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## Albert W. Upton (November 17, 1971, second interview)

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Second Oral History Interview

with

DR. ALBERT W. UPTON

November 17, 1971  
Lake San Marcos, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #2 with Dr. Albert W. Upton of Lake San Marcos, near San Diego, California. This is November 17, 1971, Arena interviewing. Before I begin on this second interview, is there any particular subject that was left hanging over or any subject that you would like to bring up first, Dr. Upton?

UPTON: Well, I've been yearning for the opportunity to answer that very question. I feel that every subject we brought up was left hanging, so it really doesn't make much difference to me, but I do know, of course, that as far as the contemporary record is concerned, my connection with Richard Nixon has been regarded as limited to dramatics, to my coaching him in the student theatre. I don't resent that or anything, but I saw quite as much of him outside that program. He worked with me on the college pager, and I was in a still more intimate relationship to him in connection with the little local fraternity, which we belonged to together and of which he was the first president.

ARENA: I am glad you brought up the fact that he was the first president. I did speak to another member I mentioned earlier, Clinton, known as Red Harris, and I believe he joined not the first year but the second year, and he thought that Richard Nixon was the first president but was not sure. But that clinches it. You recall that he was the first president.

UPTON: Yes, I recall it particularly because it was a very significant thing to me at the time. The Orthogonian Society was organized by a then student, who had come to the

college with the outbreak or the downfall of the depression from Colorado College. His name was Dean Triggs, now Superintendent of Schools, Ventura County, or at least the last time I had news of him he was still superintendent of schools there. A very able man. And when the depression came, he had to come home. His father was a banker in a small bank in Los Nietos [California] near Whittier, and bankers were just about out of business in those days, as you know. So he came home and went to school from home. It didn't cost so much. But he missed his fraternity life. He was, as I said, an able, aggressive person. He found that there were no such things at Whittier, The Quakers felt that college fraternities were not democratic, at least not in their notion of democratic. But he thought perhaps he could show them a thing or two, and he set out to organize what we would call a local fraternity. He was a member of the national fraternity, Beta Beta Phi. Well, in that process, on discovering there would have to be a faculty sponsor and so forth, somehow, somewhere, he found out that I was a Beta from the University of Denver, and he asked me if I would help the boys in the organization of this local fraternity.

And I was a young bachelor at the time with time on my hands outside school hours and I was very glad to join the party. Now he was a football player, one of the best centers that Whittier ever had, and so the boys he ran with tended to be athletes. And at that time I was in the process of getting acquainted with a good many of them, not only because a few of them were in my freshman English classes, English Composition classes, but because of being the low man on the totem pole in the English Department at the time I was given the Subject A, bonehead English.

And the overwhelming majority of the people who flunked the bonehead English test were male athletes. I don't even know at this time whether there were any women that flunked the test, whether there was another section of dumbell English that the girls attended. I only know that I had perhaps as many as fifteen boys and that they appeared to me to be all athletes. So I got a book called Trader Horn which contained a story written by the old trader, and the old trader had imagination and great powers of narration, but he hadn't had enough academic training to avoid the standard grammatical errors of misspellings, and so forth. So I thought that I could get these men interested perhaps to a greater degree by reading this fascinating book, a best seller at the time, and having them, among other things, try to find out where his mistakes were and how he should have written what he wrote.

I don't remember if I made any great accomplishments as far as Subject A is concerned. What I remember is that I got acquainted with some of the finest young men that I've ever had anything to do with. And although they may have flunked the English entrance test, some of them were eloquent, and a high percentage of them have been very successful in their lives, and some of them are superintendents of schools, although I must say that Dean Triggs didn't happen to be in that group, because he wasn't a freshman. He was a sophomore. Now the significant thing which I wish to point out is that when

this group of athletes were formed into a local fraternal society, they had to elect a president. Now an outside observer would have said, of course, that they would elect Dean Triggs. I don't know the inside story there. It may well be Dean Triggs fancied himself a king maker and didn't want to be the leader. He just wanted to be the organizer, perhaps. I don't know how that was. Perhaps you will find out in the course of your research.

But I do know that when they were finally brought together to formally organize and to elect a president, they elected Richard Nixon who was a freshman, fresh from high school where he had been a successful president already, so far as my story goes. I would characterize him in the light of my subsequent experience as a person who was sought out by other people to direct and represent them. He wasn't the type of person that went out and tried to get himself elected. He wasn't the type of person that approached life that way. And so far as I know, he never did approach it that way, until as a young attorney he had to decide whether to go on being one or whether to run for Congress. He had been so successful in a political way throughout his scholastic career that it was logical for him to wonder whether politics wasn't the right line for him. And knowing, of course, that when a man in America has passed the Bar and established himself in a practice, half the political battle is won. That he's moving into a group of men in which perhaps a majority will be themselves lawyers. It was a thing he had to decide when he came back from the war.

But even there, there is a story, and perhaps some day you will find out whether it is true or not, that he was urged to run for office in the Whittier district--I don't know the proper name of the district, but it was the district that included Whittier--by the man that was then either president or manager of the local bank.

