Program 1: The Legislature Before Reapportionment

Glendon Pierce

When the time to close the boxes arrived, the moderator dumped the ballots out on the table, and he sat down and started countin’ the ballots and he counted “Republican, Republican, Republican, Republican,” and he’d put ‘em in a separate pile, and “Republican, Republican, huh – Democrat! Well.” And he put that over in the other pile. So then he returned to his counting again, and he said “Republican, Republican, Republican, Republican, Glendon Pierce huh! Democrat! That son-of-a-bitch voted twice.”

Gregory L. Sharrow

At the end of World War II the Vermont legislature was much the same as it was at the end of the Civil War. It was a part-time citizens’ legislature that met every two years and adjourned so its members could go home for Town Meetings and sugaring season. Vermont had not seen a Democratic governor for nearly a century, and had never sent an elected Democrat to Washington.

Senator Jim Jeffords

The history of Vermont was Republicanism, but it was never a solid conservative. There was always the two parts of the Republican Party. There was the Aiken faction and the Dean Davis faction. And so that you had the right and the left within the Republican Party.

Sanborn Partridge

You didn’t talk politics, you talked issues and people.

Gregory L. Sharrow

For a state with a population of 300,000, the House was large and unwieldy: Each town had one vote, so a representative from a town of 80 had the same power as the representative from the city of Burlington.

Gertrude Mallary

The House was 246 members with a representative from every municipality. And I think there were 53 women.
Governor F. Ray Keyser Jr.

Generally speaking, they didn’t campaign a lot. They were selected because of the fact that they had been Selectmen or School Directors and they really understood some of the practical things that needed to be done. But the process was much more of a town meeting, it was much more of a representative government.

Franklin Billings

It was a part-time Legislature and they were over, you had to get over by town meeting day because it was time to sugar. And so everybody went home. And it was every other year, too.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Change began with Ernest Gibson Jr., a war hero and liberal Republican, who after the war established a minimum wage, a pension plan for teachers, a state police force, and a graduated income tax. In short, he introduced a more activist government that required a great deal more attention and time than a part-time legislature could give it.

Robert Gannett

We realized that with the State’s business becoming more complicated and involving more dollars and more responsibility, that it really didn’t make sense to meet every other year.

So in 1957, I was able to persuade the leadership of the House that we should provide for reconvening in the second year to consider budget changes or other important matters that might come up in the interim, but there was no way that the Senate was going to agree to that or would agree to that. Asa Bloomer would have no part of changing the procedure. What was good enough him and his predecessors should be good enough for the rest of us in the 1950s and afterwards.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Rutland County’s Asa Bloomer, the Senate’s cantankerous President Pro Tem, insisted that the legislature limit the issues that could be covered in the second year. These included the establishment of a Department of Administration as recommended by the Little Hoover Commission, the bonding of the new interstate highway program, and the consideration of changes in appropriations as needed.

The law was finally changed in 1959. The Legislature met in 1960, and has met yearly ever since.

Another unwritten tradition provided a means to avoid factions developing in a one-party state.
Gertrude Mallary

I think that one of the reasons I didn’t run for re-election was because this rather ridiculous mountain rule was still in effect in some counties…

Senator Jim Jeffords

They used to have what was called a “mountain rule” and because it was felt very strongly that the people on the east side of the mountain always had the benefit over the west side or vice versa, so they had the agreement that the governor would first be elected from the east and then two or four years, whatever they have, they would agree that the next governor would come from the west side of the mountains. And so it was known as the mountain rule.

Gregory L. Sharrow

It wasn’t until 1965, that the mountain rule disappeared from the legislative landscape. From then on, elections would be contests instead of coronations.

Despite the disparity of representation of the 246-seat House, the one-town, one-vote rule meant that the Legislature was bound to listen to its small towns, and for better or worse the composition of the House preserved the rural character of the state.

Graham Newall

It was my greatest good fortune to serve in the fifties. I served with people who are typically hundred percent Vermonters, who loved this state and who were not playing politics. Whose vote was really what it says in our oath: “To the best good of the same.” And I realize even to this day how much we lost with 150 man House. We were representatives from the smallest little towns...But these little towns, they could get up and of course, many of them had had great experience in town meetings and talking. And they were good talkers.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Many were also shrewd politicians. One was Loren Pierce, a well-known lawyer from Woodstock. Veteran legislator Bob Gannett relates one of Pierce’s particularly effective tactics: a demonstration of how people were abusing the bounty on porcupines. A town clerk paid five dollars for each set of ears.

Robert Gannett

He decided, and he had permission of the Speaker, to show how it was possible to fabricate these duplicate sets of ears, so he had a table set in front of his seat there in the front row and he gave an exhibition of how it could be done with skinning pieces of
porcupine and threading them in a certain way. So it was a first hand exhibition and it was very persuasive and it was the best possible evidence that could be given and the bounty was repealed. It was wonderful.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

We heard the voices of Glendon Pierce, James Jeffords, Sanborn Partridge, Gertrude Mallary, Ray Keyser, Franklin Billings, Robert Gannett, and Graham Newell. All but Glendon Pierce are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

The interviews were sponsored by the Snelling Center for Government. This series was produced by the Vermont Folklife Center of Middlebury by Bob Merrill and Jane Beck. Funding for this series was provided by the Vermont Community Foundation and the Windham Foundation. I'm Greg Sharrow.

**Program 2 : The Young Turks**

**Franklin Billings**

Were just thrown together—first philosophically, and we were all of different parties—parties didn’t mean much at that point in the Legislature—but our philosophy was the same. And of course we were thrown together socially because we were the only young people. In those days, young meant thirties.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

By 1960 Vermont's legislature was moving away from its small-town roots. It was meeting every year, and for the first time in a century some Democrats were being elected. In the early Sixties, though, the invisible forces of change took on a collective face, in a group of youthful representatives who came to be called the Young Turks.

