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## Harrison Hugh McCall and Harriet E. Stifel (March 23, 1972)

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

MR. HARRISON HUGH McCALL

and

MRS. HARRIET E. STIFEL

(With added comments and amendments  
submitted by letter from Mrs. Stifel)

March 23, 1972  
South Pasadena, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

- ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. Harrison McCall of South Pasadena, California. Today's date is March 23, 1972, Arena interviewing. Mr. McCall, may we begin by my asking you where and when you were born?
- McCALL: I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 9, 1888.
- ARENA: And how is it that you find yourself in California? What brought you here?
- McCALL: Well, I came out here to get married, and I was so impressed with the country at that time as to its future possibilities that, like hundreds of thousands of others, I decided to move out here.
- ARENA: When was that, that you moved out here?
- McCALL: 1921.
- ARENA: And did you move to this area, or where, in California?
- McCALL: I bought this house that I'm living in, in 1921.
- ARENA: Any idea when the house was built?
- McCALL: The house was built approximately, I would guess, about ten to fifteen years prior to that.

ARENA: Do you recall if the street was as occupied as it is now or . . .

McCALL: There was one other house across the street there, just this house and a house across the street, that was on this street at that time.

ARENA: What was the means of livelihood of the people at that time in this area, strictly agriculture?

McCALL: Yes, largely. All through this area was a citrus-growing area.

ARENA: And may I ask you your own occupation?

McCALL: Well, when I came out here in '21, I came out to represent two investment companies and start my own business, which I did. Investment. And then I also helped organize a commercial testing laboratory, later became known as the Los Angeles Testing Laboratory.

ARENA: What kind of things would it test?

McCALL: Largely construction materials; practically everything except medical matters or electrical.

ARENA: And would you mind giving a brief resume of your own educational background and where, if you recall, the schools you attended?

McCALL: I finished the public schools in Minneapolis, including high school, and was at the university but did not complete my university course.

ARENA: How far along did you get? How much time did you have in college? What were you mainly interested in at the time?

McCALL: Well, that was what caused the change. I personally kind of wanted to take up law but was persuaded to take an academic course first. And the result was that I was kicked out of college that first year in my academic course. And then I went back. And when I went back my father died and it became necessary for me to go to work.

ARENA: When is the very first occasion that you met President Nixon, as far as you can recollect?

McCALL: The very first occasion was in late '45, 1945.

ARENA: Do you remember the circumstances for the meeting?

McCALL: I was a member of the Fact Finding Committee to pick a candidate to run against Congressman Jerry Voorhis. We had interviewed several prospective candidates and were not quite satisfied with any of 'em. Mr. Herman Perry of Whittier then brought up the name of a young chap from Whittier who he thought would make an ideal candidate, but he said this chap was still in the Navy, although he expected to be out of the Navy very shortly. And so it was suggested that he get him out and let us meet him, and get acquainted and size up the situation. So he communicated with Richard Nixon who, at that time, was in Baltimore [Maryland] in his capacity there, canceling out and renegotiating contracts with one of the airline manufacturers. But Mr. Perry got in touch with him to see if he was interested in running for Congress and found out he would be interested. He hadn't given it any thought at that time, but when Mr. Perry suggested it, he registered interest. The result was he came out and a few of us, along with Mr. Perry, met him and chatted with him and were very much impressed. And the result was we had him appear before the Fact Finding Committee.

ARENA: And when you speak about the Fact Finding Committee, you are speaking about a group that consisted of more than just the persons in South Pasadena [California]. Is that correct?

McCALL: Oh, yes. It was a cross section of, as I recall, approximately a hundred and five or ten people that had shown political interest and were civic-minded, as well as political, and had been made up to pick a candidate to run against the Democratic incumbent.

ARENA: Would you mind describing what the relationship of the Fact Finding Committee was to the formal Republican machinery, commonly called "the machine?" Were you completely independent? Did you work closely with them? Did you not see eye to eye and so forth? What was the relationship of the Fact Finding Committee to the regular Republican setup?

McCALL: Well, the Fact Finding Committee was really set up by the chairman of the Republican County Central Committee. At that time, I happened to be County President of the Los Angeles County Republican Assembly. Consequently, he and I worked very closely together to endeavor to get as many Republican candidates elected as possible. We were a volunteer organization that had chapters in various sections of the county and was part of the state-wide organization, the California Republican Assembly. So the Chairman of the County Central Committee and myself, which I mentioned before, worked closely together. So one day he and I had lunch, at which time he mentioned this idea of setting up a group



out in our district where I lived, in order to defeat the Democratic incumbent. So we called a little meeting of four or five of the fellows and discussed the matter, and they thought the idea had real merit, and from that it spread to include all members of the County Central Committee living in that area, and all the leaders of known Republican groups, and discussed, and they approved, and then we spread out and took in civic leaders in each community.

