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U.S. CONGRESSMAN, 1951-1959

Patrick J. Hillings

Interviewed by Elizabeth I. Dixon

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

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INTRODUCTION

Patrick J. Hillings, the son of Edward J. and Evangeline (Murphy) Hillings, was born February 19, 1923, in Hobart Mills, California. Because of his father's employment with the Southern Pacific Railroad, Patrick spent much of his youth transferring from school to school, first in northern California and later in Los Angeles and vicinity. After attending several parochial grade schools, he entered El Monte Union High School and completed his studies at Benjamin Franklin High School in Highland Park.

Patrick Hillings demonstrated a predilection for public affairs from an early age; when he was ten, he circulated campaign literature for a Los Angeles City Council candidate (who lost). He also showed a talent for journalism, serving as editor of his high school newspaper, the Franklin Press, and winning a four-year scholarship to major in journalism at the University of Southern California.

During World War II, his education was interrupted when he was called to active duty. After finishing Coast Artillary basic training, he was selected for special training in the German language and cryptanalysis, and served in the South Pacific until the end of the war.

Upon his return in 1946, he reentered USC and became

deeply involved in political activity as the founder of the campus Young Republican Club. He received his B.A. in 1947 and his J.D. from the USC School of Law in 1949.

In 1947 Mr. Hillings married Phyllis K. Reinbrecht, and the couple moved to Arcadia, in the home district of newly elected Congressman Richard Milhous Nixon. At Hillings's behest, Mr. Nixon agreed to address the USC law students, and when in 1950 Nixon decided to run for the U.S. Senate, Hillings sought and won the party's nomination for representative from the Twenty-fifth Congressional District. When elected, at twenty-seven, he was the youngest member of Congress and the youngest ever elected from the state of California.

Mr. Hillings served in the House of Representatives through 1959, and after his term in Congress, he continued an active participation in Republican party politics as chairman of the Los Angeles County Central Committee in 1960-61 and as a delegate to national conventions.

After his political career, Mr. Hillings became western regional manager for civic and governmental affairs for the Ford Motor Company in Los Angeles. In 1962, he established the Pat Hillings Travel Agency. He is a member of the State Bar of California and the American and Los Angeles County Bar Associations. He has been admitted to the Supreme Court Bar of the United States.

In the following pages, which consist of a transcription of a tape-recorded interview with the UCLA Oral History Program, Mr. Hillings recalls his early life and education, the growth of the Republican party in Southern California following World War II, his association with Richard M. Nixon, and his election to Congress. Records relating to these interviews are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

Los Angeles
April 1973

Joel Gardner

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth I. Dixon, Head, UCLA Oral History Program; B.A., International Relations, University of Southern California: M.L.S., UCLA School of Library Service.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Patrick Hillings' office, Suite A 506, 3921 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, California.

Date: April 18, 1962.

Time of day, length of sessions, total number of recording hours: A preliminary interview was held April 6, followed by one recording session on April 18. This was conducted in the afternoon, commencing at two-thirty; one and one-half hours were recorded.

Persons present during interview: Dixon and Hillings.

CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEW:

Patrick Hillings was approached in a letter (1/30/62) from Elizabeth I. Dixon of the Program. The proposed tape-recording series was to focus on his long association in the political field. The interviewer suggested an autobiographical approach, and the respondent was encouraged to pursue his narrative freely. Together they determined the material to be discussed in the first and only session. Because of the pressures of business and political activities, the series was postponed and never resumed.

EDITING:

Bernard Galm, Editor I, UCLA Oral History Program, edited the transcript for punctuation, paragraphing, and correct spelling.

The edited transcript was returned to Mr. Hillings for his review in October 1968. The respondent made few deletions and additions; he verified those names

not already verified by the editor and returned the approved manuscript in May 1972. The material remains in the same order as it was spoken on the tape. Words added by the editor have been bracketed.

The index and introduction were prepared by Joel Gardner, Editor, UCLA Oral History Program, and the front matter was compiled by the Program's staff.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recording and edited transcript of the interview have been deposited in the University Archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of the University's noncurrent records.

TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One

APRIL 18, 1962

HILLINGS: I was born in a little town called Hobart Mills in northern California. At the time, my father was helping run a small railroad for the Hobart Estate Company, a big lumbering concern. Today, there's not much left of Hobart Mills--which reflects the decline of the lumber industry in California and many parts of the West.

When I was five my father became manager of the now-defunct Postal Telegraph Company's office in San Francisco. Postal Telegraph has since merged with Western Union, but at the time we had two great telegraph companies in the country. We lived in Sacramento for a short time, where my brother was born, and then in the San Francisco-Oakland area. Later my father became affiliated with the Southern Pacific Railroad, which resulted in our moving to different areas a great deal. During those Depression years, many times jobs were being closed, and my father was constantly being moved. As a result, I saw a great many of the small towns throughout northern California in the first nine years of my life.

I started to school in a little country schoolhouse outside of Atherton, California, up on the peninsula. At that time the area was considered the open country. Today

it is pretty well populated with many new homes. It is also (now) becoming an industrial area for northern California. I was one of these students who, from the very first day of the first grade in school, was always interested in a number of things. I was also fortunate enough to be able to like school and to get good grades. Perhaps an interest in politics and various public affairs began at this very early age because of that.

Later we moved back into San Francisco from Atherton (when my father was with the Postal Telegraph Company). I became a student at the parochial school in the Mission district of San Francisco and there again continued to be especially interested in school activities and was always seeking some class office.

At the age of nine, we moved to Los Angeles, where my father was transferred, and I went to [parochial] school at St. Brendan's, which is in the general Wilshire area. By this time I had two sisters in addition to a brother, all of them younger than me. I also went to school at St. Kevin's and was ultimately graduated from the eighth grade at St. Victor's Parochial School, which is just off the Sunset Strip in Hollywood. There I'd been president of my class and active in a number of things. In fact, at the time, great efforts were made by the pastor and my

mother to encourage me to enter the Junior Seminary. The pressure was such and my interest was such that I almost made the move, but I felt that I did not really have that vocation, despite the fact that I had always been interested in my religion, (and) was active in the Altar Society as an altar boy, and participated in the various organizations that young people [who are] active in the Catholic church and in Catholic school participate in. Again those extra-curricular activities, in that extent, helped to formulate my interest. I also attended Immaculate Heart of Mary Parochial School, in the Hollywood area, and for about a year and a half, Blessed Sacrament, which is on Sunset Boulevard. It wasn't that I was being kicked out of one school and sent to another, or that we were one jump ahead of the sheriff, but my father was constantly being transferred at that time and the difficult economic times necessitated us often renting homes and moving to the place that was nearest my father's work.

