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## John N. Renneburg (January 25, 1973)

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Oral History Interview

with

MR. JOHN N. RENNEBURG

January 25, 1973  
Baltimore, Maryland

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. John N. [Norris] Renneburg. Mr. Renneburg is the president of Edward Renneburg and Sons Company of Baltimore, Maryland. Today's date is January 25, 1973, Arena interviewing. May I begin, Mr. Renneburg, from the standpoint of having you give some information about your own background. For example, your date of birth and place of birth.

RENNEBURG: Well, I was born January 1, 1912. I'm about a year older than President Nixon. I was born here in Baltimore [Maryland]. I've lived most of my life here. I graduated from Gilman School and then Princeton University. Gilman School is a private boys' school in Baltimore. It just had its seventy-fifth anniversary. And then I went on to Princeton University and started out taking courses in engineering. I then switched to liberal arts and the Department of Politics, graduated cum laude, and then went to the University of Maryland Law School. I got interested and started practicing law, hanging out my shingle in the midst of the depression in 1936.

I practiced with a classmate of mine for a period of seven years. My partner wanted to get into the service but because he had asthma very badly, they would not accept him. Also, he was married and had three children and so he continued practicing law during the day and worked at night as a welder in the shipyards. And I felt very badly, being a bachelor, that I wasn't doing more for the war effort, so I proceeded then to work down here at this company, which is a small machinery manufacturer in Baltimore, a very old one. This is our ninety-ninth year with the third generation in the company, which was founded by my grandfather. I began working part of the day here and finishing up law work and then going back to my law office at night to prepare cases for my law partner to argue during the day. In some cases, I would help him in court.

But then I felt that I must get into the service, and so I applied for a commission in the Navy. My commission came through very quickly, much more so than I had expected. Actually, I had a year's deferment when it (commission in the Naval Reserve) came through in a matter of several weeks.

My law partner meanwhile had died. He had been working during the day practicing law, and during the night had been a welder in the shipyards when many of our ships were being torpedoed off the coast here, and he caught a very bad cold and continued welding work at night, and finally came down with pneumonia and died. So that was enough for me to decide that I should get right into the service and I did. I went to the Naval Air Station at Quonset, Rhode Island, and finished up there, and then I was in Washington for a while, and then . . .

ARENA: Just to be sure, excuse me, you did not possibly run into President Nixon at that base also, because he was stationed there?

RENNEBURG: No.

ARENA: You were there later than he then, too?

RENNEBURG: Yes. I was there, I believe, in 1943, in November and December, as I was called to active duty in 1943. And then I was in Washington for a while at BU-Air [Bureau of Aeronautics]. I entered the service as an Aviation Volunteer Specialist, AVS. I had applied to get on a ship. I wanted to be on an aircraft carrier, Atlantic or Pacific, but apparently the Navy felt, since I had had some engineering training, some production experience, and a broad legal training, including court work and administration of contracts, that I would be more useful to them in aircraft production and contract administration and termination work. So they had me in a number of aircraft plants, including the Ford Bomber Plant at Ypsilanti, Michigan, and also at Hagerstown, Maryland, and at Erco (Engineering and Research Corporation) at Riverdale, Maryland. But the majority of my time was spent at the Glenn L. Martin Company in Middle River here in Maryland. I never understood how I was selected to go there, because I had expected to be thousands of miles away from home. It worked out well, because my mother was home alone and I had a chance to see her. Also, my father had been ill and in the hospital for twelve years. So it was good to be at least in this general area.

But I enjoyed very much my work in the Navy, especially in the aircraft industry under Captain Robert C. Hatcher, USN, who was one of the leading air frame specialists. He was the Bureau of Aeronautics representative in Baltimore. He was a very fine man. And then he was transferred, I believe, to Task Force 58, as I recall, and went out to the South Pacific, and they brought in a commander, James O. Bigelow, USN. Commander Bigelow, I believe, has subsequently died, but he was a very capable man. I also worked under a Lieutenant

Alden E. Davis and Lieutenant Commander Bissell, from Cincinnati, Ohio. Lt. Alden Davis is, I believe, living out in California. I haven't had a Christmas card from him in the last several years, but he would, I'm sure, have remembered President Nixon, Lieutenant Commander Nixon.

