

Gordon Hall:

Mr. Hamel before we get into the business of the **George Wallace** for President drive in the state of Massachusetts, I would prefer that we spend a little bit of time on – on your background. It would be more fruitful later on to get into the development of your career so that you are now hoping to campaign for a Presidential hopeful, but I think that at the outset we ought to discuss your background. Now to begin with, how old are you at the present time?

Richard Hamel:

I am – in about two weeks time I'll reach my 42<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

Gordon Hall:

You're 42 years of age. How many years would you estimate that you have actually been involved in your version, perhaps, for want of a better term, of American Politics? I would not describe you and I don't think you would describe yourself as necessarily a main stream middle of the road type of political activist, but you've been involved and around movements for a long time of generally quite far to the right of the center of the spectrum. How many years would you estimate now of your 42 have you actually been active?

Richard Hamel:

Well I first became interested in involving myself in political affairs at the early age of 13 to 14. But at that time I was very much interested in the far left and because of my I'm – immaturity and lack of experience I was quite convinced that the far left was the only answer. It was approximately 10 or 15 years of this experience that awaked me to the fact that just the opposite was the case, and for approximately from say the age of 20 or there about until my present age I have been, if you want to classify me, I've been identified with the far right. Not the far, far right but the far right.

Gordon Hall:

Well let's clear this up a little now. You mean from the age of 20 to the age of 42, which would be 22 years, is that the sum total of your activities which would include 10 years on the left and say 12 on the far right? Or are you saying that since the age of 20 you would be in movements to the right of the political center? I just didn't quite follow you on that.

Richard Hamel:

Wh – wh – when I was emancipated from the yolk of left wing ideology, I – I looked on – on most of the so-called liberal movements with a new sort of legion. The great many people I've observed to be interested in progressive movements or organizations for improving the economic or political conditions of society that knowingly, in a great many cases unknowingly, they are not Communists as the John Birch Society would say...

Gordon Hall:

Well now let me interrupt

Richard Hamel:

but they're thorough travelers.

Gordon Hall:

Mr. Hamel

Richard Hamel:

And – excuse me.

Gordon Hall:

Well let's first establish the time sequence here. Did you first become interested then when you were 20 years of age - let's establish that – or - or before, have you been politically conscious? Whether it's immature or mature is besides the point, I just want to establish have you been politically conscious since the age of 20 or prior to that?

Richard Hamel:

Well, I was about – I was in my early 20s when I was contacted by a **Donald Shea** [ph 00:04:00] in Chicago who was the organizer of a group called The National Gentile League. And my name was submitted to him by different people in the West Coast

Gordon Hall:

Well I think...

Richard Hamel:

his New England organizer.

Gordon Hall:

But we aren't getting the number [crossover 00:04:12]

Richard Hamel:

No, this was in my 20s then.

Gordon Hall:

Well my original question thought dealt with: I just would like to get an idea of how many of your 42 years that you have been active in political movements of either the far left or the far right. Let's first establish the total number of years and then we'll establish a break down on whether there was more on one side or the other. When did you first become active; in your 20s, right about the age of 20, or the age of 16?

Richard Hamel:

Active in what?

Gordon Hall:

Actively interested in politics so that you – you no longer thought in terms, let's say, of following the Red Sox closely but became interested, let us say, in...

Richard Hamel:

I became interested at a very early age, as I said before. Approximately 13 or 14 years old I went to meetings of the community church regularly. I went to the Fort Hall forum right [crossover 00:05:00]

Gordon Hall:

Oh I see, all right.

Richard Hamel:

I – I read pamphlets by the dozens. I – I picked out the most radical that I could find and through the community church in Boston, which was directed by a Mrs. **Alice Waldman Beecher** [ph 00:05:16] who was a head of the young people's society, I was brought into an organization called the American Youth for Democracy and afterwards I was initiated into the Young Communists League through the community church in Boston. And I'm not saying that the community church is a Communist front organization, I'm merely saying that the director of the Young People's Society at that time was working for the Young Communist League and succeeded in getting me in as a conduit. Now I remained with them for a number of years, never joined the Communist Party in my life. I was in constant debate with some of their leaders in Boston, like **Ann Burlak and Otis Hood** [ph 00:05:54] and **Jack Green** and **Philip Frankfeld** [ph 00:06:02] and others who some of these people are no longer in Boston. But I was in constant argument with them because I could not understand how the Party line could change so often and so...

