



10-20-1971

Kenneth Ball (October 20, 1971, second interview)

C. Richard Arena

Second Oral History Interview

with

KENNETH L. BALL

October 20, 1971
Whittier, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #2 with Kenneth L. Ball. The date is October 20, 1971, in Whittier, California, Arena interviewing. Shall we begin by asking you the general question of your overall firsthand contact with President Nixon, up to the political years, 1945? In other words, we won't go into the politics; that will be a separate project someday. But, from the very beginning to the year 1945, when he came back and then ran for Congress, and in general terms. I'll ask specific questions, but I wanted to get the overall picture, including the college years, post-college, if there was any contact with him as a lawyer, any clubs you belonged to, and so forth.

BALL: Okay. I first met President Nixon in the fall of 1930 when we were both freshmen at Whittier College. I very distinctly remember him because he was a man chosen in the election to be president of the freshman class. He had come to Whittier College from Whittier High School, where he had distinguished himself as a high school debater and in oratorical contests, and he was the natural selection of the class for the class president.

ARENA: Just to be sure, Ken, you were not at Whittier High School yourself?

BALL: No, I did not go to Whittier High School. I first met him at Whittier College.

ARENA: That would be the very first, and we'll go into the college period, of course, in detail. Now, how about

during the college years themselves, outside the formal situation. Did you ever go double-dating with him? Did you ever meet his family in any way? Did you ever shop in the Nixon market, or even buy gas from the Nixon gasoline station? Were there these opportunities to meet with him?

BALL: Well, yes. I, of course, met him on the football field, because we played on the freshman team together, and we debated together on the freshman debating team. And of course, I was in pretty close contact with him when we used to go to the debates. His father [Francis Anthony Nixon] would very often take us. Sometimes we were at his house for dinner before a debate, or would stop by, so I did meet his family that way and, of course, in the grocery store. During these college years, of course, Whittier being a very small college, I think most of the students who attended there on a regular basis were pretty well-acquainted with Richard Nixon. And now some of the other things you specifically mentioned. Of course, in latter years I happened to be in the dairy business, and sometimes I would run the milk route and serve milk to the Nixon store in East Whittier and knew the family from doing business with them. His mother [Hannah Milhous Nixon] was generally at the store and his father was generally at the store, and his brothers--Don [Francis Donald Nixon] was there a good part of the time. Sometimes Dick would be there, usually not, during those years, because he had gone on to law school, but that would be some of the experience I remember.

ARENA: That would be the period '34 through '37?

BALL: No, this would have been after that. This would probably have been in the period of 1937, '38.

ARENA: He came back from law school after June. He graduated from Duke [Law School] in June of 1937, and began practicing by '38, and of course, was with [Thomas W.] Tom Bewley at that time. Then, was there ever any legal contact with him? Were you one of his clients, we'll say, or did you ever see him in action in court? What contact did you have with him as a lawyer, in any way?

BALL: No, we were not one of his clients. Mr. Bewley's office, of course, has represented us a number of times, but Mr. Nixon never did handle any of our legal work. It was always assigned to someone else in that office. To back up just a little bit, you asked if I had ever double-dated with him; yes, I had. I had been out socially with Dick when we were in school. We double-dated a few times, and took girls to the movies, or a few places.

ARENA: When the school years were over, how about that continuing in any way especially, we'll say, with the present Mrs. Nixon, Patricia?

BALL: No, we did not. Of course, I did go to high school one year with Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Nixon, Excelsior High School. So I did know her in high school, and I next knew Mrs. Nixon as a teacher at Whittier High School, because my wife taught at Whittier High School, and she was acquainted with Mrs. Nixon through AAUW [American Association of University Women], as I recall, so she knew her during the years when Mrs. Nixon was teaching at Whittier High School, and I think my wife did not meet Mrs. Nixon until she came to Whittier High School.

ARENA: How about the contact with Mrs. Nixon, or even the President from the theater angle? Did you ever see him appear in plays during the college years, Ken, and even afterward when he belonged to the Community Theater?

BALL: Yes. Of course, I did see him appear in the Whittier College plays. And I don't recall too much about it, but I remember him being in the Whittier [Community] Theater plays and I'm quite sure that we saw him once or twice in those plays, but nothing really comes to mind as being real vivid in that regard.

ARENA: And concerning Mrs. Nixon's, Pat in this case again, extra-curricular activities, did your wife act as a chaperone for some of the high school dances which were being introduced, I understand, during her time, when Pat was at the high school?

BALL: Well, before we were married my wife was teaching at Whittier High School, and my wife did help chaperone some of the school parties and dances and I went along as her escort, but I believe that was just previous to the time that Mrs. Nixon came to Whittier High School.

ARENA: Do you recall--I'm sure you do--what subjects does your wife teach and was she teaching at that time?

BALL: My wife was a French major and had her master's [Master of Arts degree] in French, received her master's in French from USC [University of Southern California], but I think she taught very little French at Whittier High School. Most of the time she was teaching English and, I believe, some Spanish. I can't recall, but I think primarily, she was in the English Department.

ARENA: For the record, what was your wife's maiden name?

BALL: My wife's maiden name was Dolores Lautrup.

ARENA: And, if I may ask, when does the marriage date come in, from the standpoint of establishing a relationship with the Nixons as a married couple, or as a bachelor yourself and your wife being single?

BALL: Actually, I can't recall in regard to Mrs. Nixon. Of course, my wife knew Richard Nixon at Whittier High School because she attended Whittier High School during the years that Richard Nixon was there, and she knew him at Whittier College because she was at Whittier College during the same years.

ARENA: Graduating the same year?

