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## John L. Arrambide (October 30, 1972)

C. Richard Arena  
*Whittier College*

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Oral History Interview

with

MR. JOHN L. ARRAMBIDE

October 30, 1972  
Walnut, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. John Louis Arrambide. We are now in West Covina, California. Mr. Arrambide's residence is in Walnut, California, Arena interviewing, October 30, 1972. As I mentioned off the tape a moment ago, Mr. Arrambide, we'd like to have some idea of the background of the person being interviewed, so with that idea in mind, may I ask you where and when you were born?

ARRAMBIDE: I was born in Whittier, California, December 27, 1912.

ARENA: And how is it that you were born there, rather than any other place in the world?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, when my father came from France in 1900, he settled in Whittier, California. He went to work for his uncle, herding sheep. Presently, the location is where Arrambide Drive is located off of Beverly Drive in Whittier.

ARENA: In some cases they don't do justice to the original founders. Just to be sure, do you recall the name of your father's uncle?

ARRAMBIDE: That was my father's uncle.

ARENA: What was his full name, if you recall?

ARRAMBIDE: His first name was Gracian [pronunciation as given]. I think it was spelled G A R I C I N.

ARENA: And your father's full name?

ARRAMBIDE: Pierre Arrambide.

ARENA: Now correct me if I'm wrong, but was there, in addition to your father's uncle--again this is from rumor which I would like you to clarify--was there a settlement of Basques living in the entire area, not just Whittier?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, the biggest settlement of Basques was in La Puente [California]. They had a hotel there run by the Basque. I don't remember the name. But most of the shepherders, off-season, would come to La Puente and rest there after the lambing was over; they would come in there to spend the summers.

ARENA: And would they also have been in and around Yorba Linda, where the President himself was born in 1913? For example, I've seen a Bastanchury Road, and I've HEARD that Bastanchury was a Basque name, but I wouldn't know for sure.

ARRAMBIDE: That is correct. The Bastanchury family there owned several thousand acres in and around Fullerton, Yorba Linda area.

ARENA: I don't know to what extent you had a chance, maybe, to go back to the area of your father's birth, but there is a Basque part of Southern France, as well as Northern Spain and possibly even an independent area of Basques.

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I've never had the opportunity to go back there, but my father came from the Pyrenees on the France side, and my mother came from the Pyrenees on the side of Spain, and they didn't know each other there at all until they met here in Whittier, California.

ARENA: They BOTH met in Whittier, California?

ARRAMBIDE: Right.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, did your parents speak a Basque tongue which was common to both, or did your mother speak a Basque tongue with a Spanish accent and your father a Basque tongue with a French accent, or just what? Did you ever happen to make a study of that yourself?

ARRAMBIDE: I've never made a study of any of it, but oddly enough, they spoke Basque around the house. At one time I could speak Basque but I've been away from it now so long that I've forgotten a great deal of Basque.

ARENA: May I ask how many in your immediate family? I'm thinking of brothers and sisters of yourself.

ARRAMBIDE: I have one brother.

ARENA: And his name?

ARRAMBIDE: Mike [Michael Arrambide].

ARENA: Would you mind giving a resume of your educational background, your formal educational background, and if the schools were in Whittier, precisely what they were?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, when I started to grammar school, I lived out at Murphy Ranch, where Friendly Hills is now located. I went through East Whittier Grammar School, all eight grades. I went to Whittier High School for four years and Whittier College for four years, so I got all my education right in Whittier.

ARENA: And I believe you said off the tape that the President was one year ahead of you in college. Would you happen to know if that followed all the way through your schooling, because he went to the same schools.

ARRAMBIDE: The President moved to Whittier High School for his junior and senior years.

ARENA: He did, his last two years, and his class would have been 1930.

ARRAMBIDE: Yes. He was one year ahead of me at Whittier High School and one year ahead of me at Whittier College, but I first met him at Whittier High School.

ARENA: Do you recall ever seeing him at East Whittier Elementary School, which he had attended and from which he did graduate?

ARRAMBIDE: Right offhand, I don't.

ARENA: May I mention some of the teachers he had there, to see if that might ring a bell. One--and she is still living by the way--is Miss H. Esther Williams.

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, Esther Williams, I had her for my seventh grade teacher.

ARENA: Another teacher who taught him there, her married name now is Mrs. Comfort, but her maiden name--and that is what she had when she taught there--is Miss Edith Jessup. I wonder if Jessup rings a bell or not?

ARRAMBIDE: It rings a bell. I forget what grade she was teaching though.

ARENA: It was one of the earlier grades, possibly the fifth. I wonder if you recall what your major was, by the way, at high school.

ARRAMBIDE: I took a liberal arts, college prep course.

ARENA: How about the languages? Do you recall what your languages were in high school and then in college?

