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R. Harley McClure (September 29, 1972)

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

MR. R. HARLEY McCLURE

September 29, 1972
Costa Mesa, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

- ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. R. Harley McClure. R. stands for Roy, of Costa Mesa, California, on September 29, 1972, Arena interviewing. Mr. McClure, may we begin by my asking you where and when you were born?
- McCLURE: I was born in the little town of Reynolds, Nebraska, in 1909, August 12.
- ARENA: And would you mind giving a brief resume of your educational background?
- McCLURE: I went to grade school in Nebraska until my seventh grade. My family moved to Oklahoma and I finished my high school work at Guthrie High School, Oklahoma. I was then out of school three years because that happened to be the time when, as we all know--I graduated from high school in '26--it was when finances were pretty low and my father was a Methodist minister, so we didn't have much money to send me to college, so I stayed out three years and worked. And then I went to Oklahoma University one year, 1930. Then the family decided to move to California, and we came to California and landed in Los Angeles on my twenty-first birthday. That was in 1930.
- ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you if your father became pastor of a church there in Los Angeles? Was he a practicing minister?

McCLURE: Not at that time. He had taken a leave from the ministry for a short time to perform some other work and when we hit Los Angeles in 1930, if anybody was around here at that time they would know that was right at the depth of the depression and things were rough. And so I knocked around doing odd jobs that I could do until I got acquainted with a music teacher. By the way, I had been in music all my life and this music teacher became Dean of Music at Whittier College and through him I was given a scholarship at Whittier College in music.

ARENA: Would you give his full name?

McCLURE: His full name was Dr. Frederick Vance Evans.

ARENA: Thank you. What area of music if I may ask, Mr. McClure?

McCLURE: Vocal music mostly and specializing in sacred music.

ARENA: Had you studied that at Oklahoma before, too, or started any work there?

McCLURE: Yes, I had studied in Oklahoma. In fact I entered the state contest at the Oklahoma University as a baritone soloist, which I did not win, but then I had sung in choirs ever since I was thirteen or fourteen years old.

ARENA: I want to go into that a little more later on, but to touch on some subjects you have already mentioned, what type of jobs did you handle during this period of the depression in order to keep body and soul together?

McCLURE: Well, when we first came out here I thought I could do anything. I was willing to do any kind of work and I put in applications at various places and the minute they found out I was not a native Californian, I was out, because it was tough. So I went along the industrial area in Los Angeles, down where the cooky factories and the candy factories and those things were and go in there and see if they had a car of sugar to unload or flour to unload or something similar to that. Maybe the job would last half a day or a day and then that was all of it and I was paid off and the next day it was the same thing over again.

ARENA: Do you recall of your standing in line with others waiting for the same job, as they picture so frequently in movies of that period, or would this be a case where you

would walk right up to the office or maybe you noticed the job in the newspaper, noticed that they were looking for workers, or did you go there on your own to these places?

McCLURE: I don't remember standing in line. I just went down the line and contacted whoever was doing the hiring and that was it. If they had nothing to do, I went on to the next place.

ARENA: On this matter of Californians first. I don't know if you recall the book Grapes of Wrath where, if I'm not mistaken, among other non-Californians there were the so-called Okies and those coming from Oklahoma. From your own personal experience were you treated as an Okie and what, if anything, did that idea mean from your firsthand experience? Was there such a thing as an Okie, and who was an Okie and were you treated as one?

McCLURE: Yes, I knew that there were Okies and I referred to myself as an Okie, but it was more of a reference of lightness or joviality. I was really not in the position, I think, that the real Okie that they spoke of that came out from the dust-filled farms and that sort of thing, although I was just as poor but I could do more things than just work on a farm, so that I refer to myself now--I have some other friends here from Oklahoma that I run across--and we call each other Okies, so we have a lot of fun about it.

ARENA: Just to be sure from your own recollection, knowing the situation today, for example, did it have any type of connotation like nigger or any connotation like wetback? In other words, if a person from Oklahoma was called an Okie, could that situation arise, say, maybe whoever it was who used the term with someone, was there that kind of a connotation, a kind of prejudice against the fellow in a mean sort of way?

McCLURE: Not that I recall.

ARENA: You had no firsthand experience that way anyway where someone called you that in a mean sort of way?

McCLURE: No, not that I recall. As a matter of fact at first I didn't understand what you have just said that it was particularly Okies. I just supposed that anybody who

came in from outside of California that that was the standard procedure that Californians first and everybody else could just take what was left.

