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## Hubert C. Perry (March 2, 1972)

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

MR. HUBERT C. PERRY

March 2, 1972  
Whittier, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. Hubert C. Perry of Whittier, California, C. stands for Carver. Today is March 2, 1972, Arena interviewing. Mr. Perry, may we begin by my asking you where and when you were born?

PERRY: June 11, 1913.

ARENA: And the place?

PERRY: Whittier.

ARENA: Would you mind giving a brief sketch of your background beginning, say, with your father, his occupation, your mother's maiden name, whether or not she went to college, and if your father was not from California, his place of origin?

PERRY: My father lived in Indiana and Ohio prior to coming to California, and I might say that his father was a Quaker minister in both of those states, and they both came to California early in the century, about 1906 or 1907, my father coming to Whittier and my grandfather coming to East Whittier as pastor of the East Whittier Friends Church. My father's name was Herman Lee Perry, and his wife, my mother, was Lola Carver from Spencer, Iowa.

ARENA: Do you recall your father ever mentioning the reasons for his move to California--at the invitation of other relatives, or . . .

PERRY: I'm not sure, offhand, if he came first or his brother came first. I wouldn't know which was the first one. But his brother Will [William Perry] came to Escondido [California], and a younger brother Essek [Perry] came to California and moved eventually to Whittier, and I would guess they all came about the same time, but I'm not sure.

ARENA: Do you recall your father's schools, including college?

PERRY: He went for a short time to college in Nebraska, and I think he attended for perhaps a year or a year and a half. It was a small business college in Central City, Nebraska. Then he came directly from there to Whittier.

ARENA: And did not continue his college education?

PERRY: No, he did not continue it.

ARENA: And your mother--had she gone through college?

PERRY: No.

ARENA: What was your father's main occupation in Whittier?

PERRY: He went into the banking business in early, I guess, 1907, '08, [with] an independent bank owned by the [Frederick] Hadley and [Amos] Maple families in Whittier, and that bank eventually became a part of the Bank of America system in the middle twenties, and he stayed as manager of the Bank of America until his retirement in 1949.

ARENA: Now as you know, this oral history project is not involved with the political period of the President's life; 1945 is the cutoff point. And your father did play a leading role in launching the President's political career. However, can you recall that your father had any direct contact with President Nixon before 1945?

PERRY: He would have, through his relationship with the family, Mr. [Francis Anthony] Nixon being a customer of the bank, and my father having been involved in credits to him from time to time. I know during the period when Nixon was in college he was in our home a number of times, and so through that relationship and through the relationship with the family, there was a rather close relationship.

ARENA: If this is not too personal, or too confidential, it has been mentioned in some books that Frank Nixon sold some of his land in East Whittier in order to handle medical expenses involving his son Harold [Samuel Nixon]. Would you happen to know if your father was in any way involved in the land transaction or the banking transaction, if you recall anything about that incident?

PERRY: I don't know anything about it at all. There may be in my father's files some evidence as to his relationship, but I have no knowledge of it.

ARENA: Since your father did have such an important contact with President Nixon, from the standpoint of history I would like to ask you where the papers of your father are located at this point, if you care to mention that?

PERRY: I have them here. I have a file which has two or three drawers of his papers, including the correspondence he had with Nixon over a period of some number of years.

ARENA: Did your father have any other contact with members of the Nixon family, in addition to the parents, Frank and Hannah [Milhous Nixon]? I'm thinking of, possibly, the grandparents, Mr. Franklin Milhous and the President's grandmother, Mrs. Almira Milhous?

PERRY: I'm not sure, but I would assume that there was acquaintanceship with members of the Milhous family. If I recall correctly, one of the Milhous boys, for a short period, worked in the bank sometime in the late '20's, perhaps.

ARENA: One particular Milhous who mentioned working in a bank was a W. Carlton Milhous, who did buy a Ford, Model T, which he enjoyed riding to the desert, and on one occasion rode all the way to the Grand Canyon, if that helps to pinpoint this young man.

PERRY: I think his name was William Milhous.

ARENA: W. Carlton. The W. would have stood for William, and he said that he preferred to be called Carl. I'm sure the W. stood for William.

PERRY: Carl. He lived on North Painter Avenue.

ARENA: I don't recall, but his father was Griffith [William Milhous], who did teach music, and taught music at John Muir Junior High School. Do you think that might be the same Milhous?

PERRY: I think this would be the same Milhous, yes.

ARENA: Do you recall the grandmother of the President, Mrs. Almira Milhous, who did live quite a few years beyond her husband, long enough at least to see the President graduate from law school, Duke [University], in 1937?

PERRY: No.

ARENA: Do you recall having contact, and your father having contact with other relatives, such as the Marshburns? That would be Mr. Oscar Marshburn.

PERRY: There were members of the same church, and through that relationship, plus the relationship of the people in the citrus industry, I'm sure that there would have been relationship with most of the members of the family. I would imagine--Whittier being a relatively small town in those times--that there would have been pretty close knowledge of the family and the various members, but I don't. . . .

ARENA: As an overall statement, would you say that the Milhous family of this period, when the President was born in 1913, and growing up and becoming a young man and a lawyer as of 1937, could it be said that the Milhous family was one of the leading families of Whittier, or East Whittier, as the case may be?

PERRY: I don't suppose, as a person twenty years of age, I would have known much about who were leading families, but I don't recall that they were leading citizens of the town as far as being active in the community is concerned, or active in the social life of the community.

ARENA: Did you ever possibly hear any preaching by any of the Milhouses, maybe as a guest speaker, excluding President Nixon for a moment and possible chapel talks that he might have given?

PERRY: No.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you if you knew of some of the President's cousins, such as Jessamyn [West McPherson] and Merle West?

PERRY: I didn't know either one of them when they were here in Whittier.

ARENA: Would you mind giving a brief resume of your own educational background, Mr. Perry, the schools you attended and the college?

PERRY: I attended Whittier City Schools and Whittier High School, Whittier College from 1931 to 1935, then Stanford Business School from 1935 through '37, then on finishing Stanford spent two years going to Loyola Law School and subsequently American Bankers' School at Rutgers University in 1951 and '52.

ARENA: During your pre-high school period, had you ever come into contact with the President, by any chance, before you met him in high school?

PERRY: Not to my knowledge.

ARENA: And do you recall the year that you did meet him for the first time?

PERRY: No.

ARENA: . . . from the standpoint of your maybe, freshman, junior year in high school?

PERRY: No. He came to the high school in his junior year, which would have been my sophomore year, and I don't have any recollection of any incident or any event that was particularly significant.

ARENA: In his senior year, or maybe it was the junior year, when he ran for office and lost as the head of the student government, do you recall anything of that campaign that was waged? As I say, I don't recall whether he waged it in the spring of his junior year, ready to take over in the senior year, as I think was the case on the college level.

PERRY: Well, I'm not sure either. I really don't have too much of a recollection of it. I was not active in politics myself, and I just don't have any recollection of it.

