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Charles A. Post (November 3, 1972)

C. Richard Arena
Whittier College

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Oral History Interview

with

MR. CHARLES A. POST

November 3, 1972
La Habra, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. Charles A. Post. (A, middle initial, stands for Arnold.) The residence of Mr. Post is in La Habra. We are now in Whittier, California, Arena interviewing, November 3, 1972. Mr. Post, may we begin by my asking something about yourself, your own background; for example, where and when were you born?

POST: Well, I am an original from Whittier, California. My father, Adelbert James Post, came to Whittier in 1904, and my mother came to Whittier in 1912. Father always went by the nickname, Del, Del Post.

ARENA: Where did he come from in 1904?

POST: He came out from Newell, Iowa.

ARENA: Do you happen to know if he had come from a Quaker community there in Newell?

POST: No, he was a Methodist as far as religious affiliation.

ARENA: There's no special reason for him to come to a Quaker community like Whittier, necessarily, as far as religious convictions are concerned.

POST: No. He had someone tell him in Iowa that California was a great place with golden streets and orange trees.

ARENA: Where did he locate and live most of his time in this area?

POST: When he first came to Whittier he lived at 401 South Milton Avenue. He worked in the post office in Whittier for many, many years. For a few years he was a painter,

then he returned to the post office work until his retirement in 1945. I should mention that he went to Whittier High School and was one of twelve in the graduating class. A classmate of his was Dr. Earl Daniels, who was a prominent dentist in Whittier.

ARENA: By the way, I don't think you did give the date of your birth.

POST: [Laughter] That was October 1, 1918. I was born at the corner of Bright Avenue and Wardman Avenue in Whittier.

ARENA: Would you give your mother's full name, please, and do you know if she came from Iowa also?

POST: She did. Her full name was Aleta Fern Arnold. She came from Newton, Iowa, and arrived in Whittier in 1912.

ARENA: Would you give the names of the schools that you attended yourself?

POST: I attended East Whittier Elementary School, starting in September, 1924. You might be interested to note that one of my classmates was Arthur [Burdg] Nixon, a brother of the President. Unfortunately, he passed away at the end of that year. I believe it was with meningitis.

ARENA: What DO you recall about the young Arthur, his physical appearance, his personality, his mannerisms?

POST: In appearance he looked quite a bit like the President and the other Nixon boys, Eddie [Edward Calvert Nixon] and Don [Francis Donald Nixon]. I could tell quite a resemblance. The other evening I was looking over a picture of our first grade class. I was standing near him in the picture there, and . . .

ARENA: Would you happen to have a copy of that picture by the way?

POST: Yes, I do.

ARENA: Thank you. And the name of your teacher for that grade?

POST: That was Miss Emma Wicker. At the East Whittier School the auditorium is now named in her honor, the Emma Wicker Auditorium. She passed away a couple of years ago.

ARENA: What do you recall about the younger Arthur, from the standpoint of playing with him? Was he interested in sports, interested more in books? Of course, he was

very young at that point, I realize, but were there any specific characteristics, or anything unusual that stand out even now in your mind, his personality, his habits?

POST: I don't recall too well. That was a number of years ago, except I did enjoy him very much and played with him on the playground a great deal.

ARENA: During that particular year, did you ever go to his home, the parents of President Nixon?

POST: No, I did not at that time. I met him at school. Our first affiliation with the Nixons was when they opened their store. My records indicate that my parents and I moved to East Whittier in 1920. This is the first indication that we have from the diaries that were kept by my mother.

ARENA: And the lemon ranch was located where in relationship to the store?

POST: It was approximately a mile and a half southwest of their store.

ARENA: Was it right on what is now Whittier Boulevard?

POST: I remember their store was at the corner of Santa Gertrudes [Avenue] and Whittier Boulevard. The store was built in the former East Whittier Friends Church which had been moved from the north side of Whittier Boulevard. I recall that they also had a filling station right next to the store, and I spent a great deal of my time over there during the summer vacations.

ARENA: Did you possibly ever work there or help out in any way?

POST: Not officially. I worked around the store and helped lug groceries and played around the filling station. My dad worked in the post office in Whittier and took the car every day. This left us without a car way out in East Whittier, which was, at that time, really out in the sticks, so we had to have all of our groceries brought in. This was when we first got to know the President quite well. He usually drove the delivery truck.