ARENA: Mr. Herman Perry.

UPTON: Herman Perry. I don't remember whether the Bank of America had bought out Whittier National Bank; I think it was Whittier National.

ARENA: At any rate, at that time he was with the Bank of America, Mr. Herman Perry, yes.

UPTON: Well, then that change had taken place, because that was years later, of course, from this freshman year I'm speaking of. One of the Nixon stories is that Herman Perry said something like, "Dick, we want you to run for Congressman." I don't know whether that's the fact. I only remember what Richard said to me about it. And I don't remember whether we recorded that or whether it was in the conversation we had before we recorded it. To remind you of it, perhaps you will recall.

ARENA: Please repeat it just to be sure.

UPTON: Well, to give you a means of spotting it, it had to do with the game of poker. Do you recall recording that?

ARENA: It's worth repeating, because if it is repetitious, we have double insurance. If it is not repetitious, the people will be sure to have it.

UPTON: Have to tell the story the same way twice, eh? Okay.

ARENA: I didn't mean it that way, but that's the way it came out.

UPTON: Well, I'd be curious to see that myself. Sometimes I wonder, because I don't like to spoil a good story, and I'm Irish enough to perhaps embellish one a bit, if the idea occurs to me. Whereas, this is the case where we are speaking for the record and we want to keep it as straight as we possibly can.

Why, when the President came back from the war, supposedly to go back to his practice in Whittier with the firm to which he had belonged, word came out in the newspapers that he was going to run for Congress against one Jerry Voorhis, a very popular Democrat, who was being very successful as a Congressman in his representation of the district and in his conduct of affairs in Washington. I regarded him as a very formidable candidate, even for a Republican in the Whittier area.

So I called Dick up and said, "Dick, I want to talk with you. Will you have lunch with me at your convenience?" And he said, "Be glad to. When shall we go?" And we hit upon a time and we went out to lunch together. And, of course, I quizzed him about his experience in the service and so on and we made talk over lunch and then we got down to business. And I said, "Well, Dick, I see you are going to run against Jerry Voorhis, and I just wanted to make sure you know what you are getting into." I said, "He has dug in, he is a popular candidate, he makes an excellent appearance, apparently a very fine man, even if he is a Democrat, and I just don't see the point in your going in against him and have him wipe up the earth with you. And so, I just wanted to know if you know you're taking on a tough assignment." And he said, "Well, this is my story. I was in the South Seas, you know." And I said, "Yes, I know, you wrote me from the South Seas." And he said, "I met Harold Stassen, got acquainted with him, and he has convinced me that there is going to be a DRASTIC change in the political weather in this next campaign, and that a Republican would have a genuine chance." "Now," he said, "I have won quite a little money playing poker during my Naval experience and I've saved it, and I'm going out in that district and ring all the doorbells and make my pitch. And that's the way I'm going to spend those poker earnings, or should I say poker winnings." Well, that was reassuring to me, because it's been a matter of deep conviction with me that a man is scarcely fit to go into American politics who can't hold a hand in a pretty tough poker game.

Since that time other more competent men than I am have hit upon poker as a game of fundamental importance. A very exhaustive study was made in the strategy of problem-solving by men who to a considerable degree used the poker game as their conceptual model. It is so rich in so many facets of problem-solving and particularly in those that we tend to regard as the human factor or the psychological factor. You not only have to know your technical stuff in order to be a successful poker player, but you have to know how to study the boys across the table to make your educated guess as to whether a man is bluffing or whether he isn't, and so on. I don't need to press that further. I'm just saying that I can't think of any game a man might play that would better prepare him for American politics.

And when he said that and I found out that my dear boy, Richard Nixon, the Quaker, had not only held his own at poker in the Navy but had held on to his winnings, quite characteristic of a Quaker in that respect, I was reassured. Because I knew he had the abilities, as far as oratorical eloquence was concerned. I knew he was the kind of person that inspired confidence when you talked with him, and so on. And when he put it to me like that, I just said "More power to you." And I said, "If there is anything I can do, call on me. I will be glad to help in any way I can." I would have said that if I had been a typical egghead Democrat. But I wasn't.

I suppose I ought to confess that I come from a long line of Republicans. But that being the case, I think I also ought to confess that I once voted for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Well, be all that as it may, he said immediately, "Well, I've got to organize this campaign and get going. Don't you want to help me do that?" And I said, "No." Or, no, I don't think he put it that way. I think he said, "Can you suggest somebody that might help me?" or something like that. And I said, "Well, there is just one man in Whittier that I would pick and that's Wallace Newman. I can't help you there. I don't know the town, I don't know the district. That isn't my cup of tea. If there's something I can do and you tell me to do it, I'll do it, but I couldn't be of any help to you there, and I know for sure that Wallace Newman would either be of great help to you or steer you in the right direction so far as getting that help is concerned." Now there again, I don't know to what extent Wallace Newman became campaign manager, formal or informal. You could find that out from him. And if he didn't function in that way, and did send Dick to somebody else, well for all I know, that's where Herman Perry comes into the picture. I just couldn't say. I just know that's how it was.

