

*Steve Silver:* We are talking with Mr. David Elliott for the Bryce Harlow Oral History Project. Mr. Elliott, thank you again, for talking to us about Bryce Harlow and coming all this way, especially. Why don't we start by having you tell us about your background, what you did for Procter & Gamble, and then we'll get into this stuff with Bryce.

*David Elliott:* Started with Procter & Gamble in 1957 in the manufacturing organization; was transferred to Purchases after five years and then the Company had some very serious difficulties with the U.S. Customs Service and I was asked to create a corporate organization and system to deal with those issues. After a year, I felt I had the internal company controls and procedures in place that would protect the company from violations of customs laws, but also felt very strongly that given the character of some of the customs laws, basically there were civil penalty laws which went back to the Civil War emergencies, and the way in which goods were valued, for customs purposes. Most of these problems could not be solved internally.

I recommended to the Company that the Washington office become involved in securing changes in these laws. The chairman of the Company had two questions of the general counsel, "Are these changes necessary?" and, "Do we have to be in the forefront?" And the responses were, "Yes," and, "Only if we have to – to get the job done."

Bryce came to Cincinnati for a meeting to deal with these problems, which was the first time I met the gentleman. I knew really very little about the Washington office, and we discussed the problem and what needed to be done and he said it would take three years of hard work. I thought he meant his hard work. No, he meant mine. *(Laughs)*

And that led to my coming to Washington very frequently to organize a coalition, going to meetings on the Hill and then increasingly, I found that Bryce, rather than going to meetings, as I thought he would; no, he would send me to them and then ask for a report afterwards and give me some guidance. But I was amazed at the extent to which he was a guide and mentor – letting me run loose all over Capitol Hill.

He was unwell late in the period. In fact, he retired before we had the bill through the Congress, but he was still helpful in telephone calls. And one very snowy day in February of – it must have been '78 – when I was concerned about some aspects of how things

were going, and I called him. I said, "I think what you're worried about is top management of P&G. Fine; let's just do what you need to do for the legislation. Go ahead and do it and if anyone complains, tell them I told you to." (*Laughter*) And that evolved onward into really a good personal friendship.

And then about three pieces of legislation in the trade area, all kinds of boring technical stuff but very important, passed the Congress. I was asked by the Carter administration if I would take a job as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce, and my reaction was, "I guess, if you can clear a registered Republican through the White House, and Procter will give me a leave of absence, then let's do it." I figured neither would happen, but both did, so I wound up spending a year handling international trade matters for the administration on Capitol Hill. And my wife and I would go up to Shepardsdown to visit with Bryce and Betty quite a number of weekends. And he warned me when I went to the Commerce Department that from then on, the world would consider me to be a Democrat. (*Laughs*)

*Steve Silver:* Because you were working for the Carter –

*David Elliott:* I think I'm more considered a chameleon politically, than anything else. But clearly, I'm not reliable. I'll stick with one side or the other than Bryce didn't himself, but it was –

*Steve Silver:* Right, well I was going to say Bryce was a Democrat turned Republican, also.

*David Elliott:* So it's (true) and we continue on with knowing Bryce until Betty passed away, and then Bryce faded away. Stayed in touch with Sally, his second wife, as well as we could.

*Steve Silver:* Well, how was he to work for? I mean you alluded to it earlier, when he was more of mentor and he let you loose, you talk a little bit about that?

*David Elliott:* He would ask questions. He was supportive. But I didn't technically work for him. I worked for Procter in Cincinnati, but he tried to be supportive with them, of what I was accomplishing. He would tend not to tell you what to do but to ask you questions that would lead you in the right direction as you saw the answers. When he felt you needed help -- for example, when I was having difficulties with the chief of staff of the Republican minority on the Finance Committee, he got a meeting with the chief of staff. He decided he would go and bring Mike Manatos along. And Mike,

of course, worked for P&G and was a Democrat. And so his quiet message to the staff with Mike being there was, "You've got some pretty heavy weight from both Republican and Democratic sides who want you to listen to what we have to say."

*Steve Silver:* And that's how he would fill out the picture.

