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## **Malcolm M. Champlin and Charles R. Ringo (June 26, 1971)**

C. Richard Arena

ABSTRACT  
Oral History Interview

with

JUDGE MALCOLM M. CHAMPLIN  
(Also present:)  
MR. CHARLES R. RINGO

June 26, 1971  
Oakland, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: We are in the home of Judge Malcolm M. Champlin, Oakland, California. Judge Champlin is a good friend of President Nixon and has known him since his Senatorial days. Also with us is Mr. Ringo. Your full name, Mr. Ringo?

RINGO: Charles R. Ringo.

ARENA: Where are you from, Mr. Ringo?

RINGO: I'm an old Californian.

ARENA: And you live right in . . .

RINGO: I live in Berkeley, California.

ARENA: Today's date is June 26, 1971. The purpose of this interview is merely to explore some names of persons in the immediate area--Oakland and San Francisco--who might come to mind who have known President Nixon for a long time. Judge Champlin realizes that the Richard Nixon Oral History Project goes up to the year 1945. However, some of these names could be people who might have known President Nixon during his Navy career, or they are important to take down for future reference when the project goes into the period of President Nixon's life after 1945. So let me begin by asking you, Judge: What are some of the key names of people that the project should get in touch with concerning President Nixon?

CHAMPLIN: Well, my early contacts were primarily through a little organization which we called The Alameda County Chowder and Marching Society. And this was at the time when Dick Nixon, having been elected to Congress in Whittier, California, made the decision to run for the United States Senate against Helen Gahagan Douglas. And we formed a little group to help him in that campaign. Among the people who knew him quite well would be Peter Howard, a young man who is part of the family who has owned and operated Howard Terminals in Oakland [California] for many years. And Peter Howard would have some very interesting material about Dick Nixon in those days. Another man active in that particular group was John Burd, an attorney in Oakland. I would say of the group, the two most closely knowledgeable would be John Burd and Peter Howard. Now an additional individual in the group was Harry Shackelton of Livermore [California]. Now we would meet from time to time with Lloyd Dinkelspiel of San Francisco [California], an attorney there, a very prominent and a very outstanding man.

ARENA: Is it your recollection that Mr. Dinkelspiel and President Nixon were in the Navy together?

CHAMPLIN: Actually, that I don't know. My knowledge of Dick Nixon and his Navy service would be limited.

ARENA: You didn't know him personally during that period. You knew of his record, of course.

CHAMPLIN: That is right. Now later, while active in the American Legion, I got to know Joe Foss, former governor, and Joe Foss was a Marine aviator of worldwide fame, an ace, who was in the area in which Dick Nixon served as a personnel officer. Joe Foss would be an outstanding contact for your project and his knowledge would be immediate. It is my understanding that Joe Foss was transferred to the United States with his entire group by and through Dick Nixon's personnel office, and that there are some very interesting stories in that connection, and they would be vital to a knowledge, I think, of the Nixon years. Much of my information would simply be for future record and checking as your project expanded. I worked particularly, first in the campaign for Nixon against Helen Gahagan Douglas, in which he was victorious and was elected to the United States Senate from California.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you this, Judge, that could tie in the pre-political period: You said that you-- and I am sure you would have--since you met him for the first time after his Navy career, that there would have been some checking up into his family. Do you recall personally meeting members of his family? Or your personal research that would have had an influence on your recognizing his quality--

the qualities that you would back. Do you recall personally having met, say, his mother and father, and that sort of thing?

CHAMPLIN: No, I have not. Up to this day I have never met his mother and father. I have met his wife [Patricia Ryan] Pat Nixon.

ARENA: Unfortunately, they are both deceased and did not live long enough to see him as President.

