

*Steve Silver:* This is an interview with the Honorable Dr. Kissinger from the Bryce Harlow Oral History Project. Dr. Kissinger, it's a great honor to sit down and talk with you about Bryce Harlow.

*Dr. Kissinger:* Love to talk about Bryce.

*Steve Silver:* Why don't we start by having you tell us how you first got to know Bryce Harlow. How'd you meet him?

*Dr. Kissinger:* The first time I saw him consistently was in 1969 when Nixon became President, and Bryce was in the White House for legislative liaisons. I may well have met him before that. Do you have different records?

*Steve Silver:* No, I just – how did you first really get to know him?

*Dr. Kissinger:* I got to know him when he was in the White House; when we were both in the White House.

*Steve Silver:* Okay. Do you remember what Bryce Harlow's views of the presidency were; how much respect and admiration he had for the institution of the President?

*Dr. Kissinger:* He had huge respect for the institution. He had worked with President Eisenhower. He was an old-line public servant as far as I was concerned, and he had extraordinary respect for the Office.

*Steve Silver:* Of the presidency and -?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Of the presidency.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah. In the forward to the book "Mr. Integrity," I know you wrote about the special relationship that high-level advisors like Bryce Harlow must have with their leaders. Could you talk a little bit about that? Why was he such a good advisor to the President?

*Dr. Kissinger:* When you are President, you're substantially isolated because everybody you meet wants something from you, and for everybody that meets you, that is the most important day and probably of the month, and so you are constantly under pressure. All the really tough issues come to the Oval Office; the easy ones get dealt with at a lower level, and it's terribly important to have somebody around you, who is not dependent on you emotionally and never disrespects the Office.

It is very important for a President to have people around him who will tell him what they really think and help keep him out of difficult situations, without maneuvering for a benefit for themselves. Bryce was one of the rare people who had that quality.

*Steve Silver:* Did Bryce Harlow assist you much in foreign policy development for the Nixon Administration or was his more on the politics side of it; seeing to it that there was support on the Hill?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Where Bryce Harlow helped me was in understanding the President and in understanding what was going on in the Congress. I can't say that he helped me enormously in foreign policy development. On the other hand, when I had a tough issue, which I knew would become controversial and I needed help, Bryce was the first person I would call.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah. In light of Iraq and all that's been written about America's role in the world today, would you say foreign policy has become more partisan today than it was back then or were there just as many partisan battles back when you and Vice President -?

*Dr. Kissinger:* When we were in office, it was during the Vietnam War, and we had some very partisan battles. You had a few people like Senator Stennis from Mississippi or Senator Russell from Georgia, who could act to balance things a little bit, and today that doesn't seem to be prevalent.

*Steve Silver:* And was Bryce Harlow a big help to you?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Bryce Harlow was always on the side of moderation and wisdom.

*Steve Silver:* Harlow is, of course, well known for the role he played in President Nixon's transition into office and the Pierre Hotel in 1969. A lot of those stories are legendary. Do you remember any advice or counsel or assistance he gave you in your own transition during that period into the White House?

*Dr. Kissinger:* I know I spent time with him, and he helped me organize the NSC staff and would advise me on dealing with President Eisenhower, who was still alive at the time and whom I met a few times.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah, so he provided that continuity from -?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Well, he provided more than continuity. He had enormously wise insights into the operation of the government, and I had never

really worked fulltime in the government, so he was extremely helpful to me.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah. I know you've written extensively about the Nixon staff and some of the dynamics that led to Watergate. Do you remember what Bryce Harlow's position within the White House was during that time period? Was he sort of on the inner circle or was he -?

*Dr. Kissinger:* You have to remember – Watergate is a sort of generic term, and most people today, when you ask them don't know any facts. There were aberrations, but on the whole– those were serious people doing a serious job, and they weren't looking for opportunities to break the law. They were looking for opportunities to serve their country.

So, Bryce, I don't think stayed more than a year or 15 months, and after that, he was a Washington presence because he was somebody we would take seriously.

*Steve Silver:* I guess my question is more in terms of did the President, President Nixon, feel that he maybe should have relied on Bryce's counsel a little bit more during Watergate?

*Dr. Kissinger:* He brought him in when Watergate broke open. I know that all of us on the staff felt that as long as Bryce was there, things would stay within reasonable balance.

*Steve Silver:* Do you think that that whole experience changed the way that people, senior staff, advised the President?