As a boy I did the usual things; I had a paper route. I used to sell Liberty magazines on the corner of Santa Monica and Western, where the S-car used to come to the end of the line. I was considered in my grammar school days [to be] a pretty good Liberty salesman. I used to average about sixty of them on the mornings on which they

would come out, usually being sold between 6:30 A.M. and 8:30 A.M. to commuters that would be boarding the S-car for the ride into Los Angeles. That was good experience, as I think any salesman opportunity is that comes along for young people, because it teaches you a little bit about the value of money and gives you an opportunity to learn how to deal with the public and learn something about politeness. In the course of that, I got to meet a number of people, including some local politicians, people that were candidates for the city council.

I've forgotten the man's name now, but I remember my first campaign was back when I was about ten years old. A man that I had met selling Liberty magazines was running for the city council in Los Angeles and lost, but he had asked me to help circulate some of his literature, which I did. I remember I was given, at the end of the campaign--even after he lost--about two dollars, which is the first money I ever earned in politics. I found that you don't earn much money at all in politics as such. But I suppose that almost made me a professional politician.

But the interest in public affairs, and particularly the people that you meet in conjunction with it, was an early interest and one that stayed with me and continues even as I leave the active arena as a candidate. I think

that people in politics--particularly the candidates for office and those around them, despite the differences of philosophy and sometimes the feeling that not all of them are as sincere as you would like--still make up a fascinating people. Political people have to touch all phases of life, and as a result they often are interested in everything, whereas many people in their lives have to concentrate on their particular job or certain things that they're doing. I think politicians, teachers, maybe social workers, have more of an opportunity than most people in life to meet all different types from all different economic levels. That exposure obviously whetted my interest; although at the time, my ambition was not to go into politics as a profession but perhaps to be a lawyer or even a journalist.

By this time we had moved to Bassett, located between Los Angeles and Pomona. My father was working for Southern Pacific Railroad as a telegraph operator and sometimes as acting agent in that station. And we lived in little railroad shacks beside the station. Today the field of railroad telegrapher is almost defunct because they have modern electrical equipment that guides the trains automatically and sends them into the sidings, but in those days and in the early days of railroading in America, trains had to operate on orders that were handed up by bamboo hoops to

the engineer and fireman as they raced by; and the telegraph operator would receive the orders for the trains from some centralized office--in this case, Los Angeles. That was always a kind of a fascinating thing. Being near a railroad and around it, sitting in the office and watching my father copy train orders, helped to further encourage my interest in things that were moving and the commerce that was connected with the great railroad movement in the country. I also learned railroad telegraphy and became a sort of a telegraph operator, practicing with my father, which later helped me get my first major job.

At El Monte Union High School, I remember I had to ride the school bus because it was a great number of miles from where I lived to the high school. The high school had been shaken down by the earthquake in the thirties; and as a result, they had not been able to rebuild the high school. Most of us attended classes in tents. Going from parochial school to public high school (because there wasn't any parochial high school nearby), I found that the parochial school training with its discipline was very helpful, and I was able to maintain among the highest grades in the freshman class. I was on the scholarship roll and was active in most of the freshman activities.

Later, in the sophomore year, I was a candidate for

sophomore class president, and right in the middle of the campaign, I came down with the mumps. I was home sick with the mumps when the election was held, but I won from a field of, I guess, at least five candidates--which taught me that maybe you might be better off with the speeches you do not make than those you make. The late Sam Rayburn used to say, "Nobody was defeated for the speech that he didn't make." But it's not often possible for politicians to refrain from the opportunity to make a speech. I won the election without making a speech and actually while I was home. As sophomore class president, I helped to rewrite the school's constitution and became a member of the student council for the high school. I also went out for lightweight football. I lasted for a while, but the strain of trying to do that job, keep up grades, and do a little extra work on the side became a pretty difficult task.

At that time I was not active in any partisan political way, but I remember the congressman from that district was Jerry Voorhis, who subsequently served ten years and was widely known and respected; and I remember that when he addressed the student body, it was the first time I think I'd ever seen a real live congressman. This was in the late 1930s, and it didn't occur to me that not too

many years later, by 1950, at the age of twenty-seven, I would be taking the seat in Congress from that very area.

I remember a few of the other contacts that I had politically. One was with Justice Thomas White, who's now a justice of the Supreme Court of California; he'd been a very active member of the Knights of Columbus, and my father knew him through that association. He was running for reelection as a judge in Los Angeles County, which included that area, and I remember sending a telegram to him at my father's request, saying that we were praying for his election. After he was elected, he wrote me a very nice letter, which was one of the first letters I'd ever received from a real live political candidate, even though he was nonpartisan as a candidate for judge. All those things had some impression.

Fortunately, as I say, I was able to maintain good grades, probably pretty close to an A- average, throughout that period of high school and later on through most of my high school career. At the end of my sophomore year at El Monte, the family moved again because my father was transferred to the Southern Pacific Railroad's main offices in Los Angeles. We moved to an area of Highland Park. I transferred to Benjamin Franklin High School to

complete my final two years of high school. I was boys' vice-president of the student body, editor-in-chief of the school paper, a member of the student council, an officer of one of my classes, and active in the Associators, which was a student service organization for boys. I served in a number of different ways--taking on a great deal of political activity.

I was also sports editor of the paper. I think my frustrated ambition then, and probably through most of my school career, was that I couldn't play varsity football. I was never big enough or husky enough in those days--although today, I certainly would be, I suppose, but in the wrong places. Nevertheless, that was something that I was exceedingly interested in because sports to me meant the challenge of competition--particularly football, which combined the physical prowess with certain required skills and strategy and planning. I was fascinated with it; however, not being able to participate directly, I did it somewhat vicariously by helping to cover the sports events for the Franklin Press, which was a prize-winning high school newspaper. Mrs. Kate Cranin was the teacher in charge of the Journalism Department and always impressed me greatly and had a great deal of influence on me.