ARENA: What type of truck was it, if you recall?

POST: Well, as I recall, it was a Model A delivery car. We were always happy to see the President. He lifted the groceries out of the truck, opened the back door and brought the groceries in and set them on the Maytag washing machine which was located in the corner of the back porch.

ARENA: Did he usually do that alone?

POST: Yes. However, as time went along there, he would go on debating tours and speaking engagements while attending high school and college and someone else would substitute on the route. His brother Don worked with his father Frank [Francis] Anthony Nixon] and Hannah [Milhous Nixon] in the store. Richard Nixon was a favorite of my mother's and she looked forward to his grocery delivery.

ARENA: I noticed you were looking at some notes, and as we said off the tape, I'd like to establish that on the record now; your mother kept a diary. Do you recall what the very first entry was; when did she start keeping it, and when was the very last date on the diary?

POST: These diaries were kept over many years by my mother. When my mother and father passed away, these were given to my brother.

ARENA: Could you give his full name, please?

POST: Yes, that's Russell Adelbert Post. Every Christmas he types up a diary for a certain period of time. This first diary starts in 1884 at the time my father was born, and then in 1888 when my mother was born, and up to the present time we have it up to 1939. We anticipate this next Christmas we will get the next chapter. But looking in this diary there are quite a number of references made to the Nixon corner. For instance, here in 1923, my mother says, "I came home on the bus and met Del at Nixon's corner." Here's another one: "Rode over to Pomona Boulevard to get blackberries. Went shopping at Nixon's." This was quite an ordeal and something to put in a diary in those days, before things became too complicated. One thing I do remember my father saying a few years ago is that he and Frank Nixon were looking for property in the Santa Fe Springs [California] area. They did not want to buy any property in that area because they thought it wouldn't amount to anything and so decided not to purchase. Unfortunately they didn't.

ARENA: And as you know, that turned out to be very valuable oil property, yes. I didn't realize that it was your father along with the President's father. I think it has been written that Mr. Frank Nixon had that search and then decided against it, but it's interesting to know that your father was in on that with him, that mutual tragedy there. I believe also, while you have your diary open there, would you go to the reference regarding the debate between the President and another local resident here?

POST: Yes. This is rather interesting because in the second portion of these diaries it is indicated here on April 12, 1929, my mother indicated that we attended an oratorical contest at Whittier High School. Richard Nixon won first place and Merton Wray was third.

ARENA: That would be Judge Merton Wray today.

POST: Right. Now, another interesting factor here. A short time ago I was in the Whittier Library and noted a display on the background of Richard Nixon. It showed that he had won most of these oratorical contests. Besides Merton Wray, there was a girl at that time named Gladys Olson who came in fourth. She was a former East Whittier student and the daughter of the custodian of the school.

ARENA: By the way, just to be sure, would you give for the record your brother's present address, the owner of the original diary of your mother?

POST: He lives at 8317 Kittridge Avenue, Reseda, California.

ARENA: Reseda, correct me if I'm wrong, is near Van Nuys.

POST: Yes, it is.

ARENA: Thank you. And by the way, just to be sure, where you were referring to the fact that "we" attended the oratorical contest, was that an editorial "we" and not including you, or were you at that contest yourself?

POST: I don't believe I attended that one. My mother and father went along with some neighbors from East Whittier.

ARENA: Do you recall attending ANY of the oratorical contests, and how would you describe them, from your recollections?

POST: I remember, vaguely, hearing Richard Nixon speak, but I do not remember which contest it was. I was highly impressed with his ability as a speaker. A few years ago my mother had mentioned that he was in a national speaking contest which he won. Our community was proud of our local boy.

ARENA: And going back to your joint attendance at East Whittier Elementary School, we were mentioning off the record, and I'd like to get it on the record now, the fact that the President mentioned in a news report you heard the other day, that he was indebted to his fifth grade elementary teacher. Would you give her name and where you think she may be now, and whatever you do recall about her and the President's reference to her; whatever comes to mind about her.

POST: Blanche Barum was the fifth grade teacher.

ARENA: And I believe you said you think it was Miss?