*Dr. Kissinger:* I don't know if they changed the way that senior staff advised the President because you have to remember the senior staff in the Nixon White House were under tremendous pressure, and they made some mistakes, but I don't accept the proposition that there were a ton of violators. A small number made some mistakes, and they were punished for it.

As far as Bryce is concerned, he wasn't in the White House after the first 15 months, but we all asked him for his opinions.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah. Why do you think Bryce Harlow was such a unique figure in Washington politics? What do you think set him apart from some of the others?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Well, he was smart and he was wise, which is not the same thing, and he had a terrific sense of humor, so it was easy to be around

him. Very dry sense of humor, and he had a lot of experience, so he had seen a lot of people come and go, and he had a lot of contacts, so he could be very helpful if he chose, which, when it concerned the future of the President, he always had time.

*Steve Silver:* Considering that there are no laws or famous policies bearing his name, do you think that it's important that history remembers the great staffers at the Bryce Harlow level in the White House?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Well, he was a staffer, but he was – I always looked at him as an elder statesman. When I learned about the extent of Watergate, one of the first three people I called was Bryce Harlow.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah, so a lot's been written about sort of the passion for anonymity that some of the people who served the President should have. Do you think that it's --

*Dr. Kissinger:* Well, yes, you should have it theoretically, but the media doesn't let you have it anymore.

*Steve Silver:* That's something that's changed versus back then?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Well, even then, when I came to Washington, I had never held a press conference. I had no intention of holding a press conference, but the system doesn't permit it. You have to put your case out, so now Bryce was in a position where he wasn't fighting for particular issues because he didn't have a clear-cut responsibility. He had sort of a general brief, but, therefore, he escaped being part of the world three times a day.

But for people in my position, it was impossible not to answer the press.

*Steve Silver:* Sure, sure. Do you think that the bipartisanship and pragmatism that Bryce Harlow is known for – do you think that's an anachronism in today's world in politics or do you think we could get back -?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Well, it's gonna be very hard to get back to it.

*Steve Silver:* Yeah.

*Dr. Kissinger:* First of all, the people were older than they are now in the Senate and mostly in the House, so that people were not under the same pressure to show vigilance to help their way up. They were willing to cooperate with the executive branch; not all of them, but a

number of the old southern senators, Jackson, Russell, McClellan; people like that.

They had a tradition, still, of respect for government. Senator Stennis used to tell me that he went to his courthouse in his county every Saturday to pay his respects to the judicial branch.

*Steve Silver:* Wow.

*Dr. Kissinger:* That sort of attitude no longer exists in that sense. The partisanship, which is always there, doesn't have the mitigation that it had in the Bryce Harlow period.

*Steve Silver:* How would you say your career was influenced by Harlow and what are some of the broader lessons that future generations should learn from Bryce Harlow from what he had to contribute?

*Dr. Kissinger:* My life was made easier by him. Bryce Harlow was always incisive and humorous. I asked him – when I first learned about Watergate around the end of March '73; I mean, I knew about the break-in, but the ramifications, I was not aware of.

So I asked Bryce to come to my office. I said, "Bryce, what do you think happened here?" He said, "Some damned fool went into the Oval Office and did what he was told," and with Nixon, that was a very profound statement because Nixon expected you not to pay attention to what he said when he was very wound up, and so there were numerous occasions where he had made some wild statement, which you then came back the next day or three hours later, and you'd probably get fired if you had actually executed it.

So Bryce was a big help to me that way; then he was a help to me in getting me to know the business community later on. During the Arab oil controversy in 1973-74, we had major problems economically for the country, and I had problems with – seemingly inability then of the CEO's from the staff that we had other concerns, such they are proven to, and Bryce got a group of CEO's together for me, with whom I met every few weeks and that helped bridge the gap.

*Steve Silver:* Between government and business?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Between government and the private enterprise.

*Steve Silver:* So what are some of like the broader lessons, do you think, that future people who serve in government can learn from Bryce Harlow?

*Dr. Kissinger:* Well, first of all, to respect your country and to know you're doing something important. Secondly, to understand that the President is a very harassed man and that he needs a little – he needs an opportunity to get some distance, and therefore, you have an obligation to him.

You have to help him exercise that position with some sense of perspective. Third, that nobody's interested in your personal problems when you're in Washington, so you really have to help people who have a lot of problems to help get through the difficult period by providing perspective and by never losing your sense of humor, which was absolutely true of Bryce.

*Steve Silver:* And probably all of Washington, too – you probably need a sense of humor, especially. Well, Dr. Kissinger, I just wanted to thank you again for your time.

*Dr. Kissinger:* And also to you.

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