Gordon Hall:

Well again we are getting ahead of ourselves. So then you – what you're really saying then from the age of about 13 to, let us say, your early 20s, 23 or 24, you have what roughly could be described as a decade of what you feel now was indoctrination on the extreme or the Communist or the Marxist left, is that a fair statement?

Richard Hamel:

Yes, sir.

Gordon Hall:

And then from the ages, say, of 23 or 24 when you were contacted Mr. Donald Shea of Chicago for the National Gentile League to be its New England organizer from the age of 23 or 24 to the age of very close to 42, which is almost two decades, you have been involved of what I would certainly describe and I think you would have to admit at least is pretty far to the right of the political center. Now I just want to establish this so we can lead up in a nice orderly way to – to your development and your career, which I think has been a most interesting one. You've been at this, really, for what is close to three decades now. When you're 43 years of age if you started at the age of 13 you have three decades behind you already and you're still a comparatively young man. So is that right to say that?

Richard Hamel:

Yes – yes, sir. Very fair.

Gordon Hall:

All right, fine. Now let's go back then to, just briefly, to the Communist side of things. Do you believe that you ever came close to being a truly committed Communist even though, as you say, you never joined the Party itself? Do you really believe in your own mind now – and try to – try to see this through the

earlier eyes rather than the eyes of a f— almost a 42 year old man — do you believe that when you were young zealous and almost committed to the — to the idea of world Communism or domestic Communism in the United States? Did you almost become a true believer in the far left?

Richard Hamel:

Yes I certainly did. I found that most of the people on the far left didn't just commit themselves to an idea, but they — they worked for their idea night and day. Where most of the people on the far right are not interested so much in the idea as they are in projecting themselves as a leader or as a director or their own personality. In the Communist movement I found that the most important thing was the movement as a whole and not the as — aspirations of a particular person; and — and this to me is one of the tragedies of right wing organizations that they can't have the unification that I found in the Communist — Communist movement.

And when I speak of the Communist movement I — I — I tried to — to get as wide of possible view as I could have; the whole spectrum. I not only attended the Communist meetings but I attended Trotskyite meetings and Socialist Party meetings and Socialist Par — Party meetings and Socialist Labor Party meetings and Proletarian Party Meetings. It was organized by a John [Character? 00:09:24] in Chicago, I met him many times and talked to him. And there were other, many other, section divisions within the Marxist spectrum that I — I wanted to more or less get a view of the total picture and didn't want to commit myself until I knew as much about the philosophy as I could.

And I found out that the longer I remained in the Young Communist League, the less I knew because — about their philosophy because the — the Communists basically are interested in having their leaders — their — their [card raiser? 00:09:57] or directors be informed, but the masses of their membership are — they only keep them informed of the day-to-day struggles. The — the average Communist Party member doesn't learn anything about Marxism through reading the Daily Worker or any of the regular periodicals as put out by the Party. The Party doesn't want the average member to be informed; they only want their leadership to be informed on these things. Therefore, I was consistently dissatisfied with my membership in the Young Communist League. I went to a...

Gordon Hall:

All well and good but now you — you said, perhaps three or four minutes ago, that you found it distressing that on the far right there was not the unity that you found on the extreme left. I don't want to — this is not the point or the time to discuss differences in ideology and so on, but I think historically you're quite mistaken to suggest that there was unity on the — on the extreme left. They might have shared in common a basic Marxist ideology or — or wedded to the principles that Marx, and Ingles, and Lenin, and Stalin and so on, although many were not wedded certainly to Stalin, but I think it's absurd to suggest that there was that much unity. But let me ask you a question about the right. Now in your initial phase, your initial introduction from the ages — from the age, let's say, 13, 14, on up to 22, 23 you spent it on the extreme left, were you very conscious that there was an extreme right even in that period?

Richard Hamel:

I was conscious there was an extreme right, but my consciousness or my vision was blurred by the contacts that I made, the literature that I read, the meetings I attended, and I was told that anyone that thought differently from the Communist Party line was a reactionary and a Fascist. Anyone that thought differently from the Communist concepts of race equality integration was a — was a - un-American and all that sort of thing. And then afterwards I discovered a very interesting thing, that those that served the Communist Party the most faithfully are not the leaders or even the members of the Communist party; but

those people who merely are directed or misdirected by the philosophy that the Communist Party wants to catalogue, the so-called “fellow travelers,” I think serve the communist movement better in this country than the actual members or the leaders.

