was one of your specialties, I understand, in the '50 and '52 campaigns?

HECHLER: That was pretty much developed by George Elsey at the time I was working for Truman at the White House. It was pretty much of an original effort at that time.

JOHNSON: In 1940 you got your Ph.D. from Columbia?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: In the meantime you were teaching classes at Barnard.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did that last just the one year, or two years? How long did it last?

HECHLER: It was interrupted by one summer when I took a position in the Bureau of the Census -- the summer of 1940 -- and then I went back to teaching in the fall of 1940 and stayed there throughout the academic year 1940-1941. I began to feel very strongly at that time that winds of war were already sweeping across the country, and I simply felt that I wanted to be a little bit closer to the decision-making at that time.

I might back up and say, however, that I had been doing a great deal of work for Judge Samuel I. Rosenman,

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starting about 1939, on the public papers and addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

JOHNSON: I'm glad you mentioned that because we need to ask at this point how you got in touch with Samuel Rosenman. How did that originate?

HECHLER: Well, this was pretty much a case of just luck -- being in the right place at the right time. I used to do a lot of crazy things in my classes at Columbia in order to make the classes more interesting. One of the students who was very extroverted, named Michael Gelber, would help me a great deal on these hijinks that we would pull in class, such as illustrating the campaign of 1840. That was when William Henry Harrison ran against John Tyler [2001 note: strike "John Tyler," replace with "Martin Van Buren"] on the slogan of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," and used the log cabin and hard cider symbols. Gelber one day dressed up in a Daniel Boone outfit and rushed into the classroom swinging two jugs of cider and yelling "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." Then we proceeded to discuss the issues of the campaign of 1840. But Gelber was the kind of guy who was always anxious to enliven the classes.

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Anyway, one day he said to me that he had been working with Judge Samuel Rosenman as sort of a tutor and companion for his two boys, two young boys, and that Judge Rosenman had asked him whether he knew of any young professors around Columbia who were interested in research. I had mentioned Judge Rosenman a number of times in my classes as being one of the key Roosevelt speechwriters. I tried to discuss Rosenman in terms of his great influence as a Roosevelt confidant and speechwriter. So I was fascinated by this opportunity to get to meet this great man, and I seized the opportunity to go down to visit Judge Rosenman. When I rang the

doorbell of his Central Park West apartment, he immediately introduced me to Benjamin V. Cohen who was another Roosevelt confidant. Then we sat down to talk about various things that Roosevelt had asked him to do, including annotation of the speeches and press conferences and other documents of the Roosevelt administration. Rosenman said that he didn't really have enough time to do a lot of this research and wondered whether I would be interested. I jumped at the opportunity, and it became a lifelong association that was

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not only very productive, but also perhaps was the greatest part in getting me associated with the Truman administration later on.

JOHNSON: What kind of research did that entail?

HECHLER: The publication of the public papers and addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt was done privately, the first five volumes by Random House, the second four by Macmillan Company, and the final four by Harper and Row. It entailed a discussion in Roosevelt's own words of the background of why certain speeches or actions or orders were issued and what resulted therefrom, in the form of administrative regulations or legislation.

So, while Roosevelt was still alive, the volumes from 1933 to 1941 were written in Roosevelt's own words, and this involved ghostwriting for Roosevelt on how these things were generated. It involved everything from relations with other nations -- the quarantine speech of 1937 that Roosevelt delivered in Chicago -- to domestic aspects of the New Deal. I was a little scared at first getting into so many different subjects that I wasn't familiar with, but one thing Rosenman taught me was

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never to be afraid to tackle something new. He said by concentrating, and focusing your study, you can learn almost everything that has to be learned about any new subject within two or three weeks. He advised me to just focus and concentrate on it and look for the wheat rather than the chaff. Of course, he would then go over these things, after which President Roosevelt himself would take a final look at the annotations that had been developed. Roosevelt had the chance to use his own words.

Then in the 1941-45 volumes, which were annotated entirely after Roosevelt's death, why Rosenman did these in his own words since, of course, Roosevelt was no longer there to do so. It was a brilliant opportunity to get associated with a great man, who was close to the President of the United States.

JOHNSON: Do we have a month and a year when you met Rosenman the first time?

HECHLER: It was in the fall of 1939. I would say it would be about October of 1939 when I first met him. We worked very closely together up until the time I went

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into the Army in 1942. Then after I returned from the Army in 1946, I worked very closely with him on the completion of the final four volumes of the *Public Papers*, and in addition to that helped on the research and writing of his book called *Working With Roosevelt*.

JOHNSON: Does that mean then that you had three things going at one time? You were teaching how many hours.

HECHLER: The full teaching load; that would be about fifteen hours.

JOHNSON: You were doing that; you were working with Sam Rosenman on the research for these papers, and then you were finishing up on the dissertation.

HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: All three at once.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: I haven't asked you this, but apparently you are single. Have you ever married?

HECHLER: No, I've never married at all, although I've come very close to it on a number of occasions.

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JOHNSON: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

HECHLER: Yes, I have one older brother, Charles, Jr. who still lives up in the family home in Roslyn, Long Island. My oldest brother George died in 1939.

JOHNSON: Did your brother Charles follow in your footsteps at all?

HECHLER: No, he's an older brother. He's the handsome one of the family.

JOHNSON: Did he go into college and graduate work?

HECHLER: No, he went to several different colleges, Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and Amherst College. He also spent a little while at Harvard. He eventually got his degree at New York University. He is considerably different than I am in both his interests and tastes.

JOHNSON: In partisanship too, his political partisanship?

HECHLER: Yes. He's a Republican.

JOHNSON: That's about the way it is in my family too. I guess the next subject is your experiences while you

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were in the Bureau of the Budget. I believe you were there for a little while before you went into the Army.

HECHLER: Yes, I started out with that job in the summer of 1940 with the Bureau of the Census, as a section chief reviewing the enumerators' reports of the Census Bureau and trying to clarify them and put them into order. In the fall of 1941, after quitting Columbia to get a little bit closer to things, I got a position with an organization known as the Office for Emergency Management which recruited personnel for defense agencies. This lasted until the spring of 1942 when I was recruited by Pendleton Herring of Harvard University who was setting up a small group of historians and political scientists in the Bureau of the Budget under an organization known as the Committee of Records for War Administration. It was to try to capture and record some of the key experiences of the personnel in defense agencies. This was largely a history job but it was developed within the Bureau of the Budget which may seem to be kind of a funny place to put it. But Roosevelt was very interested in the recording of history on the wing, and he was of course, a great historian himself. His

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interest was in naval history.

JOHNSON: Did you ever meet Franklin Roosevelt then?

HECHLER: Oh, on a number of occasions.

JOHNSON: Do you remember your first meeting with President Roosevelt?

HECHLER: Very clearly. Judge Rosenman brought me into the Cabinet Room. I'll always remember Roosevelt coming into the room where Federal Security Administrator Paul McNutt was displaying a number of photographs and broadsides that were being used to help raise the morale of the civilian population. The first thing I saw was almost like a cartoon caricature, the end of a long cigarette, then the cigarette holder, and the prominent chin, and then the massive shoulders, and then the sudden shock you get from seeing Roosevelt in a wheelchair, which you immediately forget as he begins speaking and you experience the dynamic character of this great chief executive. After talking with Paul McNutt for a while Judge Rosenman then introduced me to the President, who made some remark like, "I understand

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you're the only person who's read every word of all of my speeches, press conferences and letters." We had several opportunities to get to meet him and I had an opportunity to attend several of his news conferences.

JOHNSON: When was that first meeting? Do you remember month and year?

HECHLER: It would be about the fall of 1940 or the spring of 1941.

JOHNSON: You didn't have any conversation other than just a few casual remarks?

HECHLER: Certainly I didn't get to know him as well as I did his successor, President Truman.

JOHNSON: But you had several other meetings with him?

HECHLER: Yes, most of my contact, however, was through Judge Rosenman. But I did do a great deal of work at the White House itself while Roosevelt was President, while Rosenman was acting as his special counsel and at the same time trying to get completed the *Public Papers and Addresses* of FDR.

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JOHNSON: How many volumes of his papers were published?

HECHLER: Thirteen altogether. The first volume was on the governorship, 1928-32, and then the subsequent volumes covered each year of the Presidency. The very last volume was 1944 and the early months of '45, up until his death, the 12th of April.

JOHNSON: You did editing and annotating and that sort of thing?

HECHLER: Primarily did annotating, and some editing in terms of selecting the news conference texts that were utilized.

JOHNSON: This, of course, helped get you acquainted too with techniques, or the style, or presidential speechwriting.

HECHLER: Yes. Also, every now and then Rosenman would give me a small letter or greeting of Roosevelt to draft, nothing very major; for major things he participated himself, along with Robert Sherwood or Harry Hopkins or Archibald MacLeish or someone like that.

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JOHNSON: So Rosenman had some influence; he was one of a number of influences on your own way of thinking and your own style of writing.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Does your style, your speechwriting style, bear resemblance to Samuel Rosenman's?

HECHLER: Well, Rosenman wrote a letter to Clark Clifford which is in the files here at the Truman Library, recommending me as a member of the White House staff, but he said, candidly, "Now this is confidential and off-the-record, but Ken Hechler's writing is a little bit complicated." I certainly could not measure up to Judge Rosenman.

JOHNSON: Well, you had a journalism experience and don't you think that is an important part in making a clear writer?

HECHLER: I hope so. I hope I learned a little bit from Judge Rosenman in terms of clarity and respect for the truth. At the same time, I could never measure up even to ten percent of the ability of Judge Rosenman in terms of making words sing and emulating the Roosevelt

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style. Of course, Rosenman had been associated with Roosevelt ever since the days when Roosevelt was Governor in New York, and Rosenman participated with Roosevelt in developing speeches for the very first campaign when Roosevelt ran for Governor in 1928. So I never could quite measure up to that, and as a matter of fact, most of my work with President Truman was not speechwriting on the major speeches. I wasn't one of the key speechwriters on the big speeches; I worked primarily on the minor whistlestop speeches that were given at the smaller communities along the railroad track.

JOHNSON: Did Sam Rosenman have journalistic experience? Did he write for newspapers?

HECHLER: Well, he was trained as a lawyer, but he just had that magic touch in terms of telling what needed to be told in a simple, direct and dramatic fashion.

JOHNSON: He apparently avoided legalese, even though he was a lawyer.

HECHLER: Yes, that's right. Some people are able to do it. I guess people like Oliver Wendell Holmes were able

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to do it on the Court also.

JOHNSON: We're up to '42, I believe. You say you're doing some historical work in the Bureau of the Budget.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you carry the title of historian, or was it something like analyst?

HECHLER: I was called "administrative analyst," which pretty much clouded precisely what I was doing. I was doing a great deal of interviewing of people in the defense agencies. For example, when Elmer Davis was made head of the Office of War Information he coordinated a

number of information activities that had been spread over the government, and one of the things that we were trying to do was to develop the background of why the office of War Information was established and what some of the goals, objectives and principles of the new office were. Likewise, I interviewed Fiorello LaGuardia on what he was doing with the office of Civilian Defense after he was

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Mayor of New York. I had a whole series of recorded interviews with people in the defense and war agencies, and these, of course, were good raw material for future historians of that period.

JOHNSON: Did you wire-record or...

HECHLER: No, I did these primarily on face-to-face interviews, on which I took notes and then wrote them up, and usually submitted them to the interviewee afterwards.

JOHNSON: How about those papers, those interviews? Do you still have those in your personal files?

HECHLER: I have a number of copies of those, yes.

JOHNSON: You are meeting interesting people, of course, this way. How about the Truman Committee? Did you have any acquaintanceship with the Truman Committee?

HECHLER: You know, that's very interesting. I took a number of Columbia students of mine down to Washington in January of 1941, and we interviewed all of the leading members of the United States Senate and Supreme Court and the Roosevelt administration. But neither

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myself nor any of the students thought of interviewing a Senator from Missouri named Harry Truman, because these interviews were done primarily during January of 1941, and the Truman Committee was not established until about two or three weeks after we got back in February of 1941. So actually we did not get to interview them, and my interviews in the Bureau of the Budget in 1942, even though the Truman Committee had started, were primarily in the executive branch. I was told to stay away from Congress, that they were taking care of those interviews themselves. So, I never actually got to meet Harry Truman during this period, nor did I get to work on the development of the Truman Committee.

JOHNSON: Your teaching terminated in the spring of '41?

HECHLER: Yes. The spring term of '41 is when I finished teaching and then I went right to work in Washington.

JOHNSON: I suppose Sam Rosenman had something to do with that, but was there any other person or persons that influenced you to go from teaching into government?

HECHLER: This was pretty much of a personal decision. I

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just felt that with the war coming on that I wanted to be closer to things than teaching provided. I wanted to be where the action was.

JOHNSON: Were you still teaching just women students?

HECHLER: No, there were not only the courses at Barnard but at Columbia College which is the men's division, the undergraduate division of Columbia University. So I had three classes that were exclusively of men and one that was exclusively of women.

JOHNSON: These were political science courses?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the names of those courses?

HECHLER: Yes, at Barnard, the technical name of the course was American Political Life; actually it concentrated on great American political personalities. The courses at Columbia College were in political parties and American legislative procedure, American government, and a senior seminar in public administration.

JOHNSON: I suppose one of the less satisfying things about

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teaching also is the grading:

HECHLER: I liked that. I liked that very much. As a matter of fact, I have files and files filled with copies of letters that I wrote to students about their term papers, or about their examination papers. I used to take a tremendous amount of time in writing each individual student an analysis of their work. I got a lot of inspiration from Robert C. Brooks and some of the Swarthmore professors to personalize. I felt that Columbia was not personal enough in terms of the relations of most professors to the students. I tried to emphasize this. I didn't find this a chore or a burden; I found it an inspiration and a way to get closer to the students.

JOHNSON: But it meant long weekends and long work days probably.

HECHLER: Yes, it did, but it was very rewarding because they responded very well. Also I followed the Swarthmore custom of trying to be closer to the students by getting out and playing tennis and softball with them, and we used to have an annual picnic out at our place on

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Long Island, where my mother served gingerbread and whipped cream. We'd buy a keg of beer and go out and play softball out in the cow pastures prior to having a little celebration. The students would come out and assist; it helped a great deal in terms of closer relations with the students.

JOHNSON: Did any of your students become prominent in any particular fields, especially in Government?

HECHLER: Yes, I had one of President Johnson's Cabinet members, Alexander Trowbridge, who was Secretary of Commerce. Jack Bunzel became President of San Diego State University, and a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. I had a number of West Virginians who I taught later at Princeton, who had high positions such as Angus Peyton; he was head of the Department of Commerce in West Virginia. I also had editors of *Fortune* magazine, *Good Housekeeping* and the *Readers' Digest* as well as broadcasting executives and heads of Wall Street brokerage houses.

JOHNSON: Have you kept in touch with some of these former students?

HECHLER: I have kept pretty closely in touch with them. I've

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had Circuit Judges, and I've had a number of corporate executives in my classes that have become millionaires and successful in their line of work.

JOHNSON: How about political science professors?

HECHLER: Yes, some have become political science professors. I had one who is head of the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University now; he was a student of mine. There are many others who have become active in both law and politics.

JOHNSON: Well, that has to be a satisfying feeling.

HECHLER: Very much so.

JOHNSON: In '42 you're still in the Bureau of the Budget?

HECHLER: Yes, until I was drafted in July of 1942 into the Army. That, of course, terminated my career with the Bureau of the Budget.

JOHNSON: You decided to let them draft you and start at the bottom, so to speak?

HECHLER: Yes, I started right at the bottom as a private in the infantry.

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JOHNSON: You probably could have arranged something different such as officer's training school?

HECHLER: I don't know. I was interested, though, in going in to learn a little bit about the Army from the bottom up, instead of getting a commission like some other people did.

JOHNSON: Where did you have your basic training?

HECHLER: At Camp Croft, Spartanburg, South Carolina. That was during a very hot summer in 1942, in the red clay and mosquito-laden South Carolina swamps.

JOHNSON: Maybe you were having second thoughts by that time.

HECHLER: Well, it was good toughening procedure. It was very good for a desk-bound professor to get out and march 25 miles with full pack, and run six miles before breakfast and do all those other things which were physically hardening.

JOHNSON: You had been a tennis player. Was that your main conditioning beforehand?

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HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Of course, that was some months after Pearl Harbor. I suppose you have strong memories of December 7th, 1941.

HECHLER: Well, that Sunday afternoon I was out skating in Washington, D.C. when the news came in. One of the first things I thought was, "Gee, I would sure like to get a ticket to hear Roosevelt's speech." So I decided to call the White House and ask for Judge Rosenman. The White House operator immediately said, "Judge Rosenman's in with the President and he can't be disturbed. He's very busy, and would you kindly get off the line." So I hung up, and this disturbed me a little bit, because I really wanted to hear that speech.

So, the next time I called, about an hour later, I disguised my voice. The chief operator at the White House was known to be able recognize everybody's voice who called. So I said, "Is Judge Rosenman there?" And the operator said, "Just a minute, Mr. MacLeish, and I'll put you right through." I was horrified at this point, but she said, "Well, he's in with the

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President and can't be disturbed now. Should I have him call you at home?" And I said, "No, that's perfectly all right, I will get in touch with him later." I didn't get in to attend that speech.

JOHNSON: It seems to me an annotated copy of that speech was just uncovered about a year ago, by an archivist at NARA. It had been misplaced years earlier.

HECHLER: I think that that has always been available, at Hyde Park, because I worked on that in connection with Rosenman's book. The thing that I'll always remember about this was the way the first draft read -- "This is a day which will live in history," and Roosevelt had struck out "history" and wrote over it in his own handwriting, "A day that will live in infamy." The drafts that I saw when I was working on the book were all put together neatly up at Hyde Park.

JOHNSON: Did Rosenman draft that speech?

HECHLER: Well, as I pointed out, Rosenman may have drafted the original text, but Roosevelt clearly had a hand in giving it the kind of drama that the eventual text displayed.

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JOHNSON: There's that famous line too, you know, when Italy invaded France, about being "struck in the back by its neighbor."

HECHLER: That was a speech delivered in Charlottesville, Virginia in June, 1940 -- "The hand that holds the dagger has struck it in the back of its neighbor."

JOHNSON: Do you think that's a Rosenman line?

HECHLER: It's hard to say.

JOHNSON: What did you do after basic training?

HECHLER: I applied, as many of us did at that time, to be sent to Officer Candidate School at the Coast Artillery. We felt that that was the easiest way to go through the war more safely. We were all surprised, all of us who put down Coast Artillery, that we were all sent to the Armored Force Tank School at Fort Knox, Kentucky. I liked that though after I got used to it; the idea of driving these 35-ton behemoths kind of appealed to me.

JOHNSON: You were a tank man.

HECHLER: Yes.

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JOHNSON: A driver?

HECHLER: Well, I went to Officer Candidate School where you learned everything about tanks, including how to drive them. We trained basically to become tank commanders.

JOHNSON: Was this a Sherman?

HECHLER: A Sherman, yes.

JOHNSON: Not an awful lot of room to maneuver around inside that tank I suppose.

HECHLER: No, it was again, though, a fascinating, physically hardening experience. I loved Ft. Knox a lot more than I did Camp Croft, because the social opportunities on weekends were a lot better in Louisville than they had been in Spartanburg.

JOHNSON: How long does that last?

HECHLER: A thirteen-week period.

JOHNSON: And then you were commissioned a second lieutenant?

HECHLER: Second lieutenant, yes. In the spring of 1943, in May or June.

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JOHNSON: Then what did they do to you, or for you?

HECHLER: The commander of the Armored Force School, whose name was Brigadier General Stephen G. Henry, called me out of the ranks one day. We had been required to write a autobiography of our interests and experiences. I devoted a lot of time to that autobiography, including my work with Rosenman and Roosevelt, and my dissertation work. I even got a demerit once, I remember, for writing after dark; I was using a flashlight under my blanket in bed and they caught me doing that. In any event, General Henry called me out, and he said, "This is the most remarkable autobiography. I don't think you ought to be a tank commander. I think we ought to assign you to something a little bit more useful in the Army." I of course saluted and said, "Thank you, sir."

He then contacted G-2 of the Army Ground Forces and asked that I be assigned to something a little bit more important than driving a tank, which is quite remarkable for the person who is in charge of developing tank commanders.

As an interim, I was assigned to the public relations division of the Armored Force at Ft. Knox,

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and assigned to write a history of the Armored Force, which I found was very interesting in view of my historical background.

When I completed that I was sent to Washington to work for Major Kent Roberts Greenfield, who was then the historian of the Army Ground Forces, and a former professor of history at Johns Hopkins University. He had a remarkable staff. He had two very prominent historians working for him: R. R. Palmer of Princeton University, a modern European history specialist, and Bell Wiley, who is a very famous author of books on the Civil War, such as *Johnny Reb* and *Billy Yank*.

In any event, Greenfield's assignment to me was quite fascinating. He said he was having difficulty with developing any sense or interest in history by the various commands in the Army Ground Forces, and he said, "I want you to go around the country and talk with the commanding officers of every military installation around the country. Try to infuse them, first of all, with an interest in the value of military history, and secondly, to convince them that history is not simply a list of dates and honors and awards and change of stations, but is

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the analysis of what kind of training the troops are getting, and what are the mistakes made, and what are the lessons learned." And finally, the mission was to get each command to designate an able officer who could write or supervise the writing of the history.