POST: Yes, and she was a tremendous teacher. As the President indicated, he learned a great deal of geography from her. He mentioned that while traveling to Russia, he remembered many of the things she had told him about that part of the country, and I too had the benefit of her interest in geography. One prophetic comment I remember very distinctly that she made to several of us boys, she said, "I have to do a good job of teaching because I never know. Maybe some day one of you might become President of the United States."

ARENA: That is interesting. And do you mind if I ask you if you kept in contact with her or knew, say, if she lived in East Whittier itself? Was she a member of a local family? Do you know anything else about her?

POST: No. As I recall she, I believe, lived in Whittier and came out to school each day. Having gone into education myself, I often look back at this school there, and I notice that she was there a number of years. Miss Wicker, Miss [H. Esther] Williams.

ARENA: These are other teachers, H. Esther Williams.

POST: But from that time I have lost track of her, except when my mother mentioned that when Richard Nixon was running for office, either for congressman or senator and he was up in Central California, he saw her in the audience and called her up to the platform. This is what my mother told me. My father was elected to the school board at East Whittier and served with Oscar Marshburn. Oscar Marshburn's wife [Rose Olive Marshburn], of course, is Hannah Nixon's sister. They knew each other quite well.

ARENA: I'm not sure, did you say your father also has passed away?

POST: Yes, he died in 1964.

ARENA: Thank you. Did you know this particular relative personally yourself, Mr. Oscar Marshburn?

POST: Yes.

ARENA: How would you describe him, and correct me if I'm wrong, but he lives in the home that the President's grandfather and mother lived in, the original so-called Milhous ranch. And the President would visit the family from time to time, and I would say that these were close relatives. And your recollection

of them as you recall them, and as you recall them now, would be very helpful.

POST: Well, actually, I knew Oscar Marshburn. I do not know too much about him. He's a very fine civic leader here in Whittier and known by many people, and as I recall a very fine school board member. The other day I was talking to his son, Dr. [Theodore F.] Marshburn, who is an eye specialist in East Whittier.

ARENA: Thank you.

POST: In talking to Dr. Marshburn's wife recently, she indicated that the Marshburn house, which might have been the Milhous place, was located where the Whittier Quad is at the present time. She told me that the fourth generation is now living in that house. I asked her where the house was located and she said they moved it at the back of the Quad and it is still there. I checked on it a short time ago and found the house is still there.

ARENA: How would you describe them? Again take as much time as you like, bearing in mind that the President, of course, grew up in their midst. What type of a family relationship, again, given that you were an outsider, of course, but nevertheless it would be interesting to know how you looked upon the relations among the members of the family, the aunts, the uncles, the cousins, and especially, if you recall, the President's own contact with these different members of the family. For example, did you see relatives come to the store from time to time? Did you see any of the relatives working or living in the Frank Nixon household? Anything like that that comes to mind.

POST: Well, the Nixon grocery store was a community affair.

ARENA: By a community affair, you mean a family community affair?

POST: A family community affair. Those working in the store were often members of the Nixon family or the Milhous family, or the Seulke family, and . . .

ARENA: I've had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Thomas Seulke.

POST: In fact, Tom Seulke worked at the store and drove the grocery wagon a great deal. At other times the current President would drive that same truck. In that store was quite a meeting place for the community. When we would buy groceries, they would write down what we had purchased on these tablets and then store it up under the family name.

ARENA: And your family was one that did keep an account in that way.

POST: That's right, we had an account there. Nixons would usually wait until the checks arrived from the citrus packing houses and then they would go in and pay off the bill at one time.

ARENA: In other words, the people who had an account, like YOUR family, when THEY received their check, then the Nixons would be paid off.

POST: Yes, right.

ARENA: Would you happen to know, again out of historical curiosity, if any of these canceled checks, and any of the accounts themselves might be in the possession of any members of your family? Did your mother get the account book back at the end, we'll say, or anything like that?

POST: No. These were a small receipt book, as I remember. They would keep a copy there, the booklet there, and then give the customer either the first sheet or the second sheet. No, I would think that those would all be thrown away. Now I wish we had them.

After the President was married, I can remember distinctly going over to the store and having his new bride [Patricia Ryan] Pat Nixon get some of the groceries for me as I went through the line there. In those days they usually waited on you. It wasn't like the supermarkets where you go around with a cart. They were usually very kind and considerate in getting all the groceries and things you ordered together.