At any rate, my work in the BAR office was as a material procurement officer and as assistant facilities administrative officer. When the Strawberry Point Seaplane Hanger was built where they were manufacturing the largest seaplanes, such as the Philippine Mars, I was Assistant Material Officer on those projects. They were also constructing the smaller seaplanes which were, of course, known as the PB-5-M's, the Martin Mariners. These ships had distinguished war records in the major battle areas during World War II.

It was highly interesting and I had occasion, of course, to spend quite a few hours with the late Glenn L. Martin, with Captain [Robert S.] Hatcher and Commander [James O.] Bigelow. I would be invited in to the meetings, and . . .

ARENA: Would Glenn L. Martin have been living while the President was there?

RENNEBURG: Oh, yes.

ARENA: Do you know if they ever did get together?

RENNEBURG: I'm quite certain they did because I did, and certainly when Lieutenant Commander Nixon took over my job he would have, I'm sure, attended either weekly or monthly meetings with the late Glenn Martin. Mr. Martin was an amazing man.

ARENA: Did he have children or a wife who may be surviving, I wonder?

RENNEBURG: No, the late Mr. Martin was never married. Both he and his mother are deceased. But Mr. Martin would be described as an amazing person, because he seemed to have things very well under control. He was so farsighted. He was convinced that we would win the war. He was convinced that we must look at least five to ten years ahead. He was developing chemicals, interested in chemical facilities. He was interested in commercial flying, developing planes that, as soon as the war terminated, he could convert his company with the least interruption of facilities to peacetime endeavors. They subsequently took contracts for the 202 and later for the larger Martin 404 commercial planes. I remember being in on the original mockups for those planes and made suggestions as to things that I felt--some of which were adopted--would make them a better airplane.

ARENA: You don't recall, by any chance, what his formal education had been, if he had been in engineering college or a lawyer?

RENNEBURG: I believe Glenn Martin was a graduate in engineering and a flyer, of course.

ARENA: I see. When you say he was an interesting gentleman, did he talk nonshop? Did he expand on some philosophy, his ideas and so forth, which may have been with President Nixon as well as with you?

RENNEBURG: Yes, he did.

ARENA: In other words, that would be interesting to follow through.

RENNEBURG: President Nixon was never with me when we were with Martin, but I feel sure he must have been subsequently.

ARENA: If this isn't too personal--it may be just a question of your giving your rank--were you and the President on equal rank at that time? You were both officers, of course.

RENNEBURG: I was just a Lieutenant junior grade. I went in as probably one of the oldest ensigns in the Navy. I was actually thirty-one years of age when I went in. I was in only two years, or a little over, and came out a j.g. [junior grade]. And President Nixon, of course, was in a longer period of time and came out Lieutenant Commander, at least he was when I knew him. Getting back one minute to the late Glenn L. Martin, he would come out of meetings lasting one hour or two hours with him, and hardly realize that we were still in the war era, because he was looking five and ten years ahead, and he was planning so far ahead. He was so farsighted. Some of these things in industry that he was looking forward to subsequently came to pass, but it was just fascinating. This is really off the point of your interview, but . . .

ARENA: Well, no. If the President talked with him, I think that would be interesting to follow through, and I would like to put that question to him, yes.

RENNEBURG: You might ask him. I would like, sometime, to see whether he had the same impression. At any rate, in due course of time, my father and uncle who were connected with this small business--and it was a small business, less than a hundred people--died. I applied then to be released, to be transferred to inactive duty from the Navy on the basis of hardship, because we had a very incomplete staff here, and I felt that a family business, a small corporation which had been in business for over sixty years (it is now ninety-nine years old) should certainly be allowed to continue. And in due course the Navy released me, and they sent down, as I recall, Lieutenant Commander Richard Nixon in

the late summer or early in the fall of '45, and I continued on in the BAR office there until the end of the year. We were very pleased to have Lieutenant Commander Richard Nixon come down because, not only was he a delightful person to work with, very serious and very knowledgeable, and he had been well trained in law and contractual matters, having also been an attorney. And having been out in the South Pacific, he had many experiences there, some of which we would discuss at luncheon. We would usually have luncheon together in the officers' mess.

