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William T. Brock (March 7, 1972)

C. Richard Arena
Whittier College

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Oral History Interview

with

MR. WILLIAM T. BROCK

March 7, 1972
Los Angeles, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: Mr. Brock, may I begin by asking you where and when you were born?

BROCK: I was born in San Bernardino, California, August 12, 1910.

ARENA: Would you mind giving a brief resume of the schools you attended before you came to Whittier College?

BROCK: Before I came to Whittier College I attended the elementary schools in Pasadena [California]. I went to Cleveland School first and then I went to Washington Junior High School, and after finishing that I went to Muir Tech High School [John Muir Technical High School], and then to Pasadena Junior College and then to Whittier College.

ARENA: And your graduating class of Whittier College was what year?

BROCK: My graduating class was 1935.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you, what was the first occasion that you can recall that you met President Nixon?

BROCK: Well, the first occasion that I can recall when I met President Nixon was when I was out by the Wardman gym getting ready to get in a football suit. That's the first occasion that I met him.

ARENA: Had you been in athletics in high school before coming to Whittier College?

BROCK: Yes. I had been in athletics before coming to Whittier College.

ARENA: When you did come to the college had there been much in the way of orientation? For example, guidance as to what programs you would enter, or had you already made up your mind as to what you wanted to do?

BROCK: I had already made up my mind what I wanted to do and, as a matter of fact, it was very interesting. I made up my mind what I wanted to do and in signing up my curriculum in the old library at Whittier College I met Dr. [Marcus] Skarstedt, and Dr. Skarstedt overheard me speaking to one of the professors that I would like to take math and physics, and Dr. Skarstedt right away took an interest in me and I was in his class, and since then I have always appreciated that, because that's how I got started on the road to physics and electrical engineering and on that road.

ARENA: And that was your major interest during your college career and following?

BROCK: Yes.

ARENA: In other words, you became an electrical engineer?

BROCK: Yes, but at that time there was a big depression on and it's many years since then when one didn't follow his chosen profession. But I always remembered that and when the time came up later in life I plugged for it and got it.

ARENA: Would you happen to know if Dr. Skarstedt is still living?

BROCK: I don't know.

ARENA: Was he kind of an elderly man, a man of advanced age at that time?

BROCK: At that time he was in good physical shape but an older man.

ARENA: As you know in the books that have been written already about the President's private life, your name comes up in connection with the Orthogonian Society. I did some research just before this program started. You might be interested in knowing they are in the midst of building a pool for the Orthogonian Society on the campus. But what I wanted to get to, whatever you do recall about the formation of that fraternity and, of course, your own entry into it.

BROCK: Well, I do recall when I came the fraternity was already formed before I got to Whittier College. And I recall the fellows told me that Dick Nixon was the driving impetus behind the fraternity. At that time there was another fraternity there called the Franklins and all the fellows in the Franklins were nice and everything, but they were the only one of the college and I understood that Dick formed this other fraternity to let the other fellows come in.

ARENA: Do you recall the name of the faculty advisor at the time?

BROCK: The faculty advisor may have been Dr. [Albert] Upton, but I'm not sure about that.

ARENA: I know Dr. Upton was there in the very beginning and I imagine he continued on for another year at least. That would have been the second year of its life. I believe the President helped to form it in his first year, which would have been the year beginning 1930. Of course, you came in the year beginning 1932. Would I be correct also in saying that most of the members were those who were in athletics, football, basketball teams, for example? Would that be correct?

BROCK: Yes, as a matter of fact, one of the prerequisites to belong to the Orthogonians was that you had to have a good athletic record and a good scholastic record. If you had those two things then you were pledged to the Orthogonians.

ARENA: What do you recall in the way of your initiation, if anything? Did they give you a rough initiation?