ARENA: When you say civic leaders, you didn't necessarily go just for Republicans?

McCALL: Oh, yes, we went for Republicans, but . . .

ARENA: When you say civic leaders, you don't necessarily mean only the Lions' Club, the Rotary Club, some of these groups of that type?

McCALL: Yes.

ARENA: But only those who were Republicans.

McCALL: Yes, oh, yes. Of course, the Republicans.

ARENA: Though there is this idea of cross-filing, as you know, and I was just wondering to what extent, even before the formal cross-filing, if there was anything that was unofficial, where possibly some of the Democrats, for one reason or another, wanted to stand behind the Republicans and work with your group too. Was there any of that, do you recollect, an appreciable amount of Democrats who were working with the Republicans on this, at this point anyway?

McCALL: No. In fact, just the reverse was largely true, where some of the Republicans in the district were working with the Democrats, as far as Congress was concerned, because the Democratic Congressman from this area was a member of the Agriculture Committee in Congress and, consequently, the large holders of citrus land and so forth figured it would be better for them to work with the incumbent in the matter. Now, then, after this was all agreed, then we had the Chairman of the County Central Committee for this, what was then known as the Twelfth District, act as chairman, thought it would be better for him to act as chairman, to give it sort of semi-official standing; but, really, it technically had no official standing.

ARENA: This Fact Finding Committee had no official standing.

McCALL: That's right. So we tried to be open and above-board. There were no secret sessions or commitments of any kind.

- ARENA: The old idea about politicians in back rooms smoking cigars and so forth, that wasn't the way in which you operated.
- McCALL: That was not part of this Fact Finding Committee in any sense.
- ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you: As you know, I'm not interested in politics, per se, at this point. It's this background of the President and that time in history. Now, as you know, the President came from a Quaker community. He was raised a Quaker himself. What was the makeup of South Pasadena, and were there any problems because of the differences, if there were any, from the standpoint of Whittier being founded by the Quakers, although the Quakers did not run the community, of course, but they had this important historic background? Was there any problems that way? Any differences?
- McCALL: Not that I recall at all. People that were active on this committee were anxious to get a Republican in there. The district was naturally a Republican district, and they wanted to return it to the Republican Party.
- ARENA: The person who had been elected before Jerry Voorhis had been a Republican, as far as you recollect?
- McCALL: Yes, but he was a poor one.
- ARENA: How about the question, as we have today, of course, of the Mexican-American vote, the black vote? Were there any particular groups like that that had to be taken into consideration at that time?
- McCALL: No, we had no outstanding group that was either opposing or that we catered to.
- ARENA: If it isn't too personal, Mr. McCall, do you mind if I ask you how you became actively involved in politics yourself, and how far back before 1945?
- McCALL: Well, when I moved into South Pasadena, the man who was more or less considered responsible for politics in South Pasadena was a man known as Ted Law.
- ARENA: And would the Ted stand for Theodore, the full name?
- McCALL: Yes.
- ARENA: Thank you.

McCALL: But always known as Ted Law. He was very active in local politics, and I had met and made his acquaintance at Republican local meetings. And one evening he brought over a young man who wanted to run for the State Legislature, a man by the name of Frederick F. Houser. Mr. Houser was just out of Harvard Law School at that time, had just finished law school and wanted to run for the State Legislature. And the result was that I became identified with him in his campaign for the Legislature, and that was the beginning.

ARENA: Do you mind if I make sure now in asking you if you had no such interest back in Minnesota; that your interest really in politics began here in California.

McCALL: Not in active participation. As a kid, on numerous occasions I carried one of those old oil lamps in the parades, and I'd go to the fire house and watch the people vote.

ARENA: How about relatives in your family? Were they . . .

McCALL: My father was interested, but he never ran for any political position.

ARENA: Had you taken any courses in political science on the college level, even just one, where some teacher had an influence on your interest do you think?

McCALL: Well, I had a teacher at the university in English Constitutional History, subject, that took somewhat an interest in my being interested, which I think kind of encouraged me.

STIFEL: Excuse me. Don't forget that your folks named you after President [Benjamin] Harrison.

