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Louis T. Jones (January 17, 1972, second interview)

C. Richard Arena

Second Oral History Interview

with

DR. LOUIS T. JONES

January 17, 1972
Whittier, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #2 with Dr. Louis Thomas Jones of Whittier, California, January 17, 1972, Arena interviewing. Do you mind if I begin, Dr. Jones, by asking you to recall the years when you actually taught President Nixon in class, the place and the subject?

JONES: I'll gladly do that. It was my sixth year, as I recall, at Whittier College. As I earlier stated in our previous interview, I was called to Whittier because of my rather varied line of training. At that time it was the period when guidance work was at its beginning and I was asked to come to Whittier because I was more or less familiar with the scientific development that was on at the time, together with the academic requirements for admission for collegiate work. I had been head of the receiving committee at Earlham College for four years and when Dr. [Walter F.] Dexter called me to Whittier [College], it was for that purpose.

Now, when Richard Nixon, a young man, came to Whittier College fortunately I was already there. I do not recall whether or not I had Richard in my orientation class. That was a big class. That was a required class of all entering freshmen. But now I do not know whether Dick had that work. I do know that in his junior year, I think it was 1930-31, he was in my European History class and I have an indelible impression of Richard Nixon in that class.

ARENA: Dr. Jones, would you elaborate and take as much time as you want in expounding on that indelible impression.

JONES: All right. Dick, if I may use that term now, was a self-determined youth. That dark eye of his was a mark that I can never forget. Looking into that face and into those eyes I had the feeling that he was no ordinary youth. I had dealt with such youth all of the way from New England to California in my school work, in my guidance work, and so on. But I felt that there was a youth that carried unusual mentality. I've bumped up against similar cases before. But when I met Dick I can assure you that from the first meeting until he was graduated, I knew, using the fishing technique for illustration, I had a big one on the line, and it has proven so.

Let me comment about our technique in class to show about what I'm speaking. I taught after the informal way. To start with, I spent as much time in preparing my contribution as I know the rank and file of the students spent in following up the assignments. So, it was no blank exception.

In the early stage my classes seemed to be overloaded. That was no concern of mine. The larger the better. And, not only that, I had just come back from a European trip, my second one, in which I led a touring party bag and baggage for a twelve weeks tour. The very first tour to Europe out from Whittier College and from Whittier itself with free line, free space in the Whittier Daily News where I gave a report to the community as well as to the general college.

When I met Dick, as I said, I felt a deep impression and it has proven true. Let me say that anyone that has Dick Nixon in their class will soon find it out. He was a debater. I learned that he came up from the high school as a leading debater there and in my class he was always ready to challenge any statement a member of the class or that I, myself, made. He was "a thinker." There was another like person that I had had in that same class the year before, George Outland by name. George took the bait and he was just before Dick's year. George, fortunately, had a father who paid George's bills. He, George's father, was a large California rancher from Santa Clara Valley up near Santa Barbara. George went with me to Europe. Dick didn't.

George too was a debater and both of those men quickly made their way when they got out into the political arena. George represented the area up in his big valley. George was invited by the Republican State Committee, of which Dr. Walter F. Dexter, whom I've mentioned was a member, he was invited to be a candidate of the Republican Party.

Dick soon after his graduation was at Duke University, took his law course, came back home, got started and was quickly in rivalry with the incumbent in the Congressional district of this area. Dick won.

Now, you want the intimate relationships, don't you, to show why I say what I do. In turn, I had transferred from Whittier College to the high school as the Guidance Director. There were five times as many at the high school as there were at Whittier College at the time. Before very long I fell in need of aid and defense. The incident was simply this. I had bought a small amount of acreage within easy reach of Whittier, a citrus grove, if you please. I had bought materials for the construction of a small home. Then the war broke out. Previous to any intimation that we were at war, I had secured a permit of the proper agricultural commission from Washington, D. C. for the construction of my home. Then, as soon as the war broke out came a tap at my door. I had bought the materials: gravel, sand, cement and other materials and had them covered for weather conditions.

