

*Steve Silver:* We are talking with Ms. Trudy Harlow as part of the Bryce Harlow Oral History Project. Thank you so much for talking to us and helping us out. Let's start by having you tell us a little bit about your professional background in D.C. and then we'll look at the stuff with your father.

*Trudy Harlow:* All right. My professional background is, when I graduated from college – well actually even before I graduated from college, I worked at the National Republican Congressional Committee, then I worked at the Congressional Boosters Club, which was a now defunct fundraising arm of the congressional committee, and from there I worked with Senator Gurney of Florida for about a year, and then went back to the Boosters Club. Retired from there for about ten years while I raised my children and then went back to work at the Boosters Club again. From there, I came down here to Interior as a political appointee and worked at the National Park Service under President Reagan, then got a career job in the "Take Pride In America Program," which was an initiative of Interior Secretary Don Hodel. When that program got closed down, I went to work as Chief of Public Affairs at the National Biological Survey under Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and then that bureau – and I along with it – got merged into the United States Geological Survey. There, I also served as Chief of Public Affairs, and then I came here to the Bureau of Reclamation as Chief of Public Affairs, when the latest Bush administration came in.

*Steve Silver:* What was it like, and you probably get asked this a lot, but what was it like growing up with your father doing what he did and serving presidents and –

*Trudy Harlow:* Well of course I knew my father as my dad. He had a great sense of humor and he was a very playful dad. We joked around a lot in our home and the thing I remember about his work growing up was that he wasn't home much. He worked long hours, sometimes worked all night, slept on the couch at the office, and my mother would get up and take him a fresh shirt in the morning. We wouldn't see him sometimes for days on end because he would work way into the night; if he came home he'd go to bed after we were already in bed, get up and leave again in the morning before we were up, so it seems to me in my memory – but I don't know if this was actually true – but it seems like there were sometimes weeks when we didn't see him, not that he wasn't around, but just we didn't see him. And I do remember one humorous time when my father was in the – it must have been Eisenhower White House when I was a young teenager and I monopolized the phone so much that the president had a special line put in to our house.

*Steve Silver:* The president had the line –

*Trudy Harlow:* Because, because they could not get through. Teenage girls, you know, and that was a point of great humor to my father, although I think he was pretty embarrassed about it originally, but over the years that was a good family story.

*Steve Silver:* Absolutely. Did he talk a lot, when you guys all had family time, about some of the major events that were taking place? In other words do you feel like you had sort of a unique vantage point of history?

*Trudy Harlow:* Yes and no. When I got old enough to really appreciate the issues he was working around and the people he met, a lot of whom I considered to be family friends, I just didn't consider them to be anybody special. But when I was finally in the work world and really had a context for all of these folks, I remember vividly at one point my sister was working at the EPA, I must have been working for Senator Gurney, and I think my brother was working at EPA and my father was working in the Nixon White House and they were working on environmental legislation – there were just a lot of reasons we couldn't talk business at the dinner table, at least around the topics we were all working on at the time. And I remember the frustration level because you couldn't talk about your workday. Those are the things that stand out and I have to tell you right now, I'm just a week beyond having had some major surgery so my memory probably isn't as good as it should be. I can't give you any specific stories.

*Steve Silver:* Sure, I understand. Did your father encourage you and Peggy and Larry to choose government service and government relations as a career or did he sort of try to steer you away? I mean, you all ended up doing that so I'm curious.

*Trudy Harlow:* He didn't specifically steer us in any direction. The steering he did was to prepare us for life. And we all had to learn how to type, all of us, because he wanted us to have something we could fall back on and that was of course before computers. So we also suffered through awful typing classes.

*Steve Silver:* Shorthand too?

*Trudy Harlow:* Oh yes, the shorthand too, I don't know if my brother ever had to learn shorthand but my sister and I certainly did. We went to work in politics right off, my sister and I both did. And, I don't know, it

just seemed like the natural thing to do. My brother, I think, was a little, a little less clear about what he wanted to do but in the end I think that was where his interests lay also. He grew up in Washington as much as anything else and it it's just what you do here. So, but I think my father's interest was to make sure we were educated as well as we could be and that we were prepared for life.

*Steve Silver:* Did your father ever talk about some of the jobs that he liked the most or that he liked the least in Washington out of everything he did?

*Trudy Harlow:* I think there were things he enjoyed; he might have shared some of those with my brother and sister. But with me he was mainly professional in the sense that he was fair, even about personalities – he didn't tell stories at home so much about personalities. There were some things. There were stories he liked to tell. They were probably well known – about his getting calls from three different presidents at one time, and then riding along with Lyndon Johnson and having his car phone ringing and it was for him, and those things he took great delight in. Those were high points, but there were people he respected and the people he respected were always those who were honest, who were straightforward and who didn't play games with people. And that's basically how we were brought up to be.

*Steve Silver:* Did he give you any specific career advice knowing that you were on your way to a career in politics, some of the things that were important.

*Trudy Harlow:* Well I think, I don't think he really ever assumed that I was on my way to a career in politics. I was the one that stayed home with my children for ten years and my brother and sister worked. So I had a different relationship with my father. My brother and sister had careers early on in their lives and mine developed later. By that point he was already ill. So I didn't ever really ask his career advice as it were.

*Steve Silver:* Did he ever teach you just growing up then, not so much from a career standpoint, just how to handle criticism or people who disagree with you? Did you ever talk about that?

