Oral History of STANLEY HARRIS
June 25, 2002

This is the eighth session in an oral history conducted under the auspices of the oral history project of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewee is Stanley Harris, a lawyer in practice and in the judiciary, and the interviewer is William Ross. The date is June 25, 2002.

Mr. Ross: Well, shall we start? It is June 25, 2002. This is the last session I assume. This is a chance for you to sum up, to generalize, to think about your life in the light of -- stimulated by -- what you have already said and it will probably be helpful in summarizing and giving some meaning to this historical account. Do you have any thoughts, or should I just throw them around? I'm sure you do have some thoughts, so why don't I just let you go and speak.

Judge Harris: One thought occurred to me as I thought back on one of your questions, which is, I think you phrased it, if I were dictator and could make changes. One I overlooked referring to is that from the standpoint of the Article I court system, that is the Superior Court and the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, I would love to see the selection process go back to what it was when I went into that court system. I believe I mentioned historically recognizing that Washington is a place that is geographically limited and is surrounded by bedroom communities and historically judges could be selected for the "local" -- although they are technically federal courts -- people could live in Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Alexandria, Fairfax County, contiguous areas and be eligible to serve on those courts. When the Home Rule legislation was passed in 1974, while the administration was somewhat paralyzed by Watergate, it eliminated the contiguous jurisdictions and necessitated

one's living within the District of Columbia to go onto the Court of Appeals into the Article I system. I think that is very undesirable and needlessly limits the pool and I would also like to see the nomination commission done away with. If the positions on those courts are filled by presidential appointment, it seems to me inherently dubious to have legislation which restricts the choice of the President of the United States to only three names picked by a body which has, as I had anticipated, become regrettably but understandably politicized. If you take my own situation, for example, I was born in the District of Columbia, educated in the District of Columbia, lived in the District of Columbia, always practiced law in the District of Columbia. My three older sons were born in the District of Columbia and I didn't move to Montgomery County until fairly late in the game. And the idea that somehow I should become technically inappropriate for appointment to the Article I court system because I happened to have moved across the District of Columbia line is I think rather absurd. Particularly when you consider, for example, that the District of Columbia Circuit has Steve Williams who came in from Colorado, Karen Henderson who came in from South Carolina, Dave Sentelle who came in from North Carolina. There are no geographic limitations there. The situation is a little different with respect to district judges. In all but three districts in the country, a district judge must live in the district in which he serves. The three districts in which one does not have to live, recognizing the bedroom nature of the life of people who might serve on those courts, are the District of Columbia, the Southern District of New York and the Eastern District of New York, and I would like to see that here. Beyond that, I welcome any questions. I would do a little summation and invite any follow-up which will occur to you, which I am sure will.

I first became a judge, somewhat reluctantly as I indicated, in part for financial reasons,

but I really have no regrets whatsoever. It has been a wonderful, fascinating career. I've had the pleasure of serving as a member of three separate courts. The Superior Court, the D.C. Court of Appeals and the United States District Court. I was certainly the first, and I think I'm the only person, to have sat on all four of what might be called normal courts here -- the Superior Court, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, the District Court and the Circuit Court. I have sat on all four of those. I don't believe anybody else has done that. I have also been the United States Attorney. Nobody else has ever had all four of the jobs that I have had, so it has been a fascinating variety and I think that it's been very rewarding, very stimulating. I've enjoyed it greatly. I also have had the pleasure of sitting on five other courts -- the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York and the United States Courts of Appeals for the Third, Sixth, Eleventh and District of Columbia Circuits. So it's been a wonderful variety and while I think that federal judges are unfortunately underpaid, a problem which seems to become exacerbated with each passing year, which as I indicated in our last session, inevitably is leading to a reduced intellectual quality -- that's an oversimplification, of course, but a brain drain is inevitable if you pay federal judges about the same amount of money that first year associates can make in major firms. While I don't mean to suggest any major complaining on my part, sure I had to borrow money to educate my kids, but then when you retire after serving the requisite number of years in the federal system, your salary does continue and you have that for your lifetime, so the fact that you were unable to save much, if anything, during your period of service as a judge evens out at the end as your income continues to come in. So all in all, I've enjoyed it greatly. In addition to the service which I've had, I was pleased when I was being considered for nomination to district court. The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the

