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Gerald E. Bruce (October 19, 1972)

C. Richard Arena
Whittier College

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Oral History Interview

with

MR. GERALD E. BRUCE

October 19, 1972
Whittier, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. Gerald E. Bruce, (E. middle initial stands for Eugene) of Whittier, California. Today's date is October 19, 1972, Arena interviewing.

Mr. Bruce, by way of getting some background information on yourself, may we begin by my asking you where and when you were born?

BRUCE: Yes. I was born in Long Beach, California, July 12, 1913.

ARENA: And would you mind giving a brief resume of your educational background and follow that with your career to date?

BRUCE: Well, let's see. We moved to Whittier in 1917. The folks had an orange ranch out on Norwalk Boulevard, the same place that we are actually living now. So I went to what is now West Whittier School. It was the old Pico School at that time when I went there when I was six years old and in the first grade. So then we graduated from the old Pico School and then went to Whittier High School. That was in '29, and went there and graduated in 1933.

ARENA: And just to be sure, that year would have been the senior year of President Nixon then, so you were a freshman during his '29-'30 academic year.

BRUCE: That's right. And then from there went to Whittier College then in '33. So again I was a freshman when Dick was a senior and graduated from Whittier College in 1937.

ARENA: Excuse me. Do you mind if I ask you your major at the college?

BRUCE: Yes, it was in chemistry at that time and my minor was in sociology and there was, of course, the necessary mathematics to get along with the chemistry as far as that's concerned, but actually at that time I had met with--of course, knowing Dr. Ostrom as head of the chemistry department up there . . .

ARENA: Do you recall his first name by any chance?

BRUCE: Gustaf. In fact as a little sideline on that, my wife teaches in elementary school now and his son's wife is one of the teachers along with my wife now, so we still know the family and keep in touch with them. Then I went to USC [University of Southern California] for graduate work, and it was Dr. Ostrom who suggested the idea of going into teaching, into education, so I went that summer of '37 and all of '38 and '39 to USC and got my teaching credential for secondary, and also my master's degree in chemistry then from USC. And then I actually started teaching in the fall of 1938 at Covina High School.

ARENA: Would that be the one where [Wallace J.] Chief Newman was a coach or was that at West Covina?

BRUCE: No, it would be the old Covina High School. He was there--that's right--prior to my going there because, of course, he had been in Whittier all the time we were in college there.

ARENA: Were there any mementos or any marking by the school in any way that he had been coach, in the sense that maybe he had had some great teams and you may recall references to that fact from your own recollection?

BRUCE: Well, he was well remembered. I am sure of that. In fact the principal, Ben Millikan . . .

ARENA: And Ben would be the nickname for Benjamin?

BRUCE: That's right. Yes. And he often remarked about Newman being there, because he himself had been there several years and so he remembered Chief Newman very well in terms of his being there. And I guess it must have been shortly after--maybe it was right after Newman had been out of school or something that he was there. I'm not sure just when the time was but it was prior to my going there, of course. And then following three years of teaching at Covina, we went to Coachella Valley [California]. In the meantime I had married a girl who graduated from Whittier College. And then we were there one year and it was in December of '41 when Pearl Harbor occurred and, well, through that year and the following summer I went into the Air Force, first as a civilian employee in

teaching physics at what was then called the Army Air Base in Santa Ana [California]. Then in the winter of '42, along about December, they took us all into the service, and we enlisted and they sent us to OCS [Officer Candidate School] and we received our officers ratings--our commissions--and then we came back there and we were there for another year or so. Then I went to Minter Field, up by Bakersfield [California], and was in the flight school there, a basic flight school, where I taught weather in the ground school. And let's see, that went along until about '45 or '46. I am not exactly sure of that date there when I was separated from the service, but I went back with the Veterans Administration then for about another year as a training officer and worked with what they called Public Law 16 veterans, those that had disabilities of one kind or another. They were going back to school, so we kept track of them to see what they were doing and how they were doing and whether they were getting paid and all the rest of it and took care of some of their problems.

And then it was in '47, I think it was 1947, that I went back to teaching and I taught one year at Lynwood [California], down in the Compton School District and then from there went to Santa Ana [California] and was in Santa Ana three years and then in 1951 came back to Whittier as a teacher. I had been teaching a couple of years in the adult program here in the Whittier High School and then I came back to the high school district as a full-time teacher in 1951. Went from there to El Rancho High School when it opened in 1952, taught there until '63, I think it was, and in 1963 I went to Pioneer High School and was there for three years and in '66 went to Rio Hondo Junior College, now Rio Hondo Community College, and that's where we are at the moment.