ARRAMBIDE: I took one year of Latin and three years of Spanish in high school. In college I didn't take any language.

ARENA: How about your major in college?

ARRAMBIDE: Physical education.

ARENA: In the way of a liberal arts minor, I'm wondering if you took, you know, something in history, or . . .

ARRAMBIDE: I took some in history. My minor was social studies.

ARENA: Did you teach any of the social studies, by any chance?

ARRAMBIDE: Never have, I have taught physical education all the way through my teaching career.

ARENA: Did you go on and do any post-graduate work, Mr. Arrambide?

ARRAMBIDE: Yes, I took my post-graduate work at USC [University of Southern California] and got my master's degree there.

ARENA: And what would be a resume of your educational career since graduation, including your present position?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, when I graduated from Whittier College, my first job was at Fullerton High School. I was there one year, in 1936. Then in 1937 I went back to my alma mater at Whittier High School. I was there six years, coaching football and basketball and baseball.

ARENA: Was Wallace "Chief" Newman still there during the period when you were there?

ARRAMBIDE: Chief was at the college at the time when I was at Whittier High School.

ARENA: Oh, I'm sorry. When you said you went back to your alma mater, you were talking about the high school, I see.

ARRAMBIDE: Whittier High School, yes.

ARENA: I see. But he was at the college at that same time.

ARRAMBIDE: I coached football and basketball and baseball at Whittier High School for six years. Then I went in the service for four years.

ARENA: Would you give me the years and the branch of your service?

ARRAMBIDE: I was in the Air Force from 1942 to 1946, in the physical fitness program.

ARENA: Did you have any connection with local bases? I'm thinking of March Field at Riverside [California] in particular.

ARRAMBIDE: No. I spent my first two and half years at Santa Ana Air Base [California], then my last year and a half I was down at Lackland Field at San Antonio, Texas.

ARENA: Did your path ever cross that of President Nixon's, by any chance, during the war years? He was in the Navy, of course, but I was just wondering.

ARRAMBIDE: No, not during the war years. In fact, the last time I heard from him till after the war was over was when he was back in Duke University getting his law degree.

ARENA: Actually he graduated from Duke University in 1937 . . .

ARRAMBIDE: Right.

ARENA: . . . and had been there from '34, after college, through '37. By the way, just to be sure, when you did come back to the Whittier area, did you possibly meet Mrs. Richard Nixon, who was Patricia Ryan at the time in high school, teaching commercial subjects?

ARRAMBIDE: At the time I was coaching at Whittier High School, Patricia Ryan was in the Business Education department. I first met her there.

ARENA: Oh, you did meet her there?

ARRAMBIDE: Yes.

ARENA: I believe she was also head, or chairman, of what was called the Pep Committee, which may have had something to do with the cheer-leading section?

ARRAMBIDE: Yes, she was real active with the cheer-leading section.

ARENA: Good. This is by way of general introduction, then we can ask some specific questions about your contact with both the President and Mrs. Nixon. But still by way of your own personal background, do you recall, as a matter of fact, any personal disadvantages because your father was born in another country and did not speak English as well, we'll say, as native Whittierites, and the fact that the community did not have Basques as a majority? Any problems that way at all?

ARRAMBIDE: No, not really. I never really felt that I was handicapped by my parents coming from another country.

ARENA: Any problems with youngsters who may have made fun of you because of that, especially at the early grade level?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, not really. I think the only thing I recall is when I was going through the grade school my father owned a flock of sheep and they did call me shepherd from time to time, but that was the only problem.

ARENA: Did you help your father yourself regarding the sheep-herding business, by the way?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes, I did some herding.

ARENA: How did that tie in with the Whittier economy from your own personal recollections? For example, where were the sheep kept; how important was it, from your own recollection, to the industry of Whittier; and, from your own recollection, how far back did that go? Did you ever hear your father talk about the first Basques in that area, in Whittier, or, again, Yorba Linda, and Southern California in general? How far down did sheepherding come?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, to go back some, I think my father . . .

ARENA: Take as much time as you like.

ARRAMBIDE: Yes. My grandfather came over to this country before my father did.

ARENA: Would you give his full name, if you recall, your grandfather.



ARRAMBIDE: He was John Arrambide.

ARENA: Thank you. Do you recall him personally, by the way?

ARRAMBIDE: No.

ARENA: You never got to meet him personally.

ARRAMBIDE: No, that was before I was born. He came over for four years and worked, herding sheep, and then went back. He came over to make some money, and then went back to the old country to live with his wife and family.

ARENA: Any idea what those years may have been? What would you guess, if you're not sure?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I'm going to have to guess on this. My father came over in 1900 and he was over here before then, so it must have been, oh, in the 1890's, 1895, along in there.