**Governor Philip Hoff**

We were the youngest people in the Legislature, by far. I can remember one day when we sat on the House floor; one of those tedious, nonsensical debates; and I thought, well, it'd be interesting to take a look at the average age. I discovered that the average age of the Legislature was over seventy. And here all of us were, well, around forty, some of us less.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

This group, which consisted of moderate Republicans and a few Democrats, included several people with political savvy and connections: Franklin Billings Jr and Ernest Gibson III were both sons of governors; Richard Mallary was the son of Senator
Gertrude Mallary; Sanborn Partridge was the son of the president of the Vermont Marble Company; John Downs was a lawyer and chair of the state platform committee; and Democrat Phil Hoff was a lawyer and the sole representative of the city of Burlington.

Franklin Billings

When we went to the Legislature in 1961 it was really dominated by right-wing Republicans. There were eleven of us who were young, a number of us, lawyers, and this is where Phil Hoff started his career, that were elected and — the other people were not given anything, as far as decent committee assignments, because it was being run by really older, much older people, who had been there, and so we would meet after the sessions, and it first started as a social thing, and then we got very serious and we’d meet and discuss legislation and decide who was going to speak and when. It was just happenstance, but we all sat in different places all over the House and so the media and in the Legislature, when we’d get up and speak on certain issues, they didn’t realize that it was all orchestrated until later in the session, only I guess the media nicknamed us “the Young Turks.”

Sanborn Partridge

The gang that the newspapers tagged as the Young Turks were eleven. One of them had been there the year before, but ten of them were freshman Legislators. And we used to get together, I think it was Thursday evenings, or after five o’clock and our house rule was no drinks for the first hour. And we traded information about the committees on which we served. I think we were windows into something like seventeen committees out of twenty, maybe. And so we could clue each other on what was coming up. It was simply a felt need to learn that we were working on.

John Downs

We decided that we were going to make our real pitch, the thing by which we’d be remembered, by supporting a bill that would separate... the right to vote ...from the poll tax. The way the law was, if you didn’t pay a poll tax, you couldn’t vote. So we prepared carefully. We had several speeches that we made. The Legislature listened with great interest. You could tell. When the vote was taken there were thirteen votes for our position, out of 267. So that was a very sobering experience, but a very good one.

Gertrude Mallary

Bill Billings, because he had been around the Legislature as Secretary of the Senate, was much better known than most of the rest of us. Bill was made Chairman of the Judiciary Committee in his freshman year in the Legislature because he was well known and because he had been a candidate for the judgeship before. ...Dalton Mann was a second-termer, a sophomore, and he was also a committee chairman. He was chairman of the banking and Corporations committee. Phil Hoff, because he was young and
articulate and the Representative from Burlington was much more visible and got a lot of press in the Free Press and others, but the rest of us were mostly faceless freshmen. But because of our relationship with Bill and with Phil, and because of, I guess, who we are and the skills we brought, we were in a position to undertake leadership roles in the next session.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Those leadership roles would soon prove decisive.

Richard Mallary

In 1963 Phil Hoff was inaugurated governor. Bill Billings was elected Speaker and he appointed as committee chairs a significant number of the Young Turks... I was chairman of the Appropriations Committee, John Downs was chairman of Ways and Means Committee, and Tony Farol was vice chairman. Ernest Gibson was chairman of the Judiciary Committee and Stanton Lazarus was Chairman of State and Court Expenses Committee and Dalton Man was chairman of the Bank and Corporations Committee and Sanborn Partridge was chairman of the Education Committee and Byron Hathorne was chairman of the Municipal Corporations Committee.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Vermont was also starting to learn politics from Washington. Franklin Billings followed the example of a US Speaker of the House.

Franklin Billings

I was elected speaker. Having read Tip O'Neil's books and seen what Tip O'Neil had done in Congress, I removed almost all of the chairmen and replaced them with the Young Turks. And at that point we had a working majority of younger people. That were looking forward and trying to move the state, we did a lot of progressive legislation. That's where we repealed capital punishment, we repealed the poll tax, finally. There were a lot of urban renewal bonds issued, which was a new field, particularly. And there was a great deal of legislation dealing with development of the state for tourism, for business and so forth. And there was for the first time, an organized funding in trying to get equalization of education for the state. So there was just a lot of progressive legislation that was introduced and a great deal of it passed.

Richard Mallary

In essence, virtually all of the members of the eleven-member Young Turks, were either chairs or vice-chairs of the committees or the Speaker and so that particular group essentially took the dominant leadership role in the Legislature.

Gregory L. Sharrow
We heard the voices of Franklin Billings, Philip Hoff, Sanborn Partridge, John Downs, and Richard Mallary. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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Program 3: Philip Hoff and Reapportionment

Richard Mallary

1963 Phil Hoff was inaugurated governor.

George Little

I think when Phil was elected he made some significant changes in the way state government worked. And I think that that was the point in the history of Vermont that changed the way we did things back earlier and we began to catch up with the twentieth century when Phil got in.

Gregory L. Sharrow

In the late 1950s, Vermont was undergoing major changes – construction of the national interstate system was under way. With the interstate came an influx of new faces and ideas, gradually changing the makeup of the legislature. Ray Keyser preceded Phil Hoff as governor.

Governor F. Ray Keyser Jr.

I served two years as Governor, ran for re-election and, after a recount in an off year, Phil Hoff was elected Governor. This was a watershed of changing of politics. I recognized that at the time, although very few people in Vermont, having had a hundred and four years of Republican governors, realized the political scene in Vermont was changing. Before the election I had done a graph of the voting in the off years. This is non-presidential years. And where, when I was elected in a presidential year, received the most votes of any Republican candidate at that point, four years before that in an off year when Bob Stafford was elected, he won on a very slim margin after a recount. And the trend, if you started back in the early fifties through, in the off years, ignoring the presidential years, the votes for the Democratic candidate kept climbing and climbing. And if you drew a graph of it, they crossed in the year that Phil Hoff was elected.
Governor Philip Hoff

I’ve looked back at my election. It’s true that I was the focal point, but if you look back over the last few elections in Vermont, you can see the Democrats beginning to emerge as a real political force in this state.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Hoff and the Democrats ushered in a change that was long overdue -- the end to the old one-town, one-vote system, which had been ruled unconstitutional in Federal court. Even as they made the changes, everyone knew that reapportionment of the legislature would dramatically change Vermont’s political landscape forever.