So for the latter months of 1943 I was on a dream assignment, traveling around the nation, to the Desert Training Center in California, to the Mountain Training Center in Colorado, to the Tank Destroyer Center in Ft. Hood, Texas, back to Ft. Knox, and at the various corps and armies to get the commanding generals to assemble their staffs together and then I would, as a second lieutenant, give them a little pitch on what needed to be done. I found this one of the most fascinating assignments of my life. Finally, I said to Major Greenfield, "I think that my ambition in the Army now is not to stay in this country; I'd like to go overseas. I'd like to go to the European theatre of operations."

He said, "Well, we'd like to keep you here, but they're developing a corps of combat historians that are going to be activated as soon as the invasion of Normandy occurs in '44." So I was sent over to Europe

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to join, in England and Ireland, the team of combat historians that was preparing for the invasion. I went over in January '44 and got into Normandy in the latter days of June '44, and was associated with such prominent historians as Forrest Pogue and Fred Hadsel.

JOHNSON: Did you come in on Omaha Beach?

HECHLER: No, not until the end of June. But we still had to waterproof our jeep and drive off of a landing craft into the water in order to get up to the beach. The German artillery was coming in pretty heavy; we were still in a very narrow beachhead even at the end of June. The breakout from the beachhead didn't occur until the 25th of July. But this was again a fascinating experience, getting assigned a personal jeep to go up and down the front lines and get the in-depth story of the critical actions along the front.

JOHNSON: You got oriented, more or less for this, you say in England?

HECHLER: Not only oriented, but also we were stationed with the training and staging troops to get a feel as

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to what kinds of training and problems they were confronting prior to the invasion. We got to know and interview all the commanders and troops that were to participate in the invasion.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any of the generals that you interviewed before you went to France? That you interviewed in England?

HECHLER: Commander of the XV Corps, General Wade Haislip was one. I didn't get much above the Corps level. In the actual interviewing on the Continent of Europe, of course, I got to talk with General Bradley and General Patton and a few others of the higher generals as we developed the story of both the strategy and tactics of combat.

JOHNSON: Did you go over by troop ship, or fly over?

HECHLER: Initially from the United States we went over in a C-54 plane.

JOHNSON: Where were you stationed in England?

HECHLER: Initially in London, where the headquarters of

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SHAEF and General Eisenhower were. We started there, and subsequent to that I went to Ireland where a great many of the troops were trained, in northern Ireland, and then came back to a place named Atterbury, England where the XV Corps was stationed.

JOHNSON: Was it named as a historical unit that you were with?

HECHLER: Yes. These historical units were attached to Corps headquarters, but for technical support responsive to the Historical Section, which was based in London. It was initially headed by a somewhat aging and over-the-hill colonel named William Ganoe and later on by a dynamic military historian, S.L.A. Marshall.

JOHNSON: Slam Marshall.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: So you reported directly to headquarters, corps headquarters, the commanding general.

HECHLER: Yes. This made it a little bit difficult, because the corps sometimes had a different idea of what we

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were supposed to do than did the London headquarters.

JOHNSON: Then you got down to the division and...

HECHLER: Oh, yes, we got all the way down to the platoon level.

JOHNSON: So now you're in France, and you're actually going up and down the lines in Normandy...

HECHLER: Yes, the hedgerows.

JOHNSON: With the German artillery hitting every once in a while.

HECHLER: Yes, some sniper fire too, and a few night air attacks.

JOHNSON: Not much bombardment from the air though?

HECHLER: A little bit at that time, particularly when we had the German troops surrounded and they were trying to break out at an area near Avranches, France, and an area near Mortain where there was a German counterattack. There were lonely sortees by many German planes, one that we always used to call "Bedcheck Charlie"

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he'd come along about 11 o'clock and drop a few bombs while we were trying to get to sleep.

JOHNSON: Well, how did you function in Normandy? Were you sort of freelance; did you go where you wanted?

HECHLER: Pretty much, although we certainly tried to pick out what were the most critical actions to cover, and be kept in touch with the Army team captains.

JOHNSON: Who prepared the after-action reports that were required?

HECHLER: We did not actually prepare after-action reports. What we tried to do was supplement those after-action reports, to make them more meaningful.

JOHNSON: Who prepared those?

HECHLER: For the most part they were done by the S-3 at the battalion and regimental levels, and G-3 at the division and corps and army levels.

JOHNSON: Now G-3 was...

HECHLER: Operations.

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JOHNSON: Then you would supplement them, you say, with your own analysis.

HECHLER: Yes, frequently we would try to get our reports prepared prior to the after-action report which sometimes came along later. We'd try to catch these things while they were still hot in the minds of the people. We would start generally at the Army level by getting the overall strategic plan, and then follow at the Corps level on what was being done there and then work our way down to the division, regiment, battalion, company, and platoon levels. We would frequently get a group of soldiers together that were involved in an action, and have a group interview, which was a particular technique that Marshall had developed in the Pacific. It was very effective, because lots of times people would see things a little bit differently, and this enabled us to get a more accurate and more dramatic story.

JOHNSON: Were these stamped "Confidential" at that time?

HECHLER: No, they were simply sent back to the Historical Section for eventual checking and use when we were

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trying to develop the history of combat operations after the war was over.

JOHNSON: Did you carry a little portable typewriter, and bang it out on a typewriter, just like a reporter?

HECHLER: Right.

JOHNSON: We're talking here about procedures and we're mentioning that you probably got acquainted with correspondents and reporters who were also trying to write up the story of what was happening. Did you share information with correspondents and reporters?

HECHLER: Yes. Lots of times they would give me tips on who to see and who would provide a dramatic sidelight. There was some elitist feeling on the part of some of the historians that were supervising our work, that we shouldn't pay any attention to what the newspaper correspondents said. But being somewhat of a frustrated journalist myself, why I liked to see these radio and news correspondents. I always felt that the human side of what they were able to emphasize and turn up sometimes lent a lot of additional color to the story itself.

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I would try to break the bonds of the kind of prescriptions that my superiors would impose. I don't mean Marshall, because Marshall was influenced a great deal by the journalistic approach, but I think particularly of my Army history supervisor, Dr. Hugh M. Cole. He had gotten his Ph.D. in military history at the University of Chicago, and he always took a dim view of my

mixing with the correspondents and trying to put a little extra color into my accounts. He wanted to stick strictly to military history, as defined by what happened and why and not who was doing it.

JOHNSON: Or what kind of personalities they were.

HECHLER: Right. Exactly, or where they went to school or what their background was, and all those other irrelevant questions.

JOHNSON: Well, you can see what my approach is. Did you happen to meet Ernie Pyle at any point?

HECHLER: No. He was in Italy and then over in the Pacific. I went to Ie Shima where he was killed, after the war. I did not meet him personally, but I did meet a lot of

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soldiers when he had interviewed and I was very much influenced by Ernie Pyle's style of writing. I thought that this was something that we historians ought to emulate.

The only criticism I had of the reporters was that they used to have such early deadlines that they'd dash out "by-guess and by-God stories" that frequently missed some of the underlying significance of the background and strategy of what they were covering. They were looking primarily and exclusively for color.

JOHNSON: And like you say for scoops maybe, or speed. That was an advantage you had wasn't it, that you had more time to analyze.

HECHLER: That's right. I was more like a magazine, with in-depth analysis, than just getting the whipped cream and the interesting or unusual.

JOHNSON: Those reports that came back to Washington -- were they the only copies, and are those in the National Archives, in the military records?

HECHLER: Yes, I kept copies myself too.

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JOHNSON: You have a copy, a carbon?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: You did make carbons.

HECHLER: Most of the time I did, yes.

JOHNSON: And so you're doing this from late June of 1944; you're following the armies through France?

HECHLER: Yes. Well, actually, of course, it started in the training period in Ireland and England, in early '44 and continued by covering the actual combat operations in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and Germany, all the way up to the end of the war and then even after the end of the war in Czechoslovakia.

JOHNSON: How about on June 6, D-Day?

HECHLER: On D-Day, of course, I was not with the combat troops. I didn't land in Normandy until the end of June; nevertheless we did cover, after we got there, what had happened on the 6th of June. We made sure that we had the full story of the details of the invasion and the seizure of the beachheads at Omaha and Utah.

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JOHNSON: What Armies are you attached to then?

HECHLER: I was attached to both the First Army and the Third Army at various times.

JOHNSON: Now who was the commanding general of the First Army?

HECHLER: A very quiet and non-publicity seeking commander named Courtney Hodges. Even though he was head of the army that captured the Remagen Bridge, much to General Patton's dismay, he was not the kind of swaggering, colorful publicity-seeking commander that Patton was. I was in Patton's army for quite some time and one time Patton personally bawled me out, which is something I'll never forget.

JOHNSON: Well, I guess I wouldn't either. Probably nobody would forget. When did that happen?

HECHLER: I think about the fall of 1944 when officers (and I was then a captain) used to cover the insignia on our helmet with this sticky, greasy stuff [2001 note: "called cosmoline"] that we had used to waterproof our jeeps. We did this in order

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to avoid getting shot at by snipers, because when the bars would glisten in the sun the sniper could spot an officer. So one day when I had this stuff over my helmet, why, General Patton drove into our camp, resplendent with his pearl-handled revolvers and gleaming stars on his helmet, and the flag, a red flag with the stars, boldly flying on his jeep. He looked over at me and in his high nasal voice said, "Come over here, Captain." And he said, "God damn it, are you proud of your rank?" And I answered, "Yes sir," saluting rather shakily. And he said, "Well, then dig that goddamn stuff off your helmet or I'll rip that insignia off of your uniform right here and now." This was mixed with a number of other expletives that made me shudder in my boots.

JOHNSON: Apparently it was typical; it was not untypical of General Patton.

HECHLER: Yes. But he was a great military commander and he believed in speed as a means of saving lives. This was very much the opposite of Field Marshal Montgomery who lost a lot of troops by the slowness of his advances.

JOHNSON: Did you cover the breakout at Saint Lo?

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HECHLER: Saint Lo, yes, I did, very extensively. I was involved very deeply in that. We covered the bombing which killed General McNair, and the eventual breakout from Saint Lo, and the encirclement of the German troops at Mortain.

JOHNSON: You were with the First Army when this was going on?

HECHLER: I was with the Third Army at that time, and later on with the First Army.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea when that incident happened with General Patton?

HECHLER: I would say it would be in the fall of 1944.

JOHNSON: By that time you were how far?

HECHLER: We were moving very fast. By that time we were all the way up to the Siegfried line.

JOHNSON: Were you in on the march into Paris?

HECHLER: Yes. We snuck off to get into Paris several days after it was liberated, at a time when the mademoiselles

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were breaking champagne bottles over the jeeps and it was a joyful time. There was a little gunfire still going on from snipers, but that was a time that the French people will never forget, and the Americans too.

JOHNSON: You saw General DeGaulle at some point I suppose?

HECHLER: Oh yes. Yes, from afar, not close enough to commune with him.

JOHNSON: Did you interview the generals at all? Like General Hodges?

HECHLER: Yes, General Hodges and General Bradley.

JOHNSON: Did you ever interview General Patton?

HECHLER: No, my one confrontation with General Patton was about enough, although as a historian I felt it necessary to listen in on the conversations of the generals. So whenever General Patton came down to our corps headquarters I would listen in. We had a big map board that sort of screened the war room, and the generals would sit down in the war room in front of the map where Patton would pinpoint what he wanted to do. I would hide behind

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the map board and take notes because I knew that I wasn't welcome in the conference itself.

JOHNSON: Persona non grata?

HECHLER: It's interesting the different attitudes that some of the generals had toward history. Usually if you would ask them directly, most generals would appreciate its value. But they would say, "Although we would like to have you here personally, we don't think General Patton would like to have you here; therefore, maybe you had better not come in." In that case I would always hide at a place where I could listen.

JOHNSON: He was supposed to be quite a student of military history, wasn't he, even back to the Roman legions and...

HECHLER: That is absolutely true. But I think in cases when he wanted to bawl out a commander, he would rather not have that story recorded. I remember once he came down and I was hiding behind the map board, and he was berating General Troy Middleton who later became president of Louisiana State University. Middleton was a very intelligent corps

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commander, the VIII Corps. And this was right before the Battle of the Bulge when the VIII Corps had about four divisions along the very thinly held 88-mile front. Patton couldn't quite understand why they weren't attacking instead of sitting there. I remember his phrase; "Troy," he said, "you've got two armored divisions here sitting on their goddamn ass. I don't understand why you don't get them to hell out there."

Of course, that would have been even more tragic in terms of the slaughter they would have been subjected to by the Germans when the Battle of the Bulge started.

The technique of gleaning the inner thoughts of generals involved not only talking with them personally but also trying to listen to them. At one point I tried to persuade the commanding general of the XIX Corps, General Charles Corlett, to assign a sergeant who could take shorthand and to record all telephone conversations that the general had. This sergeant was livid when he was assigned to it. He said, "I'll fix you. You just wait." So the very first day that this

stenographic record came out, it started out this way (it was circulated to all the staff): "Sergeant Jones: Good morning General, it's 0600. General: Goddamn it, sergeant, I told you

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to wake me at 0530." Thereafter the stenographic record was not kept.

JOHNSON: During the Battle of the Bulge you were stationed where?

HECHLER: I was stationed at Bastogne eventually, which of course was one of the key areas that was surrounded by the Germans. I was stationed with the VIII Corps, which was the corps that was hit immediately by the Germans. I was right in the eye of the hurricane. However, the VIII Corps got the heck out of there when the Germans started to shell us in the headquarters. One shell struck the general's mess hall. We withdrew and let the 101st Airborne Division take over; they were battle-hardened combat troops who, as history records, held the Germans off.

JOHNSON: General [Anthony] McAuliffe and...

HECHLER: Who sent the famous message to the Germans when asked to surrender: "Nuts."

JOHNSON: Did you interview him?

HECHLER: Yes, oh yes. I interviewed General McAuliffe and

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his troops, as well as, after the war, those Germans that were attacking in the Battle of the Bulge.

JOHNSON: So you watched Patton come up with his Third Army to relieve Bastogne?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: And you attached yourself then to the Third Army as it came in.

HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: You ended up after the war writing a book, *The Bridge at Remagen*.

HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: What was the date of that event, the taking of the bridge?

HECHLER: March 7, 1945.

JOHNSON: So that was about two and a half months after the Battle of the Bulge.

HECHLER: That's right. This is when I was stationed with the First Army, with the III Corps headquarters,

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commanding the III Corps team. I just was lucky enough to be at the point about ten miles from Remagen, at III Corps headquarters, when this dramatic event occurred. At that time I went down to interview all of those who were involved. We were very fortunate that some of the first combat troops were brought back into reserve after they had captured the bridge. We just also had captured a wine cellar, which made the fluency of conversation considerably enhanced.

JOHNSON: Did you carry a stenographic pad with you then?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: And take your notes and then from them you typed up your reports?

HECHLER: Yes. It's too bad we didn't have small recorders that we could take along with us at that time, to get the full flavor of precisely what was being said.

JOHNSON: How about these field notes, these original notes? Did you save those? Are those still part of your files?

HECHLER: No, I didn't, because they were kind of jumbled up and I tried to save only the carbons of our eventual

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reports. If there was a whole series of actions in one operation, occasionally I would have an interim general report which would combine the individual interviews and dovetail them together.

JOHNSON: Was it mainly these carbons you had that you used as a basis for your book on the Bridge at Remagen?

HECHLER: Oh, considerably more than that, because I tried to make it a personalized story, in addition to the material that we collected for the Army. After World War II I went back to Germany on a couple of occasions to interview the Germans involved. And I did a lot of interviewing around this country after I had gotten out of the Army, to get not only the full story of military operations but the more personalized story of what kinds of home towns the participants grow up in, what the reactions of those towns were to the incident.

JOHNSON: Did you speak German?

HECHLER: A little bit, not as well as I would like to.

JOHNSON: Were you able to interview in German?

HECHLER: A little bit. Once again I always protected myself

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with a German-English reporter-interpreter who came along with me.

JOHNSON: Let's see, your grandfather or great grandfather was born in Germany?

HECHLER: My grandfather was born in Germany, and my mother and father both spoke fluent German. But you know that as a result of the experience of World War I and later World War II, why they tried to sort of shield us from learning the language. I wish I had learned German as a youngster.

JOHNSON: Were you there where your ancestors came from?

HECHLER: No, that was considerably south of where we were operating. That was in the Seventh Army area near Heidelberg. But I did go back into that area later on, after the war. Of course, I've got a lot of documentary material on the background of my grandfather. Someday I hope to write a book about my grandfather's experiences in the Civil War.

JOHNSON: Did you get to Nuremberg?

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HECHLER: Not for the trials, but I certainly got there during the war and after the war.

JOHNSON: You probably went out to the Zeppelin field where they held the rallies?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: I was there two years ago. You say you did not get there for the trials?

HECHLER: No. I don't know whether you ran across this, but I had a rare opportunity to interview a number of high-ranking Germans before they even knew they were going to be tried at Nuremberg, when they were still very, very cooperative.

JOHNSON: Right after their capture?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Including...

HECHLER: Goering, Jodl, Keitel, von Ribbentrop, and Kesselring and...

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JOHNSON: You interviewed all of these people?

HECHLER: Yes. This was part of a five-man commission that was called the Shuster Commission, headed by Dr. George Shuster, the president of Hunter College. The War Department had decided that they wanted to send this commission over to Europe, to interview these Nazi leaders before they developed a party line of their own, and to try to get things very, very fresh and quickly before they even knew they were going to be sent to Nuremberg. So they selected five members of this commission to concentrate on economic, political, diplomatic, and military affairs. I was to concentrate on military affairs. We interviewed these Germans at a little resort town named Mondorf in Luxembourg, about 15 miles from the city of Luxembourg. Jodl, Keitel, Doenitz, Von Ribbentrop, Kesselring, Julius Streicher and all of the leading Nazis that were still alive were interned there. The group included a fascinating English-speaking German lieutenant general named Walter Warlimont who had been Jodl's deputy, who I found to be extremely helpful.

I violated a lot of the Army rules because I got

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to know these people as human beings, although I did not sympathize with them. I remember making a trip down into Warlimont's home area near Munich and talking with his St. Louis-born wife, who was one of the Anheuser-Busch family, and bringing back to him a lot of things like clean underwear and soap and other things that he didn't get in the prison compound.

JOHNSON: That had to be quite an experience. Who depressed you the most?

HECHLER: Well, I guess Goering depressed me the most because he regarded the whole war and conflict as somewhat of a joke. He asked me whether or not I knew General Eisenhower, and of course, I said, "persönlich." And he said, "Would you give General Ike a message for me?" And I said, "Ja, Ja, Ja." He said, "Would you tell General Ike that I will mobilize the Luftwaffe and the German army and we'll get Doenitz to get the Navy back together again, and we'll team up and we'll knock hell out of the Russians." He said, "That will solve all of your problems for years to come." What shocks me, of course, is that there are a lot of people in the United States

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of America today who believe that we could and should have done that.

JOHNSON: Well, even General Patton was talking along that line, wasn't he?

HECHLER: Yes. Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear him speak about Russia?

HECHLER: Oh, yes. Shocking, shocking -- I don't want to go into detail here, but of course at that time we were redeploying to finish the war in the Far East, and the mothers and fathers and cousins and sweethearts around the country were clamoring to the President and Congress to get our boys back home. But the Russians ordered their troops to stay there, and as a result if we had engaged in anything like that, we would have been decimated because the Germans had been completely flattened. They didn't have anything to offer. Morally, it would have been an outrage for the rest of the world.

JOHNSON: April 12th when President Roosevelt died, I suppose you remember that date?

HECHLER: Yes, very clearly. I remember the major called us

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all together and said, "We have just received the sad news of the death of our Commander in Chief, Franklin D. Roosevelt." Then he said, "The current information" -- and he picked up a piece of paper as though he didn't know what he was going to say -- and he read it, and said, "The current information is that a man named Harry Truman will succeed him; at least that's the latest report."

JOHNSON: Harry who? Where were you when that occurred?

HECHLER: This was in Germany, deep in Germany. It may well have been Weimar, Germany. It was pretty far in.

JOHNSON: You were in many, many cities, I suppose, in Germany...

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: ...and it would take too long to recount all of them. Of course, that was only three and a half weeks before V-E Day. Where were you on May 8th?

HECHLER: I was in Weimar, the birthplace of the post-World War I German republic. And it was Goethe's home. And it was the area where we discovered the shocking results of Germany's inhumanity to man, at Buchenwald, where

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corpses were stacked like cordwood.

JOHNSON: Was that the first concentration camp that you saw, Buchenwald?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: When the Russians linked up, I think it was on the 27th of April on the Elbe.

HECHLER: It was actually on the Mulde River, I think, a tributary of the Elbe.

JOHNSON: Were you there in that area?

HECHLER: Yes, I was there in that area and it was a very happy feeling with the Russians. We all drank a little vodka and slapped each other on the shoulders.

JOHNSON: Did you interview Americans there?

HECHLER: Yes. It was a very happy feeling. We thought that this was going to solve all the problems of the future of our relationships.

JOHNSON: Did you get in on any of the surrender ceremonies?

HECHLER: No.

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JOHNSON: Did you meet General Eisenhower on your tour?