Well, he did go out and ring those doorbells. One of the things that you find out about him when you work with him and for him is that he himself is not afraid of work. He's one of the most industrious students that I've ever had. In the theatre, if you said, "Now, folks, I want you all to have your lines for Act I next rehearsal," he'd be one of the minority that turned up with his lines learned. When he set himself to do a job, he did it well. He tried hard. He knows that about himself. He's never lost that trait.

I suspect that some people leave him pretty tired because he sets the standard about him of hard work. And I know that the Democrats like to enlarge on all of these good times he has off at this retreat and that retreat, Camp David [Maryland] and San Clemente [California] and so forth, but I have a pretty good idea of what can go on in one of those vacation periods. So that would be the point I would make about the poker, that I think that it shows a capacity--intellectual, mental and spiritual, if spiritual is the right word, or psychological, if that's a better one--that is of vital importance.

And I can remember, for example, in the TV presentation of his confrontation with [Nikita] Krushchev. Krushchev had made this crack about "burying you" and so on. I remember watching Nixon in that exchange. He not only wasn't rattled, he managed to be friendly; he managed to address the whole situation without apparent irritation and so on. Krushchev's behavior was in itself dramatic. He sort of tiptoed off with a mincing step and waving his hand as if he were saying good-bye, saying, "We'll bury you." I'd have to play it over to see whether I describe it with perfect accuracy. But I'll never forget that picture of that man demonstrating those lower middle-class manners in a state occasion.

Now Richard Nixon derives from the middle class of society, but he wouldn't know how to behave in such a way that an expert could see that he was no gentleman. He wouldn't know how to do it because he was brought up in the tradition of Quaker gentility and it is genuine gentility, not just company manners. So I would say the kind of aplomb, the kind of know-how, the man in politics must acquire if he isn't to defeat himself from time to time is the kind that must be acquired in a poker game, where a man may look you in the eye and call you a son of a bitch, just to rattle you enough to win the hand.

I think it would be pretty difficult to rattle Dick and I've never seen him rattled but once and that's when he was tired out. And even then he didn't shame himself. He just made a tactical error that cost him and cost him and cost him. He told off the newspaper reporters the night of the election when he was conceding defeat. It's true, he was experiencing the bitter pill of defeat, but he had also driven himself, as few men on earth can drive themselves.

How many people know what it takes out of a man to make ten or fifteen whistle stops and a regular presentation at dinner at the end of the day? I only know what it means because I was a college professor and sometimes had several lectures in a day. But they don't work the wear and tear on your emotions as that kind of confrontation that you have with your adversaries as well as your supporters in a campaign. Well, I remember how [Wendell L.] Willkie finally lost his voice. It was pathetic in his campaign. But Richard Nixon has such splendid control of himself. He has such a marked capacity to pace himself that he can talk and talk and talk and talk, well and clearly, but always with that kind of restraint that enables him to keep on going. Well, that's the story of the poker game.

ARENA: Are there any other reminders of Richard Nixon, the Orthogonian president as well as member, that tie in with the President that you can think of? I like this interesting blend that you made of the war years, poker, and the year 1945 when he was interested in going into politics here in Whittier, California, and that magnificent blend that only a person like you could give firsthand knowledge, that blend of the pre-political Nixon and the present-day Richard Nixon.

UPTON: Well, I felt that, and I was on the point of dramatics to begin with. I just have one other point I would like to make and then I'll take up that very thing that you mention. I remember him, so far as working with him on the stage is concerned, not only for his conscientious application--learning his part and that sort of thing--but I remember him as the most directable student that I ever directed.

Now there are various schools of thought in direction. In the one you have the dominant director who makes up his mind what he wants all of his players to do and sees to it that they do it. There's the opposite kind who tries to bring the best out of the individual actor, tries to help him do it his own way, so that it will be as natural as possible, and so forth. I don't hold with either one of them, except for individual cases. I'm a middle-of-the-roader on that score. If I study a full-length three-act play and work out a theory of the characters and then get a group of competing would-be actors together to, quote, "try out" for their parts, I'm looking for people who sound as if they would do what I have in mind, in spite of the fact that I'm an educator and am thinking of the theatre as an educational instrument and not as preparation for going into acting. I would make that point emphatically.

ARENA: Could I interrupt just one moment on that point? Does that mean that you would not have in mind Hollywood [Californial] at the end of your course, so to speak, as the great goal?

UPTON: Most emphatically it means that. You mustn't get me started on that point now because it gets to be a long story.

Among my theories of education, one of them is that dramatics and journalism are of profound importance in the educational system if properly utilized, because they serve to motivate and help to develop some of the best people. And some of those best people are some of the people that give you the most trouble. Strong personalities that have fun doing certain things and would like to have fun all the time, so they tend to dodge the things they don't like to do, and so on. Strong personalities that want to do what they want to do.