ARENA: And was that your impression? In other words, the Okies were not set aside in any way. It was anyone who was not from California was not going to be given a job over a Californian if they could do something about it?

McCLURE: That's correct. That's the way I understood it.

ARENA: Thank you. I want to get that as straight as possible. While we're on the point of your father being a Methodist minister, this may be jumping the gun, but while it is still in both our minds, I don't know if you were aware at that time when you knew President Nixon or you may have read since, but his father had been a Methodist in Ohio. He grew up as a Methodist before he came out to California. I am just wondering if possibly you were aware of that and maybe you met Mr. [Frank Anthony] Frank Nixon, the President's father, and maybe he even met your father and that came up in some way, but I would like to be sure I put that to you.

McCLURE: No, I really wasn't conscious of that. Actually by the time I went to Whittier College my family had gone back to Oklahoma, and I met Mr. Nixon a number of times, one time especially when . . .

ARENA: By Mr. Nixon, Mr. Frank Nixon, the President's father?

McCLURE: Right. Especially do I remember one time when Dick Nixon, our President, invited about fifteen of the fellows to his house for dinner at the time that he graduated from Whittier [College], and we had dinner in the Nixon home in back of the grocery store at that time. I really didn't realize that the elder Mr. Nixon had been a Methodist really.

ARENA: While we are on that incident and since it has just come up, will you recount as fully as you can recall and take as much time as you like about that whole experience? For example, how many people were invited, was it the whole class, just certain people that the President knew, certain members of a team or a fraternity; who was invited? What was eaten to the best of your knowledge? Who else was there besides the students, were there some faculty? How about the President's other members of the family? Everything that comes to mind about that experience.

McCLURE: As I remember it, there were some twelve to fifteen invited out to his house for dinner and we were all students, friends of our new President. There was no-- well, let me put it this way, these friends ran the whole gamut of Whittier College, as I . . .

ARENA: How many names would come to mind if you can think? Of course this is just one detail, but just out of curiosity how many names come to mind?

McCLURE: Well there was [Edward] Ed Sowers.

ARENA: And to the best of your knowledge where would he be now?

McCLURE: Well he lives right down here below the hospital in Costa Mesa [California].

ARENA: Is that Hoag Hospital?

McCLURE: Hoag Hospital. There was I am pretty sure John Arrambide was in the group.

ARENA: John Arrambide?

McCLURE: Yes. [William] Bill Stephenson was in the group, Carl Siegmund. Hubert Perry was in the group.

ARENA: [Clinton O.] Clint Harris by any chance?

McCLURE: I'm sure Clint must have been there but I don't quite remember him.

ARENA: You can't see his red hair by any chance?

McCLURE: No, I can't see his red hair there.

ARENA: How about the fellows we were talking about. One was [William T.] Bill Brock although he may not have been the same year. Maybe he was not the same year. The other fellow who may not have been the same year, therefore, in that graduating class that we mentioned was the gentleman who was the runner in athletics--oh, Nat George.

McCLURE: I don't remember Nathaniel George.

ARENA: He may have been there before.

McCLURE: Now, I don't know whether this--what was the other fellow?

ARENA: There was a Thomson--oh, Bill Brock.

McCLURE: I don't remember whether Bill Brock was there.

ARENA: He may have been in another class too. How about [Richard] Dick Thomson?

McCLURE: I don't remember whether Dick Thomson was there or not.

ARENA: How about females, was it a coed . . .

McCLURE: No, no, it was just the fellows, strictly fellows.

ARENA: By the way, was this his fraternity too?

McCLURE: Oh, no.

ARENA: Because you were not an Orthogonian.

McCLURE: I was not an Orthogonian. No, in fact I was in a group, we formed a new society when I was there called the Lancers.

ARENA: It was not the Franklins; I think they had been there already.

McCLURE: The Franklins had been there and the Orthogonians were there and then we were the next ones.

ARENA: And you were a member?

McCLURE: I was a founding member. There were thirteen or fourteen of us.

ARENA: By the way, what was your graduating class, or did you finish?

McCLURE: I did not graduate.

ARENA: What would it have been?

McCLURE: '36.

ARENA: As you know and may remember the President's class was '34.

McCLURE: '34, right.

ARENA: I didn't mean to turn you aside, whatever else comes to mind about that invitation, again what you ate. If you recall, was it prepared by the President's mother, Mrs. Hannah Nixon and so on?