HECHLER: Yes. I met him and General Walter Bedell Smith, his chief of staff. It was very briefly, though, not a very deep conversation.

I have a bone to pick with Bedell Smith. After I had written all of these wonderful interviews with the German generals and top Nazis at Mondorf, it constituted enough material for a very, very good book. This was fresh material on what we had learned. I forwarded these interviews up through Colonel Marshall, who by then was a general, I guess, and he forwarded them up to General Eisenhower's headquarters, and of course, they went wild over them when they got up there. Three or four months later, somebody showed me a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* and they had a six-part series by Walter Bedell Smith, on "What the Germans Told Us." He had plagiarized, word for word, my interviews and made it sound as though it had been told to him. Of course, he must have gotten paid quite handsomely. I remember going to Hugh Cole, who was my supervisor and he laughed and he said, "Boy, it looks like you've been scooped."

[2001 note: "Forrest Pogue later told me he had discovered in Bedell Smith's papers a copy of a check for \$150,000 which the *Saturday Evening Post* had paid Smith for the articles."]

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JOHNSON: You were an unpaid ghostwriter, unacknowledged and unpaid ghostwriter, it sounds like.

HECHLER: You see a lieutenant general can do anything with what a major discovers.

JOHNSON: Rank has its privileges.

HECHLER: Right.

JOHNSON: How long were you in Germany after the signing of the surrender?

HECHLER: I expect I stayed there until about mid-June. Then I was called back to Paris to participate in the writing of the first draft of the history of combat operations based on the documents, the after-action reports, the maps, and the interviews. Then about mid-July, the Shuster Commission was set up, and I then went back to Luxembourg for the interviews with the German commanders. This was a very fascinating period, when I could get to be almost on my own; and Shuster was just a great director for that operation.

JOHNSON: Were these published, these interviews you did with

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the Nazi war criminals? Were they ever published in any other way?

HECHLER: Well, as I say, Bedell Smith published some of them.

JOHNSON: That became part of this account?

HECHLER: Yes. I wrote a little account in 1949, called "The Enemy Side of the Hill." It reviewed the technique and the substance of those interviews. I did this as part of my reserve tour of duty at the Pentagon back in 1949. That's never been published.

JOHNSON: Still in the National Archives?

HECHLER: It's part of the Archives.

JOHNSON: After that assignment, what did you do?

HECHLER: With the completion of that assignment, I went back to the Historical Section, which by that time had moved from Paris, 72 Avenue Foch, out to St. Germain-en-Laye. We then finished up what we could do on the history of operations. Along in early 1946 -- why, Colonel S.L.A. Marshall asked me if I would head up the whole operation

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of writing the German side of the history by recruiting all the German generals and assembling them in a camp where we could interview them, have them write answers to questions, and supply maps and everything. I told him that I was very anxious to get back to this country because I wanted to get married. The gal that I wanted to get married to didn't see it quite exactly the same way. So I guess it was about April of '46 that I went back to work for the Bureau of the Budget.

JOHNSON: When was it that you came back to the United States?

HECHLER: I came back about March of '46.

JOHNSON: And you had been gone since early '44.

HECHLER: Right.

JOHNSON: Two years in Europe.

HECHLER: I didn't go back the same way I came. I went over on a C-54 and came back on the *Muehlenberg Victory*, which was a seasickly experience.

JOHNSON: A liberty ship, sort of?

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HECHLER: I think they called it a victory ship. They changed the word to "victory" after V-E Day. They had just painted the water tank, of all things, and the taste of paint was in the water. It was just a very rough trip.

JOHNSON: That was the first time you had been on the sea, I suppose, on a ship on the high seas except for the channel.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: And you finished up your work in St. Germain before you left.

HECHLER: Right.

JOHNSON: They must have accumulated an archives there, brought things together.

HECHLER: Yes. One of my jobs working there was to try to assemble a lot of the German documents and get them back to the United States before the Germans destroyed them.

JOHNSON: These captured German documents eventually ended up in the National Archives before they were finally shipped back to Germany?

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HECHLER: Yes, they were shipped back to Germany.

JOHNSON: After we microfilmed them all?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Some of those items were among those that you had collected, no doubt.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did they ever do that project that you turned down, interviewing the Generals?

HECHLER: Yes, they did, and they did a very, very successful job of it. One of the ways I started this was to bring several of the German generals back to St. Germain while we were writing the history of operations. We brought them back there, to work with the American historians while they were developing their accounts. I always felt, even during operations, that this was something that we didn't put enough emphasis on. We had the G-2 out there who was trying to project what the enemy intentions and strengths were, but after the operation the G-2 would go on to a new operation. They would never

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look back on what had actually happened, and I always felt that we ought to do more in that area. Indeed, we did after 1945.

JOHNSON: Did the Germans have military historians who were counterparts to you people?

HECHLER: Yes, very good ones. They had full access to materials and they kept much more detailed and meaningful records than we did. Even at the time when they were very heavily pressed at the end of the war, their records were excellent. For instance, they had telephone diaries. Hitler's diaries are very good, too; they had a stenographer in Hitler's headquarters who kept a lot of them.

JOHNSON: I imagine the combat historians tended to be more truthful and factual than those higher up.

HECHLER: I hope so. I'm quite impressed by the candor with which they wrote.

JOHNSON: So now you're back in the United States and you go back into the Bureau of the Budget.

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HECHLER: Yes. I had two assignments when I got back in 1946. One was to be the overall supervisor of the development of war histories in every agency, war agencies and non-war agencies, civilian and military, to make sure that they had adequate financial support from the Bureau of the Budget in preparing these histories. They had able, competent historians who were writing them and they followed general guidelines that I tried to keep in touch with. The second assignment was to help recruit top personnel for some of the emerging agencies that were reconverting into civilian capacities.

JOHNSON: So you're not with the office of Military History, Department of the Army. You're in the Bureau of the Budget?

HECHLER: I tried to get a job with the Office of Military History, and the first thing they said to me was, "Well, we can only hire a Ph.D." I said, "I've got a Ph.D." Hugh Cole always had a dim view of my own capabilities and torpedoed the idea.

JOHNSON: Perhaps you were over-qualified, and that was the problem.

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HECHLER: Well, I'm really glad that I didn't, because my career would have been much different had I gone back into the history area. This way, I had an opportunity in the Bureau of the Budget to do a lot of things which kept me in touch with all branches of government, and at the same time I got back into the swing of helping Judge Rosenman with the *Public Papers*.

JOHNSON: Did you resume that title of Administrative Analyst?

HECHLER: Yes. I got a nice fat promotion too.

JOHNSON: Who did you work under? Who was your immediate supervisor?

HECHLER: Patterson French of Yale University was my immediate supervisor. And I worked pretty closely with Donald C. Stone who was director of the Division of Administrative Management, particularly in the personnel recruitment area. I also worked with a gentleman by the name of George A. Graham, who was chairman of the Department of Politics at Princeton University. He was very active in the Bureau of the Budget, and he began talking with me about the possibility of getting associated with

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Princeton University. At that time it was much easier for an academician to get an assignment with a university, because you had hordes of GIs coming back. They needed teaching faculty personnel pretty badly. So Graham put me on a research assignment of developing a text on legislation and legislative procedure, on a grant from Princeton, at the same time I was at the Bureau of the Budget. I completed that and submitted it to a publisher. You know how publishers always farm out these things to experts, and this expert, who was never identified, evidently had a text in the field and didn't want any competition. That's the way I interpreted it. He had some acid comments to make, so this 400-page manuscript was never published.

JOHNSON: You just made that one try; you didn't go to other publishers?

HECHLER: No, I just got kind of discouraged by what I thought was basically professional jealousy. I just never did go ahead and try to get it published. I still have the manuscript, and I still think it's pretty good.

JOHNSON: In your own personal files?

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HECHLER: Yes. I think it's pretty good, too.

Well, eventually Graham offered me a teaching job as assistant professor of politics at Princeton, starting the fall of 1947. So I quit my job at the Bureau. I had pretty much by that time finished the work on the preliminary drafts of a lot of the material for Rosenman. So I was able to go up to Princeton in the fall of '47.

JOHNSON: You mentioned resuming your work with Rosenman while you were there in the Bureau of the Budget in editing the final volumes of...

HECHLER: Let me think; yes it was the final, yes. Actually, we didn't get that finished. I continued with that work at Princeton. We wound that up, I guess, about 1949.

JOHNSON: How about your first encounter with Harry Truman?

HECHLER: That did not occur until December of 1949.

JOHNSON: Had you seen him, though, before that time?

HECHLER: I wasn't introduced until December of '49. Before that, I had seen him speak, but I had not really gotten close to him or got to know him very well. In fact, in

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the campaign of 1948 I really wasn't a very active supporter of Harry Truman, nor did I think he was going to win in '48. Like millions of other Americans I believed that the newspapers and pollsters and pundits were saying. I was teaching at Princeton at the time, and I assigned my class to go out and participate in the campaign. Also, we had about 300 people in the class, and one of the assignments was to make a prediction on the election. Nobody predicted that Truman would win, out of those 300 students. Some of them predicted he'd get a few more electoral votes than others did, but none of them predicted he would actually win.

JOHNSON: This was Princeton?

HECHLER: Yes. There were not many Democrats at Princeton. I was actually still a Republican at that time, too. First I was touting Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan. I thought he'd make a good candidate, and then in the spring of '48 I thought General Eisenhower would make a good candidate.

JOHNSON: You had been a Rooseveltian in the thirties?

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HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did your Army experience make you a little more conservative politically, or did you not see Truman as a liberal following Roosevelt's footsteps?

HECHLER: I did not think he had a chance in 1948. I think it was primarily the tactics of the moment. I thought that the whole pendulum had swung toward the Republican Party, and that the mid-term election of 1946 was a precursor of Republican victory in '48. I also thought that the split in the party, in Strom Thurmond's States Rights Party and Henry Wallace's Progressive Party, would siphon off surely enough votes that would cause Dewey to coast to victory. In my class I had my students go out into the campaign, and, of course, I had them read all this material. I said, "Be sure to read *Time* and *Newsweek* and *U.S. News* and read all these newspapers," all of whom it turned out, were giving a distorted picture. I always tried to be practical, but I turned out to be impractical.

This was a terrible mistake. In getting speakers into the class, I scheduled for the day after the election,

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as an outside speaker, Allen Dulles. He was the brother of John Foster Dulles and was the head of the CIA, and also one of the key advisors to Thomas Dewey. He was going to come in and talk about how Dewey won, you see. So I called up Dulles after the election and said, "Gee, do you still want to come?" "Oh, yeah," he said, "I'll keep my commitment." His son, by the way, was in my class, too.

JOHNSON: What did he have to say?

HECHLER: Well, he simply threw up his hands and said that he had, along with everybody else, assumed that they were advising Dewey correctly in saying that he was way ahead and he shouldn't rock the boat and shouldn't try to answer Truman's charges in kind. He was just bewildered by the whole thing, as were all the Republicans, including Mr. Dewey himself. But all of my students were clamoring, "Why do you bring Dulles here? Why don't we learn how Truman won?"

I had had a number of associations with George Elsey, he being also a war historian on the naval side. We had met at various historical meetings, and I knew

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what he had been doing with Sam [Samuel] Morison on the naval history of World War II. So I called George up and said, "Could we persuade you to come up to Princeton and give my students the inside dope of exactly how the whistlestop tour was strategized and how it operated in practice, and why Harry Truman won?" He being a Princeton graduate, we already had a friendship, and he readily agreed to do that. He came up and gave an excellent talk, [2001 note:

“on January 10, 1949,”] which we did not tape-record. But I had two or three students who were awfully good at taking down virtually every word; they noted his remarks as he spoke, and the Elsey talk report is with both my papers and Elsey's papers here in the Library. So this led to a large number of contacts with Elsey and Clifford.

JOHNSON: That was your first contact with a person from the White House staff, this contact with Elsey?

HECHLER: Well, I had made arrangements earlier for the class to see Clark Clifford. [2001 note: “One of my students named CLIFFORD KURRUS was a nephew named after his Uncle Clark.”] This letter, which is a part of Elsey's files, dated December 6, 1948, reads, "Dear Ken: I understand you are to be down here on Friday to see my boss, Clark Clifford, with a group of

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your students. If you have a few spare moments I'd like the opportunity of seeing you. I'll check with you when you arrive in Mr. Clifford's office."

Clark Clifford saw us in December of '48, in his office in the White House, and I arranged for George to talk with the students on January 10 of 1949. This correspondence is all in the Elsey papers. But since it's relevant, I want to turn copies of this over to you because it reflects on precisely what was covered. For example, here is a copy of the outline that I gave to Elsey about the nature of the class itself, and...

JOHNSON: Politics 203.

HECHLER: Yes.

And here's a copy of Elsey's letter to me, dated December 22, 1948 in which he agreed to come up on the 11th of January, 1949. Copies of this I'll give to you because I think it's very relevant about how I got associated with the Truman staff. Even though this is already in Elsey's papers, I think it might be interesting at this point.

JOHNSON: When you came back to the Bureau of the Budget in

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'46, and you were there in '47 as well, where was your office?

HECHLER: My office was in the Executive Office Building, the same floor actually where I was stationed when I was working for Harry Truman. It was on the second floor of the Executive Office Building right across the hall from the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, who at that time was Harold Smith.

JOHNSON: Did you have a room number? Do you remember the room number?

HECHLER: Oh, my goodness, it was probably 251, but I'm not 100 percent sure.

JOHNSON: So you're in proximity of the White House staff people, such as Elsey and Clifford.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: But you had not gotten personally acquainted with them before.

HECHLER: Only with Elsey in connection with his naval

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history work. And that was in kind of a cursory way. In other words, we didn't really become close until Elsey discovered I was teaching at Princeton and naturally he had a warm spot in his heart for his alma mater. That's one reason that he so readily accepted my invitation to come and talk.

JOHNSON: You're right across from Harold Smith. He lost out apparently to John Snyder in a battle for turf; I think that's in your book.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: James Webb then came in and took Harold Smith's place.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you notice much difference in the way these two operated, Smith and Webb?

HECHLER: Smith recognized that the White House needed the professional advice of the administrative experts in the Budget Bureau. Webb was much more of a politician than Harold Smith was. Smith was more of an administrative

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craftsman. Webb had a good background in North Carolina politics, and he believed that everything should be done in order to cement relations with the White House, including detailing members of his own staff to work at the White House.

For example, James Sundquist, who did a lot of speechwriting for President Truman, while on the Bureau of the Budget payroll, was one of those who was detailed. There are about six or seven alumni of the Bureau of the Budget who went on to the White House staff, including myself and David Stowe, David Bell, Milton Kayle, Harold Enarson, [2001 note: "Donald Hanson,"] and Richard Neustadt. During this period I had an interesting competition with Richard Neustadt for the position of personal assistant to James Webb. Webb sent out word that he would like to have a personal assistant, and a number of us competed for that job, including

myself. Dick Neustadt, who later went to the White House staff, won out and got that position which was a very prized position.

That may have been in the back of my mind when I decided to accept the assignment at Princeton University,

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because I felt that this would afford a little more opportunity for individual development. And I felt it was about time I got back into the academic world again, because all my life I've tried to shift back and forth between academia and practical public service.

JOHNSON: So you took your class there in January of '49, apparently.

HECHLER: No, actually it was in December of '48 when I brought my class there, and it was January 11, '49 that Elsey came up to Princeton to talk to the class. He gave a very excellent talk.

JOHNSON: Did he ask you at that time whether you had any interest in getting back into government?

HECHLER: Not yet. This was just cementing our relationship. One of the things that he said when he was talking to the class at Princeton -- he said, "I've been reading about Professor Hechler's course in *Time* magazine and the *Alumni Weekly*, and I feel that if we'd had a course like it I would have been better prepared for the work

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that I have done for the past several years and during the campaign." Then he went on to describe the campaign and the actual text of his remarks is included in Elsey's papers.

JOHNSON: January 11, 1949.

HECHLER: Of course, immediately the day after, I wrote a very laudatory letter to George, indicating not only my reaction to what he had said, and praise for the manner in which he had handled the class, but I also wanted to get a little bit closer to what he was doing by raising a few questions about my work for Judge Rosenman. I guess you could call that a kind of a strategic ploy.

JOHNSON: In other words, it whetted your interest in government again.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: And you wanted him to know it.

HECHLER: He responded to me, immediately, first with a reaction to the manner of his class performance, and

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then he said, "I should be very happy to talk with you anytime about FDR's Public Papers and Addresses. I am afraid there is not much light I can shed on so complex a matter as the Vichy policy but it is a pleasure to work on a problem of that sort." He immediately passed that on to Admiral Leahy and Admiral Dennison, and they had quite a bit of additional comment to make.

JOHNSON: If you don't mind I'll take a picture or two while you're talking.

HECHLER: All right.

JOHNSON: Okay, so you're teaching through that spring semester of '49.

HECHLER: No, actually, right about this time I began to get restless again. I began to get restless after two and a half years at Princeton and I wanted to get back into the political swim. I was very excited about the prospects of Truman's administration for a full term, and the nature of his victory. So I went down to talk with Elsey again when he was detailed to the Navy Department to work on the naval history of World War II

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operations. He said, "I sent the galley proof on the Vichy note to Admiral Leahy, who is now in Key West. As you know, he is our Vichy authority and we all refer to him when such questions arise." It was a very nice note which he wrote to me at my home in Roslyn, where I'd gone after quitting Princeton in February. I quit Princeton because of two or three reasons. First of all, I was very anxious to get back into the political swim in one way or another. And second, the burden of finishing the work on the final set of volumes for Judge Rosenman was really getting heavy. We were at the galley proof stage and we were under the gun to get all this material finished. I was doing a lot of work out of the Judge's law office at 165 Broadway in New York.

But meanwhile, I was keeping very closely in touch. For example in May of '49 I wrote another letter to Elsey about the reasons why Roosevelt didn't want a full public hearing on Pearl Harbor, because it might have revealed to the Japanese that we had broken their secret code. I had put this in the note and I said to George, "The Judge wants to be absolutely sure that the above fact is declassified and of public knowledge,"

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and would you please check this point. He responded in May, "I've talked with security officers at the Navy Department about your letter. There's no objection to stating that Roosevelt didn't want a full public hearing because such a hearing might have revealed to the Japanese we had broken their code. However, the Army-Navy policy at present is to avoid any official

confirmation or denial of assertions frequently made that we continued to break the Japanese code after Pearl Harbor."

Now I began to look around for the kind of position that I wanted. On the record, I suppose it looks pretty bad to quit a major Ivy League university in the middle of the term. It almost looks as though I had been fired.

JOHNSON: You say it was in February.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: In other words, it was after the semester had started?

HECHLER: No. Actually the semesters at that time extended past Christmas through January, and the new semester began in February. The first semester ended in January.

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So, in September 1949 Elsey wrote me, "When are you going to be in Washington again? I'm very anxious to talk with you about your work with Judge Rosenman and the FDR papers because there's been a proposal for a similar edition of President Truman's papers. Call me collect any time within the next few days." This was in September.

Now comes Judge Rosenman's letter to Clark Clifford, attaching biographical data on me, September 16th, saying, "He's a first rate research man, and has had great experience in teaching government." He mentioned that I had taught at Columbia and Princeton, and that George Elsey knew my work. "While he is able to assemble data in a hurry and to summarize and present issues clearly and succinctly in a very objective way where conflicting conditions are made, his chief limitation, confidentially, is that he does not write in a simple and interesting way. His English is fairly complicated. However, I was not thinking of him so much as a writer as I was of one who could help you as a collector of data either by individual research or interviews with people. He is very discreet and a strong respecter of confidences.

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Above all, he is an indefatigable worker and comes up resourcefully with new and bright ideas." Then he says, "George thought he might work on President Truman's *Public Papers*." Then the Judge mentions that I am coming down to Washington. He concludes, "I think Hechler would be a valuable addition to the staff of an official who needs research quickly and thoroughly done, and data assembled and presented in a succinct manner."

So now George comes back in September with another piece of data for my research on how Roosevelt arrived at the unconditional surrender ultimatum to Germany and Japan, and why he persisted in it for so long.

I did not want to get involved in President Truman's *Public Papers*. I was anxious to get away from research and get into the hurley-burley of actual day-to-day constructive work that would help the ongoing operations at the White House. This is what I was basically interested in. So I threw cold water on George's idea that I participate in the *Public Papers of President Truman*.

Judge Rosenman kept after me and he said, "Now, what's happening down at the White House? Why aren't you down there? What are you doing hanging around here?"

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So he wrote a note in October, October 25, "Dear George, I wonder if you have heard anything about something for Ken Hechler?" Now they begin talking about a position with the National Security Resources Board, and of course, I shuddered at this. I tried to hold out for something a little bit better.

The Bureau of the Budget started to try to contact me to see if I'd be interested in something there. Things dragged out through November as this correspondence in the files reads.

JOHNSON: You are kind of...

HECHLER: I am sort of holding out for something better. And right about this time an offer came to me from the State Department to go over to Frankfurt and work there with the High Commission on Germany, pulling together materials on the work of the High Commission since World War II. Well, I finally decided since nothing else good was coming up and this was a pretty high-salaried job, that I would take that job in Frankfurt. But I made a last desperate attempt to see what George Elsey could turn up, and on November 27 (this would be about this

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time of the year), I said to him, "I'd like to see what you think [about this job in Frankfurt] before committing myself."