*David Elliott:* Right. I think he was very sensitive to people. There was one example on that first bill. We were having a little problem that could easily be solved by the congressional chairman involved with the administrative conference procedural thing they had. But Bryce was well aware when we went to see him that there were other issues that the congressman had with him. So, rather than my making the spiel for what I wanted to start off with, he had a conversation with him, clearly just to let him let his steam out before we asked him for something. He was very sensitive to people and how they were feeling.

*Steve Silver:* Why do you think he was such an effective representative for Procter & Gamble?

*David Elliott:* I think the same things that made him so effective in all the earlier jobs he had. You probably got all this background from what you told me. He started off on Capitol Hill. He came here from Oklahoma to go to work for a Democratic congressman from Tulsa - the constituency Jim Jones had for many years. Also, at some point -- and I haven't these quite together -- he worked for the House Historian with a group of young guys and when they misbehaved, the punishment was usually to go and study some more of the history of the Congress. And when he worked for the congressman from Oklahoma, the hours apparently were absolutely incredible. You had to produce. The staffs were very small compared with today. You had to write a certain number of letters; I think it was a hundred letters a week or something, and you have all Sunday off after you had completed your hundred letters for the week.

*Steve Silver:* That was your weekend.

*David Elliott:* Yeah. And he would then spend what time he had walking the Mall, looking at the Lincoln and Jefferson and Washington Memorials, taking in their meaning. He had an incredible understanding of our nation's government and how it worked. He had a lot of pride in that government. He had a lot of pride in his own accomplishments. Very quietly, but he had virtually no ego. He taught me early on --I don't know if he was the father of the

phrase or not, but certainly the father so far as I'm aware -- "There is no limit to what you can get done in Washington if you don't care who got the credit."

*Steve Silver:* I've heard that.

*David Elliott:* That was very much his way of -- He was immensely proud of the Presidential Medal of Freedom that he received. He had absolutely no intention of writing memoirs like everybody else does.

*Steve Silver:* Refused to.

*David Elliott:* Refused to write memoirs. Gave all the papers away that he would have needed for it. And I thought, "By God, I wish he had." *(Laughter)* That would have been a legacy that he could have left us. Those were outstanding. How much have you been able to find people who knew him back in the Eisenhower days?

*Steve Silver:* Several, actually. This afternoon I'm interviewing somebody that's-

*David Elliott:* Good, because that's the era that I fear would be too easily lost.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah, we've got several, several good people.

*David Elliott:* Good, great. That would be in the right connection back to his days when he was Carl Vinson's Chief of Staff, when he was still a Democrat. You are aware, of course, that he handled Marshall's congressional relations during World War II -- immensely proud of Marshall. I do remember some of his guidance to me at the Commerce Department, particularly when the Republican Administration came in after Carter lost. I was, at that point, Acting Assistant Secretary, and Bryce said "You've got to do what we did in World War II at the Defense Department. That is, just put in a regulation that any communication to any member of the Department and the Hill had to go through the Congressional Affairs office." And unfortunately, I couldn't quite sell something that strong, but it's amazing how much damage can be done by somebody that doesn't know what they're doing with the Hill or has an agenda inconsistent with the administration's.

*Steve Silver:* Right. Exactly. What was some of the advice he had given you, or maybe not just lobbying in general; doesn't have to be on specific issues; on anything that you either worked with him on or just consulted him on?

*David Elliott:* One very fundamental piece was you cannot do anything but tell the truth and the whole truth. And you do not have to be stupid. But if you're asked if something's controversial and say it's not, but it is, you're in real trouble. A lobbyist may not always get the same treatment back, but Bryce was very firm in that. In direct and indirect experience, I have confirmed the importance of that. And someone trying to do some government relations really has nothing if they do not have credibility. A good friend who was legislative director for a congressman and one of the automobile companies had a plan that affected his constituency, so one day the chair of that company came in to talk to that congressman. He said some things that they understood to be inaccurate and the comment the legislative director made to me later was, "We will always give the president of this company or the chair of this company a good welcome, but we won't believe a thing he says."

*Steve Silver:* Very interesting. Was Bryce concerned about the image of a corporate lobbyist? Did he ever talk to you about the ethics and everything involved?