Federal Judiciary found me exceptionally well qualified and that category has since been dropped. That brings to mind kind of a funny story. The first time I sat on the D.C. Circuit, one of the judges with whom I sat was Nino Scalia, who of course later went on the Supreme Court. And I can't recall how the subject came up, but Nino asked me how the ABA had rated me and I told him exceptionally well qualified. And a slight bit of exasperation came into the tone of his voice and he said, "Well, they only found me well qualified." (Laughter).

Mr. Ross: That sounds like him. I know him very well.

Judge Harris: Yes. And I said, "Nino, don't feel bad. You have to have been a judge before to be able to be eligible for the exceptionally well-qualified rating and since you hadn't been a judge before, you cannot fit that because only if they've had an opportunity to valuate prior temperament and attitude on the bench could they find you exceptionally well qualified."

Mr. Ross: Right.

Judge Harris: But that's pretty much the only summary thoughts that occur to me.

Mr. Ross: Let me ask you a question, more general, or raise a topic of a little bit more general nature which I'm sure that you've thought about. Underlying what you've said is obviously a latent, maybe an explicit political issue that has been a part of our country's history, probably from the very beginning of the line of government, and that is a judicial appointment is not only a means of carrying out the function of the federal courts as they are established in the Constitution, which could be said that decide questions arising and to develop the law, but there's a symbolic function of both state and federal court judges, which is very strong, and politics and the age-old controversy between what might be called the elitist approach to judge

selection in which normally there's not an election, a popular election. The judge is appointed by the authority, the government, or the President, or whatever. Qualification by prior experience in the law or otherwise and education and so on is the key consideration and the idea being that such person will perform better in a superior way. And the other side of the issue is the desirability from the popular standpoint of having these prestigious appointments, which carry a success and power and significance in our society, go to as broad a possible base of people who are otherwise minimally qualified. When I was chairman of the first nominating committee for the new court system, some people said you ought to get really good lawyers in here if we are going to make this work. Well, we want all the groups and categories -- at any rate, other people would say well, if Judge Harris has his way, there will never be anybody from the Fifth Street Bar. There won't be very many blacks or Hispanics. There won't be these people who are the heart and soul of the population of the District who will have access to these prestigious appointments. You are familiar with that. It is part of our whole history and the bar association and lawyers groups have been struggling with this for years. Does your position in views here take into account that, or do you think that the need for excellence and qualification in the role is so important that it overcomes any such issues?

Judge Harris: I think the two concepts can meld, really, with very little trouble. Competent black lawyers are increasing in quantity with each passing year. They are very much in demand for judgeships. I think they are sought out. Some black lawyer friends that I know were offered judgeships and turned them down because they were making so much money that they wouldn't take the jobs. I hadn't realized that you were connected with the nomination commission and I think early it had started out with terrific intentions, although I rather vividly

remember a comment reported to me concerning John Hechinger who -- he was an early member of the commission -- was advocating a particular person for a judgeship and someone else on the commission said to him, "Look, would you have that person represent you?" And Mr. Hechinger replied, "Well, no, but this is for a judgeship." Well, I think that's backwards reasoning.

Mr. Ross: It sure is.