*Trudy Harlow:* My father taught more by example than by direction and I feel in my memory that he let us find our own way pretty much. We knew when he disapproved of something we had done or a way we had behaved. A lot of the times we knew it without his saying anything. And it was a very unpleasant experience to disappoint

him. So as far as handling criticism is concerned, as the most sensitive one in the family – that would be me – I think he tried to protect me as much as possible and I think he was not overly thrilled that I was working in politics, because it is such a hard knock world.

*Steve Silver:* That's kind of a good way into my next question. I wanted to ask you briefly to speak about how public affairs or government has changed now versus when your father was doing it.

*Trudy Harlow:* Oh, certainly it was a lot more civilized, then.

*Steve Silver:* Back then.

*Trudy Harlow:* Back then. There was a courtliness about it and there were manners; I don't think those things exist today. And the bottom line is what's important today, not how you got it or who you had to step on to get it and I don't think he would be less valued today, certainly. But I think he would be distressed and I think he was already getting distressed by the direction politics were going by the time he died.

*Steve Silver:* Would you say it's maybe less relationship-based nowadays?

*Trudy Harlow:* Oh, absolutely.

*Steve Silver:* Of course then that's what your father was very well known for –

*Trudy Harlow:* Absolutely.

*Steve Silver:* Relationships. Would you also say it's maybe less of a zero-sum game back then versus now? You know, nowadays, do you think people are more concerned about winning than they were back then?

*Trudy Harlow:* Yes. Yes. And although I think certainly in this administration there are people who believe that – and I would have to cite our Secretary and her people who believe that it's important to collaborate and to reach consensus decisions as much as possible. Nevertheless I don't think it's taught much of anywhere as a way of doing business and I think there's a meanness now in politics that didn't exist and that my father would be extremely uncomfortable with. Not to say he didn't appreciate hardball when it was played, but I don't believe that he would find it entertaining to attack the personal.

*Steve Silver:* And do you think there are people I guess that do that that find that entertaining now?

*Trudy Harlow:* Yes, oh yes. Yeah they do.

*Steve Silver:* The idea of integrity which of course you know stamped not just on your father but your whole family, do you think integrity can be taught or even learned or is it something you think people just need to have?

*Trudy Harlow:* No I think it's learned.

*Steve Silver:* Think it's learned.

*Trudy Harlow:* Oh absolutely. I think it's learned and I think it's learned in the family and I think it's learned in school. And I don't believe it's being taught anymore for some reason.

*Steve Silver:* As a final thought, what do you think are the most important contributions that your father made what you think should be his lasting legacy for future generations?

*Trudy Harlow:* First, that you can practice politics without being, without breaking the law, without breaking people's trust, without making other people look bad, that you can be successful creating or bringing people together to some sort of consensus in this town without having to sacrifice principles. That to me is an essential hallmark of who he was. And you know, even to the day he died I don't think I ever heard him use more than two or three swear words in my whole life; I mean he just wasn't that type of man. It wasn't that he was an overtly religious sort of person in that sense, it was just he didn't think it was necessary to get your life accomplished.

And I remember several times his saying to me that he had been offered jobs in the alcohol industry and the tobacco industry and he ended up working with Prector & Gamble because he didn't want to deal in areas he felt were not building people up. They were pulling people down and so I think it was that positive outlook about people and bringing good to the table, bringing something positive to the table rather than just always arriving with a negative viewpoint or negative impact that made him different.

I wanted to go back to what you asked that I feel like I got from my father and I have to say my father was an optimist. And I think that's essential to thinking that people are basically good and he did believe people are basically good and that at the bottom of

everything what they really want is something good. And so that shaped his whole orientation to life and I think that shaped my family's orientation to life, my siblings and mine.

*Steve Silver:* That core belief that people –

*Trudy Harlow:* People are good and, you know, my father used to get in taxi cabs and have wonderful conversations with taxi cab drivers. And he'd talk to people on the street, he just enjoyed people. He enjoyed people's stories, he enjoyed people's perspectives on life and always he wasn't one of these real total hail, fellow, well met extroverts, he just liked people and that I think tremendously colored our upbringing, our outlook on Washington actually, and the work that we do here.

*Steve Silver:* Do you think politics has changed to the point that can no longer – do you still think there's room for people like that? Do you think that's what needs to be done maybe to sort of return back to the era of civility, that core belief that people are good?

*Trudy Harlow:* I think it would help us a lot. I do think it's possible but I don't think it can be done overnight and I do know there are a lot of people around who do feel that; that people are good and they want to bring good to the table. I think they get shouted down a lot; there's a lot of noise in the system now. That wasn't there – I don't recall it being there forty years ago.

*Steve Silver:* Do you think it might have been a little tougher then for him when he encountered somebody with, somebody who didn't have very good motives or do you think he just accepted that as oh, well, that's the business?

*Trudy Harlow:* I think – I think he was realistic about people, but his foundational belief was that people were as a whole basically good, that they wanted good. I don't think that belief ever faltered, even having gone through Watergate and been falsely accused and dealt with a lot of difficult people of various kinds throughout his life. I don't think that ever was challenged in his heart really.

*Steve Silver:* That core belief?

*Trudy Harlow:* That core belief.

*Steve Silver:* That people are good. Thank you so much for talking to us Trudy. We really appreciate it.

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