Gordon Hall:

Let's – let's stay away though for the moment from – from some of the ins and outs of these movements. I think they're interesting and I think they're interesting to both of us and probably to a lot of other people, as well, but what I'd like to get at here is that by your own admission then, what I think that perhaps you're saying without actually verbalizing is that for your teenage life and for your adult life up to the present time you have always been on the edges of the center stage in American politics, so to speak, where the real power is, and you have always been, let us say, in the side streams or the slip streams rather than any kind of a mainstream.

May I ask you, how come you never became interested - since you obviously were somewhat precocious at the age of 13 to become involved in any kind of ism, whether it's Communism or Fascism or Democracy or something else, it's a sign of precociousness that you've become that involved, how come the politics of, let us say, the Democrats and the Republicans and the Young Republicans and the Young Democrats apparently held more fascination for you? Because unless you've left something out, you've never been involved in that kind of a context; why is that?

Richard Hamel:

Well the first thing I must say, and I can't leave this recording without saying this, is that basically no matter what orientation I was in, whether it was of the far left or the far right, I have always been, basically speaking, an individualist; a person that detested very much someone trying to shove authority down my throat and tell me that I have to think a certain way because that is the way that must be thought. Now a lot of people face this in their home by their parents, by a certain religious upbringing, by a certain political ideology that they're born into, and other people acquire this by joining a certain political organization. Even the Communists in which they attach themselves to the Communist ideology, they zig and zag with the changes of the Party. And the republicans and the democrats, too, appear to me to be a form of stereotyping and destroying what to me was the most precious thing in my life: my individuality.

Gordon Hall:

Let's talk briefly then about your home life. You were raised – how far did you go in formal schooling; how much formal schooling do you have?

Richard Hamel:

I finished high school.

Gordon Hall:

What – which high school was that?

Richard Hamel:

Boston English.

Gordon Hall:

Boston English. Wh – what year would you have graduated then? Can you re – can you recall?

Richard Hamel:

Age of 18.

Gordon Hall:

Well do you remember what year that would be then? I – I'm just curious as to trying to think of in that class there were a number of people to, say, great heights as Republicans or Democrats. Wh – what year at Boston English High would that have been?

Richard Hamel:

I don't recollect really.

Gordon Hall:

You don't recollect what year you graduated from high school?

Richard Hamel:

No.

Gordon Hall:

All right, in terms of your upbringing, as long as you've been in the Boston area as I remember, I think I in a prior conversation many years ago, you said you spend a good deal of time around the Brookline-Olstead area, is that correct?

Richard Hamel:

I used to live around the Brookline-Olstead area.

Gordon Hall:

I don't mean right now, but as a child when you were growing up, when you were 13 years of age and interested in the far left where did you live then?

Richard Hamel:

I lived in – I lived in Winthrop, I lived in Roxbury, I lived in Dorchester, I lived in Mattapan.

Gordon Hall:

I see, were you parents united or separated? It seems to be somewhere along the line, I have a vague memory, tell me what...

Richard Hamel:

My parents were separated.

Gordon Hall:

At what point in your own life did that occur; were you very, very young or teenaged or in your twenties or what?

Richard Hamel:

I was about teenaged.

Gordon Hall:

Teenaged. And then – and your mother and father split and as I remember you told me once before you went – you settled with your mother then, as I recall.

Richard Hamel:

That's right, that's right.

Gordon Hall:

Right. What kind of work did your father do?

Richard Hamel:

My father was a dentist.

Gordon Hall:

Is he still living today?

Richard Hamel:

No, no.

Gordon Hall:

Oh I see. Was he a dentist in Winthrop, or...?

Richard Hamel:

No, in Boston.

Gordon Hall:

I see. Right, well now, you did not go beyond high school and yet I think you said a little earlier today on the way over to – to find the place to do this taping in peace and quiet that you had graduated from the Cambridge School of Radio Broadcasting, is it?