Judge Harris: If you get somebody on the court who is not qualified to do a good job, you do litigants and an entire system a considerable disservice. With each passing year, there are more and more qualified black lawyers, more and more qualified women lawyers across the spectrum. I might say that during my time as the United States Attorney, I hired more black and female Assistant U.S. Attorneys, both as a numerical proposition and as a percentage proposition, than any of my predecessors. And that certainly did not mean that I was all out for affirmative action in the sense of having quotas. There simply were more qualified ones in the pool available for me to pick from. And I can't resist making one comment. The *New York Times* sent a reporter named Leslie Maitland down to do a story on the United States Attorney's Office and one of my assistants pointed that out to her and she was very impressed by the fact that I had hired more blacks and women than any of my predecessors. She assured us that she wanted to make that part of her story. Well, when the *New York Times* ran the story, that was conveniently spiked. The *New York Times*, being somewhat more liberal than some publications, did not want to have a Reagan appointee recognized as having done that, which I found quite interesting. But I can understand the sensitivities on it. It can be argued both ways. But we have a Constitution and we have a capital city that under the Constitution is under the control of the Congress and we are not a state and not governed by a governor. The only person, if you had

local appointments to what are basically federal Article I courts, if they were to be made locally, they would be made by the Mayor. No Mayor in the United States makes judicial appointments and I see no reason why the District of Columbia, as the capital city, should be the only city in the country to have judges going into a court system on appointment by a Mayor. One thinks back to the fact that Marion Barry, had he had the power to appoint judges, might not have put in the kinds of folks that would have reflected considerable credit on the judiciary.

Mr. Ross: Yes. In terms of the performance of the court system and the bar, have you had experience with alternative systems either in this country or elsewhere? Say the British system or the continental system that lead you to have some reflections about the possibilities of improvement of our system?

Judge Harris: I confess that I have never studied other court systems in any detail and basically have not served on any kind of a committee or commission that went into those things. And I just never had the time to get into scholarly frolics such as that. Frankly, I've always felt that my obligations to my court and my litigants were such that I didn't have time to do that. I am concerned, though, that the United States has, in my view, too many lawyers. The law schools I think graduate more students than the legal profession adequately can assimilate. That seems to me to be unfair to a lot of the kids who decide to go to law school. And it also gives rise to an awful lot of lawsuits that otherwise might not be brought as lawyers certainly have a right and a need to try to make a living and they are apt to bring into court cases that might not have been brought ten or fifteen or twenty years ago. I do think and I certainly have thought a lot about the so-called English system of having the losing party pay the attorney's fees for the prevailing party, and I think that has a great deal of charm and could get rid of an awful

lot of junk that crowds up our courts now, where people will file essentially virtually frivolous lawsuits with the expectation of being bought off with some settlement in a case that has little more than nuisance value, but because it has nuisance value, can result in some fee to the lawyer. And those cases detract from the ability of judges to deal as effectively as they would like to with those cases that present genuine issues of merit.

Mr. Ross: I have been troubled, as so many lawyers of our generation have, about changes in the bar over my lifetime and they seem to be, to me at least, very striking. I don't know whether they are as striking or as extreme as I imagine them to be, but let me give you an example. I'm really asking you about sort of a general question. When I went to law school, I remember that I was taught that a lawyer should not express a personal opinion about the guilt or innocence or the right or wrong of a client's case. That is, you're an officer of the court, you represent your client to the best of your ability within the law. You're a zealous defender of your client's interests, but it's for the tribunal to determine the validity of his claims, whether they are civil or whether they relate to his guilt or innocence. Nowadays, a lawyer who doesn't operate as a public relations outlet for a client presumably would in many areas of practice get no clients, and the grievance committees and the ethics committees of the bar seem to pay no attention to this phenomenon. Do you have thoughts about that? Am I all wet about this?

Judge Harris: No. I agree with you completely. It's a troublesome thing to me and I think it is unfortunate for example that advertising by lawyers was approved by the Supreme Court and I confess that I never read that opinion. I don't have any personal views as to whether I agree with it or disagree with it, but I think it's an unfortunate outcome. It is distressing to watch so many lawyers say I believe my client is innocent on television. On the