ARENA: Are there any particular ones that come to mind?

RENNEBURG: Well, we shared desks together, and he, very much like I, was serious in nature. He was all business, and pretty much I was all business, in the sense that we were not interested to sit around and read or to do a lot of talking. We had lots of work to do and so we worked together much of the time. We were terminating contracts and there were millions of dollars involved in these terminations. We had very active days. We were very busy. About the only chance we would have to relax would be when we would walk down to the officers' mess, which was probably a quarter or a half mile away, for luncheon. And I recall one delightful late fall, almost Indian summer day, going down to luncheon. We were just talking generally about things and talking about what we were planning to do after the war, and I told him what my plans were. I hoped to get back here to the company. I probably would not practice law again, but I felt that I had a job to try to rehabilitate this small business and get it back on a sound basis again. And I asked him what he was planning to do, and he said that he had planned to go back to Whittier [California] and practice law. But strangely enough or curiously enough, I don't remember exactly how he worded it, he had had a telephone call from some people out in California who wanted him to run for Congress, and he expressed certain misgivings to me about it.

He said, "Gosh, you know, I'm not a politician and I think it would be very difficult. I probably would be defeated." And I remember facetiously saying, "I hope they didn't reverse the charges when they called you." He laughed and said, "No, they didn't. They seemed to be serious about it." I said, "Well, if you want my advice for what it's worth, which is nothing, and which will cost you nothing, you're the kind of person who ought to run for office. You're as honest as the day is long. You're as hard-working, sincere and dedicated an American as I've ever known. I've known you for quite a few weeks now." And I said, "For goodness sake, go ahead and do it. What are you going to do if you don't?" "Well," he said, "I'm going to go back to Whittier, California, and practice law, probably hang out my shingle." And I said, "You're going to probably have the same experience that I did, only times are better after a war, if we don't have a depression. But during the big depression that we both remember, I starved for a period while I was trying to build up a practice." I said, "Go ahead and run. Somebody might remember

the name of Nixon. Even if you get defeated, you might even get some clients. You might as well be practical about it." He said that well, he was really thinking seriously about it. We had lunch together and we talked about other things. We were both interested in music and many other things.

Of course, I was a bachelor in those days, so I didn't get to know Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Nixon really very well. I met her once or twice. As I recall, she was expecting in a few months and probably not feeling too well, but being a bachelor I didn't go around too much with the married officers, and most of the other officers were married. In this group in our office, I think we had several hundred people and only a limited number were officers. We had some enlisted personnel and a civilian group as well. We went back and we continued working.

And then it seems to me, as I recall, the next day we went to lunch again and he said, "Well, I did it." I said, "You did what?" He said, "I told them I was going to go out there for an interview, that I was interested." And I said, "This is great. I certainly wish you luck. I think you'll make a great congressman. You're the kind of person who ought to be in there, and if there's ever anything we can do to help you, let us know."

So I didn't see him for a period of time after he left, although I have a few letters from him, sent when he was Vice President. I was married in 1948, this being a number of years after I had gotten out of the service. I was discharged, I think, as of the first part of January. I had some separation pay, or terminal leave I guess is the term, which carried me over until January of 1946, but I had left sometime late in December 1945, left the facility down there at the Bureau of Aeronautics Representative Office. But I recall being very pleased when he was successful and became a congressman and followed his career as best I could in the newspapers.