McCLURE: Well, I suppose so. I don't remember too much about what we had to eat, but I know that for some of us who had gotten along on pretty sparse rations, including working our way through school, that it was certainly a real fine meal and we all enjoyed it and it was just a regular banquet for us.

ARENA: By the way also, just to be certain, since you were not graduating that year, it was not just an invitation to his graduate classmates? In other words it was friends besides those who were graduating with him?

McCLURE: Oh, yes, I named two or three who were not graduating with him.

ARENA: That's right.

McCLURE: [William] Bill Soeberg was there.

ARENA: And if I'm not mistaken, you probably know for sure, in San Clemente, California, now.

McCLURE: I don't know. The last I knew I heard he was over in Glendale [California].

ARENA: No, I'm pretty sure the Soebergs. . . . And if I'm not mistaken she is related, the wife, in some way, maybe the sister, if this name rings a bell of a gentleman we are trying to contact, Herschel Daugherty, who is now a quite prominent movie and TV [television] writer and producer. But does the name ring a bell to you--Herschel Daugherty--of that time?

McCLURE: Yes, yes and I'll tell you why. (Note: Daugherty was husband of Mrs. Soeberg's sister). Herschel graduated a year before I went over there to Whittier, and the year before Whittier College had a very very fine male quartet and the quartet was composed of Joe Gaudio, top tenor. And by the way, I am pretty sure he was at this dinner out at Dick's home.

ARENA: Any idea where he may be now?

McCLURE: Yes, he lives in Costa Mesa, over here in Mesa Verde.

ARENA: Thank you. Another name that comes to mind, I know he is Italian of Italian background, Vincent Sinatra.

McCLURE: Vince Sinatra I did not know.

ARENA: He is now a lawyer living in Beverly Hills [California] but his law practice is in Los Angeles [California] and I have had the pleasure of meeting him.

McCLURE: To go on with the quartet then, there was [Joseph] Joe Gaudio--I can't think of the man's name. . . .

ARENA: How about a [Joseph P.] Joe Cosand?

McCLURE: Oh, Joe Cosand I knew him. He was the secretary, I think, of our Glee Club. He was a Franklin.

ARENA: He's now in Washington, D.C., and I had the pleasure of meeting him, and I also saw his name, speaking of music, in this program called Ambassadors of Song, which was a particular choir of the college.

McCLURE: That's right. I have a number of those if I could find them.

ARENA: Oh, fine. I just have the one and I know his name is in a number of them.

McCLURE: See, I was president of the Glee Club. Well, we're getting ahead of ourselves. To go back to the quartet, Herschel Daugherty was the baritone and another fellow was the base in this quartet and they almost went professional and had some auditions with some of the big bands over in Los Angeles.

ARENA: When you say they, that did not include you or President Nixon?

McCLURE: No, but I am explaining to you how I know Herschel Daugherty. So the next year I went there while Joe Gaudio was still there, the top tenor, and the base. Manville Saxton was the base. Those two were there so they needed the two middle ones, so I took the second tenor part and the president of the Glee Club that year was Mickey McNutt. He sang the baritone part, which was Herschel Daugherty's part. Later on, going back to homecoming, we couldn't find Mickey McNutt anywhere. They wanted the quarter to sing, so I sang with Herschel and the other two at the homecoming party and then at other homecoming times I would meet Herschel. We kidded each other a lot, and so I had a good acquaintance with Herschel Daugherty. You asked me if I knew Herschel and that's how I knew him.

ARENA: I see. You don't recall whether or not he may have been at that dinner we were also discussing?

McCLURE: I don't think so because he had graduated before in 1933 I think. Yes. That's why he wasn't in the quartet in 1934 when I got there.

ARENA: Can you account for any reason why the President and you hit it off? Evidently you did. You were invited to his home to eat. Any particular reason?

McCLURE: Yes, at that time there was a tradition at Whittier College that when the Whittier College Glee Clubs went out on tour they took no faculty members with them at all. We had our own little self-contained government within the club and we went without any faculty representatives. Well, I was president of the Glee Club and Dick was in the Glee Club as one of our leading basses at the same time he was student body president. So that it sort of fell upon the shoulders of me as president of the Glee Club and he as president of the student body to kind of keep things under control, and we became very well acquainted because we had two or three little situations which we had to iron out.

ARENA: Would you want to explain some of these situations?

