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Melville Charles Rich (November 10, 1971, second interview)

C. Richard Arena

Second Oral History Interview

with

MR. MELVILLE L. RICH

November 10, 1971
Whittier, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #2 with Mr. Melville Rich, the Managing Editor of The Daily News of Whittier, California. The date is November 10, 1971, Arena interviewing. This is also the first oral history interview in the Richard Nixon Oral History Project where the method of television recording is being employed. Those assisting in this and in charge of that method are Mr. Robert Rheinisch and Mr. Richard Cheatham of the Learning Resources Center of Whittier College.

Now, we did mention the fact that you were the editor of the special edition that was put out for the inauguration of President Nixon. The title is, "Richard Milhous Nixon, 37th President of the United States of America." And this is subtitled, "This Commemorative Edition of The Daily News and East Whittier Review is published in honor of and dedicated to the President and the distinguished history of his family in Whittier and in California." The date for that is Saturday, January 18, 1969, and this is what the title page looks like. That is correct; you were the editor of that?

RICH: That's right. Yes.

ARENA: Mel, how long have you been the Managing Editor of The Daily News?

RICH: Approximately twenty years.

ARENA: By way of review, would you indicate your personal contact with President Nixon over the years? If I'm not mistaken, we have established that you are a native son.

RICH: Right.

ARENA: Now, would you mind going back to the first time that you did meet the President, from the beginning right up to the present time, and then we'll go back in detail, as we did in the first interview, picking up where we left off.

RICH: All right. The first time I met him was when he transferred to Whittier High School from Fullerton [California]. He was one year ahead of me and transferred in his junior year, which was my sophomore year. And being the kind of person he was, it didn't take too long for him to become known on the campus in some of his activities. I had probably met him before but didn't know, because there were times when we would stop at the store in East Whittier which his family operated. However, I was not personally acquainted with him at that time. So we spent two years in high school together, his junior and senior years, my sophomore and junior years, and then, of course, he went on to Whittier College. I've always been a sports nut and always followed Whittier College closely, and although he was not one of the greatest football players on the campus, I knew him as a member of Chief [Wallace] Newman's squad. And I did have, playing on the team, a number of personal friends, who in the summertime, after I had gone to the University of Notre Dame and would come home summers. . . . This group of fellows, Johnny Chapin and the Bonner brothers and a few others, had lived in a barn on North Washington [Avenue]. And my father, who had been a Whittier College booster for many years, if I may get away from the subject to give a little relationship of him. Just recently the Whittier College 1921 football team had its fiftieth anniversary and my wife and I were invited, not for anything we contributed, because I was pretty much of a lad at the time, but half of the squad (it was told to me) had been employed by my father in a bit of proselyting. Whittier College had gone down to Coronado [California] previously and hired the high school football coach, Esek Perry, and speaking the same sports language, mentioned one day about all the good talent he had down there, and it was too bad they couldn't go on to college because they couldn't afford it. And so my dad immediately started thinking of how he could help them. He was the manager of the Southern Counties Gas Company, and he employed I think out of the group that was there at this picnic there were fourteen who worked a lot or a little for the gas company to help pay their way through Whittier College. In some cases, they would never have made it without that income. And as long as he could, until the depression years, he always had some boys there. He preferred to help. . . . Well, he always helped the needy, but he preferred to help the underprivileged, as I guess we call them these days. Later on, I can remember one of my very good friends, Nate George, who came from Washington, D.C., a black boy. Nate worked there during his

four years at Whittier College. Oh, he'd find little jobs for them, and he kept a very fatherly eye on them, and one of the great compliments that was paid to him was paid by Ed Suggett, Whittier College's first player ever mentioned for All-American, I guess. And Ed has--as a matter of fact, I have them in my possession now and am going to return them to Ed--a couple of letters my father wrote to him when Ed became a dropout after he had come to Whittier. He decided he would drop out of college. It was difficult for him and he decided to go back to Coronado and, in his words, become a fireman. My dad wrote a letter. The first one was rather kindly put, and the second one was an absolute order to get back. It followed a week after no response from the first one. And Ed said, since it was written that way he thought he'd better get back, because he'd be in trouble if he didn't. And Ed did come back and finished school and went into a teaching career, from which he is now retired. And he feels, in his own words to me, a great debt for that. Because of that interest in Whittier College, mine was home-born, you might say. If these kids would need a meal, they ate at our house.