ARENA: Do you recall, possibly, that that was WHY your father came, because his father had talked up the area, so to speak?

ARRAMBIDE: I'm quite sure that's why he came over here, the fact that one of his uncles was in the Whittier area.

ARENA: And that, of course, would be your grandfather's other brother.

ARRAMBIDE: Right.

ARENA: Do you recall whether or not your grandfather remained in France when he went back?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes, when he went back he remained there, and when he passed away, I think he was ninety years old.

ARENA: Getting back to the other part of the sheepherding and your connection with it, what areas were devoted to that, and just what were your chores in sheepherding?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, all those hills behind Whittier, Friendly Hills and Hacienda Heights.

ARENA: Which is now all residential.

ARRAMBIDE: All residential, right. All those hills there were used as pasture for sheep, and my father's uncle, and then later my dad bought this herd of sheep from his uncle, and that's how he got started in the sheep business. All those hills back of Whittier were used in the winter for grazing, and then in the summers they would bring them down to the flat area where they raised grain, and after they'd harvest the grain the sheep would come in there and graze through the summer, where Whittier and East Whittier are located. All that area was all used for sheep.

ARENA: Were there any problems from the standpoint of the sheep using lands that were not owned by the shepherders? Was there an understanding with the owners, allowing the shepherders to . . .

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes, they leased this land from the owners.

ARENA: Because a lot of the land would not have been owned, that the sheep needed to graze on, I presume.

ARRAMBIDE: A lot of this land back of Whittier and Murphy Ranch was leased way back in those days by the oil companies and I think my dad leased a lot of that land from the oil companies.

ARENA: By the way, just to be sure, where you do have this Arrambide Drive, and I pass it many times. I live at the intersection of Palm [Avenue] and Norwalk [Boulevard], where Palm Avenue comes to a very dead end. Arrambide Drive is right around the corner there off Beverly Drive. I'm just wondering if that is precisely where you lived or any members of your family lived, or is that just part of the general . . .

ARRAMBIDE: That's where my father's uncle lived.

ARENA: Right on that drive.

ARRAMBIDE: Right on that corner, yes.

ARENA: I see. Would you happen to know if the original home of either your folks or any of the original shearers have their original homes still there, especially whether or not some of these homes were built by some of these original Basque are still standing?

ARRAMBIDE: No, all of those homes are gone now.

ARENA: Do you recall that your father DID build his home when he did come to that area, by the way, maybe jointly with his uncle?

ARRAMBIDE: No, I think he stayed there with his uncle, and then when he bought this flock of sheep from his uncle, he moved out to East Whittier where Friendly Hills is located, and my dad built a house there on leased property, and we lived there for a number of years.

ARENA: Then was it on leased property that your father lived; he did not own the property, as a matter of fact?

ARRAMBIDE: No.

ARENA: Was it owned by the Murphy Ranch itself at the time?

ARRAMBIDE: It was owned by Murphy Ranch, and he leased the land from Murphy Ranch, and later when he went out of the sheep business, he sold his sheep to Murphy Ranch.

ARENA: If it isn't too personal, how did your father make out economically? Was there enough to support the family? Was there enough that it paid your way through college? Did you work your way through and so forth?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, he made enough money off his sheep business to buy ten acres of citrus in East Whittier on Imperial Highway, and he lived off the citrus ranch for about thirty years.

ARENA: And that he did own.

ARRAMBIDE: He owned that, yes. That's the only property he owned. He had five acres of oranges and five acres of lemons.

ARENA: From the standpoint of locating that now, Imperial near what other intersection?

ARRAMBIDE: Santa Gertrudes [Avenue]. If you take that same street now and go north, you'd come out at the corner where Nixons had their grocery store and service station.

ARENA: Was that open at that time?

ARRAMBIDE: No, it wasn't open at that time.

ARENA: Of course, it goes right through now. While we're on that subject, had you yourself recollections of the Nixon grocery and Nixon filling station there when you lived in the area?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes, I recall it real well. I recall the Dietrick brothers there on the corner leased from the Nixons and run a Richfield service station. And then I recall taking Richard Nixon home, giving him a ride a few times from school when he stayed after school.

ARENA: Would this be the high school or college or both?

ARRAMBIDE: I recall college. I don't recall taking him home from high school, but I recall taking him home from college after football practice a number of times.

ARENA: On this Nixon market location, do you recall that you had contact with him and his family before the school years at all, as you were growing up, or did your father buy that land on Imperial [Boulevard] and Santa Gertrudes [Avenue] after you were out of high school and then this would have been after?

ARRAMBIDE: No, he bought that property while I was going to elementary school.

ARENA: Did you know the [family of Walter Dietrick] Dietricks during the elementary school years as well?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes, I knew them well.