ARENA: And your present position from the standpoint of title and the subjects you are teaching there or the administrative position you have there, Mr. Bruce, at Rio Hondo?

BRUCE: At the present time I am department chairman for the Department of Engineering and Mathematics at Rio Hondo.

ARENA: Thank you. Going back to your direct contact with President Nixon, so that you have an idea of the direction in which my questions will flow, and don't you hesitate at any point, if something comes to mind, whether I ask you the question or not, any incidents, any experiences that come to mind, you just blurt right in. But I intend to ask you what you do recall about him we'll say from the academic side, although he was a senior and you were a freshman, possibly you may have been in some of the same classes together. Then there is the extracurricular side where you may have seen him in the position of student leader on campus and so I will ask you about the extracurricular Richard Nixon in high school and the same thing with the college period. What you recall about him from the academic side, then the extracurricular side.

And then perhaps you met him off the campus. I am thinking of situations where maybe you were in the same service clubs together, maybe you met members of his family and ANY of your recollections concerning any of the members of his family would be pertinent. And then, I am not going to ask you, so there's no doubt about it, I am not going to ask you about the political part of his life, which is more or less 1945 on. That is not a part of this particular research project, so I won't go into politics.

HOWEVER, since you did know the President in this early period and you know of him, of course, now, I would be tempted to ask you to note changes or no changes in personality or habits or traits or style of speaking and things like that without going into politics, but by your recalling him and those habits and customs that he had as a young man just to see, you know what has developed over the years. SO, and again any question I leave out, any question I don't raise, that you want to go into, please feel free to do so.

Let me begin by asking you to clear the air, what do you recall, if anything, about the academic side of the President when you knew him on the high school level or is there any situations, school clubs, I shouldn't say clubs, because that would be extracurricular, but any classes at all where you and he were thrown together?

BRUCE: In high school we had no classes together that I remember at all. I don't think there was any contact that way. I remember him in an academic sense as a member of the debate team. In those days they still had pretty strong debate teams in the high school and I remember him particularly in the sense that, you know, we saw articles in the school paper and so forth in terms of what the debate team was doing and one of the things that I recall is the fact that Richard Nixon was at the top of this thing and as I recall taking many awards of one kind or another through his debating at that time.

ARENA: Do you recall attending possibly as a spectator any of these debates?

BRUCE: I can't recall that. I can't recall that.

ARENA: While we're along these lines, do you recall where he may have been, we'll say, in an auditorium assembly or any situation where you may have seen him on the high school level before an audience, before you, any occasion at all?

BRUCE: Well, yes, in the sense that as actor. He was pretty good in drama as I recall. I remember seeing a play in which he had one of the leads and I can just remember the fact that we were in the audience and it was one of those things that struck me as being--coming in as a freshman into high school, I was almost awed by the situation that you had some people up there in front who were doing all this and it just didn't seem real that

a person could be doing it. And I remember thinking at the time that, boy, these are real great people because they were doing this kind of thing, little realizing that within a few years I would be up there myself, but then this was beside the point at that time. I can just remember being there and seeing this play and hearing the accolades that he received as a lead in the play. I can't remember the name of the play.

ARENA: Do you recall, for the record, that you ever did meet him personally in any capacity during the high school years, working with him in any sort of a committee or, say, even in athletics, was there any opportunity for you and he to get together?

BRUCE: No, I would say not in high school. I just can't recall anything of this nature at all.

ARENA: How about his family and also your possibly visiting the store itself, the Nixon grocery store, at what is now Santa Gertrudes [Avenue] and Whittier Boulevard.

BRUCE: I suppose--and here again it is just a supposition--I suppose I must have visited it, in the sense that my dad in his work with the oranges and knowing some of the people out in East Whittier--we had some relatives who lived out on Gunn [Avenue], I believe it was, the Sharpless family that was here at that time.

ARENA: There is a gentleman by the name of Sharpless in Lindsay, I know. Would that be any relation?

BRUCE: That would be a cousin, Ralph Sharpless. That's one of the boys and Homer [Sharpless] is another one of the boys.

ARENA: I believe Homer is the gentleman I met.

BRUCE: That probably is right . . .

ARENA: Excuse me, who was here for the annual or Yearly Friends Meeting.

