



Source: SLO Telegram-Tribune, May 1, 1950.

Dick Nixon Campaigning in Morro Bay

Published September 25th, 2025

This image shows two political stars, Richard Nixon and Joe Giannini (left most). Both men went on to achieve great success in politics. Giannini outlived Nixon by 15 years and was universally admired when he died in 2009.

Future U.S. President Richard Nixon visited Morro Bay fishermen during a campaign visit to SLO County in April 1950, fifty-five years ago this month. Nixon was a member of the House of Representatives at that time and was running as a

Republican for a U.S. Senate seat that was not being contested by the incumbent, Democrat Sheridan Downey, who had resigned during the primary campaign. The Democratic candidate was primary winner Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas who was a movie star and political activist.

Nixon was on a campaign swing through the county on April 19 and 20 so the meeting on the dock in Morro Bay was one of many formal and informal events where he tried to engage with voters. In this case, he probably held an impromptu discussion about the problems of the commercial fishing industry. About half the men in the group were Morro Bay fishermen and the other half were part of the crew of the shark-fishing boat Excell out of San Francisco.

From the Morro Bay point of view, Joe Giannini was the most important person on the dock. He owned a fishing supply business and advocated for Morro Bay fishermen--he was one of the forces behind organizing the fishermen and he worked hard to support the industry. He was very active in Morro Bay politics generally and became the second mayor of recently incorporated Morro Bay in 1968. His family has been prominent in Morro Bay ever since.

The photo catches Nixon explaining important policy matters to the fishermen to get their votes, but they probably already knew all about it.

Nixon did go on to win the Senate seat in a landslide. He tarred Douglas with the accusation she was sympathetic to the Communists and in Russia-phobic 1950 that finished her career. As everyone knows, Nixon went on to be elected President in 1968.