A tap came at my door and stated: "You are in violation, stop work." I inquired, "Why?" They said, "You have purchased vital war materials." I said, "Yes, I'm aware, but I have the authorization from the proper authority at Washington, D. C. to purchase the property that I did when I did." "That makes no difference, you will recall," said the voice, "that a like educator in a nearby community, naming it, had just been convicted and he was fined thousands of dollars for the same offense." "All right," said I. I thanked him and dropped a line to George Outland, my friend at Santa Barbara. I knew him. He had traveled all one summer with me, hence I knew him. He immediately got into touch as a member of the Democratic wing with Dick, my Congressman from my district. Believe me, almost as short a time remained between the time that you and I have been acquainted until action was had and there came a response from the very agent who came at first to my own door that the claim was rescinded. Now, from that time on I knew that Dick not only sees to fair play for his friends, but for any others that carry the right of American citizenship.

So, I urge the point that I think I know Dick. He is a self-determined man to root out wrong wherever he finds it and within the limitations of his time. Dick, to me, is an incorruptible, devout citizen, motivated by public duty and public responsibility.

Now, I think that might end the case. All right. There's another. In 1948, '49, I retired from the high school work after eighteen years of acquaintance with Dick Nixon. My wife and I thought we would go to Europe the next trip, the third time. We happened in to Washington to Dick's office and acquainted him with

our interest and asked him if he had contacts there. He did. He asked what we wanted and I said, "Well, Richard, we would like a letter of general introduction." He said, "To the British Ministry of Education?" I replied, "That would be a feather in our hat. It would clear the way." Promptly he gave directions to his secretary to write the letter; he signed it, and when we landed on the boat we had the letter and it was one of the first letters that we advanced when we made our way to London. So, we presented our letter of introduction to the Ministry of Education.

May I draw comparisons now? Our line of education today is split up under the Department of Education, Health and Welfare. British Education is singular and unified, and we were received in almost royal estate. We were seekers, not teachers. We were after the knowledge of their efficient ways of organizing their educational machinery. And the Ministry immediately ordered their official secretary to outline our entire activities, in other words our entire itinerary. And it was to be a thorough, complete coverage, not only the academic but also the vocational.

From that time on until we left Britain for the continent for a similar study there, our line of march was supervised by the British Ministry of Education. They would phone ahead of our coming. They would phone after we were gone to see that we had been properly aided and assisted. So, we got a complete vision of the British system of education from the local area right on up through their top professional and occupational universities.

At Oxford University we were greeted with glad hands and let me say that we were quizzed more about our system of education than we could quiz them about theirs. However, Pearl [Jones] was knowing to their system because she had already seen the examiner when she was off in Syria for admission to Oxford and Cambridge [University] examinations. So, that is the second major contribution that Richard gave to me. And on our return, we gave a complete report, both to him and to our senior Senator, Mr. [Sheridan] Downey, who came right close from Whittier, California.

ARENA: To be sure, the Pearl you're referring to is Mrs. Louis Jones?

JONES: That's right. Now, more than almost twenty years have flown by. I have here on the desk today, just showing the letters that come and go, I've submitted the letters received in part from Dick from 1955 up to 1960 on. Just a day or two ago there came a letter from Mr. George Outland, Doctor, Yale, Ph.D., now one of the leading professors at the University of

California at San Francisco [California]. So, I try to keep the intimacy going. In other words, I have been a learner as well as a teacher. So, I cherish these broadening contacts. Now, is that enough for that phase of matters.

ARENA: It certainly is. And I wonder if I could explore a moment more about the President as a student in your European History class from the standpoint of what were the assignments, what were his responses to the assignments? For example, term papers: how was he on his examinations, if you recollect at all; were they objective or essay type; what do you recall of his essay ability? Anything at all that would pertain to the President and his attendance in your European History class and if you will, the limits of that class? In other words, was it a period beginning around 1500? Would this be modern European history? Or did you have some other designation?

JONES: That is a very interesting matter to explore. Of course, I had a general European History class. And then I had the sectional classes that went more into the specialties, for example, say, European History. You know it's an expanse in history that is next to endless. The general European History class covered a year's work and was by accepted authorities at the time. I had made my own preparation in that by the best authorities that I knew at the time, majorly from the University of Chicago. They were the specialists that I was in contact with while I was back in Maine and I followed it through during the years that I was at Earlham College. And when I came to Whittier I came with the same connection. So I was guided primarily by competent university specialists in my selection of the materials to be covered, as well as textbooks to be used. And very fortunately I have those textbooks today. Now, as for which . . .