BRUCE: Right, right, he was a former missionary with the Friends church, I believe it was in South America if I'm not mistaken.

ARENA: He did speak about missionary activity in Guatemala, Central America, of course.

BRUCE: Right.

ARENA: Just to be sure, if it isn't too personal, are you a member of the Friends church yourself?

BRUCE: No, not now. We were at that time. My folks had been Friends for a long time back and my grandparents from Indiana and Kansas, the relationship of the family there. When they came to Long Beach they went into the Friends Church in Long Beach, which had been organized I suppose around 1900 or somewhere in that era, and for a time we went to the Friends Church in Long Beach even after we moved to Whittier. We drove back and forth on Sundays and spent the day with my grandparents there. So while I was going through elementary school and I would say through the first two or three years of high school, we were actively attending the [First] Friends Church in Whittier here.

ARENA: The reason for these questions and tying it in with the President is, that in his book Six Crises, which is dealing with contemporary political events BUT from time to time he touches on early parts of his life and he brings out the fact that his mother. . . . The President said that his mother had hoped when he was a youngster that he would some day go to Central America as a missionary, and knowing Mr. [Homer] Sharpless as you would, I am just wondering if you ever heard anything along those lines yourself or had any recollection of that subject coming up in any way, that the mother of Richard Nixon, Hannah Nixon, did have this dream. I am just wondering if you may have gotten wind of that indirectly through Homer Sharpless or anyone else?

BRUCE: No, I can't say that I ever did. In fact, I haven't seen Homer now for several years myself. We visited him one time when they first had their ranch down around the Pala [California] area and when he had some oranges down there. And that was, as I recall, after he had left Whittier. But that was before he went into the missionary work, I am pretty sure. But I don't remember anything that ever had anything to do with the Nixons as far as making any connection there at all.

ARENA: That is a personal out-of-school connection, you mean?

BRUCE: Uh huh.

ARENA: How about any members of the family who were living in Whittier? I am thinking of the Marshburns, and Mrs. Oscar Marshburn, whose maiden name is Rose Olive Milhous, the President's mother's sister. Any connection with any members of the Marshburn family, her children, who would be the President's first cousins, of course.

BRUCE: Well, I wouldn't say there was any connection. I knew one of the Marshburn boys up at the Friends church.

ARENA: One is Theodore [Marshburn], Ted. He is now a doctor, eye doctor. Another would be Hadley. He is now in Oakland and he went on into engineering, by the way, Hadley Marshburn.

BRUCE: Hadley Marshburn, well, here again . . .

ARENA: And still one more would be a teacher in social science, Howard Marshburn. And then there is the daughter [Marygene Marshburn] who married a Mr. [William H.] Wright, now living in the original Milhous ranch home.

BRUCE: Uh huh.

ARENA: I just wanted to be sure. Once again as you were brought up in Whittier and these children were growing up too, you have come into contact, and they are younger, so there may have been a better possibility of your associating with them than with the President.

BRUCE: Uh huh. That's right.

ARENA: Moving on to the college years, again just let me repeat whatever comes to mind regarding the academic side of the President that you saw and the extracurricular side, including but just by way of a reminder here, he was in sports, football, of course; he did continue his interest in debating and was on debating teams, of course; his interest in music, in addition to the school men's glee club, which I understand was called the Ambassadors of Song. He also was taking some music lessons and maybe you had opportunity to see him in that context. And then, of course, he was president of his classes and then finally president of the entire student body.

BRUCE: Uh huh.

ARENA: Especially when you were a freshman.

BRUCE: Yes, that's right.

ARENA: So anything that comes to mind along those lines. Take as much time as you like.

BRUCE: Well, one of the first things, I suppose one of the first direct contacts that I had with President Nixon was before school actually opened. In those days they had a kind of a reception for incoming freshmen, and at the time we were at school registering, I remember him having--I am not sure that this just happened--but he came up to me while I was in line at registration and told me about this reception they were going to have and part of the program for that reception was to have people from the freshman class, you know, do something in the way of playing a musical

instrument or singing, doing something in which they might be involved themselves, I suppose, and I always wondered why he picked on me, but he asked me if I would sing a solo because he had heard that I was doing some singing down at the high school prior to that time. I had been in a couple operettas and had been in glee club work there ever since my freshman year actually in high school.

ARENA: And just to be sure, you say you wondered, are you still wondering why? Did you ever find out why he did single you out? How he got your name, for example?