Now, you can get to those people because dramatics and journalism are glamour subjects, particularly in high school, and therefore subsequently through college. So I feel they are very important as amateur activities. Although I would always, if I had MY way as a college president, see to it that our department of journalism



and our department of drama was a good place for a prospective journalist or actor to start. I would try to get as much general education, and by general education there, I don't mean high school education. I mean the kind of education that serves you, whatever your walk of life may be. I would try to get as much of that in at the expense of overemphasis from my point of view on the favorite subjects, namely, journalism and dramatics. If I kept correspondence as some thoughtful people do, I would be able to show you a very touching letter I once received from the parents of the then Marjorie Hildreth, now Mrs. Knighton, whom I hope you will meet. She was one of our most active participants in the dramatic program and wanted to go to dramatic school, I think, at the end of her sophomore year. She was a contemporary of Richard Nixon, by the way. And I talked her into staying in college, getting her A.B. [Bachelor of Arts], before going on to Pasadena [California] to the drama school there. They had a very fine school of drama in Pasadena--the Pasadena Playhouse, the community theatre. I told her that if she did leave then and did get into professional dramatics that she would constantly be facing the handicap of finding herself in competition with people who knew so much more than she did about so many things, that it was an area in which the general education was important, and I urged her to stay and finish the college job before she went on to drama school. And she did.

I got this touching letter from her parents which I remember. They said, "There are some things that a parent just can't do for his children, because his children just won't listen. And you have made it possible for us to keep her in college." Well, I was touched by that, and of course extremely gratified, because I think that four years of college education are just about as important as any four years can be in a human being's life.

ARENA: Before you leave the drama of Whittier College and the drama of Hollywood, I can't help but ask your comment to this story which was told to me by a cousin of the President, who visited him about the time he was studying for his Bar exams in Whittier, California. He had graduated from Whittier College, graduated from law school. She was from the East, Pennsylvania, came to California for the first time about her second or third year of college. It was the furthest she had ever been from home and was being hosted by her cousin and her aunt and uncle, Frank and Hannah Nixon. Hollywood, of course, at that time was the big thing. Yet the Nixons, who were very busy, the President studying for his Bar exam, did take time to take her to see certain things, such as the Huntington Library, one of the beautiful national parks, Sequoia, possibly. But she recalled that they did not take her to Hollywood, and she felt that that was very significant. That, here, the President had been interested in drama and did not take her to Hollywood, either. I just thought I would pass that along.

UPTON: Well, I'm glad you brought it up, because one time in one of the numerous interviews that I have enjoyed because of my connection with the President, a journalist or a

TV man asked me, "When you were coaching Richard Nixon in that play you mentioned, John Drinkwater's 'Bird in Hand', did you ever think that this man might be the President of the United States some day?" And I said, "Well, of course I didn't in that time." He was a freshman in college and I didn't stop and think that any freshman in Whittier College would be President some day. I was too busy working on the immediate problem. If somebody had said to me, "Could you conceive of the fact that this man you were coaching in this play would be President some day?" I could say, "Well, yes, of course, there's just no telling who might be President some day." Whoever thought of Harry [Truman], the haberdasher, being a very fine President before he got through with it. But that remark was sort of twisted. It was as though I had said, "Oh, no, of all the things I'd never think of would be Richard Nixon being President of the United States."

And somehow the concept of Hollywood got into it. You might have thought of him winding up in Hollywood but certainly not in Washington, you see. Well, to answer that point as it came up, I would have had to stop and go into a long account of my theory of the importance of amateur dramatics in the educational system, and I was talking to a man who was getting paid for finding out in a hurry, not what I thought about the drama and its educational value, but what I could say about Richard Nixon that he could put in a story about Richard Nixon.

It's a terrible thing, American journalism is, a terrible thing. And the irony of it is that there is no way for people to realize that, because the newspaper and the TV and the radio are parts of our lives, and you don't think of your constant associates, whether they are friends or enemies, as such terrible things. You just think of them as life. But it's been an experience to me to see how fast a thing has to move, how little can be said, how things of profound importance can be glossed over in a second, and piddling little things of no particular consequence blown up because they are amusing, and so on.

And I'll never forget, and my wife will never forgive me, for a mistake I made that's intimately connected with this problem. I enjoyed directing all sorts of drama but I liked to see students play things that they could play. And so it wouldn't be my inclination to put on [King] Lear. The students enjoyed comedy more and I was fascinated with the theatrical problem of the successful gag. The problem of timing, the problem of working up and pulling the gag, and the problem of going off leaving it without spoiling it, and so on. It is a fascinating, technical theatrical problem.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

UPTON: We were working on a delightful comedy by John Drinkwater called "Bird in Hand." The central character was an old inkeeper. His daughter had run off with what he regarded at the time as a city slicker who meant her no good. And he was brokenhearted, and I wanted Dick to sit down middle stage, giving an account to a visitor of what had happened to his daughter. And

I wanted him to get a lump in his throat and have difficulty in going on with his story because of his emotional state. And I showed him how to go about it, to get a lump in your throat and how to catch your breath and, in other words, how to cry if you wanted to go on and have your cry. It's not a difficult thing for some people to do, impossible for others. But I went through it and got a lump in my throat and all that.

