

# In Whittier, the Sense Of Injury Is Personal

By Robert Meyers  
and Robert Joffe

Special to The Washington Post

WHITTIER, Aug. 8—  
"We're behind the President 100 per cent," said Grace Newman, whose husband, Wallace, was Whittier College football coach when Richard Nixon first tried out for the team in 1930.

"I think Dick Nixon is one of the finest people there ever was," she said.

Mrs. Newman added that her husband, whom Mr. Nixon as a 155-pound rookie, called "Chief," was too upset over the fate of his most famous player to talk to the press today.

Nearly all of the people in this town of 74,000, founded in 1898, have been touched in some way over today's dramatic events.

"He made the commencement address at Whittier College in 1954 when he was Vice President," Marjorie G. Kauffman recalls. "We were so thrilled he was there." Then her voice dropped.

Mrs. Kauffman and her husband, Herbert, have owned a men's wear store on Philadelphia Avenue since 1943, and they have supported Richard Nixon since he has been in public life. "But he lied when he said he didn't have anything to do with Watergate," Mrs. Kaufman says. "No matter what your politics, it hurt."

If a town can hurt, Whittier, Calif., is hurting. "The people here have always taken inordinate pride in having a local boy make the presidency," says Bill O'Donnell, a staff assistant to Rep. Chet Holifield (D-Calif.), whose congressional district includes Whittier. "But now most people are resigned and depressed."

Whittier is small, the kind

of small town America Richard Nixon referred to on the recently released June 23, 1972, tape recording, when he told former presidential aide H. R. Haldeman to keep his campaign appearances in "middle America."

Kauffman's clothing store is across the street from the Bank of America building where Mr. Nixon, as a young Duke University law school graduate, opened his first law practice in the 1940's.

Up the street is the William Penn Hotel, where the Soroptomists and Lions hold monthly meetings, worrying about garage sales, rummage auctions, and helping the youngsters keep busy in summer. The City Hall is a few blocks away, next to the courthouse and around the corner from a neighborhood mortuary in a squat white concrete building.

Clinton O. Harris, an Oldsmobile dealer, was a classmate of Mr. Nixon at Whittier and a fellow member of the Orthogonians—a fraternity. He said Mr. Nixon's friends here "are thinking of him and hoping the best for him. It seems to me

a tragedy that people like Daniel Ellsberg—who in my opinion at least is a traitor—have gotten free because of technicalities of the law. And then they make a mountain out of a mole hill on a thing like Watergate."

Harris said he thinks one of Mr. Nixon's strongest qualities is loyalty and that "I'm inclined to think that this was what trapped him." The President, he said, has been "crucified for loyalty to his friends. Wouldn't you or I have done the same thing?" he said.

"If he had told the truth at the beginning, he wouldn't have gotten in this

mess," says the owner of a paint store who would not give his name.

"If he'd just come out and said it, bang, everything would have been OK. But this dragging it out, this lying . . ." he shakes his head.

Crystal Smith, a volunteer in the local GOP headquarters, fixes a visitor with the same stare she says she used when she was training Marine Corp recruits years ago. "If the press and the media had left him alone he'd have been a happy man," she says. Mrs. Smith wanted Mr. Nixon to "fight to the last man. I don't think he's guilty of anything illegal," she says, stressing the word "illegal." "It was his decision to resign, but I don't think he should have."

"I think it's a catastrophe," said Paul Smith (no relation to Crystal Smith), former Whittier College president and a member of the National Bicentennial Commission. "It's a tragedy, not so much for Nixon as it is for the system in which we're all living."

"Nixon is a child of this age," he continued. "We live in a society which has pretty weak moral underpinnings to it, and Nixon is a casualty of that. Society—not Nixon—should be at the bar."

Smith, a constitutional historian, supervised Mr. Nixon's studies in that field. "If his resignation means we put the total blame on Nixon, it was ill-timed and he shouldn't have done it."

Blake Sanborn is the mayor of Whittier, a Republican who is in the insurance and investments business. "I'm shocked," he says. "It's like being on the front row of history. I'm disappointed to see a man end a career like that. I've seen things of greater magnitude and nothing ever comes of it. I mean such things as the attack on Pearl Harbor, where there was advanced warning, and everyone knows it."

Fred Sarchet is a 70-year-old retired engineer who hasn't been quieted by age or the enormity of today's events. "I've been an enemy of Richard Nixon ever since he knifed Jerry Voorhis," he said while working in his rose garden.

"Nixon would do anything

to achieve his ends. That's the only principle he had. I'm afraid I can't find too much sympathy for him. They should go ahead with the impeachment and criminal prosecution. Nixon has lied all his life."

Louis T. Jones, who taught young Republican Richard

Nixon some of his early history lessons, is now retired and living in a comfortable second-story apartment at the William Penn Hotel.

"He had a marvelous mind," Jones, 90, recalled, as he and his wife Pearl, 94, ate some sliced meat and potatoes. Jones taught a class in world history in 1931 at Whittier College.

"He once told me he had every handwritten note he'd ever made in my class," Jones said, "Knowing Dick as I do, I trust his judgment in everything he does." As for the President's resignation, Jones says "I know in his own mind and heart he thought it would be in the best interests of the country.

"A the first sign of Watergate I dropped him a note, a hasty SOS," Jones says. "I told him that if he were in violation of the law, then he must make his own decision. What he did must be a result of his own dedicated thought. He knows what he did. I don't."