other hand, there are so many channels now available in the mass media that the likelihood of that reaching a perspective juror is rather slim. I mentioned earlier the case in which I had 850 co-defendants when I was on the Superior Court and they had been arrested on the Capitol steps, and during the process of jury selection, I shall never forget there were eight defendants who went to trial, 752 still in the wings and when the voir dire was being conducted, and one lawyer got up and said, "Now, you are aware that there had been these Vietnam protests and that some of the routes to the city have been closed and access to streets has been interfered with? Are there any members of the prospective jury panel who have been in any inconvenienced or troubled or otherwise have any reaction to what's going on?" And out of a jury panel of about 150 folks, about three raised their hands. It was as though they didn't have the foggiest notion of what all these people had been doing. And I think defense counsel were taken quite aback. They thought the efforts that the clients had been making to express their displeasure with what was happening in Vietnam was having a great import. It certainly didn't have it on our jury panel. But you see, I watch cable television and a lot of talk shows, and you are seeing lawyers just constantly giving opinions as to their client's guilt or innocence, other defendants' guilt or innocence, and it's troublesome.

Mr. Ross: Do you see the bar moving in any direction? We are now at Point A and a continuum, we look forward to the next years and one could reflect that perhaps we've reached a peak in a kind of shift in the bar to an overt pursuit of prestige and money, particularly money, the income, and that success in the bar is being a bigger earner, a more prestigious lawyer, in the general newspaper sense, and things might be turning back now and the trend might be more towards a more conventional -- historically conventional -- notion of the lawyer as

being in a special role as compared to a businessman or a politician. Do you see any evidence either way?

Judge Harris: I think the problem continues to become exacerbated, but I may be looking through the wrong end of the telescope in that I haven't practiced law for 31 years now. I have watched the lawyers practicing before me and watch the overall legal scene. I think, for example, what's happening with respect to class actions is virtually obscene, with lawyers getting hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions, in fees for massive class actions that often appear to be worked out in some sort of collusion and I don't mean that in the pejorative sense because I'm not adequately informed, but in collusion with various states attorney generals offices. I think lawyers are entitled to be properly compensated for their efforts, but to end up with thousands and thousands of dollars per hour for participation in a class action which often ends up -- well, for example, in the asbestos industry, I think there are about 40 companies that have been thrown into bankruptcy. A very high percentage of the claimants in the asbestos cases have no discernable injury whatsoever. They are suing on the theory that perhaps they may have some injury in the future. It's all very troublesome.

Mr. Ross: One wonders, what can be done about this? It's a money thing, and we all know that. The profession appears to be -- the formal structures of the profession appear to be relatively helpless to modify or change this kind of progression. Have you thought about that?

Judge Harris: Yes, but not to the extent of being sufficiently informed to know what specific steps might be taken, but it's my understanding, for example, that a particular county in Mississippi and another in Kentucky, the courts in those two areas have been hot beds of class action filings, where they have extraordinary laxity as to what constitutes diversity from

the standpoint of being able to bring in defendants from all over the country, if they can find one plaintiff within the particular jurisdiction. I think we need some sort of legislation that would convey Article III purely federal jurisdiction on major class actions and get them out of some of these state court systems. I haven't analyzed it enough to know exactly.

Mr. Ross: Do you have some thoughts about the role that you played in the larger political life in the District? The District has been your home. You grew up in a family that was rooted in the District. You were trained for law and practiced law in a very fine law firm here, one of the elite law firms, and you played in an intense way and very thorough way a role in the life of the District as a judicial officer and as a U.S. Attorney, a federal law officer. You are at a point now where you can look back over that tremendously variegated life in the history of this very interesting and almost unique government community. Do you have thoughts about that?