BALL: No, she did not graduate the same year. She graduated in 1933, one year ahead of our class of 1934. But we were married in 1936 and, of course, during our early married years, in 1937, we had one child. Our oldest son was born during the year of 1937, and we became rather involved in our own family--housekeeping and establishing our family--and during those years we were not running around very much socially, or going on vacations or going a great many places. Those were the years when the romance between Pat Nixon and Richard Nixon took place.

ARENA: That's right. They were married in 1940, so you had been a married couple for some four years by then. Well, I think that touches the various areas of contact between you, your family and the Nixon family. Is there any general area that neither of us has brought up where you might have had contact with him, say, even something like outside travel, military years, or anything that hasn't come up? We've mentioned education, the business contact, the social contact.

BALL: Well, of course, it was not long after those years that the war took place, and during wartime we all went pretty much our own ways, I would think. Mr. Nixon went into the service, and I think before that time he was with the Office of Price Administration. So he did not have a very long practice or very long time in the community until he was swept away into the war, and I think that changes all of our lives. But I do remember him being back at Duke Law School for those years after graduation. Once in awhile we would see him when he came home. I do remember him being active in some of the community projects like the Whittier [Community] Theater and, as I remember, the 20-30 Club or the Junior Chamber [of Commerce]. I can't remember just which one, maybe both.

I remember seeing him around once in awhile. I can remember in particular--I used to take our older son ice skating when he was quite young, because he was quite fascinated by the people on ice skates, and we used to go down to the old ice rink which would be now at Paramount, California. In those days it was known as the community of Hynes, California. A number of times we would see Richard Nixon down there learning to ice skate. Richard was a person that anything he tackled he went into with great vigor, so I can remember seeing him down there ice skating several times. We'd be on the rink together. Our older boy got quite a kick out of trying to ice skate, and he did learn to ice skate. Of course, I had known a little bit about it, having grown up in Iowa, we had

lots of ice and everyone ice skated, so you kind of learned to ice skate about as early in life as you learned to do many things. But I can remember Richard Nixon being involved in many things in the community and the area during the years that he was here.

ARENA: Well, now, Ken, shall we back-track and, as much as time will allow, go over these individual points of contact and explore them more in detail? And what we don't finish now, with your permission, we can resume in the future. Beginning chronologically, with the first occasion, the freshman year at Whittier College in Whittier, California. That freshman year was 1930-31, that academic year.

BALL: That is correct.

ARENA: Now, what do you recall about--let's take his student political side. Possibly you were in some classes with him, too, and we could look at that separately, the academic side, as you recall, from a student's point of view of the President. Let's look at the student political side, whatever you can say and can recall about the freshman year first, because I understand later on he goes on and becomes the whole student body president, and we can take that separately.

BALL: Yes, I remember Richard Nixon as being energetic, hard-working, a good student. During the freshman year he worked in his father's grocery store. I worked in a little grocery store after school and on weekends, and we used to compare notes about the grocery business, how the grocery business was, what we did, how business was going along in the grocery industry, and it was very interesting to compare these notes on the side.

ARENA: Excuse me. I would just like to explore that for a minute. In other words, the President was working, you recall, in his father's grocery store at that time.

BALL: During his freshman year.

ARENA: During his freshman year, and I believe he had charge, in particular, of the fruits and vegetables and actually used to do the buying. And you recall that he and you--well, maybe he did--did he enjoy discussing that aspect of his life?

BALL: He seemed to enjoy discussing it very much, because it was an important part of his life. It was the income for the family that kept him going to school, and I'm sure that it was very vital to him.

ARENA: Did he mention such items as, discussing the store's future and the store's financial problems, and his ideas about those particular items, including discussions with his father, that you can recall?

BALL: Well, I can recall discussions with him on the future of the store, because they had not been in business in the full line of groceries so long at that time, as I recall. They found that business was picking up all the time. They were doing more business all the time at the store. More people were coming into the area. A few more houses were being built in Whittier at that time, particularly up in La Habra Heights, and they acquired quite a little of that business. They were the closest store to those people. They were out, really, in the country. It was really a country store. They sold gas, serviced cars to a certain extent, and kept adding grocery items, meats and vegetables. As you mentioned, Dick did work in the fruits and vegetable department quite a little bit, and I was doing the same thing in the small store that I was involved in, over on Atlantic Boulevard in Bell [California], and then I worked at a store over in Maywood [California]. The same people owned both stores, so sometimes I'd work at one store, and sometimes at the other. But we used to have quite long discussions about the grocery business and the food industry. And we were both history majors in school, so we had many classes together, and naturally this was a good topic of discussion for us on many occasions.

ARENA: Was there anything at that time, Ken, as they have now, Junior Achievers [Junior Achievement], various college or community groups, even say the 4-H [Club], where students, young people can deal with adult, mature business questions and problems like that?

BALL: I do not remember any of those opportunities in those days. I do remember the 4-H projects; I'm sure they were active but I never participated in them, and I don't think the President ever participated in them.

ARENA: Did you, possibly, ever go to the marketplace with the President, together? Did you go alone or together, and what do you recall about that?

BALL: Yes, I did go to the market a time or two when I met him at his house when we were going to a debate, or on some occasion like that, but not very many times.

ARENA: Would you describe any of the experiences, to the best of your knowledge, about going to the market with him, even though they were very few?

BALL: I do not remember being at the market with him when he was working there during the after-school or before-school hours. The only times I can remember being there were when we went to his house, maybe for a bite to eat and then to go on. The family lived in the back of the store.

ARENA: They did not--excuse me--leave the store for their living quarters. The quarters were right in the same building as the store.

BALL: As I remember it, they were, yes.

ARENA: At that time.