Peter Mallary

Reapportionment was an incredibly powerful historical moment. People sat in that chamber and voted themselves out of a job. I don’t know how it gets more emotional than that for a politician. For a public servant.

Gregory L. Sharrow

The old system was so out of balance that when Hoff was elected to represent Burlington, he sat one seat away from Gertrude Mallary, who represented Fairlee.

Gertrude Mallary

I had as much clout in the House as the member from Burlington. And of course, that was obviously wrong. And reapportionment, it changed the House most of all because it reduced the House from 246 members to 150. And it was in terms of population, not of geography. The ridiculous thing, the amazing thing is how long the old way lived before it succumbed, I mean it’s completely unequal for me to have as much of a vote as the member from Burlington.

Richard Mallary

I think it was because of the people who recognized that this was the end of an era... the concern of the rural areas that... the historic power of the rural areas and the agricultural community was going to be seriously dissipated.

Gregory L. Sharrow

When Hoff asked Bill Billings to convene a committee on Reapportionment, Billings picked Emory Hebard, a Republican from Glover, to chair the committee. Hoff was furious.
Robert Billings

And I said, “Governor, I think you must think, and I’ll tell you what you’ve got to think, that Emory Hebard can get the small towns to realize this is the law, even though they’re voting themselves out of office. And we can’t get them. I can’t get them and you can’t get them. And it’ll work out.”

Gregory L. Sharrow

The passage of the Reapportionment bill in 1965 was a pivotal moment in Vermont’s history. Former governor Tom Salmon remembers Vivian Tuttle, Town Clerk and Representative from Stratton, which then had about 40 residents.

Governor Tom Salmon

And my memories that night were Vivian Tuttle, a little lady, very short, diminutive, a very slight build, with her hands literally quaking— she wasn’t a public speaker, but getting up to explain her vote, why she was going to vote in favor of reapportionment and vote herself out of a job. And then, later that evening, a farmer from Stannard, up in the Northeast Kingdom, Frank Hutchins rose, a dairy farmer, and rued this backwater decision to dismember the House. And, you know, real tears flowed down his eyes. And that was very moving.

Governor Philip Hoff

And I recognized that, for him and for many Vermonters, this constituted a major change in their lives and their concept of what Vermont was all about. And I defy anybody who saw that man and heard him not to have been sympathetic. You know, there are very few absolutes in this world and each of us tends to build our own world around ourselves and our background and our history and our philosophies. And you have to be sympathetic to that, I think. So yes he broke into tears and it was, quite honestly, I understood.

Catherine Beattie

They reapportioned and Danville was placed with Danville, Peacham and Groton. And then I didn’t run again. It has changed the whole complexion of the Legislature. It really has. It’s just progress and change, that’s all.

Governor Tom Salmon

We could never have got there were it not for two people. One was Governor Hoff, the other was Speaker Franklin Billings. They summoned a meeting of a group of Republicans and Democrats they viewed as moderates, or at least open to persuasion. We met on night -- and they both made sterling appeals for this group of moderates to come together and reach closure on one of the reapportionment bills, so we could move
on with our life and not find ourselves embarrassingly in violation of Federal Order to get reapportionment done so the success story of reapportionment, getting the job done, was truly bipartisan.

**Governor Philip Hoff**

No question that reapportionment—it changed the nature of Vermont, really. Changed the nature of the Legislature.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

We heard the voices of Richard Mallary, George Little, Ray Keyser, Philip Hoff, Peter Mallary, Gertrude Mallary, Franklin Billings, Tom Salmon, and Catherine Beattie. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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**Program 4 : Women and the Legislature**

**Louise Swainbank**

It was a shock to me the way women were treated in the Legislature... I had come from a women's society, teaching school, and a lot of respect for women. And when I got over there, I found that women were expected to be Clerks and do the mechanical work. The Equal Rights Amendment came up and then women came to the forefront.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

Women had been in the Vermont legislature since Edna Beard in 1921, and in 1953 Consuelo Bailey became Vermont’s first woman speaker, and then the nation’s first woman lieutenant governor. Yet as Louise Swainbank said, women continued to be separate but unequal in the state house until a group of women from Chittenden County emerged in the Seventies.

**Governor Madeleine Kunin**

At first I thought, well, I’m going to have a tough time in the Legislature. One, because I’m a Democrat and there were very few Democrats at that time. We were a real minority. And the other, because I’m a woman and there were very few women. Well, it turned out that my biggest liability was neither of those, but the fact that I was from Burlington, which was the big city!
Madeleine Kunin won a seat in the Vermont House of Representatives in 1972, running on a platform that stressed educational, environmental, and poverty issues.

Governor Madeleine Kunin

And, uh, I soon learned though that the most powerful committee in the House was the House Appropriations committee. And I also learned early on that not all legislators were equal. We may have gotten there... by the vote so we were equally elected but the leadership and the committee chairs wielded a lot of power. And so I looked around me and I said, “Well, you know there are 180 people here, but there are about a dozen who really call the shots.” And there had never been a woman in a leadership position before, so I decided to run for the position of Democratic Whip, which is the number two spot in the leadership hierarchy and, as a result of that, I gained a position on the House Appropriations Committee. And the budget itself is the most important legislation that the legislature has to deal with – You have to pass a budget each year. And it wasn’t just a question of money, it was a question of values.

Four years later, Gretchen Morse followed Kunin down the interstate to Montpelier.

Gretchen Morse

When I got elected I ended up being one of the only Republican women, and, yet, I felt a great allegiance and collegiality with many of the other Democrat women candidates that won. And so we went to Montpelier with kind of a group. We car-pooled together, we often stayed overnight together. We knew each other as people. We shared a lot of things in common. We had small children. Madeleine was kind of like our big sister. And she was very, very generous with her skills and her mentoring, regardless of party. The other thing is, I didn’t really feel among the women friends that I had there that there was a lot of ego, I mean we were very excited about participating and joining. And not necessarily being the “it”. So there was a lot of teamwork. We held caucuses together and took on issues that crossed party lines.