*David Elliott:* Ethical behavior is just part of the standard. And it was also part of the standards of Procter & Gamble. Bryce made it very clear to the company when he was hired that if they wanted him for his expertise, he would come to work for the company, but if they wanted him because of his ability to use his influence, he didn't want to work for them. And I think that's standard. To maintain it, I think, is very consistent to the company's general belief in things as well. It doesn't mean you don't take opportunities to take people out to dinner or what have you. The morals have had a change since I was playing around in the city. But P&G was never great in the entertainment side. When I worked in the trade area, I would go off to Geneva and meet with trade negotiation officials while negotiations were going on. That maybe some evening when I'm wondering what to do, some large company was entertaining the U.S. Trade Representative at a big party on the edge of Lake Geneva. *(Laughs)* And we just didn't operate that way.

*Steve Silver:* Was it something endemic in the company or just --?

*David Elliott:* I think it was the company's style and they tend to be very conservative. For a long time, as I understood later because it wasn't my area, basically, Bryce's job was just really to keep us advised as to what was going on; monitor things for us. It only evolved over time into becoming proactive. I think that had come

only a very few years before I got into this customs thing in '76, so it may have been in the early '70s when we started, even then it was always strictly rationed what we got into. The company did have a standard that they believed in -- to involve the company in the activity, it had to be right for the company, right for the country, and P&G had to be a factor that would make a difference. I'm not sure that standard has changed too much to this day. The process of getting to it may be different, but when I was talking to Jane (Hoover), they're rigorously prioritizing what the company is involved in.

*Steve Silver:* Can you talk a little bit about what Bryce's name means within Procter & Gamble or up until the time that you retired, what kind of an impact did he have on the company?

*David Elliott:* The impact Bryce had on the company, other than what he quietly accomplished? I think top management knew him well and had a high degree of respect for him. I think the majority of the manager level people didn't know he existed because some of them probably didn't know we had a Washington office. And simply because it didn't affect their daily lives. But I think the people who did know him closely had a great deal of respect for him. I happened to go to his funeral and the company brass also were at the funeral, and that was the one of the only times I've ever seen John Smale, who was Chairman of the company, in tears. And John has mellowed in retirement, but in that era he was not expected to be seen teary-eyed. *(Laughs)* He was a strong leader.

*Steve Silver:* A lot has sort of been made about Bryce Harlow's invisible influence that he had in Washington and sort of in Procter, and I want to ask you about that. Do you think that a lot of that was because of the quote that you referenced earlier about letting other people take credit for things? I mean, there's no laws named after him, there's no buildings named after him, that kind of a thing.

*David Elliott:* I'm sure there are a lot of laws he was responsible for, and probably a lot of buildings. I was very intrigued when I went to the Department of Commerce about the number of civil service people who came up to me and understood that I knew him and what they thought of him. They might know some Army or Navy Reserve outfit that he had been in at some point. He had a quietly strong reputation. But, he certainly was not someone who ran around selling Bryce Harlow.

*Steve Silver:* Do you think you could teach, or anybody can teach the kind of integrity that Bryce had? Is it possible to teach that?

*David Elliott:* I think you can tell people about it and if they're smart in the government relations area and use these things, they will learn for themselves.

*Steve Silver:* That's interesting.

*David Elliott:* Yeah. I mean, I think it's important to let people know how he operated, but they're going to have to take those lessons and apply them, find they work. I worked pretty much away from Washington over the last years with Procter. What lobbying I did is outside the country, not here. Jane did the trade area, which was my responsibility. Jane did the lobbying here and I worked with the trade associations, probably very little on the Hill. I did do work with some of the USTR staffers and so forth, but most the government official work I did was outside the United States. And I applied the same principals and we got the same results.