ARENA: Where did you live at the time?

RICH: On Haviland Avenue, which then was out in the country; as a matter of fact, right across the street from us were the hills.

ARENA: And for those who are not acquainted with Whittier, it would be the intersection of Painter [Avenue] and Beverly [Boulevard].

RICH: That's one block east, and we were half a block south of Beverly [Boulevard]. It was called Turnbull Canyon Road then.

ARENA: Before we leave this question of your father's proselytizing, do you mind if I ask why he did not succeed in your case? How did you end up at Notre Dame?

RICH: Well, he didn't have a chance there. When the University of Notre Dame came out to play Stanford University in the Rose Bowl, I became, although a Protestant, a Notre Dame bug, and I don't know whether this is a compliment to me or not, but what had great appeal to me was the fact that this was an all-boys' school, and you didn't have to be bugged by girls, and I would change now. They're going to go co-educational one of these days, and I'm sorry I'm not good enough to be back there. But at that time, it had great appeal to me. Well, sports were a very important part of my life. Any studying I did was only because I had to, to participate in sports in one way or another, and I was never a great athlete. That wasn't the motive. Anyhow, my interest in Notre Dame began

then, and it lasted. As a youngster, these interests come and go, and in this case mine stayed, to the degree that when my brother graduated from high school. . . . He was not a great student, either, but he was a great athlete, and he didn't care to go on to college. It sounded like work to him, and he took a job, and he also had a girl friend, and he was thinking of earning enough money to get married. But my dad finally got the message through to him after two years, and he, too, went to Notre Dame, preceded me there.

ARENA: From the standpoint of understanding the boyhood setting and young manhood setting of the President on this question of sports, Whittier today is very sports-minded especially, I would say, football-minded. Was that the case in your day and President Nixon's day, as it was in the country as a whole? In other words, Whittier, with its particular history of being a Quaker community, with its other particular and special characteristics, was it All-American, would you say?

RICH: Well, yes. When Whittier was even more so, I think Whittier College received great community support through its athletic teams, in the way of interest and whatnot. I mentioned in our earlier interview that there was a day when, before stadiums were lighted, Whittier College played its games on Saturday afternoons and the stores closed, I mean, for two reasons: So the store people could go to the games, and if they stayed open there wouldn't be any customers. Everybody would be up at the college. And there was formed, first a group of businessmen called the Howling Hundred, because they were one hundred in number, and they were businessmen, merchants, lawyers, doctors, and so forth. That became a group sort of like the 1195 Club now. Their support of Whittier College was through athletics and then later became, as the group grew, as wives joined, known as the Thundering Thousand. And then wives, mothers, et cetera, all went to the games. My mother didn't like football; it was a violent game.

ARENA: Was your brother ever hurt, by any chance?

RICH: Yes, and that didn't help the situation, didn't help a bit. He broke his leg. And at one time I can remember, she set her foot down and said that was the last time he was ever going to play football, but she lost the argument. There were too many males in the family to beat down.

ARENA: On the question of the violence of the game, which I assume was as violent in those days as it is today, maybe more so or maybe less, but about the same from the standpoint of broken legs and . . .

RICH: Well, for one thing, his equipment wasn't as protective as it is today.

ARENA: The question I have on that then, is: Does it seem surprising, or was there ever any howl in the newspapers in this period, from the particularly Quaker community, because of the violence? You don't think of the Quakers as a group that would support anything dealing with violence, whether it be sports or whether it be war, and so forth. Were there ever any drives or ever any movement about the violence of football?

RICH: If there were I would have ignored them, so I don't remember any; and as I mentioned, the popular thing to do was to support Whittier College. And the community was much smaller then and this was a single activity that brought the entire community together, because on Sunday people would go to their respective churches and so forth, and they belonged to their respective social groups. Here they all belonged together and the spirit was really tremendous, quite tremendous, and of course, this is always helped by success. To me, one of the great changes that has come to the athletic society of today, which I miss very much, is the fact that you lose a game and the season is over, to a large degree. And in those days you could lose a game, but every opponent was a traditional opponent, as far as the college and high school were concerned. Each game had its own individual importance. You could lose one and you'd still attract people.