BALL: At that time. Later on they moved over next door, but at that time they were living in the quarters that were part of the store building, to my knowledge. That's the way I remember it. And the store was very small at that time. A little country store, but apparently they did quite a little business. And as I previously mentioned, it seemed to keep growing, and it did grow to become quite a large country store.

ARENA: What evidence was there that all the family was busy working in the store, from your recollection, including of course Mrs. Nixon, Mrs. Hannah Nixon?

BALL: Well, the people I remember around the store were Mr. [Frank] Nixon, Mrs. [Hannah] Nixon, I remember Don working in the store. Don used to be in the meat department during the times when I would be there. And the older brother, Harold [Samuel Nixon], was still living when I first knew the family. He later passed away, but he would be around there.

ARENA: Did you see him working, do you recall?

BALL: I do not recall Harold working. I remember Don working in the store. And I believe there was a cousin that worked in the store a little bit. I do not recall his name. I think he was [Thomas T.] Tom Seulke.

ARENA: Tom certainly worked there for a while. As a matter of fact, I had the pleasure of interviewing him just yesterday, who is a cousin.

BALL: Yes, I remember him working in the store, but I can't remember if he was there during those early years or not. I remember him later on. That's about all I can remember of the store. If you wanted to go back to the freshman year. . . .

ARENA: I would like to go back to the freshman year and his political interests and actions, as you recall them.

BALL: Well, of course, as I mentioned previously, I remember him being elected to the presidency of the Whittier College freshman class. I was there when the election took place.

ARENA: Do you recall whom he defeated, by any chance?

BALL: I can't recall. It seems to me that the meeting was held and a person was nominated for president and he received the most support and the most votes so he was made the freshman class president. I think it was conducted at a meeting there. I do not remember it being a formal election, where ballots were passed out and students had a day or two to vote. I think it was all held at that meeting. Slips were passed around and everyone voted for their choice as president, and he received the most votes. There were one or two other nominations for the presidency, as I recall, but Richard Nixon was elected, because he had the largest number of votes.

ARENA: Were you involved in the campaign or in running for any office yourself at the time?

BALL: In the freshman class, no, I was not, because I came from another community. I had come over from Bell, and there were only two or three Bell students there, and a greater number of students came from Whittier High School, so that gave them a nucleus of students to make their selection from, pretty much, as a president of the class, but I thought they made a good selection and I think everyone agreed with them.

ARENA: Did you live on campus or commute back and forth from home every day?

BALL: During my freshman year I commuted from home back and forth to Whittier College everyday, and I came over on the Red Car, which was the Pacific Electric [Railway] line, running through the Bell-Maywood area, directly right up to Whittier, within two or three blocks of Whittier College. It used to come right up Philadelphia Street, so I could buy a monthly pass and commute on the Red Car line cheaper than any other way I could get back and forth to school.

ARENA: Do you recall the length of time, on the average, for the trip?

BALL: Oh, it seems to me it took about forty minutes to come from from the place I caught the car line, which was probably three or four blocks from where I lived, over to Whittier. It made a number of stops on the way but it was a passenger car, and other students rode into Whittier College on those same car lines. They would pick up students from Huntington Park, Bell and Maywood, Rivera, which is now part of Pico Rivera, and Los Nietos, and then on up into Whittier, so everyday on the car line there would be some Whittier College students going to college on that car. They ran a schedule of several cars a day, so you had a little choice of what time you could go.

ARENA: Of course, Whittier College was made up of people from Whittier, as well as the local area. The foreign students, students from other parts of the country, were very much in a minority--would that be a correct generalization?

BALL: Yes, it probably would be correct, although we did have students from all over the United States, and we had students from the Hawaiian Islands during those years. Whittier College had some kind of an exchange student program, and we always had several students from the Hawaiian Islands. Then we always had a few minority students, a few blacks were there, coming from the Los Angeles area, and quite a few Mexican-American students, too, not a lot of them, but a few.

ARENA: Was there one black in particular, by the name of [William T.] Brock, who became a member of the Orthogonians, President Nixon's group? Would you say it was his direct involvement that got him in, or would he have gotten in any fraternity if he had wanted to get into one at that time?

BALL: Well, Bill Brock was a very fine fellow. I knew Bill quite well because I was on the track team with Bill, and we all thought a great deal of Bill. He was a brilliant young man, I thought. He was a good student. He was interested in all aspects of college sports and was pursuing a good education. As I recall, he had quite a talented sister who did not go to Whittier College, who used to be a cartoonist, and her cartoons used to appear in some of the metropolitan papers, I think the Pasadena [California] paper in particular. As I remember, her name was Laura Brock. I used to enjoy seeing the cartoons that she did for the papers. And Bill was a good football player and a good track man. He was interested in philosophy. Bill, going into the Orthogonian Society, the Orthogonian Society was a little different than the Franklin Society. I happened to be in the Franklin Society, where they would have their pictures taken in tuxedos. They would have their formal dances once or twice a year, where the Orthogonians were a little more non-conventional, so to speak. They would have their pictures taken in a clean, white shirt. Where they had their parties, they did not have the formal dinner dances, that I can recall anyway. They were rather a new group, a new movement on the campus. And I think Richard Nixon was a part of that group and enjoyed fitting into it.

We were there in the years when Whittier College was undergoing change. The curriculum was changed under Dr. [Eugene T.] Coffin and Dr. [Walter F.] Dexter and Dr. [Paul S.] Smith and Dr. [Albert] Upton. Whittier College went into a new concept of education. I think that things like the Orthogonian Society and the black student going into one of the societies, which is similar to a fraternity, was probably rather new to some, but we at Whittier College saw nothing wrong with it. I think everybody was delighted that a fellow like Bill Brock fit in so well into Whittier College. I remember another black student there, [Nathaniel N.] Nat George, a very good football player, but an excellent track man.