Later in public life, I found that my early training

in high school as a student newspaper writer and editor was of tremendous value. Newspaper people, particularly, are taught to write and think in complete sentences, which is very helpful in making speeches. It also taught me to understand the way the press operates, and no person in public life today can help but have some understanding of the press because they cover your activities, and often it's the way you communicate with the people. Television today, of course, has moved into the picture very heavily, but still the newspaper, and particularly the local newspaper, is vital for any politician because this is still the way in which most people get their political news. To be able to know something about how a news story [is written] helped me in putting out releases later on, and understanding the modus operandi of newspaper people was a very valuable thing. In fact, I think probably next to lawyers, and maybe insurance men and farmers, the profession that has the greatest representation in the Congress is that of the newspaper profession because newspapermen have to be close to the moving scene.

As a result, I was the valedictorian of my class and also the commencement speaker. I continued these extracurricular activities to such a degree that my parents thought I was spending far too much time on them and perhaps

not enough on my studies. I also continued to have odd jobs. For a while I had a morning paper route but had to give it up--there just wasn't enough time. I [did] everything from [selling] violets on street corners to taking summer jobs wherever I could, because the family needed the help. By this time we had a fifth member of the family, a brother, who subsequently went on to finish at the University of California, many years after I did.

I can't think of any political activity in a partisan way that I participated in, although my father was a very staunch Democrat at the time, and I suppose whatever political leanings I had were somewhat colored by his. He was a staunch admirer of FDR. One of the political things that we did do in school was that we had a mock convention for the 1940 presidential election. That was the year that Franklin Roosevelt was running for a third term, and that was also the year that Wendell Willkie was the Republican candidate. We set up this mock convention, which has since become a customary thing in our high schools, although at the time it was a little bit new. I remember that I was one of the floor managers for FDR. That area had a great number of Republicans in it, and while we didn't have a Republican mock convention, many of the Republican students decided that they would try to check FDR's bid

for a third term by participating in the convention on behalf of John Nance Garner. I suffered a defeat as FDR's floor manager when the forces of John Nance Garner (who was then, of course, vice-president and who didn't seek to run for a third term as vice-president and bowed out) succeeded in nominating him. But, nevertheless, it was an interesting experience and as a result, I remember I wrote for advice to James Farley, the great chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and he sent me a handbook of one of the previous Democratic conventions, which I read avidly with great interest. I also received a personal letter from him which I proudly displayed.

So my orientation really in those years was toward the Democratic party. We were just coming out of the tough days of the Depression and the Democratic party was the dominant political vehicle in the country, and the tremendous influence of FDR was felt everywhere, I think particularly among most high school and college students of the time.

But as a result of my editorship of the Franklin Press and the fact that we'd won a national award, I entered a contest which is sponsored every year by the University of Southern California to select one girl student and one boy student from the southern California area for a four-

year scholarship in journalism. The USC School of Journalism is widely known and has had great success in its graduates, and every year this contest is held. In those days, a four-year scholarship at the University of Southern California was a great prize--not that it isn't now, but in those days it would be almost impossible for anyone without some financial assistance to go to USC. Later on, with the coming of the GI Bill and so forth, a lot of that was changed. UCLA at the time did not have a school of journalism, that I recall. In fact, it was a much smaller institution; so to go to USC--a private institution that was pretty much the dominant school in dentistry, medicine, law, journalism, and teaching, in addition to its great football teams--was something that was considered quite an honor. It was then that I began to get my name in the paper as the winner of the scholarship which I received as the male award winner in southern California. So journalism was really my first love by then, and I intended to enter the School of Journalism and take my degree and hopefully someday become a foreign correspondent.

Radio journalism was becoming more and more the thing as the events in Europe were moving toward a real climax. In my senior year in high school, the war had already started, and one week before I was to graduate from Franklin

High School, Hitler invaded Russia; so journalism and all of its coverage--particularly, the radio journalism--had tremendous appeal. But at the time I still hadn't developed any real political philosophy, other than quite a personal admiration of FDR and my father's influence in any political question that might arise.

During that summer--the United States was beginning to rearm and was encouraging aid to other peoples as well as calling up the National Guard and so forth--I got my first job of any real consequence when I was employed by the Southern Pacific Railroad as a telegraph operator. I was sent to little towns like Edom [renamed Thousand Palms], near Indio in the hot desert, where I often had to work from midnight to 8:00 A.M. (which is the low man on the seniority totem pole). I took the back end of things, but it was pretty good money for a teenager to be making and, of course, the money would become useful as I entered college. Great numbers of troop trains were beginning to move from the East into the West as the nation began to get ready for what looked like a serious situation. Ultimately, of course, it resulted in our actual entry into the war at the time of Pearl Harbor. This was in the summer of 1941, the last summer that the United States was to be at peace for some time. And then I entered

the University of Southern California.

I might add that I had become interested in public speaking and took a course in it at Franklin High School and won the regional contest sponsored by the American Legion every year. I was ultimately defeated as we went into the higher echelons. I also was one of the early winners in the preliminary rounds of the Herald-Express oratorical contest for high school students throughout the Los Angeles County area, which brought me into contact with students from other high schools, many of whom were people that I came to work with--and sometimes against--in my political career. But many of the young budding politicians of the time were beginning to blossom as orators, representing their various high schools. That was my first real exposure to contact in a number of other high school activities.

Then, on entry to the University of Southern California, I became active in student affairs, became a member of the freshman class council, worked for the election of one of my fellow freshmen for president of that class, and became exceedingly active in the Daily Trojan. Putting out a daily newspaper was quite an experience, and it happened that I got the coveted assignment to cover the varsity football games at the Coliseum and sometimes

travelled with the team. At the time, a number of students were being drafted, particularly the older students, and there were a lot of vacancies on the Daily Trojan staff, thus affording me this opportunity. I got to know the varsity football players pretty well and by covering various campus activities put me in contact with the day-to-day campus life of the university.

I also was on the desk the Sunday night we were putting out the paper for Monday morning, when Pearl Harbor was struck. The excitement of that night, with the bells ringing on the one United Press teletype machine that the school could afford, with the bulletins from all over the world--Manila, Hong Kong and various places--indicating Japanese attacks, was an extremely exciting experience for a budding journalist, which further convinced me that I was on the right track in picking this profession.