ARENA: As far as you recollect, did you ever see President Nixon in high school football games? I understand he did play for Fullerton [California]. I do have information to that effect. His father, Frank, did bring one of my interviewees to see him play. How about it, did you ever see him play on a Whittier High School team?

RICH: No, I never did see him play. He couldn't have been very good if he went to Fullerton, because Fullerton wasn't any good; I mean, Whittier used to beat them all the time. This is what I'm talking about. They were a traditional rival, being just a short ways down the road. And Fullerton in those days never had a good football player. No, I never did see him play. As a matter of fact, I only saw him play one season in my life, and probably only one game.

ARENA: Have you had the occasion to know firsthand his love of the sport?

RICH: Oh, yes.

ARENA: Obviously, he did love it. Have you spoken with him about it?

RICH: Of course, I haven't seen him in quite some time, but I know that the next time I do see him, whenever that

is, we're going to have a discussion about the University of Notre Dame's football team, good or bad. He's going to be smiling if it's bad, and maybe not if it's good. Because every time I ever did see him, we always get around to discussing Notre Dame's football team, and of course, we zero in on Whittier College, you know; how are they doing, and so forth, and what are the prospects, and so forth. But yes, to me, football. . . . He was a bench-warmer, I was a bench-warmer, and regardless of that fact, evidently we both see great value in competitive athletics; I mean, it prepares you better for life, for one thing. Even though I sat on the bench, I got an awful lot out of it.

ARENA: And you feel that he feels the same way about it?

RICH: I certainly do; he has told me that. We have compared notes, neither one ever having been any great success at the game, we still admit to each other that we both got a lot out of it.

ARENA: If it isn't too personal, did you, like the President, not succeed in obtaining a letter?

RICH: No, I never made a letter, not in football. I got a letter in track.

ARENA: Even though he received an honorary one.

RICH: I don't have even that. [Laughter] When I was at Notre Dame I was a candidate and did all my playing in the middle of the week. Well, I was what they call one of the butcher boys; I mean, we used to get the stuffing kicked out of us, particularly if they lost a game. We used to hate that, because that meant we were really in for trouble. If they lost a football game, the coach was going to get some things straightened out, and we were going to be the dummies. That was the extent of mine . . . and I appreciated that fact, too. I always wanted to play. I always wanted to be on the squad. I always thought I was good enough to be on there, but you know, the coach was stupid [Laughter]; he didn't recognize talent. But I was never chosen.

ARENA: While we're on the subject of this era and the President's interest in football and coaching, I'm sure you agree that he has acknowledged publicly on various occasions his indebtedness to Coach Newman. What do you recall, first about the President's referring to Coach Newman in any conversations you've had with him; and secondly, your own views about Coach Newman, who has been a member of the community for many years?

RICH: Well, I think in particular what the President got from Chief Newman was that winning is important, very

definitely, but participating is even more important; trying is even more important; somebody has to lose. And I know the Chief never, ever, liked to lose. I mean, you started a football game with the intent of winning it. And this, of course, is pretty much my philosophy. Somebody has to lose, but when it's all over you should be able to say, with pride really, that you did your best, but the other guys won. And the ones I feel sorry for are those who don't do their best and lose. To me, that's an object that we live with the rest of our lives, how you conduct yourself. You do your best, and if that isn't good enough, that's too bad, but at least you can go to bed at night and say, "You know, I tried my best." And he, I think, feels a debt to Chief for having taught him this. This was not a generally accepted philosophy. I was a great admirer and fan of Knute Rockne, and he pretty much followed this prescription, too.

ARENA: May I ask if you ever met Knute Rockne while you were at Notre Dame, or had he died before you got there?

RICH: He had died before I got there, but yes, I did meet him once, the year before, when he brought the Notre Dame team out.

ARENA: Do you ever recall Chief Newman bringing up Knute Rockne?