BRUCE: [Laughter] No, I don't know that I ever found out how he got it, other than the fact that he might have had a connection through the high school music teacher at that time, Mr. Petty.

ARENA: Do you recall his first name by any chance?

BRUCE: Ralph Petty. Ralph Petty had a daughter at Whittier College.

ARENA: Might she be married to someone like Mr. Soeberg?

BRUCE: Yes, right. I can't think of her first name, was it Dorothy? I'm not sure, but it was Petty.

ARENA: Now Mrs. Soeberg?

BRUCE: Yes, right. At any rate, I never found out, as I say what the bit of information was that led him to contact me on this thing, but at any rate I said that I would do it and I got one of the girls from high school that I knew who was a pretty good pianist and so she played for me.

ARENA: Do you recall her name by any chance?

BRUCE: Her name was Ruth Culp. She later married a fellow by the name of Brown. She went to Whittier College for one year as I recall, because she was coming over that same fall and we were both freshman there. We had known the family for several years because they had lived out there on Norwalk Boulevard north of us while we were growing up in elementary school. But at any rate, I can't remember the little auditorium in which the reception was held. I know it wasn't up in the old so-called Poet Theatre that we had up in the main building. And it could possibly have been--well, I don't know. I was going to say it could possibly have been in the old Platner Hall reception rooms, but I don't think that would have been a large enough spot. At any rate I just remember going through that experience.

ARENA: Was he involved in that too? In other words not only did he single you out to participate but did he act, we'll say, as the master of ceremonies or contribute anything at the actual program, the freshmen orientation program?

BRUCE: He might have acted as master of ceremonies but I don't know, because he was coming in as the student body president that year, so I don't know whether he did or not.

ARENA: I realize this was many years ago but I am just wondering if possibly--because certain things do stand out many years ago and are very clear for who knows what reason--but can you remember clearly his manner toward you in making this request? Was it one in which it was an upper classman throwing his weight around, being blunt? Was it a kindly invitation? Can you remember anything about his mannerisms and the way in which he asked you to participate in this way?

BRUCE: I have a rather vague recollection of his coming up to me, but it seems to me he approached me in a very friendly fashion and said something to the effect, "Well, I've heard you have done some singing in high school and we would like to have people who are in the freshman class provide some of the entertainment or perhaps most of the entertainment at this reception and would you sing a song for us?" I remember very definitely the ready smile and the idea of friendliness. I certainly wouldn't say that it was anything other than a very friendly gesture.

ARENA: Do you remember the name of the song, by any chance, that you did contribute?

BRUCE: I was thinking about that last night when I was trying to remember a little bit about this and it was "Wagon Wheels." It was interesting to remember though that that was the song that I had sung.

ARENA: Do you remember any follow-up? Did he ask you to repeat that performance or did you and he meet in any other similar situation, say where you joined the choir or . . .

BRUCE: Well, we were together in the glee club that year because I went into the glee club and was a member of this group that you mentioned the Ambassadors of Song and also became a member of the Quaker Revelers that same year later on. That's when Manville Saxton and Joe Gaudio--I can't think of who else was in that.

ARENA: Was there a McClure involved in that?

BRUCE: Yes, Harley McClure.

ARENA: Whom I saw the other day.

BRUCE: Yes, Harley McClure was in that.

ARENA: He mentioned a Mr. Joe Gaudio. Just to be sure you mentioned another name?

BRUCE: Manville Saxton.

ARENA: Any idea where Mr. Saxton might be. I do know about the whereabouts of Mr. Gaudio, thanks to Mr. McClure.

BRUCE: Manville Saxton was a teacher in the elementary schools here for many years and then retired. Now I haven't heard from him for several years.

ARENA: Would he have been an upper classman?

BRUCE: He would have been an upper classman. In fact, I am pretty sure that he must have been a senior at that same time, and I can't recall the circumstances in which the baritone had to drop out of that quartet. Anyway, they approached me with the idea of taking that position. We were right in the middle of the year and could I learn, you know, a minimum number of songs so that within a week or ten days we had a concert coming up and would I be ready to go with them.

ARENA: Did the President have anything to do with the quartet? I know he did with the Ambassadors of Song.