Judge Harris: Well, one thing is I think apparent to me and that is that I don't think anybody could have had the career that I have had anywhere other than in the District of Columbia in that, despite having had four presidential appointments, I have never done a single thing in politics. And the District of Columbia is unique in that respect with no Senators from the District of Columbia. The President, that is the White House and the Department of Justice, have been able to make their independent choices for each of the four jobs that I have fulfilled in public service. I had zero political background at all. That couldn't happen unless -- I had tended to simply focus with each of the jobs that I've had on the job at hand and do what had to be done. I've never been a particular activist. One thing I did do was mildly inconsistent with that; as the United States Attorney, I don't think I ever turned down an invitation to speak before any community group. I did that for two basic reasons. One, I felt that it would be a constructive

thing to do, but also I felt that with the contemporary political atmosphere in the District of Columbia, it was important for a white Republican U.S. Attorney in a largely black city to be available, to meet with anybody that wanted to meet with them, to let them see the face of the person who was heading up the office and hear the views of that person. So I was constantly doing outreach in that job. Well, of course, that was a night, always night time. But I should take this opportunity to interject that I've always been blessed by having a wonderful wife who has been enormously supportive of all of my professional activities and we have three fine sons and she was able to be a stay-at-home mom until our youngest child reached 16 when she went into the real estate business, which she has enjoyed since. But the political world is a different world than the one in which I have always functioned and it's one which, I must confess, with each passing day the political arena is one in which I find less and less to admire.

Mr. Ross: The saying is that the closer you look at it the less you will admire it. It's sort of like making sausage. Who said that you don't want to see the process?

Judge Harris: I can't remember. And conversely, the vast majority of the judges with whom I have come into contact with, serving on multiple courts and through serving on Judicial Conference committees, have been in my view very dedicated, very conscious folks who reflect great credit on the judiciary. No hidden axes to grind.

Mr. Ross: What do you see as your -- you still are a very youthful man and obviously still in what might be called the prime of your abilities. What do you see your future holding given some modicum of good health and so on?

Judge Harris: Well, I had been a judge for nearly 30 years, blocking out the nearly two years as the United States Attorney and I had watched others get sufficiently advanced in age

and then become ill and pass on in their eighties and in the meantime had been tied to the courthouse the whole time, and I just decided -- in part for silly mundane reasons such as the obnoxiousness of the daily commute to get to the courthouse -- I decided to retire and did so when I was 73. And I still feel able to contribute to the dispute resolution process, which in effect is what the judicial system is all about, so I did affiliate with this organization called JAMS. And JAMS is the largest of the nationwide private organizations providing alternative dispute resolution services. I started out with the goal of keeping active both mentally and physically and also supplementing my income somewhat, although there's a deterrent there which might be of historical interest at some point in the future in that about 55 percent of every dollar I earn from JAMS goes instantly in federal, state and social security taxes. I started out with the idea of doing that on a part-time basis for those reasons, but I have found that a retired federal judge who doesn't drool is very much in demand and I now find myself working considerably harder than I had in mind when I retired. But I'm finding it interesting, although God knows I miss my law clerks and my secretary in this world of arbitration and mediation. But this makes my, in effect, my sixth career, and I'm finding it quite interesting and rewarding.

Mr. Ross: Do you find that there are differences -- you're judging in a way, in a very real way -- in that you're deciding or contributing to the decision of controversies? I take it that you are fairly new at this and you must be feeling your way into it. Are there things that you can point to that you think are quite significant about your role and how it works as compared with when you were on the bench?

Judge Harris: Well, there is a considerably more relaxed atmosphere which is marvelous. No longer the formality of being called by your courtroom deputy and being told that

the parties are ready to proceed in the courtroom. And you go in the back door wearing a robe and everybody rises and you don't have much informality with anyone. An arbitration proceeding is basically a non-jury trial that is done on a very relaxed basis. I still bring to it a total dedication to try to reach the right result and do whatever is necessary to reach the right result. That makes me think of a wonderful letter I got from one of my former clerks saying that he would be unable to attend a retirement dinner that all of my former clerks arranged for me a year or so ago. I wish I had it before me because he phrased it so marvelously, but one of the things that he said was good luck in a world that is free of appellate review and monotonous recurring drug trials.

Mr. Ross: Ah, yes.