ARENA: I do know Mr. Lyman Dietrick. I had the pleasure of interviewing him the other day, and the name is very fresh in my mind. I do know that he mentioned the years 1929 and '30 as being included in the period that he stayed. What DO you recall about the grocery store and the filling station?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I can recall going there with my parents a number of times to buy groceries.

ARENA: Was that the main source of your parents' groceries, do you think? Or was it one of other grocery stores?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, they used to go to Whittier quite a bit, too, to buy groceries in between, but Nixon's grocery store was closer, so they would go there a number of times. And that's when I first got acquainted with the store.

ARENA: Do you recall what the parents of the President were like in that period by any chance?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes. They both worked in the store, real pleasant people. I had occasion to know both of them.

ARENA: Is there any particular experience besides the idea of going there and shopping, any particular incident that comes to mind involving you and either of his parents or both of them during this period?

ARRAMBIDE: I can't recall right offhand. I can recall going in there a number of times to maybe buy a candy bar or a package of gum when I was in that area.

ARENA: Did they know you and your family by name, by the way?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes.

ARENA: And if this isn't too personal, did your family keep an account there which would be settled at the end of the month, which they did do with some customers, I understand?

ARRAMBIDE: No. My folks had an account in Whittier, the market on Greenleaf [Avenue]. I think the name of the market

was Jacob's Market. They would buy groceries there and they'd bring eggs in to exchange to pay the groceries, but they paid cash for their groceries at Nixons.

ARENA: Do you recall that your parents, maybe your mother in particular, looked for special foods, for special good home-cooked Basque meals? I'm wondering if that was a problem, she couldn't find them, say, in the immediate area, and had to go into LA [Los Angeles], or something like that?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, we probably ate more lamb than anybody else because we were in the sheep business, but we used to slaughter our own hogs too. They slaughtered mostly what they wanted, so we mostly lived on lamb and pork, and we had chickens.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, did your father sell to such grocery stores as the Nixon market, lamb and so forth, or did he deal with wholesalers or something like that?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, what he did, after the lambs were large enough to sell, he would sell 'em to big meat packers in LA. I don't recall the name, but they would come out and buy five hundred, seven hundred, a thousand lambs at a time, and they would butcher them in there.

ARENA: Did you yourself ever go with him or ever see any of those large packers by any chance?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes. Every time he sold a number of them, why they would truck them in to the markets and we go in and see them delivered.

ARENA: Do you recall, if this isn't too personal, that you were looking forward to taking over your father's business some day, or were you looking forward to just the opposite?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I never thought about going into that business. As I was going through school, I liked athletics so much that I thought I'd make coaching my career.

ARENA: From your own recollections--and correct me if I'm wrong--as you were outstanding, not only on the college level, but on the high school level in sports, do you

recall your father and mother, as they were watching your career, mentioning it to other relatives, maybe uncles or cousins who, either back in Europe or in other parts of the U.S. had similar, very skilled, sports-minded relatives?

ARRAMBIDE: I don't know. My father was really a sports bug. He played a lot of handball. There used to be a handball court in La Puente where the French-American Bakery is now located, and I can recall going with him on Sunday afternoons. He'd go over there and play handball with Basque friends.

ARENA: Was that particularly popular among Basques, would you happen to know, or was that something he learned in this country?

ARRAMBIDE: No, that's the national game in the Basque country, and wherever there was a number of Basques, they would put up a handball court in this country. La Puente seemed to be the center of the Basque population in this area.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, are the rules and regulations of handball in our country the same as the ones that your father played by, would you know?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, they're basically the same rules, only they use a ball that's a little bit harder. We use a rubber ball. They used a ball that was real hard in the center with a leather covering, so it was quite a task to master the game. It was really hard on your hands.

ARENA: How about football, European style, or was that not as popular when your father was born and living?

ARRAMBIDE: No. I guess the first knowledge of football he had was when I started to high school. He used to attend regularly at games. My mother would never watch any of the games because she was afraid I'd get hurt.

ARENA: How about soccer?

ARRAMBIDE: In elementary school we played a lot of soccer. We played, in fact, other schools in soccer. Soccer was a real popular sport at that time.

ARENA: Any reason to guess why soccer has never made it in the U.S. to the extent that it has in Europe, by the way, or in Latin America and around the world?

ARRAMBIDE: No, I don't, but it's beginning to come back now. I notice a lot more youngsters are playing soccer in schools now, and I think it's going to come back and be a real popular sport.