McCLURE: Well, the one that I remember most particularly--I don't know whether I ought to say this . . .

ARENA: You can leave out names, for example, and maybe describe it generally if you don't want to get too personal.

McCLURE: Our business manager of the Glee Club, whose duties were to line up the itinerary for the Glee Club and to see that we were able to get enough to make our trip and everything during the trip, took it upon himself to kind of get over to the musical end, and we had a very, very fine young accompanist. For a boy seventeen or eighteen years old I have very seldom seen anybody that was better. And these two fellows got at odds and when we arrived at one of our concerts--to give one of our concerts--we found a big grand piano down in the pit in front of the platform.

Well, if anybody's ever been on a trip like that you know that the accompanist gets to play on most any old piece of equipment they have around because a lot of these grade schools and places don't have real fine pianos. And Bob [Olson] always fixed something about every piano he played before the concert. He'd find something wrong and fix it. And, of course, when he saw this big, fine grand piano down in the pit his eyes just shown. Here he was going to really have a fine instrument to play.

And up on the platform there was a very, very small upright piano. In fact it was so small--this accompanist was about six feet four inches tall--he couldn't sit to the piano, he couldn't get his knees under the keyboard. So our business manager insisted that we use that piano on the stage and group around it. Well, we had quite a little set-to there and it was through the efforts of Dick and myself that we straightened that thing out.

ARENA: Dick Nixon?

McCLURE: Yes, Dick Nixon, and we got the two fellows together and they ironed out their differences. After this concert, the next concert we gave was at the Women's Club and it was probably the best concert we ever gave. Now when I say this accompanist was good, he played Chopin, anything. I mean he really was good other than being an accompanist. He was a real piano soloist.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, what was the eventual goal or even place of those who did major in music? Was it for teaching purposes on public school level, college level? Was it for personal, private concerts, tours and so forth?

McCLURE: There were different reasons. You mentioned Joe Cosand a while ago. I think Joe was just in there for the fun of loving music. Some of the fellows were in there because they wanted to teach. In my case I expected to teach music. I majored in education and minored in music and a number of other fellows went out and taught music, but many of the fellows were there just because they liked music and they liked to participate and got to go on this trip and had a lot of fun and that sort of thing.

ARENA: Would you say that your main contact with President Nixon during the academic period there, the college years, was through your common interest in music, or did you also have some classes with him and how about sports? By classes, of course, I mean academic subjects.

McCLURE: No, I had no academic classes with Dick. I did have contact with him. He was in student dramatics, and I did some little work in dramatics.

ARENA: Strictly in college or did this continue, say, the Whittier Community Players used to put on productions?

McCLURE: No, this was strictly in college. And I admired Dick very much. I took a course in Public Speaking and, of course, he was already very proficient at it and we used to meet. I was never in any athletics there but we met a lot and we just seemed to hit it off. I wouldn't say that I was one of his bosom companions, but we were always very congenial and saw eye to eye on a lot of things.

ARENA: As a matter of fact on that subject of bosom companions, because this part of his personality, of course, keeps coming up all the time, would you say he had certain fellows with whom you would consistently see him or was it a question of his not sticking to A particular person or even A small group all the time, thinking back at that time?

McCLURE: My recollection is he didn't have what I would call a real close bosom companion. He had many friends. Now later when he went to run for Congress, it turned out that Mr. Perry, who was Hubert Perry's father . . .

ARENA: That would be Herman Perry.

McCLURE: Herman Perry was one of the chief backers of his running for Congress, in fact talked him into it.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: Mr. McClure, I think we were discussing Mr. Herman Perry and President Nixon and your recollection of that situation.

McCLURE: Yes. At that time I had already gone from Whittier and was over in Arizona and my future wife, whom I had not met at that time, was working in the office for the election of Mr. Nixon to his first Federal office in the House of Representatives.

ARENA: Would this have been in the year 1946?

McCLURE: I would say so, yes, 1946. Two years later after his election, we were living in Arizona and Congressman Nixon came through Arizona and stopped at our place for a couple of hours for a visit. We had quite a visit. He was nervous, couldn't sit down, paced the floor and this was right in the middle of this Alger Hiss case that he prosecuted so well. And I remember two or three questions I asked him, one of which was, "Dick, is this Russian situation as bad as it sounds?" And he stopped and he turned around and he said, "Harley, if you knew what I know you couldn't sleep at night." And another one of the questions I asked him was, "Dick, why don't you get out of this?" I said, "You can make a lot more money in your law practice than you can in this sort of thing. You would be a wealthy man already." And he then answered me by saying, "Harley, it just gets in your blood." After he left I turned to my wife and I said, "Honey, there's a man who has his eye on the top spot." This was in 1948.