ARENA: Do you recall his appearances at any oratorical contests, which may have been part of regular assemblies that students were required to attend, or where there were assemblies, regardless of the purpose, oratorical contests or not, where he spoke during the high school period?

PERRY: I'm not sure I listened too intently to those oratoricals that we had. We had them regularly. But I can remember him being involved in the oratorical contests, and I can remember the fact that he was the outstanding speaker on the campus, but I don't recall any particular incident that relates to his speaking.

ARENA: During this high school period were you and he attending the same church, or were you attending the one in Whittier and he the one in East Whittier?

PERRY: I attended the one in Whittier, and he attended the church in East Whittier.

ARENA: Did your paths ever cross through such organizations as choirs, or Christian Endeavor, or similar groups such as that, during the high school period?

PERRY: No, not particularly.

- ARENA: On what occasion did you first come into contact with President Nixon, as far as you can remember, and about the year, as far as you can remember?
- PERRY: I really can't indicate any particular event or any particular time, per se.
- ARENA: Does your own freshman orientation year in college give a clue? Do you recall that he may have been one of the upperclassmen? And I believe you said you were a year younger.
- PERRY: A year behind.
- ARENA: A year behind. Do you recall that he may have been involved in some of the orientation during the freshman period, freshman orientation?
- PERRY: I don't know. I don't have any particular event that I can remember how he was involved, per se.
- ARENA: On the occasions which you mentioned earlier, when he was in your home, would these have been connected with academic activities or would these have been connected with non-academic activities? In other words, was he in your home through your bringing him home or through your father bringing him in your home, as you mentioned earlier?
- PERRY: I would guess, basically, through my own relationship. During the college period there were several occasions when, as a result of glee club activities, we would have parties or affairs of one kind or another, and he was in the house several times for dinners. I don't recall at the moment under what particular circumstances they might have been, though.
- ARENA: Do you recall, during any part of the college period, that the particular glee club or choir that he and you belonged to were called the Ambassadors, and this was a group that traveled from school to school and from community to community?
- PERRY: Well, we were both in the glee club at the same time and both traveled around Southern California, usually about once a week to a concert, and we practiced quite regularly. I think it was two or three times a week, early mornings, at the college. And then we would take bus trips around the country to the churches around here to raise money--and high schools--to raise money for a spring trip, on which we took a trip around California, or wherever it might be, for spring vacation, giving concerts.

ARENA: Do you recall that during this period any special incidents took place, any special event or emergency, all during this contact with him through choir?

PERRY: I've been trying to think of situations where there might be something that I can recall. There's only one occasion that stands out at all, and I don't know why that was, except that it made an impression on me at the time, and I guess I just happened to have remembered it. We would travel by bus from town to town during these concerts. Generally, some of us would sit in the back of the bus, and there was nothing to do between stops but sit and talk about things that might be of interest to eighteen- or twenty-year-olds. And I recall only one particular situation which does kind of stand out, and that was that we got to talking about politics at one particular time, and it may have been, really, about what we were going to do. But in any event Nixon made some comment about if he got into politics he probably wouldn't do it at the local level because he felt that it might get people too involved in things that might not take him very far, but if you were going to get involved you should get involved in something beyond the local political level, perhaps in Congress. And I think that maybe the reason that I remember this as much as anything else, is the fact that during the course of our conversation we were talking about ideas on different things, and he asked me what I thought. This made quite an impression, because I think that those of us who knew him had a great respect for his ability and his judgment, partly because of his academic standing and also just natural leadership. And I think that maybe the fact that he seemed to be interested in what I had to say on that particular subject made quite an impression on me, even though I don't remember exactly the details of what it was that we were talking about at the time.

ARENA: Even though you were a year behind, was there ever an occasion where he and you were in the same class, history, English?

PERRY: We probably were, but that doesn't stand out one way or the other at this particular point.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you what your major interest was, or major subject, at Whittier College?

PERRY: I took a business course, majored in finance, and I would guess that he, along with [Clinton O.] Clint Harris and some of the other fellows, if he took economics or took courses in business subjects, may have been in the same classes. But I don't have any particular remembrance of who was in those classes.



ARENA: Do you recall having any contact with at least three persons whom the President has singled out who were a part of his college experience--I'm sure there were probably others--but there are at least three names that he has singled out: one, Dr. Paul Smith, history, and you know that the President majored in history; two, Chief [Wallace J.] Newman, whom he has called "a remarkable coach"; and three, Dr. Albert Upton? The President as you know participated in drama and volunteered to appear in plays. I was just wondering if you had any direct contact with these gentlemen, and would you give your impressions of them as teachers, as men, whatever you care to say.

PERRY: Let's take Dr. Smith first. Paul Smith, of course, at the time we were in school was a history professor, and he had an unusual ability to teach history, American history perhaps. He had a special class he taught called Famous Americans, which by the research he was able to devote to this made what otherwise could have been, perhaps, not too exciting a class, he somehow seemed to have the ability to make it live and to bring out the human side of these people to the point where his classes were always very popular. Even though people were not particularly history majors, as I wasn't, there seemed to be a great desire for people to take not only the required courses such as the Constitution, but to take the other courses from him because he was such an outstanding lecturer, and he was younger than some of the other professors, and I think this also added a lot to the relationship with him. At the time we were in college, behind the chemistry building someone put up a horse-shoe pit, and so late afternoons sometimes we would play a little horseshoes, and I was always impressed that Dr. Smith was, as I remember now, the only faculty member who came out and played horseshoes with some of us.

Dr. Upton was an English professor, and was, I guess, as I recall now, THE English professor on the campus, and he taught most of us who took any English at all, English literature. And he was, I would say, a very outstanding individual, and a very colorful lecturer and one who made a great impression on anybody who was involved in his courses, and I'm sure he had a profound effect on Nixon through his teaching.

ARENA: Did you happen to know a classmate--I believe she was in the President's particular class--who went on and specialized in drama in a way, went on to the Pasadena Playhouse. Her maiden name was Marjorie Hildreth.

PERRY: Marjorie Hildreth, yes, right.

ARENA: Do you happen to know if there were others besides her who were so inspired, and who went on to what has turned out to be a great nursery of actors and actresses, the Pasadena Playhouse?

PERRY: There were two other people that went about the same time. One was Herschel Daugherty. There was a football player--the name escapes me--who . . .

ARENA: That can be checked later.

PERRY: . . . went out, and is now a director in Hollywood [California]. Then there was a man named Hayden Almandinger, who went to Hollywood to the Pasadena Playhouse. He is deceased; he is no longer living.

ARENA: Was there anything further about Dr. Albert Upton, and including your attending any of his classes?

PERRY: I didn't have too much contact with him, except through attending a couple of English classes he had. He was a sponsor of the Orthogonian Society, and through that had a close relationship with the fellows who were Orthogonians, but I didn't have too much contact with him outside of taking a couple of classes from him.

ARENA: Speaking of the Orthogonians, were you one yourself?