ARENA: As you know, I'm going to ask you about your firsthand contacts with President Nixon, and these could be on several levels. One, of course, would be sports. But I'm also interested in what you recall of him from the standpoint of his student side, his social side, if possibly you were ever in social affairs with him, and since we are on the subject of sports now, maybe I can begin by referring to this article, or news clipping, that was in Newsweek dated July 10, 1972, and I'll quote and then ask you to comment on this:

"It was about as hard a task as I'd ever undertaken," said Richard Nixon. He spent a Sunday afternoon at Camp David poring over the pertinent books and figures, and son-in-law, David Eisenhower, was called on to lend a hand. The difficult chore: obliging an RKO General radio reporter who had asked for the Nixon version of an all-time major league baseball team. It was not an assignment to be taken lightly by the Nation's number one sports fan; he emerged from his research with a roster of 84 names from Babe Ruth to Johnny Bench, explained that he had made his choices on the basis of watching and following baseball since 1925 and meticulously divided the stars into four squads to make up prewar and postwar teams for both the American and National Leagues."

ARENA: And this is the part that I'm especially anxious to have you consider:

"After taping the radio interview, the President got so carried away that he listed and discussed his selections in a byline article for AP. 'Arky Vaughan who is named at shortstop on the National League prewar team may be a surprise to some,' conceded sportswriter Nixon. 'There is a sentimental reason for my including him--the



fact that I attended Fullerton High School with him in 1927 when he was a star football player as well as a fine baseball player."

[Tape ended in the middle of the quote]

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: By quick repetition, we're discussing the President's choices of outstanding athletes he has known. [Quote continued as above] I don't want to read the rest of that, but I just wanted you to give your reactions to that name, whether or not you knew Mr. Vaughn, and anything you recall about your contact with the President and sports.

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I recall Arky Vaughn real well. I forget what year it was, either 1928 or '29, we were playing Fullerton High School when I was at Whittier High School for the league championship. At the time Arky Vaughn came up to bat I was pitching, the bases were loaded and I think we were about three runs ahead. I can still recall Arky Vaughn hitting this pitch off of me, over the railroad tracks in right field for a home run to beat us eight to seven. So I knew that he was a great ball player then and, of course, later on in the National League, he was an all-star for a number of years.

ARENA: Would you have any idea where he may be now at this moment?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes. There was kind of a tragedy to Arky Vaughn. He was at Lake Tahoe [California], I don't recall the year, but he drowned in Lake Tahoe. It must be, oh, about twenty years ago I would say.

ARENA: Would you mind giving factually, Mr. Arrambide, some of the honors that you recall personally that you have gained over the years in sports, including, say, the championship teams on which you have played. Take as much time as you like.

ARRAMBIDE: I'll go back to high school. I think my senior year we won the football championship. We got to the CIF [California Interscholastic Federation] semi-finals in football.

ARENA: Excuse me, that senior year would be '30-'31.

ARRAMBIDE: That would be in '31.

ARENA: Class of '31 was your year.

ARRAMBIDE: Yes. Then in basketball that year we won the Southern Cal [California] championship.

ARENA: You were on both teams.

ARRAMBIDE: Both teams, yes. From there I went to Whittier College. I played freshman football and freshman basketball. They didn't have baseball that year at Whittier College but my sophomore year I played as a regular on the football team. We won the conference and I was selected as all-conference halfback. That same year I played basketball; I was substitute, didn't play regular. I played first base on the baseball team that year. And my junior year I was selected, I think, second team, all-conference in football, first team all-conference in basketball and first team all-conference in baseball. Then my senior year, 1934-35, I had the privilege of being the captain of the football team, all-conference halfback. I was all-conference guard in basketball, captain and all-conference outfielder in baseball in the spring of '35.

ARENA: And your graduating year was, of course, '35.

ARRAMBIDE: Yes.

ARENA: How about any positions as a captain or assistant captain, or anything like that along the way?

ARRAMBIDE: Yes, I was captain of the football and baseball teams my senior year.

ARENA: And who were the coaches, if you recall the names, both at Whittier High School and Whittier College, for the different teams? I'm thinking in the case of baseball as well as football.

ARRAMBIDE: Well, when I played at Whittier High School, I had the same coach for football and basketball. The coach's name was Don Douglas, and for baseball I had Don Cole.

Then at college my first year in football I had Chief Newman and Verne Landreth for my coaches in football. Landreth was also my basketball coach and Chief was our baseball coach. I had the privilege of having Chief Newman for my coach in football three years, three years in baseball, and Verne Landreth as my basketball coach for three years in college.

ARENA: How did the teams make out during those years under Chief Newman when you were there?

ARRAMBIDE: Under Chief in football my sophomore and senior years we won the conference championships.

ARENA: What were some of the teams you had on your schedule?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, in those days we played San Diego State [College], Santa Barbara State [College], Redlands [University], LaVerne [College], Occidental [College], Pomona [College]. Our big games were with Occidental and San Diego State. My junior year we come in second. My senior year we won the conference again. I can remember that senior year we went up to San Jose State [College] to play a game up there Thanksgiving Day. I think the score ended 6-6. I was real fortunate to have real outstanding coaches. I learned a lot from Chief Newman and Verne Landreth.