ARENA: Did the different personalities of the immediate Nixon family stand out? I'm thinking of Mr. Frank Nixon, his waiting on you, Mrs. Hannah Nixon, and you said the President's wife helped out from time to time, Mrs. Pat Nixon. What about the difference in their personalities in THAT situation, when they were working in the store?

POST: Well, first I would like to say that Mrs. Hannah Nixon was one of the kindest ladies that I have ever known. When we would shop there, she would help us pick out the best fruits and vegetables. I'm sure that she has had a great effect on the life of the President. Mr. Frank Nixon was more of a fireball. He was interested in politics and usually expressed them to us when we went in the store. He had strong, opinionated feelings! We always had a great deal of respect for him, but there was no question that he was a member of the Republican Party. [Laughter]

ARENA: And this was before the President got into politics, I presume?

POST: Right. When Richard Nixon was running with [Dwight D.] Eisenhower for President, there was a big sign in the front of the store that said, "We are for Ike and Dick." This was a large sign in the store which was quite appropriate.

ARENA: I might have mentioned off the tape a moment ago, and I'd like to get your reaction to this situation too, for the record, that Mr. Lyman Dietrick also remembered the Nixons, and his entire family leased the gasoline station. I'm just wondering what do you recall about that situation of the gasoline station, the gasoline pumps being leased out and so forth?

POST: Well, I remember that they had a couple of pumps there and sold Gilmore Blue-Green gas and Richfield gas at a later date. They were part of the Gilmore Island concern over here near the Beverly Boulevard area over near Farmer's Market. But this was the gas that was being sold there at the time. I remember the Dietricks working in the service station.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: Mr. Charles A. Post is now looking at some of the photographs of the Dietrick family, and in looking at the photographs realized that it was not at that time the Gilmore Company but the Richfield Company that supplied the Nixon gasoline pumps. And I believe you were also saying that you recall, not only that THEY went to Whittier College, but that you attended the college yourself.

POST: Right. I graduated from Whittier College in 1941.

ARENA: May I ask what your major had been?

POST: Yes. I went into education and I've been thirty-one years with the Montebello Unified School District. My current position is Assistant to the Superintendent and Director of Federal Funds. Being involved in federal funds, I'm obviously interested in the government and what kind of money is available for programs.

ARENA: I would imagine that most of the teachers that the President had you had as well. I'll just mention some names: Dr. [Albert] Upton, Dr. [Paul] Smith, and possibly Mr. J. Gustav White who, I believe, taught sociology.

POST: Yes. I knew these people. Unfortunately, I didn't have all of them during my time there at Whittier College. Since I was in the field of education, I did not have the fortune of having Dr. Smith, who was close to the President, although I know him. I'm in the Rotary Club now in Montebello [California]

and I also make up here in Whittier, where I meet Dr. Roy Newsom and others from the college. I enjoyed Whittier College very much. I'm very proud to be a graduate of the school.

ARENA: Do you think it had changed much in that five-year difference from the time you attended and the time the President attended?

POST: I don't think it changed too much in appearance. We still attended in Founders Hall, and having attended Whittier High School and being interested in athletics and observing Whittier College, I couldn't see too much change in outward appearance, although I'm sure within there was quite a change in personnel. I really wouldn't know on that.

ARENA: Do you want to make any overall comment and assessment of your joint education? By joint education, I mean the fact that both you and the President went pretty well through the same schools, not only the same system, but the same schools, and in many cases had the same teachers. I assume, by the way, you also went through Whittier High School as well.

POST: Yes, definitely.

ARENA: Would you want to make some overall comment on the level of education that you were exposed to and, therefore, the President?

POST: I'm very proud of my education in the Whittier area. I have, unfortunately, not gone as far as the President has in moving ahead, but I felt that the teachers that we had in East Whittier were extremely competent. I know my father was on the school board and they worked diligently at obtaining the best possible teachers for the school. I went to Whittier High School, four years there, and then after that stayed out of school one year to work around the ranches in East Whittier, and then went back to Fullerton Junior College for two years, and then to Whittier College for two years, and then to the University of Southern California, and then during the service was at Yale University. During my years in the service, I would always come back to the Nixon store and keep tabs with where the boys were located overseas, and . . .