BROCK: Oh, yes. It was very rough. In order to become a member of the Orthogonians you had to go through this initiation, and at that time I didn't know exactly what the initiation consisted of. I thought, well, if the other fellows can take it, I can too. So what they did, they took us down to somewhere near the beach, Corona Del Mar [California] I think it was, and they had this seal that was all decayed. They showed us this seal that was decayed earlier in the day, in the afternoon, and then that night at the initiation they told us to eat this, and it was supposed to be this dead seal. I'll never forget that.

ARENA: Do you recall if you had any particular office in the Orthogonians or if there were any committees or anything like that?

BROCK: No, I didn't have any office.

- ARENA: As a matter of fact, if you don't mind my asking, did you go in for any aspect of student government while you were on the campus?
- BROCK: No, I didn't.
- ARENA: And if it isn't too personal, do you think the Orthogonian Society was of help to you? Did you benefit from being a member of it?
- BROCK: Oh, yes, very much so. Even now I think of the Orthogonians. Like a friend here in Whittier, I know he was an Orthogonian.
- ARENA: Do they have contact with the alumni, not only as an alumnus of the college, but is there a particular person who takes care of the Orthogonian alumni, such as yourself?
- BROCK: I don't know, but I do know from word of mouth as we are running around in our lives, we run into Orthogonians, you know, and fellows will give information on this person and that person, what they are doing, and it gives us a warm feeling, more closer to the Orthogonians and the college.
- ARENA: I meant to ask this question earlier and I'm just wondering if the answer comes to mind. Do you recall why you did choose Whittier, when you stop to think of all the colleges in the country, why Whittier College?
- BROCK: Well, I was playing football at Pasadena Junior College and I wanted to further my education, so I wanted to go where I thought I could trade my football playing ability for an education. So, at first I went out to Loyola University and I had already been contacted by some of the fellows to take a look at Whittier.
- ARENA: Do you recall the name of the person who first put you on to Whittier College? Was it a student you knew here at the college?
- BROCK: Well, there was one person that put me on to Whittier College, that was Nathaniel George, who also went to Whittier College and had graduated. And then there was [Richard] Bus Thomson who also went to Whittier College, and he was working for the Southern Counties Gas Company at the time here in Whittier. I happened to meet them in Los Angeles and they said that the best place for me to go, they thought, was Whittier College.
- ARENA: And did you have to work part-time to earn expenses to pay bills and so forth?

BROCK: Oh, yes. I remember I worked. Ever since I was very small I worked with my father as a carpenter, so I worked in helping to repair some of the buildings and also the college had a building out in an orange grove and I worked on it. I think Dr. [J. Herschel] Coffin later on was going to reside there for awhile.

ARENA: Dr. Coffin would have been the philosophy, religion teacher.

BROCK: Yes.

ARENA: What do you recall of him as a teacher if you were in his class? Did he leave a lasting impression on you?

BROCK: Oh, yes, he was a very fine man, very fine man. I know there were two men I liked especially there at Whittier in philosophy and history and religion. One was Dr. [John R.] Wilkie and the other was Dr. Coffin.

ARENA: And what was his field?

BROCK: His field was archaeology and ancient history, and we used to meet once a week at his house and have cider and doughnuts, and we would discuss archaeology, excavations and things when he was in a national college, I think in Smyrna, Turkey.

ARENA: And that was a credit course. You were receiving credit for that?

BROCK: Oh, yes.

ARENA: It sounds like it must have been very pleasant.

BROCK: Very pleasant. As a matter of fact, he was the first to mention Will and Ariel Durant, the philosophers that he admired quite a bit. Since then, I have their set of books and as a matter of fact, when the President first announced he was going to visit China, I got the book out and dusted it off, and I think it's called Our Oriental Heritage, and I began reading more about the Orient. I liked it very much.

ARENA: He has a very easy style.

BROCK: Right.

ARENA: Pleasant style for academic reading. How about some of the other teachers that you recall especially, that seemed, you know, more alive than others.

BROCK: Well, my coach, Chief [Wallace J.] Newman.

ARENA: Did you have him for any academic classes as well as for football coaching, by the way?