McCALL: I was born the day that President Harrison was nominated for President, so you can see. [Laughter]

ARENA: Do you happen to know the Harrisons of Whittier [California] who are also distantly related, I believe? William Harrison is an architect. His office is in Los Angeles [California] and his brother married the President's aunt, the sister of his mother. His mother was Hannah [Milhous Nixon] as you know, and his mother's sister is Elizabeth [Milhous Harrison]. One of the brothers of Mr. William Harrison is Russell Harrison, Sr. He has a son. And I was wondering if you did come across the Harrisons?

McCALL: No, but in the laboratory business, we did work at times for his office, the architect.

ARENA: That's interesting.

McCALL: But it never occurred to me that there was any connection, and I never asked him.

ARENA: Did you ever come across, you know, the idea that politics is dirty? Did your friends or relatives ever press you on that and try to get you out of that line of activity by any chance?

McCALL: Well, I never thought of politics being dirty. I don't yet. There are INDIVIDUALS in it who, let's face it, are dishonest and are in it for personal gain, no question about that. But I think there are a lot of dedicated people, for the good of the community and the good of the country as a whole, holding public office. Take the word politician. What's the definition of that? It's "student of public affairs."

ARENA: Did you ever want to run for an office yourself, Mr. McCall?

McCALL: Never had any ambition to run for office.

ARENA: Any particular reason?

McCALL: No, I had a family to support and a business to look after, and while I was offered one or two appointed jobs in my career, but I was able to make a little bit more than what that job offered in salary, and I never accepted.

ARENA: How about even some of the lower positions in politics, not in importance but in publicity anyway, like the boards of education and offices like that? Did you ever run for any of those?

McCALL: No.

ARENA: How about the type of people . . .

McCALL: The nearest thing in politics, as I mentioned earlier, I was president of the L.A. [Los Angeles] County Republican Assembly. Now, let me correct myself, I did run. You had to run and be voted on as a member of the County Central Committee. I served on the County Central Committee for two or three terms.

ARENA: That would be an elective office?

McCALL: That is an elective office. And then I served on the State Central Committee, but that was by appointment, on the State Central Committee.

- ARENA: Did you ever attend any national conventions for Presidential candidates?
- McCALL: I attended four conventions, and was an alternate member of the delegation on three of them.
- ARENA: Did you enjoy the experience?
- McCALL: Very much. Very much. I was State President of the California Republican Assembly a term, which is a volunteer group. At that time, they were much more conservative than they are today.
- ARENA: How about the general type of person you personally ran into in politics? How would you describe them, from your own personal experience including, say, the Fact Finding Committee of 100. One, you could describe them from the standpoint of their business or occupations; what percentage, we'll say, were businessmen; what percentage, do you think were teachers; what percentage were, maybe, elderly retired people? That's one way. The other is from the standpoint of their desires to be in politics and their desires to promote a candidate. What motivated them? These are just some possible ways of describing these people.
- McCALL: Now, you have reference to this fact-finding committee?
- ARENA: Along with the other people over the years. I'm just wondering how you would describe the average political person that you've encountered in your long experience.
- McCALL: Well, like most groups, you're inclined to associate with those people of similar ideas to yourself. Now in politics, it's the same way. There you would spot someone whom you saw was very personally ambitious for himself and himself alone, why, it wasn't long you didn't associate with that person too much, or you didn't come too close.
- ARENA: In other words, you think the person who went in for politics and was for himself would be a good contact, for whatever reason, either as a candidate or as a person to work with in the party?
- McCALL: Oh, no. I have no objection to a person being ambitious for themselves. I have no objection for them wanting to seek office, that sort of thing. I don't mean to eliminate all those that are seeking office by any means; but on the other hand, you occasionally come in contact with those who are seeking office for a very, very selfish reason, and you know darn well that, once they have gained that office you'd have to watch 'em like a hawk. But I maintain that there are many men, women too, nowadays, in politics because they want to do something for their state or their nation.

ARENA: Would you say that, from your experience, that represents the average person over the years that you've encountered, the person that has that attitude?

McCALL: I think it represents the majority.

ARENA: Would you include the Fact Finding Committee of 100 in that category too?

McCALL: Definitely. Oh that Committee of 100, I'd have a hard job picking out ANYONE on that committee who I thought had a selfish, personal ambition.

ARENA: How about the idea of separating the members on that committee, from the standpoint of their occupation or profession?

McCALL: I think the majority of them were in business, most of them for themselves. In addition, there were several professional men. Naturally, lawyers are inclined to show, a large percentage of them, an interest in politics. But then there were some doctors; there were some dentists.

ARENA: As you know, a member of the faculty at Whittier College, Chief [Wallace J.] Newman, was one of the supporters. I don't recall if he was a member of the Committee of 100, but he was one of the supporters of President Nixon at that time. To what extent were there people like that, teachers, whether college or high school or elementary on the committee? Did they stand out as a group or were they rare?