PERRY: No. I was a member of the Franklin Society. You asked a little earlier about Chief Newman, and I think this was, perhaps, where I got best acquainted with Dick Nixon. Somehow, being too small to play football, I went out for managership of the team my freshman year, and was football manager for four years, three of which Nixon was on the campus, and we spent a lot of time every night on the football field or in the lockers, Saturdays at football games. Most of the time during the games, of course, both of us sitting on the bench.

ARENA: Do you ever recall discussing that situation with President Nixon, his sticking to the bench where, certainly after a point he realized that he was not going to play, or it would be very unusual if he did play? And yet, he would stick it out. Do you recall discussing it with him and why he would stick to the bench?

PERRY: No, I don't.

ARENA: Can you give any guess? I'm thinking, for example, of this situation: He was getting good grades, which meant that he had to put in time with the books; he was working part-time at his own store; he was appearing in plays, which meant time for practice, but still coming out to the practice sessions, as well as coming out to the games and sitting on the bench.

PERRY: Your question is, why would he do this?

ARENA: Why would he, with so little time, in a way seemingly wasting it; whereas, in the other things, in a way, you could see the purpose? Why put in this time on football where he wasn't getting into the games?

PERRY: That's a good question, and I don't know really what the answer is. I could make a couple of guesses. One is that he has subsequently indicated a great interest in sports, and perhaps he had a desire here to prove something to himself, which he never was quite able to accomplish. But also, perhaps, it may indicate something of the character of the individual, that he isn't willing to give up. Yet, some other fellows, who weren't much better than he was at football, enjoyed sitting on the bench, or did sit on the bench, so he wasn't without some company. But that's a good question. I don't know. I don't know why a fellow wouldn't give up, except perhaps none of the others did, either, and I think maybe this was kind of a sign of the times. These fellows were getting something out of it perhaps. I know they got something out of it aside from football. Maybe there's some religious aspect to this. I think, personally, it indicated the fact that he was not the type of fellow to give up very easily, and I think he couldn't have accepted this, and as a result just stayed with it.

ARENA: Would you care to comment on Chief and Coach Newman, as Newman the Coach, the football mentor, and Newman the man and teacher and moulder-of-character on the Whittier College Campus?

PERRY: Well, I can only say that at the time I hated his guts. That's kind of a bold statement, but I don't remember him ever thanking me for doing anything in the four years I worked for him. These were tough times, and I'm not sure that at the time we really expected very much. I think his contribution, maybe, to Nixon, his contribution to some of the rest of us may have been the fact that it was a tough life. It was a Spartan existence, where he was extremely demanding of people, and the contribution he made was something that was recognized subsequently, but not at the time. And as a matter of fact, there were days when the team was fighting the coach, because he pressed so hard and the team in many cases was playing over its head as far as the size of the school it was playing, or the depth of the opposition, and as a result he would drive these fellows, because there was no such thing as being second, I guess. And he was the kind of individual who couldn't stand to lose, a terrible loser, and as a result of it, anything less than winning was unacceptable to him, and he in some cases drove the fellows to a point where they would react unfavorably.

I would guess that one of the contributions he made, or Nixon made, was that in some of these kind of trying periods when the team morale might not have been too good, or individual morale

might not have been too good, because if a player came off the bench or came on the field and didn't do something right, the Chief really told him off in front of a couple of thousand fans. This didn't really do too much for the individual's ego, but Nixon always had the ability to, or took the time perhaps, both during the game as well as during the half, to in many cases be the sparkplug by little things that he might have said to the fellows, compliments as well as his ability to put things succinctly, and as a result, in some cases I had the feeling he countermanded or countered the adverse effect the Chief had. Now, I don't think the Chief was particularly loved at the time these fellows were in school, but I think that as time has gone by and they've seen the results of his tutorship, they've begun to appreciate the contribution he made to them as individuals. But I think at the time, if the fellows were honest, they would have said that it was a pretty rough go.

ARENA: At the time, was football the number one sport, although there were other sports, but was football the number one sport on the Whittier campus at the time the President attended?

PERRY: Yes. I would say that basketball was a pretty strong sport and pretty active sport, but football was the number one sport.

ARENA: Were you intertwining, in this past comment about the Chief and these past observations, the two parts of my question? One dealt with him as a football coach, the mechanics side of football, you might say, the expert in football; and Newman, the man? I just want to be sure, because I think you did deal with both. But is there something that you want to say specifically about the football mechanics side of him, as compared with what you know about football today, and for the layman?

PERRY: Well, he had principles, fundamentals, that he worked on that, I think, were disciplines that were extremely important, although I'm sure at the time they weren't particularly well appreciated by any of us, particularly those who were involved in them. I wasn't so much involved, but he had an insistence on fundamentals--that there be no such thing as a bad block, and no such thing as a bad tackle, and any time these things were evident in a game, after the game we would drill and drill and drill, from 6 o'clock they'd turn the lights on, we'd drill till 7, 8 o'clock at night.

ARENA: And you say, even after the game this would take place?

PERRY: Not the same night, but the next drill, and he would just drill and drill. I would guess that if something came out of this from the standpoint of training, it

was the development of fundamentals--that you don't just go off without being properly prepared and properly trained--and probably, if there was any one thing that he was a past-master on, it was getting the fundamentals. And he insisted that if you're going to get dirty you get the front of your suit dirty and not the back of your suit, which meant that you had to charge a little bit harder and you had to hit a little harder, and of course, this insistence on excellence on his part produced some great football teams. In spite of the fact that he had some talent, he didn't have team depth, and I would say that a lot of his success came from the fact that these teams went out there with only one thought in mind, and that was to win the game. They were well-coached, well-disciplined, and except for some few emotional problems we had, we, I think, had a pretty good football record during those years in college.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you about such a thing as school spirit? Did you personally feel, at the time, the traditions that Whittier College represented, and would you happen to know if that was the case with President Nixon himself? In other words, was there identification with the history of Whittier? Was there more of a feeling that you were from this town, and this was the town college and there was more of a personal identity? Can you recall that consciously?

PERRY: I'm not sure I quite get the question, but . . .

ARENA: Were you aware that Whittier DID have traditions when you were a student at that time; in other words, that it had certain traditions and did it give you a pride and a feeling of identity with those traditions?

PERRY: Well, let me say this: I was a day student and Nixon was a day student, and we, of course, all went our separate ways at night, so we didn't, like many schools which have dormitories and dormitory life, we didn't have that degree of fraternization and emotional involvement that many schools do develop.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you about what percentage WERE dormitory students, do you think, at that time?

PERRY: At that time a very small percentage of men and a little larger percentage of women, but I would guess maybe thirty percent, at the most, lived in dormitories, and the rest of the people lived at home or lived away from the campus. Most of us couldn't afford to live in a dormitory.

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ARENA: Would you continue please, Mr. Perry?