The next time I contacted Mr. Nixon in person was in the second campaign for President Eisenhower. He came to El Paso, Texas, during the course of the election tours and we happened to be standing right near the gate through which he came, and as he and Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Nixon came along shaking hands as he always does, I was standing about three rows back. There were a bunch of little children in front and he was shaking their hand and he was just shaking hands without looking at anybody, and he took my hand and he looked up and he said, "Well, Harley, are you still singing tenor?" I said, "No, Dick, it's baritone now." At the same time Mrs. Nixon was

quering my wife about our two boys. Now I knew that Dick had a lot upstairs, but when he made that remark to me, I was dumbfounded. After all the years and all the people that he had met to come up with--just right on the spur of the moment--"Hello Harley, are you still singing tenor?" Dick seems to have, as far as I can tell, a brain that never forgets anything that he reads or sees.

ARENA: Do you recall from the standpoint of the debating experiences that you yourself may have witnessed, do you recall that ability in action, so to speak? Did you ever attend any of his college debates by any chance?

McCLURE: No, I didn't. However, my wife did and she has told me that she was particularly impressed, and she was a speech major, with the way he could talk off the top of his head, as we say, with no notes and he has always done his homework perfectly it seems.

ARENA: I would like to ask your wife about that part personally. While we are on the subject of Arizona, I am just wondering if either then when you and he met during the political years, if either then or at any time you were aware--it came up in discussions--that he had had a brother who had been living in Arizona--Prescott to be precise--for the purposes of TB [tuberculosis] rehabilitation?

McCLURE: No, I didn't know that then. I didn't find that out until later.

ARENA: And therefore he had lived in Arizona for a while from the standpoint of visiting the family. I've just come back from there. I thought maybe you had brought that up.

McCLURE: The conversation that we had in Arizona was in Wickenburg, Arizona, which is right at the foot of the hill as you go up to Prescott. But at that time I was not aware that he had ever lived in Arizona at all.

ARENA: While you and he knew one another in the college years--and by the way, let me be precise on that--had you any other contact with him outside of college before 1945, before politics? I am thinking, for example, when he graduated, when he left Whittier College, which was '34, and went on to law school

and came back in '37 and then lived there and practiced law. Did you have any contact with him at all during that period?

McCLURE: I had gone from Whittier to Arizona before that time.

ARENA: I see.

McCLURE: Before he came back from Duke.

ARENA: Let me ask you this then concerning the college years and your firsthand contact. Taking into account that Whittier was a Quaker-oriented college, did you personally find that being a Methodist ever created any problems in any way at all from the standpoint of not being treated as well as the other students or any disadvantage whatsoever?

McCLURE: Absolutely none. My guess was that at the time there were as many students at Whittier College who were not Quakers as there were who were Quakers.

ARENA: Even at that time?

McCLURE: Yes.

ARENA: How about the chapel programs, which I understand was required and which were not necessarily religious I understand, in the sense that non-ministers could address the group, sometimes even the students themselves? I am wondering again if you recall in particular that the President was ever in charge of any of these chapels or convocations and what the subject was and how he conducted himself?

McCLURE: Well, to answer your first question, yes, there were many chapel services or gatherings where there was no minister. As a matter of fact the chemistry teacher, Dr. Gustaf E. Ostrom, had one session every year where he defuncted the advertising. It was a hilarious thing. He told how there was enough poison in a tube of toothpaste to kill you and that sort of thing. And we had all types of speakers, one of which I remember particularly was a Mrs. Kerr who was the wife and helpmate of the man who started and continued the manufacture of the Kerr fruit jars.

ARENA: Excuse me, any idea of the full name of the gentleman or the wife in that case?

McCLURE: No. I do know this that Mrs. Kerr was Dame Kerr [Ruth] by virtue of honors from either the King or Queen of England, I forget which, and because of the fact that she maintained a home I think out in El Monte [California] or out in there for wayward girls and that sort of thing and other charitable organizations. I remember her speaking there. And as to the President, I am sure he must have conducted some of the chapel services. I don't remember any specifically. I remember him more as going with the Glee Club to certain places and making a talk during that Glee Club program. Dr. [William D.] Mendenhall to my way of thinking was as good a preacher as I ever heard in my life. He spoke very softly so that you had to sit on the front of your seat to listen. After he got through you were glad you had done it. I have very fond memories of Dr. Mendenhall, but I don't specifically remember that he conducted a chapel service there.