Richard Hamel:

I took a course. I paid \$340 dollars, I think approximately that. I studied for two years – between a year and a half and two years at the Cambridge school of Radio and TV Broadcasting and I studied script writing, announcing, and the whole bit. And I went out about approximately 10 years ago, I went out to the state of Colorado and I was living in – in Denver, I was studying with Reverend William Blessing and with a **Reverend Kenneth Goff**. I studied with him for about four years and I worked at the very same time that I was studying; I was working in a hospital.

Gordon Hall:

Well let's just finish, however, the – the – did you actually take formal courses at the Cambridge School and actually graduate and receive a diploma, or did you just study there?

Richard Hamel:

I received a diploma.

Gordon Hall:

I see. But now – now...

Richard Hamel:

Which qualified me to enter into the broadcasting field if I so cared to.

Gordon Hall:

Well did you care to or did you not?

Richard Hamel:

I found that the – it's a struggle just like getting into the arts or the theater, that one has to constantly be in a – a place of trying to – trying to get the breaks and get in and I found that I was interested in other things much more than spending too much of my time trying to find a job in which there was so much competition. And – and yet I don't regret the fact that I did learn certain things from this trade.

Gordon Hall:

Would – would you have been possibly around '31 or '32 then, or was that even earlier that you went to the Cambridge School of Broadcasting?

Richard Hamel:

It was about that time.

Gordon Hall:

Right. How – how seriously did you actually try to get into, let us say, a familiar job in – in the industry of radio broadcasting or script writing?

Richard Hamel:

Well...

Gordon Hall:

Did you – did you spend any real time at it or did you

Richard Hamel:

Well I..

Gordon Hall:

make [crossover 00:19:05] passes and then go?

Richard Hamel:

I – I – I saved up \$125 dollars and I bought this tape recorder. The only reason why I purchased the tape recorder was for the purpose of getting myself employed in radio and I subscribed to *Broadcasting* magazine, the official magazine of broadcasting companies throughout the United States, throughout the world perhaps. And I put an ad in the magazine and I subsequently made tape recordings and sent them to radio stations that were advertising for announcers and disc jockeys and so forth and I got some replies...Can we continue?

Gordon Hall:

Sure. Yes.

Richard Hamel:

The objection was not that I was not versatile enough but that I had a deficiency of having a New England regional accent. And this was the one thing that prevented me from getting a position and I was also told that it would be much easier for me to start it in a small town somewhere than in a big city. So for that reason I thought it would be necessary for me to leave Boston and I toured the West coast.

Gordon Hall:

Right, well now on the business of your family life, when – after your parents were separated and you went to settle down in obviously a number of places with your mother, at what age did you and your mother cease to live together; what age, for example, did you strike out on your own and set up bachelor's quarters in and around the city? Because as I remember I've known you for, actually since the 1950 period of and on, and we've seen each other, you know, every few years or so we manage to meet and paths cross. As I remember you've always had a bachelors set up rather than actually living with your mother. Now at what – what point did you age-wise or how long ago did you set out this way; how did that work out? I'd just be curious to know.

Richard Hamel:

It was about the 1950 period, as you say, that – that's correct. Because About that time my mother re-married Mr. Hamel, my step-father, and I – I tried living with two step-brothers and one step-sister and one step-father and we quarreled constantly like children like that will do.

Gordon Hall:

Do you feel that either your mother or your natural father, or your step-father, shared your political views or – or not?

Richard Hamel:

No, no I find that another reason why at one particular point my sister came home, tears streaming from her eyes, that my cousin had told her that she had attended a meeting of temple Israel somewhere, and the Rabbi had taught that evening about me. Now this was more than ten years ago and she came home and I was sitting in my room typing on my typewriter some letter to Donald Shea or someone else. My

mother called me in for supper and my sister came into the room and she pulled the letter out and was reading it, and I felt that she invaded my privacy, my private rights to have my own opinions and – and we – we had a big argument back and forth as to what outrageous views I had developed and – and that I was a very hateful person and

Gordon Hall:

Now at – at this time -

Richard Hamel:

so forth and so on.

Gordon Hall:

this – you're talking now about

Richard Hamel:

Yes.

Gordon Hall:

the – because I think the tendency on the part of you forget your talking about **Donald Shea** and the National Gentile League, now, writing a letter to him correct?

Richard Hamel:

Yeah.

Gordon Hall:

Yes.