And as I've said before, I've never associated with a person who would listen so attentively and then try with such apparent sincerity to do what you were asking him to do, what you were suggesting to him and so on. And I'll always remember on the nights of the performance I'd always go up in the first row in the balcony to watch the performance instead of staying back stage. I turned it over to the student manager and the director. I always worked through students that way; I was not director in name. I was coach or whatever you want to call it. We had a student director and a student manager. And so I went up in the front row and watched Dick, holding my breath you know, and hoping for the best, and all. And I saw tears run down his nose and fall on the stage in the front of him as he sat there telling the story of his lost daughter. And in case you're getting a lump in your throat, everything turned out all right. He wasn't a city slicker at all but he was a fine young man and they got married and lived happily ever after, and so forth.

Well, when I was being interviewed and the interviewer brought up the fact that I had coached him in plays and so forth, he was Vice President at the time and you may recall that at the end--no, he wasn't Vice President at the time, he was a potential candidate for Vice President--you will recall that he was called to [Dwight D.] Eisenhower's headquarters after a red-hot campaign and met at the airport by [William] Knowland and the newshounds got his picture weeping on Knowland's shoulder. And I understand that. Again, he was emotionally excited, deeply touched, knew what was going on, what was going to happen to him, and he was tired out. And he wept and a Democratic reporter saw him. And I say that with considerable confidence because I have yet to meet but one Republican journalist. I know there are such, but in this whole episode, I have yet to meet one. And there are good Democrat reporters. Earl Mazo is a gentleman and a scholar as well as a Democratic journalist. But I turned to this fellow after they had nicknamed Richard Nixon the Weep instead of the Veep for Vice President. And I said, "Well, I'm the man that taught him to weep." WOW.

My wife worked me over and I suppose justly so, but I don't always feel that it's just. But my, how I wish I had never made that crack to a newspaper man! It was interpreted, you see, as evidence that when Richard Nixon, for example, was in the Raffles Speech--that was the dog's name wasn't it, Raffles?

ARENA: Checkers.

UPTON: Checkers--somebody had a dog named Raffles. Well anyway, the Checkers Speech, that lump in his throat and all that was put on--that was dramatics, because he could do it.

And you know, that fellow Upton taught him how to do it. And it wasn't like that. You can do what I have described with people and know what it means to get a lump in your throat and cry when they are emotional. You can get them to sympathize with the fictitious character because they know how it feels.

Now there may also be actors who can give imitation weeps that never wept in their life--cry and do a good dramatic job of it when they've never cried on their own. There may be such people. I've never consciously coached one or trained one. I just know that some people get lumps in their throat under certain circumstances and that under the right circumstances in the theatre you can capitalize on that capacity.

My stepfather, for example, couldn't read the story of Joseph in the Bible aloud without getting a lump in his throat and tears in his eyes. I had a chancellor at the University of Denver, Chancellor Buchtel, who prayed for us once or twice a week, and he couldn't make a prayer without weeping. By the end of his prayer in chapel the tears would be streaming down his cheeks. People differ in respect to that sort of thing.

I know that Richard Nixon is the sort of human being who, in a matter of certain emotions, would get a lump in his throat and tears in his eyes. And I took advantage of that capacity. I'm that sort of person. I showed him what I could do. He turned out to be the sort of person that did it and it was just that simple. But you can see that it would be subject to interpretation that would be anything but complimentary to a person running either for Vice President or for President.

So I feel deeply about that, and I hope before too long that I can even apologize to Richard Nixon at the psychological moment, if the thing has ever got around to him. It was just because I couldn't resist that little verbal gag I'm the one that taught him to weep. "Oh, the Weep. Yes, I know him. I'm the one that taught him to weep." Damnable thing, but it just struck me as funny and without duly considering the total situation, which is contrary to my whole philosophy of education and life, I goofed and I am ashamed. Well, so much for the dramatics. Now you wanted to go back to the Orthogonians.

ARENA: Before you leave this for one moment, especially in view of your last personal remarks, would you have any objection if this interview should be brought to the President's attention, the complete interview?

UPTON: No, no. I don't . . .

ARENA: As you know, all of these interviews eventually will become public.

UPTON: I have things that I'm ashamed of but not that I would hide, we might say. No, no; it's one way to get to talk to him, you know, because there are things that I feel very deeply

about him. I hope before he and I are finished that we'll talk about American education, but there won't be much point in it unless he is successful in that second term. And I hope to get around to that in our discussions, too. Well, there have been two or three things that I have said that one might call prophetic. I called the turn, and we'll get around to them before we get through.

There's one other little footnote on the dramatics, however. In that same play I was trying to have this young athletic junior-- I think he was a junior at that time, I'll have to check on that-- behave like an old man. I not only wanted him to get a lump in his throat and weep, but I wanted him to walk across the stage as if he were in his late sixties and not go dashing across the stage on the balls of his feet. I said, "Dick, an old man will get back on his heels. Now we don't want you to shuffle like the traditional Polonius but I want you to learn to walk across the stage putting your heels down, and don't let your center of gravity get so close to the floor ahead of you. Get back on your heels as you walk." And he practiced and practiced. I didn't tell him to practice. But whenever he got up and walked around on the stage, he was walking on his heels.