Judge Harris: And that is a comforting thing. I might mention, Bill, that there is always tension between appellate courts, appellate judges and trial judges. I spent nearly ten years as an appellate judge and nearly 20 as a trial judge, so I've seen both sides of it. No judge likes to be reversed and have a case remanded, but an awful lot of the issues that judges have to deal with are 51 percent one way and 49 percent the other and people of good faith can legitimately disagree on the outcome in certain situations. On the other hand, I think a big part of the tension that exists between the two types of courts is a feeling on the part of trial judges that too often appellate judges and their clerks do not have the requisite or desirable degree of familiarity with the subtleties of the trenches that you have to work in as a trial judge. And I must confess on a couple of occasions and perhaps I might provide the citations as we refine this, but on several occasions I have felt that the D.C. Circuit erroneously sent back cases to me for further action. For example, one was sent back to me to make findings and conclusions on a

motion for summary judgment and in my opinion the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure make it clear that that is not necessary. And I wrote a rather firm opinion saying that I thought the Court of Appeals was wrong and saying why. *Fairhead v. Deleuw, Cather & Co.*, 817 F.Supp. 153 (1993). And I know that I earned a little enmity from some of the judges on that court for having the presumptiveness to challenge the validity of their thinking. But it was done because of my belief in the need for the law to be sound as an institution, and if a trial judge is asked to do things or directed to do things which he believes in good faith to be the result of an error by the Court of Appeals and the Court of Appeals is as capable of being wrong as a trial judge, if what a trial judge perceives to be a faulty opinion stands in the reporter system forever and is not challenged by the trial judge, it soon becomes established law. And I have felt an obligation to the law as an institution in a few circumstances where that has occurred to write an opinion saying why I think the Court of Appeals was wrong so that future clerks when they are researching a problem would be then led to my analysis in hopes of avoiding a comparable problem in the future. However, of course, trial courts hierarchically are inferior to appellate courts and so in each case I have always done what they said, but if I felt they were wrong in directing it, I felt an obligation to say why I disagreed with what I was asked to do. And I can't resist noting that after the *Fairhead* case was over, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, then a member of the appellate panel who later was appointed to the Supreme Court, telephoned me and said that I was "absolutely right" in that case and that "what we did to you was terrible."

Mr. Ross: It surprises me that there would be criticism of that as a procedure because it seems to me as long as it is done in a respectful way with recognition of the fact that we are all human and prone to error, including the writer, it's useful and helpful.

Judge Harris: Well, an awful lot of trial judges don't like being reversed and there are a lot of appellate judges who don't like being told that they may have erred. And then, of course, intertwined with that problem is the fact of which many practicing lawyers complain, and I think with considerable validity, and that is with existing case loads, lots of lawyers are concerned that too many judicial decisions are too clerk created. And I think that's a valid criticism. So if you have these youngsters who, as talented as they are, have just come out of law school and really are still pretty wet behind the ears and something strikes them as wrong, they can come up with a very logical sounding draft saying that a trial judge did X, Y, or Z wrong and an appellate judge presented with a cogent draft from a clerk may well sign on to it without fully realizing exactly what happened. I had one reversal, for example, that still astounds me. In a trial someone asked for an additional period of time, in effect for a recess, during the trial to produce a witness who had never been produced and rather clearly was not going to be able to show up. And I declined to continue the trial and made a ruling to that effect. It was appealed and I was reversed. And I was baffled. And then in reading the opinion, the word "not" had been left out of my ruling by the reporter, and to me, a high school senior would have read the sentence in context and recognized that the "not" had been dropped out, but that provided the basis for the reversal. So, strange things happen in every field.

Mr. Ross: Well, perhaps you may have further thoughts, but it seems to me that we have covered a number of areas that are pertinent, and I wanted you in particular to refer to this commendation that you received because I think it sums up your career and your status and place in the judiciary and the bar and the District. Could you do that now for me?

Judge Harris: Well, thank you, Bill.

Mr. Ross: If you could give the context and so on.