ARENA: Excuse me, would that be Nate or Nat George?

BALL: Well, some of us called him Nat and some of us called him Nate.

ARENA: I have heard the term Nate, and I just wanted to clarify that.

BALL: Did I call him Nat now?

ARENA: I think you said Nat. I have heard him called Nate.

BALL: Well, Nate would probably be more correct and the way he preferred it. But he was an excellent track man. He defeated Frank Wycoff in the Coliseum track meet during the one year Frank Wycoff ran-not Charlie Paddock, but another very prominent sprinter from USC [University of Southern California]. Mr. George had the track records for many years at Whittier College, and I'm not sure but what he might still have the track record for the 100-yard dash, and the 220-yard dash. But he was active in YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] work, and as I recall when he graduated from Whittier College he went to work for the 28th Street YMCA over in Los Angeles [California], which serviced an area where there were quite a few black members of the YMCA.

ARENA: Would that possibly be the Watts Street section today, do you know?

BALL: No. It would be closer down into Los Angeles. It would be closer in the old Central Avenue sections. During those years most of the black population in Los Angeles congregated around the Central Avenue area, close in to downtown and running south for, maybe, two or three miles.

ARENA: From the standpoint of my setting up some future interviews, have you been running into these gentlemen since graduation, or have you heard of them, say, at alumni gatherings or in alumni publications?

BALL: I have not seen Bill Brock for many years. One day he stopped by my office to see me, and I happened to be out of town that day. I was very sorry not to get to see Bill. Bill went into the Merchant Marine, I remember, after the war and, as far as I know, he probably is still in the Merchant Marine. I think he's still living. Mr. George, Nat George or Nate George, I have seen him from time to time. The last time I saw him was at the big Anaheim [California] party just after Mr. Nixon was elected President, but before the Inauguration. We had a homecoming party, where the old football team all congregated to greet Mr. Nixon at the Anaheim Convention Center, and I saw Mr. George there. He looked very good, very much the same as he did when he was in school. I think the years have been kind to him and I think he's retained very good health.

ARENA: Getting back to the question of the politics of the freshman year, and maybe we can dispose of it and move on to some of these other subjects, as we have been. Do you recall that there was anything unusual about the political side of the freshman year other than the fact that he became president of that class? Was there a campaign about a particular issue, even though it was a brief, you might say, election and event, where the meeting took place and he was elected? Does the speech, if he made one at that time, come to mind? What did he say he would do, and what happened that freshman year from a political standpoint?

BALL: I don't remember any speech being made before the election took place, but I do remember after the election Mr. Nixon making a short acceptance talk. I remember very little about it, except I can remember that he did make one. And I remember him as a vigorous class president. During that year they held the first dance on the campus of Whittier College.

ARENA: Was President Dexter president at that time?

BALL: Yes. Walter Dexter was the president. And I can remember that there was pretty severe criticism of the college president for allowing this dance to take place on the Whittier College campus. It was held up at the Wardman Gymnasium. I can remember being there. Whether Mr. Nixon was there or not, I cannot recall. I rather think he was not there. But I do remember, from the students' side, that we heard a little bit of gossip or scuttlebutt about the problems of the president of the college by letting us have that dance and, as I remember, the dances were stopped after that one. I think Walter Dexter had to go to his friends on the board to kind of help him along, because he was in a little bit of a, shall we say, jam, for allowing this dance to take place. It was not condoned by many people in the Whittier community at that time.

ARENA: Do you recall if President Nixon, president of the freshman class, was responsible in making the dance possible? In the first place, was there a formal channel or a formal request that you think of?

BALL: I don't think he had anything to do with it. But I think later on, as he took part in school politics, one of the issues that he campaigned on was that we should have dances on the campus at Whittier College. Now, during this time they were allowed to have dances off the campus but not on the campus. During those years at Whittier College, and as I remember all the years I went to Whittier College, you were not allowed to smoke on campus.

ARENA: That would go for faculty, as well as students?

BALL: For faculty, as well as students. And of course, we were still in the prohibition era then. Liquor was illegal during the freshman year at Whittier College. In fact, I think about during our junior or senior year prohibition was repealed.

ARENA: I believe 1933, under Franklin Roosevelt; 1933 or '34, after he was sworn in.

BALL: That's right. I think beer was legalized first in the area, 3.2 beer, as I recall, and of course later on came the complete liquor business into the open again, shall we say.

ARENA: Since you brought that up, did you ever see the President drink during this period? Did you see other students drink, say, at the dances, parties, as far as your memory serves you?

BALL: As far as I remember, during that first year or two I cannot remember any Whittier students, ever seeing any of them drink at any of the dances or any of the parties. I can remember about my third year or so I was invited to a party, it was our Franklin Society of which I was a member, and we had a party down near Whittier here, on Santa Fe Springs Road in a barn that belonged to the parents of one of the members of our society, and we had some home brew at that party, and of course, everybody had some, and I can remember that our society was almost, the charter was almost suspended over that party, because the home brew was served at that party, and the word got out. I think no one got hilarious at the party, I think everybody tried some to see how it tasted. I cannot remember anybody being intoxicated. I think it would be rather hard to get too intoxicated on home brew, although I concede it is possible. But that must have been about during the year 1933, maybe the spring of 1932. But things like that created quite a problem, I guess, to college administrators in those days.

ARENA: Anything else that comes to mind, Ken, before we move on to the other political years; that is, political student years, about the freshman year?