JOHNSON: Okay, this is a hand-written letter to George Elsey, November 27, 1949, and that's in the papers of Elsey here at the Library.

HECHLER: Right, that's in Elsey's papers.

Meanwhile, one of those wonderful breaks occurred that has really characterized almost everything I've done in life. It's just amazing; it just happened out of the blue. Somebody sent President Truman a copy of an article by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in *The Reporter* magazine, which was one of the early liberal magazines which has since gone out of existence. The Republicans had been attacking the Democrats for creating a welfare state, and Schlesinger's theme in this article was that the welfare state really started with Alexander Hamilton and his program of subsidies for business, banks and through the protective tariff. The article said that so long as the subsidies went to a big business nobody ever criticized them, but as soon as they started to go to education

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and health, like the Democrats were proposing, then all of a sudden it became a terrible thing called a "welfare state." So Truman was very intrigued by this and he wrote a little note to Clifford saying he'd like to have a study made of all these subsidies that had gone to business, to show that this wasn't anything new. This was just broadening the base a little bit.

JOHNSON: Becoming Jeffersonian and not just Hamiltonian.

HECHLER: Exactly. This came in early December of 1949, and you know December is just about the busiest time around the White House. They were all getting ready for the State of the Union message, the Budget Message, the Economic Report, all of which are due in January. All of a sudden comes this request from the President, "Let's do a study on subsidies." Those guys were just fit to be tied; they didn't know how they could find time. So Elsey wrote a memorandum to the White House staff saying, "On Friday, November 11, the President stated that he would like a study prepared that would show instances in the past where the Government had assisted private business through direct monetary aid, land grants,

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special privileges, or other such means." And apparently they couldn't get anybody to do it, so finally Elsey got in touch with me.

JOHNSON: What date is that?

HECHLER: Elsey got in touch with me early in December; on December 1st he wrote a memorandum. Well, here it refers to a poll of the staff and me as to whether or not this could work out, you see. He said, "I was willing and everybody else put his okay on it."

He was going down to Key West so he wrote this memorandum to various people saying, "Mr. Hechler is being placed on the White House rolls temporarily as a Special Consultant, to prepare a report under my direction for the use of members of the White House staff. He will work at the Library of Congress where he will not ordinarily be available by telephone. While I am in Key West from December 5 to 20, Mr. Hechler will keep in touch with Miss Toi Bachelder in Mr. Murphy's office, and mail or messages for him can be left with her."

JOHNSON: In the meantime, from February to December 1 of '49, what else were you doing?

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HECHLER: I was completing the work on the Public Papers and Addresses of FDR, and when I finished reading the page proofs I applied to the Army for a 60-day tour of duty at the Brooklyn Army Base. There, I was assigned to do public relations work right about the time the Russians were developing the atom bomb in the fall of '49.

JOHNSON: Now as to Samuel Rosenman's role, was the White House consulting him regularly?

HECHLER: I'm sure they were. I'm sure they were privately in terms of whether or not I would be a good person for this. So, here I was, not stationed in the White House, not regularly employed other than to do consultant work on this particular piece. I bet you can't guess how much I was paid -- twenty-five dollars a day for a period of three or four weeks. I really earned it. I really earned it, because I worked from early morning to late at night up at the Library of Congress. Nobody every kept track of my hours, but I was determined to produce a study that would be first-class.

JOHNSON: Did you stay in a hotel in downtown Washington during

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that time?

HECHLER: I stayed at the YMCA. In mid-December I had a further conversation with David Lloyd and David Bell, who later became Administrative Assistants to President Truman, about various things that should or should not be included in the subsidy study.

JOHNSON: Had you gotten acquainted with them when you were at the Bureau of the Budget earlier?

HECHLER: With Bell, but not with Lloyd. Bell was another of the alumni of the Bureau of the Budget, and he had come into the Bureau about the same time I did in 1942. He joined the Marines during the war, and came back as a very able Budget Bureau member who was detailed and later put on the White House staff on a fulltime basis.

So, in doing this study, the first thing I did was call up Arthur Schlesinger and get some more advice from him. Then I called Seymour Harris at Harvard, and called Henry Steele Commager at Columbia. I just tapped everybody to get the best information I could. I wrote an interim note to Elsey in mid-January to indicate the progress I had made.

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JOHNSON: When did you finish your study?

HECHLER: I finished my study in about two and a half weeks.

JOHNSON: Your first draft?

HECHLER: No, the final draft. Two and a half weeks. Now that meant a lot of work. I knew it had to be done in a hurry and I knew it had to be good, so...

JOHNSON: You turned that over to whom?

HECHLER: I turned it over to Mr. Elsey, who turned it over to Mr. Clifford, who on the 22nd of December wrote this note to the President on the study.

JOHNSON: Where did that study end up? Is it in our papers?

HECHLER: Here it is; I'm going to give it to you today.

JOHNSON: We don't have a copy?

HECHLER: No. You have now.

JOHNSON: Great, that's what we're after.

HECHLER: You don't have a copy of that either.

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JOHNSON: I don't think so. This is a memo from Clifford to the President, December 22, subject: Brief history of Federal subsidies to Business. And I notice in this last paragraph he says, "I believe that there is a great deal of information here which will be of value to us in working on your Jefferson-Jackson Day speech."

HECHLER: Also you will notice that he gave me credit in the memo that I had done the study, I think.

JOHNSON: He says it is in preliminary form, but was it ever revised beyond that?

HECHLER: No, this is the final document. It's a nice, thick study for two weeks.

JOHNSON: Yes. Harry Truman read that, presumably. Did you ever get comment from Harry Truman himself on that study?

HECHLER: There was a Christmas party at the White House right about this time, which is the first occasion that I personally met President Truman. I got a call from George. I had told him I had finished the study, and I had sent it on to him. I got another call from him

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saying, "You are invited to come to the White House Christmas party since you are now a consultant at the White House." Still, it was very tenuous. He said, "It's going to follow the President's press conference." So after I hung up I called back and said, "Gee, you know, I'd like to go to the press conference, too. Do you think I could get in?" He said, "Well, Charlie Ross doesn't like outsiders in, but now that you're an insider, you come on." So afterwards we went through the receiving line at the White House Christmas party and President Truman mentioned

that he had seen the study and appreciated it very much. He didn't really go into any details, but he expressed appreciation.

JOHNSON: That's December 22, so this party was between then and Christmas?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Must have been the next day or so.

HECHLER: I think it was very close to Christmas Day.

JOHNSON: That was the first time you got to talk to him, at the Christmas party?

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HECHLER: Yes. And there were a lot of people in the line going through. So we didn't really have much of a chance of a conversation but he did commend me on the study, and the nature of it, and the speed with which it had been done.

JOHNSON: It certainly fit into his thinking by that time.

HECHLER: Yes. It documented precisely what he wanted to get documented. You see, this all happened so quickly and it happened so fortuitously that if this had happened in the springtime when somebody else would have had time to do it, why I never would have had that chance. But here I had a chance to put my best foot forward and show what I could do speedily, accurately, and efficiently, and I think it probably made an impression.

JOHNSON: You weren't being distracted by other projects, or other jobs at the time.

What's the next step after that Christmas party meeting?

HECHLER: Well, I had a kind of a blue period there after Christmas, between Christmas and New Years, where

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there wasn't any call on my services at all. Here I was; I had just finished this great job and I was kind of sitting around. I wasn't really a consultant anymore because I had been paid by the day for work that had been completed, and I was just sort of chewing my fingernails. So every couple of days I would call Elsey or Lloyd, just to make small talk, conversation, just to let them know I was still alive. I kept emphasizing, "I'd really like to do some more work like this. Isn't there something else I could do?"

This happened all during January; I just didn't get a feel as to what the possibilities were. Then, on the 30th of January, which was FDR's birthday, I went up to see Congressman Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., and I said, "Look, I'm very enamoured by your father and his record. I've done

this work for Judge Rosenman. Isn't there some way that I could work into your Congressional staff?" And that fell flat. I reported that to Elsey and Lloyd, and said, "Look, I don't have anything to do. I'm desperate and I'd just love to get something to do here. I don't want to go to Frankfurt, and I don't want to go to the NSRB, and I don't want to work on

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Truman's public papers. I just want to do something constructive."

So Elsey responded, "Well, why don't you come over? We've got another little project here in connection with President Truman's Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner that we'd like you to work on."

I came over, and Bell and Lloyd I believe were there. Elsey, Bell and Lloyd said, "We're interested in including for the President's Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner all of the predictions of doom and gloom which various Republicans have made in the past about everything since the purchase of Alaska in 1867, the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 and the establishment of the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1887. Just take the Grand Coulee Dam, the Sheppard-Towner Maternity Aid act in 1920, and find out what the Republicans said about that, and about soil conservation, and Social Security." They said, "We want to get some good scare words," as they called it. So, again, I went up to the Library of Congress and really dug through Republican platforms and American Liberty League statements and all of these predictions that had been made that the end of the world would come if we followed some of these policies that by 1950 were accepted

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as part of the public conscience. I found some real "dingers," some really good ones. I put these all together, and President Truman used about six of them in his Jefferson-Jackson Day speech.

I began to feel now that I was really contributing something constructively. I was still working for \$25 a day. Then, the next thing that happened which really cemented my relationship with the White House was when the Northwest trip was being planned, as I think I describe in my book. George Elsey came out with a bunch of travel folders and said, "You're going to be our local color man on the trip that President Truman's scheduling for May, 1950."

JOHNSON: You did your study in November-December of '49?

HECHLER: Actually I started the subsidy study December 1st and finished it in about two and a half weeks. Then I did the scare words study early in 1950.

JOHNSON: What was the purpose of that 1950 trip? We do have a copy of the report that you made out on that trip.

HECHLER: It was a report to the people, a report on what

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the current issues were and what had been accomplished.

JOHNSON: He wanted to make a whistlestop out of that, reminiscent of '48, I guess. He was going out to rededicate the Grand Coulee Dam.

HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: This was a reason, or excuse, then for this Whistlestop tour?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: He could have flown out, of course. But there was a claim it was non-political, wasn't there?

HECHLER: It was, quote non-political unquote, although I think there were certainly great overtones of politics involved in the trip. I think it was one of the most successful trips that I ever saw in terms of its political impact.

JOHNSON: I notice in the shelf list of your files that there's quite a gamut of subjects dealt with. I suppose this would cover both the '50 and '52 trips -- agriculture,

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airports, electric power, fiscal policy, floods, foreign policy, housing, human resources, and Point IV. So you were researching in all those subjects?

HECHLER: Yes. Not only researching but preparing the local color for every community that he visited, and trying to balance these things at the same time. While the speechwriting team, of which I was not a traveling member, was on the road, I was the only person left at the White House to supply them with additional details and additional speech drafts for a lot of the stops that they covered.

JOHNSON: I notice, in your book, you do explain fairly comprehensively how you went about this, using newspapers, and correspondence and WPA guidebooks, Library of Congress materials, Congressional offices, and personal contacts.

HECHLER: Yes, lot of personal contacts with members of Congress, with librarians, mayors, public officials in the areas that he was going to visit, and agency experts in the areas that he was covering. For example, the Department of Agriculture was very helpful on the

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Iowa and Nebraska speeches, and so was the Department of Interior in those areas where there were public power projects.

JOHNSON: You're on the White House staff, as of what date?

HECHLER: Well, I was on as a consultant, \$25 a day, and at some point there, I think the official record will reveal that my salary was raised to \$33 a day or something like that. It wasn't until after the Northwest trip that I think I began to feel confident that my status there was a little more permanent than just a per diem basis. That was probably about the summer of 1950 that I was put on as a permanent White House staff member with the title of Special Assistant.

JOHNSON: An appointee kind of job rather than Civil Service, of course.

HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: They were free to handle you as they saw fit.

HECHLER: That proved to be the case, particularly after Eisenhower became President. I hung on for a little

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while under the Eisenhower administration.

JOHNSON: Yes, I don't think that's in your book either, that role in the first part of the Eisenhower period.

HECHLER: I'm not sure it is, but that was a fascinating experience.

JOHNSON: You can wait until we get into that chronologically. Were you acquainted with Paul Nitze?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: And his Policy Planning Staff that you said, "delayed application of Point IV."

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you make any specific contribution to the inaugural speech in '49?

HECHLER: No. Point IV was unveiled in the inauguration speech of January 20, 1949. I did not start working at the White House until the end of 1949.

JOHNSON: And it came from Benjamin Hardy apparently, the original idea out of the State Department.

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HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: He had to by-pass the channels to get it to Elsey. I suppose you got acquainted with Hardy as well. Did you know Benjamin Hardy?

HECHLER: No. No, I didn't get to know him. I was rather shocked, of course, that the original sponsor of this plan had been killed in the airplane accident which also killed the president of Oklahoma A & M.

JOHNSON: How about Paul Nitze, since he's still pretty much in the news as one of these negotiators on disarmament.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Would you want to comment on his role in the Truman administration as you understood it?

HECHLER: Well, we had a feeling in this particular respect, that not only Paul Nitze but almost everybody over in the State Department, all the way up to Dean Acheson himself, had been rather cool toward the idea of Point IV. They felt that this undermined the basic strategy of large capital economic developments that the State

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Department was carrying on. There was considerable reluctance in the first place to allow its inclusion in the inaugural address, and that reluctance spilled over and carried over into the administration of the Point IV program itself, which was given minimal support by the State Department. It always seemed that the White House had to move in and insist that it should be given more emphasis. It was not only Paul Nitze, but almost everybody over at the State Department showed reluctance.

JOHNSON: Is there anything more about the 1950 trip, the Northwest trip, that is not in your book, or that you want to elaborate on? Any aspects?

HECHLER: Well, there is a very extensive memorandum in my papers that analyzes the Northwest trip which I think goes into extremely great detail on the trip itself.

JOHNSON: I notice one of the interesting issues of that time was this charge of Socialism.

HECHLER: Yes. It seemed to fade into the background after the trip was over, but President Truman during the trip made extremely good use of "scare words," the thing that

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I had first worked up for the Jefferson-Jackson Day speech. I had worked very, very hard at expanding this beyond the little study that I did for the Jefferson-Jackson Day speech. He used

this at good strategic points. For example, when he was close to the agricultural experiment station at Ames, Iowa, why, he drew on a Republican Congressman who had criticized the initial appropriation of \$15,000 for the establishment of agricultural experiment stations. He was very adept at giving the proper degree of sarcasm for some of these foolish statements that Republicans wished they had never said, I'm sure.

JOHNSON: We may also note that Joe McCarthy had already started his attacks in February 1950.

HECHLER: February 12, [2001 note: strike "12," replace with "9, 1950"] at the Wheeling meeting of the Ohio County Women's Republican Club.

JOHNSON: Do you think that played a part in the motives for Truman to make this whistlestop?

HECHLER: That was tangential, certainly not the most important reason. He wanted to put all this in perspective,

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and not only ridicule the Republican charges of socialism and "welfare statism" but in addition to that to try to put into perspective the ridiculousness of McCarthy's charges. He did not address those charges directly, though, in the speeches themselves.

JOHNSON: Did he try not to mention McCarthy's name?

HECHLER: No, he never mentioned McCarthy by name on that trip.

JOHNSON: So this is your first experience with a speechwriting team working much in the same manner as they did in '48, except this was said to have gone even smoother than the '48 campaign.

HECHLER: It was a very, very well-planned and smoothly operating performance.

JOHNSON: Big crowds, enthusiastic crowds it seems like.

HECHLER: Very enthusiastic crowds. I got together several of our friends, including James Sundquist who had worked on Presidential speeches before. We drove up to Cumberland, Maryland, to hear the last whistlestop speech of

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the trip. At that time Charlie [Charles S.] Murphy, who succeeded Clark Clifford, and whom I was working for, asked me if I'd ride back with him on the train. I felt a little bad about the fellows I'd ridden up with in the car; but I came back on the train, and the whole spirit of both the staff and the newsmen was very much upbeat. The newsmen were extremely impressed by the thoroughness with which all of us had researched both the subject matter and the local color.

They commented, with some awe, about the way in which the President had, at each stop, been able to work in personal comments that were extremely well received by the hometowners in each of these communities.

JOHNSON: I suppose Truman was in a very good mood after that trip. But then we get into June and you might say a watershed occurred because of the invasion of South Korea. His popularity began to decline apparently after June of 1950, and reached its nadir sometime there in 1952 before he left office. As far as you can tell, this was one of the peaks of his popularity among the American people?

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HECHLER: No question about it; that was the real high point of President Truman's popularity. I think that if I could try to analyze the reactions after 1950 -- people didn't put these into very good perspective. They were just frustrated by the fact that the war in Korea was not like World War II. We couldn't seem to get an end to it. Even though we had succeeded in driving the North Koreans back to reestablish the original line at the 38th parallel, we could not seem to get the agreement to end the war while President Truman was in office.

JOHNSON: It settled into something like World War I, with its trench warfare, and sort of a stalemate with some shifting back and forth but not a great deal.

HECHLER: Well, because of what we felt were some bad tactics on MacArthur's part, we could not get the kind of cease-fire and agreement in 1951 which we thought we were on the verge of attaining. That was before MacArthur came out with the blast about leveling the Chinese and...

JOHNSON: Using Chiang's troops and so on.

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HECHLER: But to interrupt the very delicate negotiations with a statement that we were going to rub their noses in the dirt, so to speak, as MacArthur indicated, I think was one of the things that prevented a good settlement in 1951. Then, of course, the Republicans were very adept at utilizing McCarthy's charges, even to the point of following Robert A. Taft's advice -- to keep repeating those charges until one of them might possibly stick. They found they had lost so many elections just by fighting the issues that they felt that they had to do other things like rely on hysteria in order to defeat the Democrats. Then they blew up, and the press, I think, blew all out of proportion some of this nickel and dime stuff concerning alleged corruption and the mink coats and the deepfreezes, which are really penny ante stuff when you compare them to Watergate and some of the other Republican scandals.

JOHNSON: Do you think it was a mistake for President Truman not to seek a joint resolution of support from Congress, to use American forces in Korea? You describe it but you don't take a position, I believe, in your book.

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HECHLER: Yes, I do believe it was a mistake. I think at the time that such a joint resolution would have passed by an overwhelming majority. This was the advice of Averell Harriman, and many other advisors. I think it was unfortunate that that advice wasn't followed. I think it would have pulled the teeth of some of the subsequent congressional criticism of Korea which was almost unbounded and over-emotional in its nature.

JOHNSON: Apparently, Truman's argument was that he didn't want to tie the hands of future Presidents by setting this sort of a precedent. I suppose it would have been a precedent. Of course, that was an unprecedented war.

HECHLER: Every President sets his own precedents. So I'm not sure that that was as valid an argument, even though constitutionally, in the President's belief, it may have been the kind of landmark decision that could have caused someone to follow. Most strong Presidents in the Andrew Jackson, Teddy Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and FDR tradition don't necessarily follow a precedent of that nature. They meet the situations as they come up, and I think Harry Truman himself did that on a number of occasions.

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He didn't feel bound like the judiciary is by a stare decisis on certain precedents.

JOHNSON: Do you think that he felt that by keeping a freer hand that it might be easier actually to withdraw rather than get more deeply involved? Do you think he felt that to get Congress involved would mean to make it a bigger war, or deeper war, or more of a war rather than a police action, which was a term that he accepted?

HECHLER: I really am not in a position to comment on this, because I did not talk as intimately with President Truman on diplomatic strategy or on relations with Congress. That's a question that I feel ought better being addressed to someone like George Elsey who was present at the time. By the way, George was a magnificent human being to work for, and he was a powerful force for intellectual leadership among our group generally responsible to Charlie Murphy.

JOHNSON: I don't think we're getting ahead of ourselves here because this covers all of Truman's administration, but I think I do need to ask you your opinion of

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Merle Miller's book, *Plain Speaking*, which of course includes some rather powerful commentary about MacArthur and Korea and a host of other subjects.

HECHLER: Well, I share the opinion of many people about Merle Miller's book, that it is a colorful book; it is one that has certainly enhanced President Truman's reputation, and was the opening gun of a long series of events, commentaries and other things which caused President Truman's rating among the average people of the United States to climb higher and higher. On the other hand, historically it's an unfortunate book when you come right down to trying to

establish the accuracy and truthfulness of some of the quotations. Merle Miller has always refused to turn over what he says are the tapes of these conversations that he alleged to have had with President Truman, and this raises a suspicion about whether or not some of these quotations are really valid. Some of them sound very much like President Truman, and others are very hard to verify. So, although I give Merle Miller a lot of credit for having enhanced Harry Truman's reputation, as a historian I have to

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challenge some of the validity and truthfulness of some of the quotations.

JOHNSON: I think his account of Truman flying into Wake Island and his initial meeting with MacArthur there is at odds with Truman's own memoirs and other evidence.

HECHLER: I would trust Truman's *Memoirs* on that, and what Averell Harriman said, and others who accompanied President Truman. There are a lot of stories that are hard to kill that people love to repeat, like the old story about Mrs. Truman and the rose garden. The people love to repeat this because it sounds so much like Harry Truman, when Mrs. Truman is alleged to have said in response to a criticism of a member of the garden club about remonstrating with Harry Truman's use of the word "manure," and Mrs. Truman is alleged to have said, "You don't know how many years it took me to get him to say that."

Prior to writing my book, I wrote a little note to Margaret Truman and I said, "Surely, this is an apocryphal story; I don't believe that this ever happened. I don't believe Mrs. Truman ever said this. Can you document

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this so I can include it in my book?"