Sallie Soule

When I got to the House there were women helping women. And as I came in, I didn’t ask for the traditional committees that women often do. I did ask for Ways and Means, which is a tax writing committee. And Madeline got me on Ways and Means, which was almost unheard of in those days, for a freshman to get on a money committee. It was totally scary, too, because I really didn’t know much about taxes. And I had to learn awful fast.
Gregory L. Sharrow

Sallie Soule’s interest in politics was born out of a difficult personal experience. Her career was a sign that women would bring new energies, new issues and new perspectives into the state house.

Sallie Soule

My third pregnancy I lost a child that went to term and the baby died because it was a blue baby and at that point the doctor said to me, “No more babies.” And I said, “All right. If I have one, get pregnant again, I’m going to have an abortion.” And he said, “No abortions.” Well, that’s again what rather radicalized me in terms of some of my thinking. And I think a lot of people’s career in politics or whatever they do comes from their personal experience, no question about it. And this was a searing experience in my life, and so I think that began my interest in abortion rights, women’s rights... And I do think, very clearly, that people’s political life or their business life or whatever it is, a lot of it comes from their own personal experience.

Louise Swainbank

Sallie was a wonderful and very strong legislator. She was a Rock of Gibraltar, you know. She was courageous, and so was Madeleine Kunin. And Susan Auld was another very strong Legislator. And there were women before that time who were good Legislators. I don’t mean that there weren’t. But these people were activists and were willing to fight for their strong rights.

Gregory L. Sharrow

When debate began over whether Vermont should ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, the opposition included Phyllis Schlafly of the conservative Eagle Forum — yet support appeared from often unexpected quarters.

Louise Swainbank

It came up fairly early, as I remember, and it was quite obvious that we had the votes and so, we decided not to speak too much. In other words not to kill it by over-talking... but it did pass both Houses, and we did ratify, but, of course, it never was ratified nationally. Phyllis Schlafly appeared and with cohorts and organized the opposition at a hearing. That was very interesting. But some little man from Barre, got up and said “I’m not going to pay any attention to somebody who comes in here from Illinois.” And of course, we were all just delighted. And I think that the very process of working through all that, really, nation-wide, changed attitudes toward women. And I think we’ve made a great many changes in a relatively short period of time.

Gregory L. Sharrow
When Kunin was elected governor in 1984, record numbers of women followed her into the state government. By the end of the century, Vermont had the highest percentage of women state legislators in the country.

Louise Swainbank

Those strong women from the Burlington area were very effective and they gave courage to some of the rest of us. And I think it was just a change in the general feeling about women. And the Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women was very prominent at the time. We had a lot of support.

Gregory L. Sharrow

We heard the voices of Louise Swainbank, Madeleine Kunin, Gretchen Morse, and Sallie Soule. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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Program 5 : The Speaker of the House

Timothy O’Connor

I saw George on the street one time in the summer between sessions, and he said to me, “The two years that I spent as Speaker, in my thinking back on things, was probably the best two years of my life. You only had 149 people to deal with, you knew ‘em all. Sometimes you were their confessor or sometimes you were their friend, but, you know, you were never their enemy.

Gregory L. Sharrow

The Speaker of the House, as described by George Aiken to former Speaker Timothy O’Connor, was a position that was conferred rather than contested. It called for wisdom and maturity.

Richard Mallary

Generally speaking the Speakers during most of the early part of the twentieth century were senior Representatives who had served a while and for whom this was the last year of service. I think that Bill Billings was the first Speaker, since the teens, who was elected to a second term as Speaker and so he served for three years. He served his second term for the reapportioned session.
Franklin Billings

When I ran for Speaker I was seconded by one of the Democrats and my opposition was only from the conservative wing of the party. But to show what a change there’d been in who was in the Legislature, I think I only had about 26 that opposed me.

Richard Mallary

I announced for the Speakership and was elected as Speaker in the first reapportioned House. The procedural part of being Speaker I enjoyed. I know the rules quite well and, as Speaker, you have an obligation to treat every member equally and fairly, in terms of giving them the opportunity to speak, and making sure that the rules are administered fairly and reasonable and even-handedly, and so forth. One of the difficult things to do as Speaker, of course, is committee appointments, because you’re never able to please everybody, but …shaping the committees and getting people where they can serve most ably and where their skills are most useful and where their philosophy is either most beneficial or least harmful, is an important part of it.

Walter “Peanut” Kennedy

I was elected in 71, Speaker of the House. I must say that regardless of their political following, just about everybody there trusted me, Democrats included. Because I made the resolution to myself when I was first elected that I was elected speaker by the majority of the members of the House, which meant that I was to take all of the members of the house by the hand and lead them through two years of session. That it was my responsibility to do that regardless of their positions. And if they came for help I was to give them help, and I was not to divulge their position to the enemy camp, and I never did. I never did that, Republican or Democrat, I never did that.

Gretchen Morse

When I came to the House, Timmy O’Connor was the Speaker. He’s a Democrat, elected by a Republican majority, …and he set the tone of being issue-oriented, being balanced. And he really, because he needed the support of Republicans to maintain his Speakership, was extremely interested in making sure the process was fair, that people were appointed on merit. …but the general tenor was one of compromise, was one of finding the common ground, taking the steps that would move you ahead on an issue and not necessarily a strict party view.

Timothy O’Connor

I was the first Democrat ever to be elected Speaker and I was elected by a Republican majority. My job was not, as the Speaker, to set the policy myself. My job was more to make sure that those people who were in their respective leadership roles were doing what we all thought collectively should be done to get the legislation through the
committee, out to the House floor and debated. I was a facilitator, as opposed to being the chief executive officer who was telling everybody what they ought to do. I was the first person who ever served for Speaker for six years.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

The Speaker, perhaps more than anyone, embodied the early tradition that members of the state legislature were, despite their differences, colleagues.