BALL: Yes, I can remember, as I think back now, it was quite a thrill to me to think about it, and as I recall it was quite a thrill then. They used to have the interclass debates. The subject of the debate I don't recall right now, but that year Richard Nixon and I tried out and were on the freshman debating team, so we participated as a freshman team in the inter-class debate. The debate was held in the old chapel, which was part of the old Founders Hall, which is now gone, lost in a fire here a few years ago. It was a small chapel that held maybe four

hundred people, and Mr. Nixon and I were representing the freshman class. We were debating against the juniors, who were in the final for the interclass championship. It's very interesting, because the juniors were Joe Sweeney and Delyn Hornaday. Today, Delyn Hornaday is Dr. William Hornaday, who is in Los Angeles at the Church of Religions Science over in Los Angeles, a very successful church, a very successful religions organization. They do have a branch church here in Whittier. And Joe Sweeney went on to distinguish himself in diplomatic service for the government. When we had our class reunion back in Washington, summer before last, we had a party down in Arlington [Virginia] one evening for the alumni in the area and Mr. Sweeney was there. Of course, I had known Mr. Sweeney from the time I was in high school, because he went to Huntington Park High School and we were in the Boy Scouts together. So, I did know him for a long time. But I felt rather glad that Dick Nixon and I were able to win this interclass debate and defeat two persons who were really noted as being pretty good speakers. How we won it, I really don't know. I guess Mr. Nixon really won it for us, because I do not remember too much of the details of the debate. I remember that Dick Nixon and I did prepare for a long time, working on this debate and we were, of course, quite proud to win that, and I think that there is an old debating trophy up there at Whittier College someplace now. I saw it here a few years ago, and it still has our names inscribed on it as being the winners of the interclass debate that year. As you get older you think back on these things they seem a little more important to you sometimes than they seem to you at the time.

ARENA: Do you recall, from the standpoint of the unitiated, the basic format for debating procedure?

BALL: Debating procedures, I recall, were very much as they are today at Whittier College. I have heard some of the debates in recent years, and I think in general the format and the rules are about the same. You had a first speaker and a second speaker, and the opposition had a first speaker and a second speaker, and then each of you had a rebuttal time, so each speaker spoke twice during the debate. I do not remember the exact rules. It seems like the affirmative speaker was last to speak in the rebuttal. The negative speaker, I believe, got to speak next to last, and we had two debaters on each team. I debated a little bit in high school and we used the same rules. Professor [Eugene] Knox was our debating coach and our debating instructor there at Whittier College. He was an old-timer in debating. He was active in the Chautauque Circuit in the early days. He used to do that during the summers, but for many years was a professor at Whittier College in charge of public speaking and debating. He was also the dramatics coach. Some of his family still live in the area. Richard Knox, I believe, lives in Downey [California]. He was the youngest son and he was in Whittier College during the years that I was there. He had older sons. I have met them. They're around the area someplace.

ARENA: Do you recall if possibly you and President Nixon got together for particular strategy or a particular approach, realizing you were taking on upper classmen and this would be a particularly difficult assignment? I'm sure you were aware it would be a tough debate.

BALL: Oh, yes.

ARENA: Do you recall, possibly, anything particular being done about preparation for it?

BALL: Yes, we did, as I mentioned. We worked very hard on that debate, because we felt that we probably could not beat two such good debaters as Mr. Hornaday and Mr. Sweeney.

ARENA: May we interrupt for a second?

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: Then we'll continue, Ken. We're speaking about your preparation for the debate that you won in your freshman year.

BALL: Well, we did prepare very long and worked very hard to get our talk ready, our debate ready, because we knew that Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Hornaday were exceptionally good public speakers and good debaters. How we won, I can't recall, except that we worked awfully hard on it, and I think that probably it was Mr. Nixon's ability that won the debate for us, because he was an excellent public speaker then. In fact, in many ways I feel that he was almost as good a public speaker at that time as he is today. Of course, during the years he has matured, but he had good ability to make a presentation, and he was very thorough in the preparation; and I remember how hard we really worked on that debate, because we wanted to beat the sophomore class if we could. We beat them in . . .

ARENA: Excuse me, is that junior or sophomore?

BALL: Sophomore class. Did I say junior before?

ARENA: I think you might have. But it was definitely the sophomore class that you defeated that made you the champions of the interclass debating contest.

BALL: Yes.

ARENA: On that point of, we'll say, President Nixon in front of an audience, speaking, thinking on his feet, since you were one who knew him on both levels, as you palled around with him, would you say there were two Nixons, in a sense? Did he seem to be different in his thinking, in his approach, in front of an

audience, as he was off the stage, so to speak, away from the crowd, from your observation? Obviously, people bring that up today--Nixon in front of a crowd, Nixon alone. But you are one who recalls him back at that time. You were in both worlds, so to speak. You knew him as a debater and you knew him on the personal, man-to-man level. What observations would you make about that, if you care to?

BALL: Yes, I could make a little observation. We worked hard preparing the debate, and I did debate a few times with Richard Nixon during our freshman year, but the thing that always rather amazed me about him, although we would prepare for these debates, when he would be up there and be speaking, very often he would bring out something that we hadn't really talked about when we were preparing for the debate. I think that shows that when something came to his mind he had the ability to think on his feet, and if it occurred to him or if the debate was going a certain way, he was able to bring some of those arguments or some of those points into the debate that had to come from extemporaneous experience. I think he was always better up before an audience than just sitting talking to a person.

You say, two sides to him--I don't know about that, but I think that something that he has that very few people do have is the ability to do something like that. If I can digress just a minute, I think that one thing that illustrates this point was in his famous "Checkers" speech, when he was on television, baring his soul before the American Public, when he was a candidate for Vice President at the time that he and Mr. [Dwight D.] Eisenhower were on the ticket together and made a tremendous presentation in his Checkers speech. Then, when he turned around, as I recall the newspapers quoting him and the television people, he said, "Well, I've failed. I've failed. I've made a poor presentation. I was terrible." When, actually, he probably made one of the best presentations of his entire life. And I think that he has an ability to, what should you say, come on before the public that he doesn't even realize himself, to the extent that he does have this ability. And I believe that has been in him all the years that I have known him since his freshman year at Whittier College until the present day.

