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## Edna Collins, Bewley Allen, and Katherine Sorensen (June 21, 1971)

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ABSTRACT  
Oral History Interview

with

MRS. EDNA COLLINS  
MR. BEWLEY ALLEN  
MISS KATHERINE SORENSEN

June 21, 1971  
Whittier, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

Miss Sorensen, Mrs. Collins and Mr. Allen are long-time Whittier residents. They are all acquainted with the Nixon family. Patricia Ryan lived in the Collins' home for two years while she taught at Whittier High School.

[At the request of Katherine Sorensen's heirs, her portion of this joint interview has been omitted from the final transcript, and the original tape and rough transcript are not to be released.]

The interview began with a general discussion of the background of the participants and of Whittier's history.

The following verbatim dialogue, related especially to Edna Collins' recollection of Patricia Ryan, then took place:

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ALLEN: I don't want to go too long, but before we stop I would like to get Mrs. Collins here to tell you about the period when [Patricia Ryan] Pat Nixon lived in their home.

SORENSEN: [Omitted by request of heir.]

COLLINS: Well, I'll tell you. Pat lived with us for two years. She was a teacher in the high school here.

ARENA: Do you recall the two years, Mrs. Collins?

COLLINS: She lived in our home for two years and taught in the high school. They couldn't find places for their teachers and they called us and asked us if we would take one, and it turned out to be Pat Riley. And she stayed with us for two years.

ARENA: Excuse me, you mean Pat Ryan.

COLLINS: Yes, Pat Ryan. That's right. I'm used to a Pat Riley here in Whittier. Pat Ryan, and we were in our new home at 610 Terrace Place. (We had tarantulas in the living room, and things like that.) Pat stayed there for two years.

ARENA: Would 610 Terrace Place be in Whittier?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, just off of Alta Street, north of Hadley [Boulevard].

COLLINS: Oh, I don't remember what year it was.

ARENA: But the first two years she taught, possibly?

COLLINS: Yes, the first two years she taught here in Whittier, and she was interested in so many things, not only in education but also in people. She was a fine teacher and interested in her pupils--not only as pupils altogether but as people, and their plans and projects for their adult life. She was really a remarkable person. She was interested in anything to do with humanity, and when she lived at our house she would sit up half the night typing. At that time she was interested in journalism and I think she sent a few things out to magazines and places. She had done so many things before that I just can't even enumerate them. I think she had been a secretary. She also was interested in home decoration, played the lead in Whittier Community Players. During Dick's absence in World War II she was in [Office of] Price Administration, etc. She did everything.

And when they lived out near Candlewood Country Club--I think he was running for the Senate--her children were so well behaved. I had tea there several times. She disciplined them in a firm way, and yet in a joking way, too. There was never any fuss or anything like that. And I think you see the result of that today in her children. She is poised and gracious and calm, and they are, too. They seem to have the same attributes. Some people feel she is cold, but she isn't. She is a warm person. People cannot be as interested in other people as she was, and in the better things of life, and be cold. I think maybe

some of those attributes cause people to feel that way, but I would say it is not true.

I remember--this is one little instance--I was teaching in Adult Education here in Whittier at the time, and she would hear my car come in about 9 o'clock at night. And when I would get into the house, she would have two cups of chocolate poured and a cup of coffee for my husband. She and I would sit on the floor in front of the fireplace and he would sit in his chair, and we would discuss the things of the day. She was that kind of a person, and we just enjoyed having her with us so much. I think Dick--he is a very intellectual person, very fine mind, and I feel his integrity is beyond reproach. We all felt the same way. I feel that they are of equal abilities, and that she has been the best helpmate a person could have.

ARENA: Do you mind if I interrupt? Did President Nixon know her at the time she was living at your house?

COLLINS: Yes; they were both in the Community Players while she was living at my home, and they met then and went together for most of those two years. We were invited to their wedding. They were married at the Inn in Riverside [California].

ARENA: Would that be the Mission Inn at Riverside?

COLLINS: Yes.

ARENA: The President just mentioned that in today's paper, how sorry he is that it is being torn down.

SORENSEN: [Omitted by request of heir.]

ARENA: I remember that from my Army days--beautiful.

SORENSEN: [Omitted by request of heir.]

ARENA: They have tried, but I understand they are losing a great deal of money.

COLLINS: I think Pat reacted to him at first like many girls do. I said to her one day, "Well, how do you like Dick Nixon?" "Oh, he's all right," she said. And of course, later they were married, and that's very often the case. She has a very independent way of thinking things through, and she is willing to listen to the other side. But she is thorough, I would say. She never makes snap judgments, and I think she must be a great help to Dick at all times, and I think he respects and listens to her judgment.

ARENA: Do you recall, possibly, her religious affiliation at the time?

COLLINS: Well, as far as I know, she didn't go to church at that time. She just didn't go.

ARENA: Interesting religious differences. [Francis Anthony] Frank Nixon was a Methodist and then a Quaker.

COLLINS: We never discussed religion at that time. I wasn't going to church then. I was teaching--sometimes day and sometimes night--and it was about all I could do, and there was a spell in there when I didn't go. I am a Congregationalist, along with the Maples. Your mother and Marjorie [Maple] were two of the finest women I ever knew, except the Sorensen women, and we went to the same church. But after I got adjusted to this teaching business, then I went back.

\* \* \* \*

The first interview ended with another consideration of the personal background of the participants.