ARENA: And by he in this case, you are talking about President Nixon.

McCLURE: No, President Mendenhall. They had dramatics and hygienics and a bunch of things like that at chapel services.

ARENA: How about meeting with the President, while we are on this subject of religious interests, how about meeting with him in such groups as Christian Endeavor or say in your own church? Was there ever any reason you would invite him or was there a social affair? Was there a Methodist social evening sort of thing where he would attend your church or vice versa? Did you ever attend his East Whittier Friends Church, which was his regular church, although the other main one in the area was the First Friends Church of Whittier itself?

McCLURE: When I was in Whittier I never went to the Methodist Church. The director of the choir at the First Friends Church in Whittier was the comptroller of the college, Mr. . . .

ARENA: Would that be a Mr. [Howard L.] Hockett?

McCLURE: Mr. Hockett, right, and so I sang in the choir at the First Friends Church all the time I was there. [Laughter] And so I never was in the Methodist Church there at all.

ARENA: If it isn't too personal, did this get you in any trouble with the local Methodists or your own father, your own side of the family?

McCLURE: No. Before that time I had been a director of a Christian Church on West Adams in Los Angeles and I had been a member of the Presbyterian Church when I was directing the choir back in Oklahoma, so that there was no conflict there whatsoever. As far as I am concerned, we are all trying to get to the same place and little changes in forms of doctrine don't bother me at all and they don't bother my dad--didn't bother my dad as far as that was concerned.

ARENA: I am wondering if you observed that, the idea of the President attending any other churches from your recollection, including possibly when the choir was on tour out of the city or in the city? Did you ever attend churches on that basis?

McCLURE: Oh, yes, we sang in many other churches.

ARENA: Would you want to name some of the denominations that do come to mind for sure?

McCLURE: Well, the Congregational, the Presbyterian. I don't remember what the one in Sacramento [California] was and over in Mill Valley; we sang in the Community Church there in Mill Valley.

ARENA: Where is Mill Valley?

McCLURE: Mill Valley is just across the bay from San Francisco [California]. It's a very small bedroom-type town from San Francisco and one of the students there at Whittier College, his home was in Mill Valley, Mr. and Mrs. R. P. Connally. He was general manager of the Emporium Store in San Francisco at the time and his daughter, Nelda, who is now Mrs. Carl Siegmund, arranged and through her father and mother and our business manager arranged that we sing at the Community Church at Mill Valley.

ARENA: Do you recall, speaking of these trips, that transportation was ever supplied by private cars? I am thinking, for example, that on a debating trip up the West Coast

the President borrowed the family Packard. I am just wondering if anything like that happened on any of the trips in which you were involved and that a lot of the expenses were handled by visiting relatives and friends?

McCLURE: No, our Glee Club trips were all in a bus that we chartered. And as far as the instance you speak of, I knew nothing about that whatsoever.

ARENA: How about living with relatives and friends along the way or were room and board provisions made ahead of time through reservations and all that?

McCLURE: Yes. We were billeted out in private homes in some places. In other places we sang, like at a hotel or motel, we sang for our meals or we sang for our lodging, and I don't remember that we stayed with anybody's relatives.

ARENA: Mr. McClure, thinking back, how would you assess the quality of your choir at the time that the President was a member from the standpoint of its reception by the different groups where you performed, and would you have any evidence--not that I am legally testing you or anything but--in the way of reviews or letters in your own possession or would you know of anyone who may have any correspondence or any written record of those choirs at that time? There are two questions in a way. How did you make out do you think, and do you think there would be any records?

McCLURE: Well, to answer your first question, I feel that we had a lot of fun, of course, and I feel that we represented the college in a very positive manner. Now, we weren't the best musical organization in the country but we had quite a nice repertoire and we had enough good voices--of course, you know everybody in the Glee Club wasn't a soloist--but we had enough good voices and these others would blend in so that we could put on quite a nice program, whether it be in a church or a high school or a ladies' club or organizations of that type, Rotary Club, Lions Club, and we sang for the Breakfast Club of Los Angeles and we had . . .

ARENA: The Breakfast Club, is that the radio program?