Later at USC, I became chairman of the Greater University Committee and was active in the Trojan Knights, the Trojan Squires, and Blue Key, which is a national scholastic honor fraternity. I had to maintain at the same time better than a two-point, or B average, in order to hold my four-year scholarship. I also joined the Delta Sigma Phi social fraternity, later becoming president, and was active in the Inter-Fraternity Council.

This is where my first real organized political experience began to take place. USC, in those days and in the years immediately following World War II, was considered a big-time political school in the sense that politics, particularly campus politics, attracted a great deal of attention. We had organized political groups. The fraternities were highly organized, and through the Inter-Fraternity Council, we had representatives of each fraternity whose job was to deliver those votes. I remember one of my assignments was not only to deliver my own fraternity votes for the candidate of our choice, but also to see what I could do about encouraging the sororities to vote with us. The first precinct work I ever did was going to the sorority houses on Monday night's Open House, which was traditional at USC (for several hours after dinner the young men could visit the sororities, under due supervision), and that was the time when we did our politicking and tried to get the girls to support us.

Now I'm skipping the war period, which caused me to leave the university to go into active duty. I went into active service in my sophomore year at the university and had to return after three years in the Army to finish my schooling. But during this period right after World War II, the nonorganized students began to develop an organization

called the Independent Students' Association, which began to contest the fraternities very vigorously for control of the students. One of the leaders in that group was a man by the name of Jesse Unruh, who today is Speaker of the California State Legislature. My first real come-to-grips with a strong politician that was organizing against us was with Mr. Unruh (a man that I was later to have a lot of conflict with as I moved into the political arena on the partisan level). But many of the students at USC in those days, like Joe Holt and many others that I could name, went on--in addition to Mr. Unruh--to hold public office. Many of them later, of course, became judges; for the University of Southern California, that was an exceedingly active political period. Mildred Younger was one of those who was very active at that time.

I joined the Enlisted Reserve Corps and was called to active duty in 1943 and left the university. I was trained at Camp McQuaide, California, in Coast Artillery basic training and then was selected for special language training on the basis of a language aptitude test (I had taken Spanish in college and had taken Latin in high school) and was sent to Kenyon College in Ohio to study German. A group of us was to be trained in German, particularly in the language of an area of Germany with a

dialect, so that we could be used either in being dropped behind the lines or to assist the landing forces and so forth when we went in. It was very extensive training; we also received a great deal of area study which would teach us how to traverse the area, who to contact if we had to go in, and so forth. Many of the professors were people who had only recently come from Germany and gave us a great deal of firsthand knowledge, as well as teaching us the language under the new approach to language where you begin to study it as a practical force from the first day. I found that German was later to become valuable, not because I used it in the war--after all that training they sent me to another school and the next thing I knew I was in the South Pacific, so I never went to Germany--but later on I went [to Germany] as a congressman many times, and I found that in talking with Chancellor Adenauer and others that the German [language] training had a great beneficial effect.

Apparently the timetable had changed and after nine months when we completed our course, most of the men were sent to other facilities for additional training. In my case, I was sent to Vint Hill Farm Station right outside of Washington D.C., in Virginia, which was a training school in cryptanalysis. We began to study the breaking of enemy

codes and ciphers and began to study the Japanese kana alphabet, which is the alphabet used in transmitting signals. Obviously the Japanese could not send ideographs over radio and the wires; they had to use a Romanized language form for communication purposes, and this we studied. Then I was shipped to the South Pacific, with service in New Guinea in the Buna area, down into Australia at Brisbane, and eventually back to the Philippines, to Manila and to San Miguel, where I was in the Army Signal Corps Intelligence Service, concentrating on the breaking of enemy codes and ciphers and handling the communications connected thereto.

I ended up a sergeant. I had a chance to go to Officer Candidate School in Australia, but that chance was cancelled when the war moved further north. They decided that they were going to be able to transfer great numbers of officer personnel from the European theater, where the war was coming to a climax, into the Pacific; and they closed down that particular school which was training officer candidates overseas in the Pacific area. I did not get to go to Japan because the war ended while I was in the Philippines and, therefore, the great operation that we'd been trained for--the invasion of Japan--did not take place.

After the war, with time on my hands waiting to be shipped home and obviously with no more Japanese codes to break and to work on, I became more interested in political affairs and began to read a great deal more. I even went to a school in Manila that was set up to give us some college credit for various courses, and I began to study a little more about American political science and history, even though I had already taken some of these courses in high school and at the University of Southern California.

There was also a great movement on, at the time, to get the troops home, and I became involved in a number of committees that were set up trying to urge Congress to speed up the transportation of troops home. I never became one of the ringleaders, but I began to see how pressure was brought on public officials to bring about a particular activity--which was a very interesting experience. It turned out that some of the ringleaders of that activity had pro-Communist leanings later on, but I don't believe that was [true of] the typical serviceman involved. And anything that I did was within the realm of military authority and expressing viewpoints that would not necessarily be considered contrary to good order and discipline.

I returned home in '46 and immediately reentered the University of Southern California. By this time, with a

growing concern of world affairs--also some three years older--I began to become more interested in political activity. At that time on the USC campus, as I continued my student activity and went back into the School of Journalism, I found that there were new groups that were forming. One was the American Youth for Democracy which became a successor to the Young Communist League and often promoted pro-Soviet causes. The Soviet American Friendship League had become active on college campuses. That was a great period of friendship with the Soviet Union, our ally in World War II. But I had some misgivings about that friendship. It may have been partly because of my intelligence experience and the information that came to me in the military. I suppose my Catholic background had caused me to be especially suspicious of Communism and its atheistic teaching. Also it was obvious to me that, at the time, the United States was not reaping the benefits of its great victory in World War II, and that we were oftentimes giving in on so many grounds to the Soviet Union, which was appearing to be very aggressive. Perhaps my beginning to study political science and world affairs to a greater degree, partly because of the time on my hands in Manila waiting for shipment home, was beginning to have its influence.