BROCK: No, I didn't, but he did teach some classes.

ARENA: Many persons, and as you know, the President himself has indicated the Wallace (Chief) Newman was a remarkable coach. Why so? Why do you think he should be called remarkable?

BROCK: He was just a fine man. He had this intense interest in the game and all his men, winning the game.

ARENA: In other words, not only a question we'll say of his football knowledge and football ability and technique, but the man's personality and the man himself. There were two aspects. Were they equally important?

BROCK: Yes, very much so.

ARENA: Did he make himself available to the players after the game, if there was any special help you needed or anything like that?

BROCK: Oh, yes.

ARENA: Did you ever get the impression or did you hear others say that he could be very critical and sometimes in front of the fans seemed to be pretty rough on players? Did you ever have that impression?

BROCK: Oh, yes, yes. He was rough on me several times.

ARENA: But how was it although he was that way, people could still admire him? In other words, what was it about his being rough that did not leave a lasting, bitter feeling on the part of the players?

BROCK: I don't know what it was, but he had it whatever it was, people like him. The fellows all liked him.

ARENA: Can you account in any way for President Nixon's coming out for four years, and while not playing very often on the varsity team, still coming out to the games and trying to play?

BROCK: Well, he had that sticktoitiveness, which is characteristic of him. It wasn't just for that short period in college, it also stuck with him for the rest of his life, to the present day, this sticktoitiveness. As a matter of fact about playing football, I've heard it said that he wasn't

such a good football player. But at that time Whittier College had very few men on the football team and he had to play all the time, so Nixon played, and the only reason he stopped football was his leg got burned. He had to drop out because of the injury. I think it was when he was smudging. We used to work in the orchards, you know, smudge these orange trees. That's when Orange County used to be full of oranges that that happened. He had a lot of guts, a lot of sticktoitiveness.

ARENA: Was that one of the best means of earning part-time money, the smudge pots?

BROCK: Yes, the smudge pot jobs at that time were about the only jobs, outside of working in the orchards, and the college had quite vast orchards, too, at that time in avocados and oranges. I recall I used to go to Turnbull Canyon and work in the orchards. But you had to be careful--the college didn't do this--but the other growers used to put big bear traps to keep the fellows from stealing avocados. At that time avocados were very expensive. They were just beginning to exploit that crop in the United States.

ARENA: Do you recall ever meeting with members of the President's family, the mother or father or brothers?

BROCK: No, I don't. One time after Nixon had graduated from Whittier and had gone to, I think, Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, I was down that way hunting a job, and I stopped by Nixon's house and said hello to him. Let's see, that would be about 1936.

ARENA: As you know he went there right after graduation, and law school was three years, '34 through '37. Do you recall the nature of the house in which he was living? Was it off the campus?

BROCK: Oh, it was off the campus, yes.

ARENA: Do you recall the time of the year?

BROCK: No, I don't.

ARENA: How did he seem as compared to his undergraduate days? Did law school seem rougher to him?

BROCK: No, he was the same friendly fellow.

ARENA: Did you happen to sleep in his house or stay over a couple of days?

BROCK: No.

- ARENA: Did he seem glad to see you and did he seem to want to talk over the college days with you?
- BROCK: Oh, yes.
- ARENA: Did you ever recall attending any religious services with him where you saw him speaking at a chapel?
- BROCK: No.
- ARENA: If this isn't too personal, did you feel while you were at Whittier College that there was an attempt on the part of the Quakers or any religious group to kind of gather you into their fold? Was there any pressure along those lines?
- BROCK: No, I didn't think there was any pressure along that line, but I admired the Quakers and I liked the Quakers. And I do know at that time in the old library that I liked so much, the Quakers had a very complete library on slavery and the abolition of slavery and the underground railroad, and things like that. I enjoyed it very much reading those books at that time.
- ARENA: On the question of slavery and black history, as you know, one of the criticisms is that there was not enough of that in your time and my time. Would you want to make any comment on that?
- BROCK: Well as I mentioned, in the Whittier College library--I can't speak for the other campuses--but knowing our library at Whittier College, there was a very ample amount of books because the Quakers themselves led in the movement of the underground railroad and helping slaves escape and fighting for the abolition of slavery, so naturally they would have these books.
- ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you, had you been aware of that before you came to the college, or do you think that through the history courses and through some of the people you met, you became aware of the Quaker role in trying to end slavery in the country?
- BROCK: I think I learned about that mostly from the American Friends down here at the college. I learned it mostly from them.
- ARENA: Did you enjoy history by the way, Mr. Brock?
- BROCK: Oh, yes, very much, very much.