PERRY: It seemed to me that there was a tremendous amount of school spirit, maybe partly because the school was small. Maybe it was because times were tough and people were in school generally for the same reason, because they couldn't get jobs, or because they wanted an education. And Whittier at that time, with its excellence of faculty, which at least we always felt was excellent for such a small school, there was tremendous school spirit. People supported the athletics, they supported the social activities, and it seemed to be kind of a family atmosphere that was unique. We didn't have many rich people; we didn't have, maybe, poor people, per se; but it just seemed to be a school where people generally were pretty happy and extremely friendly, and it was a situation which I thought was, I would guess, was probably pretty unique at the time, and probably is not even shared today because of all the different groups that are involved.

Now we did have two men's fraternities, per se, or clubs, and we had three of four women's groups, but these were not strong in the sense that they were ends in themselves. They were, basically, students at the college first, and they all seemed to enter into student activities with a good deal more interest and enthusiasm, and you didn't have small groups splintering up the school with projects which seemed to split rather than to unify. I think this is one of the reasons.

If you look back to what's happened in subsequent years, these people were generally pretty loyal to the school because it had great meaning for them, and there was a great social involvement or emotional involvement with these people which they seem to have retained, many of them staying in the community to live in the Whittier area, rather than going back to their home towns. So many of the people who now live here were students during the particular period, and I think maybe it was more unique at the time than might be the case of students in more recent times.

ARENA: Did you ever feel in any way at a disadvantage in attending a small college in a small town? Did you have, maybe, any cousins or relatives who were in some of the big schools in different parts of the country, and felt that maybe you were at a disadvantage in any way?

PERRY: Well, we had friends who went to USC [University of Southern California] and Stanford [University], but I think it never dawned on me that I could go to one of those schools at that time because it was during the depression period. We felt we were lucky to be in school, other than to be unemployed, and I, being a great believer in a small school and the ability to participate and be involved in its activities, felt that that involvement, perhaps, made up for some of the so-called deficiencies which may have existed. Certainly in the business end of the college we were very weak, and I would say

my education from a business standpoint, from the standpoint of my major, was academically very inferior, because the professor that we had at that time was an ex-minister who really wasn't a success as a minister and he wasn't really a success as a professor, and he had an assistant who had had one year of business experience and tried to teach out of a book, and it just wasn't that good. But I think that those of us who took business have been reasonably successful. Clint Harris is another major in the business end of this thing, and maybe it was the extracurricular activities and the involvement that partly made up for this so-called deficiency. In the other aspects of the college, we felt that it was very strong.

ARENA: Of all the various extracurricular activities in which you participated that you've mentioned so far, and maybe there's some that you haven't mentioned, which did you find the most enjoyable, and looking back, the most helpful, and maybe the two didn't go together in the sense that it was not fun at the time, but it turned out to be one of the most worthwhile extracurricular activities?

PERRY: Well, let me go back and say something I started to say a little earlier about football. I would go down every afternoon--this doesn't really have much to do with Dick Nixon, but it is, in part, evidence of some of the same reasons why he did what he did maybe--I'd go down to the packing plant every afternoon and get two field boxes of oranges, put these in the back of my Ford, carry these field boxes up to the Campus Inn, hand-squeeze these oranges, enough to fill--or partially fill at least--a twenty or twenty-five gallon milk can with orange juice, and we would take this orange juice up to the football field to give orange juice to the fellows after practice. Just that chore of getting the stuff and hauling that stuff up there, which I did by myself most of the time, without thanks from the Chief, I wondered to myself, "Why didn't you quit?" But I guess it just didn't dawn on us that you could ever quit anything that you start. I don't think I enjoyed it, and yet as I look back on it, that whole experience and the involvement was perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the whole educational experience of being involved in something that. . . . There was a lot of comradeship, I think, among the fellows on the football team. It was one of those things that once you started you didn't think about quitting, and I think some of my friends who sat on the bench and were involved in this football, even though I didn't play, were as close friends as any I had.

The next most active thing was, of course, the glee club, which was more of a fraternity than it was a glee club, because I don't think we were particularly good singers, but we had spirit and we had a lot of comradeship, and I think as a result of that it was a very meaningful experience.

ARENA: While Richard Nixon did not stand out during the high school period, can you say that he begins to take on more shape for you, that he does stand out, during the college years, even though you were not in the same year?

PERRY: It seems to me that one of the recollections that I have of college is for different reasons. We spent a lot of time in the library. He, as you have already indicated, did not have much time to devote to some of these things. He obviously worked hard while he was on the campus, and where a lot of students would be sitting on the grass just talking and chatting and generally--particularly on a spring afternoon--not being too concerned with studying, he would be in the library which was in what we called the Redwood Building, which was a very small library and has since been replaced. He, and it seemed like it would be three of us, four of us perhaps in there; a girl by the name of [Clauda] Mangrum who, I think, was in Nixon's class and a straight "A" student, and she would normally be studying in there; a fellow by the name of Jack Richardson . . .

ARENA: Excuse me, you wouldn't possibly remember the first name of Mangrum?

PERRY: Clauda, something like that.

ARENA: That can be checked out in the yearbook.

PERRY: She was in his class. Jack Richardson, or John Richardson, I guess, as he is known, is now with our embassy in Seoul, Korea, who was a very brilliant individual, and later studied at the Sorbonne in Paris [France] after going on to graduate school at California; and myself. We spent a lot of time in the library working, I for a different reason--that I had to do it to get the work done, and consequently developed some habits of work which I find it hard to break. But we did spend lots of time, and many afternoons there would be just the four of us in there because there weren't too many others who used the library for study purposes.

I think one of the interesting observations--or at least an observation which I would have--of Nixon during this particular period was that he wasn't very much for small talk and he wasn't very much for being involved in the social activities of fellows on the campus, not so much because he may have been antisocial as it was that he just didn't have time, and he apparently learned early in life how to make his time count for the most. But he didn't spend much time doing a lot of these other things that students were involved in. His seriousness, I think, and determination to get an education at that time, and his determination to achieve certain things, I think, has pretty well set a pattern for the subsequent period. And actually, today I don't think there's too much given to small talk, although he obviously has



great social charm, he's not a person to just stand around and chat, because his partly, I think, was a matter of shyness. He just didn't participate in a lot of things, partly because he was, to some degree, reticent, and I felt at the time, almost an introvert, which of course is a little bit difficult to see in public life, except that maybe this is one of the reasons for his success, has been his ability to understand other people and his ability to see other people's points of view, and his ability to not put his own ego in front of his relationship with people. And I think that this experience in the library evidences a lot of the kind of seriousness he had, but also his determination to get an education, and I think he ended up first or second in his class.

I was impressed with him as an individual because of his ability to learn, and yet he never dominated any relationship or conversation with the fact that he seemed to know answers to things. He always had this ability to ask questions, and I think very early in life developed a great listening ability, so that you never had the feeling that here was a man who was a bookworm. And even though he didn't involve himself in small talk, by asking questions and listening--a trait which he seems to still have and do a great job with--he developed a great following of people who really weren't close to him, but who admired him.