ARENA: From your personal recollections, how would you describe President Nixon as an athlete?

ARRAMBIDE: I recall him in football mostly. He played on the third team, and third stringers were always on defense playing against the first team. We used to knock him down pretty often, but he'd get up and be ready for the next play. I think he weighed around 150 or 160 pounds.

ARENA: Do you recall that he was faithful in keeping up his practice schedules? I'm thinking of the fact that he was doing well scholastically, so he had to put time in there; he was helping in the grocery store and had to go to the market early in the morning. Did this eat away in his making his schedules?

ARRAMBIDE: I recall Richard Nixon missing very few practices, only when he had to help out at the grocery store.

ARENA: What do you recall about him personalitywise? Did you know him personally from the standpoint of off the field as well as on the field?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes. We were good friends on and off the field. As I look back now, he was one of the originators of the Orthogonian Society at Whittier College. All the athletes belonged to the Orthogonian Society.

ARENA: May I ask if you were a member yourself?

ARRAMBIDE: Yes. I was in the first pledge group to go through, and I recall the ritual we went through, and later they told me it was written by Richard Nixon.

ARENA: If that isn't a secret ritual, how would you describe it, if it isn't confidential, strictly fraternity business?

ARRAMBIDE: It's fraternity business, but I'll tell you it was a tough initiation. A lot of thought went into it. He did an outstanding job of putting that initiation together.

ARENA: If THIS isn't confidential, do you recall that one aspect or one phase of the fraternity was this self-criticism, where members would criticize one another, for whatever cause?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes, I recall that real well. We used to call it the knock-and-boost session, and I think that was put in there by Richard Nixon.

ARENA: As you know, Mr. Arrambide, fraternities are somewhat controversial; some knock them, some boost them. How would you assess your own fraternity? One thing I can think about from the standpoint of knocking them is that they are prejudiced; they don't allow blacks in, for example. That has been one criticism. How would you comment on that overall question, and my question ends with what do you think you got out of the fraternity, if anything?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I think I got a lot out of those knock-and-boost sessions, and I also want to say right here that we had

no race barrier in our fraternity. We had blacks in as well as whites.

ARENA: Do you recall some of the names, possibly, of some of the blacks?

ARRAMBIDE: Yes, I recall one real well. [William T.] Bill Brock from Pasadena [California] played fullback on the football team. I saw him a couple of months ago.

ARENA: Do the fraternity members get together at all these days by any chance? It is, by the way, still in existence on the campus. I'm just wondering if the alumni get together in any way?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, we used to get together at homecoming. We used to have a breakfast, but the last few years the tendency is to go away from it. When Richard Nixon went to Whittier College there was only one fraternity, the Franklin Society. He wanted to start another one, and he started the Orthogonian Society, and I was real proud to belong to it.

ARENA: I believe still another one--I'm not sure when it was started--is the Lancer Society. That may have started later.

ARRAMBIDE: That was started later after I graduated. When I was at Whittier, the Franklins and the Orthogonians were the only two.

ARENA: Looking back over your overall education at Whittier College, how would you assess it? Do you think you got a good education there?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I've often been asked. Because of my athletic ability I had a chance to go to Saint Mary's [College, California] and the University of California.

ARENA: Would this have been the University of California at Berkeley?

ARRAMBIDE: Berkeley, yes. My high school coaches, two of them, were from Whittier College. My elementary coach was from Whittier College, and I'd never been away from

Whittier, so I decided if I was going to go to college I'd go locally. And people have asked me if I've ever regretted going to Whittier College. I never have. In fact, I think it was the best thing I ever did. It was a small school, I knew everybody there, I knew all the faculty, and everybody was willing to help a hundred percent, and I never have regretted it. If I was to start over again, I'd go to Whittier College.

ARENA: You were mentioning earlier that you had contact with the President on a social level as well. Do you recall any of these experiences? Would this include things such as double-dating? Or would this one year difference make a lot of difference in those days, from the standpoint of joint dating with him and so forth?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, looking back, he was so busy working at the store he probably didn't have as much time as we had to go out on dates. But I can recall being at some of the social gatherings with him. Before he met Pat Nixon, he had another girl friend at Whittier. Her name was Ola Florence Welch.

ARENA: Ola Florence Welch.

ARRAMBIDE: Yes, the daughter of the police chief. I can remember being at some of the social gatherings with them.

ARENA: What do you recall about him in particular, if anything comes to mind at these affairs? Did he seem at ease? Did he enjoy himself? Were you at ease in his company at these social affairs?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, yes, both ways. I've always been at ease around him, and he was the same way with us. He was just one of the boys at that time.