I think it's important trying to teach his qualities: integrity, deep understanding and respect for his nation's government and how it works. You understand what took him from being an LA to a congressman to being in charge of congressional affairs, like George Marshall in World War II, to being Chief of Staff to Carl Vincent. He changed his mind about which party he belonged to, then becoming first Eisenhower's speech writer, and on to basically being counselor to Eisenhower. Upon learning how the Kennedy Administration planned to organize the White House Congressional Affairs Office, he called Larry O'Brien and said that he was making a serious mistake in turning it to nothing, not because he liked the Kennedy Administration's policies, but he thought it was important that the government be run properly. When McElroy returned from the Defense Department to chair P&G from his Washington experience, including its government affairs office, who did he pick?

*Steve Silver:* Bryce Harlow.

*David Elliott:* Bryce Harlow. And when Nixon needed someone to manage his transition team, who did he pick? When he wanted a counselor, who did he pick? When the Nixon White House was falling apart, who did he pick?

*Steve Silver:* Exactly.

*David Elliott:* He and Melvin Laird went back in to try to straighten things out. And so, you understand this, and then you understand some basics

of who he was, how he did things. I think those lessons should speak for themselves. I suspect even in this highly partisan non-collegial world, these things would still work, particularly for the business Hill representative.

*Steve Silver:* Well, that's what I wanted, that's sort of my next question. That was a good segue into it. I mean, Bryce, of course, you know we've been talking about this, is his ability to work with Democrats and to present both sides of the issue. Do you think that if you were operating in today's partisan polarized environment, that would still be a virtue?

*David Elliott:* I believe he'd still play the game that way.

*Steve Silver:* The same way.

*David Elliott:* He was a smart man, so he would make some accommodations in how he went about things, but the basics would remain the same.

*Steve Silver:* Do you think lobbyists who are starting out in the profession today should know the name Bryce Harlow? What should they take away?

*David Elliott:* Well, pretty quickly someone should be getting to know about him. A very good place to start.

*Steve Silver:* Would be Bryce Harlow? Yeah. Why do you think he was seen as such a unique figure in Washington?

*David Elliott:* Because he was a unique figure. *(Laughs)*

I think, here again, it would be the, "I don't care who gets the credit." And that meant people could come to him for advice and that he wasn't going to booby trap them and that he wasn't going to try and take credit for what was done using his advice. A confidence level. You could get the right answer and it wouldn't be a mistake to ask for it.

*Steve Silver:* As sort of a final thought, just to sum up, how did he influence your own political career in terms of how you operated?

*David Elliott:* He certainly influenced my ability to do things here and I think of the years I was doing much for the company in Washington, he got the hard work done. And what I learned from that -- he moved me to a job that was more involved with the policy issues of trade with the company, not the lobbying side; that went to Jane. And I

started working with governments in other countries, through our subsidiaries. And that all continued on, just was how and about doing things and I guess, right this week is probably the first Washington lobbying I've done in twenty years. It's following, I think, very much the same kind of track. No big deal to it, but trying to get some support for a documentary film I'm doing and trying build a group of potentially interested field folks to support it. I think it's exactly what he would have done. No magic to this one; what I'm doing is not a complicated issue, but the same basic things.

*[BREAK IN AUDIO]*

*David Elliott:* Well, one measure of the man was that when he was retired from Procter with his emphysema and was taking an enormous array of medications, when he always wanted to see me if I had time, and either to get away from the Commerce Department or when I was back in Cincinnati, or in the Washington area and wanted to visit, he would welcome me. And I found out later from Betty that while she tried to ration visits, he would want to see me and take extra doses of cortisone so he could and in doing so, was paying a price later for that. I remember staying there at the time but later I learned about it, and it just increased my appreciation for his kindness and generosity. He was limitless in his friendship and limitless in his advice and willingness to help. In fact, when we moved to Washington, even though I was going to work for the Carter Administration, he offered me the loan of his apartment in Crystal City. We didn't take him up on it because we found a house quickly, but, that was, again, an example of his friendship, but also a willingness to help his government by helping somebody, though a pretty unimportant job, ease their pathway into Washington. He did advise me, before I went to Commerce, "Remember, your job may be important, but you are not." And that was not just advice to me, but it would be his advice to anyone in government service.

*Steve Silver:* So you are not, the job is. It's about the job.

*David Elliott:* Yeah.

*Steve Silver:* Well, thank you, again, for talking to us. It's been great.

*[End of Audio]*