The thing that I saw at the college period was that the people who went to school with him, with the exception of one person--and that was over kind of a jealousy situation--I've never heard anybody at the time he was in school ever say any adverse thing about the man. And as a result of his great sincerity, and also his mental ability to get quickly to the core of a subject, he seemed to develop leadership without seeking leadership. And even though he didn't spend his time politicking, as it were on the campus, he soon became a leader on the campus merely because, I guess, of these personal traits of his which people seemed to admire and respect and lean on for guidance. And this, as a result, got him into school politics to a point where he became student body president, even though I don't think he really at that time was conscientiously seeking this sort of thing. It was more or less thrust on him, and as a result maybe he developed a liking for this sort of thing to the point where, then, he began to seriously consider politics as a field.

ARENA: Thinking back over some famous presidents--not because of their politics but because of their personalities--and bearing in mind what you've just said about the character and personality of the President, would you venture to say he is similar to this or that president, when you're speaking about these particular qualities--again, regardless of party? I'm thinking in terms of the personality of the man. Think of those presidents who might seem to be similar in both public and private lives, as men of politics.

PERRY: You're getting into an area of history that I'm not really familiar with.

ARENA: Let me mention some names, so as not to just let this thing drop because of not asking the question clearly enough. A person like [George] Washington gave the impression of being shy; spoke very little; but inspired, obviously, confidence in people; was not a good speller; was not, we'll say, a brain from the standpoint of a lot of formal education; and yet would be the chairman of the Constitutional Convention, made up of some very sharp characters. Now he represents a certain personality. Another personality would be someone like Theodore Roosevelt, who would stand out as a public speaker, would stand out as a leader of men. In a way, maybe they represent two opposite personalities regardless of their politics. Would you say that Nixon reminds you overwhelmingly of one or the other, especially this period that you're talking of, the personality of the college Nixon?

PERRY: Well, I'm not sure I can answer that. Let me just say this: We hear a lot about the new Nixon and the old Nixon, and I think that this is a kind of a thing that people have concepts of a man from reading the press or hearing radio, which are interpretations which are completely a figment of somebody's imagination. I don't see this man, other than growing, as being much different today than he was, basically, at the time he was in school, except of course, he has matured and developed as any man in this kind of situation would normally do. But basically, I see a man who in his football take a terrible beating, and you don't really appreciate that until you can see what his weight was at the time he played football against such fellows as Clint Harris and see what kind of beating these guys took, night after night, with Newman encouraging these big guys to knock the little ones down and to run over them. And when anybody goes through that kind of a physical beating as well as some kind of an emotional beating, I think, where you know that you're not going to get a letter and yet you stay with it, this has got to tell something about the kind of an individual that's involved. I kind of see him as being--if you were going to compare him somewhat--I see him as being quite shy. I see him as being an introvert, and I think that maybe this is one of the abilities he has, to project himself into a situation and being able to understand the other person's point of view without getting his own emotions involved in the thing; and I see him as being, maybe, more like a [Abraham] Lincoln, not in the tragic personal life, but in the man with certain principles pretty well ingrained into him, well-trained, and a man with great moral strength, partly from his own family background, and a great compassion for other people, but a man of great humility. And I kind of think if I were going to compare him, I would see him more like Lincoln than Washington or Roosevelt.

ARENA: On the matter of his family background being an influence in shaping his character, knowing his family background as you do, knowing his college background, would you say his family background was by far the more important of the two, and that possibly his character was shaped by the time he entered Whittier College because of that particular family background?

PERRY: Well, I think you kind of have to know the mother [Hannah Milhous Nixon] and the father [Francis Anthony Nixon] in this case to understand the individual. And I think the gentleness of the mother, and the woman who NEVER superimposed her ideas on anyone, who was always gracious, was never demanding of people, a GREAT person, very tolerant, and had all the traits--good traits I suppose--of Quaker heritage. And his father's stubbornness--I don't think I see in him the temper of his father. At least, he's always been able to control his temper. I don't recall ever seeing him lose control, but I think he has the stubbornness of his father, which maybe is one of the reasons in football he wouldn't give up. And I think those were great influences. But I wouldn't minimize the influence of Whittier College on this individual. And I think Whittier College and the Whittier community, or the environment in which he lived, may have been just as big factors in determining this man's character as the family. The other two boys were of completely different personalities, so it may be he was as much influenced by the community as he was by the family background.

ARENA: The President has written, I believe, in a book Six Crises, where he sometimes touches on his autobiographical life, he has mentioned that he never took a course in political science. How would you explain his acquisition of political knowledge, in view of that fact, and from what you do know about him?

PERRY: I never took a course in political science, so I don't really know what it consists of, but he somehow had--and I think this was evidenced in school by his involvement in school politics--he had a good training ground, both in his involvement, personally, in school activities, as well as his tremendous interest in the Constitution, which was evidenced by his involvement at the high school and the research which he did there, and his ability to participate in student activities. One of the abilities he has, and I can't quite define it, I remember we were involved in an alumni affair--this was before he got into politics and while he was still practicing law--the only thing that I remember now is that our meal was about an hour late being served. It was served in the old gymnasium at the college, and this was a couple of years after he got out of school and before the war started. It must have been about '38, '39, and I was putting on this affair in the gymnasium. We had all these

people trying to get in, the food hadn't arrived, and here we had a couple hundred people outside waiting to get into the gym--what were we going to do? The food hadn't arrived, it was going to be a half hour to forty-five minutes. And so he came. I don't remember where he came from, but we said, "All right. You're going to entertain these people for forty-five minutes." Well, somehow, he had the ability to just get up there and to talk to these people and to kind of entertain them a little bit. I still maintain he's a shy individual, but he has the ability to convince people in a situation where. . . . In this particular case, he just talked about the individuals who were there, and he has this fantastic, computer-type of mind, where he can zero in on situations which most people forget about, and as a result he took and just captivated this group for about forty-five minutes until the food arrived and we were able to eat. Nobody was really upset about the problem, yet these are very embarrassing situations and the sort of thing that. . . . He just has that ability, somehow, whether it's timing or whether it's judgment, or whatever it is, it's just locked in there, and he has a sense about political timing which I think you don't get out of books, and I think it's a part of the man.

ARENA: Can you ever recall a time when he was not at ease in front of an audience? And this is something that you can recall that he improved as the years went by; or do you recall that he was always at ease in front of an audience?

PERRY: Well, if the premise is correct that he is an introvert, I would guess that it was a very difficult thing for him to speak. And I would guess that he perhaps went into acting partly to overcome this shyness. And I'm just guessing, but I would be of the opinion that it might be that this was kind of difficult, originally, for him to do, and yet he was a great actor, he had great acting ability on the campus. I think this kind of stemmed from, again, the fact that he was able to project himself, as a good actor does, and see the other person's point of view and absorb himself in another personality as an actor. But I would guess that he was kind of mechanical in those days in his acting. He wasn't graceful, particularly, but I think he probably forced himself to do some of this partly to overcome this shyness.