One thing I remember very vividly. After my wife and I were married--and my wife by the way, had also been a Lieutenant, junior grade, in the WAVES. She was stationed in Pensacola, and she was also stationed in Key West for a period of time, and worked in the top secret room in Washington in WAVE communications. She roomed with a group of four or five other WAVE officers, all of whom had been very carefully selected, and they were very much concerned about the confused situation at the end of the war. I felt when the war was over, as the late President Woodrow Wilson and some of my professors in the Department of Politics under whom I studied at Princeton--I didn't have Wilson as a professor, but I had a number of his students including Dr. William Starr Myers and some of the others, that we had made the world safe for democracy again, to use the term from World War I. But I found out when I married Ruth Bennett Buettner that international conditions were such that another war would undoubtedly soon erupt--Korea. Her father had been an Army Colonel, a doctor in the Medical Corps who fought in both World War I and had been an American surgeon on a British transport ship, the Shropshire . . .

ARENA:           Excuse me, I'd like to get the name of the ship.

RENNEBURG:    The Shropshire. He had been stationed on that vessel in World War I as a transport surgeon, an Army surgeon, because so many of the young English physicians had been killed in the war. And then during World War II he was in charge of the laboratories at Ft. Benning [Georgia]. He had many German prisoners under him on his staff, and his daughter then decided that she would go into the Navy, I suppose to be a little different. So she joined the WAVES and went to Smith College and Holyoke, although she had a B.S. degree from The Johns Hopkins University, having attended its evening division, McCoy College, mostly at night. So Ruth, my wife, had been in the top secret room in Washington. And these WAVE officers, a number of whom were in our wedding, were concerned that we were going to have another war very shortly and, of course, I felt that this was preposterous because, as I said a moment ago, I felt that we had pretty well made the world safe for democracy, having just won World War II. And sure enough, the Korean War came along not long after that. These WAVE officers had been involved in the codes.

The codes had been broken and they were unscrambling these codes, and the messages at that time were going through the Navy Department, and they had a pretty good picture of what was going on internationally and the problems in which we were involved, especially with the Russians. I mention this background because, after we were married, we were still members of the Naval Reserve. We had to get permission to go down to Venezuela [South America] and Colombia [South America] where we went on our honeymoon, and we were supposed to report to the Naval attachés at these various ports. But after we had been married a year and a half, our daughter, Carol, was born, and my wife was very interested one day because I got home from work rather late and she showed me a letter she had from the Bureau of Naval Personnel, directing her to report to Annapolis [United States Naval Academy] to get her physical examination to be put on active duty again and made a Senior Grade Lieutenant in WAVE Communications. They were not aware, of course, that we had a child and, of course, she had to resign. We both eventually became inactive, got off of active duty officially.

But what I'm leading up to is that several years after that we were in Washington, and President Nixon was at that time Vice President. We were invited to a dinner in the Statler or Mayflower Hotel, I can't remember which. It was an Advertising Council dinner. And I was not aware of the fact that Dick Nixon was going to be the speaker of the evening. But we were seated about half way back in the ballroom. Nixon came in. I just noticed on the program that he was going to be there, and I was telling my wife. And she said, "Well, I wonder if he'll still remember you." So I said, "Well, I question whether he will, but he just might." So sure enough, during the dinner, before he was scheduled to be the featured speaker, he looked around and pointed out to me and waved to me, and he motioned to me with both hands to come up and see him. He said, "My



gracious, John, what in the world have you been doing?" He said, "You old fellow, did you ever get married?" I said, "I certainly did. I married a WAVE officer, and there she is, sitting down there, the dark-haired girl." He said, "Well, bring her up." So I brought her up, and I said, "Ruth, I'd like you to meet Vice President Nixon. He was my replacement in the Navy." He said, "Certainly is great to meet you, Ruth. What did you do in the Navy?" She told him a little bit, and he said that was fine. He was very nice about it and he said, "Well, I hope we'll see you again. You know, I've got to go on the air here in a minute to speak, and we'll hope to see you again. I'm glad you finally landed him and kept John from being an old bachelor." So he did remember us.

ARENA:           Excuse me, to be sure. He remembered your name right off. You didn't say, "Do you remember me, I'm John Renneburg?"