McCALL: There weren't a great many from the colleges or schools at that time.

ARENA: Comparing it with today's situation, would you say there's a big difference?

McCALL: Big difference.

ARENA: I appreciate your answering these personal questions, because it does give an idea of the type of person and the type of climate that was in existence when the President was first running for office. Again, as I say, it's not politics, as such, but the history of that time and period that you're helping to make clear. Getting back to the President individually--again, aside from the politics end of it--how would you describe him? You said he did make an impression on you when you met him. Do you recall, was it that meeting that made the impression? Was it meeting him later? Was it what people said, like Mr. Perry? What were the things that impressed him on you and why?

McCALL: Well, I was impressed with his frankness and his integrity and his ability. He made a very favorable impression, because as I've always maintained, if you've got a candidate that you have confidence in his integrity, you've got confidence in his ability, why, you can play along with him.

ARENA: But on these early occasions, what would convince you that he was a man of integrity, a man that could instill confidence? What was it about him, or what was said about him that made you feel that way toward him? And how long was it, if I may ask, that you made up your mind that you really had these convictions? You met him, say, when he first appeared, flying in from Baltimore [Maryland], but how long did it take, do you think, till you were really sure that you could support this man with your own work and your own reputation and everything?

McCALL: Well, it was frankly, very quickly after meeting him. Of course, all the time you were comparing him with those who had expressed a desire to become the endorsed candidate. And he, in my estimation, was so far ahead of any of those that I figured I'd go along with him.

ARENA: In what respect, thinking back--and you need not mention their names unless you want to in making this comparison--but how did he excell in comparison with some of the others that you were considering for running against Jerry Voorhis, as you recall?

McCALL: Well, the way he would express himself as we quizzed him about his belief on different matters?

ARENA: Excuse me. Do you recall, physically, how that quizzing took place? For example, were there about a hundred people there the first time and he was in the large room? Was it a small room and maybe the leaders of the Committee of 100, which you were in a circle together, we'll say? Do you recall how that was done, the quizzing of him for his views?

McCALL: As I recall, the first meeting was with just a handful of the members. Herman Perry actually, as I recall, had a few of us over for lunch, or something, in Whittier to meet him.

ARENA: It was not here in South Pasadena.

McCALL: No.

ARENA: You recall that.

McCALL: Yeah. I think it was in Whittier. As I recall, I think we were up at that Penn Hotel.



ARENA: There is a William Penn Hotel and they have a restaurant there now. Did he wear his uniform at the time, do you recall?

McCALL: Yes.

ARENA: Did anything come up regarding his being a Quaker, and Quakers are usually pacifists, as you know. Did that come up in any way, do you recall, in a way that it might be an embarrassment politically?

McCALL: From a sort of argumentive point of view?

ARENA: Well, in any way, in any way at all?

McCALL: No, it didn't become an issue. But I remember there was some hesitancy on his part. I forgot, now, whether he had taken on weight or lost weight since he'd gone into the service. Anyway, he assured us that his uniform was the only suit of clothes that fitted him, and a question arose in his mind. He was fearful whether he should appear before the committee in uniform or not. But I don't know who he consulted in that regard; anyway, he went ahead and appeared.

ARENA: How long a period of time, if you recall, did you spend with him on that occasion? Was it just during the luncheon period or, we'll say, during the rest of the afternoon, the rest of the day, or was it mainly just a lunch?

McCALL: I'm not certain about that. I would be inclined to think it was just a luncheon affair.

ARENA: I'm thinking, you know former president, John Kennedy, you've seen [Charles] DeGaulle on television, you recall Franklin Roosevelt; to what extent did his personality have any comparison with these other famous political leaders of our times? Each one has kind of his own stamp. Maybe for Franklin Roosevelt it might be that terrific smile. Kennedy, it might be the man's exceptional good looks and strong physique. DeGaulle, it might be his physique and maybe he looks like an emperor and sometimes acts like one. If these generalizations make sense to you, and if they are accurate, was there anything like that, any special thing about the President at that time that stuck in your mind?

McCALL: At what stages, now, do you mean?

ARENA: Well, let's say this very first time.

McCALL: No, there was nothing I could specify then.



ARENA: He didn't overwhelm you. Would that be a correct thing to say, that he didn't overwhelm you the first time?

McCALL: Oh, no. But he conveyed confidence.

ARENA: Were his parents there, or was there a minister there on the occasion to speak up for his integrity, his honesty, and his being a respected member of the community?

McCALL: At this first meeting?

ARENA: At the luncheon itself.