**Stephan Morse**

You fought like the devil all day, but you had dinner or drinks or you spent the evening with Legislators from all across the spectrum. So there was a person relationship. You know, you were almost a Republican by day or a Democrat by day, and a human being in the evening.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

By the mid Seventies, Vermont had truly become a two-party state. It was perhaps inevitable that politics would become more overtly partisan and more aware of the power involved in every aspect of the political process. With these changes, the Speaker’s job was changing too.

**Stephan Morse**

But I was kind of caught in between being fully partisan and this era of O'Connor. I’d like to think that some of Ralph Wright’s, who was my successor, some of his success was because I was able to transition to a more partisan Legislature.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

By the mid-Eighties the Speaker had evolved from confessor and friend to a figure of power. The skills needed to get work done in a bi-partisan House were very different from those of earlier times. As Speaker Ralph Wright puts it, a new approach was needed.

**Ralph Wright**

The purpose is, is get the podium because if you don’t get the podium, it doesn’t matter how they vote because the issue’s never coming up if you don’t have control of the podium. You have to do your homework. Not just on the issue. I mean, do your homework. You’ve got to learn that issue. But you also have to be good with people. You have to know who’s moving and who’s blocking on this issue. You have to be able to anticipate this stuff. So yeah, we worked hard. We read the bills. We were serious about if you’re going to get in a fight, let’s win it. And I think underlying all of this was the good feeling we hoped to get by making Vermont a better place to live, and I think that if
you look at, it’s gotta be hundreds of bills we passed in that decade, you’re gonna say “Wow..” you know?

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

We heard the voices of Timothy O’Connor, Richard Mallary, Franklin Billings, Walter “Peanut” Kennedy, Gretchen Morse, Stephan Morse, and Ralph Wright. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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**Program 6 : The Senate**

**Edgar May**

I always thought the difference between the two chambers was that in the House of Representatives you could get up and give an impassioned speech and make a difference. You could sway votes. In the Senate, obviously, when it’s a lot smaller, the idea of pounding your chest and tearing your garments and giving this William Jennings Bryant speech in the Senate, that’s nice for the television cameras, but it generally doesn’t produce a lot of votes.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

Over the last half-century the most obvious changes in the Vermont legislature took place in the House, which after reapportionment shrank from 246 members to 150--but the Senate, too, had its own particular character.

**Peter Mallary**

The Senate is more genteel in its exterior, but it's driven by some very dominant personalities. There's the old line that house members love, the problem with running for the Senate is that if you win, you're in the Senate.

**Arthur Gibb**

I was seven years in the House and sixteen years in the Senate. And it’s an interesting comparison between the two bodies, as far as that goes, too. Some people like the bigger body, but I enjoyed the Senate very much. It’s a little more intimate. You get a little closer to the people you’re working with. you uh… It’s in many ways more informal. It’s like a great big committee. It’s thirty people instead of 150.
Robert Gannett

The irony to me was that when I was in the House I used to look across at the Senate chamber and say, “My goodness, not for me. I’m much happier here in the House where there are other people from all the towns.” With the change that had taken place, it was soon evident to me that the Senate was just where I belonged. There were a number of Senators, in 1973 when I went to the Senate, with whom I’d served in the House in the early times. In the Senate you serve on a number of committees and the variety is, is a real plus to serving in the Senate. And it also puts an extra burden on the Senators because you have to keep up with the work in two or three or even more committees.

Governor Madeleine Kunin

I had three terms in the house and then two terms as Lieutenant Governor. And as Lieutenant Governor, I presided over the Senate. So that was my Senate experience. And the Senate is a very different body. The house is more diversified and more—I don’t know, lively. I guess you might say. And at that time, in the early seventies, there were also interesting characters who were in the House. You know, real Vermonters. I can’t remember the name of—(laugh) Stub Earl! Stub Earl, who had his spittoon. Stub Earl, the Earl of Eden is what he called himself or was called.. And I remember thinking when I first got there, there were a number of people who had lost a finger or a thumb. And then I realized, these are people that worked the land and with machinery. That’s why it was kind of their emblem.

Sallie Soule

Conference Committee is a very important committee to be on now because that’s where the differences between the House and the Senate are worked out.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Committees of Conference arise when a bill is passed through both the House and Senate, and the versions are different.

Richard Mallary

In the Committee of Conference three people from the House and three people from the Senate are essentially determining the final form of the legislation that is probably going to pass and all you need to have is a majority of each of the committee, so that two House members and two Senate members write the report of the Committee of Conference.

Robert Gannett
My third term in the House, Senator Newell had started in the House with me and then he went over to the Senate. And we found ourselves in one of these – a Committee of Conference for one of these bills that had to pass. ...It was expenditure of money for a new building, as I recall it, either at Brandon Training School or at the Weeks’ School. He represented the Senate and I represented the House. And by the time we were still in our Committee of Conference, everything else had been wrapped up and, in effect, everyone was waiting on a decision to come out of this group of six people. And I remember, we were in a small committee room downstairs. And in those days, one way you knew adjournment was coming, was about three days before they wheeled a piano into the well of the House. And during the breaks between action. With 246 people, not everybody had an assignment in those days at the end, so there’d be a lot of sitting around, so they’d have the piano. They’d have songs and all. I can remember hearing the piano and people singing upstairs and we couldn’t agree down there. And, finally, I gave in, the House gave in. And Senator Newell and his Senate committee prevailed. And we went back upstairs and adjourned. But, for the most part in our State House, decisions and events like that didn’t result in hard feelings and permanent feelings. We respected other people’s right to their opinion. We knew somebody had to give, and sometimes it would be one side and sometimes another.

Gregory L. Sharrow

We heard the voices of Edgar May, Peter Mallary, Arthur Gibb, Robert Gannett, Madeleine Kunin, Sallie Soule, and Richard Mallary. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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Program 7 : Getting Involved, Learning the Legislature

Governor Madeleine Kunin

I think the first couple weeks I probably was totally exhausted trying to absorb it all, not only the people and their opinions, but the process.