RICH: Oh, yes. Chief was a great admirer of his, too, although Chief went to USC [University of Southern California]. You might say there was a bit of friendly rivalry, but he always respected Knute Rockne's principles of football, and his coaching and his techniques, and his influence on young athletes. In those days, and particularly at a school like Whittier College, the coach was closer to his players than they are now. This is true at Whittier College now. It's still small, and I'm sure Coach John Godfrey is close to his players, but in larger schools the coach is pretty much removed from the personal contact. An assistant has that job to do, but Knute Rockne, when he was there, had a number of assistants, but he maintained a personal relationship with each of his boys, and this was very much like Chief, a PERSONAL interest in each of his boys. Chief stressed success in the classroom; I mean, you have to study to earn your grades to be eligible, and Knute Rockne used to stress this. It broke them both up if they lost somebody because he wasn't scholastically eligible. And Chief stressed this. He stressed fair play; he stressed rugged play; be prepared. And I think that really what Chief's whole contribution was about was that you've got a life to live and this is a good place to prepare for it, in addition to the classroom.

ARENA: Mel, while we're on the subject of famous alumni of Whittier College and the President's acknowledgment

of their assistance and their value in education, and to him personally, which he has done, another name that comes to mind is Dr. Paul Smith. Again, do you recall the President discussing Dr. Paul Smith, a former president of Whittier College and now the Chancellor, and at that time the President's history teacher? What do you recall of the President's personally bringing up, if he did, Dr. Smith's history classes, his approach, and beyond that, your own contacts with Dr. Smith, which I know you've had over the years?

RICH: Well, to me Dr. Smith was, always has been, and is a great philosopher, as well as being a history teacher. If my memory serves me correctly, Mr. Nixon attributes much of Dr. Smith's encouragement in him becoming a politician in the very beginning, through the history of the country, needing good leadership, and people are willing to make sacrifices to lead. In all the conversations I ever had with the President about Dr. Smith, he has paid him great tribute, inspiring even more the study of history and research into history, and whatnot.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you your major?

RICH: My major was journalism, and that's something else. I told you earlier that I headed for Notre Dame at a young age and I headed for journalism at a young age. I was in the seventh grade, and at that time I was going to John Muir Elementary School, which no longer exists, and once a week we produced a page in The Whittier News. My great interest was to become a member of that staff. And I was one of the fortunate ones, really, I can say, because neither of my sons knew for a long time what they wanted to do, and I knew from the very beginning. Of course, I didn't want to be an editor, I'll tell you that. I wanted to be a sports editor and that's all I was interested in, the direction that I followed, and the only reason I went into the business in the first place, to write sports.

ARENA: As a trained journalist, would you comment on the President's written works, including this pre-political period of the President, and then make an overall assessment? For example, I know you've heard him speaking. You would know better than I, but you've probably heard him give speeches from prepared, written speeches. You've heard him speak extemporaneously, and you've heard him deliver messages, some of which he has acknowledged have been done by ghost writers. But where you know it is the President's own written work; for example, his book, Six Crises, would you comment on that whole area of the President as a writer?

RICH: Yes. The President missed his calling. He writes better speeches than his ghost writers, by far. He has

the feeling that they don't have. And he makes better extemporaneous speeches than he does prepared speeches, for one thing, because it is "him". Too many times, for the want of time, he can't research these things out. He has to depend on somebody to put these things together for him, and they aren't done as well as he could do himself if he had the time to do it. He expresses himself real well.

ARENA: There is no question in your mind that, no matter how well the speech is written, he comes off better in delivering his ideas extemporaneously rather than from the written text?

RICH: Yes, for this reason: When he was a congressman, of course, he couldn't afford a ghost writer, so all of his speeches, when he would come home, were his. He wrote 'em, and without, to my knowledge, any help. And unfortunately, I have to say his speeches then were better than they are today. They were more to a point; they were expressed better. Whatever he was talking about was put in better words.

ARENA: While we're on this subject of journalism and politics, from a general point of view, is it your view, from your lifetime experience in journalism, that most journalists are members of the Democratic party, and, if that is so, why? Even if they are not members of the party, are they pro-Democratic? Is that true, from your experience?