McCALL: No, I don't recall any minister being there.

ARENA: Well, let me not interrupt you any more for a while, and let you say whatever you want about these early meetings, again, from the standpoint of the impressions that you recall, including meeting his wife who, I believe, was not there at that time, the very first occasion.

McCALL: No.

ARENA: But could I ask you to say anything that comes to mind about these early meetings with him, from the standpoint of his personality, and then his wife, Mrs. Patricia Nixon?

McCALL: Well, the next time I had an opportunity to be impressed was when he appeared before the entire committee and gave a talk, and it was so far ahead of anything any of the other prospective candidates were able to show, that the entire group, practically, were immediately for him.

ARENA: Do you recall if his talk was a prepared speech, followed by questions on his feet, so to speak?

McCALL: As I recall, there were questions asked, because we had asked questions of the other candidates after they talked. You could ask questions from the floor of them.

ARENA: Do you recall if this meeting with the whole Committee of 100 was in Whittier also?

McCALL: This first meeting . . .

ARENA: The first time you met with the large group, or might it have been the one. . . . I believe he went to Pomona where Mr. [Roy O.] Day was, but I don't recall if that was the one. And I think he was going to be introduced by--you may know this gentleman--a Mr. [Donald E.] Don Fantz. Somewhere along the line, he introduced him at a large meeting. That might have

been a political rally later on. But I had the impression that Mr. Fantz, who was a Democrat, by the way, and I believe still is, but a bipartisan situation. . . . That name doesn't ring a bell? It would have been a long-known . . .

McCALL: What's his name?

ARENA: Don Fantz.

McCALL: And he was from where?

ARENA: He was from Whittier. And as far as you recollect, Mr. McCall, this occasion was not one in which the Democratic leader, Don Fantz, introduced him, as far as you recall?

McCALL: No.

ARENA: Was there anything else about this meeting, in which he overwhelmed the majority of the fact-finding committee, that comes to mind? Any particular touches? Did he introduce, we'll say, his family or his wife on this occasion?

McCALL: No. The only thing, they took a vote, and it was practically unanimous. As I recall, I think there were three or four who did not vote for him on the first ballot. And then someone moved to make it unanimous, so it was made unanimous.

ARENA: Is there anything else about these two meetings that you've described so far that you'd like to bring up before we close that subject out? I just wonder if maybe by my asking you individual questions, you might have lost track of some of the main general points you were thinking of.

McCALL: No, I don't . . .

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: As we mentioned earlier, and also off the tape, you met some very well-known local persons of the Whittier area, such as Chief Wallace Newman, a football coach at Whittier College; a Mr. Herman Perry, who was the head of the Bank of America in Whittier. I would just like to ask you to give your recollections of these gentlemen, who played an equally important role in launching the President into his political career. And any other names that I haven't mentioned that you would like to bring up would be very much appreciated.

McCALL: Well, I'll say this. The men from the Whittier area, in my honest and sincere appraisal, were men of the highest

caliber. And I do not recall a single exception to that matter. I could go through and name several down the line, but the ones that I worked closest with . . .

ARENA: They would be the ones that I would be most interested in.

McCALL: Yes. Of course, first of all, Herman Perry, that I worked very closely with. And by the way, I might add that Herman Perry was very much interested in helping young fellows come up. I think if the facts were known, there may be more officers with the Bank of America that are indebted to Herman Perry than any one man, certainly in Southern California. He was always pushing these young fellows.

ARENA: Would that be pushing them educationally or pushing them in their professions, and also how about politically?

McCALL: Not necessarily politically. I mean if they wanted and got a job with the bank, he would follow their career and help 'em along. Like politics, that was one of his--you'd hardly call it a hobby--but nevertheless he was specially interested in young men.

ARENA: How about Chief [Wallace J.] Newman? What do you recall and what impresses you about that gentleman?

McCALL: I had a very, very favorable impression about Chief Newman. I had a very, very favorable impression about [Thomas William] Tom Bewley, who was afterwards, or had been before, a law partner of President Nixon. And then Harold Lutz, who I still think a great deal of, and a man who was very dependable. His word was just as good as his bond.

ARENA: Had you known these gentlemen before your political connections where you pushed President Nixon?

McCALL: No.

ARENA: I see. Who were the important Republican leaders of Whittier that you did know, if you knew any, from that particular town?

McCALL: I knew very few, if any.

ARENA: How about Mr. Charles Cooper, not to be confused with the Charles Cooper who wrote the history of Whittier College.

McCALL: No, but the Charles Cooper who is agriculture, yes. Well, there's an example of the rank and file of the committee. Charlie Cooper I have a very high respect for. Yes, very definitely.