ARENA: Do you recall discussing Richard and his whereabouts and his doings with the parents or with the brothers?

POST: Definitely.

ARENA: And what were some of the comments that came up?

POST: Well, they were about Richard being in the South Pacific in the Navy. I happened to be in the Air Force in Alaska in a communications group. This was a meeting place at the store, and it was really where we kept up to date on all the happenings and where everybody was located. I should mention one other factor here, that the Nixon family were always staunch supporters of the East Whittier Friends Church. I've usually gone to the Methodist Church in Whittier, but in 1936 and '37 I attended East Whittier Friends Church and now am attending it quite a bit today.

ARENA: Any contact with the fact that the President did teach Sunday school, participated in choirs in East Whittier Friends Church? Does that ring a bell, the fact that he was involved in that way?

POST: No, I was not affiliated with the church at that time.

ARENA: Maybe you may have known some of his pupils who were in Sunday school under him, and the fact that he did participate in the choir of that church. I just wonder if you had any direct knowledge of that yourself?

POST: No, I don't have direct knowledge. However, the current minister there, [T.] Eugene Coffin, has often mentioned how the President had taught a class. In fact, President Nixon has called this minister back to Washington, D.C., to give the sermon there at the White House.

ARENA: Speaking of your own Methodist roots, did it ever come up in any way--it's now in print, of course, in various books--but did it ever come up when YOU were growing up that the President's father had been a Methodist and that following the marriage he took to the ways of the Friends?

POST: Yes, I've read that in articles on the President. I did not know it at that particular time.

ARENA: And that did not come up in any conversation that involved you, or maybe you overheard your father and Mr. Frank Nixon going into that in any way at all?

POST: I don't recall that coming up as a matter of discussion. During the last few years that my mother was living, she was constantly in contact with the President's mother, and was always telling about how Mrs. Nixon was keeping a scrapbook on her son. And then, too, the last time I really talked with his mother was when I voted in 1960. She and I voted in the same garage, the same precinct. At that time they had the large two-story house that was formerly Macy Smith's home, which is now an eating place.

ARENA: I believe it is around the intersection, the corner of Beach Boulevard and Whittier Boulevard.

POST: The Nixons owned that house and the President's mother lived there around 1960. But anyway, I'm proud of the East Whittier background that we had. We felt we had a rich school background. The East Whittier Friends Church is a fine one and I'm certain that all these things contributed to the success of the President. Right now, in fact, I happen to live on the property that was owned by [Charles William] Milhous. It's subdivided now, but even now I still live on Nixon's relatives' land.

ARENA: There are several Bill Milhouses that come to mind. One is the one who owns the Sea Fare Inn [William Alan Milhous] and the other would be his father [Charles William Milhous] I believe.

POST: That's right. It was owned by his father.

ARENA: The gentleman who is at Leisure World at Laguna Hills . . .

POST: Yes, that's right.

ARENA: . . . whom I've had the pleasure of interviewing also. It's his property where you are living now?

POST: Right.

ARENA: What would be the location now? Oh, this address that you gave me in La Habra, I see.

POST: Right. As a youngster I knew Sarah [Rose Milhous], Beulah [Beula Mae Milhous] and Bill Milhous, Jr. [William Alan Milhous] (operator of the Sea Fare Inn).

ARENA: Was there ever any discussion, did you ever feel in any way uncomfortable because of the different religious background, your being of a Methodist background, surrounded by Friends, just for the record?

POST: No, we always got along very well, and I don't think there seemed to be any conflict at all.

ARENA: Were there ever any joint religious projects? I'm thinking--correct me if I'm wrong--that Mr. Frank Nixon helped build some of the different denomination churches in Yorba Linda. I believe he helped to build the Methodist Church there. But at any rate, I was just wondering if anything like that took place as you were growing up. Did the Nixons, in particular, attend any religious services other than the Friends and vice versa? Would there be some visiting Methodists to the East Whittier Friends Church from time to time?

POST: Well, not that I know of. At that time we were living in East Whittier and we knew that they did attend church there and were very faithful. I don't recall any exchange one way or another.

ARENA: Were you ever, possibly, in any of the same religious organizations that the President belonged to? I'm thinking, for example, of something like the Christian Endeavor, which may have cut across denominational lines. Was there ever any contact with him in that regard?