Gregory L. Sharrow

The changes that affected the Vermont legislature in the past half-century are connected by one common thread: Legislators of all political persuasions were inspired and motivated by the desire to be a part of something greater and more important than themselves.
Robert Gannett

In 1952 there came a presidential election in which General Eisenhower, unexpectedly was persuaded to run as a republican... I was a delegate to the Convention in Chicago. I always remember, then-nominee Eisenhower spoke to the delegates and he said, “Thank you. I hope you go home and work for my election, but more importantly, go home and get involved.” And that’s what I did.

David Wolk

Bobby Kennedy is someone who had a real influence on me in my formative years. And watching him be assassinated, live on television at the Ambassador Hotel, June 5, 1968, was, I mean. I was sort of a glutton for punishment, watching this. I was only fifteen years old, but I was very interested and found him to be quite inspirational. So my interest in issues of equality, justice, particularly civil rights, emanate from his example, Martin Luther King. And, of course, as a child of the sixties, those were sort of guiding principles.

Catherine Beattie

I was always interested in town affairs and went to town meeting and participated in town affairs... Then Phil Hoff came to Danville and it was in Danville where he announced his candidacy to run for Governor. I went to that and I just got interested in politics. Phil Hoff was first elected in 62, I think it was his second term when I was elected and went to Legislature.

Sallie Soule

By 11 o’clock I got my courage up and I called the town clerk in Charlotte and said, “Hazel! ... how am I doing down there?” and she said, “Oh, Sallie, this is, you know, a Presidential year and a United States Senate year. We haven’t even gotten to you. I mean, we’re still counting the Governor. And we certainly haven’t gotten to where you are.” But she said, “As a matter of fact, you’ve won.” I said, “Hazel, what do you mean I’ve won?” She said, “Your pile of ballots is higher.”

Gregory L. Sharrow

Getting elected can be difficult. But learning your way around the people and the process can be downright humbling.

Edgar May

We all, I think, feel overwhelmed in the beginning.

John Kristensen
It was rather hectic. I shouldn’t say hectic, but difficult to know what was going on. I remember one day I was in the men’s room and a man was in there saying, “This is the only place that I really know what I’m doing!” And I agreed completely with that. But you soon get over it.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

Peanut Kennedy was persuaded to run for office by Ray Keyser, who gave him some valuable advice on how best to gain solid footing in the Legislature.

**Walter “Peanut” Kennedy**

Ray said well, you want a good background. He said I’m prejudiced, but if you want a good background, he said you probably ought to try to get on judiciary committee.

When it come time to put in my choices for committees I just listed judiciary, I didn’t list any others...and I got there...I had Phil Hoff, I had John Downs, I had Ernie Gibson. These were all my classmates on that committee and Bill Billings was the chairman. You couldn’t have found probably a more diverse political spectrum perhaps. You couldn’t have found the capability and the knowledge that those people had. It just was amazing. And I got the background in that committee for an awful lot of things: how a bill was constituted, how it came about, what happened to it, the knowledge of being able to deal with the Vermont statutes...you could not buy or attain that type of an education except as I got it.

**Harvey Carter**

I was somewhat, I suppose awed by being in the Legislature and I expect that I was probably fairly quiet at first. I also had a wonderful person who sat in front of me in the House. His name was Harry Lawrence and he was from Lyndon and he was a dairy farmer. And Harry exemplified the two basic characteristics that I found in the Vermont Legislature, and I find about Vermonters, generally. He was very fair minded and he was very modest. And fair-mindedness and modesty, I think, are really the hallmarks of an awful lot of people I served with in the Legislature.

**Timothy O’Connor**

I always remember Tom Salmon used to say, “During your freshman year, Tim, you just sit and observe and you don’t say anything. You just kind of learn the ropes, but don’t be getting up making speeches until you really feel that you’re ready.” and we had a bill on Fish and Game licensing or something. And Fish and Game bills were interesting in that everybody felt they knew something about fishing and gaming... And it seemed as though for three days we had debated this bill and everybody had spoken, but myself. And I finally decided that I ought to get up and say something. And I did. It was kind of my maiden voyage. And I’ll always remember, where I sat I could look over and I could see Tom Salmon and I could see him looking like, “what is he doing?” and then he sent me a note. And of course, I got in the middle of the whole thing and then a couple
people asked me questions. And of course, I really didn't have a depth of knowledge about fishing... and the final note was, “See? I told you! Stay in your seat.” So you know you had people like that that could give you advice.

**Peter Mallary**

It is still one of the great human experiences. It was an experience over-all that I would not trade for anything. It’s a glorious experience and a chance to feel that you are playing a role in the State’s life and the State’s direction and to meet fascinating, committed interesting people, this is still one of the great human experiences. I’m a great believer in the political process.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

We heard the voices of Madeleine Kunin, Robert Gannett, David Wolk, Catherine Beatty, Sallie Soule, Edgar May, John Kristensen, Walter “Peanut” Kennedy, Harvey Carter, Tim O’Connor, and Peter Mallary. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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**Program 8 : Political Courage**

**Harvey Carter**

I think it takes an enormous amount of courage sometimes to vote against your own convictions because you know it’s the right thing to do, in terms of what public policy considerations are.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

The changing Vermont legislature has seen its share of courageous acts. Such acts often cast a cloud over, or even spell the end of a political career. So what are the qualities that make a person put aside political goals and personal agendas, and join others in support of unpopular positions?

**Louise Swainbank**

I’m sure that I was much more liberal than my constituents. But I had a sense of place and a sense of how they felt. I don’t think anybody can betray their own feelings in voting. You have to be honest about your own positions and sometimes you can convince your constituents and sometimes you have to vote in a way that they don’t
like. And, eventually, that may do you in. But I can remember Stub Earl from Eden was dead set against a doe season. And he was on the committee that was dealing with that. And he knew how his constituents felt and he was with them, but one spring the Fish and Game people took him out on a spring trip to see the deer that had died during the winter and he changed his mind and voted for the control of the deer herd in the Fish and Game Department and he was defeated, of course, in the next election. And he knew he was going to be. It was very hard for him, but that took courage.