Margaret wrote back a very nice note, and said that she was so tired of hearing this story -- she thought General Vaughan had invented it -- and she was very tired of hearing it. So I wrote back and I said, "Would you then give me permission to use your denial in my book?" She wrote back again, indicating that as she had said in the first place, she was tired of hearing it, she didn't want to hear it repeated, but if I insisted she would give me permission to use it. I immediately read between the lines and wrote back to her that I would not use it, and she was very pleased by that. Our friendship immediately became warmer.

JOHNSON: There is probably a body of apocrypha that surrounds Truman and the writings about him.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: We have the trip to the Northwest, we have Korea, we have McCarthyism, we have the MacArthur controversy. What was your involvement now with the White House staff activity, let's say from June 1950 into 1951.

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HECHLER: I became increasingly involved with political matters which affected members of Congress and the Democratic National Committee, although the main focal point of relationship with the Democratic National Committee was through Matt Connelly, the Appointments Secretary. There was a vast amount of effort that I undertook that was sparked by Charlie Murphy and George Elsey toward the establishment of a research division at the Democratic National Committee, to enable them to get more truthful and complete facts and figures for Democratic candidates and members of Congress. Initially, George suggested that I was the number-one candidate to direct the Research Division. Like some of the other suggestions about my employment, I bucked that one very hard because I definitely and strongly wanted to remain at the White House doing what I was doing.

I tried very hard to work with the White House staff and others to get adequate directorship for the Research Division which was eventually taken over by Bertram Gross, the executive director of the Council of Economic Advisors. Meanwhile, I spent a tremendous

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amount of time in this period feeding information to our friends on Capitol Hill on various subjects, to help them prepare speeches, to provide background data, and to try to orient the activities of the Democratic National Committee a little more toward substantive research. The aim was to develop ammunition that would be useful both in the midterm election of 1950 and looking toward the election of 1952. So a vast amount of activity was directed to this area. In addition, whenever there was a research study that had to be done that the President suggested or anybody else found necessary, they would always turn to me to do a whole series of what were essentially master's theses that were turned out in two or three months.

JOHNSON: You were working directly under Elsey?

HECHLER: Elsey was my immediate boss, and my office adjoined his. We all reported to Murphy. Elsey left the White House staff to go over with Averell Harriman in 1951, so after that I worked with David Lloyd and also with Murphy. Essentially, Murphy was the head of a team which included generally Bell, Lloyd, Elsey and Neustadt.

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The five of us acted as a kind of a team working under the Special Counsel.

JOHNSON: Apparently there wasn't much interaction with John Steelman's group. I think he said they were over in the East Wing.

HECHLER: Yes, they were over in the East Wing. We were primarily operating out of the West Wing, although my office was in the Executive Office Building along with Elsey, Bell and Lloyd.

JOHNSON: Milton Kayle, I think, took an office over there too later on.

HECHLER: Kayle was primarily working with Steelman.

JOHNSON: In the election of 1950 -- this was in the early stages of the Korean war -- Truman did not do much in terms of whistlestopping, did he?

HECHLER: After the May trip, no. The May trip was so successful that I think it was unfortunate that he didn't get out a little bit more. But being very occupied with the Korean war, he didn't feel that it

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was proper to go out barnstorming around the country at a time a war was going on.

JOHNSON: He met with MacArthur in the middle of that campaign, in October.

HECHLER: Yes, that was a pretty political meeting. I have a feeling that was politically designed to try to see if they couldn't bolster some of the Democratic candidates in the mid-term election.

JOHNSON: I notice that the Democrat losses in 1950, although they were probably expected because it was a midterm election, occurred heavily in urban and Catholic areas. I guess the feeling was that McCarthyism and Korea were the greatest burdens on Truman, and on Democrats.

HECHLER: That's right. The corruption issue had not really risen to its height yet at that time as it did later on when the Republicans were emphasizing Korea, corruption, and Communism as their three biggest issues.

JOHNSON: I think they made an issue out of the perimeter speech of Acheson, and probably misused it.

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HECHLER: Yes, they did. I tried to put out a lot of information for our friends on the Hill on that. But it was the kind of simplistic description that seemed to catch hold despite the fact that many of the people who used that speech had voted against economic and military assistance to Korea prior to June of 1950. They conveniently glossed that over when they brought out the charge.

[2001 note: "Actually, Acheson said in January 1950 that although Korea was outside the perimeter of responsibility for the United States to respond alone, any attack on Korea would be handled by the United Nations, which is what actually happened."]

JOHNSON: The domestic programs of Truman -- some of them were passed after 1948, but generally he was not all that successful in getting his domestic programs through the Congress.

HECHLER: But he did raise the banner on behalf of such things as health care and education.

JOHNSON: Got the minimum wage raised, and the Social Security expanded.

HECHLER: Right.

JOHNSON: You were mentioning this legislative liaison, and in your book you stress that [Charles] Maylon and

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[Joseph] Feeney were not very effective in that role. They apparently were replaced in 1950 by John Carroll.

HECHLER: Not replaced. John Carroll was sort of a supplement to what they were doing.

JOHNSON: So they were kept on the job, but he came in too?

HECHLER: He came in actually in 1951. He came in right about the time the MacArthur controversy was erupting in 1951. He actually had run and lost a race for the United States Senate in 1950. So he was pretty well occupied in 1950. I had gotten to know and admire Carroll from his service in the House of Representatives and had brought many groups of Princeton students to have bull sessions with him. I claim credit for recruiting Carroll for the White House staff.

JOHNSON: If they were not doing that good a job, why did Truman keep them on?

HECHLER: Well, his theory about relations with Congress, having served in Congress, was that the President ought to be handling these functions personally. He had seen some of these minions of FDR come up to try to twist

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his arm and other Congressmen's arms when he was in the Senate. And he felt that this was a little bit undignified. He felt that such activities -- the bigger ones -- should be undertaken by the President personally. So he'd devote a lot of his time to personal phone calls, and he had Maylon and Feeney mainly to take care of the bread and butter stuff that Congressmen are interested in. These included little Social Security cases, jobs, pork barrel projects and things like that. It was my own personal feeling in dealing with the Congress at the time (and I had had a lot of dealings with people on Capitol Hill) and of course, having served in Congress, I've observed it since, that there are a lots of things that the President himself simply didn't have time to do that could have been undertaken by more able, effective liaison people of the nature that Larry O'Brien set up for

President Kennedy, for example. And I think this Congressional liaison has been carried out very effectively by every President since then.

JOHNSON: So you had a rather large part, I guess, in strengthening this liaison between the White House and the Congress, you and Carroll.

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HECHLER: Yes, although I don't want to over-emphasize my role. Although a relatively junior member of the staff, I had very good rapport with members of Congress and with members of the US Senate. At the same time I did not have the clout that a more senior person would have had. I feel that Carroll was extremely effective on the MacArthur issue and on economic issues, such as the fight against inflation, and on general advice. He had a very strongly liberal point of view, but he also commanded attention as a former Congressman. It would have been helpful maybe if two or three other people of Carroll's stature had been there at the White House to assist President Truman in his relations with the Congress. Carroll was articulate, persuasive, and a fighter for the principles of Truman's Fair Deal.

I had many conversations with Congressman Dick Bolling about this and Bolling made this point very strongly, on a number of occasions.

JOHNSON: Of course, they had increased spending a good deal, military spending, after the war started. Then President Truman's policy was pay-as-you-go; he wanted

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to increase taxes sufficiently to cover the cost.

HECHLER: I wish Lyndon Johnson had felt the same way too.

JOHNSON: Truman, you know, was not successful entirely in getting that done. Apparently Republicans and conservative Democrats managed to reduce the final tax bill, so that they had to borrow more to pay for it.

HECHLER: Unfortunately that proved to be true.

JOHNSON: The liberals were more of the "pay-as-you-go," and the conservatives were more pro-borrowing, borrow or sell bonds rather than tax, is that the way it was?

HECHLER: Kind of the reversal of the usual policies that you attribute to conservatives.

JOHNSON: In other words, did it seem that lower taxes were more important than a balanced budget to these conservatives in 1950-51?

HECHLER: I'm afraid so.

JOHNSON: Talking about conservatives, you mentioned that Snyder and Connolly were among the conservative people

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around President Truman.

HECHLER: Charles Sawyer, also [2001 note: “and to some extent John Steelman”].

JOHNSON: Yes, in '48 Charles Sawyer comes on board as Secretary of Commerce. As I recall, there's very little, if any, mention of Sawyer in your book. Did you have any direct relations with Sawyer or did you get involved at all in fiscal policy?

HECHLER: Not very much. David Bell was very strong on our staff in that area. Much of that area was the responsibility that fell in John Steelman's bailiwick also. So I actually did not get into areas that I wasn't very well trained in. Economics has never been one of my strong areas.

JOHNSON: But you started as a major in economics in undergraduate work, you said.

HECHLER: Yes, but I never did very well in it nor was I very interested in pursuing it.

JOHNSON: Here's a note and I don't have the source for this, but apparently you were saying in March of '52

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that "Sawyer is waging an undercover fight against SDPA, undermining the administration's position." SDPA, what's that?

HECHLER: Small Defense Plants Administration.

JOHNSON: Do you remember anything about this?

HECHLER: Not anything beyond what I stated, which I got mainly from the records rather than direct personal knowledge.

JOHNSON: So you're not that well acquainted with Charles Sawyer?

HECHLER: No, I didn't have very much to do with Secretary of Commerce Sawyer.

JOHNSON: For speeches on fiscal and economic policy, I suppose the Council of Economic Advisors would come out with some drafts.

HECHLER: Yes [2001 note: “and LEON KEYSERLING was a great source for underlining the liberal position on economic issues”].

JOHNSON: The Department of Commerce would come out with drafts on fiscal policy?

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HECHLER: Treasury, too. The Treasury would also contribute.

JOHNSON: But the White House staff, you included, would end up editing and redrafting...

HECHLER: My role in fiscal and economic speeches was confined almost entirely to checking the validity and accuracy of facts and figures contained in the speeches. I would always read these speeches with a rather jaundiced eye to try to act as a devil's advocate that this couldn't possibly be true, and then I would research and find what the documentation was to ensure that those figures that came out of other agencies were indeed truthful and accurate figures. I would check to see if there hadn't been a transposition somewhere along the line, or a misquotation, or a lack of relationship in the manner in which the statistical tables were constructed. David Bell was probably our number one expert on fiscal and economic policy in the Murphy orbit.

JOHNSON: You said that one of the problems you had with material you received for that 1950 trip was that the Bureau of Reclamation was blowing its horn a little too loud.

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HECHLER: Oh, yes, they were very much of a PR-conscious agency. They had a lot of publicists on their payroll who probably didn't know anything about building dams but sure knew a great deal about PR.

JOHNSON: You know the Northwest had a lot of public power projects.

HECHLER: Yes, there were and, nevertheless, they were always trying to re-win their battles with the Corps of Engineers. In addition to that, they were going to the press also with a lot of claims that they were the ones really who were writing all these speeches and providing all of the material that made that trip such a success. Even though their material was good as a basis, it had to be put into perspective so that it was really presented in an objective way and it wouldn't shock the natives to have the President come out and say that something was ten times as important as it really was. This is the role that I tried to play, to kind of put that material into more truthful and candid form.

JOHNSON: The Northwest has been a major beneficiary of

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Federal power projects, and yet they have tended to be, at least in recent elections, strong Republican territory.

HECHLER: That's a hard thing for me to understand. I don't know how exactly to explain that. I think here again this is one of these mysteries of the personality of Ronald Reagan as a great communicator.

JOHNSON: That less government is going to benefit them?

HECHLER: They think much more of the fact that he seems to be a nice guy rather than what his policies have produced.

JOHNSON: He's a Westerner, too, and perhaps has a Western image.

HECHLER: "Cowboy capitalism." Maybe that has contributed a little bit more to the popularity of the Republican Party in that area.

JOHNSON: In 1952 did you attend the convention?

HECHLER: Yes.

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JOHNSON: Do you want to give us some comments or some recollections of that convention in '52?

HECHLER: Well, of course, that was the year when President Truman was very, very anxious in January to persuade, first Chief Justice Vinson, and then later Adlai Stevenson, to be his successor. He has related so well in his *Memoirs* why he was terribly disappointed with Stevenson in the manner in which he reacted the first time he made the offer. As I tried to describe in my book, working for two of these truly great men, I found it a very interesting contrast in human nature in the way these two great men approached political issues and strategy.

In late 1951 at Key West President Truman had Chief Justice Vinson and his wife down at Key West to try to persuade both of them, and Mrs. Vinson was very much against her husband's running, just as Mrs. Truman I feel had a major role in persuading President Truman not to run again in 1952.

JOHNSON: I think you said that Mrs. Vinson was the only

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woman, and certainly the only wife other than Bess that ever came down to Key West.

HECHLER: At least she's the only one I ever saw down there.

At the 1952 convention, Harriman initially tried to make a run for it too, and he had some votes in his Union Pacific Railroad state of Idaho, and a few scattered votes around the country, but he never could really hack it. Finally, President Truman persuaded him to withdraw. Then there was a short run for Barkley, which was sort of a sentimental run. I don't think President Truman really had his heart in that. He just sort of went along with him temporarily because Barkley had importuned him to do so.

It was a great disappointment for President Truman, first in early January and then second during the campaign itself, to see the manner in which Stevenson had carried on the campaign. The greatest personal disappointment was the fact that Stevenson acknowledged (repeating a reporter's characterization) that there had been a "mess" in Washington, and also disappointment in the change in DNC national chairman, with the firing of Frank McKinney.

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Thirdly, there was disappointment in the fact that Stevenson was not campaigning as aggressively as Truman would have liked. Fourthly, there was the switching of the headquarters out to Springfield, Illinois, rather than keeping it in Washington, D.C. These were all things that President Truman felt were wrong in the manner in which that campaign had been conducted.

JOHNSON: In Cabell Phillips' book, *The Truman Presidency*, page 425, he says:

In August Stevenson paid a visit to the President in the White House in the hope of working out a 'modus vivendi.' by which the President would remain in the background until the last couple of weeks of the campaign, while Stevenson created a public image and program of his own. The conference was held in the Cabinet Room with the President and key members of his staff lined up on one side of a vast coffin-shaped table and on the other side, Stevenson and picked members of the 'Springfield crowd' -- like representatives of sovereign powers at a treaty conference. It was stiff, painfully uncomfortable and largely inconclusive.

Did you attend this meeting?

HECHLER: No, I didn't attend it, but I heard reports on it. I think that's a reasonably accurate description of the atmosphere at that meeting.

JOHNSON: Do you remember some of the Truman people who were

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at the meeting.

HECHLER: I am certain David Bell, David Lloyd and Charlie Murphy were there. Clifford, of course, had left the White House already to go into private law practice. Elsey was not there because he was over with Averell Harriman by that time.

JOHNSON: Why do you think he decided to have his principal headquarters in Springfield instead of Washington?

HECHLER: I think Stevenson's theory was that the attacks of Truman, which had lowered Truman's popularity to such a low ebb in 1952, were so serious in the public mind that the image has been created of a party that had been in power too long. He wanted to give a fresh, new

approach, such as Calvin Coolidge did after Harding, to try to put an air of being far removed from this area which had been attacked as being somewhat corrupt and in power too long. I think it was a question of image more than substance that Stevenson was trying to emphasize.

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Now Bell would be a good person to contact on that because Bell was loaned to the Stevenson staff by Truman in 1952, to help Stevenson bridge this gap. Bell would be a good objective person to direct a question like that to.

I don't know whether Bell's oral history goes into this question or not, but he's certainly a much more reliable person than I am to talk about that.

JOHNSON: I think Truman's rating in the Gallup Poll, based on the percentage of those who said he was doing a good or excellent job went down as far as 21 percent.

HECHLER: Very low. Very low.

JOHNSON: Certainly, that was quite a contrast to what has happened to his reputation since.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was it a kind of convergence of problems, of trends, at work there -- communism, Korea, and corruption?

HECHLER: Those are the three things that I think caught hold in the public eye. I think that they were, of

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course, much exaggerated, and in more recent years they've been put into better perspective. I think that the reasoned judgment of history since then has put them in the proper perspective.

JOHNSON: I think it startled some people to read about Eisenhower and his role in regard to McCarthyism and McCarthy, in his deleting a favorable reference to (General George C.) Marshall in Wisconsin.

HECHLER: This really infuriated Truman and caused him to take off the gloves in a very famous speech he made in Colorado Springs, in which he excoriated Eisenhower, who had received the kind of blessing that only the Chief of Staff George Marshall could confer on him. And then Eisenhower had turned on his old mentor.

JOHNSON: Was your role in the '52 campaign very similar to that of 1950?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: In other words, you were the one to research the local areas that he visited, check the facts.

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HECHLER: Well, it was much larger, because of the fact that I participated in actively writing a number of the whistlestop speeches on the train itself. I brought a large number of the speech drafts with me.

JOHNSON: These are not yet a part of our papers, is that right?

HECHLER: That's right.

JOHNSON: And you're going to leave them here?

HECHLER: Yes, I'll leave them. These are first drafts of speeches. For example, here's the first draft of my speech...

JOHNSON: "The Helper Engine."

HECHLER: About the helper engine -- which the President used almost verbatim in his whistlestop speech at Helper, Utah.

JOHNSON: The metaphors.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: I wanted to ask you about that because you seemed

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to make a point of finding the proper metaphors, the figures of speech, of painting word pictures.

HECHLER: That was the most exciting part of doing these speeches. Actually, I think President Truman did so much better in communicating both his personality and his use of these outlines in the whistlestops than he did in his major speeches. His major speeches sometimes, particularly when you contrast them with Franklin D. Roosevelt, were kind of flat in terms of public reactions. He didn't seem to get his heart into a major speech as much as he did in the whistlestops. I thoroughly enjoyed working on the whistlestops, and occasionally did come up with some that I think were very effective.

JOHNSON: I suppose the challenge was to do something that was both informational and inspirational at the same time?

HECHLER: Yes, that's a good definition. We tried to develop an outline also which could either be read in its entirety if the President wanted to do that or to use it as a springboard for elaboration. But of course, the things that were remembered are the kinds of metaphors...

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JOHNSON: Those catch phrases, I guess.

HECHLER: Yes. In addition to the Helper, Utah speech, one of the ones that I was kind of proud of, which the President used in the 1950 Northwest trip at Missoula, Montana, and which Margaret Truman calls attention to in her book, refers to "the little men with acorn minds." That was in contrast to people like Mike Mansfield who could look at issues and problems with the foresight to envision an oak tree.

JOHNSON: I noticed that got a lot of mileage.

I guess you just had to read a lot of literature to come across this sort of thing. It didn't just happen to pop into your mind, but came about probably through reading a lot of non-political literature as well, I suppose.

HECHLER: Maybe so, but you didn't have really much time to read while the train was hurtling through "space." You're out of contact with all the developments back on "earth."

JOHNSON: You had a big trunk of documents and then also

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a couple or three shelves of books. You had your traveling library right there with you, apparently, to refer to. But most of your work, the groundwork, had been done before you left and then you did the finishing touches and polishing up on the train?

HECHLER: We had a pretty general idea of the subjects that had to be covered, and all of the local color was done in advance. Occasionally, why, new issues would come up that required very quick footwork while on the train. George Elsey pioneered in this area in the 1948 campaign and taught me everything I knew.

JOHNSON: Didn't Stevenson do a little flying in that campaign? Wasn't that when they started campaigning by airplane?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did he do much whistlestopping?

HECHLER: Well, when I was working with him in 1956 he did some whistlestopping across Pennsylvania by train, from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia. In addition to that he did quite a bit of campaigning in the primaries by car, and in California he did some whistlestopping by train.

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He was following the Truman tradition, although he never was quite as effective as Harry Truman on the rear platform. His speeches, unlike Truman's, were much more effective in the larger, prepared speeches.

JOHNSON: Rather analytical and metaphorical, too?

HECHLER: There was a very good sprinkling of humor in his speeches. Unlike Harry Truman, why, Stevenson devoted a vast amount more time toward polishing these speeches. In the latter stages of the Truman administration, President Truman would not spend very much time on revising, or going over, a speech. At the White House he would frequently say he wanted to show them to the "Boss," meaning Mrs. Truman, before they were delivered. Frequently he would come back with changes and suggestions that she had made at the last minute. In the whistlestops, most of these changes were extemporaneous remarks, adding in some of the things he had experienced as head of the National Trails Association, or places that he had visited, or stories that he had heard along the way that were interspersed and frequently outrageous little statements. For instance, in Nebraska he recalled the times when the

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grasshoppers were so bad that they ate the handles off the pitchforks. These were little things that brought a laugh from the crowd and really helped the speech tremendously. Yet they weren't as thoroughly planned as Stevenson's almost painful effort that he made to try to make every speech like the Gettysburg Address.

JOHNSON: You mentioned a couple of places where he spoke and there were these rather unruly high school and college kids with their "I Like Ike" signs.

HECHLER: I remember Exeter, for example, Exeter, New Hampshire where all the prep schoolies turned out. Obviously they had been pretty well schooled and trained by their Republican local committee to bring out their new brooms and heckle the President.

JOHNSON: Otherwise, the impression is that he did have good audiences and there were generally good reactions to Truman on that trip. You wonder if his popularity in the polls was so low, why he was still such a great attraction on these whistlestops.