ARENA: What I had in mind, and I think you have answered it very well, there are those who are talking just as you and I are talking now and, when speaking in front of an audience do about the same thing. In other words, they have that characteristic. I don't know whether it's good or bad, but there are those who speak and act in front of an audience as they would at the dinner table. I have met people like that, and maybe you have also. But in the case of the President, a person like you, who knows him on and off stage, as you say, there's something that happens--and possibly he himself doesn't know--in the debate, or in this case in the speech, that is different from the ordinary situation. And that's what I just wanted to look into at that point.

BALL: I might illustrate it in another way, Dick. You take the athlete. You have athletes who do rather poorly in practice but when they get out on the football field, or if they're on the track running, some of these athletes will excell themselves tremendously over their routine of practice. Or if the competition is real stiff, they're good competitors. You take a sprinter who might only run the 100-yard dash in 9.8 seconds, if he has the competition he rises to the occasion where he runs the race in 9.5 seconds and wins it, because he's a winner. I think this is the thing that I'm trying to say that I think that Dick Nixon has, particularly as a public speaker or as a debater. Does that clarify it somewhat?

ARENA: Oh, very well. Again along the same lines, having witnessed at this period of his life the President as an extemporaneous speaker, as a speaker who gave a prepared, maybe written speech, and as a speaker who gave even a memorized speech, you recall all three types--witnessed all three--and if you do, how would you assess his most successful ability in those three different categories --a memorized speech, reading from a prepared text that's written, and then just speaking extemporaneously?

BALL: I don't think that Richard Nixon ever gave a memorized speech. I doubt if he could do it, although I'm sure . . .

ARENA: The closest thing would be something like a play. Everything is memorized in that.

BALL: That's right. Yes. He could do it, but I don't recall him ever giving a memorized speech. I know in the debating I would try to memorize a certain part of my speech and give it, and I was criticized very severely by the debating coach for doing it, so I quit that. I learned early that you don't give a memorized speech in debating or in public speaking. It just isn't the correct way to do it.

Now, the other one you say is a speech that's prepared and written, and reading it, so to speak, and I do not think the President does well with the written speech. As we see him sometimes on television, we know that sometimes he does read his speeches, but he has a great ability to speak extemporaneously, even before a television audience, naturally, or in a press interview, and that's when he's at his best, speaking extemporaneously. He's so much more interesting. I would say it's very hard for Richard Nixon, even today, to read a speech and do real well with it. He doesn't come through the way he does when he's talking directly to the audience extemporaneously. That's my opinion; now maybe I'm wrong. I think that that's the way it strikes me.

ARENA: That's what I appreciate. Before we leave this question of your recollection of the President as a debater, what other debating experiences, either directly or indirectly during

the college years and even after, can you recollect, but not the political years after 1945? The other is, you mentioned something about another type of format or another type of debate, those sponsored by Reader's Digest. Would you go into that?

BALL: Yes. During those years, the Reader's Digest used to sponsor oratorical contests, whereby the contestants would read all the articles in a certain issue of the Reader's Digest. Then when you went to the contest you were told just before you were to talk which article you were to talk on. So you were to make a presentation on that particular article in the Reader's Digest. And Richard Nixon did very well in those contests, as I recall. I remember him winning one of them. We used to practice on them in our debating class or in public speaking class. But he had the ability to read that article and get up and make a very fine presentation on that article. Now, he did not give it from a memorized viewpoint, or you were not allowed to read, of course, so it was extemporaneous. It was a Nixon presentation of that article, and he did very well on it.

That's quite a trick, to be able to take an article that someone else has written and digest that thing and make your own presentation. He had that ability and could do it very well. Most of the students and most of the people, and I know in the case of myself, I could not do well with that kind of a presentation, because any presentation, it seems like, to be really good, is so much better if you can talk about something that you've lived or have earned the right to talk about. It's pretty hard to take something that are historical facts out of textbooks and make a presentation that is real, real interesting to everyone.

ARENA: Obviously, Ken, this involves another ability. You know, there are people who are great readers of speeches; namely, famous actors, but when it comes to extemporaneous speaking they're lost. And in the case of the President this involves, would you say mainly memory, and also the ability to take ideas of other people, regardless of whether they were by scientists or doctors or Reader's Digest, it runs a wide range, and put them into a language that the common audience, the average audience, can understand; and hence, his ability to do that would be reflected in this particular type of public speaking assignment or debate. This wouldn't be therefore, as you said, a debate. It would be a particular type of public speaking contest; and to your knowledge is that done today?

BALL: I do not think so. I don't know whatever happened to that program. It was, I thought, quite good, really. There was quite a bit of interest in it during the thirties. But whatever happened to the program--I suppose it was not successful enough to the Reader's Digest or they would probably have carried the program on. To my knowledge, they no longer have those contests.

ARENA: If I'm not mistaken, your own service organization of the Lions [Club] conducts debates.

BALL: Public speaking contests.

ARENA: Were there public speaking contests by service organizations in your day, at college or high school?

BALL: I do not remember them during the time I was in Whittier College. At the high school level, yes. I think Richard Nixon did win some public speaking contests in high school. They called them oratorical contests in those days, and they did have some when I was in college. I do not recall any of them sponsored by the service clubs. Our Lions Club does sponsor a very fine public speaking contest for high school students. It's very successful. They are all assigned the same subject. Each participant prepares his own speech, but they are all on the same subject.