RICH: Yes, and I'll tell you my reasoning why. They are subjected. . . . Well to me, anyone who is a bonafide newspaperman (there are people in the business that I don't call "bonafide"), a dedicated person becomes extremely objective, extremely fair-play-minded, and, particularly around here, you send a reporter out and he is subjected to. . . . Most everything he goes to is predominated by Republicans. And he hears the Democrats abused, in his mind. It's pretty one-sided, and so forth. Because of this desire to be fair and objective, this turns him in the other direction. It could be reversed. I mean, maybe if I went down to Texas somewhere, where the Democrats are dominant, maybe many of the reporters down there swing in the other direction. This is what I feel. Now, also, a few years ago the Democrats were more closely related to programs helping the underprivileged, the deprived, et cetera, than were the Republicans. This may not have been a fact, but as far as the general public was concerned, this was it. The Democrats would go cover an event. . . . I mean, to me one of the greatest myths of interpretations of wealth in this country is that the Republicans are all the rich people and the Democrats are all the poor people. You would go to an affair. . . . I remember, one night I went over to a dinner when Mr. Nixon was the Vice President, in Los Angeles. Limousine after limousine was parked there, all super Cadillacs.

Well, I sat with the press and most of them were talking about this, all the wealth that was in the room, see? Well, the truth of the matter. . . . Certainly the John Kennedys and the Franklin Delano Roosevelts weren't poor people. They were rich people, and there have been many, many more besides them.

But here again, the public and the Democrats, through some shrewd politicking, set themselves up as poor folks, interested in the poor guy, et cetera, and I think this has contributed to a feeling of newspaper reporters of tending to that direction. Well, I would say on my staff, I never ask politics, I never ask 'em, but from their expressions, yes, I would say most of them tend in that direction. I don't, necessarily, because I've lived a little longer and I've seen a little more. I don't believe that just the Democrats are interested in the poor guy on the street, but they haven't done a very good job of selling this to the public. Mr. Nixon has, I think, demonstrated it a few times. Well, good heavens, he came from not-wealthy circumstances.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, while you're on that point, I was thinking of that when you talked about those Democrats who were wealthy and were obviously brought up in wealthy families. From your firsthand recollection and experience, precisely what was the economic background of the President to the time he entered politics formally, which was 1945? And by way of an historical capsule here, you know he was born in Yorba Linda in 1913, left there in 1922 to come to Whittier, East Whittier at that time, and, of course, has been here ever since. So from that period, 1913 to 1945, from your observations and recollections, what was the economic status of the Nixon family, including the President himself?

RICH: They weren't fabulously successful financially in their market. They did earn a very good living. Perhaps one of the reasons for their good living was the fact that so many of them worked there. It was a family enterprise. It wasn't just dad owning the store and hiring all the work done. Everybody had his job to do, including Richard Nixon, who at one time was in charge of the produce market, which required him to get up at a very early hour in the morning and go to the Los Angeles produce market and buy produce for the store.

ARENA: To be sure we understand this physical and economic set-up of the Nixon grocery store, would it be more like the corner grocery store, rather than anything like even a single super market?

RICH: Yes. We have a few around here right now that are reminiscent to me of the way they operated. The Beverly Market up on Beverly Boulevard just west of Pickering [Avenue]. Down the street on Pickering [Avenue] at the corner of Broadway [Avenue] is a little market. There's another one down here on Painter Avenue at Walnut [Street], I

believe it is. And there are a few about, the Mifflin's market up here on the corner before it burned was similar to that. I don't think the Nixon market was as large as Mifflin's.

ARENA: And speaking of members of the family who worked there, do you ever recall seeing Mrs. Patricia [Ryan] Nixon working in the market place, especially after they were married in 1940? Were you around between 1940 and 1945?

RICH: Yes, but I don't recall seeing her.

ARENA: Do you know if she did, though, even though it was not personal? Do you know if she did help out in the store?

RICH: Well, knowing a little bit about her, I would say that if she was needed she was there. No, I don't recall that she was ever working there when I was in the store.

ARENA: Is there anything else that you can think of on this question of the economic status of the President's family, again, before 1945?

RICH: Well, I wasn't personally acquainted with the fact, but I have read where Frank Nixon, the father, had on a couple of occasions, I guess you could say, failed at different things, economically failed. When they moved down here, if I'm not mistaken, I think he even had to borrow the money from somebody in the family to make this move. And of course, they lived there on the premises, and this is a sign, too, to me, of not too great a success. I don't think it hurt them a bit, living there.