I also found that I was not as interested in journalism for journalism's sake as I had been previously and that the political influence had caused me more and more to think of law school. I also, during the course of my military career, had come to know a number of lawyers and we began to compare the interest in the legal profession and what it could offer later on in life, not only economically but also to be a person of considerable influence in the community. That profession seemed to have the flexibility and the opportunity that I was interested in and which maybe journalism did not have; and also it created in my mind a greater independence because a lawyer, like a doctor, was more or less his own boss and could hang out his own shingle, whereas a journalist--unless he owned the newspaper, which very few could--would have to take a lot of his direction from the publisher and editor and would have to be dependent on the availability of jobs in order to make a living. If there weren't too many newspaper jobs available, it might be difficult to get started.

I found myself thinking more of law and I therefore gave up my scholarship. I was by that time eligible for the GI Bill as a returning serviceman and applied for law school. Of course, the law schools were getting to be jammed with ex-servicemen, many of whom had already finished

school but were coming back to take advantage of the GI Bill. However, I was successful in being accepted in I guess it was the summer of '46 and entered the University of Southern California Law School. In those days, with the accelerated programs, we were going to school around the year--and around the clock, too--in an effort to get through and to make up as much as we could. I took a heavy load of units, and even while I was in my first year of law, I had to take some undergraduate courses but continued to be active in my fraternity and in school activities, which was rather unusual for a freshman law student because mostly you have to concentrate on that study.

Nevertheless, this growing political interest [was] aroused in part by my war experience and then by the growing activities on the campus, particularly at the University of Southern California, of some of these groups that I thought had questionable philosophy. In fact, I don't think I ever knew a live Communist, and I never would accuse anybody of that without positive proof; but I felt that many of the students were being fooled by the high-sounding phrases of some of these groups that were often being directed well away from the campus and with no real knowledge of the students who joined them. But, nevertheless, they were growing in power and I found how there was

a concerted movement on to ban any further testing and experiment with this great atomic power which had been unleashed so devastatingly, and horribly in many ways, over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nevertheless, I felt that the possession of that weapon by the United States--and at the time it didn't appear as if the Soviets had it yet--could be vital to the nation's security, and that particularly now as the unchallenged leader of the Free World, we must maintain it. Arguments and debates on this score began to develop.

I also found that so many of the students that I thought were active in some of these groups were also active in the Young Democrats, and it appeared to me that maybe, while I'd registered as a Democrat and had voted for FDR the first time I could vote, which was in the service by Army ballot, perhaps my philosophy was a little different than that. The only vehicle that I saw at the time that would help me to express myself and to combat some of this thinking was the Republican party. At the time, I'm not sure that I had a well-defined concept of what the Republican party was, but it seemed a little closer. I began to get interested, and changed my registration to Republican, and then formed the first Young Republican Club on the USC campus and became its first

president. We called it the University Young Republicans. We found that the university, most of whose board of trustees were Republicans, nevertheless took a dim view of encouraging an active partisan political group to hold meetings. We had to fight that battle with the administration to get recognition as a duly constituted phase of extracurricular activity at the same time that we were trying to combat some of these other groups who often had a little easier job of being active on the campus because they would say that they were nonpartisan politically and were not interested in either the Democratic or Republican party. At the time there was a young Democratic group active in the area, and we found that we had more and more opportunities to stage meetings and oftentimes to bring speakers.

By this time I was in my second year of law school and had pretty well phased out my undergraduate activity because in the summer of '47, I received my B.A. degree. In that same class was Joe Holt, who went on to become a congressman, and there were other students who had gone to USC right about that time, several of whom were ahead of me. One was Craig Hosmer; another was James Utt, both of whom became congressmen from California. James Corman, who's now a congressman on the Democratic side and formerly a [Los Angeles] city councilman, was a classmate of mine;

and, as I said, Mr. Unruh and others were in the group. Tom Rees was active in the Young Republicans at the time, but was at Occidental College rather than at USC. We had contact with him because we were working with Young Republican groups at other college campuses. Later he went on to become a member of the legislature and is now a candidate for state senator on the Democratic ticket--he was a young Republican then; now he's a Democrat from Los Angeles County. So this was an interesting period, the post-war era particularly, with a little older student than was the usual case, coming back from the service with a much more aroused political interest than they'd had before, or would normally perhaps have at that phase of their development.

I was also elected vice-president of the law school and was active in Delta Theta Phi legal fraternity and was one of its officers. Then it became my assignment to bring a speaker to the law school student body, which usually had several prominent speakers a year.

By that time I'd married an USC graduate of '47 and had moved to Arcadia because it was the only place we could find an apartment in which to live in those days when there was a tremendous housing shortage. There had just been a new apartment development in the Arcadia area, and I

managed after much trying and after weeks of waiting to secure one of the first new apartments.

I was then in the district (where I had lived before and where I'd gone to school, at El Monte) of a young fellow who had also come back from the service and had just recently been elected to Congress. His name was Richard Milhous Nixon, and while I'd never really known Mr. Nixon personally and had never even heard of him until he'd gotten elected, I was impressed with him, particularly because he was one of the younger members of Congress and was beginning to make a great deal of news as a member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. We had written that committee and Mr. Nixon for information regarding some of the groups that I'd mentioned that had become active on the college level, seeking to determine more facts about them--at least from the standpoint of that committee. We'd also written various other agencies of government, including the Attorney General's office and so forth.

Mr. Nixon, at my behest, agreed to address the student body of the law school, and it turned into one of the most interesting and exciting and highly controversial meetings we had ever had because there were many law students that were highly critical of Mr. Nixon and the activities of

the Committee on Un-American Activities. I watched this byplay and his answers, and I felt that he conducted himself fairly and very well. He was one of those who at the time impressed me by taking the view that the committee was not a prosecuting agency and must treat witnesses fairly. And as a budding law student, that was pretty much the attitude that we had. The right of cross-examination, we felt, should be protected and free people should not be called in to discuss their political views--even if they were questionable regarding the United States--without at least these same protections that we would expect to accord anyone in any other type of proceeding. And Mr. Nixon was one of those on the committee that espoused this view.

About that time, the chairman of the committee, Mr. Parnell Thomas, who had been in some ways under a great deal of criticism for his conduct and rather highhanded handling of the committee, was convicted of padding his congressional payroll, and this caused further blows to the committee. Yet I felt that Mr. Nixon's conduct in handling the case against Alger Hiss was, by contrast, very fair and protective of the basic rights of those witnesses who would appear. All of which impressed me a great deal. And I would say if I ever had any real political mentor,

or someone that I at least looked up to and admired from the beginning, it was Mr. Nixon. It was an association that began then and that was to last on through my public [career], and later into my private career, and he obviously had considerable influence on me. I became later a very close personal friend of his as well as a key member of his staff in various campaigns and also in his activities as Vice President.