ARENA: Could I ask you this for the record, Ken: Did this success in debating, in politics, winning the election of the freshman class, and later on the presidency of the entire student body of the college--did this go to his head? How did the President take to this kind of on-going success, as one who knew him intimately during this period?

BALL: I always thought him to be a very humble person. I cannot say that I ever had the feeling, or heard anyone else say that they had the feeling, that any of his success of being student body president or president of the class, or winning any debate or any achievement, went to Dick Nixon's head. I think he was a very humble person. If anything, his successes tended to make him more humble than maybe you would expect. Of course I knew him on the football team, and there's another illustration there. We played freshman football together, and as we all know, the President was probably less successful at athletics than anything going. I think maybe he would about as soon be an All-American football player as President of the United States, but fortunately he didn't have the ability to be an All-American but does have the ability to be President of the United States.

On the freshman team he had great spirit. We played--we used to scrimmage the varsity a lot. We used to play quite a few conference games and non-conference games, and we had quite a few boys on the team who were not eligible to play in the conference games because they did not have the full school requirements as they came into Whittier College. You had to have certain requirements to be eligible to play on the freshman team or the varsity team and play conference games. But a lot of these fellows played in games against junior colleges and practice games. So we who had very little ability did not get to play in those games, but when we played the conference games we only had about thirteen men who were eligible to play, so we didn't have very many substitutes. It meant you had to play the whole game.

As I recall, Dick Nixon played either guard or tackle, I cannot remember, and I played left end, but boy, when he was in that game playing he was talking it up and he was giving it all he had, though he had very little ability; and I can appreciate that because probably

the only guy on the team who was a worse football player than Dick Nixon was myself, so I know where he stood on the thing, I know how he felt. But a lot of us liked to participate in athletics, and I think that Dick Nixon used football, maybe, largely because here was something he knew he was not good at but he wanted to see how much he could improve himself, and I'm not sure that he didn't use it--planned and maybe not planned--to discipline himself, that there were things he couldn't do and he just had to accept it as being a fact of life. But it certainly didn't distract him from trying, and it certainly gave him an interest in athletics that he has retained all of his life that I think has been a wonderful thing.

I think it's a wonderful thing that a President of the United States can be real interested in which baseball team is winning and which one is losing, which football team is doing well, what football coach is outstanding, which player is outstanding, who is a real typical All-American. And I think that's a great side of the President that sometimes is overlooked and not appreciated, because it's a very great part of American life that is important to our country.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, did he go out for any other sports which would not have been as rough--since he didn't have the big build--or any other recreational activities? Was golf offered in those days; tennis?

BALL: Yes, they had golf. Dick and I played on the freshman basketball team together. We had a very poor team and a very unsuccessful season. There again, at basketball he tried his best to master basketball. I mentioned awhile ago, ice skating. I can remember him learning to ice skate. He was pretty clumsy at it, but he stayed with it until he learned to ice skate.

ARENA: To the uninitiated, Ken, what does it take to earn a letter? If I'm not mistaken, he never did earn a letter.

BALL: Well, I don't think he ever earned a letter in varsity. He earned his freshman letter, that I know, but you had to play a certain percentage of the time in the games and so many quarters and so many conference games to make your letter. Practice games did not count.

But I know that Dick Nixon did make his letter as a freshman in football, as I did too, because I remember we got our sweaters together. They used to give you a very nice little sweater with your '34 on it. That was the freshman sweater that indicated the year that you were supposed to graduate. I wish I still had one of those sweaters. I have my varsity; I sure wish I could have kept that freshman sweater, because it was such a nice sweater and it was rather unique, something that I don't remember seeing at any other school or seeing today, but as freshman you didn't get a W for Whittier College, you just got a '34, or if you graduated in '35 you got a '35, those two gold numbers to go on your sweater. That designated you as a freshman team winner--a freshman team letter winner.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, would it be correct to say that as the letter system goes, or went at that time--I don't know about today--effort didn't mean a thing. You really had to end up on the team and play in actual games?

BALL: That's right.

ARENA: So a person could have been a great player going, say, to the utmost of his ability, but still not get that reward, and isn't that, after all, considered the number one reward, the letter, even today?

BALL: I think it is.

ARENA: Which might be fair or unfair, but just as a matter of fact.

BALL: That's right, but I can remember, sure, we had some real good football players at Whittier College. We had quite a large squad. Whittier College had some pretty competent football players in those days, so Dick Nixon was on a team with some boys with some real ability, and they were playing hard schedules. They had an excellent coach. Chief [Wallace J.] Newman was an excellent coach and they played a very hard schedule. They used to play against USC [University of Southern California], against the [University of] California, against Loyola [University], and really some top teams of the nation. They were not conference games, but the squads were very large in those days. I think probably as large as the football squad is today at Whittier College, and we only had about four or five hundred students there. So you can see, a pretty good percentage of the fellows turned out for football. And I think that Chief Newman brought a lot of people to Whittier College with him from the high school days. He had come over from Covina [High School] and he brought a lot of good athletes with him.

ARENA: Would one example be Clinton Harris?

BALL: Clinton Harris would be an excellent example. And the Bonner boys [William and Ellison Bonner] and [William] Bill Duncan, many of those people. And then at the time that Chief Newman came to Whittier College Verne Landreth came over from Huntington Park [California] to Whittier College to be the basketball coach and director of athletics and he brought a lot of good athletes with him from Huntington Park [High School], people like [William] Bill Krueger and [Murle E.] Mashie Mashburn and a lot of real good football players. Whittier College had some good teams in those days. They may not have won all of their games, but they had some good teams, and their records were not poor.

ARENA: Pardon me for interrupting here for a moment, but was there anything like athletic scholarships? These who did come with the coaches, would it be on the basis of the respect

of the individual athlete wanting to come because he wanted to be with that particular coach?