- ARENA: I don't recall if I asked you if you had had Dr. [Paul S.] Smith as a teacher.
- BROCK: Yes, I had Dr. Smith for a class entitled American Constitution. As a matter of fact, I sat right behind Dick Nixon in American Constitution.
- ARENA: What do you recall about that class: one, about Dr. Smith as a teacher; and two, about President Nixon as a student at that time?
- BROCK: Well, President Nixon was an "A" student and I recall the class was very interesting because Dr. Paul Smith was a very interesting instructor, very interesting, and all the students were interested. I know one thing, we never fell asleep in his class.
- ARENA: Do you recall any of the techniques, do you think, of teaching? Without mentioning any other names of other teachers, why do you find that he was interesting, more so than other teachers; what qualities did he employ that makes you think he was a more interesting teacher?
- BROCK: Well, one thing he knew his subject and he lived his subject, and he wanted you to know it the way he knew it; and when you want the student to know it, the student feels ashamed to not try to learn it because he feels ashamed to face him. So we used to go there and really study, so we'd know it.
- ARENA: As a matter of fact, did you ever study together with President Nixon?
- BROCK: No.
- ARENA: Did you engage in joint study with anyone, testing one another and if so, how was this conducted--joint study, if there was anything like that?
- BROCK: Well, my classes were mostly--yes, we did, but most of my classes were in the math and physics line and as I mentioned, history at that time.
- ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you if you received the Bachelor of Science degree or the Liberal Arts degree?
- BROCK: I don't know what it was, to tell you the truth. I think it was a B.A. [Bachelor of Arts].
- ARENA: Do you recall that the President used to make oral reports in that history class, if that was the practice of Dr. Smith? Do you recall that he did get up and speak or recite in class?

- BROCK: He did recite. I remember him reciting, but just as the other students would recite on some topic.
- ARENA: Do you recall that there were ever different points of view between him and the instructor?
- BROCK: I don't recall.
- ARENA: Going into another phase--oh, by the way, were there any other classes in which you and the President were together?
- BROCK: No, there weren't.
- ARENA: Now, going to another phase, we'll say the extracurricular activities phase, what do you recall about the President's interest and involvement in student government?
- BROCK: Oh, he was very much interested in student government, very much interested.
- ARENA: For example, do you recall when he ran for office, the nature of the campaign? Do you recall that he specifically came to you and said, "Will you vote for me?" Did he do it that directly or did he do it indirectly by speaking in front of student groups, or did he do it both ways?
- BROCK: Well mostly, since I was at that time an Orthogonian, naturally the Orthogonians supported their members, so they supported Dick. So they all voted for him.
- ARENA: Do you recall that the Orthogonian Society had a policy of what could be called self-criticism?
- BROCK: Yes.
- ARENA: How did that work?
- BROCK: Well, I'm not so sure now exactly. It's been so many years ago.
- ARENA: Did they actually meet together where one student would be criticized by a fellow Orthogonian for his classwork, for his conduct, and the idea being, of course, that there would be improvement?
- BROCK: Yes. That's right.
- ARENA: Do you possibly recall any of the criticisms that were directed toward President Nixon at that time, or would that be considered strictly confidential and that would be a part of the fraternity that should not be discussed?

BROCK: Oh, no, not that, but I don't recall any specific thing.