And I used the word prophetic a few moments ago. I think I might just as well clinch this point by another story. When Eisenhower was a death's door and it looked as if Richard Nixon might be President any minute, the boys were all ready, of course, the newspapers, TV and all. They're all set to go with people of prominence, you know. And there must be a list somewhere, and I'm on the list. At any rate, a TV organization--I don't remember which one--came to Whittier College and set up for photographs and interview, and I got a call from the secretary to come down to the president's office. They wanted to see me on a Nixon interview. Well, I didn't know anything about it. I went down. The door to the president's office was open. The secretary wasn't there so I stuck my head in the door, looked around and saw this crew setting up for TV. In one corner of the room there was a large portrait in oil of Richard Nixon given by some admirer of Nixon and the college, and the president had hung it in his office. I looked in there and saw these men--I would say there were four of them. One of them was the person in charge of the interview, the others were technicians, cameramen and so on. I looked around and sized them up, said nothing, walked in, went over before the portrait, knelt down and crossed myself. Then I got up and I said, "They say you gentlemen wish to see me."

Well, it was a delight to see those faces. I couldn't take oath that their jaws fell, I just remember the puzzled astonishment on their faces because I played it so straight. It was just as if, "Gee, what are we getting into? What kind of a religious organization is this? Do these people worship Richard Nixon? Such things are possible, you know, in the colleges, so far as that's concerned. And these men get around. Nothing surprises them. And then I grinned. Well, then they thought, here's a regular guy. There's one thing you know about him, he doesn't worship Nixon. So then they opened up, you see.

One of them--he turned out to be the one who was going to run the interview--took me back to the portrait and pointed up to it, and he said, "When you stop and realize that that man may be President tomorrow, doesn't it just scare hell out of you?" And I said, "It certainly does not." I said, "If that man is President tomorrow, in a short time you'll find out that he's the best-advised President you ever heard of." I said, "I'd have no concern or worry about what happens to this country if Richard Nixon becomes President, because I know him to be a man who seeks out the best advice he can get and listens and then makes up his own mind."

Now, I have no way of telling to what extent what I have just said on this recording enlarges somewhat on what happened there. But this I do know--I mean enlarges on the matter of words, just how many words I used and so forth--I do know that I have not misrepresented that situation, because of hindsight. I said it back there and I said it again and again subsequently to that. And now I am saying, am I right or am I not? Do you know? You're a historian. Do you know of an American President that has had better, more competent advice and who has listened to it? Now, what you find out is that the opposition will pounce on that very thing. That is, you know that he finally decides on the big freeze as a result of his consultation with his advisors, his counselors--there can be a distinction if you want to make it sometimes--his consultants and his conscience. And I think I know from personal experience that he'll try to get the best advice he knows of or that he can find, that he'll listen to it and then HE WILL MAKE UP HIS OWN MIND. He will make the decision. He won't do what somebody tells him to do. He'll do what he thinks is best after he has listened to more than one side.

It's my experience, and it seems to me that the past months particularly have borne that out, and I would say to the Democrats, "And doesn't that capacity to change your course in the light of your contemporary advice, doesn't that just scare hell out of you as a Democrat?" That, it seems to me, is relevant to the present state of affairs, that what is being called opportunism by his opponents is nothing more nor less than what I call Quaker compromise.

ARENA: Does this incident or this general subject right now remind you of the day when you taught the course along with Dr. Paul Smith, the historian, who was especially good in the U.S. Constitutional History? Do you recall the question of the matter in which Jefferson, the strict constructionist, before he was President became the loose constructionist, especially after the Louisiana Purchase?

UPTON: Yes, yes.

ARENA: Does that come to mind and do you want to comment on that?

UPTON: Well, I'd love to comment on that for an hour or so, but not in connection with Richard Nixon. My intense interest in the Constitution and the pros and cons of constitutionalism is all bound up with Language Theory Educational Procedures

that developed after Nixon left college. So when I think of him, although I think of him as a major in history and government, what political science we had was called government, and Dr. Paul Smith was the head of the department.

Smith did a little book on New Approach to the Constitution about which he was, in fact, enthusiastic. I proofread it for him a couple of times and I know that that enthusiasm and that understanding of the Constitution were pumped into Richard Nixon. Smith was an eloquent teacher, an impressive teacher. I think the cliché is inspired teacher, and I don't see how an intelligent person could sit in his classes and listen without himself being inspired. I sat in his classes and listened for years because we taught together and sometimes the students were on the platform, sometimes I was on the platform and sometimes Smith was on the platform.

And the whole thing worked beautifully because Smith would watch the students all the time, and the minute he saw they were getting bored or I was losing them, he would interrupt and take over. In a sense, Smith made the tough, the difficult, abstract thing I was trying to do in the Introduction to Critical Procedures possible by taking the Upton curse off of it every once in a while, because he was dramatic and fascinating.