CHAMPLIN: I see. I see. Well, there is one member of his family, Pat, whom I think is one of the most delightful and charming ladies I have ever known in my whole life. I say that for a number of reasons, one or two of which I think are of interest. At one time Dick Nixon came as Vice President of the United States to the Claremont Hotel. And John Burd brought Pat Nixon out to meet my wife, and my wife was a little absent-minded, and they were chatting and before she realized quite who Mrs. Nixon was--she had been introduced as Pat--they talked about a recipe for cake, and she asked Pat how many children she had, and she said, "By the way, where do you live?" And she said, "Oh, I live in Washington." And they had a delightful chat without my wife having any idea to whom she was talking. And then pretty soon the receiving line was beginning to form, and somebody said, "Mrs. [William F.] Knowland, step forward, please." and "Mrs. Nixon, step forward, please, into the receiving line." And at that point she realized that she was talking to the wife of the Vice President of the United States. Well, they have been friendly and have recognized each other instantly ever since. So that was interesting and a lot of fun.

ARENA: It certainly speaks well for the ability of Mrs. Nixon to put people at their ease, I believe, and not embarrass them.

CHAMPLIN: Absolutely. And then later, of course, she shook hands with three thousand people in one afternoon, which was an exhausting process, but did it with a stamina and a charm which was just a wonder to behold. She has been a tremendous asset to Richard Nixon at all times, and I have tremendous respect and affection for Pat Nixon.

Back again for a moment to the early days: Dick Nixon did arrive in Alameda County [California] with his charming wife, Pat, in a station wagon and with a little black book of names. And we jokingly referred to them politically as being all the wrong names. By that time we became aware that he didn't know too much about the political scene in Alameda County, being a young congressman from Whittier in Southern California. However, we did our best to meet him right away and to be of real assistance to him. Now those days you could find much more about by talking to John Burd, the attorney, who lives, I believe on

this side of the [San Francisco] Bay and practices law in San Francisco--a very successful attorney--and Mr. Peter Howard, who is in charge of the Howard Terminals here in Oakland.

ARENA: Speaking of that period, had you heard of the people with whom the President had his first law office, Mr. [Thomas W.] Tom Bewley, for example?

CHAMPLIN: No, I had not. No, I had not. At that point I did just enough checking to satisfy me then that I was dealing with a young congressman who was a man of integrity and ability, and I chose independently of any family contacts to back and support him. Now at all times since, in my contacts with Richard Nixon, which have been political and very friendly but not too personal actually, but have been such that I have learned more and more about him and have reinforced my conclusion about Dick as being a man of absolute integrity. I used to be an FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] agent years ago, and we would refer to so and so as being clean. Well, Dick Nixon's clean. No question.

ARENA: Were you aware possibly that he almost worked for the FBI himself? When he left law school he had a letter of recommendation to Mr. J. Edgar Hoover.

CHAMPLIN: Well, I was not aware of that, but it wouldn't surprise me at all. People don't realize also that he was a member of the Order of the Coif in law school and was a brilliant student. And the Order of the Coif, being an honorary legal society in the English-speaking world, includes only approximately the upper 5 percent, I would say, of law school graduates, and Nixon was honored by such a membership in that honorary society.

ARENA: I had heard that he had that honor, but I did not realize that it applied to the entire English-speaking world; in other words, England as well as other English-speaking countries.

CHAMPLIN: Yes, that's right. Canada, Australia, United States--the English-speaking world, and it is a very great honor. I would say probably the highest honor for law students in the English-speaking world.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you, Judge, where you attended law school?

CHAMPLIN: I attended law school at the University of California at Berkeley, Boalt Hall there. Now, as time went by I was keenly interested in the Nixon campaign against Helen Gahagan Douglas here, and I learned more and more about Dick's outstanding dedication and perseverance in the Alger Hiss case. As a former FBI agent with