ARENA: If we can continue along this philosophical and partly psychological path for a moment, given your commitment to the Quaker way of life, knowing the President's past commitment, would you say that his entry into politics would be particularly hard for him, his very entry into politics, because of its demand of seemingly projecting your ego, which was not easy and was not promoted in a Quaker community such as Whittier, California, where the President grew up between 1922 and 1945?

PERRY: I kind of have a feeling that he would be kind of like a man who gets called to the ministry. All of a sudden something hits him that seems to be the right thing at the right time. And I have a feeling that he had had enough contact with political life, having been in the OPA [Office of Price Administration] during the early part of the war, and in the military for two or three years, and of course as a lawyer, and with his history background had a good feeling for political operations, although he had never been in politics. And I have a feeling that when he received a telephone call that this kind of sparked something that was kind of like a minister getting a call from JC [Jesus Christ] himself, so he recognized this as something that he wanted to do, and I think that this was a very great emotional experience on his part. I never discussed this with him and I don't know how he would. . . .

ARENA: Knowing him as you do, and knowing the background of that call, would you venture to say that if he had not received such a call he would not have gotten into politics, if it demanded the opposite; in other words, if he had had to say, "I want to go into politics. Won't you call me?" He would not have gone into politics if the initiative did not come in that form, that he was asked to serve?

PERRY: Well, I think it's entirely possible that he would have gone into politics, but the chances are that he might have gotten involved in the local political scene. He had been Assistant City Attorney for Whittier, and maybe La Habra [California], and I think he might have gone into state politics, or something like that. It, obviously, would have been a different thing, and I think he was given a running start into a political situation which was kind of tailor-made for him, and out of that initial involvement he did such a tremendous selling job on the people that there was an emotional involvement of these people with him and his career which is most unique, and I don't think I've seen it in any political figure, congressional or state government individual, certainly in this part of the country since that time. So, undoubtedly, he got off to a running start faster, and I think this of course has had a tremendous impact.

But, to get back to your question, I don't know what his course of action would have been. I don't know where he would have ended up, but I don't think there is any question but that this was the reason he became President of the United States. I don't think he would otherwise be where he is today if it hadn't been for that one thing, because I think that at the time the circumstances were just right to have the kind of support which would take a young man a lot farther than he otherwise might get if he tried to do it on his own without this kind of community support that he had.

ARENA: By way of making an historical analysis here, knowing him as you did personally in the college era, can you recall the steps that led him into college political life, albeit student government? Precisely, do you recall that students went after him, or how was it that he was drawn into college political life, and possibly the answer might be that he continued what he had done in high school. As you know, he had run for office in high school. Or was there something special about the situation in college?

PERRY: Well, I don't know the details of how he happened to run for office. I would guess that he probably was selected to run, rather than really pushing himself into the office. This may be just an impression, but I have a feeling that he had some opposition, but it was not strong opposition, and I think he was a natural leader rather than a political type of leader on the campus. As I said before, not because of popularity, per se, but just because people admired him and, I think, said that well, here's the fellow that's going to do the best job. I would say that the job kind of sought him, rather than him really saying, "I want to cut a big, fat place for myself at Whittier College and run for office." I kind of feel that he was kind of guided into it, maybe. Again, maybe the same way he got into the other thing. Probably somebody sponsored him, really, rather than him deciding that he wanted to do it.

ARENA: Also going back to this period of college years, do you think that he had a true evaluation of himself, in the sense that he did not try to overreach himself, and that where he did attempt certain things, he was accurate in his calculations of being able to achieve whatever he went after? I'm thinking fundamentally of [William] Shakespeare's putting the words in someone and saying, "Be true to thine own self." Do you think he had an accurate picture of himself?

PERRY: I was going to say that in college the only real failure he had was football. And I think he knew that he never was going to play football. I don't think that he had any illusions that he would be a first-string football player. He just physically didn't have it, and I think he would be the first to admit that. I don't think he ever did anything without thinking through the consequences. I don't think there's too much evidence of rash judgment. I would guess that anything he did had been pretty well. . . . Evidenced by the last few weeks, China has been the result of a lot of groundwork and a lot of judgment as to his own abilities, and he has a unique sense of timing, which I think is maybe something inherent. I think it's evident that he does his homework. He did his homework in the library and he has always done his homework. So that I think

he pretty well knows what he is capable of doing. Except for a couple of political miscalculations that he's made, I'd say his batting average--which we've always reminded him of, of course; every time he makes a mistake everybody tells him what those mistakes were--but you look at his political batting average, it's pretty high.

ARENA: To take this question of views on Richard Nixon, and this last one was views on Richard Nixon by Richard Nixon, what about the community of Whittier itself--again, before politics--what view did the community have, and one example would be your own father? Why was it, do you think, that your father was in favor of favoring this young man, aside from the political aspect, which obviously was his primary cause, but why did your father have faith in this young man?

PERRY: Before I answer that, let me tell you a little story. To me, it evidences a little the type of individual . . .

ARENA: And before you begin, may be continue this on the second tape?

BEGIN TAPE II SIDE I

ARENA: Would you care to continue, Mr. Perry?

PERRY: In 1951, I was assistant manager of a branch in Vernon [California] and one of our customers was head of the Lettermen's Club at USC [University of Southern California]. At that time Nixon was a congressman and he had been invited to speak to the Lettermen's Club. I don't know that a subject was ever assigned to him, but the thing that impressed my friend was the fact that, unlike most so-called politicians who come out and say that they've just been talking to the President, and they've been doing this and doing that, talking pretty much in the first person about their great contributions, Nixon devoted no time to the subject of politics, but spent all of his time talking about a football game which Whittier had played against USC back in 1936, or '34 I guess it was, the fall of '34, when Whittier College played a double-header against USC in the Coliseum and lost by only, I think, one touchdown. USC, I think, that year was possibly in the Rose Bowl, and they had a tremendous team with [Irvine] Cotton Warburton and Aaron Rosenberg and a number of all-time USC greats on the team. And the thing that impressed this friend of mine was the fact that Nixon talked about that game and the little instances that happened, named all the players on the USC team, and had a memory for events in the game which brought this thing not only to life, but in other words he was speaking on something which was of interest to them, and I think this kind of evidences the kind of individual he is. Every time he is involved in a relationship with a person, he always,

instead of trying to impress them with his own ability, his own knowledge, he talks about the thing that seems to be of interest to them, or asks about something that they're involved in, and he has this, not only a memory which he can fall back on which picks up little instances which people in many cases have forgotten about, but he always directs it to the person with whom he's involved. And I think this is evidence of political awareness perhaps. It also has brought to him the great loyalty of people who politically have been involved with him, because he has this ability to build these tremendous loyalties of people because of a genuine interest which he evidences in them and their families and their points of view or their interests. So at this particular event he did more politically to favor his own situation than if he had talked about what he had accomplished as a politician in Washington. And this maybe isn't a good illustration, but it seemed to me, at least, that it gives kind of a thumbnail [sketch] on the man's character, and not only his alertness politically, but also his humbleness, perhaps, in being able to talk about somebody else other than himself.