ARENA: And you did know him before or not?

McCALL: As I recall, I did. Now, I think he was on the County Central Committee at the same time I was on the County Central Committee.

ARENA: Does that mean, Mr. McCall, the fact that you did not know these political leaders of Whittier, that Whittier had not played an important political part, maybe, before?

McCALL: No. No, because I wasn't extended in the whole overall area, Congressional area. My activities prior to this had been largely confined to this area of South Pasadena and thereabouts, because before I had no political ambitions, no reason to go out and cultivate political acquaintances. If I met them and worked with them like on the Central Committee or something, that was another thing.

ARENA: How would you describe your association with the local supporter of Mr. Nixon, Mr. Frank Jorgenson, whom we mentioned off the tape?

McCALL: Well, I had, and still have, the highest respect for Frank Jorgenson. Now Frank Jorgenson, as I recall, was chairman of the finance committee while I was campaign director. Consequently, I worked very closely with him in that capacity, in getting bills paid, [Laughter] and so forth.

ARENA: How about Mr. Spencer? I don't recall his first name.

McCALL: Herb.

ARENA: Herbert Spencer. I just remembered his married daughter's name. It is Mrs. Pfau who now lives in San Francisco [California] by the way. She had contributed her papers to the [Richard] Nixon Foundation for the Presidential Library. I just thought it might come to mind, but names can be misleading, as we all know. Well, that's okay. We can find that out easily enough in our records. Is there any question or any point that I have not raised? For example, I'm thinking now, I did mention Mrs. Pat Nixon. I was wondering what your impressions of her are, going back to this early period when you first met her. Did you think she would make a good candidate's wife?

McCALL: Well, I always say it's nice for a candidate to have a good looking wife. [Laughter] It certainly doesn't hurt his campaign. And Pat was not only good looking, but Pat was a good worker.

ARENA: Was she ever difficult from the standpoint of the committee or you working with her, like "Boys, get out," or something like that, "Leave my husband alone?"

McCALL: Oh, we had a couple of little differences that come up from time to time, but she wasn't the kind to hold it.

ARENA: Do you recall that she had some definite political suggestions, or did she play an advisory role in any way?

McCALL: Oh, no, she would have definite suggestions, and sometimes you'd go along with her suggestions and sometimes you wouldn't. Oh, no, we had our differences at times but it all worked out all right.

ARENA: Thinking back in an overall fashion about this early period, what do you think the President's biggest asset was, from the standpoint of being a winner, from right off at the beginning, as you know, and right up to the present time. He had a loss here and there, but he certainly was a winner for a long time. But during this early period, what was his greatest asset, do you think?

McCALL: Well, in my book he was almost like a psychologist, the way he would size up a situation. I'll cite a little example. We had arranged for him to appear on a small radio station that was located up at the Huntington Hotel in Pasadena, and he was going to speak over the station. And the station made a demand that he submit to them beforehand a copy of what he was going to say, his remarks. And I have never forgotten how he submitted them, and then went up there and they weren't going to let him give his talk. They said, "We can't have you make the statements that's in this statement that you submitted." And he pointed his hand at this director and says, "Why did you submit that to Jerry Voorhis to review beforehand?" Well, this man replied, "He's the only one I knew that knew anything about it." And it was just a bluff on Nixon's part. He didn't know he had submitted it to him. He just guessed at it and made the crack. It was things like that that were very interesting.

ARENA: Some people say that a good poker player is a good bluffer. Do you think there's any connection, and did you know whether or not the President played poker? Did that ever come up in any way?

McCALL: No. I heard that afterwards. While he was in the service, you mean, when he won all this money?

ARENA: Yes.

McCALL: Well, he may have been a good poker player, but I don't think he was in for big stakes, because he was saving his money and sending it back to Whittier.

ARENA: You never saw him play poker?

McCALL: I never saw him play. I never played poker with him. It was never suggested on either side, and yet I like poker. [Laughter]

ARENA: What would you say was his weakness as a political candidate--nobody's perfect?

McCALL: No. Well, it would be hard for me to answer that question. His weakness in his early campaigns, I think, sometimes he'd lose his temper a little, but he corrected that pretty well.

ARENA: Were there any other things where you think he needed some correcting? For example, this was his very first campaign, and he didn't have any experience that way, although he had--maybe you knew or did not know at the time--a lot of public speaking experience as a student in debate, but were there any other things where you noticed that he took a different attack after he saw that something wasn't working out well? Let me ask you this, if nothing comes to mind on that point. There was something about his challenging Jerry Voorhis to a debate, whether that was a good idea or a bad idea, Jerry Voorhis being a well-known speaker himself. What do you recall about there being some question as to whether that was a good idea or not, and finally, of course, he did debate him, but do you recall anything about there being an issue as to whether or not he should debate him?