POST: No, there wasn't at that time. We have to remember that he was five years older than I am. In other words, when I was in the first grade he was probably in the sixth grade, with the older kids, so actually in face to face discussions he was just a few years ahead of me. Where we knew him the most, of course, was where he came to the house with the groceries. We didn't have a car and we had to rely on the Nixons and quite often the President to bring them.

ARENA: How was the order put in? Was there a phone connection between you and the store?

POST: Yes, definitely.

ARENA: I see.

POST: We'd call in the order and then they would record what the order was and then deliver it to the house.

ARENA: If this isn't too personal, were tips in order to the grocery boys at that time?

POST: [Laughter] No, we didn't think of it. We probably should have.

ARENA: Was there any reaction to that negative action on your part?

POST: This is the first time I ever thought of that. No, but I will say that the President was always extremely business-like. He was industrious, ambitious, and I think that this was a quality that all of us noticed.

ARENA: Did you ever, possibly, attend any of the plays in which he appeared on the college level, and then the community level later on, by any chance?

POST: Yes, I can remember vaguely attending some of the community plays that I knew he was in although, of course, at that time I didn't know he was going to become President and such a famous personality in our country, so those days are kind of hazy.

took care of the situation beautifully, whatever it was. So these are just impressions and incidents that I do remember. Now I'll be looking forward to next Christmas, to the next diary chapter, right after 1939 for the next few years, to see if there is more information. In fact, I might even check ahead of time to see if there's something.

ARENA: I'll certainly make the [Richard Nixon] Foundation aware of the existence of this diary. That is one of the important contributions that this project can do, in addition to taping interviews with people such as yourself, to let the Foundation, which is going to build the library and is interested, of course, in ALL papers and ALL documents that deal with the President's life. I'll make sure that they are aware of the existence of such a diary. As a matter of fact, so did the mother of Mr. Lyman Dietrick--it's interesting and a coincidence--she kept a diary too, and he is looking into that. That went to, I believe, a sister. He kept it for years and years and recently, as he said, gave it to his sister.

Was this a common thing, do you think, because of maybe the scarcity of things to do, a lack of neighbors, do you think that was common among the people living in that part of Whittier, or just living in those times, more common to keep diaries? Can you think, for example, of your other aunts, or any others, who kept diaries like that?

POST: Yes, my grandfather, R. L. Arnold, kept a detailed diary, and I think a lot of this was just passed on as far as my mother was concerned. There were some other reasons for this diary, however. When it came to health factors and immunizations, etc., she had an excellent record. She would take them to the doctor and they would ask a question about when any of us were ill, she'd just look back in her diary and pick up the exact date. And I can see in here the time any of us were involved in sickness; they're recorded right in here. I can tell you when I had the mumps, or I can tell you when I had tonsillitis.

ARENA: From the standpoint of an overall description of the diary, it keeps the factual information. Was your mother equally concerned with impressions and, we'll say, religious and philosophical comments on happenings of the day, of the times? Would it be an historical document, in a sense?

POST: Well . . .

ARENA: Did she record, we'll say, presidential elections and that she was happy or sad that so-and-so won or lost?

POST: Definitely. I was reading in here, and it indicated that Herbert Hoover was elected to the presidency over [Alfred E.] Al Smith. And then another time . . .

ARENA: Excuse me, but speaking of the Hoover family, as far as you know, did she know. . . . She was probably aware of Lou Henry Hoover who was from Whittier. Did she know her by any chance?

POST: I don't believe she knew her personally. At least, I don't recall this or ever going to Lou Henry Hoover's home, but we knew where it was located in Whittier.

ARENA: If you do know, what was your mother's educational background? Do you know if she had gone through college herself?

POST: No. She did take some nursing work but I believe she had most of her schooling in Iowa before she came out here from pictures that we have. In these diaries she had indicated the favorite radio programs of the day, and favorite music at that time, and radio programs such as Vic and Sade and Ma Perkins. These were not in diaries, but my brother has taken these from other historical things she kept, and he has put them all together.

ARENA: Finally, as a kind of overall question, knowing the President as you have, firsthand, in your home, knowing him as we all do today, at a distance, in what respects do you see the same young man; in what respects do you see a different person? I'm thinking of, you know, those habits, those mannerisms, those traits. What of the early Nixon grocery store is still left in Richard Nixon from your own observation? Take as much time as you like to dwell on that.