BRUCE: No, he didn't have anything to do with the quartet, but we were a part of the Ambassadors in the sense that we had our part on the program in special music and so forth, but as far as the glee club itself was concerned, it was under Frederick Vance Evans; I remember the name there. Particularly in our spring tour which carried us up north--generally speaking we went up around San Francisco [California] area and maybe up to Sacramento [California] and back around--but President Nixon was in our glee club and joined us for that tour. He was the one that would make the little talk and about half way through give a little pitch for Whittier College, because we did give a lot of concerts in high school situations where we had many high school students.

ARENA: In other words this was a recruitment . . .

BRUCE: Right.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: Just to be sure we didn't leave anything off at the end of the last side, we were discussing the fact that Mr. Richard Nixon had been in charge of giving a little pitch in between or at the halves of the glee club performances. Do you want to elaborate on that in any way, in the sense, did he use notes, did he read, did he give this same set speech every time? Whatever comes to mind.

BRUCE: Oh, I don't recall his ever using any notes for it. I think he was a great extemporaneous speaker as I remember, just from making announcements and giving this little pitch and so forth. I don't think he ever used a note on it. I can't recall anything like that at all. Now whether he was the one that always did it or not, I'm not sure about that either. Although I do recall that in the instances where we were in the high schools, I am pretty sure that he is usually the one that gave that, and you know, he was always introduced as the student body president of Whittier College and he would give his little talk on it.

And one of the things I recall particularly in terms of being in this organization was the fact that we were both baritones and so we stood together actually in the second row or whatever it was as far as the organization was concerned. But we sang together in terms of the parts and obviously had the kind of conversation that would go on between a couple of college fellows back there, but here again . . .

ARENA: I wonder, I wonder, do you recall any of those conversations?

BRUCE: Here it was a freshman versus a senior kind of relationship and I don't think I had a close contact with him as far as any conversation was concerned. I can't remember anything specifically at all.

ARENA: Do you recall that he tried to persuade you to join certain organizations? I am thinking of the fact that he was one of the charter members, I am sure, of the Orthogonians. I am wondering if anything like that came up?

BRUCE: No, no. I was not oriented toward any of the physical education end of things or anything of this nature or any of the activities which Orthogonians usually were involved in, so I don't think I ever had any contact that way.

ARENA: I believe a lot of them were in athletics. As a matter of fact were some of the stars of the football team.

BRUCE: Oh, yeah, I remember fellows like John Arrambide and, well, [Daniell] Dan Tebbs and some of those fellows were in the same class that I was, so I remember them.

ARENA: Arrambide is now, I believe, at Mt. San Antonio [Collegel], and we are trying to contact him.

BRUCE: Yes, I understood he was out here somewhere. And, of course, you have probably already contacted Dan. He's in the Whittier High School District here.

ARENA: I didn't realize that.

BRUCE: In the administrative offices. At least he was just a year or so ago.

ARENA: Along those lines, if this isn't too personal, taking into account you have been a member of the [First] Friends Church and he has been and still is, by the way, officially a member of the East Whittier Friends Church, do you recall that subject coming up in any way, again persuading you, trying to persuade you to be a member of such religious organizations as the Christian Endeavor or do you recall that subject coming up in any way at all?

BRUCE: I don't recall any contact along that line.

ARENA: How about the idea that the college, and I believe still in your day--correct me if I'm wrong--had chapel required and although it might not necessarily be a religious sermon, you were expected to attend. Do you recall: one, did you have that as a requirement; and two, was he involved in any way? Was he a speaker at some of these programs that you attended yourself?

BRUCE: Well, undoubtedly he was, but I don't recall any specific one at all. Yes, we had the requirement for a weekly chapel meeting and I don't recall even what day that might have been. But it was getting I think in those days to the point where we were expected to go, but if there was something else that might be involved in terms of a school activity or something, there was pretty good freedom as far as not being checked up on particularly. I don't recall anybody ever going out after you and saying, "Hey, how come you weren't in chapel yesterday?" or something like this.

ARENA: Just to be sure along these lines of your getting to speak with him from a close point from time to time, although bearing in mind the four years difference, do you recall his bringing up the matter of particular subjects or teachers, saying you should take this fellow, he's a good teacher or anything along those lines at all?

BRUCE: No, I don't recall anything like that. [Laughter]

ARENA: And to move into another extracurricular area where you may or may not have had direct contact with him or maybe you saw him at a distance, but the athletic side of President Nixon at Whittier College. Do you recall the football contact?