HECHLER: Well, I wasn't, of course, on the '48 trip, but

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certainly the atmosphere was different in '52 than in '48. Certainly it was different than in the 1950 trip. The sweet smell of success was just not there in 1952, even though the crowds were sizeable and the general public response was sympathetic. It wasn't nearly as emotionally uplifting as in 1950 or 1948.

JOHNSON: Do you think that Truman's whistlestopping helped or hurt, or made no difference, to the Stevenson campaign?

HECHLER: Well, I think that you have to conclude that nobody would have been able to defeat "George Washington" in 1952 as we frequently called Dwight Eisenhower. No matter what kind of whistlestopping had been launched in 1952 I think it would have been difficult. Eisenhower was really the main issue; it wasn't either Stevenson or Truman in 1952.

JOHNSON: Of course, Truman was a "lame duck." I don't know whether they used that term much in those days. Nowadays you hear a lot about lame duck Presidents, those who were finishing their second term.

HECHLER: Maybe so. I hate to admit this since I worked so hard on the 1952 campaign, but I seriously doubt whether Truman really made too much difference in the total outcome of the 1952 campaign. I think this was a referendum on Eisenhower and the tremendous popularity of the wartime SHAEF commander.

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There was the feeling that the Democrats simply had been in power too long, which was a feeling that even some of the Democrats shared in 1952.

JOHNSON: There have been comments that coordination wasn't very good between the Springfield staff and the Truman staff. Can you give us some comment on that?

HECHLER: Well, that was the main reason that David Bell was sent out to Springfield in 1952. I'm sure that he experienced some frustrations, because here you had two entirely different personalities that were going at political strategy in a different way. It was very hard to coordinate when you're working for two such opposite types of personality, as were Truman and Stevenson.

JOHNSON: They think of Stevenson as something of an intellectual.

HECHLER: Not only something, but I think he's the greatest intellectual giant of the 20th century.

JOHNSON: Truman had a high intelligence, right?

HECHLER: No question about it.

JOHNSON: But in terms of being an intellectual?

HECHLER: I certainly wouldn't call Harry Truman an intellectual. I think he certainly knew more history and constitutional

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government than the average Ph.D., but it was practical application rather than theory. Also, I think I made this comment in my book that Harry Truman reacted very quickly and very forcefully, almost as though he was reacting with his viscera, when issues came up, issues of exploitation, or justice, or fairness, or democracy. Adlai Stevenson thought things through very, very carefully and sometimes painfully with his cerebellum. Well, anyway, he was more cerebral.

JOHNSON: Yes, but you wouldn't think of Truman as an anti-intellectual either.

HECHLER: No. Oh, no. Not anti-intellectual at all, but at the same time his reactions were predictable reactions. Stevenson reasoned through an issue in a more intellectual fashion.

JOHNSON: Truman was such an admirer of Acheson. Well, Marshall was a fairly intellectual type, I guess, too.

HECHLER: Yes, but certainly not as great an intellectual as Acheson.

That's an interesting relationship, between Truman and Acheson. You wouldn't have thought that those two men of such differing backgrounds would have gotten along so well together. Yet they complemented each other extremely well and Acheson had tremendous respect

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for Truman's grasp of basic policies and his instinct for decision, where, again, Truman differed from Stevenson. Stevenson was a good deal more patient in arriving at a decision.

JOHNSON: To Truman, I suppose, Stevenson appeared indecisive, as time went on in the campaign.

HECHLER: I call it patience, that Stevenson had.

JOHNSON: I have a note from the papers that indicates sometimes there appeared to be some contradictory advice. There's mention here of Orville Freeman and Max Kampelman. Kampelman apparently disagreed on the importance of Social Security as an issue in Minnesota in 1952.

HECHLER: Now where did you pick this up?

JOHNSON: This was in Box 15 of your files. It was a note that was made by somebody else, but the name Max Kampelman came to mind, you know; again someone who's in the limelight as an arms negotiator.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were you acquainted with Max Kampelman?

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HECHLER: Very closely. This started when Max Kampelman was the administrative assistant to Senator Hubert Humphrey. As I mentioned, I had a lot of dealings with both Senators and their assistants on the Hill in terms of feeding them research information. There were lots of occasions where I would get administrative assistants together to give them what the White House thinking was on various issues, and to solicit their views. Max Kampelman I always found to be one of the most able and articulate of the assistants. Of course, he was deeply immersed in Minnesota politics. His relation with Humphrey spilled over into close relations with Orville Freeman, when Freeman was Governor of Minnesota.

JOHNSON: You were well-acquainted with Orville Freeman too?

HECHLER: Oh, yes. I don't know quite what that refers to in that note you found in my files.

JOHNSON: I made a quick search; I didn't see the document. But it appears that they had a different point of view on the importance of Social Security as an issue.

HECHLER: Well, I think that's a matter of political strategy,

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that they're both thinking independently on that and it may be that they had a differing piece of advice on where Social Security ought to be emphasized as an issue when campaigning in Minnesota. That's what I would assume that comment means. I don't think that that looms very large in terms of the total history of the Truman administration.

JOHNSON: Also there's mention that the President in the '52 campaign usually did not do more than state the name of the statewide and congressional candidates. Does it really make much difference, do you think, if the President...

HECHLER: It makes a lot of difference to the candidate. I mean, he loves to have his name mentioned, and he seems to think that that would cause a great boost in his vote at the polls. I, personally, wonder about that. You'll notice that in nearly every speech in my outlines and everybody else's outlines, and the speech itself, that the President was very careful to make sure that those candidates were always mentioned.

JOHNSON: Could such an approach even backfire possibly?

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HECHLER: Well, I don't know. If they're on the ticket, why, he naturally wants to see that they don't drag down the rest of the ticket.

JOHNSON: The coattails of Harry Truman were probably not very long in '52.

HECHLER: Well, sometimes he was counting on reverse coattails, and building up the local candidate, so that you...

JOHNSON: His association with them, instead of vice versa.

HECHLER: What is the expression, "When the tide goes up all boats rise?"

JOHNSON: I think I've heard of that mentioned with this present administration.

In the '52 campaign apparently President Truman is still talking about Taft-Hartley and the 80th Congress. The only new addition seemed to be criticism of the McCarran Act. The implication is that he did not respond directly to these issues of communism and corruption and Korea, except, I suppose to criticize Eisenhower for trying to exploit the Korean issue by

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saying that he'd go over there.

HECHLER: The Colorado Springs speech was a direct attack on Eisenhower for his defense of McCarthy. I think that met the communism issue head on. One of the ways that he handled the corruption issue was at Clinton, Massachusetts (the birthplace of Matt Connelly who had been attacked for various things), he made a very, very moving exposition of the high quality of the advisors that he had recruited. If you re-read that, you find that it's a very extensive and totally extemporaneous treatment because, as I remember, the outline for Clinton started with a few nice comments about Matt Connelly, but it didn't elaborate on all of the other people. He had just been fed up to the gills with all of this criticism of those that had worked for him and he went to bat in a very emotional, and I think very persuasive, way in Clinton, Massachusetts. So that was his answer to the corruption issue by pointing out the high quality of the people that he had working for him.

JOHNSON: Apparently, with one exception at least; your opinion of Harry Vaughan was not awfully high.

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HECHLER: Well, Harry Vaughan can be explained in terms of the long friendship that the two men had and the various scrapes that Vaughan had gotten Mr. Truman out of when they were in the Army. He saved him from a bawling out, you remember, right at the start of their reserve duty. Also, despite the fact that we didn't think Vaughan measured up to the quality of other Truman advisors, he did have something which contributed to Truman's morale, which was to keep him in good humor and keep in perspective some of the major problems that he was confronting, and keeping him laughing. Some people have called him a "court jester," and I suppose this is a role that he did play. My opinion of Harry Vaughan as an able, respected individual on the White House staff was very low, but my understanding of why Harry Truman

kept him is very clear. It can be summed up in one word: loyalty. I think it would have helped Truman's image considerably had he fired Harry Vaughan, but on the other hand, you've got to consider that it would have been a painful personal thing for him to do. It also would have meant that sometimes when he was burdened with some of these awesome problems, he just wouldn't have had an opportunity to laugh.

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This is something I think every person in that terribly burdensome office ought to have a chance to do every now and then.

JOHNSON: Did you ever get in on any poker games?

HECHLER: Oh I sat on the fringes and was a kibitzer and I listened in, but I never actually played. I wish I had had a little tape recorder on some of the wonderful persiflage that passed back and forth.

JOHNSON: Did they go to someone's suite in the hotel usually to play poker, because there was criticism of anybody playing poker in the White House?

HECHLER: I don't think they played poker in the White House very much after the first couple of months. I honestly think that when that was done, it was either done at a hotel suite or on the *Williamsburg* or down at Key West, or something like that. After the first few months they didn't play anymore in the White House. On the train though there was a lot of it.

JOHNSON: Did you know Stephen Mitchell very well?

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HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: He was chosen by Stevenson to replace McKinney and that angered Truman.

HECHLER: Right. Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you think that that was a wise move on Stevenson's part, or an understandable move at least?

HECHLER: I just don't know. You see, I didn't go to work for Stevenson until 1956 and Stevenson chose Mitchell in 1952. It did anger Truman a great deal and Truman looked on Mitchell as being an amateur in politics. Of course, Truman couldn't stand for that, having such a strong professional background in practical politics. So I can understand the criticism, although again I don't believe that anything that McKinney could have done for Stevenson would have won the election in 1952. Again, I believe it was Eisenhower's tremendous popularity throughout the country and the cleverness of the advertisers that kept emphasizing these

wonderfully simplistic slogans like "I like Ike." You know this was just a perfect slogan to utilize.

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JOHNSON: They go a long way in campaigns.

HECHLER: Yes. Unfortunately true.

JOHNSON: You were saying the same thing, that we need some good catchy slogans to counteract the sloganeering on the other side.

HECHLER: Well, yes, but it will certainly not raise the level of the political debate however.

JOHNSON: It's a matter of pragmatic politics, I suppose.

HECHLER: That's right. I used them myself when I was running for office. Sure.

JOHNSON: You learned how to play the game. What was your involvement in the transition work with Eisenhower?

HECHLER: Well, I mentioned, I believe, in my book that the morning after President Truman delivered his 1952 Jefferson-Jackson Day speech, he called us all together and said, "Now, whoever's elected this fall, whether he be a Republican or a Democrat, I don't want him to face the kind of thing that I faced when I came into office in 1945, completely unbriefed and unprepared."

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And he said, "I want this to be a smooth transition, whether it be a Republican or a Democrat that's going to take over after next January 20th. I want everybody to work very hard on it between now and next January," which was eleven months. My reaction at the time was, "It's so much more important to win this election than to think what's going to happen after."

That was very characteristic of President Truman, that he was looking into the future that far. In the transition period I did not play a very strong role. I think he had people pretty well designated who were the opposite numbers of the incoming Eisenhower people, particularly in the Budget Bureau, which was one of the leaders in helping plan and carry out the transition. So my role was not very large. Much of the time after the election of 1952 I spent on these massive research projects that Truman had asked me to do on documenting every single statement that Eisenhower had ever made, and also documenting when Nixon had called him a traitor, and defining "Trumanism." All these things took a tremendous amount of time, particularly the Eisenhower project. I wish I could locate a copy of that "Iklopedia;"

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it's over 600 pages long. I suspect that there is a copy in the Democratic National Committee somewhere.

JOHNSON: I don't think we have that in our collection.

HECHLER: I don't believe so.

We had a bowling alley down in the basement of the White House, and this was so large that I had to use the bowling alley to assemble it because it was so big. Those were before the days we had mechanical assemblers. It's amazing what more work we could have done with word processors and all of the other gadgets that they have today.

JOHNSON: Including xerox machines.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: You had to cut stencils and run off mimeograph copies.

HECHLER: Right.

JOHNSON: Either that or carbon copies, or dittos; they were the only ways you had to reproduce copies.

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HECHLER: The modern advance of clerical technology has certainly revolutionized this whole business.

JOHNSON: I guess it has. Eisenhower seemed to be pretty standoffish about that transition.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Didn't really show much enthusiasm at all for it.

HECHLER: He didn't believe that we were really candid. I think that was one of the other problems. He felt we were all going to try to stick a dagger into his back.

JOHNSON: A little suspicious after that campaign, I suppose.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: And a little irritated over what Truman had said about him apparently.

HECHLER: Not only that, but he was irritated by the telegram in which Truman said he would make transportation available if he still wanted to go to Korea. He made it

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sound as though Ike just had said that as a political ploy.

JOHNSON: So now we're getting to the end of the Truman years. Well, I might back up; there's a question here that comes to mind. On November 1, 1950, there was an attempted assassination of Harry Truman.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were you in the area at the time?

HECHLER: Yes, I was. It was a very warm, sunny Indian-summer day. I had just returned from a very late lunch when several people rushed up and said that the President had been fired on and several Secret Service men had been killed, and that there was just mass confusion. I heard ambulances and all kinds of commotion over in front of Blair House where the President had gone for his usual afternoon nap after lunch. They had cordoned off Pennsylvania Avenue, and I couldn't get in, opposite Blair House. But I went up on the steps of the Executive Office Building, looking right across the street to see the confusion there. What really struck

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me was the determination and courage of the President to go out to a speech that he made that afternoon, out at Ft. Myer, I recall, dedicating a statue to a Britisher.

JOHNSON: Dill, John Dill.

HECHLER: Yes. Right.

JOHNSON: Didn't seem to faze him much?

HECHLER: No. I thought this was remarkable, although he took very personally, very much to heart, the death of Leslie Coffelt, the White House policeman, who had been killed.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Truman ever talking about possible assassination attempts, or the dangers of being a President?

HECHLER: He took this pretty much as going with the job. He did not dwell on it. He resented the necessity of circumscribing his activities and his morning walks, and the number of Secret Service men that had to accompany him, and the orders that they gave to him. This he resented although he understood it, and accepted it.

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JOHNSON: As Truman's administration ends, you're still in the White House and you remain on for awhile after Eisenhower came in?

HECHLER: I guess it started out as a joke; somebody asked me if I was going back to work the next day, and I said, "Sure, why not?" And then I decided that night that I would just try it to see what would happen. So I went back to work and I went back to the same office I'd been in. I expended most of my time bringing up to date and polishing this "Iklopedia," the report on Eisenhower's statements. I went to work every day. I went across the street to the White House mess, where I had eaten during the Truman administration. Everybody was slapping everybody else on the back, including me, saying, "Welcome aboard. Welcome aboard." Pretty soon they began to ask me what I did there, and I always said I did research. They said, "Great, you know research is important. We need good research."

Then a memorandum was circulated from the personnel director saying that because of the crowding at the White House mess, it was decided to confine eligible members of the staff to those over Grade GS-12. Then it listed

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those. It started out Sherman Adams, James Hagerty, Ken Hechler, and everybody else. I happened to be eligible, so I continued to go over to eat with the new staff until one day somebody asked me who I worked for. I said, "I work for the Special Counsel." The special counsel was sitting over on the other end of the table, and he asked, "I'm the special counsel, what do you do for me?"

This remained a kind of a joke around the White House as to what I was doing there. Finally they offered me a job at \$1,000 less than I was making. I said, "I immediately accept; it would be an honor for me to continue to work at the White House." This kind of surprised them, because they figured I would turn it down immediately. I guess it was about March when I got another position as Associate Director of the American Political Science Association. I was still kind of interested in what excuse they would utilize, because it is in the law that if you fire a veteran, even if he is in an excepted position, you have to give a reason; it can't be a political reason. So I got this letter saying, "Your services are not required after such and

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such a date in March, because you have completed your assignment."

JOHNSON: Well, were you on Civil Service status; you mentioned GS grades?

HECHLER: Yes, I had a GS grade, but it was what you call a Schedule A position, which was an excepted position.

JOHNSON: This meant hired and fired at will.

HECHLER: Yes. Except for the fact that as a veteran they had to ascribe a reason for firing me, and that reason had to be in writing and it couldn't be a political reason. So the reason was that I

had completed my assignment. I was very pleased though. That's the first time that anybody had ever said I had really finished something.

JOHNSON: Were any of your colleagues still working there, too, or...

HECHLER: John Steelman was around for quite awhile -- I don't know for how long -- but he had been invited to be around so that was a little different. Of course, quite a

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few of the secretarial help remained.

JOHNSON: But now Neustadt, Bell, Murphy...

HECHLER: They all left.

JOHNSON: ...Elsey, all these people had departed.

HECHLER: Oh, yes, Elsey actually had already left in 1951 to work for Harriman.

JOHNSON: So you were virtually the last one of the old White House writing, speechwriting, crew to leave?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: The last one to see the White House until Kennedy got back in I suppose. So in March you became director of the American Political Science Association.

HECHLER: Associate Director, under Evron Kirkpatrick, whose wife of course hired me was Edward Litchfield (later president of the University of Pittsburgh). President of APSA was Pendleton Herring, my old boss at the Bureau of the Budget.

JOHNSON: Was that a fulltime position?

HECHLER: Yes.

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JOHNSON: How long did you stay with that?

HECHLER: I stayed with that until very early in 1956 when I went on leave of absence to work as Research Director for Adlai Stevenson in his campaign. I came back in the American Political Science Association after the Stevenson campaign in November of 1956.

JOHNSON: How about that campaign of '56? What do you remember about it?

HECHLER: Well, the worst thing is the result. Other than that, it was an exciting experience to travel around the country and to contrast Stevenson with Truman.

I went on one very ill-fated campaign in Minnesota, in February of '56, when Stevenson was defeated by Kefauver in the primary. I guess I was about the closest to Stevenson during that campaign, because I was the only speechwriter that went along with him. I don't think that I singlehandedly succeeded in making him lose, but I could see the contrast there between Stevenson and Kefauver. Kefauver appealed to the Minnesotans, despite the fact that all the party leaders -- Humphrey, Freeman and others -- were supporting Stevenson. He was a very

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down-to-earth, folksy type of a campaigner.

JOHNSON: Coonskin hat.

HECHLER: Yes. He had this little routine that he would always pull with his staff. Stevenson would never think of doing a thing like that, would resent putting on this kind of an act as being insincere and hypocritical. But one of the staff members would invariably come up and say to Kefauver in a very loud voice, "Senator, you realize you're fifteen minutes behind schedule, and that we're going to have to leave." Kefauver would turn angrily to his staff member and say, "Now don't take me away from these good people. They're the most important people in this whole campaign, and I intend to stay here as long as I want to and you're going to have to take that in your pipe and smoke it." He'd do this time after time. Of course, the newsmen would all laugh about it.

JOHNSON: That could play hob with their schedules.

HECHLER: Well, it did. But at the same time, everybody really realized his schedules were just kind of confused

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and unplanned. Stevenson would stick very closely to his schedule, and everything was click, click, click. It worked out administratively very well, but politically not near as well.

JOHNSON: Truman did not like Kefauver; I think he called him "Cow fever."

HECHLER: Yes. He just detested the manner in which Senator Kefauver had attacked some of the Democratic urban political machines, and not said a thing about some of the Republican organizations in Philadelphia in his Senate crime investigating committee. That was quite a fascinating campaign, even though Stevenson lost worse in '56 than he did in '52, once again because of Eisenhower, rather than anything he himself did.

JOHNSON: What was your official title?

HECHLER: Executive assistant, I think I was called, in charge of research. Pretty much of the same type of activity I'd done before -- local color, speechwriting...

JOHNSON: Where did you work out of then?

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HECHLER: I traveled with Governor Stevenson on all of his trips and I also worked out of his Chicago headquarters on LaSalle Street. I traveled extensively in Florida, Minnesota, California, Oregon, Pennsylvania, all the other states that he visited.

JOHNSON: Did you have contact with Truman at all between '53 when he left office and '56 when you worked with Stevenson?

HECHLER: Yes, quite a bit, quite a bit. We had some correspondence. I am turning over all the communications that I got from President Truman.

JOHNSON: Did you ever come out here to visit him?

HECHLER: Yes. Not during that period, as much as after the Library had been established, in 1957.

JOHNSON: Were you here for the dedication?

HECHLER: No, I wasn't here for the dedication, but I came out just before I filed for Congress in 1958. I kept pretty close in touch with the President and his family.

JOHNSON: Not to jump back, but you know in those years from

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'50 to '52, when you were working very hard for the White House, did you have many personal meetings as such with the President at that time, or was it generally through channels with Elsey?

HECHLER: He was very accessible. I relate in my book that dinner that he had for his speechwriters very shortly after I came to the White House.

JOHNSON: Did you attend the staff meetings?

HECHLER: No. No, I did not. Elsey attended the staff meetings for that little group, and Lloyd went over, when I worked for Lloyd. I did attend a lot of speechwriting conferences, however, and of course, had a lot of contact with him on the train and at Key West, and on other occasions like that. But I was a relatively junior member of the staff in terms of the hierarchy and I didn't feel I ought to barge in at every opportunity. The best time to get to know him on a personal basis was at Key West, and at speech conferences, and on the train, those three instances.

JOHNSON: You usually then were kind of bargaining over

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words, I guess, in those speech conferences?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: I remember you pronounced the word "particularly," and he tripped over it and you decided...

HECHLER: Yes. Well, when he read a speech aloud you could tell what types of things were difficult and then you would try to iron those out. They would look alright on paper but not when actually read. This is why invariably he would always go over a speech, and read it out loud and say, "What do you think of page one? What do you think of page two?"