McCALL: Very much so. I remember. To begin with, it wasn't a question of Nixon or the Nixon forces wanting to debate Voorhis. It was a question of Jerry Voorhis wanting to debate Nixon. Well, we figured this way. Jerry Voorhis had been in Congress for five terms, ten years, maybe the greatest debating society in the world. None of us on the committee, or that, had ever heard Nixon debate. True enough, he had been on the college debating team, but to be on a college debating team and to be a member of Congress, debating in Congress, were two different things. Consequently, I for one didn't want to see him debate Voorhis. But they kept hounding us and putting out publicity, till finally he agreed to debate him. But then, they submitted a list of cities



where the debates should be held throughout the district, and what they were after was to hold them in Republican communities, see? Well, we weren't going to stand for that. The result was, it was decided and compromised to split it up to both Democratic and Republican communities, so the debates were held, and there was no question but what that really made Nixon. Up to that time of the debates, I thought there was considerable question whether he would win or wouldn't. There was just about a draw. But after those debates started, I was convinced he had it won then.

ARENA: I know you recall the debates against John Kennedy. And some say that that's what caused him to lose. Would you want to comment on that and maybe compare the two famous debates, the one with Jerry Voorhis and the one with John Kennedy?

McCALL: Well, I'd like to comment, but I'd like first to know whether or not Mr. [Joseph P.] Kennedy or Ambassador Kennedy, Sr., had gotten to the makeup people at the studio through some of his connections with the organizations, because I personally always had a suspicion that whoever handled the makeup of Nixon for those debates had been taken care of and I think that, more than what was said on either side, pretty near affected to a large degree the public.

ARENA: Finally, I'd like to ask you about these collections of papers, correspondence, that I see you have well preserved. They're covered with plastic envelopes. Would you mind giving an overall description of the sort of papers that you have that deal with President Nixon, from the standpoint of historians knowing who has what and, hopefully, you'll let them see them when they get ready to, of course.

McCALL: Well, I have two volumes here of various letters that transpired between us during the campaign, '46 and '48, many telegrams, several letters that he wrote personally, longhand. By the way, it includes a letter he wrote me longhand while aboard the Queen Mary on his way over to Europe with the old Herter Committee. And these letters and all, of course, I prize a great deal. A lot of them are of quite a personal nature, but the majority of them involve political questions that came up during the campaign.

ARENA: Would you say that the correspondence also goes back to that very beginning, 1945, and that he has kept in touch with you right up to the present? You have written to him on and off?

McCALL: Well, I don't see or hear from him so much today, of course, which is understandable. I had the pleasure of being back there, as I told you, to the weddings of both

children, that they were kind enough to invite me to. I had the pleasure of being his guest on the yacht "Sequoia" down the Potomac, when they were kind enough to invite me, and a few little personal things like that which I appreciate and have enjoyed, and the fact that he keeps tab on some of his old friends, I think, just registers the kind of a man he is, as well as his good wife.

ARENA: Excuse me, but one of your most recent prized possessions is the handwritten postcard while they were over in China. Pat had written the card, and then he gave his signature on the card.

McCALL: He joined her in signing the card.

ARENA: Would you mind, or is that too personal, reading into the record what he did say on the card?

McCALL: No.

ARENA: Now that you have found that card that the President and his wife sent you from China on their recent trip, would you mind reading it, Mr. McCall?

McCall: "Greetings and best wishes from Peking, China, February 1972, (signed Pat (initialed) R. N."

ARENA: Thank you very much. And thank you very much for the hospitality in allowing me to come into your home and asking you these questions for the historical record, and for your answering them so frankly and fully. Thank you very much.

ARENA: The point was just made off the record and maybe it would be good to put it on the record. Would you mind repeating that?

STIFEL: For the reelection--at that time Congressman Nixon had his headquarters right in this home, in the little front room--he had a special telephone put in, so that my father wouldn't have to be chasing, maybe, out to Whittier, or Pomona, as often.

ARENA: And the address of this home, of course, is 1625 Laurel Street, South Pasadena, California. Thank you very much.

