

*Steve Silver:* This is an interview with Mr. Michael Baroody for the Bryce Harlow Oral History Project.

*Michael Baroody:* Brief point that I still on occasion give what I call my Bryce Harlow speech.

*Steve Silver:* Oh, go ahead.

*Michael Baroody:* And it's pretty short actually so I can give it in its entirety. That is that Bryce used to say that if the business community would ever abandon its habit of dividing and conquering itself, so as to save its adversaries the trouble, and replace that with the habit of unity, there just might be no stopping us.

*Steve Silver:* Oh, great. That was actually something I was going to ask about so.

*Michael Baroody:* That's been sort of a guiding lodestone of a lot of us who understand, whether we heard him say it directly or not, we understand he's right. There's no substitute for unity in the business community when we're trying to get big things accomplished. And I think it had a lot to do with how we got, for example, how we helped this president get four tax bills passed in his first term. Business unity was an almost essential quality there, and Bryce was an inspiration for that.

One other thing I remember rather directly – in my own experience, one of the things I'm proudest of – is being the editor-in-chief of the 1980 Republican platform when Ronald Regan ran and won on. Well before we started that process in '80, I and the executive director of the platform committee – a fellow by the name of Roger Semerad – journeyed out to West Virginia to visit with Bryce, who was a master when it came to crafting Republican platforms. He'd been involved in just about every one, every previous one for maybe the previous 25 or 30 years. So we journeyed out to West Virginia sort of to sit at the feet of the master and get his insights into how you make the best of strong views even within a political party.

*Steve Silver:* What kind of things did he tell you?

*Michael Baroody:* Oh he told us about how to try to broker differences among people; how – it won't surprise you – how crafting language carefully could cover over or mask differences if you chose the right words and were prudent in the way you wrote the things up in the matter of taking position. But it was both useful for us, Roger and me, to

go out there and a way of saying to Bryce how much we valued all of his service and all the insights he gleaned over the years.

*Steve Silver:* Do you think a whole lot has changed in the way that the platforms are crafted today?

*Michael Baroody:* Yes I do, though I haven't been involved much lately. I stayed involved throughout the 80's in Republican platforms but really haven't been much involved since. But I think that they are different and it seems maybe of declining significance. The last one was hardly an issue at all, I think, in the 2004 Republican convention, which had one issue and the issue was re-nominating the president. And so I don't think that the platform may have loomed less large in this most recent convention than it has in any of the post-war period, and it remains to be seen whether that's a trend, and they'll continue to have declining significance or not. But I think maybe they will.

*Steve Silver:* Well, I was going to ask about that. You kind of hinted that maybe it will be a trend; maybe it won't be. Is there a difference between a re-nominating convention when an incumbent president enters the platform and how it's constructed?

*Michael Baroody:* Oh yeah; it's been a long time. It seems that there's been a truly wide open convention, but usually now the matter is resolved before people get to the convention, the matter being who shall be the nominee. But it's even more so when you're talking about a successful incumbent president who would be seeking re-nomination. The president's folks would have control of the convention and control of the party mechanisms. So there wouldn't likely be any real controversy surrounding the platform.

*Steve Silver:* Let me ask a little bit about what the business community and lobbyists were like back then versus now. Was it a very tight-knit group back then when Bryce was at Procter and Gamble, back in the early days, I guess?

*Michael Baroody:* I can only be impressionistic about that. I wasn't involved with the business community at the time. My sense is that there was—at least among the Washington reps, like Bryce, of major Fortune 200 companies—a coherence; a camaraderie that was important. And I think that that continues, through mechanisms. I think Bryce had something to do with putting that together, like the Business Government Relations Council. And my recollection, though I'm honestly not sure of this, is that Bryce had a little something to do

with inspiring the creation of the BRT. I may be wrong about that, but I don't think so.

*Steve Silver:* I think you're right about that.

*Michael Baroody:* In any event, it's always struck me that the BGRC is sort of a Wash-rep level imitation of the BRT. Same companies represented. In the case of the BGRC, they're Washington reps, whereas with the BRT they're CEO's. So at least through mechanisms like that there was a fair degree, I think, and there continues to be a fair degree of collaboration, or at least communication among them.