ARENA: Do you think that's one of the qualities your father admired or was aware of in him, and the others who were willing to stand behind him? Again, I'm not thinking in terms of politics as much as why he attracted the attention. What was there about him that people knew firsthand that would make them advance his career?

PERRY: Well, Whittier was a small town, and while I wasn't interested in the political life of the community at that time--being a student--and people who were involved, and my dad was one of those involved in the community life, knew everyone in town, knew their strengths and their weaknesses. And here was a young man who came from a good family background morally, and a man who had evidenced in his own career in school the kind of ethical background that was admired by people, but also, beyond that he evidenced great talent, not only intellectual talent, which was obvious from his career in college, but also a great deal of judgment perhaps, but ability to land on his feet in situations that were difficult. And my dad, having been a very close friend of his law partners, and also having been on the board of Whittier College during the four years that Dick was in school, and also having known the family, and through our own relationship he was probably much more emotionally involved with this individual than I was, and I think he basically looked upon him as a son. It was a relationship where the judgment was right on the man, but also it was a very close emotional involvement.

ARENA: If it isn't too personal, do you recall that your father in any way expressed disappointment or concern over the fact that the young Quaker had entered military service as a combatant, and was that any problem for those Quakers who were being asked to support him?



PERRY: No, well, the answer is no. Because I had gone into the service myself, and there was no problem in my family as to military service. It was never entered into. But I would say a couple of things about the support of Nixon's candidacy, which I indicated was kind of emotional, and that is this: My dad had two great desires in life. One was to have a law degree, which he never did have; and the second was to be in politics. He had an opportunity to run at one stage of the game, but for family reasons didn't get into that. So he had an overwhelming desire to do this himself. And I have a strong feeling that his support of this individual was kind of like . . . . That's one reason I went to law school for two years, basically, because my dad wanted me to go to law school, although I never finished. And I think he saw in this young man a kind of fulfillment of his own ambitions. So I, at one time, might even say that I thought my dad was disappointed in me and looked upon Nixon as his favorite son, kind of. I have to admit there was a little jealousy there. He was getting his kicks, if you will, in this young man, and I would have to assume that a lot of the enthusiasm that was built up for this young man was stirred up by my dad, much more than maybe Nixon realizes, and maybe much more than the public generally recognizes. But it was contagious and spontaneous once the flames got stirred up a little bit and the fire was. . . . Very interesting. I don't think you'll find, if somebody were to study this facet of political science, that there are many politicians who sparked that much local enthusiasm. I've never seen that in any other candidate. And I think it's rather unique. It may be just a matter of timing. It may have been the personalities who were supporting him, but it also may have been a lot the result of the man himself and the people he attracted to himself.

ARENA: Certainly people like Chief Newman and your father and the other members of the Committee of 100, including maybe just those in Whittier alone--who were just a PART of the 100--certainly these were not professional politicians. As a matter of fact, did this group support any other politicians, before or after President Nixon, in that manner?

PERRY: No. I don't know of anybody that's ever been where people were that much involved.

ARENA: I'm sure your father must have heard the expression, and maybe it was told to him, "Politics is dirty; keep out of it." As a matter of fact, do you recall someone saying that to him, regardless of the name of the person, and what was his reaction; or, if you don't know of a specific case, why do you think he entered politics?

PERRY: Who, Nixon?

ARENA: Your father, in the sense of supporting a person in that fashion, putting his reputation on the line, so to speak, too.

PERRY: This was a way of him becoming a congressman without leaving Whittier. He was doing this through the eyes of another individual, so he was reliving his own ambitions, I think, in part. And I don't know the political background of the particular time, except the people were, in Whittier, at that time very much fed up with the socialistic attitudes, as they interpreted it, of the then Congressman Jerry Voorhis. And the other candidates who were running were kind of old political hacks, and I think they saw the opportunity to bring into this thing a young man with high ideals and a man that they felt had the potential to do something, and so there was this kind of a ground swell, really, for this young man. Maybe the other candidates were so bad that he just looked good by comparison, but I think beyond that they built up this tremendous number of fellows who really had never met the man before and had no reason to be involved with him, except that they, I think, recognized that here was a talent that was rather unique and refreshing in the field of politics.

ARENA: I don't know if this question has ever come up or has ever occurred to you, but let me put it bluntly: Do you think, knowing your father as you do and his background, that his interest in politics was fundamentally from a religious base in the sense of performing a service to his fellowmen, given your father's Christian environment?

PERRY: To my knowledge, none of these men who were involved with him, nor none of the companies who were involved in financing him--and this was all kept very quiet by my dad, so that no one, including Nixon, knew where the funds came from, and my dad had some pretty good support at that time from local firms and state-wide firms and national firms--but none of these people ever asked for or received any political office, or the spoils of office, which oftentimes are associated with involvement in politics, and to me it was kind of like a group of crusaders, really, not that they were starry-eyed. They were all pretty practical politicians, as history kind of proves, but none of them were in it for personal gain or corporate gain. It's, I think, a rather unique situation where nobody, to my knowledge, ever got anything or asked for anything. And Nixon, on the other hand, has never really appointed any close friends, or ANY friends. And I would say that he doesn't have too many really close friends in the personal sense, which you sometimes think of people having a lot of close buddies, but he has never done anything for any friends, and nobody has ever really been unhappy that they haven't been given anything. And I would guess that the closest of anybody that was ever close to him would be, maybe, Clint [Clinton O. Harris] and myself on this Nixon Foundation, and I kind of look

at that as being out of respect to my dad, as much as anything. Other than those two instances, I don't know of anybody in Whittier, I don't know of anybody in his political life around here who has ever been appointed to anything. And there are a lot of very competent people, but nobody has ever asked for anything. I think that's kind of almost unique in politics.

ARENA: Was there a distinction between the group of which your father was a part and a regular professional group-- Republicans, we'll say--the so-called machine? Was there another group like that, and how did these two groups get along?

PERRY: You're getting into an area that I'm not too conversant with. I'm sure that there were some groups, and there were some people, the Murray Chotiners, who were the professionals. And there were some differences as to some of these people, not so much as to techniques, but more their characters and their associations, etc. I have a feeling that some of Nixon's early political history might have been different if my dad had been living, but I think, other than Murray Chotiner, the other professionals, I think, were Bernie Brennan from Glendale [California], who is since deceased, and a man you interviewed in San Francisco who was kind of a semi-professional.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you about the President's law-years period? Did you have any contact with him in that time, including belonging to the 20-30 Club?

PERRY: I worked in Los Angeles [California] and was not a part of the Whittier community as far as service clubs were concerned.

ARENA: Just for the record, did you have any contact with him during the war years ever, even by chance, have your paths crossed?

PERRY: Not during the war period. We did have some occasions after the war, had some affairs, some desserts. My folks were great on having desserts, and I can remember a couple of times having desserts at our house with Pat [Patricia Ryan Nixon] and Dick and, I would guess, [Thomas W.] Tom Bewley, but that's kind of. . . . I just don't remember it too well.