ARENA: It's frequently said that the advantages of an athletic program in a college or high school is that it helps to develop character. How would you comment on that, bearing in mind what you know about President Nixon himself at that period, especially bearing in mind that your character builder number one, the person in the number one position was Wallace "Chief" Newman?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I think athletics. . . . You get knocked around in athletics, just like Richard Nixon did in football. You learn to give and take. You learn to win and lose

just like in life. I think it's a good give-and-take situation. You learn to be a good winner; you learn to be a good loser. I think the association with a number of people in athletics is real good and I think, probably, Richard Nixon got more out of being out there in football, playing on the third team, than the rest of us did playing on the first team.

ARENA: As you know, this project is not concerned with politics, and we're not concerned with the years after 1945, but I'm sure my historians would never forgive me if I didn't ask you for some overall assessment in this sense: In the Richard Nixon of today, what do you see of Richard Nixon, the athlete, bearing in mind that he has suffered some defeats in politics? Do you think that that experience in athletics has played a role in shaping him today and in his overall character, again, not going into politics per se, but in the man's personality and these adverse situations which ANYONE could suffer, not only in politics but anywhere?

ARRAMBIDE: I think it has to a great extent, because any time an athlete, or anyone who has been out for athletics, mentions his coach, you know they've gotten a great deal from the coach, and they've also gotten a great deal out of the athletics. I know he's been up and down in politics, and I think he probably learned from athletics to bounce back and give it a second try.

ARENA: On that question of the influence of the coach, we have mentioned the name of Chief Newman on several occasions, and the President himself has on numerous occasions. I'd like to ask you for your assessment of Chief Newman as a teacher, as a human being, as a professional coach. Take as much time as you like.

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I probably learned more from Chief Newman as far as coaching is concerned than any other coach I've ever had. Chief was a real sound fundamentalist, just like he is in life. Chief was never blessed with a lot of great material at Whittier College. He would take people that wanted to go to Whittier College and wanted to play football, and he'd make football players out of them. He would take average material and developed this material to the fullest extent.

ARENA: Mr. Arrambide, do you think that the Chief, or any coach, may have been at a disadvantage at Whittier College in

the sense that it was founded by the Quakers, who were noted for their non-aggressive personality, their pacifist leanings, among other things, and football is not noted for being a pacifist game? Do you want to comment on that?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I used to hear a few people around town criticize the Chief a little bit, that maybe he was a little aggressive, but as far as I'm concerned he was a great football coach, and you need that aggressiveness to play football, and I think that anybody that's ever played for Chief learned a great deal. I think he's a great man, great builder of character.

ARENA: As you know, the President himself is a Friend, a member of the Quaker church. Did you ever have any discussions, maybe in or out of the fraternity--where these are not confidential--did you ever have any discussions dealing with religion with him in any way?

ARRAMBIDE: The Chief?

ARENA: Well, with both, the Chief and with the President?

ARRAMBIDE: No, that was one thing about Whittier College, I'm a Catholic, and Quakers go there, Protestants go there, and I can't ever remember discussing religion with people there.

ARENA: And just for the record, did you ever feel that you were at a disadvantage because you were a Catholic at a non-Catholic institution?

ARRAMBIDE: Nobody ever made me feel THAT way. No, I never felt that I was at a disadvantage.

ARENA: We were discussing the President from the standpoint of athletics, from the standpoint of your social contact with him. I wonder if you have any recollection of him as a student. Possibly you may have been in some of the same courses, or even where he spoke, we'll say, in the capacity as a student leader, head of the student government--anything that comes to mind along those lines.

ARRAMBIDE: His senior year he ran for student body president. He won the election and made a real fine student body president.



ARENA:           What do you recall about the running of that campaign? This would have been his junior year and your sophomore year, I believe, and then when he did serve in his senior year, it would have been your junior year, so you were there for that complete period.

ARRAMBIDE:       I don't recall anything special on the campaign or the election.

ARENA:           If this isn't too personal, do you recall that he made a special plea to his fellow fraternity brothers; that is, he himself, not someone else, but he himself, made a special plea to support him as a fraternity brother, for example?

ARRAMBIDE:       I don't recall that, but everybody that went out for athletics and was on that football team I'm sure supported him, because we considered him just one of the gang.

ARENA:           And on that point, his being one of the gang, since he was--correct me if I'm wrong--a top student throughout college and high school, and he went on in law school and maintained this high academic level, did he seem, I won't say strange, but did he seem unapproachable to the average person because he was such an outstanding student? Or did he talk your language and the language of your buddies?

ARRAMBIDE:       I think that's why we all admired him so much, because he always treated us as one of the group. He never seemed to be above us. We all respected him because he was a good student, but still he was out there getting his head knocked off every fall in football. He gained a lot of respect from the rest of us.