ARENA: Do you recall attending any of the debates in which the President participated?

BROCK: No, I don't.

ARENA: Do you recall seeing him appear in any of the school plays, including that Orthogonian play?

BROCK: Yes.

ARENA: And how would you characterize him as an actor?

BROCK: Well, I thought he was a good actor.

ARENA: Did he ever forget his lines or seem in any way nervous or not sure of himself on the stage?

BROCK: No more than any other amateur college actor would, I imagine. [Laughter] We always liked the plays.

ARENA: Did you ever appear in any yourself, by any chance?

BROCK: I don't think so. It's been so long ago. I may have appeared in "The Pirates of Penzance." If I did, I was one of those obscure pirates. [Laughter]

ARENA: How about the school choir, or newspaper, or any of the clubs. Did you ever appear in any of those?

BROCK: No. I took an art course there and I used to draw posters for different affairs the college would have.

ARENA: Did you by any chance keep this interest in art after you left, actively drawing?

BROCK: Yes, but my brother is the one that has taken that over. He's the real artist in the family now. I help him.

ARENA: Did you go on for any further formal education after you left Whittier College?

BROCK: Yes, I went to the University of California and I also went to NYU [New York University]. And at that time the war was on so I took some war training courses, also.

ARENA: Looking back as an overall thing, how would you evaluate your college experience at Whittier College?

BROCK: I think it's the greatest thing that ever happened in my life. I always seem to use that as the hub, the key point of my life. If I hadn't gone to Whittier College I don't think my life would be as complete as it is.

ARENA: Was there ever a point where you almost left, where there was an emergency situation, say financially, or academically?

BROCK: Well, financially--I always remember that I used to--one time I was thinking about leaving because I didn't have the money and then I told one of the fellows I was going to leave and they got me a job. At that time Clifton's Cafeteria was here and I got a job at Clifton's Cafeteria. And another time . . .

ARENA: Excuse me. Do you mind if I ask you what you did in the restaurant?

BROCK: Well, I cleaned up the floor, swept out, just the little things persons do around restaurants, you know. Cleaned pots, washed dishes. It was real nice and Clifton's also had very fine food and let us eat there besides giving us some money for the tuition. And then I worked for Mr. [Howard L.] Hockett. I think he was treasurer of the college then. He put me to work on the buildings. I put the partitions up and did carpenter work around there, so I kept in.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you about your housing accommodations in Whittier at that time?

BROCK: At that time I slept on top of the old hall that we talked about that burned down. I think it was called Painter. I slept in an empty room up on top of Painter building.

ARENA: Is that the building that is also referred to as Old Main?

BROCK: I don't know. We didn't call it that.

ARENA: In other words, it was the single main building.

BROCK: Yes, the main building.

ARENA: The main structure which was above a little rise.

BROCK: It was right up above the Chapel.

ARENA: Would it be personal to ask you what you paid, if anything, for that privilege?

BROCK: As a matter of fact I didn't pay anything.

ARENA: Were you more or less obliged in a way to be a kind of caretaker in the building or to be alert for fires?

BROCK: Oh, yes.

ARENA: Was that one way you were paying your way through?

BROCK: Yes, I kept alert. Sometimes people would come there at night who were not supposed to be there or something, and I would see what that was all about.

ARENA: If it isn't too personal and I could move into the area of race relations at that time, do you mind if I ask you if you ever suffered from prejudice while living in the community of Whittier?

BROCK: No, I didn't.

ARENA: And going directly to the school situation itself, do you feel that you ever suffered from prejudice on the part of any of the faculty or students or administration while you were there?

BROCK: No. As a matter of fact, just to show you how things worked out then, as I mentioned before I was taking an art class and I was pretty good at drawing posters and things like that. So I did some posters for some affair they were having at the Vista Del Arroyo Hotel in Pasadena [California]. So, in return for the posters they gave me a couple of tickets, so anyhow I went to this dance--had a dance up there. So at that time I danced with a white girl, Anglo what you would call now, and somebody wrote in criticizing the college for having some black dance with a white. I didn't see it. They printed it in the college paper. I didn't see it at the time but I noticed all the students were real nice to me, so one day I said, "What's up? What's everybody being so nice to me about?" So one girl told me. So anyway they felt so bad about that they were trying to protect me from it.