ARENA: Excuse me. Would you mind giving the author and title? As I recall in our first meeting we saw them before the taping and if it isn't any trouble, if it is, we can get this later. If it isn't any trouble, could you go over those again? I don't think I made a record of them on the tape.

JONES: Let me get them. I have them available. [Interruption]

ARENA: Now, we have in front of us the names and the actual volumes that you used as textbooks when the President was in your European History class. Would you cite the complete citation, Dr. Jones, giving the publisher and place and date of publication?

JONES: The first was History of Western Europe. The citation of the book was the work of James Harvey Robinson, professor of history at Columbia University. And it was published by Guinn & Company, Boston, New York, Chicago and London, and bore a copyright of 1903. Of course, now that is in the field of public domain. But a scholarship is there. Now as a basis for follow-up work, that is primarily a literary explanation of Western Europe, not Eastern Europe but Western Europe, and here are what is called the readings in modern European history pinned in with this, and there are two volumes of it. Here it is, a collection of extracts from the sources chosen with the purpose of illustrating same, of the chief phases of the development of Europe during the last two hundred years. And it is by James Harvey Robinson and Charles A. Beard.

ARENA: That's interesting, since Beard, of course, is primarily known as a U.S. historian.

JONES: That's right. Now, there are two volumes and it covers, bear in mind, the Western readings in modern European history. Now, that is the general course. And now for the specialized courses, and I do not make any claim to being a specialist in any way. My contacts throughout have been generalized but there was a need for definite study of modern European conditions, Europe since 1815.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: You were just stating the title of this more specialized work.

JONES: On its title page we read this: Europe Since 1815 by Charles Downer Hazen, with fourteen colored maps, Henry Hope and Company, New York. And this copyright was 1910. Now anyone familiar with European conditions as they were in 1815 will recognize that was practically the Napoleonic era, so that it involved reference works of various kinds that would enlarge on the details of the cultures that were involved, so I had to have added reference works myself.

So, earlier, I had loaded on this: A History for Ready Reference and Topical Reading by Larned. Take here, the history for ready reference from the best historians, biographers and specialists, their own words in a complete system of history by J. N. Larned, L A R N E D, with numerous historical maps from original studies and drawings by Alan C. Reiley, six volumes.

Now, let me just turn to see what happened here, as was my general practice. I not only used extensive inserts for page reference, but I did so much annotating, underscoring and here you find it. Now, before I would go before this body of young people I would have data to support the statements made in the textbook. In other words, I was broadening out. One of my most interesting things is the extent of those annotations. So, there were six volumes of that larger size publication and volume one carried 796 pages, so that will give you a little bit of an idea of the load that it took to qualify for even a passing grade in this work. Now, we're getting pretty close to your second question from me, which was what kind of work did Richard Nixon do? Well, without fear of mistake I can say--oh, do you want the other volumes too?

ARENA: That would be helpful. Give those names also.

JONES: Here is one volume that I used in class as study, in fact it was a year's course and it was Europe 1450 to 1789.

Bear in mind the one earlier quoted was from 1815. This was from 1450 to 1789, by Edward Raymond Turner, a professor of European History at the University of Michigan. It was published by Doubleday, Page & Company, New York, Garden City, and carried the copyright of 1928. That was that work.

Then here was from Europe Since 1789. In other words, the student had to have two books before he would get through this combined course and it was published by Richard Turner and by Doubleday Page. Each of these books carry at least 842 pages. So it was no easy work. There was work to be done. And not only that, before a recommending grade could be acquired they had to produce or reproduce a written theme periodically and they had to submit the evidences of collateral reading.

Now, in my work in the university I had to do the same thing. And so I was simply mimicing, in a way, that which I was required to do in such courses as those taken at the State University of Iowa and the University of Kansas. The work was pretty thorough in those days and you could probably state the same thing of which you, yourself, have done.