ARENA: Speaking of Frank Nixon as a successful businessman, in this case really a seller as well as an operator of a store, do you recall his personality from the standpoint of being a storekeeper and a store salesman? Do you particularly remember buying things from him, or recall his attitude, his personality, at the time the customers were coming and going, and would this be conducive to a successful salesman in that store?

RICH: No, I don't remember any particular incident, but I do remember being told that he was a pretty tough guy. [Laughter] I've found out since that a lot of it was a put-on. He enjoyed it this way. My father was a pretty tough guy, too, but he really wasn't; I mean, he was a cinch for breaking down. Of course, I never tackled Mr. Frank Nixon on this basis. He probably was, in that respect, very much like my father. He loved to argue, and my dad loved to argue.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, do you recall personally experiencing arguments, either with or without your father, and Frank Nixon, regarding politics, or anything?

RICH: No, I never was. To be honest with you, I don't know whether Frank Nixon was a Republican or a Democrat before the President went into politics. Some people have told me they thought he was a Democrat. And I think perhaps he played that role because he lived around Republicans and somebody had to argue the other side. You couldn't get an argument by agreeing. My father was a Democrat, one of the few known Democrats in town, but I can remember the impression he made on me once when, in a family discussion at home, he asked my mother if it was all right if he wrote out a rather sizable check for a candidate for Congress. And the candidate for Congress that he was writing out the check to help was a Republican. And being an impressionable age, I asked, "How in the world can you do this?" And he said, "Well, he's many times better than the Democrat running, and I don't want that Democrat elected, so I'll help the Republican." And I have a hunch that the senior Mr. Nixon was very much this way, too. But I'm sure, out there, much of what he did was for the purpose of. . . . After all, life in a country store like that can be rather lonely unless you have something to argue about. And he had Harry Schuyler just around the corner, and Harry Schuyler had been a Republican all his life, a very outspoken one, and Frank couldn't really get any kicks out of agreeing with Harry, he had to argue. Harry loves to argue; oh, he's always arguing. And I can just see Frank Nixon making Harry think he was a Democrat even if he wasn't. Just so they'd have something going.

ARENA: This type of arguing, as far as you know, no matter how loud or boisterous, was always on a friendly basis?

RICH: Always, always. I don't think Mr. Frank Nixon--in one research I had to do relative to the special edition--was not that type of person at all. I think he enjoyed arguing, so he'd size up the situation, and if everybody was in favor of one side he was immediately on the other, regardless of what it was. I am that way myself. I love to argue. I guess it's an inherited characteristic. I sometimes get exasperated with my dear wife because she doesn't argue. She gives in on everything. She doesn't like arguments, and as a result, we never have had any real arguments. We've had a few disputes, but never any real arguments in all our married life, because she won't argue, and this makes me madder, you know. [Laughter]

But I am that way, too. I like to go out socially and if everybody is talking in one direction I just automatically have to head off in the other. The other side has to be defended, you know, so I head off in that direction. I may not even believe anything I say, but it sounds good, you know. And actually, by doing this you learn a lot, really. You can get a lot of good, strong arguments that reaffirm. You can be for something, pretend like you're against it, and you can get a lot of good strong arguments that support your feelings about a matter. I've had a lot of fun doing that.

ARENA: Wouldn't such an activity as debating be a good activity for the type of person who liked to do that sort of thing, and would possibly the President's activity in debating be a more educational and intellectual way of doing what his father did, who only had, as you know, a sixth grade education?

RICH: Oh, excellent.

ARENA: Before we leave that point and the question of debating and arguing, you and the President, although going to two different schools, had this in common. And I think this is a common American phenomenon, too. You attended religiously-denominated schools; he, of course, a Quaker one; you, a Catholic one. Now in his case he belonged to that denomination, but you did not. Would you mind commenting, from your standpoint, how much could you, how much could the student, from your experience. . . . I realize you're speaking of Notre Dame firsthand, and this might or might not apply to Whittier, but I intend to do this with Whittier as well. But I'd like to get your view on the question of how much opportunity there was for taking a different point of view; for arguing, say, with a teacher. And I'm sure in the case of Notre Dame some of the professors were priests, which is a common factor. To what extent could you argue with the establishment and get away with it?