About that time, Mr. Nixon was beginning to take soundings on the possibility of running for the United States Senate. California had an election coming up in 1950, and Sheridan Downey, who'd been the United States senator and was widely known and widely respected and was a member of the Democratic party, had indicated that he might not seek reelection for health reasons. The chance of the Republicans--we were beginning to come to life in the postwar period--looked pretty good. Also, there'd been the election in 1946 of a Republican Congress. With the meat shortages and the price controls and regulations and so forth, and the people rebelling now as they came out of World War II and wanting a little more freedom from governmental control after some four or more years of it, they turned to the Republican party, and for two years the Republicans were victorious. That gave further great

impetus to the growing movement of Young Republicans in the party, and the chances of victory in the Presidential election of 1952 appeared greater--in fact, the first real chance that they'd had perhaps since the defeat of Hoover back in 1932.

We belonged to the new postwar crop; many of us were converted Democrats, moving into the Republican ranks. From the presidency of the University [USC] Young Republicans, I became president of the Los Angeles County Young Republicans, which was a pretty small group in those days. I don't think we had more than ten or twelve clubs scattered around the county, but we managed in the period that I took the assignment on to double the number of clubs and try to take advantage of the growing interest, particularly on the part of younger people coming out of World War II, in a bona fide Republican movement. Nixon became in those days the champion of this younger group, and as a result, we were able to build around him a very active political organization which later went on to form the nucleus of his campaign group in California and resulted in a number of us going on into public office.

The presidency of the Young Republicans carried with it the possibility of vice chairman of the Los Angeles County Republican Central Committee, and while there were many

vice chairmen and the position didn't mean much in the way of power, I emerged as one of the youngest vice chairmen that they had had. As the Young Republican president, considerable attention began to be directed toward our activities and movement. Mr. Nixon then decided in 1949 that he was going to take a chance at running for the United States Senate.

My district, which was then the Twelfth Congressional [District], later became the Twenty-fifth after the reapportionment of 1950, where, in the elections of 1952, California was given seven new congressional seats. At that time, Mr. Nixon had a big district covering the eastern end of Los Angeles County--Pomona, Whittier, San Marino, Arcadia, South Pasadena, El Monte, and so forth--and one of the larger districts population-wise and one that was growing very quickly as the postwar housing boom really began to get under way. It was a district that was generally conservative but that was growing away from its rural- and citrus-dominated economy. As more and more new people began to pour in and were not tied in with the local interests and the local economy, it moved more toward the Democratic side. Yet, it still was a fairly solid and stable district which had a habit of electing many Republicans to the legislature--even though Jerry Voorhis had been

the congressman for ten years before Mr. Nixon, as a New Deal Democrat.

But with the coming of Mr. Nixon in 1946, the district began to move more toward Republican orientation; so it appeared that a Republican candidate, backed by the overwhelming majority of Republicans, would have a fairly reasonable chance of winning. As a result, great interest began to develop, whereas a few years before, Mr. Nixon got the nomination almost for the asking because it had never meant much before. But once he won and this change began to take place, it appeared that this was one congressional seat that the Republicans had a pretty good chance of winning. There were some fourteen announced candidates for the job.

The Republicans, in an effort to try to maintain unity and concentrate their power behind one man, decided to set up a fact-finding committee composed of about one hundred and fifty to two hundred prominent Republicans from the district. They set up a formula for selection of the committee. It was a continuation of the process that had selected Nixon in 1946, although at this time the problem was different. In those days it was just a question of almost forcing somebody to run, but in this case, because it looked like it might be a pretty good

chance of winning, it was an effort to try to unify the party and not let a Democrat win by default. We had cross-filing at that time; and a strong Democrat, for example--if he could hold his own people--could also file on the Republican ticket, and if he had considerable appeal, as many of the incumbent Democrats did, he might get twenty or thirty percent of the Republican vote in the primary, which would virtually assure his election in the general. And a Republican, by the same token, could cross-file on the Democratic ticket. Mr. Nixon in his second term out had won on both tickets.

I joined in the setting up of the committee and was more or less the leader of a group of Young Republicans that were named to the committee. We were very much in the minority because the old-timers were still not sure that "you should give these young fellows too much authority," but the power of our movement was such that the party was forced to recognize us. My position as Los Angeles County Young Republican chairman gave me access to the key leadership in the county and in that district where I lived. I was named to the committee and was insistent on obtaining the appointments of a number of other Young Republicans from the area.

We listened to these candidates, appearing at several

different meetings in schoolhouses. The experiment attracted a lot of attention; it looked like we were sincerely--which I think we were--trying to develop grassroots interest and to make it possible for any person who really wanted to run as a Republican to come before the committee and state his qualifications and his interests in the hope that we could agree, as the key leadership, on one man and then back him in the primary.

Nevertheless, the unity didn't seem to work very well, and there was great division between a number of candidates. One was Willis Sargent, a member of the California legislature, a former member of the New York legislature, who was an attorney from the South Pasadena area and who had strong backing. He tended to represent more the middle-of-the-road type, whereas a woman by the name of Mrs. [H. George] Genevieve Blaisdell, whose husband was a prominent physician and who was a very active leader in the Republican Women's Federation, represented the ultra-conservative wing and was trying very hard to get the nomination as a woman. In addition there were other candidates, including the mayor of Whittier and others. The mayor of Claremont at that time, a man named Stewart Wheeler, had indicated his desire but did not appear before the committee, and it wasn't known whether he was serious or not.

But after listening to a number of the candidates, I felt--and some of my friends felt--that perhaps what we needed was somebody that was a little more of the pattern of Nixon--a younger man, willing to talk to the young families that were pouring into the district in great numbers as new homes were being built almost overnight, in Covina and Puente and Azusa and Arcadia and all around the area--and that none of the people that were appearing seemed to be the ones who could attract that type of support. We knew that, in order to win, the Republican must have a number of Democratic votes as well as a solid Republican showing, and many of us felt (those of us who belonged to the new group--we wouldn't exactly call ourselves the Young Turks because we were really cooperating with the bona fide organization, and particularly with Mr. Nixon) that some new blood was needed.