RENNEBURG:       I think he remembered my name. I don't recall that, but he called me John right off the bat, and he not only waved to me but motioned to me to come up. He's met so many thousands of people since, he probably doesn't now, but I have several letters. But I must say one thing there before I get off the subject. Driving home to Baltimore that night, I asked my wife, I said, "Ruth, what did you think of Vice President Nixon?" She said, "He must have a terrific mind and he gave a fine talk, but you know, he's so tense." I said, "I'm sure he is. Wouldn't you be tense if you were Vice President and knew what you knew about world affairs?" She said, "Yes." And then she said, "You know, he doesn't seem to have as much of a sense of humor as I had hoped he would have." And I said, "Well, he's always been serious. After all, I've always been serious myself." "But," she said, "I wonder if he will ever become President unless he learns to relax a little more."

But I think in recent years, in this horrendous task that he has, he has learned to relax. He has learned to be a little more outgoing. I had a classmate at Princeton that used to sit next to me, Frank Pace. He was Director of the Budget, I believe, for a period of time, then he became Secretary of the Army. And I was at a college reunion dinner with him one time, and we were talking about [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. And Frank was talking about Ike, and he said, "You know, Eisenhower has a very competent young man there, Dick Nixon. But you know, Ike runs things like the Army. He delegates everything, and he expects to have reports given to him, and he reads the reports and reaches a decision. I wonder if Nixon will ever be that type of fellow." Well, I think Dick Nixon is a little bit like I am, probably. He wants to make his own decisions. He wants to read all the available evidence and knowledge and information that he can on a subject and then reach his own decision. And I think this is the case. It annoys me. . . . I got back a few months ago from a business trip to India. I do a good bit of

traveling in my work from time to time, travel from Reykjavik, Iceland to Santiago, Chile. And recently I spent several weeks in India. We're doing another project over there, and I had occasion to meet various business people. I met a young man who was, I believe, the economics editor for the Madras or the Delhi Times, one of the India newspapers, and we were sitting in the Madras airport admiring a picture of Indira Gandhi. Pictures of her, of course, are everywhere, and I was recalling meetings that President Nixon had had with Prime Minister Gandhi. And this young man, who I could tell was obviously of Indian extraction, spoke with a very British accent. So I asked him whether he had ever had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Gandhi and he said, "Yes, indeed, I have. About once a month or so I have dinner with her Sunday evening, Sunday evening supper in her house. I studied at Cambridge, and she has two sons, one of whom was a classmate of mine. One of these young men is a pilot for Air-India and the other one, I believe, is in automobile production, making an inexpensive car, sort of a Volkswagen of India. But he said that Indira Gandhi is simply an amazing person. Until recently she had apparently been a great admirer of President Nixon. And, of course, when we backed Pakistan, he said, "You Americans have a lot of explaining to do."

I was trying to defend our policy. And this man's attitude was that Indira Gandhi is not only one of the best cooks in the world--she prepares, supervises her own kitchen, and when she has people in on Sunday evening, she not only does some of the cooking herself--but he said that when she deals with these foreign diplomats, she seems to operate more on woman's intuition. She will toss out an idea or a suggestion and then sit back and look and see what the reaction is, and if that doesn't sort of bear fruit or receive a favorable reaction, then she will toss out another one. And he said, "You know, apparently we have been impressed with President Nixon, but--and this is, of course, only one man's opinion--we can never quite understand him because he doesn't seem to take us in confidence. He doesn't let us know his innermost thinking. He keeps things in his own mind rather than publicizing his thoughts." He was sort of criticizing us for being poor press agents.