RICH: Well, firsthand, I had a more than normal interest in religion. I was active in my church, the Episcopal church here, and served as an altar boy, was very close as far as I was concerned to the rector of our church, whom I dearly loved. Probably, aside from my father, at that time of my life, he was the most influential person, and I had his blessings to go to Notre Dame. I talked it over with him, and he thought it would be wonderful if I'd do that.

ARENA: If I may ask, and excuse the interruption, what are the Episcopal denominative colleges in the country?

RICH: There aren't many. Two of his sons went to Occidental College, a great rival of Whittier College.

ARENA: Is that, by the way, officially Episcopalian, or started . . .

RICH: No. To my knowledge, it was not started by the Episcopal church, no. The only Episcopal school I know of out here on the west coast is Harvard Military Academy, or, I mean, one that the Episcopalians had an influence over. Back east there must be some, and I can't think of their names. I didn't even consider them at the time. At one time I knew a girl who went to Smith College, I think was the name of it, and

that was an all-girl school. That was an Episcopal school, and then down the road was Hobart College, I think, which she said was an all-male school, which was Episcopal-sponsored.

ARENA: In New York state.

RICH: Yes. In New York state. So when I was at Notre Dame I enrolled in religion, which kind of flipped 'em, I'm sure, because it was not required. It was required of all the Catholics to enroll in religion but not the Protestants. One of the first things they did when I arrived there, they handed me a letter of introduction to the rector of the Episcopal Church of South Bend, and I was told I was expected to be there next Sunday, and did go, and found out later that they had checked to see if I did go. The Catholics, naturally, had church on Sunday. Well, that was a little inconvenient for me, and I didn't have a lot of money and I couldn't take a cab down there, and the street car was not always satisfactory, and it was a long walk. I don't remember how many services I attended there, but eventually I got around to asking if it was all right if I went to church if I just went to chapel on campus there, and they told me certainly, that that would be all right. So from that point on, I attended church every Sunday just like my Catholic roommates, et cetera, on campus.

I took four years of religion, and evidently there were no students in any of my classes in school, that is, freshman, sophomore, et cetera, who were planning to become priests, because they had all gone through parochial school and figured they knew all the answers and did a very poor job of studying. To me it was Greek, so I actually had to devote time to the textbook and taking volumes of notes in the classroom. And I think their records will substantiate the fact that I had to do all this studying, and I'm not a first-rate student; I want that understood. But because I had to do all this studying, you're looking at the guy who got the highest grade in all the classes and earned the title of "Protestant Spy", and the good fathers let me discuss our differences and our likeness. Now, there isn't too much difference between the Catholic church and the Episcopal church, even less now that the Catholics are switching from Latin to English. I had an advantage over most of the Catholic boys because all our services were in English. I could understand them and many of them couldn't. They weren't that good with Latin to understand them.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

RICH: One of my professors of religion stopped me after class and thanked me for making a strong pitch for their confession system. It always amazed me that a number of Catholics felt that they could go out and do what they pleased Saturday night, go to confession in the morning and the slate was wiped clean. Well, I never felt this, and had read

enough textbooks to know that the feeling has to be in the heart and not on the surface, and if they deeply regretted what they did Saturday night why, yes, maybe they could get that erased, but if they didn't, they'd have a hard time convincing me it was just that automatic. Well, of course, I think this is what drives a lot of Catholic priests up the wall; they have a good many members who feel this way. And I got up in class and talked at great lengths on their confession, which I find a very worthwhile thing; I mean, it can relieve a person of a burden, and that's the purpose of it, to express remorse for something you did that you shouldn't have done. Yet there were numbers of these fellow-students who felt that way. They felt it was all automatic, that they could do this and do that and go to confession the next Sunday morning, and now we start a new week all fresh, and so forth. Well, I never believed that for a minute, and told them so. So this father appreciated my support of his beliefs and teachings and stopped me after class and thanked me very much and said it was probably more impressive coming from a Protestant than from a Catholic. As I say, my father wasn't a Quaker, he was an Episcopalian, and yet his relationship with Whittier College was very close.

ARENA: You didn't feel as though you were being stifled by attending a school of a religious denomination?

RICH: No, sir. No.