Judge Harris: Well, the context is that of the Committees of the Judicial Conference of the United States, with the Judicial Conference of the United States being in effect the ruling body of the federal judiciary, and it's comprised of the Chief Justice of the United States presiding and the Chief Judge of each of the circuits and a number of Chief Judges of district courts around the country. And the Judicial Conference obviously cannot be adequately informed on all of the subjects relating to the judiciary and so there are a whole series of committees which work under the Judicial Conference. In years past, if a federal judge was appointed to a Judicial Conference committee, typically he or she would serve on it for their entire careers. They made great friends and they had great get togethers and meetings and they were productive, but Chief Justice Rehnquist came up with the idea, which I think was a very constructive idea, and that is that you would not serve -- no judge would serve more than six years on any committee or combination of committees. And the idea obviously makes a lot of sense to me and that is, it gets more judges into the process and gives them more exposure to other judges in different parts of the country because a typical Judicial Conference committee has one member from each of the circuits. And I was the District of Columbia Circuit's representative on the Committee on Criminal Law for a period of six years. Each appointment is for three years. There are, unfortunately, some members of committees who do not produce. We all have experienced that in various fields. So sometimes people serve for only three years and are not appointed again, but I served two terms on the Criminal Law Committee and thought, shew! That was a nice experience. I like the people I work with and I learned a lot, but it took time away from my cases, so now I'll be able to just concentrate on being a judge. Whereupon I

was asked by the Chief Justice to become the Chairman of the Committee on Intercircuit Assignments. Now there are two ways in which courts in need can get help. Courts within a particular circuit may get the benefit of what is called an intracircuit assignment. In the Fourth Circuit, for example, in North Carolina, a judge may be designated to go help out a court in Virginia. And that kind of appointment can be made by the Chief Judge of the circuit. Also, however, there are what is known as intercircuit assignments, where a judge may go to another circuit and by statute that may only be done by the Chief Justice. Well, obviously the Chief Justice does not have time to fool with that, so there is a rather unusual committee known as the Committee on Intercircuit Assignments, which makes all of those arrangements and submits them to the Chief Justice for his approval. In effect, you become the alter ego of the Chief Justice for the purposes of achieving these intercircuit assignments. In any event, I think I became the first judge -- I haven't been able to find anybody else -- the first judge ever to become chairman of a Judicial Conference committee who hadn't served on it before, which was a bit of a daunting task, but that was a fascinating experience also, although it was very time consuming. In any event, despite the Chief Justice's rule that you only serve on any committee or combination of committees for six years, I ended up serving 12 years on Judicial Conference committees and when I finished my second term, the Judicial Conference adopted a resolution which, if you'll forgive me, I will read, lest it stays forever in a darkened closet, and it reads as follows: "The Judicial Conference of the United States recognizes with appreciation, respect and admiration the Honorable Stanley S. Harris, Chairman of the Committee on Intercircuit Assignments from 1994 to 2000. Appointed by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, this outstanding jurist has played a vital role in the administration of the federal court system. Judge

Harris served with distinction as leader of the Intercircuit Assignments Committee while at the same time continuing to perform his duties as a judge of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. Judge Harris set a standard of skilled leadership and has earned our deep respect and sincere gratitude for his innumerable contributions, not only as chair of this Committee, but also for his service on the Committee on Criminal Law from 1988 to 1994. We acknowledge with appreciation Judge Harris's commitment and dedicated service to the Judicial Conference and to the entire federal judiciary. Done in the City of Washington, D.C., September 19, 2000." And it is signed by Leonidas Ralph Mecham, the Director of Administrative Office of the United States Courts, who is the Secretary of the Judicial Conference, and by William H. Rehnquist, the Chief Justice of the United States. So that bit of appreciation was greatly welcomed.

Mr. Ross: That's a splendid encomium. Well, I think we are about done.

Judge Harris: Yes, sir.

Mr. Ross: And I think we've got a pretty good oral history.

Judge Harris: Well, you've been a pleasure to work with, Bill, and I'm deeply appreciative of your interest and you've done a great job, and I'm not one to talk about myself. It just isn't my nature, but you've done a wonderful job of bringing things out and developing it.

Mr. Ross: Well, that's one of the points of the whole thing.