"But," I said, "after all, President Nixon and I'm sure Indira Gandhi is subjected to tremendous pressures and she has a great deal of knowledge that should not be released to the public, at least at this point, until after some fait accompli, until after something has been done, and I feel this is true. People have been criticizing Nixon recently because of the stepped-up bombing and this sort of thing, and they feel that he has not let the public know his reasoning behind it, but I think that it is not possible or wise to give the public all of the facts, and I feel that President Nixon is certainly wise in his approach. Don't play all of your cards; don't tell all the points of your case or give away your case to the enemy ahead of time." But I had the distinct feeling there was great animosity and I hope, now that President Nixon has been reelected for a second term, that the Indians will realize that we have poured tremendous amounts of money in there to help their country. I think

that we shall have better relations with them, and I feel that Mrs. Gandhi really wants to improve the situation.

But getting back to. . . . Perhaps I'm just rambling on too much and talking about too many things. I have several letters here from Dick Nixon. One of them, the only time I ever asked him for assistance in getting a competent man a position in Washington. I had a friend who has since died, a classmate who wanted to get into the Department of Justice, and I wrote him a letter about Julie Renninger, who has subsequently died.

ARENA: Would you mind giving the date?

RENNEBURG: Yes. This letter is dated February 6, 1953. It's addressed to me, Mr. John N. Renneburg, Edward Renneburg and Sons Company, here in Baltimore:

Dear John,

I want to thank you for your letter of January 17, in which you recommend the appointment of Julius C. Renninger to a position in the office of the Attorney General or the Department of Justice. I'm sure you can appreciate the delay in replying to your letter. It was occasioned by the tremendous volume of mail we have received since the election.

I've already called Mr. Renninger's qualifications to the attention of the proper people, and I appreciate your writing to me on this matter.

It was good to hear from you again, and I hope you will stop in the office when you are in Washington.

With very best regards,

Sincerely yours, Dick

RENNEBURG: Then I have another one. I just pulled several of these out when I heard you were coming. This one is from the office of the Vice President, Washington, dated January 27, 1954, again addressed to me here at the plant:

Dear John,

This is just a note to thank you for your letter of January 20 and to tell you how much I enjoyed hearing from you. Needless

RENNEBURG: to say, I greatly appreciated your generous comments concerning my conduct in the office of Vice President.

You may be sure that our trip to the Far East was most interesting, and it was a wonderful opportunity for us to meet and talk with the people of the various countries we visited.

As you can imagine, though, we were glad to get back in time to spend Christmas with the children.

Pat joins me in sending our very best wishes to you and Ruth, and I hope it will be possible for us to get together one of these days.

Sincerely, Dick Nixon

RENNEBURG: Then another one I pulled out. . . . I thought that Dick Nixon had been very close to his father. Dick was very sympathetic with me when my father died, although I had met him just shortly after my father had been buried, but he was very kind about it. So I wrote him a letter when his father died, and then he wrote me this letter back on September 17, 1956. Again, from the office of the Vice President in Washington, on his letterhead:

Dear John:

I want you to know how deeply I appreciated your writing as you did with regard to my father.

The past few weeks have been trying ones, and particularly so for my mother who, during the last two years, has devoted her life to caring for my father.

For her and for all of us, the messages we have received from our friends have been a great source of comfort and strength.

With every good wish to you both,

Sincerely, Dick

RENNEBURG: And, oh, I have another letter here. . . . No, this just happened to be a copy of the same letter, but it impressed me because of his extreme care and honesty. Even the envelope, which had his franked signature, he could have sent it through the mail but he put a three-cent stamp on it, in the good old days when you had three-cent stamps. But at any rate, it shows that he wanted to be above criticism, and I've always felt that he was above reproach.

ARENA: Could I ask you to explain the precise responsibilities, as long as it doesn't violate, of course, any confidences, that you and the President had with the Glenn L. Martin Company and with the Navy? In other words, you were with the Navy during this period. You were looking after the interests of the Navy, which is the U.S. Government. I think many people are confused as to just what was involved there.

RENNEBURG: Well, of course, the Glenn L. Martin Company, Plant No. 1, as I recall, had most of the Navy contracts for the Martin Mariners and the larger foreign seaplanes, the Philippine Mars and the other planes. Those contracts were all administered by the Navy Department and were all under the cognizance of the Bureau of Aeronautics. The Army had a separate group of officer personnel at what was known as Plant No. 1, where the B-26's and some of the other Army planes were being manufactured, and we had some inter-working relationships with the Army personnel down there, but our function at the end of the war was to terminate these Navy contracts and to dispose of the surplus.