JOHNSON: When was your first trip out here, then, after he left the Presidency? Do you remember when you made your first trip here?

HECHLER: I think it was '58, when I first came out.

JOHNSON: Truman went back to Washington in the summer of '53, and visited with some old Senate colleagues and so on. I think some of his staff people from the White House also met with him. Do you recall...

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HECHLER: He had a staff meeting at the Mayflower Hotel.

JOHNSON: The summer of '53.

HECHLER: No, this was early '53; maybe we're talking about different things.

JOHNSON: It was May or June; it was just four or five months after he left office.

HECHLER: Well, maybe that was another meeting, the second one.

JOHNSON: And you were there for that.

HECHLER: For both, yes.

I remember I was very embarrassed at the first staff meeting we held at the Mayflower Hotel. This was supposed to be a staff meeting even though I didn't attend staff meetings. I was invited to this. They had a long green cloth-covered table shaped like a "T," and President Truman and Matt Connelly were sitting along the T and the rest of us were sitting along the side. There were yellow pads and pencils at every place for the staff. As soon as I walked

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into the room, why, Matt Connelly said something that really shocked me. He said, "Supposing we start this staff meeting by having Ken Hechler tell us about his experience working for President Eisenhower at the White House." The reason I was embarrassed was that President Truman, you see, had emphasized so much that he wanted a smooth transition. I didn't want to go into all these details, but he started to laugh a little bit when I began. I got warmed up a little bit after that, but it did embarrass me a little bit at first. Eben Ayers relates that incident in his diary.

JOHNSON: So you gave Truman a personal report, and the whole staff.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: A personal report on these six weeks or whatever, with the Eisenhower people.

HECHLER: Yes. But the summer meeting I think it was -- maybe you have more detail on it -- but as I remember we had some kind of a dinner meeting at which we all got

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together. Whenever he came back to Washington we would have little reunions of various types.

JOHNSON: Where were you living then?

HECHLER: I was living at 1800 I Street and working at the American Political Science Association.

JOHNSON: That was interrupted by the '56 campaign, your work with them?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: And then you came back to that. That brings us to 1957 and 1958.

HECHLER: November of '56 was when I went back after the campaign. I felt again a sense of lack of importance of what I was doing at APSA. I had been through this very high-gear campaign, where you work from early in the morning until late at night. I came back to that job at the Political Science Association where everybody's attitude was sort of "mañana," you know, like "we don't have to do this until after we have our morning coffee break." I began to get a little bit frustrated with the

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feeling that I'm going to be here in Washington with this kind of restful job, when Eisenhower is in for another full term and his terrible Vice President Richard Nixon is going to be there for four

years. I just wanted to get as far away from Washington as I possibly could. Also, I recalled the advice which Justice Brandeis had given me in 1941 -- how much more important were the small towns and small colleges.

One of my jobs at the American Political Science Association was to recruit college and university professors of political science on request. I got this request in from Marshall College, which was a college in Huntington, West Virginia. They needed an associate professor of political science. I thought to myself: I visited Huntington when I was at Ft. Knox in the Army and it's a beautiful city. I'd been there when President Truman went through there, and had prepared the local color on Huntington and other cities in West Virginia. I thought it would be an interesting thing to try, even though the salary was about 1/3 of what I was making with the Political Science Association. But I just liked the idea of accepting a new challenge like

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that. Secondly, I thought, "Gee, this'll be a great opportunity to get out in the grassroots, you know, and not only teach a class, but participate in community activities in the small town in a grassroots fashion." So I went to the Congressman who represented that town, who was Republican -- Representative Will Neal -- and I asked him, "Give me the names of some people in the Huntington area that are community or politically active that I ought to call on. I don't want to just teach. I'd like to do other things."

So he prepared a nice list of names of some of the key people, both Republicans and Democrats. These were the movers and shakers in that town; you get to know them, and you'll get to know everybody. I just pulled up stakes and went out to Huntington to start teaching at Marshall in February of 1957.

I registered to vote in West Virginia for the first time in January of '57. It was a great experience with those students because I got them all active in the community. Pretty soon I was getting requests to appear in various forums around the district. Somebody asked me -- after I had been there a couple of months -- they said, "We've got a

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very bad county chairman in Cabell County. Would you run for county chairman?" I said, "I haven't been here long enough; I wouldn't want to do that." Well, I began to get more and more interested in the politics of the area. In early 1958, when I had only been there about a year, I decided to run for the House of Representatives, which I did, and subsequently got elected.

[2001 note: "Actually I impressed on my students the importance of participation in community affairs, helping candidates, running for office themselves. Then they asked me: 'What's your excuse? Why aren't you running practicing what you preach?'"]

JOHNSON: In the '58 election?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: So you taught for only...

HECHLER: One term. The spring of '57, that was the only term I taught. Then in the summer of 1957 I got a call from John Carroll, who had been elected Senator from Colorado in 1956 and he said, "I desperately need somebody to help me on civil rights problems up here. Will you come up here and help me?"

I said, "Providing it's only for the summer, because I don't want to leave West Virginia now that I've come down here." So I came back to Washington to work for him during the summer. That was right

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during the civil rights fight of 1957. They got a bill out that wasn't as strong as we wanted, but it was an interesting experience. Then I went back to Huntington in the fall. Right about that time, Ballantine Books had accepted my book, *The Bridge at Remagen* and published it. That created a nice source of invitations around the area.

JOHNSON: Did you help write the civil rights legislation of '57?

HECHLER: Of '57, yes.

JOHNSON: Including the Civil Rights Commission that was established which I think was the first one.

HECHLER: Yes. It was not near as strong because one of the big fights that we had, which we just lost by a narrow margin, was to provide jury trials. Carroll and I both felt that a jury trial would just be murder, because you know you can't get a jury in many of those southern communities to convict. But that went into the bill; that was Lyndon Johnson's idea of a compromise as majority leader. It wasn't nearly as effective a bill

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as the later civil rights legislation of the '60s, but it did raise the issues in the same way Truman raised issues when he was President. Then I went back and I not only publicized the book, but I also started a television program called "Comment." I had a Republican professor named Carl Leiden and later a Republican lawyer named Richard Tyson and we would argue point-counterpoint issues, on developments during the week. That attracted a lot of attention around the area.

JOHNSON: Was that prime time?

HECHLER: It was pretty good time. It was Sunday afternoon, I think, when a lot of people were listening, or Sunday evening, I forget which.

JOHNSON: How long did that go?

HECHLER: That lasted until I filed for Congress, and then of course, they cut me off.

JOHNSON: About how many months?

HECHLER: About six months.

JOHNSON: A weekly program.

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HECHLER: Yes.

It was very well received and it got a lot of good mail and comments. I got better known around the district that way. Of course, when the book came out this created a lot of attention among veterans and people that just enjoyed reading war stories.

JOHNSON: Was that made into a movie?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were you a consultant then for it?

HECHLER: Yes, I was the technical advisor, they called it.

JOHNSON: When did that come out?

HECHLER: In 1969. It was filmed in 1968 in Czechoslovakia.

JOHNSON: Were you in Czechoslovakia then?

HECHLER: Yes. I was there during the time of the Russian invasion.

JOHNSON: You saw the Russian tanks come in?

HECHLER: I didn't realize they were coming, but I actually got the last plane out of Prague before they came in the

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next morning. I only left because I was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1968. I wanted to get back to Chicago to participate in that battle of Grant Park and Mayor Daley of 1968.

JOHNSON: Well, getting back to '58. You filed then for Congress; you wanted to get back into harness, political harness.

HECHLER: Yes. And that was a very, very difficult campaign, because, of course, I was a carpetbagger in a state where people and their ancestors are very much honored. Everybody kept asking me, "Who are you kin to? Hechler? I never heard that name around here."

JOHNSON: You had a grandfather though that...

HECHLER: I discovered that after the campaign had started. My father told me that; I didn't even realize that. This, I emphasized, of course, a great deal to defuse the issue.

JOHNSON: You had to win the nomination on the Democratic ticket. Did you have quite a bit of competition for that nomination?

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HECHLER: Yes, I did. Organized labor was against me, and all of the political organizations were against me. The favorite candidate was a fellow named Tom Harvey, whose grandfather was Coin Harvey who had helped William Jennings Bryan on his 16-1 free silver campaign. He was a very prominent lawyer in Huntington who really had everything sewed up for him; he had the labor support, which was very strong and influential; he had the machine support; he had the support of the preceding Democratic Congressman. In the general election I was running against this very Congressman -- Will Neal -- who had advised me on who to see in the district.

JOHNSON: In the general election? What was his name?

HECHLER: Dr. Will Neal. He had been Mayor of Huntington. He was an obstetrician who had delivered practically all of the present voters in the district as an obstetrician. He said, "I have delivered you; now you deliver for me."

JOHNSON: He probably wished he hadn't given you all that free advice on going to West Virginia.

HECHLER: It was a very high-level campaign.

JOHNSON: The hardest fight for you was for the nomination?

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HECHLER: Well, no. I only won the general election by 3,500 votes, out of about 120,000, so it wasn't a walkaway by any means.

JOHNSON: Did they have a direct primary?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: So you had to run in the direct primary.

HECHLER: But it only required a plurality, however; it didn't require a majority. We had three candidates, two of whom were lawyers, and myself. I guess the way I won was on the strength of the popularity of my book, and the stress that I placed on having worked for Harry Truman. A lot of people discovered that I had once been a Republican, and they all said, "This is a Trojan horse." I got Clark Clifford and Dave Lloyd to write me very excellent letters, saying, if Ken Hechler was good enough for FDR and Harry Truman, why we're sure he ought to be good enough for the voters, the Democrats, of West Virginia. It was very, very good stuff they wrote for me.

JOHNSON: Did you run on some national and international

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issues as well as more local ones?

HECHLER: Yes. Particularly in the general election. This was right at the time when there was a very severe recession in West Virginia, and I was running on very strong economic issues -- of aid to education, unemployment compensation...

JOHNSON: How about black lung? Was that one?

HECHLER: Not yet; no, that didn't come until later.

JOHNSON: Strip mining?

HECHLER: Not until later. Those were all issues that I did not begin to stress until after I got into Congress.

JOHNSON: Medical, health, like medicare?

HECHLER: Medicare, yes.

JOHNSON: You were still stumping for a national health plan?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: In other words, the Fair Deal. You were just

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trying to continue the Fair Deal in West Virginia?

HECHLER: Yes, a very strong Roosevelt-Truman program, including repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act, and issues that would appeal to organized labor, like opposition to right-to-work legislation, which was on the ballot across the Ohio River in Ohio.

JOHNSON: So you did get some organized labor votes?

HECHLER: In the general election, and not as much in the primary. Actually I'll revise that a little bit. In the primary, what I did was I went out to all the plant gates and I tried to get the rank and file to separate from their leaders who were supporting my opposition. This proved successful because the favored candidate was kind of resting on his oars like Dewey. In fact, I compared him to Dewey, and said he's just taking the election for granted. I was out working very, very hard from early morning until late at night, pounding the pavements. I had all of my students, several hundred of them, from Marshall that were all really fired up and they did a bang-up job of effective campaigning.

[2001 note: "In addition, the publisher at Ballantine Books of *The Bridge at Remagen* said he had never had an author run for Congress. So he put out a campaign edition with my platform in the front. I bought 13,000 copies at ten cents a piece and distributed them at plant gates, which won me the rank-and-file labor vote."]

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JOHNSON: That semester paid off.

HECHLER: It really did. At the end of the term, for example, I organized a trip to Washington. I paid for all the expenses of the students to spend four days there and we met with people like Senator John F. Kennedy and Justices of the Supreme Court, and people that were high and low in Government.

JOHNSON: It sounds like you were a resource person, so to speak, as well for your political science class.

HECHLER: Yes. I had a technique that I learned from Jim Farley. I used it in Columbia and Princeton, of installing a telephone in the classroom which was hooked up with an amplifier. I would then call high government officials and other experts on the phone and then amplify the conversation to the students. Then they could ask questions. Farley used that in 1932; he described it in his autobiography as a means of putting Governor Roosevelt in Albany in contact with the delegates at the Chicago Democratic Convention. Farley would bring all these delegates from Idaho or Montana into a hotel room and

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he'd hook up this amplifier and have Roosevelt speak to them by phone from Albany. I said, "Golly, if he can do that for politics I ought to be able to do it for pedagogy." It really worked very well. It got a lot of attention and publicity and it also fired up the students a great deal.

JOHNSON: So you were a fulltime Congressman from January, 1959, until...

HECHLER: Until 1977.

JOHNSON: Until January '77.

HECHLER: Nine terms.

JOHNSON: What changes did you notice over those years in the issues, in the methods of politicking, or whatever?

HECHLER: Well, so far as issues were concerned, or the operation of the Congress itself, there was dramatic change in the early 1970s when the seniority system was broken down a great deal by the rise of subcommittee chairmen who were given more power than committee chairmen. And there was the election of chairmen by

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the Democratic caucus rather than by just seniority, resulting in turning out to pasture of a number of superannuated committee chairmen. Particularly after Watergate, when the class of '74 came in, they voted out several elderly Congressmen who had simply been holding on for too many years.

In terms of politicking itself, why, the biggest change of course, has been the use of money and PACs in politics. This is exemplified by what [Jay] Rockefeller did in West Virginia, spending 12 million dollars in a Gubernatorial campaign, and even more than that in his Senatorial campaign. Those briefly are some of the changes.

JOHNSON: In these years from '58 to '76, what were you doing in terms of your old contacts and relationships with White House staff people, your old colleagues?

HECHLER: Not as much as I wish I had. In other words, I kept up a correspondence with them. Harry Vaughan and I would correspond back and forth, and I'd keep very closely in touch with Charlie Murphy as he ascended to other positions like chairmanship of the Civil Aeronautics

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Board and Under Secretary of Agriculture. I kept in touch with Dick Neustadt up at Harvard. Dave Lloyd died in 1962, unfortunately. I kept closely in touch with George Elsey while he was at the American Red Cross. But I must say I regret that I didn't keep more closely in touch with them. I had good, nice correspondence with President Truman out here.

JOHNSON: You were in the Congress when Murphy was Under Secretary of Agriculture.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Also Civil Aeronautics?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: So at least geographically you were close.

HECHLER: He helped me considerably, for example, when he was head of the CAB. I was trying to get a jetport halfway between Huntington and Charleston that would combine the two cities with air support [2001 note: strike "air support" replace with "a Midway Airport"]. It was not successful, but he did help me considerably during that period.

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JOHNSON: Of course, you were on the other end now. You were seeing how the White House was dealing with Congressmen from the Congressmen's point of view.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: Had they learned quite a bit from the Truman experience?

HECHLER: For example, on Congressional relations, Kennedy set up a very, very strong Congressional relations staff, headed by Larry O'Brien. That was something I wish that President Truman had done a little bit more effectively. It would have taken a lot of burden off of him personally. That's one of the things.

JOHNSON: Larry O'Brien; he wasn't the only one, you say he...

HECHLER: Well, he headed it up.

JOHNSON: How many people would they have?

HECHLER: Oh, they must have had at least six people for each body of Congress.

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JOHNSON: Well, that's a much bigger staff than Truman's.

HECHLER: Yes, not only bigger, but they were really smart and respected people who dealt with big substantive issues, instead of just this little chicken feed that Maylon and Feeney dealt with.

JOHNSON: Of course, both Kennedy and Johnson were alumni of Congress.

HECHLER: Yes. Johnson had a strong Congressional relations staff too. Of course, he had somewhat the same experience legislatively that Harry Truman did.

JOHNSON: Did the speechwriting staff -- I'll just confine it to that for the moment -- did it tend to grow rather steadily over the years? Was there a bigger staff, a bigger group, working on speeches with Kennedy than worked for Truman?

HECHLER: Yes. Also you have to recognize the fact that we on the speechwriting staff of the White House were doing about six or eight other things at the same time. We were involved in policy. Clark Clifford

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mentioned, for example, that he and George Elsey used to handle everything that the National Security Council subsequently handled, because there was no National Security Council in the early Truman years. He said that Kissinger had a staff of about 156 that were doing the kind of work that he and George Elsey were handling when they were there, in addition to doing speechwriting. So the speechwriters under Truman had a tremendous advantage in being part of the whole political and other substantive structure of what the White House and the President were doing and they had more access to the President. Whereas I get the impression that many of the modern speechwriters are doing this in a vacuum.

JOHNSON: In the Bureau of the Budget, I think you said that in '48 they became a clearing house.

HECHLER: Well, earlier than that, Harold Smith really developed this under Roosevelt initially.

JOHNSON: To review all bills before signature, and get recommendations.

HECHLER: From the different agencies.

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JOHNSON: But the Bureau of the Budget, that certainly expanded in size over the years too, didn't it?

HECHLER: Yes, that has become the office of Management and Budget. Of course, the Council of Economic Advisors was created in 1947.

JOHNSON: In '46 with the Employment Act, wasn't it?

HECHLER: The Employment Act of '46, but it really didn't begin to operate until '47. You have now an organization known as Domestic Council which was not in existence when Truman was President. And the National Security Council came about as a result of the unification of the Armed Services. This was not effective right away. So there were many areas that the early Truman speechwriters were involved in that later on they didn't have to bother with.

JOHNSON: Do you notice any other important differences between the modern White House and the Truman White House in terms of organization?

HECHLER: It's just too damn big. I mean President Truman

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believed in a small staff, that under no circumstances would interfere with the Cabinet officers. I think there is a good deal more tinkering with what goes on, for example, making sure that Margaret Heckler gets moved from head of Health and Human services to Ireland when she does the wrong thing.

JOHNSON: Not related?

HECHLER: No, not related. Art Buchwald had a wonderful column on how this was a great promotion for Margaret Heckler when in fact she was "kicked upstairs."

JOHNSON: I think the rhetoric, modern political rhetoric, would be kind of outrageous to the Harry Truman type, wouldn't it -- this rhetoric that conceals rather than reveals, oftentimes?

HECHLER: Exactly. There's far less candor in politics, and there's more heavy spending. Truman in both his Senatorial and Presidential campaigns relied very heavily on grassroots campaigning, directly with people instead of the plastic type of soap-selling that occurs these days. Airport rallies, for example, are pretty much

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engineered by the political organizers. They aren't spontaneous like the whistlestops.

JOHNSON: Television apparently, and the airplane, but television in particular, seems to have changed the mode of operation.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: As a Congressman from West Virginia, you had plenty of state and regional issues, but on the national and international scene I suppose one of the most difficult things was the Vietnam war.

HECHLER: True.

JOHNSON: And you said you had to deal with that problem.

HECHLER: Yes. I was a very early supporter of the Vietnam war. As you probably know, the Gulf of Tonkin resolution passed the House of Representatives unanimously. By hindsight we felt we had been misled by President Johnson. My position changed rather gradually at first, and then precipitously later on. The first thing that caught my attention was that there were more West

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Virginians per capita that were getting killed in Vietnam than any other state. More were getting involved in front-line action there, and this caused me to do a little headscratching. Then I began to see that probably it was a mistake to get in, but since we were in we might just as well try to see what we could resolve. Then that evolved in 1966 to a very precipitous decision to take the stand of all-out opposition to the war itself, and try to see if I could use my influence to bring an early withdrawal which would be accompanied with some guarantee about American prisoners.

So I parted company with President Johnson rather sharply, and also with my old friend Hubert Humphrey who was trying desperately, as Vice President, to support President Johnson. This won a lot of opposition from veterans groups in my district, but I think overall it was the best course.

I guess in Congress I was most active on three issues; coal mine safety, coal mine health in terms of setting a level above which the dust in coal mines would not be allowed to go, and black lung compensation. I also was active on a lot of environmental issues like

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saving a number of irreplaceable recreation and priceless areas throughout the state that needed protection, such as saving the New River from being dammed up by the Appalachian Power Company. There were issues of that nature that I fought pretty hard on, and was generally successful on.

JOHNSON: Apparently they were fairly popular, because you were reelected over those years.

HECHLER: Yes. Of course, I guess some of that was due to the fact I put on a pretty vigorous campaign among young people. I had a program called "Week in Washington" where I'd bring about 50 students between their junior and senior year in high school to work for a week in my Washington office. I raised the money on that from various corporate contributions that were administered by The American Political Science Association. In addition to that I worked awfully hard on constituent contacts -- working through the schools, colleges and universities. I had a really super staff that had a rule of answering every piece of mail the same day it was received. We had a very alert and responsive

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operation so far as constituent complaints were concerned.

JOHNSON: How big a staff did you have?

HECHLER: At first when I got there, we were allowed four people, and by the end of my 18 years why we had about 16 that we were allowed.

JOHNSON: Did you get correspondence from Truman in those years that you were in office?

HECHLER: Some, yes.

JOHNSON: I was wondering too, if any other staff members of the White House ended up serving in the Congress. Were you the only one?

HECHLER: One of Stevenson's staff was elected to Congress. He and I were working on research; he was John Brademas from Indiana. Philileo Nash was elected Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin. John Carroll, of course, served. He was elected to the Senate in '56 from Colorado after he served briefly in the White House. Of course, he had been in politics before. He had served in the House and had been defeated

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twice for the Senate.

JOHNSON: It appears that you're the only one that ended up in Congress from the Truman staff, other than Carroll.