McCLURE: It was at that time, uh huh. And I had a very good friend [Laughter] who was I know very prejudice said--told me afterwards--that after my solos he said she

could just hear John McCormack [Laughter] singing. Of course, that was rather amusing. I nowhere near could approach John McCormack, but from that I knew that we had been on the radio. Ours was an average college Glee Club.

ARENA: How much time did you put in practice as a group? Would some put in more time than others?

McCLURE: I'm glad you asked me that. I was just thinking before you came when we were talking and thinking about our own little government within our group . . .

ARENA: The government within the choir group?

McCLURE: Yes, a set of rules, we rehearsed every morning at 7 o'clock and that takes quite a bit of doing. You have to be pretty much in favor of that sort of thing. Now we had a saying in our Glee Club that if we were to gather for anything at a certain time, we'll say for a practice at 7 o'clock in the morning, I would announce to the club that sockery was at 7 o'clock. Now that takes a little explanation. We had a big paddle, a good sized paddle, and if I had announced that sockery was at 7 o'clock, that's when the practice or whatever it was--that was when we were to be there--and anybody who came in a minute late had to assume the position and receive sockery. Every man in the club took a crack at him.

ARENA: That's paddling. And sockery in this case is S O C K E R Y?

McCLURE: I guess. I don't know.

ARENA: It's your own word.

McCLURE: Yes. So that we had very little trouble of any kind in our Glee Club. As a matter of fact, our Glee Club was so well disciplined that the president of the college, before Dr. Mendenhall, had a son who was a little bit lazy so he came and asked us to take him into the Glee Club and straighten him up, although he was no credit to the Glee Club as far as vocally was concerned at all. We straightened him up. He got so he got there on time and one thing and another. You didn't miss those things only about a time or two and then that sockery became a little bit of something to think about.

ARENA: I notice this picture that you have nearby showing you and the President together. Would you give an idea of when this took place, where it took place and any circumstances surrounding the photograph?

McCLURE: It took place at Rancho de los Caballeros in Wickenburg.

ARENA: Wickenburg, Arizona.

McCLURE: Right. As to the exact date . . .

ARENA: Even the general year, you need not worry about the exact date.

McCLURE: I would say it was about 1948. I learned later that he had the Pumpkin Papers with him at the time. That is why he was so nervous and . . .

ARENA: This is a part of that same experience you were describing earlier?

McCLURE: Right. Yes. Well he was still a congressman, he couldn't have been . . .

ARENA: He was still in Congress, that's right, '48. He became Senator, by the way, in 1950 and then won the Vice Presidency in '52. By the way, whose ranch is that?

McCLURE: Well, that ranch was a working dude ranch where this was taken. My wife was working out there at the time as publicity director and I had gone out to see her. That was before we were married. It belonged to a company composed of three or four men, some of them back East. I couldn't name them for you although I had met them all, and it is now owned by one person by the name of Gant. Dallas Gant was the manager at this time and had a big interest in it. That was his first name, and he has since died and his son and wife have taken over, and I think they own it all now.

ARENA: Is there any question or any subject that I have not brought up in this interview that you would like to bring up at this point, as it comes to a close?

McCLURE: Yes. Some time ago you asked me if I knew if he had any real bosom friends and I said not that I knew of at the time. He had many friends. That was brought to my mind later on by the fact that when he was Vice President some mutual friends of mine who had traveled back East stopped to call on the Vice President and the Vice President's door seemed to always be very accessible to people from Whittier College. As a matter of fact, since he has become President, I wrote him a letter about a thing that I thought he ought to know about, and I received a letter back in less than a week. Now while he was Vice President I understand that he kept a file of his Whittier College people and his Duke University people and then another file of his political people--friends he had formed in political circles.

ARENA: As a former student and therefore alumnus yourself, do you receive any communications from the college, the usual Alumni Review or Alumni Bulletins?

McCLURE: Oh, yes.

ARENA: And therefore possibly see his name in that connection. If I'm not mistaken a member of the Board of Trustees?

McCLURE: Right. Let's see, he ran for President in 1960 first, didn't he? Well a [Mr.] Lodge came to El Paso [Texas] at that time That would have been Senator [Henry Cabot] Lodge who was running for Vice President on the ticket, and my wife was president of the El Paso County Republican Women's Club at the time and she was designated to meet Senator Lodge--was he Senator at the time?

ARENA: He had had some connection with the U.N. [United Nations] of course.

McCLURE: Yes, ambassador to the U.N.