

*Steve Silver:* We are talking with Mr. Hartmann for the Bryce Harlow Oral History Project. Mr. Hartmann, good to meet you. Thank you for talking to us.

*Robert Hartmann:* Thank you.

*Steve Silver:* Could you tell us a little bit about how you first met Bryce Harlow?

*Robert Hartmann:* Well, it's hard for me to remember how I first met him, but I suspect that it was when I was first a newspaper man, and I was covering the Congress as chief at the Washington Bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*, and the man that you could talk to if you wanted to know anything was Bryce Harlow, about the Congress, or the U.S. government, .but most particularly about the Congress.

*Steve Silver:* What was Bryce Harlow like to work with, do you remember?

*Robert Hartmann:* He was a very congenial and a pleasant person, a gentleman and a scholar, and he had a phenomenal memory. He knew everybody on Capitol Hill, and everybody of any consequence in politics.

*Steve Silver:* What was it like working for President Ford? Could you tell us about that?

*Robert Hartmann:* Well, since I did it for a great many years, I guess it must have been satisfactory. *(Laughter)* He was one of the most genuinely honest and unpretentious persons that I've known in the political arena, and we're still friends. I'm on the board of directors of the Ford Foundation. We still get together. He's in much better health than I am because he exercises more. He's a very good friend, and our families are friends, and we see him as often as possible.

*Steve Silver:* Do you remember anything that you and Bryce Harlow worked on together in the Ford administration?

*Robert Hartmann:* I looked in my autobiography trying to find something like that because I am good about concealing my sources when they're secret or when they don't want to be recorded. I don't put them in my books, so my book is not much better, and my memory is not any better. I know that when Ford was a very young congressman, he often went to Bryce Harlow to find out what was going on in the Congress, what other congressmen were thinking, and what to expect of them as he was working his way up the ladder to become one of the leaders of the Congress. Ford wasn't ambitious to be

president at that time. I really don't know whether he was or not, but vanity was not one of his faults.

He was born with the name of Leslie Child. Ford's mother remarried, and his father – not his biological father but the stepfather – that was Gerald R. Ford, head of the Ford Paint Company in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who adopted him, fortunately, because I don't think he would ever gotten anywhere in politics being Leslie Child. And when Ford made All-American Center at the University of Michigan, the stepfather who had adopted him called him Gerald R. Ford, Junior, and his nickname was Junie. He couldn't have gone very far in politics as Junie either (*Laughter*), but he had a good sense of humor and a considerable degree of modesty for a politician.

(*Laughter*) But we became very good friends when I was a reporter, one of the few that he trusted. I had a lot of – that's why I was a good reporter. I had a lot of people who trusted me, but I enjoyed being a reporter and I got to know all these famous people. But the way I got the best of my news riding around at night with the people on the police department, detectives on the night shift, and learned how they operated and learn all their names because you get the best news from the cops who were doing the work. And, you know, they don't talk to reporters very well until, first of all, you earn their confidence that you aren't going to get them in trouble and you're not going to put on the record things with their name on them. So that's how I started my career as a Washington reporter.

*Steve Silver:* And what about Bryce Harlow?

*Robert Hartmann:* Melvin Laird was a congressman and it was his ambition to be the Speaker, I guess. Some say all congressmen have that ambition. Mel was very good at analyzing whether people were going to get ahead and if they were he wanted to pick them so that they could help him along. You know, "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." He was the one who introduced me to Bryce. And the thing was that if there's anything I want to know that I don't know, we'd just ask Bryce, and I asked him why and he said, "Well, because he knows the answers." (*Laughter*) But he didn't say that. What he did say was, "Well, you're never lied to unless, of course, he tells you something off the record and you don't keep it off the record and lie to him, and then he won't ever tell you anything again." (*Laughter*) That was good advice and we remain friends.

*Steve Silver:* So confidentiality was very important to Bryce Harlow.

*Robert Hartmann:* It is both in the news business and in politics, where there isn't too much difference. One of them wants to get elected and the other one wants to get printed. *(Laughter)*

*Steve Silver:* Do you think that's changing? Do you think people are less good at that today than they were back then?

*Robert Hartmann:* Oh, I don't suppose people have changed very much since Adam. *(Laughter)* Everybody wants to get ahead and not be left behind. There's two sides to the same coin. One is called ambition and the other one is called courtesy. *(Laughter)* As for Bryce, I really can't remember when we first got acquainted. But I got so good at keeping confidences I kept them too well for myself. When I was first reporting on Capitol Hill and became chief of the *Los Angeles Times* Washington Bureau, I was anxious, of course, to get good sources and on and off the record, and that's when I first learned about Bryce and his reputation for being a good source unless he – unless you didn't honor the off-the-record business, and then he wouldn't tell you anything ever again *(Laughter)*.

*Steve Silver:* Well, I want to thank you for talking and sharing your thoughts about Bryce Harlow and President Ford.

*Robert Hartmann:* Bryce was a very honorable gentleman and a scholar and so forth, and I respected him, and we remained friends as long as he lived.

*Steve Silver:* Thank you.

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