some knowledge of Communism, I had great respect for the tenacity in the handling of that case. Later I had occasion, as a member of the Resolutions Committee of the American Legion in California to prepare and carefully draft a non-partisan resolution, together with others [the Americanism and Resolutions Committee of the American Legion] to carefully draft a resolution which would be really non-partisan, supporting Dick Nixon as a congressman and as a dedicated American in the work which he did in the Alger Hiss case. That was unanimously passed on the floor of the Convention in the State of California, and I believe it became an important item politically as he later ran for other high offices.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you, Judge, concerning the Alger Hiss case--I don't know whether anyone has ever put this question to you before, but I think future historians and future students of history might be interested, especially in view of your personal experience, both as a lawyer and as a judge and as an interested citizen--do you think that the opposition to President Nixon for his work in the Alger Hiss case, opposition which came obviously from some people who are not Communists, as well as obviously those who were, do you think that those who caused him more difficulty or were as equally vehement were those who were not Communists but were just ignorant and were just as damaging to his chances and therefore in a way to helping the country than those who were dedicated Communists? I guess what I am trying to get at is, here is a question of ignorance of people who opposed President Nixon were anyone on the Communist issue as well as those who were calculating Communists.

CHAMPLIN: Well, I think I see what you are driving at there, and I think it is quite true that in a free country like ours, we have the problem of ignorance which must be faced. People don't understand the issues many, many times. This actually applies in every election that we hold, there is a certain degree of it. But particularly with respect to the analysis of the Communist Party, dialectical materialism, the drive for world conquest, people don't realize that what we have, really, is Marxism-Leninism, a combination, which has not only the economic phase to it but the world conquest phase to it, and therefore, people with this lack of understanding, and you can call it ignorance of Communism and the nature of Communism, just simply don't comprehend the need that exists for people, if they desire to remain free, to oppose totalitarianism in whatever form--whether it be Nazi totalitarianism or Communist totalitarianism. And much of this becomes pretty subtle, and we shouldn't be surprised when the average man doesn't understand an Alger Hiss who would be Assistant Secretary of State and have what I call intellectual depravity in a Communist-disciplined mind, dedicated from his standpoint to destruction of everything in which we believe. Now, for an

American trained in fair play in school, in his home, in his church, an American who just breathes freedom automatically all his life, it's hard for an American to conceive of intellectual depravity and of a dedication for totalitarianism and against the very freedom we live in and that our forefathers have given us and that our sons have fought to preserve.

So, yes, the answer is that many people innocently but ignorantly oppose a crusader like Dick Nixon. I am convinced that we have no more dedicated Christian gentleman, we find no one in my view with more integrity and absolute honesty in his heart and soul than the President of the United States, Dick Nixon. This I began to observe in the early days, and I have observed it again and again and again. And I am convinced that this man is number one, a dedicated American and a Christian gentleman. So you see, when he starts to dig into a mess like that, say, of Harry Dexter White or Alger Hiss, people don't understand it. And a great many innocent people who don't read very much have difficulty comprehending it, particularly if they're trained as I say, in the atmosphere of freedom and breathe the air of freedom all their lives. If you don't know something about rattlesnakes, you might be bitten. You don't pet a rattlesnake, you see. People. . . . You are correct when you say that frequently people innocently and ignorantly oppose a person who is trying his best.

ARENA: Wasn't it also a characteristic of President Nixon in the Alger Hiss case that he went by the letter of the law? In other words, there was no business of trying to act as a catchall, say, unlike possibly some who are opposed to Communism but don't have the facts. But President Nixon proceeded on a careful basis of being sure every inch of the way where he stood, so that no one could trip him up on that.

CHAMPLIN: Absolutely! Absolutely! Dick Nixon fired with a rifle, not with a shotgun. Dick Nixon never at any time had any intention to hurt an innocent person. You will find over and over again that what he says can be documented. The man is, as I say, a man of integrity, but also of tremendous intellectual ability.

I ran for Congress at one point, and I analyzed very carefully, and I had occasion to support 100 percent the thinking of Richard Nixon. His speeches I have checked over and analyzed from time to time, and each time that I have taken the trouble to do this, I have found that same integrity pouring through. The man politically is very astute, and he phrases things very carefully, which I admire for any political leader, and he has the ability to do this. At all times, however, I find that same integrity all the way through.

ARENA: Judge, I hope you will permit me to return when the project does spend full time on President Nixon's political side. It would be very

interesting to have the views of a person who has worked as closely with him as you have.

Mr. Ringo, since you have some relatives in Whittier [California], would you mind giving us some idea of your relatives and whatever knowledge you have of the Whittier area, which is a part of the area in which President Nixon grew up and therefore is responsible for his personality, his character, his training and so forth?