And with that in mind, I was urged--although it didn't take a great deal of urging--to resign from the committee as one of the judges and become an active candidate for the nomination. The support that began to move my way was mostly the younger element, some of Mr. Nixon's friends, although the bulk of Mr. Nixon's original supporters were divided between Mr. Sargent, the mayor of Whittier, and Mrs. Blaisdell. I found that my support initially was

certainly less than one-third of the committee. They were supposed to remain neutral until the final balloting, after some five or six of these meetings, but a pattern began to emerge where the support was going.

Finally one night in El Monte in December of '49, the committee met for its final session to ballot; they decided they would keep balloting until one person received a majority of the votes, and then they would name that person the choice of the Republican Official Fact-finding Committee, ostensibly with the idea that the entire Republican element--at least from the leadership standpoint--would back that candidate. It turned out they were wrong; the committee, after many ballots--I guess there were at least five--and lasting until three-thirty in the morning, finally selected me in the recreation hall next to El Monte High School, where not many years before I had been a young student and president of the sophomore class. I was selected by the committee in a close vote after many, many ballots where I consistently gained, and eventually the others fell by the wayside until I received fifty-one percent; and then one of my opponents moved to make it unanimous.

I was the official candidate of the party--at least it said so on paper--but it didn't take very long before

I found that the committee broke up into segments. Many of those who were for other candidates announced they could not support me--they felt I was too young. (At the time I was barely twenty-six. I hadn't been twenty-six when we started this but was twenty-six by the time of the selection.) There also was a little feeling in certain areas, like San Marino and South Pasadena, that the Catholicism aspect of the candidacy was not good, because they were strong Protestant communities, and that began to be a factor. Also Mr. Wheeler, the mayor of Claremont, who had not appeared before the committee, announced his candidacy and felt he wasn't bound by any committee decision, and many of the elements that had supported Mrs. Blaisdell and Mr. Sargent quickly moved to support Mr. Wheeler, including Mr. Sargent and Mrs. Blaisdell. I found myself a general without an army--that the people who had selected me were not backing me. However, great resentment began to set in among many people who had not supported me on the grounds that the people on the committee had given their word to support the choice of the committee and had gone back on it, and there was [therefore] a moral issue involved. And I benefited from that.

In addition, the campaign against me in the primary that was waged up and down the district in early 1950--

that I was too young and so forth--began to backfire in many quarters because it was a young district, and we began to use that argument to our advantage. We'd go into these tract homes where some woman would put on a coffee hour--sometimes I'd have as many as five and six of those in a day--and people would say that "this was still a young country and that youth should not be a factor against you," because I was a year beyond twenty-five and the constitution said you must be twenty-five years old to take your seat in the House of Representatives. I believe in the long run the youth [factor] helped rather than hurt, but at the time it made it difficult to get the money and certain other support--newspaper and otherwise--which was necessary.

But by constant working, I made hundreds of speeches before anybody who would listen: talking mostly about my concern over the Soviet threat to our country, concern about getting more power released from the government to unshackle the economy of the country, to release more of the war powers that the government necessarily had to impose when you go into war, where we have to operate on almost a dictatorship to get the job done. I was also interested in giving greater boon to housing, without the government doing it but perhaps by doing it through tax

incentive, so we could meet the growing housing needs of our people, and particularly development in that great area of southern California. The Korean War started in the summer of '50. Later, the general election approached, and I had finally received the Republican nomination by a rather handy margin--which surprised me because I expected greater difficulty--but I beat Mr. Wheeler by a considerable margin; and the Republicans did then unify and worked very closely with me in the general election. In fact, many of the key opposing campaign leaders then joined actively in my campaign, and Mr. Nixon gave me his endorsement.

Mr. Nixon, however, refrained from any participation in that primary in his own district, despite the fact that both sides were trying to get him involved, because he was a candidate for the United States Senate against Helen Gahagan Douglas and felt that he should not choose up sides even though it was his own district, which in some ways hurt me because I was known to be a friend of Mr. Nixon's, and they felt that if I were his friend, why didn't he endorse me--that he had reservations. But Mr. Nixon privately encouraged me, and many of his key people became my key people.

Our campaign was a young one, conducted largely through person-to-person campaigning. We did have one district-wide

mailing. We had no money for radio (TV was in its infancy then) and we had very few billboards. We had to run it on a very low-budget basis, but we made up for it, I think, in enthusiasm and in the coming power of this new group within the Republican party. The general election was a little easier than the primary because my opponent, Steve Zetterberg, a prominent Democratic attorney from the Pomona area, found that he had some difficulty within his own party in gaining unity and the fact that the Republicans appeared on the ascendancy in California: Earl Warren running for reelection as governor, obviously a very powerful vote-getter among Democrats; Nixon moving ahead by all the polls over Helen Gahagan Douglas; and the fact that we had pretty strong candidates for many of the other congressional seats.

The party at that period became better financed, and we set up a United Republican Finance Organization in Los Angeles County, headed by a man named Charles [S.] Thomas (later to become Secretary of the Navy). They tried to unify fund raising, put it into one central fund, and then allocate it out. That became a great help, and I was the beneficiary of some financing that might not have come my way. We felt that was better anyhow, because in most cases I wouldn't even know who the donor was. They gave

it to the central United Republican Finance, which was under the control of the party organization, and then was handed out on an allocation basis so that I did not have to personally feel liable--assuming I would feel that way--to my basic contributors, because in most cases I didn't even know who they were. That helped a great deal, and I beat Mr. Zetterberg rather decisively and was sent to Congress.

After being elected in November of '50, I obviously could not take my seat until later. Mr. Nixon announced that he would resign from the House because Sheridan Downey, even though he was a Democrat, said he would resign as the United States senator in December to give Nixon seniority advantage over the other newly elected senators who could not take office until January. But under the Constitution, while the governor of the state can appoint a senator to fill a vacancy--and he immediately appointed Mr. Nixon to fill that vacancy and give him seniority--he cannot appoint a member of the House. So the House seat was actually vacant for a period of time; even though I was newly elected, I could not take the seat. It resulted in an interesting situation because many people considered me the actual congressman, even though I was not sworn in.