HECHLER: The only one that I can remember, yes.

JOHNSON: You made several visits out here. You say in 1958 you were here. Were you a member of the Library's Institute?

HECHLER: No.

JOHNSON: Were you ever out here for any of the conferences?

HECHLER: I was here in 1977, I believe it was, when staff members of the Truman White House met at the Library. From that conference, Francis Heller produced a book, *The Truman White House*, that was published by the University of Kansas Press. It seems to me I was at one since then, but I can't really remember the focus of it.

JOHNSON: Did you meet Mr. Truman across the hall here in his office?

HECHLER: Yes.

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JOHNSON: Was he working perhaps on *Mr. Citizen* or some other project?

HECHLER: Let's see, I came out here just before I ran for the House in '58. This is the visit I remember the most.

JOHNSON: What did he have to say to you?

HECHLER: Oh, we just talked about old times. We talked really a lot more after I was elected. He came to the House of Representatives the day I was sworn in. He was sitting up in the gallery. I've got a great picture of him leaning over the gallery rail, pointing to me. You can't see that I'm there, but you can see him pointing at me. He's sitting in the President's gallery. That was January of '59. Then, of course, Kennedy had him over to the White House in 1961-63.

JOHNSON: Had him in the White House the first day, in the Oval Office.

HECHLER: That's right. Truman had a meeting too, with all the Democratic members of the House in the White House. It seems to me I remember some kind of a reception too where Margaret was there at the White House; maybe

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that was about the same time.

I've been to a lot of Truman conferences like at Hofstra and Harvard University. I was out at Monte Poen's place at Northern Arizona University.

JOHNSON: Yes, it was written up in the paper.

Did you give papers at these other conferences?

HECHLER: Yes, I did, and also participated in panels. Also, I had an interesting meeting a little over a month ago. William Safire of the *New York Times* sent a letter around saying he wanted to assemble all the speechwriters from Truman to Reagan. He had about thirty of us out to his house in suburban Maryland for dinner. He called it the Judson Welliver Society. Judson Welliver was the speechwriter for Harding and Coolidge, apparently the first one so designated. Clark Clifford and I were the only ones from the Truman Administration there. They had some really fantastic people like Jack Valenti and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Harry McPherson and Douglas Cater.

JOHNSON: That must have been quite a group.

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HECHLER: It was a fascinating evening. Everybody got up and made a little talk about what they did.

Clifford did his usual masterful job of relating things that had happened. He told one story -- and I don't know if you can verify it -- but Truman had a classmate from Independence High School named Tom Barrows. Clifford said that every year they would compare notes and their life ambition. Barrows said that his only ambition was to make a lot of money. On his 70th birthday, Truman and he came together in this little reunion, and Barrows, in response to Truman's question about how he was getting along, said, "I met my goal; I have made a lot of money. I just want you to know that one of the greatest things has happened in my life. I just got married to a

twenty-year old girl." So Truman kidded him and said, "Well, Tom, you must have lied about your age." So Barrows, according to Clifford's story, responded, "That's right. I told her that I was 90; she believed it and married me right away." Evidently, she was more interested in his money than anything else.

I don't know if that story is true or not.

JOHNSON: It could be true. I can't verify it at the moment.

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Of course, Clifford was a lawyer in Washington in those years you were a Congressman.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: So did you visit socially once in a while?

HECHLER: Oh yes. This is fantastic, because I remember it now. He used to get a lot of the old speechwriters together. We'd go to the old Cosmos Club located over on Madison Place, not where the new one is on Massachusetts Avenue. We'd go up there to the second floor, and we'd get together and tell stories about the old days. Clifford is a great storyteller, and he still maintained his contacts with the White House staff. Of course, I maintained my contact with Judge Rosenman too over the years. I recently visited his widow up in New York.

JOHNSON: Was Clifford involved in that '56 Stevenson campaign?

HECHLER: As I remember, he was. In '52 he was in favor of Oklahoma Senator Robert Kerr for President; that was his choice. I thought that was kind of odd.. Kerr, to me, although a great speaker, you know, smelled of oil a little bit.

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JOHNSON: I think that he turned out to be something of a scandal.

HECHLER: He and Bobby Baker and a few other things were mixed up.

JOHNSON: Did someone talk you into getting onto that Stevenson campaign in '56, or was that something that you sought out yourself?

HECHLER: Well, actually what happened was, Philip Stern was director of research for the Democratic National Committee, and he was very close to Stevenson and John Brademas, who I indicated was a Congressman from Indiana. He wanted to leave the Stevenson campaign to run for Congress in Indiana in 1956. So they needed a hurry-up replacement, and Stern called me and asked me whether I'd be interested. I said, "What do I do?" He said, "You go up to New York and drop in on Tom Finletter," who had been Truman's Secretary of the Air Force. Finletter was recruiting and interviewing for the job. The thing I remember most about the interview was that

Finletter said, "If you take this job, just remember this; you're going to be dealing with a person who, if

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Socrates were alive today, he would out-argue him." I found that to be true. Stevenson was a brilliant man.

JOHNSON: Stevenson and Clifford certainly had their outstanding qualities, lawyerly qualities, but also political. In '76 you apparently got restless again.

HECHLER: Yes, I did get restless, because in '74 I had no opposition at all in either the primary or the general election. I got very bored. I love campaigns and I wanted to debate the issues, and nobody could argue with me. Here I was trying to fight strip mining and...

JOHNSON: Most of the candidates would like that situation, but it was boring to you?

HECHLER: It was very boring. Also I kind of resented the fact that the other candidates for Governor had budgets of over \$1 million, and Rockefeller spent about three million at that point, which I thought was outrageous. Of course, he has since exceeded that by 400 percent. I really got into that campaign mainly to try to call

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attention to the outrageous nature of campaign spending. I never thought I would have a chance to get elected. There's a letter on file I wrote to Jim Farley saying that this entrance into the campaign is sort of like my going into the ring with Muhammad Ali, with one hand tied behind my back. I had it pretty well cased. I never expected to win it.

JOHNSON: When was it they held the primaries out there?

HECHLER: At that time it was in June.

JOHNSON: The June primaries. So you had to politic in May, the weeks before that primary election?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: That's where the election really takes place, I suppose, because the Democrats ordinarily do win?

HECHLER: Yes. Ordinarily, although we elected a Republican Governor last year, who came in with Reagan.

JOHNSON: How much did Jay Rockefeller spend in comparison with what you spent?

HECHLER: I spent about \$30,000. He spent about three million.

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My mistake also was that I refused to accept any campaign contributions.

JOHNSON: From PACs [political action committees].

HECHLER: From anybody.

JOHNSON: Oh, you were using your own money?

HECHLER: Yes, \$30,000. You know you can't do much with that.

JOHNSON: A "Simon-pure" campaign.

HECHLER: Yes, I was like a blue-nosed prohibitionist in a wide-open town.

JOHNSON: They didn't reward you exactly.

HECHLER: They were raising this question, "Why was I leaving this safe job in Congress," rather than listening to what I said on all the issues. It was a very futile campaign.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the final count?

HECHLER: There were eight candidates and I came in third.

JOHNSON: And then he won the general election -- Rockefeller?

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HECHLER: Yes. He won the general election and served for two terms, and then got elected to the Senate.

JOHNSON: Did he offer you a job?

HECHLER: Oh, no.

JOHNSON: You're not exactly buddies?

HECHLER: And no one in Congress offered me a job either. Usually a defeated Congressman gets "taken care of" or at least gets some kind of an offer which he can refuse.

JOHNSON: Not even as a lobbyist?

HECHLER: No. Of course, as you may know, I ran a write-in campaign for Congress in the fall of '76. The polls indicated that I had about 60 percent support if I were on the ballot. But it was an almost impossible job. There were five different ways of voting in the eight counties. Some counties have paper ballots, and there are three different types of voting machines.

JOHNSON: You had passed the deadline on registering?

HECHLER: Well, I deliberately did because I wanted to

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concentrate on my campaign for Governor. I could have, if I had wanted to, pulled out of the Governorship campaign and got back on the ballot for Congress had I done so in April. But that of course would have killed my campaign for Governor.

JOHNSON: You couldn't register for both?

HECHLER: Yes, I did initially; but then I pulled out of the Congress race in order to focus on bringing out the issues in the governorship race.

JOHNSON: Which maybe is the reason you got defeated? You weren't printed on the ballot?

HECHLER: Right. I did receive a lot of criticism for trying to run a write-in campaign when the Democrats had already nominated somebody else.

JOHNSON: The regular Democrats were not too happy.

HECHLER: That's an understatement; they were infuriated.

JOHNSON: Well, did you split the Democrat vote? Is that what they were concerned about? You were going to split the Democrat vote and it would go Republican?

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HECHLER: Well, they contended that would happen, but the Republican came in a dismal third. One of the arguments that Senator Byrd, and others used, was that anybody who cast a write-in vote for me ran the danger of losing their vote for Jimmy Carter and Jay Rockefeller and the other Democrats. They even said that one may have to wind up in court by explaining a challenged ballot. You see, they made it sound as though something terrible was involved in it.

JOHNSON: Raising non-issues.

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: So now you're out of a job.

HECHLER: I ran again in 1978 and this time I was on the ballot, but I was again defeated in the '78 primary for the House of Representatives.

JOHNSON: You won the primary though?

HECHLER: No, I ran in the primary.

JOHNSON: You were defeated in the primary?

HECHLER: By the incumbent, Congressman Nick Joe Rahall who

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spent about \$200,000. I was spending about 40 or 50 thousand.

JOHNSON: You were considered something of a dissident Democrat, non-regular, or non-organization Democrat?

HECHLER: This was the talk all over the district, although the *Congressional Quarterly's* figures shows that I had a higher percentage of support of Democratic Presidents' policies than any other member of the West Virginia Congressional delegation. In other words, I was very strongly in support of the national party, but locally I would do strange things like go out and take a poll of a particular town where there was a vacancy for Postmaster to find out who they really wanted. And if it turned out to be a Republican winning that poll, why, I would appoint him rather than one that the local Democratic committee wanted.

JOHNSON: A maverick?

HECHLER: Well, this is what they said.

JOHNSON: How about the staff in Washington that you had? Did they get turned out, or did the new Congressman just take over most of the people that were on your staff?

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HECHLER: I can't think of a single one that he hired. He may have offered one a job, but it was turned down.

JOHNSON: So they were out of work, too.

HECHLER: Oh yes. They've all done very well though. They're all very capable people. Very loyal people too. Most of them stayed right there until the very last day without even going out to look for another job, even after I was defeated.

JOHNSON: How about '80?

HECHLER: I got a job with the old House committee I had served on -- the House Committee on Science and Technology. They called me in to write the history of the committee which I completed in about 1,200 pages.

JOHNSON: What year was that?

HECHLER: That was in '80. Between '78 and '80.

JOHNSON: After you lost that election in '76, did you take up teaching again?

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HECHLER: Not yet. I did a lot of visiting of college and university campuses and made a lot of community speeches and did a lot of volunteer work in some of the areas that were flooded that year. Also I was the state chairman of the Arthritis Foundation fundraising campaign.

JOHNSON: You had this radio program then, too?

HECHLER: It was a daily program. It was kind of a call-in talk show. I would have one guest for a few minutes and then we'd have a call-in, sort of like the Larry King show.

JOHNSON: How long did that last?

HECHLER: That lasted about a year. Then when I filed for Congressman in '78 naturally they cut me off the air. I had to concentrate on the Congressional campaign. After losing that, I got a call from the old chairman of my Congressional committee saying that they had a lot of trouble trying to write the history, that several people had started it and goofed it up and so I came back.

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JOHNSON: What committee is this?

HECHLER: The Committee on Science and Technology of the House of Representatives.

JOHNSON: Were you the chairman of that committee?

HECHLER: No, I was chairman of the subcommittee at first on Advanced Research and Technology, and later on Aeronautics, and later than that on Fossil Fuels Research. So, I wrote this history which was published by the Government Printing Office, entitled *Toward the Endless Frontier*. It got some favorable reviews but it got panned in the state on the grounds that here I was doing like every other defeated Congressman, "slopping at the public trough." It was a hard job and I kind of resented that kind of criticism. After all, there are a lot of people that are always out to get you when you're in politics.

JOHNSON: And don't necessarily value history.

HECHLER: That's true. Then after that, after I got back home, I started working on the Truman book and finished

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that in '82. I participated in a number of Truman conferences, wrote a lot of articles for the local press, and started teaching first at the University of Charleston, which is the State capital, in political science, and later at Marshall University where I had taught in 1957. The reason I ran for Secretary of State in 1984 was that I didn't want to end my political career with three straight defeats. I wanted to get back on the mound and pitch one more game. So this was a kind of a fun campaign.

JOHNSON: You were teaching at Marshall again before you ran for this last election?

HECHLER: Yes. Although I quit teaching when I filed for Secretary of State.

JOHNSON: How long a tenure was that teaching job?

HECHLER: Three years.

JOHNSON: Under the same old department head?

HECHLER: No, this was a new department head -- Dr. Simon Perry.

JOHNSON: Changed somewhat, I suppose, since the first time

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around.

HECHLER: Right.

JOHNSON: Much bigger institution?

HECHLER: Oh, yes. Much bigger. The first time I taught in 1957 there were about 3,500 students, and now there are about 11,000, so it has trebled in size. The students are considerably different. I didn't find the same type of enthusiastic response toward community activity. Of course, I tried to shake them from their innate conservatism, but I did find that they were very interested and articulate, and I believe generally a lot smarter than the students I taught in '57.

JOHNSON: Teaching the same type of course?

HECHLER: This was an American Government and Politics course, which you could develop into most any direction that you wanted. I had a lot of fun working in some of my experiences in the Congress and the White House, relating and expanding on the text book and giving them an opportunity to dip into some of the practical side of government and politics also.

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JOHNSON: Of course, you already had name recognition. I guess you didn't have to worry too much about name recognition, which is very important in politics. But you're building up a bit of constituency among the college students again.

HECHLER: Yes. And I did a good deal of visiting other campuses while I was teaching at Marshall, such as West Virginia University at Morgantown, and the other smaller colleges around the state, as well as high schools.

JOHNSON: Did they canvass for you again then? Did you have student canvassing?

HECHLER: Yes, and they did a beautiful 30-second political commercial for me that was produced in 15 minutes. A red jeep is my trademark. I drive around in a red jeep. One of my friends was a very accomplished guitarist and he composed an original song and music which he utilized, and we worked out the words and the tune together, sort of a Rogers and Hart combination. Then we got one sorority and one fraternity to videotape the song. The campaign song goes something like this:

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"There's a red jeep in the mountains and it's coming 'round the bend. It's bringing us a message from a West Virginia friend." Then all the chorus joins in, "Ken Hechler served in Congress, helping us pave the way, for a better West Virginia and a better U.S.A. So be sure and vote June 5th, and don't forget the date. Let's help make Ken Hechler -- our Secretary of State."

JOHNSON: Sounds like good campaign oratory.

HECHLER: It worked out pretty well because it was done in a kind of a mountain type of music and background. It was done in a refreshingly amateurish style that contrasted with some of the slick, plastic commercials that you see coming out of Madison Avenue.

JOHNSON: What are the main functions of Secretary of State?

HECHLER: He's the chief election officer of the state: he tries to eliminate fraud at the polls and tries to educate the voters toward a higher degree of public and political awareness. He also has supervision over chartering all corporations that do business in the state.

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He registers private detectives and security guards, registers charitable solicitations, and commissions notaries public.

We've had a lot of trouble with fly-by-night charities that come in and try to rip off our people. I've been very effective in keeping a lot of those out, denying them authority to solicit, after

keeping pretty closely in touch with other states that have had problems with these organizations. In addition to that, he's the repository of all the rules and regulations that are made by administrative departments of the state. This was handled in a kind of a sloppy fashion, up until the time I got in office. All the regulations were sort of boxed up and put down in the Capitol basement, but now we have an index and a very easily recoverable, retrievable, system of making sure if anybody wants to know what kind of regulations the highway department or the health department or the labor department have, we could call them up immediately. I have a very able staff that is nonpartisan and extremely efficient. I've tried to save a lot of money also for the state in terms of trying to follow the Truman example of having a small staff that works

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hard and does its work effectively. I don't have a Cadillac, but I have a jeep.

The previous Secretary of State had a big limousine that he leased for \$560 a month plus oil and gasoline, and repairs. I simply said, "I don't need that. I don't need all this extra travel." We've been able to cut down a lot of expenses in the office. It's been a rewarding experience and I think that I've put into effect a lot of reforms that have made for a very efficient operation as well as reducing the amount of corruption and fraud that has always been a hallmark of the way that West Virginia politics have operated.

JOHNSON: You're not interested in running for Congress again?

HECHLER: I'd be interested if there were a good vacancy, but it's very difficult to defeat an incumbent particularly when they have access to huge amounts of money. I just have a thing about spending money in campaigns. I just don't like to do it, and I don't think it's healthy for the political process.

JOHNSON: If you don't do it, why you're at a disadvantage,

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of course.

HECHLER: But most of what I learned about politics I learned from Harry Truman, that he always concentrated on a grassroots, doorbell-ringing, shoe-leather campaign.

JOHNSON: Well, politics has changed to some extent, and not necessarily in the right direction.

HECHLER: Radically. And, unfortunately, in many instances in the wrong direction.

JOHNSON: So you give Harry Truman a good deal of credit for your political ideas and philosophies.

HECHLER: I give him credit for political ideas, philosophy, and political courage in such areas as civil rights, the determination to do right and things will come out right in the end, in low-

spending in campaigns, and the emphasis on grassroots, shoe-leather type of politics. But, of course, I also have to give him credit for giving me my start in politics. I doubt whether I ever would have been able to get elected in West Virginia after only being a resident there one year, had I not had the kind of experience and also

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reputation which was established with the people when they look to see that I had worked with Harry Truman and traveled with him. Truman came to Huntington in September of 1958 and everybody kept asking, "Did Ken Hechler really work for you, or is he giving us a bunch of bull?" He told about all of the things that I had done. He said I was the only "heckler" on his campaign train.

JOHNSON: That was in '58 when he came through there?

HECHLER: Yes.

JOHNSON: So you had a little homecoming.

HECHLER: Yes sir.

That was during the general election. Of course, he couldn't take sides in the primary, but in the general election he came to my area on my birthday, September 20, 1958.

JOHNSON: You will remember that one all right.

HECHLER: He spoke in Charleston. He was supposed to speak in Huntington, but he got rained out and he landed in Charleston, a very difficult landing, during the rain.

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A day very much like today. He was supposed to drive to Huntington but he wasn't feeling very well after that landing. After all, he was 74 years old, I guess, at the time. So he stayed in Charleston to address several meetings there.

JOHNSON: How about your brother, did he have a family?

HECHLER: No, he's never gotten married either.

JOHNSON: Oh, I see. So you have no nephews or nieces.

HECHLER: No. President Truman was very pleased, incidentally, to meet my mother and father. He came to a convention of the American Political Science Association while I was associate director.

JOHNSON: Truman did?

HECHLER: Yes. At the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. My mother and father came down and he was very pleased to learn that they had grown up in Missouri. He said some awfully nice things both to them and at the convention about the work I had done at the White House, which didn't hurt at all among my fellow political scientists who also couldn't really believe it. They thought I'd made it up or exaggerated it.

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JOHNSON: Do you have any idea what year that would have been?

HECHLER: I guess that was '53 or '54.

JOHNSON: When did your parents die?

HECHLER: My mother died in 1976, and my father died in 1962. My mother lived to be 96 and my father lived to be 80, so I expect to be around a long time.

JOHNSON: Yes, you've got the right genes.

Another "final" question. Apparently you were pretty active and vocal in the civil rights legislation of '64-'65.

HECHLER: Yes. I marched [2001 note: strike "I marched" replace with "I was the only Member of Congress to march"] at Selma with Martin Luther King.

JOHNSON: That didn't damage you politically in West Virginia?

HECHLER: I think it did, yes.

JOHNSON: But not enough to defeat you apparently in the election?

HECHLER: No.

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JOHNSON: You were not taking on a necessarily popular position.

HECHLER: It was the kind of position which Harry Truman took in 1946 and '47 and '48 with the establishment of the Civil Rights Commission, and in his insistence on going ahead with the civil rights program, with his message to Congress at a time when Strom Thurmond and his crew were walking out of the Democratic Convention and setting up the States Rights Party. That kind of courage was a tremendous inspiration to me in pursuing the civil rights program, even though only about six percent of my constituents were black.

We also have, I might say, a large number of expatriate Virginians who are very strong old-Dominion, Harry Byrd types in their outlook.

JOHNSON: That was quite a feat then for you to continue in office for so long over those years.

HECHLER: Well, if you do your job on other things; to most people that's more important. If you answer your mail directly and they believe that you're honest in your beliefs, why, this is usually accepted even if they

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disagree with you. Of course, a lot of the younger people would tell me, particularly after the first campaign, that their parents disagreed with everything I stood for, but when the youngsters insisted that their parents vote for me, why, they couldn't resist.

JOHNSON: Well, I think we've come to the end of this session, and you're welcome to add to or alter the draft that comes out of this. Certainly I appreciate the effort you've made, coming out here in bad weather and going back in weather that probably won't be so good either.

HECHLER: I want to leave a few of these things with you. Included is the second draft of the book which contains a lot of material that wasn't in the book.

JOHNSON: Thank you, again.

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