BRUCE: Oh, yeah. I remember the fact that he was a member of the squad. I don't know if we ever considered him what you

would call one of the top players on the team. I don't think he considered himself that at all, but he was in some of the games. I remember him being in some of the games the last couple minutes or so when they would put some of the second string fellows in, he would be put in the game all right. So I definitely remember him as a part of the football team, but I don't remember him being in any other athletic contest or any other athletic team of any kind.

ARENA: Do you recall that in the football period, especially if he had a game one day and had to come out for glee club practice the next day, did he have any black eyes or broken bones. Did the physical side of the football show up on him in any way?

BRUCE: [Laughter] I can't recall that there was anything like that, nothing that stuck with me certainly. [Laughter]

ARENA: Thinking back at that period, did it seem to you in any way unusual, and correct me if I'm wrong, that he was a top student, and I wonder if you were aware of it at the time. Evidently he had a very good college academic record. Were you aware of the fact that he was a college student and also on the football team, and also did that seem unusual at that time in any way?

BRUCE: Oh, I don't think it seemed unusual. I think we were all aware that he was a good student and very well thought of and very well liked all the way through, as far as I can remember. But I don't remember anything particularly other than just the fact that we thought highly of him because of his spot, and here we were the lowly freshmen coming in, and so anybody that was in leadership capacity and a senior, they were pretty good, they were something. [Laughter]

ARENA: I wonder if I could ask this general question, again not going into politics per se, but given your firsthand contact with him, although it was these two years only on the school level, but given this firsthand contact, what were some of your first thoughts when you noted that he was entering the public life, when he was entering politics? Were you surprised or did it seem natural in view of the young Richard Nixon that you had known back in school days?

BRUCE: I can't remember my feeling at the time. As I look back on it, I certainly am not surprised that he did this in the sense that I think he was always outgoing. I think he was always interested in what was going on around him--what other people were doing and thinking and, you know, it's just a situation where it seemed very natural that he should go ahead and continue into the political field, particularly with his law background that he attained

later on after he left Whittier. And here again, we kept in contact in the sense that we knew the law firm for which he worked. [Thomas W.] Tom Bewley, for instance, was an old-time friend of the family and at the time he entered public office and was elected to the Senate--was it Senate?

ARENA: First time Congress and then the Senate. He was a senator when he went out for Vice President.

BRUCE: That's right. Well, it was when he was first running for office and when he was first elected then as Representative that I remember my wife helping her aunt, who in turn was working with a group of ladies preparing things for Pat [Patricia Ryan Nixon] to take with her--clothes and things like this--because they really didn't have a whole lot to go back there with and they were getting all these things ready.

ARENA: May I ask your wife's full maiden name, Mr. Bruce?

BRUCE: Her maiden name was Genevieve Joy.

ARENA: Was she a native of this part of the country?

BRUCE: No, she was born up in Washington.

ARENA: The state of Washington?

BRUCE: And then they moved, yes, to California when she was two or three years old, somewhere along in there, when they came down into California.

ARENA: I believe you said you met her at Whittier College?

BRUCE: Yes, we met at Whittier College.

ARENA: What was her graduating year?

BRUCE: She graduated in '37, the same time that I did.

ARENA: Again I can't help but ask this general philosophical question, given your knowledge of the President when he was both in high school and college, given as has been brought out in the early part of the interview your experience as a student for many years yourself, your experience as a teacher on many levels--I'm thinking now of different schools in the area and then on the college level now. Given this wide range in direct experience with many many students, what is there, if anything, that indicates the sort of qualities or the sort of personality that turns out a President? In other words, are there other Richard Nixons in this area from your own--of course, your experience has been overwhelming in this area--but do you find that he is an overwhelming exception. Of course, anyone who's President is an

exception, but given the background of him as you know it, the background of the whole area which you also know, was it that unusual that this area could produce a President? As I say, this is strictly philosophical, but at the same time someone in your position is in a better position to answer that than someone who is not from this area.