Now, you've asked me to estimate what Dick's standing may have been. Well, I cannot say as to grade because not seeing his grade since 1931, and I must say I do not know. I do know the grade that my daughter-in-law who was in that same class says I gave to her. She says I gave to her a "B" grade. I'll have to take it for granted that she knew. I went to the office at Whittier College to certify to me when Dick was in my class. I did not press for what grade I gave, but I would venture to say from the best of my memory it was

not less than "B". A "B" doesn't mean anything to me other than an estimate of thoroughness.

But I met Dick years after that. After he had had his work. He was just publishing the Six Crises and he was at the Broadway store in East Whittier autographing, and the book cost, as I recall, about ten dollars. There was a long line of persons who had already bought their books to be autographed in line. Pearl, my wife, bought me a copy and when I came up to the desk on the platform, he leaped up when he saw me and came forward with his big hand and wanted to know what he could do for me. And I said, "Sign this." And then in the jolly way of his he burst out laughing and he said, "Dr. Jones, you know I have all of my notes taken in your European History class at Whittier College."

I've met him repeatedly since then when he was speaking or associating with collegiate friends, and I can assure you that my estimate would be that he certainly earned his recommending grade whatever that was.

ARENA: You say that he would raise questions if he agreed or disagreed. Can you recall of some particular instance where either with you or any colleague, any faculty member, something like that happened?

JONES: That's getting into a refinement that I fear I could not trust myself to say by memory. Some of these things come and they go, as you know so well. But, to try to resurrect and be responsible for a statement to go into the record, I fear that I have to decline at that stage.

ARENA: Can you recall, either in general or in detail, attending an event on or off the campus where the President was in a debate, participating in a play either in school or in the Community Theater Players, and describe your recollection of that?

JONES: Yes. Fortunately I think I can. I'm confident I can. I very distinctly remember when Dick was in rivalry with his incumbent opponent in Congress, Jerry Voorhis, because I had a relationship with Jerry that was very pleasing. One of the very first things I did when I came to Whittier from the East and had located at Whittier College was to contact the Church of All Nations in the city of Los Angeles [California]. It is in a depressed part of the city, but it was dedicated to those who were in distress. It was placed there by Jerry's father who was a man of some means, and it was for the social betterment of the community.

The purpose of the father, as I got it, to encourage his son in civic responsibility. So, Jerry, a friend of mine, had won the place in Congress for a two year period. I'm not sure whether it was at the end of the two year period, but I think it was after the first incumbency in Congress of the United States that Jerry and Dick locked horns. Dick had been selected by the hundred Republican members of the committee here to represent this district on the Republican side of the fence. Jerry was open for reelection. He had served at least one term. Jerry was as fine a fellow as I could ever hope to be compatible with. I wasn't particular Republican. I was for the best man. When it came to sponsoring a person that I knew as intimately as I knew Richard Nixon, of course, I stood for a Republican. And I let Dick know that I only wished we could have such men as he and Jerry both elected to Congress.

When the election came through Dick had won and I well remember not their meeting personally, but I well remember the mode of delivery that Dick presented when he would speak at public occasions. It was with that thoroughness of preparation. He knew Jerry Voorhis' record. And over and over again, just as he does today, he would use the expression, "Let's set the record straight." Anything but being crooked, with Richard Nixon, and anything but being crooked with Jerry Voorhis.

It's sufficient to say that by public address and its suasive power, Dick won, with all of the defamation that opponents, unreliable, brought against Dick. That did not matter. Dick had been chosen by the Committee of 100 and I knew the chairman of that committee, among others, Mr. Herman Perry, Manager of the Bank of America, and his son has followed Herman in that position.

ARENA: The father was Herman and the son was Hubert.

JONES: Herman Perry was chairman of that Committee of 100. Not only that, but before Dick stood in candidacy for this dedication to public service, he had taken his law degree, he set up his office here in Whittier, and often I would meet him on the street and follow him through. I knew his two brothers intimately. So, there is that familiarity that I feel I simply could not go astray when it would come to the integrity and reliability of the man that has won my confidence.

ARENA: Dr. Jones, I'm very grateful that you have extended, again, the second hour to continue with this interview on President Nixon. I know that you know much more, but in view of our respect of appointments we will bring this to an end. Thank you.

JONES: You're very, very welcome.