BALL: Well, I think he wanted to be with that particular coach. I think that was the main reason. Whittier College grant-in-aids, they were called. They did get free tuition for so many football players, and as I recall they received their tuition free but no other expenses. They had to have enough money to pay for their board and their room; if they lived in the dormitory they had to pay for that. None of those. They were very meager scholarships, but Whittier College, I think all during the years, has given scholarships to athletes--not very generous, but some inducement to come there.

ARENA: Speaking of Coach Newman, he has been described by many former men whom he coached as being an unusual man. Even the President has remarked to that effect. How would you comment on that? In what way was he unusual, worthy of praise?

BALL: Well, I would agree that Chief Newman was and is a very unusual person. He was an excellent football coach. He drilled his team intensively in the fundamentals of football. He expected good play; he expected vigorous participation. He liked to win, as I think all football coaches do. But he was a man of very high morals. He was a man who did not--I have never seen the Chief smoke. Smoking was absolutely taboo with the Chief, for his football players. As you know, many of the boys did smoke, but I think during the football season and during most of the year, those fellows would smoke very little, if at all. And of course, liquor was pretty much a taboo with the coach. He was a student of anatomy and physiology. He taught good health and healthy habits. He did something that in those days I don't recall coming forth in very many coaching programs, he taught the boys to protect themselves when they were playing football so they wouldn't get hurt. He would go through various ways that you were supposed to hit the fellow and hold your body and tense yourself and relax so you would not receive football injuries, something he was aware of from his experience as being a football player and his education in the coaching field.

But he was a man of very high morals. He's quite a psychologist, I would say, quite a philosopher. He loved to take part in bull sessions, as we called them in those days, with the fellows and with the classes, talking about your philosophy of life. The Chief has some Indian blood in him, of which he is very proud. It's a very small percentage of his inheritance, his Indian make-up, but he's very proud of it. He's been a great crusader for the American Indian in America today, and I think rightfully so, but a man of extremely high moral values and just a real fine person and a real fine football coach. That's the way I would sum up Chief Newman.

ARENA: What opportunities would there be for interaction, for discussion with the Chief, say, off the football field? I believe you mentioned he did some teaching. Did you go to his home, or were there lounges, say, where you could really sit down and blow with the Chief?

BALL: When we were freshmen at Whittier College the Chief and his wife and his baby daughter lived at the boys' dormitory, Wardman Hall, and they were the dorm mother and dorm father of the dorm there during my freshman year, so they were around campus a great deal, both the Chief and Grace Newman. And there used to be a lot of sessions around the dorm there in the lounge. The Chief did teach classes, as I say. I don't believe I took any of his academic classes, but he did teach physical education, too. He coached our freshman basketball team during our freshman year, because we only had two coaches at Whittier College, as I recall, Chief Newman and Verne Landreth. They had a little assistance from some of the graduate students, but they had no assistant coaches that I can recall. George Kellogg helped, but he was a student there. But in the gym there would be a lot of bull sessions take place after practice, maybe, or maybe during the afternoon. If you had a free period, why the Chief would maybe be in his office there in the gymnasium. It would be a gathering place; he'd talk to the fellows. But I will always remember how the Chief loved to philosophize. The Chief used to have long discussions with a bunch of the fellows, and I can remember him and Bill Brock taking part in the discussion.

ARENA: Do you recall where and when these philosophy discussions would take place? When I say when, after the football season was over, in the lull of the school year, when the rush of his athletic involvement was over, and what some of the subjects might have been? Philosophy covers an awful lot of ground, as you know, Ken. Can you think of some of the subjects that might have come up? Would they be personal? Would they deal with the fellows' ideas of marriage? Would they ask the Chief personal things, say, about family problems, about money problems? Was it that type of a personal discussion?

BALL: Oh, I think they covered the waterfront, really. During football season I cannot remember them taking place very much, because the Chief expected a lot of his men. During football season I think it was all business with the Chief, as I remember. I think if you made your letter playing football under Chief you rather earned it, because you had to work hard to do it. No monkeying around, no horsing around, as we called it, and during the season the Chief seemed to be, as I recall, more serious and was interested in only football. But after the football season is when I can recall more of the bull sessions, as we called them. Maybe they would take place out there on the campus, in the [Whittier College] Quad. We'd be sitting around on the grass, or standing around. Maybe they would be in the gym office up there, or down in the dressing room. Often they would take place in the dressing room. And subjects--oh, it could be politics; it could be socialism, communism.

I can remember one incident, which maybe I shouldn't say, but I'm going to tell you anyway. I remember one time we were going to a track meet or basketball game, I can't remember which, but the

Chief was driving us, and he had to stop by his house for a minute, and he and Grace had a little tiff. They were arguing like heck about something and they were snapping at one another, and it kind of embarrassed us just a little bit because she's a redhead and they both had pretty good tempers, and you could see the sparks almost flying. So as we drove around, finally somebody said, "Chief, gee, is that the way you treat your wife?" And the old Chief said, "Boy, that's the way to do it. If you don't have a fight once in awhile, you don't really get along together. I think the best thing for a successful marriage is to have a good argument and a good spat once in awhile!" I'll never forget that. It was quite a kick but, you know, I'm not sure but what he isn't just about right. I think maybe a successful marriage has to run rough and smooth, and certainly the Chief and Grace have had a long, successful marriage and been very happy together. And in later years, getting better acquainted with both of them, I think a great deal of both of them, and I just can't praise the old Chief too much. I think he's a great guy.

ARENA: Maybe at that point would be a good place to stop. And again, thank you very much, Ken, and I hope we can get into those other areas that we mentioned in general and can bore into later.