ARENA: Recalling the Nixon before politics and the Nixon since politics, especially since you met him after he got involved in politics, what changes, if any, did you detect in the man? Or, what traits and characteristics do you think were strengthened or refined, and you could see that the post-1945 Nixon still had the same traits in some cases, as you knew them, if you have been in that position to make such an analysis?

PERRY: Well, I don't see the old Nixon and the new Nixon, and I guess that's not quite what you're saying. I don't see him as being much different than he was in college. Now I don't know whether this is a valid observation or whether it's just my imagination, but it seems to me that I see the same characteristics in him in politics that I saw on the campus, except that he, of course, has built up his abilities as a public speaker and I would say is more aggressive in political life. Certainly when he went after Jerry Voorhis he was a different individual, although I would have to admit that when he played football he played as HARD as anybody could, but he just didn't have what it took. I just don't see him as being that much different. He had something in college which most of us didn't have. He had maturity and he had a bearing that maybe was a little old for his years, and I don't see him. . . . I see a lot of people where in school they were a different individual than as they matured in life, but it seems to me that the abilities he had and the characteristics he had aren't that much different, except that his great shyness, which I felt was a shyness in college, has been. . . . Certainly the intellect is the same, but the self-confidence which has, of course, come from success, has built an aura of personality which is much more outgoing, certainly, than it was in college. But I think basically what we see today is a man who is what he is because of that period between age fifteen, maybe, to age twenty or twenty-two made him.

ARENA: May I ask one final overall question? As you know from your own U.S. history, there have been certain periods in our history where regions seem to produce president after president. I'm thinking of Virginia when it produced a series of presidents, New England, Boston [Massachusetts] in particular. Can you see Whittier producing more presidents? Which is a way of asking you, was President Nixon completely-- I won't say surprise--but completely unique phenomenon in Whittier and Southern California? Well, let's say Whittier in particular.

PERRY: I would say that to some degree he was. . . . Well, I don't know whether I can say that or not. I just don't know about that. I would think that he's a product of California, and I may be a little prejudiced, but I have a strong feeling--and this is evidenced very strongly in the industrial field and commercial field, and it may very well be the same in the political field--that California produces more creativity, certainly in the field of business, more creativity, a higher degree of excellence, and an evidence of goal-setting that you just don't see in the older and more conventional parts of the United States, the traditional Ivy League situations.

In the retail field, the best merchants in the United States are the ones that come out of California, particularly the Los Angeles area. And this is the most competitive market in the entire United States. And there's something about it, maybe it's because we have a twelve-month climate. We're active, outdoor participants rather than spectators. Maybe this competition has fed on itself. I think Nixon is the unique product of a community which is a different community today than it was, certainly, when he was growing up, and maybe it won't be duplicated. But I would guess that there's a better chance of this kind of talent coming out of California than there might be out of any other one single region of the United States. I don't know of any political figures which bear that out, but I would kind of guess that it might be true.

ARENA: Is there any point or any subject concerning your contact with President Nixon that I have not raised, before the interview comes to a complete close, that you would like to raise yourself at this time? Any statement that you would like to make about any aspect of his life?

PERRY: Well, I think he's the kind of individual--maybe this is just an observation--that he may not go down in history when he goes out of office, in another four years, as being a great president. But I have a strong feeling that history--when it has an opportunity to evaluate in depth the man and the times and the results of his success--will evaluate him as being one of the great presidents of the United States. And I kind of say that for one reason, which came out of an observation we made at our meeting last year down at the Summer White House. He has an ability, unlike [Lyndon B.] Johnson--and he has a lot of other things that are unlike Johnson--but he has this one ability unlike Johnson, which I think is, again, something that goes back into his early period, to kind of capsulize whatever he's doing at that moment, and to kind of draw the blinds on anything that he is not at that moment doing. For instance, the morning we were down there he had been talking to [William] Billy Graham for a little while, and then he left Billy Graham and he met with Nelson Rockefeller and talked to Nelson Rockefeller about the problems that Nelson Rockefeller had run into in South America. And here was a completely different series of problems and situations. And then he came in and sat down and talked to us about the Presidential Library. Well, we had been kicking this around at some length about what a Presidential Library was. It had not been too well outlined to us by anybody, and I was not too impressed with the quality of our leadership in discussing this thing, and Nixon sat down and in a very few minutes very succinctly and clearly indicated what he thought a Presidential Library was and what it wasn't. And he was so completely absorbed in what he was doing that it was obvious he wasn't thinking about these other tremendous problems that were on the sideline. He completely

zeroed in on this problem and brought into focus his point of view and brought the group into focus very clearly, without really appearing to dominate the thing and without really telling them what they had to do, but in his quiet manner just kind of pulled this thing together so that he gave direction to it and he gave dimension to their thinking, and then he left there and went back to talk to Nelson Rockefeller again. Well, he has this ability to, as I say, capsulize everything into little compartments and zero in on each one at a time and do that and then go on to the next thing. Whereas Johnson, all these things kind of fell in on him and he wasn't able to separate or maybe assign priorities to these things, and it almost got him down, physically and emotionally. Nixon, I think, is just thoroughly enjoying the job, and probably history is going to record him as one of the great presidents, because he's on top of the job, rather than the job being on top of him. Not that he's solving the problems any more than the next president might, because some of these problems he inherited are almost unsolvable, certainly in a four- or eight-year period, but he will be setting a tone for doing some things for which I think history will record him as being, perhaps, one of the great presidents, if not maybe the greatest president in this century. So I think we're living in a situation which, maybe, we're almost too close to it to properly judge.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you this personal question? Can you separate President Nixon and Dick Nixon in your own mind, having gone to school with him, gone to college with him, sat on a bench with him, and now he is the President of the United States? Do you find yourself working at it, so to speak?

PERRY: I made the terrible blunder last summer at the White House, when he drove up, to say, "Hi, Dick!" Now, this isn't the way you do these things. You say, "Mr. President." And you should.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you what his reaction was at that point, if you recollect it?

PERRY: Well, I think if it had been somebody he hadn't gone to school with he might have been a little upset, because I have a feeling he likes the recognition of being the President. Not that he rejects the informality, but I think with people he's known, I don't think it bothers him. He loves the job, he likes to be President, and I think he likes the trappings that go with it, but at the same time I don't think this bothered him any either, but I felt embarrassed about it because I knew this wasn't the way you treat anybody in this particular situation. And yet it was the natural thing to do, because as far as I'm concerned, he's still Dick Nixon, and the fact that he's the President of the United States was secondary in my own approach at that particular moment. Although I think

that the office itself certainly commands your respect, even though you, theoretically, would call him by his first name, I don't think a person should. But he still has those traits as an individual, to the people, I think, who knew him as just Dick Nixon. But I think this is one of the great things about the man, that he has this humility.

ARENA: Mr. Perry, I can't thank you enough for extending to me the hospitality of your home and answering all of my questions so completely and frankly, and doing history this service. Thank you very much.

PERRY: You didn't mention Louise's [Perry] cookies.

ARENA: They are now mentioned. And they were quite historic, too, thank you.