BRUCE: Well I think so often we see people in our classes who exhibit the same or like characteristics to one degree or another, but through the choices that they make or someone else makes for them as they go along, they may not have quite the same opportunities or the same situation come about which leads them into the path which eventually leads into a Presidential possibility. But certainly as far as characteristics is concerned, I've had a few people in my classes who I would say exhibited these same basic characteristics: outgoing individuals, interested in others, interested in what's going on around them, and social structures and one thing and another and with good abilities in their own right, as far as speaking, being able to think on their feet and all the things we usually think of as characterizing top-notch thinkers. People that can get other people to work with them and do things with them. You have to have a certain ability to sway someone else to your thinking or you're not going to get very far along that line. [Laughter] And I don't think it's unusual that a person might come from this kind of background because this is just what it seems to me to take to get somebody started along this line. But there are so many things that can happen in between, of course, that you just can't pick out somebody and say well, boy, there's a good candidate for President of the United States fifteen or twenty years from now. [Laughter]

ARENA: Since you are being so bold as to answer these impossible questions, I will have to give you one more, Mr. Bruce. Again given your particular background and upbringing as a member of the Friends church yourself, and this is strictly from a layman's--a non-Friends--point of view, as I was not brought up as a Friend and my education is strictly from books and personal contact with Friends. BUT was his being brought up as a Friend a liability or an asset in the sense that, and correct me if I'm wrong, if there is such a thing as a stereotyped Quaker, a general personality, one thinks that it is retiring, one thinks of pacifist, the opposite of aggressive and so forth. Could that be taken as a liability in any way that he was brought up as a Quaker where the qualities for such a job as running for office, whether it's Congressman or Senator or President seem to call for an AGGRESSIVE type of person. I told you it would be an impossible question.

BRUCE: [Laughter] Well, I don't know. My own thinking would not necessarily mean--although we think of people who are going to go for political office, have to be pretty

aggressive--they have to get out and dig up all the stuff they can on the opponents and all the rest of it, in this present political arena anyway. I think there is something about Quakerism, in the depths of Quakerism, what I would call just a good staunch determination, some people might call it stubbornness, but it's determination to go on in the beliefs or in the particular religious concept that Quakerism has had over the years that probably gives a person a quality of good solid thinking that I think would be certainly one of the primary characteristics of somebody running for this kind of an office, for the President particularly. And I think that through the years there was a stability here of just the idea of theocracy, the idea of God and His control of man and the fact that man, however, has his own abilities and will that he can put into the picture but having direction from a spiritual source, which I think is one of the very strong points of Quakerism as such.

ARENA: From your overall knowledge of the President and the community in which he grew up, how would you describe him as a religious person? I realize that is an impossible question too, but again given your personal vantage point, having been brought up as a Quaker yourself and knowing that he was and knowing him as you do, recalling his personality when he was with you and sometimes what a person does not say and does not do as well as what he does do, taking all this into account and realizing you are not his brother and you do not have that intimate relationship with him, but taking all into account, how would you address yourself to that question, evaluating the significance of religion, his religious training and so forth as a part of his character and personality? And again right up to the present time without going into politics per se?

BRUCE: Well, it seems to me that over the years the history of this country seems to indicate that a person who has had some good solid religious training and religious background in the home in the early years of his life and so forth, generally speaking has been in the background of nearly every one of our Presidents to some degree or another, and I think that this is a characteristic, a quality, that certainly in my own mind is needed. It's certainly a quality that seems to have paid off. In other words the idea has paid off in terms of the quality of Presidents that we've had. And I think Dick's background and the family relationship--although as I say I had no contact with him at that time or with his family because they were in the East Whittier church while we were always at the one uptown here in Whittier--I think this must have definitely had an effect on his thinking and as I have followed what little bit I have been able to follow in terms of his contacts with religion through his friendship with Billy Graham and some of the other leaders that we have, I am sure that this has been a stabilizing influence in his life and gives him direction.

ARENA: Excuse me, could you say from your own personal contact with him back in the high school and college years, bearing in mind how limited it was, could you say that he was the type who went to church on Sunday and wore a religious mantle on Sunday or do you recall him as one who was influenced by his religious training during the week?

BRUCE: Oh, I think he was very definitely influenced and I think this was just evident through his relationships, as I recall, with other people. The fact that again this idea of being able to have what we would call some high ideals and they were reflected in the things that he stood for I'm sure and the things that he did. You know I never thought of him as being anybody else, other than the fact that his religious training must have carried over into his daily life. I can't remember anything that would lead me to think otherwise.

ARENA: Mr. Bruce as this interview is coming to an end, is there any, and it need not come to an end if you have anything else to say, but I want to be sure if there is any point or subject I have not raised myself that you would like to bring up at this time, any experiences, please take as much time as you like to go into them at this point.

BRUCE: Well, it seems to me we have covered the field as far as my recollections and my contacts were concerned pretty thoroughly.

ARENA: Well I want to thank you very much for taking the trouble to grant me this interview and answering all of my questions, including the impossible ones, so frankly and fully. Thank you very much.