And another one of my colleagues, [Charles B.] Spaulding, whom I mentioned before, used to sit with me. The three of us were teaching the course--another course together--and it was a lecture course where the student had very little opportunity at the lecture to say anything, so we would simply sit and listen to our colleague. And how many times Spaulding and I have turned to look at one another and shake our heads at the skill and the eloquence of that man. And Nixon couldn't help being profoundly influenced by that attitude. And Smith had a degree in law. He had never passed the Bar but I think he had a Bachelor of Laws degree and an intense interest in Constitutional government.

ARENA: Precisely, if you can--this is short notice--thinking back to Dr. Paul Smith's lectures, wherein did lie these skills? Was it the fact that he applied drama to his lectures; was it his diction; was it his use of facts coupled with making the figures come to life and therefore the facts more meaningful? Where did you find that he was skillful?

UPTON: Well, no one has ever asked me that question before. I would say that his skill was not what I would call an acquired skill; that is, he didn't go to drama school to learn how to make an impression, and so forth. Now, he worked his way through school in part as an itinerant Quaker preacher. Well, that meant that he got good practice in talking about things that were generally regarded as important and vital to people who weren't necessarily very interested. When people go to church who feel you ought to go to church on Sunday, everybody sitting in the pew isn't necessarily thinking about the sermon. And there's a natural relationship there that tends to force the preacher to try to be

interesting, to try to appeal. He can't stand it to see people go to sleep.

Now I can. When I see a student going to sleep, there's a certain kind of subject that I attempt to discuss with students, and it has that effect that you can see the mind trying to hang on and grasp and then it sort of gives up and retreats and falls asleep. And I could look out in the audience and see that happening on occasion to this, that or the other student. And I'd simply say, "Now watch him. Don't let him fall in the aisle," or whatever it is.

But that wasn't Smith's procedure. How many times I have had him take over when I was all worked up on one of these difficult points, and get me back and do a little repetition or give them a break and a rest, and so forth. Or ask some leading questions, and so on. So he was audience sensitive. He watched them and he could tell. I did a sermon for him that he did at The White House, one of Nixon's Sunday meetings, and who was that grand old Republican, the last great one to die?

ARENA: [Everett M] Dirksen?

UPTON: Dirksen. He said, "Everett never took his eye off me." So he was watching these people and he was watching Everett Dirksen. He said, "Everett never took his eye off me."

Well, that's Smith for you. He was audience conscious. And so he just wouldn't go on if he saw he wasn't holding them. But he never became trivial. He would become dramatic. He'd get to talking about the American duel and the ethics of the duel, and so forth and so on.

Well, he brings a pair of dueling pistols to class. I've seen him up there on the platform in front of three hundred people putting on this duel. And you gradually realize that here are two civilized men that were ready because of an ancient tradition to shoot at each other, maybe with fatal results to one another. And he would make that real. And it would make you think about it. And of course, he wanted you to think what damn fools people were that would get up and kill each other off for the point of honor--just because one of them called the other one a liar or something. Well, he tried to make his teaching vital in that sense of the word.

ARENA: Did he lecture from notes, as far as you recollect?

UPTON: He had notes, reams of them, but I never saw him try to follow them on the platform. Now, he'd been teaching the same subject for years when I came to know him. He shouldn't have needed any notes, anyway. I've never seen him or heard him deliver one of the speeches I wrote for him. It would be interesting to see to what extent he followed the page. And a person can deliver an address these days right off the paper and get away with it. There was a time when it wasn't permissible, but I think it's done now. But I would just say offhand that I never recall seeing him use a note.



ARENA: Knowing President Nixon's style and delivery and his public speaking ability, do you see his mentor in any of his mannerisms? Do you see Dr. Paul Smith in Richard Nixon?

UPTON: Oh, no.

ARENA: Just to make sure that's clear.

UPTON: No, I remember one day that just brought the house down. The students were putting on a skit at convocation, and we had a student out from the East who went out on the stage. They brought a blackboard out and he came out and gave an imitation of Smith giving a lecture. It was just one mannerism after another. He always wrote things on the board when he was talking and for some reason or other when he started to write, his writing would go down until he might start up here and wind up over here, down here. Down there like that, and then he'd get up and would feel his pants were coming off and he'd adjust his breeches like that, you know. This chap did it so well nobody had to ask, "Now who's this you're imitating," because everybody knew, of course, who had gone to school to Paul Smith. No man, particularly with Nixon psychology. . . . Nixon is not imitative. I would say even in this crying thing he didn't watch me and then try to imitate me. I was talking to him all the time about the physiology of the thing and how that lump feels in your throat and all that, and he's thinking inside, you see, what I'm talking about.

ARENA: If I may ask you, Dr. Upton, in view of your lifetime of teaching drama and teaching people to speak, really, when all is said and done how does one learn to speak, in the sense that, say, a student takes a class from you? From your own experience, if that student is an A student, does that mean he will speak as you speak, or will he have learned certain principles and will still end up delivering his own speech in his own style? And how can you account for that, if that isn't the case?