Gregory L. Sharrow

In the last half-century, two issues produced political acts in which courage prevailed over expediency.

Richard Mallary

I think the two most emotional issues, probably in the last century, have been reapportionment and civil unions. There are many things that are emotional for one person or another: deer herds or special education or the death penalties or what have you, but I was fortunate to have been present for both the reapportionment of the Legislature and for the vote on civil unions. And in both of those cases I think almost everybody in the Legislature was deeply involved and felt very strongly about what was happening.

Tom Little

I've never thought about the civil union battle in terms of my own personal political courage, but I saw it then, I see it now, as finding out what the right thing to do was. And when that becomes apparent, after you've done your homework and taken the testimony and examined the facts, there are times when it just becomes obvious what is the correct, proper outcome for Vermont.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Correct and proper, though, may work against political self-interest — which is where courage comes in.

Mary Ann Carlson

Marian Milne got up on that Senate floor at Civil Unions, and said “I can’t do anything else but vote for this bill, and I know this is gonna mean I’m gonna lose my election,” and she did.

Richard Mallary

As with reapportionment, the Legislature was faced with a court order to provide equivalent benefits for same-sex couples, as the benefits were provided to married
couples. And so once the court order came out, it became clear to me that the Legislature had no option other than to do something. The choice was given to us by the court as to whether we provided civil unions or domestic partnership legislation, or whether we provided the full equivalence of a marriage. And it became very clear in the Legislature that it was a highly emotional issue that, for many people, providing equivalent benefits or equivalent obligations was not a problem, but the word “marriage” was very freighted with emotional content and that to call it “marriage” would have been unacceptable for many people who were willing to support civil unions. So I think the Judiciary committee worked hard at it and came up with what I found was a very acceptable and appropriate solution. But as the papers indicated, it was a highly emotional issue. Many people are totally unwilling to accept the court’s order and so when it came to the final vote there was no question in my mind as to what was the appropriate vote, but I was not unaware of the number of people in my district who disagreed with me. And I became even more aware of how many disagreed with me when I got around to run in that fall and found that it was a highly emotional issue and many people felt extremely strongly about it. I’m fond of quoting from Edmond Burke’s letter to the electors of Bristol, when he says, “Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgment and he betrays, instead of serving you, when he sacrifices it to your opinion.”

**Peter Mallary**

When Dick sees what’s right, he does what he believes is right. And given the way the Civil Unions law was fashioned, he had no problem supporting it and he did support it, and in a 2 member district, came in dead last. In a sense he voted himself out of a job then too.

**Edgar May**

Any one of us can get up and speak for motherhood and apple pie. It is always easy to articulate the popular. It’s always hard to stand up and talk about the unpopular. And that’s the greatest challenge of not only the Vermont Legislature. It happens on Boards of Selectmen. And I think the Civil Unions issue, regardless how you feel about it, required a great deal of courage. But political courage is not for sale or a dime a dozen. That’s what makes it political courage. And some of us occasionally don’t quite meet even our own standards and definition of what courage is.

**Gregory L. Sharrow**

We heard the voices of Harvery Carter, Louise Swainbank, Richard Mallary, Tom Little, Mary Ann Carlson, Peter Mallary and Edgar May. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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Program 9: Civility and the Art of Compromise

Gretchen Morse

The leadership took the time to educate new legislators to behave in a certain way that set a standard. And that was for all of the decorum in all of the kind of civic rules of, Roberts Rules of Order. They held to those so strongly. They educated us to those rules. And the reason why you were always Member from Charlotte was because you were not Gretchen Morse. You were not the individual. You were representing a group of people and you were part of a process where your ability to express was in a much broader context than you personally.

Gregory L. Sharrow

Legislators must learn to function effectively in an environment that can get divisive, emotional, and sometimes downright hostile. The key is good old-fashioned civility…

George Little

When you’re on a committee for four or five months with thousands of issues, you’re bound to disagree with your best friend on some issues. You can’t possible agree on everything. And, occasionally, they’ll come up for a vote. A lot of times they get brushed aside. They’re not important. But once in awhile you do come head-to-head and you have to handle it in a way that protects the process and doesn’t cause a lot of rancor. And I think that, by and large, happens. And I always thought of it at the time, you try to think of the overall good of the legislature, rather than your particular opinion.

Sam Lloyd

What intrigued me, as time went on, was to hear two Legislators, let’s say from opposite ends of the pole on a particular issue, arguing very strenuously about a particular issue and sometimes even becoming angry in their assaults on the other’s viewpoint. And then an hour later, perhaps, or the next day, they’re cooperating hand in glove on another issue. And this is one of the things that every Legislator and everybody in public life has to learn, that give and take is a part of it. And you have your strong views, of course, and you’re going to pursue them, but there has to be a listening to the other fellows views. And out of that, so often, comes compromise, but that is the system.

There has to be willingness to compromise, in the best sense of the word. That however strongly you may feel, you have to recognize that other people have the right to feel strongly the other way, and the best possible legislation is when they sit down and
recognize that there’s always a solution. Then, you just have to say, “well, there’s a way here and now lets find it, and lets not worry about how mad we are at each other, or how little we think of the other person's viewpoint. It's important for society or for the state that a solution be reached, and we’ll just do it.

Louise Swainbank

There were Republicans and Democrats on issues that worked together. I can remember we’d argue and fight during the day and then we’d all go out to dinner together at night which was fun.

Seth Bongartz

The person you may want to strangle tonight is the person you’re going to need two days later on something else on which you actually happen to agree. And you really have to put it aside in the evening and go have dinner with a group of people, half of whom may have voted on the opposite sides during the day. Ultimately you at least begin to build out of that trust in each other, get a sense of when somebody is doing something out of conviction or when you think maybe they’re not. And getting to know who you trust, who you think is sort of legitimate, and who you think is not.