RINGO: My cousin is Jack Schallenberger. His wife was Virginia Bailey. Her grandfather, Jonathan Bailey, organized the Pickering Land Company to form a Quaker settlement in Whittier. And she's working very hard on the same project you are.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask if they were Quakers? As you know, the town was founded by Quakers.

RINGO: They belonged to the Quaker church there, yes. Jack was not a Quaker originally, but on account of his wife, they belonged to that church. He was head of the Boy Scouts of the Whittier area.

ARENA: Do you happen to know possibly if they ever had any contact with [Francis Anthony] Frank Nixon, who was not a Quaker but a Methodist when he came from McArthur, Ohio, but then married Hannah [Milhous Nixon], who was a Quaker, and evidently became a Quaker after the marriage. He taught Sunday school, President Nixon's father, as did the President himself, by the way, I have been assured by Pastor Ernest Lamb. Do you know if any of your relatives ever had any contact on the church level with any of the Nixons, before President Nixon became famous?

RINGO: Well, of course, my cousin--they were very great friends of his, and my cousin is some relation to Nixon, I don't know just what it is--my cousin's wife, not my cousin.

ARENA: And your cousin is Mr. Schallenberger.

RINGO: Yes, and his wife is. And I think he teaches in the Sunday school there, too.

ARENA: What is his position there, do you know?

RINGO: He is with Standard Oil [Company of California] at the La Habra plant, and he and two other men have charge of all the hiring of all the foreign engineers and so forth for the Standard Oil outside of the United States.



ARENA: Are you aware possibly that President Nixon opened up a branch law office in La Habra, and recently a plaque marking that fact was dedicated there?

RINGO: I do not know.

ARENA: Is there anything else you would like to add, Mr. Ringo, concerning your relatives connection to either Whittier or with the Nixon-Milhous family?

RINGO: I don't know. I just know that she's very active and she is quite an artist. She makes sketches of various things. She's working on the history of Whittier for the Nixon Library in Whittier.

ARENA: They are hoping that the Nixon Library will be set up in Whittier, but it's not definite. A choice is to be made by the Richard Nixon Foundation. Those who are members of the community are very anxious, and would have great pride in the fact that the Presidential Library and Museum would be there. The city has donated land, and the college, under its current president, Dr. [Frederick] Binder, has made a formal plea to the Foundation that the Foundation choose that site. The decision is yet to be made. I do know that your cousin is a member of the Historical Society of the Whittier area, which is also on record for urging the city and the college to have the Richard Nixon Foundation place the Museum and Library there.

RINGO: Isn't she vice president?

ARENA: Actually, she's not a vice president, but she's responsible for painting the sketch on our first annual banquet booklet as well as the membership card--your cousin, Virginia Schallenberger. But I don't believe she is an officer now. The vice president is a lady by the name of Mrs. Sue Johanson, but your cousin was at the very first steering committee meeting held earlier in the fall of 1970. She was at that steering committee, which eventually led to the formation of the present Historical Society of the Whittier area.

RINGO: I see. Well, I got it from those girls who introduced me to you.

ARENA: I just thought I would get the record straight.

RINGO: Well, yes; I don't know, of course.

ARENA: I hope you will come and attend some of our meetings. Our next meeting will be on a tour of the Presidential libraries by Mr. Hubert Perry, who is

one of the various gentlemen of the Richard Nixon Foundation that toured all the libraries so that they would have a better basis for selecting a site. Others included the President's brother, Edward Nixon, and a gentleman, [William H.] Bill Harrison, who is an architect. This Hubert Perry, Judge Champlin, is the same Perry, the son of Mr. Herman Perry, who was one of the original backers of President Nixon as a congressman when he left the service. You might be interested in knowing that.