I remember we had a dance, I think it was at the Fox Hills Country Club, so I took my girl to Fox Hills Country Club; as a matter of fact she's married to a very good friend of mine now. We were discussing that the other day. So I took my girl to the dance and the fellows--and this was just after this news story came out in the paper--so it was very noticeable that the fellows, in order to protect me from what they felt was an indignant remark that was made, they all asked to exchange dances with my girl, so I didn't get a chance hardly to dance with my own girl. So things like that were always made up for one way or the other. So it didn't make too much difference.

ARENA: Do you recall that the police were out--I won't say to get you--but that they made you feel uncomfortable while you were in the community?

BROCK: No.

ARENA: Did you happen to know the President's girl friend at that time was Ola Florence Welch, one; and two, that her father was the Chief of Police?

BROCK: Yes, I knew he was the Chief of Police.

ARENA: Was there ever any complications there, you being a member of the same fraternity, her father being a Chief of Police?

BROCK: No.

ARENA: If you had had the opportunity, do you think you would have settled down in Whittier as a result of your having lived here while you were a student? Do you think the town was that nice a place for a person to settle down?

BROCK: Oh, Whittier's a nice place, for a town, to settle down, but I don't think I would have settled down here though because at that time I had that urge to get out. I always wanted to sail on the sea, I wanted to be near a waterfront.

ARENA: How long was it after you graduated that you did fulfill that wish of going to sea?

BROCK: Well, it was a long time after graduation. I went to sea during World War II when I was in the Merchant Marine.

ARENA: Was that the first time, too?

BROCK: That was the first time.

ARENA: But you had been hoping that some day you would.

BROCK: Yea.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you to what extent you and the President would, say, attend social affairs together, either on the campus or in the community, or even if the school had affairs, we'll say, in other cities?

BROCK: Well, see, I was there just a short while with him and he being in a class ahead of me, naturally, the group he ran around with was a different group than what I ran around with, so we never came in contact with each other very much.

ARENA: On the question of dancing, was it your impression that he played an important role in bringing dancing on the campus? Do you recall that he campaigned on that platform?

BROCK: Yes, I do recall that, yes.

ARENA: Was Whittier College at that time, as far as your own recollections go, did it seem to be too strict with such rules as no smoking, no dancing? Did the college seem to restrict you personally as well as the other students?

BROCK: No, it didn't seem to restrict me.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you, if it isn't too personal, what your own religious preference was?

BROCK: Well, I was born in a Christian Science background home. My mother was Christian Science and I just didn't have any special preference. I liked the American Friends and I liked the Quakers when I was here, and I've lived around all kinds of people.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, was there at that time a Christian Science Church in Whittier?

BROCK: I don't recall.

ARENA: Do you recall that there was such a thing as Parent's Day on the campus and did your parents ever attend Whittier and visit you?

BROCK: No.

ARENA: What was there in the way of social activity, as far as the community of Whittier was concerned? I am thinking now in terms of, say, movies or dancing, not on the college level, but on a personal level.

BROCK: Well, I would always, on weekends, get in my little car and go up to Pasadena, so I don't know what was happening down here.

ARENA: At that time your parents were living in Pasadena?

BROCK: Uh huh. And most of the students--some were living in Covina [California] and different places. They mostly went home, too, on the weekends, the fellows. Now the fellows who came from long distances, like up north, they would stay on the campus.

ARENA: Do you ever recall seeing President Nixon in any of his part-time jobs that he had during his four years of college? Did you know, for example, that he was working part-time any place, and did you ever see him on the job?