ARENA: As far as the President was concerned, it is a matter of written record now. It has been included in various biographies, of course, that he did take on the establishment, so to speak, on the matter of allowing dancing on the campus, and I know you are aware of that. I was just wondering if you had firsthand knowledge of that. Were you in Whittier around that time, or away at school, maybe coming in on a weekend, or something? Were you aware of that dispute involving some of the members of the community, as well as the President, and some of the others who viewed with the President this issue: One, he wanted dancing allowed on campus and others did not, and it was not allowed at the time except for certain special occasions. I understand that President Walter Dexter, for example, had allowed an exception from time to time, but there tended to be a row about that. Do you recall firsthand about that period?

RICH: No, I was not here; well, I was here in the summertime, but not during the school year. But I believe that came out during his campaign for student body president.

ARENA: Right; that would be the spring of 1933, to be precise.

RICH: I discussed this with these college friends I mentioned who lived in this barn, which may still be there, up on Washington Avenue. These were kids that didn't come

from wealthy families. They couldn't afford the dormitory up there on the campus so they would get together and rent a barn, and there are many of them doing that now, I'm sure, renting apartments now and sharing them. This was worse than an apartment, I can guarantee you that. But thank God for whoever owned it to make it possible for them to occupy it. And we used to discuss among ourselves whether it was evil or sinful, and of course, there was no disagreement. I mean, they all agreed that this was rather silly, to prevent dancing and that sort of thing. I think in my earlier interview I mentioned an issue that actually tore the community apart, and that was opening shows on Sundays, the theaters being open on Sunday. It was not until, I believe, the city council election of 1928 that they got that squared off. Until then it became a debatable issue in quarters here, whether the shows should be open or closed on Sundays. And this was probably much the same relative to dancing at Whittier College and smoking at Whittier College. I can remember, at Notre Dame we were allowed to smoke. There were certain places we were not allowed to, but we were allowed to smoke, and a good many of the young fellows did. But in Whittier College they were not allowed to smoke. Well, that didn't mean they DIDN'T smoke. They went elsewhere to smoke. Notre Dame had rules and regulations, too. On the matter of alcoholic beverages, if you took on too much, there wasn't much anybody could do for you if you got caught. They would bed you down for the night and the next morning you would have to go face a prefect and he'd hand you a railroad ticket home. It was that pure and simple. And of course, at Whittier College. . . . I can't think of any greater consequence of getting caught than that. Whittier College didn't allow it, either, didn't tolerate it. Bit by bit, though, I have seen Whittier College become more tolerant of many things. I have seen Notre Dame become more tolerant of many things.

I just mentioned, in talking to a Catholic priest who was visiting here in behalf of the John Birch Society last week, about the great changes that have been made at the University of Notre Dame, and the disappearance of iron-fisted discipline, which I didn't appreciate at the time, and appreciated as I grew older, and I'm very sorry it's gone. This applies at Whittier College. Freedom's great, but sometimes we can carry it too far. You know, you've got to keep modern, and this is the trend, and I'm sure this is what has compelled both of them to allow more freedom to students. I can remember when it was sinful for a girl in Whittier to have her hair bobbed. If she did, that had a connotation that was not complimentary at all, and this was just the social acceptance of the day, and when it broke down, within a matter of weeks every girl in Whittier had her hair cut off. Many of them shouldn't have; I mean, they looked better with it longer. But it was a great event in my home when my sister was finally allowed to have her hair cut. I can't imagine that being much of an event in a home today. And it wasn't because my parents didn't agree that it should

be cut, they just wanted her not to be doing anything that would make her a social outcast. That's why she had to kind of go along with the "mod" of the day. My father did wage a campaign on behalf of opening the theaters, because he thought it was rather nonsense.

ARENA: Do you recall that your father was joined by any prominent Quakers, whom you need not mention, if you don't want to? Were there those Quakers who did not agree?

RICH: No, I can't recall that he was joined by any. It doesn't come to mind that he was. He ran for the city council and was elected on a platform of opening the theaters on Sunday. He probably picked up a few Quaker votes, but how many I don't know. And he probably got many who didn't
. . . .

ARENA: Mel, as we come to the end of this interview, I do want to thank you very much for making it possible, and I hope that you will consider a third interview. I'd like to get into the President's personality, the myth that he was a wooden personality. Thank you very much.

RICH: Thank you.