CHAMPLIN: Very interesting. One of the items of real interest--when I first began to consider supporting Mr. Nixon was the fact that he had nerve enough to answer an ad actually to run for Congress and then further, after analysis, he had nerve enough to run against one of the outstanding, young congressmen of that time. And I was very impressed when I read in Life magazine, or something I recall, an analysis of "One Day in the Life of a Congressman" or some such thing, as though the man were the outstanding congressman in the United States, which he may have considered himself to be and may have been considered by many others to be. And this is the man that Dick Nixon defeated. So that at that point I said, "Here's a man with a little nerve." And I admire him greatly for it.

In your work, Dr. Arena, my suggestion is that you be sure to talk to Governor Joe Foss. Put him on this same microphone and ask him about his contacts with Richard Nixon in the military situation, because as I recall that little story, it was a classic, in which you have an outstanding war hero, Joe Foss, being assisted away out in the Pacific on the islands, close to where the air battles were going on, and it was Dick Nixon cooperating with Joe Foss that brought back not only one or two people but his entire unit after they had been in a number of heavy engagements. But they all sat tight until the whole unit would come, not just one hero, as I recall the story. But Joe Foss will certainly tell you about that.

Down at Yorba Linda [California] you mentioned, there is a man named George Kellogg. Truly, I must confess I don't know whether he is alive now or not, but George Kellogg of Yorba Linda can give you some interesting stories about Joe Foss, if he is still alive. He would be now about 76 or 77 years of age, as a possible point of departure for some stories in the Yorba Linda area.

ARENA: There are some real old-timers in Yorba Linda, Judge, including a gentleman who worked for President Nixon's father, Frank Nixon, and recalls the day the President was born. I have already seen that gentleman. There is a Richard M. Nixon Historical Committee there to preserve the Yorba Linda birthplace and that is fairly well along. I'm sure that they will preserve it. The home is still standing, occupied, but still standing.

CHAMPLIN: I can't help commending you for sticking to the facts and for probing deeply to get these facts, because the facts about Dick Nixon when put together will show an outstanding figure of an American of whom our country can be forever proud. I keep thinking of him in terms of crisis presidents like Abraham Lincoln, and I feel that he will stand high when compared to our many fine gentlemen who have previously occupied the White House.

It's refreshing to see a man come up from simple, poverty circumstances, from a religious household, with the typical American development--as a little child, as a boy, as a young man and as a lawyer and political leader, as a veteran, as a member of Whittier Post of the American Legion. If you were to write a book about Horatio Alger or somebody else, it would be about as typically American as you can get. It is still possible and it is still marvelous and it is still refreshing to see such a thing happen. And the deeper you get into the facts, the more closely you will come to a genuine true Horatio Alger type of development from simplest origins to the highest and most powerful position in the world, the Presidency of the United States. And this is why people who think it through, who believe in the principles of freedom and have faith in the dignity of man can't help but be drawn to Dick, who is actually much more of a warm person, friendly person, personalitywise than most people believe, as well as being a man of immense stature.

ARENA: In view of what you've said, Judge, maybe I know the answer to this already, but I would like to ask it for the record. Do you think two years is too much time to spend on this early background, including the family and grandparents and religious and economic circumstances surrounding the President's early birth and growth before his political career? Do you think that that much time should be spent on such a search?

CHAMPLIN: Of course, it depends on what your resources are financially and so forth. In general, yes. I would say that you could use that time to good advantage this way, particularly when you are doing two things here. You are talking to me about Dick Nixon, and actually much that I am saying would be after 1945. However, it is not wasted time, because during your two-year period in which you are endeavoring to concentrate you are at the same time laying a foundation here, so that your two years, I am sure, will be well used searching in the early religious thinking and family area of research, so that I would say by all means continue with the same time allocation that you have now. It could be put to very good use and you'd have a little headstart on your later development. You'd know who to talk to later, and so forth. I think it is all worthwhile. And it is refreshing to have a search for the truth like this. In these days we

find people so sloganized, and so limited in their reading, and so dependent on the flash on television or this or that, that it's again refreshing to see a true historical approach, in a search for the truth of the character of the man.

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The interview ends with Mr. Champlin's recollections of his World War II service in the Pacific, where he served as aide to General J. W. Wainwright.