ARENA:           As this interview is coming to a close, Mr. Arrambide, is there anything that I have not brought up? Any question or any subject that you would like to bring up at this point? Any ground I have not covered that you think should be covered?

ARRAMBIDE:       Well, the only thing that comes to my mind. Whittier High School was having a rally one morning and they asked Richard Nixon and myself if we'd go down and speak at the rally. I recall that real well.

ARENA: Would this be an athletic rally for a game?

ARRAMBIDE: This was an athletic rally for a football game and they asked Richard Nixon and myself to come down to the pep rally. And I think I mentioned it before, on a number of occasions I had the privilege of giving him a ride home from football practice.

ARENA: Do you recall some of the things that you talk about on that ride home, and was it just you and he together, or did you take a gang home in that direction?

ARRAMBIDE: Oh, I would generally take two or three home, and we'd just talk about things in general. I can't recall any big issues we talked about.

ARENA: Did it ever work the other way, in the sense that he had a car in which he gave you a lift from time to time or did he not have his own car, from your own recollection?

ARRAMBIDE: He had a car, but sometimes something would be wrong with his car and he would ask me, or his parents would bring him to school and he'd ask if I'd take him home. Of course, it was just on my way home.

ARENA: Is there any recollection or notion that he was not particularly mechanically inclined, by the way, as far as trouble with his car or anything else?

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I don't suppose he ever had to do anything to his own car. They had a service station there. I imagine they took care of the car at the service station. As I recall he wasn't too mechanically inclined.

ARENA: I believe another person we mentioned, and I would like to ask you to recall it at this point, now that it comes to mind, was Mrs. Richard Nixon who at the time before marriage, of course, was Miss Patricia Ryan. What do you recall about her in the days before she became Mrs. Richard Nixon?

ARRAMBIDE: I just would talk to her as one of the people on the faculty. I wasn't real close to her. I can recall the students that I had out for sports saying what a

fine teacher she was. And I recall when I was coaching there, she had a brother who was coaching at Hoover High School at the same time.

ARENA: Do you recall his name by any chance? There is a [Thomas S.] Tom Ryan and a . . .

ARRAMBIDE: I believe it was Tom Ryan. He was the coach at Hoover High School in Glendale [California]. And we had occasion to talk back and forth about that, her brother coaching at Hoover. But she was a real popular teacher, and from what I could gather from the students, a real good teacher.

ARENA: Did you know the President and Mrs. Nixon in their courting days by any chance? Did you know them when they were engaged, for example?

ARRAMBIDE: Let's see, I was out of Whittier at that time.

ARENA: This would have been around 1938 when they began going together, from then on. And then they were married in 1940, if that helps, the summer of 1940.

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I don't recall. I recall that they were both involved in some plays there at the high school.

ARENA: And in the community.

ARRAMBIDE: Community Players, that's what it was.

ARENA: And on that subject, did you ever get to see the President in any plays, whether they were high school, college or post-college?

ARRAMBIDE: I don't recall seeing him in a dramatic performance, but I do recall listening to some of the debates he engaged in competition against classmates and other colleges.

ARENA: As a person who has spoken in public frequently yourself, and as a teacher, how would you comment on the President's speaking ability from the standpoint of his establishing a rapport with the audience, his speaking off the cuff, his giving a prepared speech? As you yourself do this all the time, how would you assess Richard Nixon?

ARRAMBIDE: I think he does a very good job, off the cuff. I admired him then, when he was in college, how he could debate back and forth without any notes and keep one step ahead of the people he was debating with. I don't know how he feels, but as an audience he made me feel quite easy, that it was no effort for him.

ARENA: Again, anything you want to add as we bring this interview to a close, Mr. Arrambide?

ARRAMBIDE: No. Just one thing in closing. I get kidded quite a bit that I went to college with the President. They always ask me, just like we have in this interview, what kind of a person was he, how did he get along with you. I always tell them he was one of the fellows, real easy to get along with and they can't believe that he went out for football. And I keep telling them he probably learned quite a few things from his experience in football.

ARENA: As a matter of record, do you recall in some of these skirmishes that you ever hit him in such a way that maybe you gave him a bloody nose or a black eye? Does that come to mind in any way? Or maybe you saw someone else do that.

ARRAMBIDE: Well, I can remember him on the ground most of the time, but we'd pick him up and he'd be ready for the next play. That's what we admired about him. He never got into a ball game, but he was there and he took it every week.

ARENA: Well, Mr. Arrambide, I want to thank you very much for granting me the privilege of this interview and for answering all of my questions so frankly and fully. And above all, I know my fellow historians join me in this expression of appreciation. Thank you.

ARRAMBIDE: Well, this is certainly an honor.