POST: Personally, and just from what I remember, he appears quite a bit to me as he did at that time. It seems to me that he was always a very friendly fellow, and everyone I know thought a great deal of him. He was a fine student in school from everything I've heard. He was always, as far as I know, very trustworthy in every way. His mother and father certainly had the qualities that are, to me, reflected in his personality. As of late years, I certainly give him credit. . . . I sent a note to him a while back, and he answered me saying that it was a pleasure hearing from an old neighborhood friend, that he cherished the years that he lived in the neighborhood. This is the way the letter started.

ARENA: If it isn't too personal, could I ask you how he addressed you? Did he call you by your first name?

POST: "Dear Arnold."

ARENA: I see.

POST: And in the letter that I had sent to him, I told him that if I could be of any service to him, to let me know. He had referred the letter to [Robert H.] Bob Finch who was then secretary of HEW [Health, Education and Welfare]. He said, "You will be hearing from Bob Finch very soon." And I did get a letter right away, exactly two weeks, offering me a position there in Washington, D.C. He has sent me a Christmas card every year from the White House, which I'm always very happy to get. I asked a favor of him last April, by mentioning that a couple of our administrators were retiring and would appreciate anything in the way of a letter or a certificate or something. He sent out two very fine letters, personally signed. And it seems to me that he is conscientious and, I think, probably the finest President we ever had.

ARENA: From what you have read about him and from what you know about him, without mentioning the names of authors, of course, do you think that what is on the record about this part of his life, this part we've been discussing, not the politics, has been pretty accurate.

POST: Definitely. Very, very accurate. And this is something I'd like to stress, the things I have heard him say. I heard him a while back saying that in the grocery store he knew how people felt who could not pay their bills, and I could almost tell exactly the person he was talking about. I could envision this so easily. Then when he was running for the presidency the last time, he mentioned how they didn't have a great deal of money and how his mother, around July Fourth, got out some red, white and blue bunting and fixed up the table, to make it a little more patriotic on this particular day, which I remember clearly. His description of his fifth grade teacher was very accurate. And really, I cannot think of anything that I have heard him say, in any way, shape or form but what it has been extremely accurate.

ARENA: Thank you very much, Mr. Post, for the privilege of allowing us to have this interview, and for answering all of my questions so frankly and fully and to the best of your recollections. Thank you very much.

ARENA: Is there anything that I have not brought up in this interview so far, as it comes to a close here, that you would like to mention? Any incidents or any experiences that come to mind?

POST: The only thing that I would like to mention is that my mother has considered Richard Nixon as practically one of her own, as far as family. He was in the house so much, bringing in the groceries. We hardly saw anybody in those days. The mailman came around and the milkman and these people dropped in, but she thought so much of him. When he decided to run for Congress against Jerry Voorhis, she was extremely active in the campaign headquarters.

ARENA: Had she been active or had she been interested in politics before that time?

POST: She was such a dyed-in-the-wool Republican that whenever a Democratic president would get in it was extremely upsetting to her. And I can remember distinctly that she came home and was so happy when Richard Nixon came in and referred to her as "Mrs. Republican." This was something she was extremely proud of.

ARENA: And as you know, we're not interested in politics per se, but because of this unusual personal relationship, I would like to have it on the record as to where she did her volunteer work. Would it have been in the East Whittier office or in Whittier proper, and what did it consist of? Did she have coffee klatches for people and that sort of thing, including coffee klatches for the President?

POST: Well, in those days there were hardly any homes out there in East Whittier and hardly any meeting places, and if I recall correctly, this was even in 1946. I believe the campaign headquarters were here south of town. I think they were on Greenleaf [Avenue]. I could be mistaken there.

ARENA: But that would be in the heart of Whittier proper.

POST: Yes. And, of course, I remember he had his office here in the Bank of America. My father recalls coming in and having him sign affidavits and so forth, so he could get an okay on whatever the legal matter was.

ARENA: Would this be certain instances, or just about all the legal work of your father was handled by the President?

POST: No, I think these were rather minor items that he had where he had to have the signature of a lawyer. But he was telling me that he thought that Richard Nixon certainly