Gregory L. Sharrow

When the legislative process seems threatened, extra effort is occasionally required.

Ralph Wright

It’s almost like people who get good in the Legislature are like center fielders who almost instinctively break the right way. Even almost before the ball’s off the bat, and you say “How do those guys do that?” You know, John Murphy was one of the best at this. I remember the day Murphy got up and we were arguing an issue and it was awful. It was contested, it was heated. I mean even some people who always managed to keep their cool were getting very impatient, getting up and you could hear it in their voice and it was getting personal. And, boy, I though, we’ve got trouble. And then Murphy, who hadn’t participated for two hours, the whole issue, Murphy got up. And I looked over at seat 150 and thought “what on earth could Murphy have to say on this issue, which he knows nothing about, that hasn’t already been said in two hours by almost everybody else on the floor, how much more can be said?”. Murphy got up and he proceeded—we had earphones at the desk...you have earphones that you can put on to amplify the debate. And of course, you have a microphone that you speak into. Well, Murphy got up and spoke into the earphones and put the microphone in his ear. And he did it with all seriousness. And the whole place broke up. And Murphy turned bright red. I mean, this place broke up. I mean everybody started roaring. And I just looked and said, “Are we a little mixed up today, Member from Ludlow?” And he got so embarrassed by that comment that he sat down. And you know what? The debate ended right there. Murphy ended the debate. He caught the tone of the House and he
changed it a hundred and eighty degrees. And I talked to him about that — he came down to Florida last winter and we visited. And I said, “Murphy, remember that?” And I said, “You did that on purpose, didn’t you?” and he said, “Now Ralph, don’t you go making me reveal my secrets.”

Gregory L. Sharrow

We heard the voices of Gretchen Morse, George Little, Sam Lloyd, Robert Gannett, Sallie Soule, Louise Swainbank, Seth Bongartz, and Ralph Wright. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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Program 10 : Citizen Legislature

Harvey Carter

The Vermont Legislature is just a big town meeting. It really is. The same kind of direct democracy. The same relationships of people. A sense of neighborliness. A greater sense of community, as a small state. It all informs the legislative process and makes it, somehow it works. It really does. I guess that I wish, in many ways, the rest of the world were run like Vermont.

Gregory L. Sharrow

It would be difficult to find a better example of a Citizen Legislature than in Vermont, where the process is truly of, by and for the people. But what is it that motivates a citizen to choose the path of public service?

David Wolk

What spurred me on the most was that I learned a lot about the laws or the lack of legal protection for children with respect to childhood sexual abuse. And there was an incident in one of the schools that I worked in that brought that to light, got me very angry, and inspired me to work on the childhood sexual abuse statute, because of an incident that I found out about and had to act upon where many children had been victims. And that really got to me. And I worked on a couple of bills, one of which I sponsored myself with some co-sponsors, and helped shepherd it through. I guess it was a year or two after I was elected and that made me feel really good. I mean, you really can make a difference.
Harvey Carter

Let’s see, I was I guess what twenty-eight years old and I’d recently moved to Pownal and there was a big controversy in Pownal about Sunday racing at the race track. The Legislature passed legislation that had authorized Sunday racing, and Pownal had no say at all, whatsoever, except through its Representative, who at that time was Jim Loundsberry, so I felt this wasn’t a very fair way to treat the people of Pownal and I decided I’d run for the House. So I ran and I got elected. And I went up and served one term in the House.

And I introduced a bill to give Pownal a vote on Sunday racing because that is what I had said was one of the issues that got me into politics, and running for the Legislature. The long and short of it is that I actually got the bill through the House. It went over to the Senate and the bill passed and Pownal got its say on Sunday racing.

Gregory L. Sharrow

It’s easy to separate yourself from the legislature, and to forget that you have the power to influence the process.

Mary Ann Carlson

People would always say, “Well, you and they. You know, they, the Legislature and you, the legislators, Mary Ann.” And I would say to them, “Wait a minute! We have an incredible system in this country. I’m representing you. It’s not you. If you don’t like what they are doing, you need to get different Legislators then. Get out and vote! Get rid of me if you don’t want that to be happening.” It was wonderful to really see that the government works for you and you are instrumental in making that government work. And in Vermont that is so true.

Sam Lloyd

We are so fortunate in Vermont to have this small state where you have a contact with your local Legislator, or the Governor, where government is responsive. ...It’s well said that all politics is local and local control is the best. Here we have it, not to the extent that some would like, but, still, far more so than elsewhere.

Sallie Soule

One of the joys of being in Vermont politics is you know your constituents. And one of the programs we funded was to get women in the trades, because women in the trades can begin to make some significant dollars. And one of the nicest personal things that ever happened to me was that we were having some plumbing done one day at a house and a very, very capable young woman came. And I’d never had a woman plumber in my whole life. And she came working with the journeyman, who was
directing her, and she had been part of that program... and she was now making nine dollars an hour, and she had been prior on welfare.

Robert Gannett

I’ve often said that if we in Montpelier, in our State House, cannot make the democratic process work, nobody can, but it’s so important that younger people can find a way and can feel that there’s a place for them in our Legislature.

Gretchen Morse

How do we make people feel valued as citizens of a democracy in a way that really encourages them to participate? …We grew up with the expectation that the other piece of that three-legged stool was, in fact, participating in our government. Some way. Whether it’s at local level, state level, through voting through helping candidates get elected. But we will not survive as a democracy unless people really face up to this issue, that they’ve got to build this into their time and into their lives.

Edgar May

A democracy cannot work if large numbers of people opt out, if only one point of view prevails… It is not they in Washington. It’s not they in Montpelier. It’s not they on the Board of Selectmen. It’s us. And if we cannot get the best minds and different minds, different points of view, to step forward and serve, then all of us are diminished.

Gregory L. Sharrow

We heard the voices of Harvey Carter, David Wolk, Mary Ann Carlson, Sam Lloyd, Sallie Soule, Robert Gannett, Gretchen Morse, and Edgar May. All are former members of the Vermont Legislature.

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