Richard Hamel:

I also corresponded at that period, I have a very can - canny memory. Sometimes I remember names, addresses of people I never forget. I also corresponded with a woman who – I don't know what's happened to her, but she was very prominent on the national scene by the name of Agnes Waters in Washington, D.C. Does that name mean anything to you?

Gordon Hall:

Oh yes.

Richard Hamel:

I corresponded with her, too.

Gordon Hall:

At one time she was the only women's candidate for presidency, I think it might have been in the 1948 period. Agnes Waters may still be around the Washington D.C. area, I am not sure. Now how many members were there in your family; how many brothers and sisters?

Richard Hamel:

I had a brother that died and – you – you mean actual brothers and sisters not step-brothers or...?

Gordon Hall:

Oh yes actual – actual brothers and sisters.

Richard Hamel:

Myself and my sister.

Gordon Hall:

I see. You are still, Mr. Hamel, as far as I know you're still a bachelor are you not?

Richard Hamel:

That's right.

Gordon Hall:

And you have never been married?

Richard Hamel:

No.

Gordon Hall:

Right, I see. Do you have any nieces and nephews, I don't mean terms of numbers, but have the rest of your family raised families of your own so that your mother is now a grandmother and things of that type?

Richard Hamel:

Yes they have, I seem to be the lone wolf in the family.

Gordon Hall:

Well see I establish this only – not out of any sense of nosiness, but I wanted to know if – if for the most part the other members of your family would lead what we usually regard as normal American lives, whereas you, Richard Hamel, in – in your particular family would be considered the lone wolf or the black sheep or the political activist. I might say there's nothing unusual about this, I'm the only one in my family as well who is really an activist of any sort, but most of my sisters and brothers simply lead normal suburban lives raise children and I'm considered a little bit odd by their standards. So I don't mean to suggest that this is unusual in your case.

Now over the span of time that you got out of high school and became of age, without going into each one, aside from politics about how many jobs would you estimate that you have held just in the course of the period from, let's say – say two decades, twenty years? So the time from when you were twenty until the time 42; what – what – how many jobs have you actually held?

Richard Hamel:

Not too many. About say a dozen or so.

Gordon Hall:

Dozen jobs. You mentioned working in a hospital a little bit earlier on the tape out in Colorado.

Richard Hamel:

I usu – I usually stay at a job sometimes it's distasteful to me, but I've always felt that if I'm making my money by – making my livelihood by the ideas that I profess that people might accuse me of just being interested in the money, being more of a hypocrite. I feel in any type of honest work is worth staying at, and I've never – I've occasionally gone into a job and left in a very short period of time but most of the time I stick to a position for at least four or five years.

Gordon Hall:

And what would these positions be, just – just generally, not - were you a hospital orderly, or...?

Richard Hamel:

I worked as a hospital orderly, I was in the medical core in the Army during the second World War as a medic. I got a very high IQ, I was put in the medical core, and I worked as a hospital orderly in the union [printers? 00:26:30] home on the West Coast, and I – I liked the job. It was a cleaning job, I didn't work too hard, the pay was good, the climate there was beautiful...

Gordon Hall:

What other kind of jobs [crossover 00:26:47]

Richard Hamel:

But I had to come back cause my parents wanted me back in the city, so then I left that job and I worked in an insurance company in Boston. A restaurant department. I associated myself with restaurant work over a period of years, but I've never worked as a – not that I would say that I – I couldn't or it would be beneath me – but I've never worked as a dishwasher or porter or anything of that sort. I've al – I've worked as a – as a slide man, in other words I go into the kitchen, I prepare the – the food and I send it up to the different floors in the hotel where I worked, and this is called a slide man. And most of the actually menial work is done by Negroes anyways here in Boston.

Gordon Hall:

What is your current occupation as of this day, which is in early September of 1967? What – what are you currently engaged in other than your, what we will ultimately [crossover 00:27:53]

Richard Hamel:

My means of livelihood.

Gordon Hall:

Yes we'll ultimately get to the business of the Wallace campaign...

Richard Hamel:

I'm a sl – I'm a slide man and I've held this job for approximately two and a half years.

Gordon Hall:

All right. Now does that pay a wage – I don't want to know what you're making per week, but does that pay a wage higher, let us say, than a bus boy or a dishwasher?

Richard Hamel:

Oh yes. Much higher.

Gordon Hall:

I see. So then you're actually then by this time a fairly experienced slide man?

Richard Hamel:

That's right.