But I flew to Washington. Mr. Nixon asked me to go

with him when he went back after the election. The Congress had been in recess; Harry Truman had called a special session, with the Korean War on, and Congress took a recess for the elections and then went back into session in November. I actually walked on the floor of the House, which was then being held in the old Ways and Means Committee Room.

TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two

APRIL 18, 1962

HILLINGS: The House of Representatives was being repaired. The roof had almost caved in, after years and years, and the House of Representatives was meeting then in the Ways and Means Committee Room in the new House office building; and the Senate was meeting in the old Supreme Court chamber in the Capitol. I was allowed as a congressman-elect the privilege of the floor, even though I had not been sworn in, so I walked on the floor of the Ways and Means Committee Room (which was then the House of Representatives in session) as a brand-new elected member to receive the congratulations of the existing congressmen and to watch Mr. Nixon, who was still the congressman at the time, receive the congratulations on his election to the United States Senate. I had the privilege then on the same day of walking on the floor of the United States Senate (which was then in the old Supreme Court Room in the Capitol). As a congressman-elect, I had that privilege of the floor. Mr. Nixon did, too, and while he was not yet a senator, I was there the first day that he felt out the floor of the Senate even though it was in a temporary chamber--which I felt was of great interest and some historical significance.

I later found a place to live, in an apartment over in Virginia, and found out something about how you set up your congressional office, before flying back to California to get ready to return to Washington in late December to take my seat and be sworn in, in January of 1951.

I was then twenty-seven years old, the youngest member of the Congress and I guess the youngest--so far as I know--ever elected to Congress from the state of California. It was a very interesting and exciting experience, but I think the significant thing was that it proved there was an opportunity for newer and younger people within the Republican party to move into positions of responsibility. My election heralded, not only in California but in many other places, a rising trend of young people. It helped to show that this was possible; even Mr. Nixon, when he'd been elected to Congress at an early age, was by that time already in his thirties, and to be elected in your late twenties or comparatively middle-twenties was considered a rather rare thing. Today, I don't think it's quite as rare because, since then, a number of men in both parties--but particularly in the Republican party where the movement for new blood was on--found that they could do the same things. As a result I began to receive letters and questions from all across the country from other young

Republicans who were asking for information on how we conducted a "young Republican-styled" campaign, and I was very pleased that what happened in California in that campaign of 1950, at least congressional-wise, perhaps had some effect of encouraging the new movement in the party, which I felt was essential and which I think later proved to be of great value as we took control of the White House and the whole Congress in the elections of 1952.

But the problem in those final few months--even though I said that before I took office, even though Mr. Nixon ultimately resigned and there was a vacancy--was to become more familiar with the duties of the job. But I found that practically nowhere could you get any publication which said what to do as a congressman; and surprisingly enough, aside from the personal memoirs and various historical discussions of issues, there was very little that really has been written or prepared on the duties and functions of the congressional office.

The office, in coming through the postwar period (up until that time, congressmen would often go to Washington three or four months out of the year and then return home to their business), resulted in a drastic change where Congress was in session most of the year, and the duties

of a congressman and his office--just handling the requests of his constituents--became a tremendous burden and a far greater duty and responsibility than I think the framers of our Constitution ever visualized. It became a great service office, particularly with all the problems of postwar United States, with thousands and thousands of veterans now seeking different veterans' assistance. There are problems in that regard, and all kinds of new problems of social security, and people wanting their refund income-tax checks speeded up. So it was a very interesting experience to me and one that I hadn't fully contemplated: the learning process that I had to go through as to how you really serviced your constituents. And I found, while I hadn't taken office yet, that I already was in the thick of hundreds of requests. These weren't just requests for jobs because Mr. Truman was still the President and the Democratic party still ran the executive branch of government.

But this is something that eventually I would like to see somebody do: to prepare more of a detailed analysis of the real way in which a congressional office today functions, and the change in times that have caused the congressman not only to be a legislator but to become in many ways an administrator of a great number of problems

that come before him, involving all agencies of government, and perhaps the last real bastion of any country in the Free World whereby the average taxpayer, or the average citizen, can go to a top official (because a congressman does sit on the board of directors of government and must be considered a pretty high official in our country) to seek special assistance from the government--assuming that it's legitimate--and expect to get an early answer and expect some action. Today, with the government so vast, to write a letter to any agency of government involves probably a great deal of time before you can get an answer, and the answer is usually a very impersonal one, often written by somebody who couldn't care less who you are or where you're from. But yet you can write to a congressman--or call him on the telephone and in most cases get him--and the letter in most cases will be read by him personally, even today, and the chance of action if you're one of his constituents is much greater because he's so concerned about your vote and your interest in that area. So this became to me a very interesting revelation which nobody had adequately discussed with me before, and something which I was never able to read about in any booklet or publication on the duties and functions of being a congressman.

DIXON: Do you just talk to other congressmen, or do you just learn the hard way by sitting down at the desk?
HILLINGS: You exchange views. In this first visit when I went to Washington with Mr. Nixon as sort of a quick orientation before I came home to get ready to go back to stay, I had a list that he had given me--and others had given me--of say fifteen or twenty members of Congress that they had special respect for in different fields, and I called on them and introduced myself and asked for advice. They gave me a great deal of it--some of it conflicting--everything from where you find the men's room, to what it means when they ring three bells, to how you get additional stationery if you run out of it, as I was inclined to do because I came from a district where people wrote a great deal. I found out also that the congressman from California, three thousand miles away, received the same amount of airmail stamps as his allotment as the congressman who represented Arlington, Virginia, who drove home every night across the Potomac River and who probably had no use for them. I found out too that the telephone allowance was almost the same for a Californian as it was for a New Yorker, and obviously the cost of long-distance telephoning to California was greater.

Some of these things have since been remedied. I was

appointed eventually to the Committee on House Administration which was a minor committee and was one of my minor assignments but, nevertheless, was the housekeeping committee for the Congress; and I was able to help institute some reforms in congressional activity along this line, to help the bigger districts--and particularly the farther away districts--in meeting the needs to help service their constituents in a more efficient and able manner. But the thing that impressed me most was that the only way you could learn about the real operation of your job was in talking to other members of Congress, and in just sitting there and trying to learn, and being on the scene. There wasn't anything that I could find, that I could read to prepare myself--at least in any detail--to assume this new responsibility.

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