BROCK: No, I never saw him on the jobs but I knew he was working, because everybody at that time had to work if you could find a job. The main thing was finding a job. It was different than it is now.

ARENA: Was it your impression that the community had a good attitude toward the college and the students and helped them to find jobs?

BROCK: Yes, they did.

ARENA: In your travels around the country, either before or since, have you ever felt you wished you lived in another area, had been brought up in another area, besides where you were born and raised, right here in California?

BROCK: No. No, I would rather have been brought up right here in California. Yet in traveling around, I have seen other places I like.

ARENA: In your travels around the world, do you mind if I ask you if there is any particular favorite place that stands out above all others?

BROCK: Yes, Taiwan.

ARENA: And would this be since World War II, by the way?

BROCK: Yes.

ARENA: If you had the opportunity would you retire, as some Americans are doing now in a foreign country? I am thinking of Mexico in particular, where the cost of living seems to be so low. I was wondering if you ever had visited Mexico, by the way?

BROCK: Yes, I have visited Mexico, and I like Mexico, too.

ARENA: Did you have the opportunity to study Spanish anywhere along the line, including Whittier College?

BROCK: I took a course in Spanish at Whittier College, but I didn't follow through since I got out of school. I regret it very much now, because I wish I could speak Spanish. As a matter of fact I am thinking of taking night school courses in Spanish.

ARENA: To what extent does your traveling now make a foreign language necessary, or do you find that English for business purposes and social purposes can get you around just as easily around the world?

- BROCK: English can get you just as easily around the world. It looks like English is the language that you have to have to get around the world now.
- ARENA: Mr. Brock, as this interview comes to a close, may I ask you if there was any point of any subject that I have not raised that you would like to raise and comment on for the purposes of the record?
- BROCK: Well, I don't know.
- ARENA: Would you want to make any sort of comparison, leaving out politics, any sort of comparison of President Nixon today with the President you knew as a college student?
- BROCK: Yes. Well, President Nixon today is pretty consistent with how he was when he was in college. He has a lot of nerve, a lot of drive and I was surprised--I was amazed--at his going to China. I think it was a good thing but I was amazed that he was the one to go there. Also, I was amazed at how the people who were supporting him still support him. In other words, he still has the same drive of keeping the confidence of the people he did when he was in college.
- ARENA: Is there anything to the point that is made sometimes that he is a loner? A President by his very nature, I guess, has to be on his own.
- BROCK: Yes.
- ARENA: But, was he a loner--is that a pretty accurate adjective, an overall adjective for him during his college years? Did he not pal around with any particular fellows over and over again, do you think? Did he keep to himself pretty much?
- BROCK: I think he keeps to himself pretty much, but when he is keeping to himself he is collecting these ideas and this method of operating, and he knows what he's doing. He knows very thoroughly what he's doing, and then when he starts playing the keys everything drops into line.
- ARENA: Speaking of playing the keys, did you ever hear him play the piano keys?
- BROCK: Yes, we used to have a piano up in the auditorium of that old building.
- ARENA: Would this be an occasion where he would just walk up and start playing, or was it a formal occasion where fraternity brothers got together?
- BROCK: No, it was not a formal occasion. He would just play.

ARENA: If you don't mind my asking, did you ever study music yourself and how would you judge his piano playing?

BROCK: Well, I've never studied music, but he liked to amuse himself, too. He liked to play.

ARENA: Did you find that you enjoyed it and that it was something that you listened to with ease, yourself?

BROCK: Oh, yes, I listened.

ARENA: Did he seem to play actual pieces or would it just be a question of, you know, little melodies on and off, or did he seem to be serious when he played the piano?

BROCK: When I heard him play the piano on one occasion, they were practicing for a play and the piano happened to be there and I was surprised that he could even play a piano. It was only a little bit so I couldn't judge his piano playing on that little demonstration.

ARENA: Mr. Brock, I can't thank you enough for taking the trouble to give us the benefit of your recollections, and answering all of these questions so completely and so frankly. Thank you very much.