The work involved, first of all, sending out literally thousands of cancellation telegrams to all the vendors to stop work immediately. And we would spend hours of the day going over planes that were partially constructed, going over physical inventories of material. There are a few pictures of them on the wall up there. We would take a group of usually two officers and probably four or five Martin personnel. We would have lists, and we would decide what items should be scrapped, what items should be sent to the Naval depot at Mechanicsburg, Pa., to be saved as spares, and there was a great deal of responsibility. We had, as I say, literally millions of dollars' worth of contracts, and as I recall in the course of a day, we might determine. . . . We might have scrapped several hundred thousand dollars' worth of partially fabricated parts for planes, spars and fuel tanks and all the myriads of hydraulics and thousands of parts that go in them. So it was a very exacting job and then, of course, any parts that could be used or salvaged, or would have use in keeping these planes flying, if they were far enough advanced we would, of course, want to save those parts. Then we had a great deal of paper work to do and we had quite a staff helping us.

ARENA: When you say we, about how many of you were lawyers and how many were assistants in the way of secretaries?

RENNEBURG: Oh, I guess there were probably about four of us who were lawyers.

ARENA: This would be full-time.

RENNEBURG: Yes. We were Naval officers, but we had had legal training, you see.

ARENA: And your offices were right there in the plant. I believe I saw that building. Mr. Charles O. Gronert was not sure as to what part of that building your offices were in. I wonder if you recall.

RENNEBURG: Yes, we had the third floor. They're tearing down some of the buildings.

ARENA: Yes, that building is still there. They are tearing down some of the others. One has completely been torn down, I understand.

RENNEBURG: So I understand. And we reported, of course, to Lieutenant Alden E. Davis and Commander Bigelow was in charge of it at that time, and I believe Lieutenant Commander Bissell (he was Lieutenant Bissell and I believe he subsequently became Lieutenant Commander Bissell) was the Executive Officer. Lieutenant Davis was the Materials Officer. I was his assistant, and then I was a Termination Officer, along with Lieutenant Aubrey Cates, who was from Birmingham, Alabama. I don't know whether he is still alive. We always referred to him as Judge Cates, because he always spoke like a judge. He had an excellent legal training. He hadn't had any mechanical or engineering experience. So I suppose it was the fact that I had had some of both that my services were required for this type of work at the termination of the war.

ARENA: If it isn't too personal, we did mention off the tape that you are a Presbyterian. I wonder if you were aware that the President was a Friend, a member of the Society of Friends, and whether or not he had access to attending religious services at a Friends church, or if he was able to attend any?

RENNEBURG: Well, he never said whether he did, at least to me. We have, of course, in Baltimore, the Friends School out here, which is a Quaker School, the Society of Friends. It's very near Gilman School, out in the northwestern section of the city.

ARENA: Near what school?

RENNEBURG: Near Gilman School, where I attended, in the Roland Park, Homeland area. And the Society of Friends has meeting places there, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if both Pat and Dick Nixon went there. But I don't know as a fact that they did.

ARENA: Is there any subject or any question regarding your recollections of the President in that period that I have not touched on that you would like to be sure is included on the record, Mr. Renneburg: Anything I have not brought up?

RENNEBURG: I think not. I can only say that I feel toward him today the same as when I knew him during the war; it has only been completely proven, the fact that he has done such an outstanding job. He has had his disappointments, as everyone does. He has gone through them courageously. He, I think, unquestionably will go down as one of our greatest Presidents. I think there is no question about it.

ARENA: I want to thank you most sincerely for allowing me to have this interview.

RENNEBURG: I want to thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to meeting you soon again. And I hope to see President Nixon one of these days.

ARENA: The feeling is mutual. Thank you.