

The literary careers of J. Edgar Hoover & Lyndon B. Johnson

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WASHINGTON — Lyndon Johnson is \$1.2 million richer for selling his presidential memoirs while Daniel Ellsberg faces a possible jail term for giving away a different version of the same story.

LBJ's book, *The Vantage Point*, contains a detailed account of precisely the facts which government lawyers contended would imperil the national security if published in the Pentagon Papers.

The government's claim was made during the trial of its suit to halt publication of the Pentagon Papers by the *Washington Post*. The trial was conducted, in large part, behind closed doors.

During one of these secret sessions, Judge Gerhard Gesell asked the government to specify which information in the secret documents would most jeopardize the Republic.

In response, the government cited the account of "Operation Marigold," an unsuccessful 1966 peace initiative. The Pentagon Papers told how the U.S. had sounded out Hanoi about peace through a Polish diplomat.

Thus the government, in the name of national security, sought desperately to suppress the story of "Operation Marigold." Yet the full story was published, complete with the top-secret details in LBJ's ponderous book.

Ellsberg has now been indicted for making the Pentagon Papers public. The government is also trying to pin conspiracy charges on the *New York Times*'s Neil Sheehan and his wife, who helped prepare the documents for publication.

Johnson, meanwhile, is riding high on his ranch.

LBJ's Secret Papers

What's more, LBJ is sitting on what may be the biggest collection of classified papers ever assembled by one man. Shortly before leaving office, Johnson ordered government departments to produce exhaustive material for a history of his administration. He personally hounded subordinates for all their working papers; Joe Califano, a top Johnson aide, was put in charge of the massive research project.

Five years earlier, when Johnson took over the administration, he insisted that the outgoing Kennedy officials leave their important papers behind.

Yet Johnson, upon his departure, took with him every important document he could get his hands on. Even the secret hotline messages the White House had exchanged with the Kremlin were carted off to Texas.

Johnson used these papers, which, of course, were prepared at taxpayer expense, to put together his book. He was assisted by a government staff, which the taxpayers provide an ex-President.

Once the manuscript was written, in large part at public expense, Johnson shopped it around and got publishers bidding against each other. He ended up with a staggering \$1.2 million advance from Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Johnson then pulled another fast one. To encourage other contributors, he had offered to put up money out of his own pocket for the library he has built to commemorate himself. He arranged for the book advance to flow through a tax-free foundation into the library as his share of the cost. Thus the \$1.2

million benefitted LBJ without costing him a cent in taxes.

Meanwhile, he has now stashed his huge collection of publicly prepared documents in his memorial library.

In all, Johnson has pulled an extraordinary coup. He has made money by revealing information which the government claims is a danger to the nation.

And he revealed it in the most self-serving fashion.

Both Lyndon Johnson and Daniel Ellsberg made public secret documents, including some of the same documents about the Vietnam War. Johnson quoted only the selected passages that made him look good. Ellsberg released uncensored documents, which gave an objective, unvarnished account of the war.

Johnson collected \$1.2 million; Ellsberg could go to jail.