McCALL: Well, just a little amusing incident that happened. This was while he was in Congress. He wrote me that he was going to put out a sort of poll among the voters. Now, I'm not sure whether he was the first congressman to originate that idea or not. I know it's the first time I had ever heard of it, a congressman sending out a questionnaire to his constituents in the



district. He said he had prepared this to send to them, and he wanted me to make arrangements to have some of the women folks address the envelopes and mail them. He would send them out here to my house. Time went along, and in about a couple of weeks, while eating breakfast, the doorbell rang, and I went to the door and here was the mailman, said he had some mail for me. "Well, I said, where is it? Give it to me." "Oh," he said, "I got a whole truck-load. Where'll I put it?" So this big mail truck backed up, unloaded I don't know, twenty or thirty sacks of mail [Laughter] for me to arrange to be addressed and sent out to the constituents. So I got busy and got two or three of the women's organizations competing among themselves as to who could address the most envelopes to send out.

ARENA: That is very interesting. Thank you, Mr. McCall.

Attachment

Additional comments furnished by Mrs. Harriet J. Stifel, daughter of interviewee, Mr. Harrison McCall:

\* \* \* \* \*

You quiz dad about his family's interest in politics. Dad said that his father was active with "the underground railroad" in Illinois.

When my dad hired one of his nephews (at that time on summer vacation while studying engineering at Stanford University) the nephew said the Los Angeles Testing Laboratory was a "Little United Nations" as far as the heritage of the employees was concerned.

In the interim, since your visit, the President has written my dad two warm personal letters--one concerning dad's health, the other wishing him Happy Birthday July 9th. Between these letters Dad received a direct phone call from the President!

Last week Julie Nixon Eisenhower sent him the book "Eye on Nixon" which she edited. She included a handwritten note addressed to Dad on the flyleaf.

The warmth of our First Lady! Dad said he greeted the Nixons many times at the airport when the President was a congressman. Many times Dad was the only one there on their unannounced trips. Dad said Pat always gave him a hug and kiss when they arrived. When Dad went back to Washington for Julie's wedding, he said in his mind he wasn't going to make such a move to the President-Elect's wife; however, she spotted my father in the reception line, pulled him out of line, and after a hug and kiss took him behind the reception line to Julie. After reintroducing them, she said something like: "he gave you the 'Nixon thimble' and the gold thimble."

Today our home, to quote a recent real estate ad about another place, is almost "the worst looking place in the finest neighborhood."

Dad was invited to and attended the two State Dinners held in California.

My personal sidelights of our President: I first met him in the fall of 1948 when he was a congressman. I had returned to California when my mother was in a coma at the hospital. One evening my dad went to a dinner at a private home in San Marino to discuss with others (including Mr. Nixon) the advisability of Nixon's running for the Senate. (My father was against the idea at THAT time, thinking that politically the time wasn't right). After retiring for bed I heard my father return. Curious about the outcome of the night, I got up, knowing my father, decided to get dressed first in case Nixon was here. In my bedroom slippers I was introduced to Nixon and my dad sincerely invited me to join them.

At that time I complained to Nixon that Missouri law was different than California's and I couldn't send an absentee ballot unless I was within the state of Missouri and that President Truman was spending taxpayer's money to fly to Missouri to vote, but I couldn't afford the trip. Then, knowing my parents' full confidence in Nixon plus the background of the evening, I asked Nixon, "When are you going to run for President so that I can vote for you?" He responded with a modest laugh.

One day our childhood maid decided to bring her two sisters over and do a "fall housecleaning" job from top to bottom instead of sending flowers to my mother in the hospital. By mid afternoon, rugs were on the front lawn, living room furniture stacked up in the corner where the three women were cleaning. I was cleaning in the front hall with the front door wide open when I spotted Nixon coming up our steps. The situation was obvious, so I relaxed as I introduced the women to him. They were so embarrassed to meet a Congressman when they were so dirty, but he said something that put them at their ease. The purpose of his visit was to inquire how my mother was getting along.

As a campaign manager, my father was always publicity-minded for his candidate while he remained in the background himself. Therefore, many of the party workers nicknamed him "The Grey Fox" or "The Grey Ghost" (grey for the color of his hair). So, after the convention 20 years ago, it didn't surprise me when Dad came home and explained the background of a newspaper picture that I still have. During the "demonstration" after Warren's nomination, he and Mr. Raymond Arbuthnot made a hand chair and were carrying Mrs. Mary Topper on the convention floor. When Dad spotted a photographer coming their way, Nixon then Senator was at his side, so Dad told Nixon to quick switch places. Dad's head is in the picture but not named under the picture as the other three are. (It's a horrible picture of Nixon!)

And when I wrote a "thank you" note to Julie Nixon Eisenhower for the book she sent my dad, I said "We're both mighty proud of our fathers."

Sincerely,

Harriet Stifel  
(Mrs. Robert J. Stifel)  
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South Pasadena, California 91030