*Steve Silver:* Why do you think Bryce was so effective at bridging the gap between business and government? Why was he so effective at getting everyone to sit down do you think?

*Michael Baroody:* You know, again, people who were his peers at the time probably would give you a better answer, okay? My sense is that it was a mix of things. One, by the time – well, certainly by the time I became aware of Bryce Harlow – he had been moving between government and business at very high levels for some considerable period of time, and that won him the respect that goes with the credibility; that attends to being able to operate at a high level in both spheres over a protracted period of time. And then of course he just kept doing it. And he kept doing it with an ability, a facility if you will, for making himself very clear and even notable in terms of the way he spoke; the way he spoke in conversation; the way he spoke from the podium, so that clarity was a big strength of his. Well, it's a rarer commodity in this town than it ought to be so when you find it, it can be pretty influential. And I think in Bryce's case it was. He wasn't just clear, he was right more often than not, and that made a big difference.

*Steve Silver:* Aside from there just being more lobbyists in town today than there were back then, how else do you think things have changed, based on your own experience and observations?

*Michael Baroody:* Well, I think they have – it seems to me they've changed a lot. I think that, first of all, one way in which they've changed is an awful lot of business entities, whether it's the Washington office of a corporation, or the headquarters of a Washington-based national trade association, are much leaner than they would have been back then; back then being 20, 30, 40 years ago. Those offices – they may have been larger, in terms of number of people involved. There might even have been more opportunity for young people to

get entry-level opportunities in such offices. These days, for many companies if not all, their Washington operation mirrors their national operation – even their multi-national operation – in looking to keep costs low, in any way it can to cut costs. Offices that might have had a dozen people in the 70's might have three now, with anything expanded responsibilities. So in the first instance, it is a much more – well it's just that – it's a much leaner operation. It may or may not be a more demanding one, but it's certainly leaner. And the luxury of having many hands (that would have been the case two or three decades ago) is just evaporated.

I think it's also a much more politically involved operation in and outside the beltway. It's always been a political job to be involved with the business community in Washington. That inherently goes with the territory, but with the rise of things like PACs, and the increased awareness that involvement – that successful advocacy – couldn't just rely on people like Bryce, highly respected voices for the company here in Washington, who could maybe by influencing a few members, the well-placed members of Congress, the chairman of the committee, or the ranking member, or the leadership. Now people understand that in addition to that, you need to be a presence out in the districts where members of Congress run for re-election, and where members of Congress now find themselves thinking they are more directly accountable to the voters in their district than they are to anybody else, including the leadership in the Congress. And so that's another way in which it's changed. It's become more political in that sense; more necessarily reliant on the addition of the voice of grassroots to the voice of an articulate spokesperson here in town or lobbyist here in town. There are a lot of ways in which it's changed; that's a couple.

*Steve Silver:*

Yeah. Do you think it's possible to teach the kind of integrity that Bryce Harlow had, or do you think that just has to be inborn to the person? Can you teach it, you think?

*Michael Baroody:*

Well I think he was special that way. I think, though, that it can be taught in a sense. But I think you either got it or you don't in terms of character. I've heard people say – and been just flabbergasted at it – that while I know they would say to someone, "I know you've made a commitment but this is business," as if in a business environment a commitment doesn't mean anything. You can reassure people in a time when that's not as uncommon as it ought to be, that it's still the right way to operate, and it's the way you ought to operate in the business community. You can get people to understand that one of things Bryce believed deeply, that

your word is the most important thing you got in this town. It's still the most important thing you can understand about trying to advocate in this town.

People are free to accept the lesson or not, but most folks I think not only will buy that lesson – it's not that they'll have integrity because of being taught that. Understand that some of the most cynical things said about this town are just that, the most cynical things said about this town. But they may not be the most accurate things said about this town. I think the Bryce Harlow scholars learn this. That it is not just okay to have integrity; it's the right thing to do. It's the way this town ought to operate, it's the way a lot of people in this town still do operate, and trying to emulate Bryce Harlow's integrity is a good thing, simply. You can learn those kinds of lessons. In an environment in which too often you're made to think you're a sucker if you buy into it. Just being reassured that Bryce Harlow was no sucker, and he represented this – one of the biggest companies in the world well and effectively – precisely because people knew his word could be trusted. That's a lesson people need to hear, particularly young people.