UPTON: Well, of course, I think that the ideal in education is the drawing out of the student. It's the way the artist talks about woodcarving. He gets the trunk of a tree and he tries to get the statue out of the tree that's in the tree. That means he tries to take advantage of the knots and the direction of the grain, any dark or light lines that have developed. You know how beautiful certain woods are, and really competent woodcarvers achieve astounding results by following the wood. I was complimenting one just the other day on a job that he had done with a piece of avocado wood. You get a high contrast in avocado wood.

And so the ideal would be to get out of the student what's already in there in potential. Now, that doesn't mean to say that just because you have that as a philosophy that you wouldn't say, "Now watch me and see if you can do what I do?" because that's the natural way that many people learn. But it would never occur to

me to coach Richard Nixon that way. I gave him a little lecture on the statics of the thing. I talked about an old man being back on his heels, and so forth. I didn't give him an imitation of an old man walking across the stage. I'm not that good at doing imitations. I'm not a good mimic. Some people are just natural-born mimics. You know. You've seen them on the stage and heard them. You just can't believe it that out of the same mouth could come words that now sound like one well-known character and now like another and so different.

There are people who have that gift, but I don't think of that as a method for teaching. I'd rather say, "Do as I say, not as I do." Because if you can get people to get the idea that causes you to have them try to do what you want them to do, then they'll do it in their own way and that's what I would be after. If they can get the idea of constitutional procedure, then they can go ahead and be judges on the bench in their own way, and they'll be different sorts of judges. But they'll be their own men because of the general idea of the understanding and that seems to me what the etymology of the word education implies. It's drawing out of somebody something that's there in potential but that's a half-truth, you see. You also have to pump some things into them that aren't already there, and both are possible.

ARENA: This isn't unfair as one teacher to another: What do you recall in Richard Nixon, your pupil, that were weaknesses, and what do you recall in Richard Nixon, your pupil, that were good solid points--thinking back, of course?

UPTON: I have asked that question on TV and I have to say in all candor that Richard Nixon had no weaknesses in my connection with him. The interviewer had asked what I regarded as his principal fault, and I answered, "He doesn't have one, he's not a tragic character." Then he said, "Do you think he will be a great president?" And I answered "America doesn't need a 'great president,' it needs a president that is great for the nation."

And now that we're on the subject of interviews, I recall another time on a radiocast when I was asked my opinion concerning his future. I said that after his second term I expected to see him on the Supreme Bench. I might add that my daily exercise and diet are designed to assume that I shall be on hand to say "I told you so."

I suppose I could go on and say I didn't know him well enough. But it's my belief that I would have a firmer conviction in that regard if I had known him better than I do, because Richard Nixon was a good conscientious boy who became, in my estimation, a good conscientious man.

Now, in the interests of coming clean with you, as clean as I know how to come, I would like to say that he is logic-dominated, that is to say, his natural tendency or a tendency that was cultivated in him by I know not whom--his mother, his father, both or something--he is the sort of person who tries to use his head. I

won't go into this distinction we made off the tape about sensation and emotion and logic. I would just say that there's a man after my own heart. He's trying to use his head. By that I mean trying to do the right thing or the logical thing or the diplomatic thing or the political thing or whatever the thing may be in the light of the total situation.

And the coming clean part of it has to do with the changes I observed after he had been in politics for a while. I am thinking now of Calvin Coolidge. Calvin Coolidge was not a baby-kisser, and he wasn't a costume-wearer, but he kissed babies and he wore Indian headdress because that's the sort of thing you're going to do if you are the President of the United States and your loyal citizens want you to kiss their babies or wear their tribal chief's headgear. And if you're a Calvin Coolidge, you'd do it with ill grace.

Now Richard Nixon was characteristically respectful toward his elders and he ran on a campaign for president of the student body at Whittier College in which one of the planks was dancing on the campus. And I think, as I've said before, another plank might have been curriculum dramatics. I couldn't say for sure on that. I just know his attitude. But he didn't insult anybody. He didn't irritate anybody to the point of exasperation. He remained a respected, quiet member of the Whittier College community, respected by board, administration, faculty and student body. That is, he always behaved as a gentleman. And I think that's due to the capacity to see the whole picture, think the thing through and do what the situation calls for, even though your heart isn't exactly in it.

And so, after he had been in politics for a while, his speeches took on a more political sound to my ear, less of the boy debater and more of the political oratory but not of the flowery sort, of the direct businessman, man-to-man sort, because the flowery sort had gone out of style with William Jennings Bryan. There's still some of the boys there, particularly from the South, and I've heard Harry Truman do the old political stuff. I've heard men--I'd never dream of men as I knew them, well-educated, straightforward, businesslike--I've heard them in politics where they were stumping, in a typical knockdown, dragout campaign, sound like demagogues. And you can hardly believe your ears when you first hear it. But it's because one of the things a politician has to tumble to on the way to becoming a statesman, if he ever gets that far, and that is that you have to "play politics."

ARENA: Thank you very much, Dr. Upton.