*Steve Silver:* Do you think it's easy to have role models like Bryce Harlow in terms of how they're covered by the press, or do you think the press is only apt to cover the bad apples of lobbying, and do you think maybe that's kind of a problem?

*Michael Baroody:* It's a problem because most of the reporting you see about lobbyists cast them in the worst sort of light.

*Steve Silver:* Exactly.

*Michael Baroody:* And that's one of the things I was trying to get out with the previous conversation. If all you do is read the newspapers, particularly these days with the reporting of some truly scandalous behavior by some lobbyists, the gullible, and maybe the people who aren't so gullible, can come to believe that that's the way it is; that's the way you're supposed to behave. So, in short I think you very seldom see the kind of positive treatment of lobbying as a profession, or of lobbyists as role-models, to use the phrase you used in your question. Rather, you see scandal and bribery and the suggestions that it's all about – not just all about money – but all about gobs of it. There's nothing wrong with money in politics, or money in lobbying, or people doing well because they've done good, but it isn't just that. But you won't get that impression from reading most of the press coverage.

*Steve Silver:* Do you think the longer hours and the more complexities of the business make it difficult to have the same level of integrity that Harlow had, or is that just an excuse? Do you think it's necessary to cut corners and all that stuff?

*Michael Baroody:* You know I can't imagine it was always easy for Bryce. Some things never change, and sometimes it's the more expedient route, the easier route would be to cut corners, to trim, to dissemble. It's a lie even, and there must have always been temptations. I mean, the fact that one might be tempted to do that isn't unique or peculiar to our time. If it were simply easy for Bryce Harlow to have the integrity that he had, we wouldn't lionize his memory as much as we do. It's because it distinguished him as someone to be admired that we remember him for it, and so I don't know that it was; that it's any more difficult now than it was then, but it's probably not any easier.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah. Do you think there are a lot of Bryce Harlow's out there today that we maybe don't know about because of what you mentioned before with the press coverage, and stuff like that?

*Michael Baroody:* Well, there are a lot of people of good will who are professional and have integrity. Whether they are quite – the giants is the right ironic word to use about Bryce because he was diminutive physically, as you know – whether there are giants like him out there in great numbers, I doubt. I think the majority of the people I've come to know, Wash-reps of our member companies at the National Association of Manufacturers, are people of integrity. They're people who try pretty hard to do the right thing for their company, for the people who work for the company and the shareholders in it, and to do the right thing the right way, if I could put it that way. But that doesn't mean they're all going to be remembered like Bryce. I think there was – he just had the special quality that singled him out.

*Steve Silver:* Aside from the Bryce Harlow scholars, do you think there are a lot of younger lobbyists and students of lobbying who know about Bryce Harlow?

*Michael Baroody:* Well, I don't. I said at the outset, I have this speech I sometimes give about business unity that I refer to when I give it as my Bryce Harlow speech, and I can tell, particularly among younger members in the audience, that the ones who show any recognition when I mention the name Bryce Harlow, are few. I don't think he's well-enough known, but the existence of the foundation, the

scholars and the annual dinner do a lot to keep his name and his memory alive. So a lot of people do know; I mean I don't know how to quantify it I guess. But it's good that such institutions – any institution of the dinner itself – exist because that continues to be, it seems to me, year in and year out better attended, and that means the flame will stay burning.

*Steve Silver:* As sort of a final thought, what would you say is the most significant way Bryce has influenced you and your career? What do you take away from Bryce Harlow?

*Michael Baroody:* I was always fascinated with his use of language and I think that had an influence on me. But to add to that – enough said about that, but that would be the first thing that came to mind – it struck me powerfully; one thing that we all remember about him, and that is the ease from which he moved from high positions at staffing presidents back and forth from government to business, and the like. He didn't seem to see; he saw them almost as seamless in a good way. That is he saw the business of this town as seeking good policy, and he thought that good policy was good politics. I mean, I can't speak for him in that regard, but what I'm saying is I think that he saw seamlessness to the business of government and the business of business, and the business of government relations with business. That always struck me as an enviable career to have.

*Steve Silver:* Mike Baroody I just want to thank you for talking to us. It's been great.

*Michael Baroody:* Good.

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