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## Temperance Bailey (November 16, 1971)

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

MRS. TEMPERANCE R. BAILEY

Whittier, California

November 16, 1971

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is an interview with Mrs. Temperance R. Bailey of Whittier, California. This is interview number one. The date is November 16, 1971. Arena interviewing. Mrs. Bailey, do you mind if I ask you when and where you were born?

BAILEY: I was born in Greenville, Iowa in 1898.

ARENA: What was the occasion that brought you to California? Do you remember when that was?

BAILEY: I was nine years old when my father came out here for his health. We've been here ever since, I have.

ARENA: Would that be directly to Whittier?

BAILEY: Right to Whittier. I've been living here since I was nine years old.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you first general questions and then we'll zero in on particular details? For example, about where and when--and don't worry if you don't remember the exact date, we could always check this or always find some additional information--what occasion did you first meet the President, Richard Nixon?

BAILEY: I had a very dear friend--she happens to be one of the Bewleys, a cousin of Tom Bewley--and her aunt and uncle came up from Long Beach [California] when Esther [McIntosh] and I were, we figured out one day that we were about twelve or thirteen years old, and they wanted us to go for a ride one Sunday afternoon. In those days that was a big treat. And we were to go out and see the new "Milhous" baby, and the new Milhous baby was Richard Nixon. So that's about the first time that I remember Richard Nixon.

ARENA: And you were about thirteen and you were born in 1898, which means that this would have been about 19--well  
. . . .

BAILEY: I may be wrong.

ARENA: Maybe, because he was born in 1913. So possibly around that time.

BAILEY: I was about fifteen then, wasn't I?

ARENA: About fifteen and he was a baby, as you recall.

BAILEY: He was a baby. He had just been born.

ARENA: Do you recall the occasion, Mrs. Hannah Nixon, Mr. Frank [Francis Anthony] Nixon, do you recall what the people did, what they said? What you did, did you stay for supper? In other words, anything that you can recollect concerning that experience. Do you remember what day of the week it was, was it on the weekend, Saturday or Sunday?

BAILEY: It was on Sunday, but I was more thrilled about getting to go for a ride than I was to see the new baby, and I don't remember anything that happened.

ARENA: It was Yorba Linda? [California]

BAILEY: Yes.

ARENA: Do you recall to what extent the roads were rough?

BAILEY: Oh, it was nothing but a cow path.

ARENA: Do you recollect at all the appearance of the house and the room?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: As you said, the thing that really stands out is the automobile ride itself.

BAILEY: That's right. I was so thrilled to go for a ride, and they came up from Long Beach to take us out there.

ARENA: Do you recall if you ever had occasion as you grew up to pass by the area again in Yorba Linda? Did you ever return there?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: Did you ever go to the residence of the Nixons when they moved to East Whittier, [California] where the Nixon market was set up?

BAILEY: No. We went out to the restaurant there and in their store. I was in their store many times.

ARENA: Do you recall the very first time you went to the store?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: Were you single at the time or married when you went to the store for the first time?

BAILEY: I think I was married.

ARENA: Did you go there to shop or was it just to visit?

BAILEY: My husband's aunt and uncle lived close by and they shopped at the Nixon market.

ARENA: Do you have the name of your aunt and uncle?

BAILEY: Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Dewey.

ARENA: Do they still live in the neighborhood, Mrs. Bailey?

BAILEY: No. They're deceased.

ARENA: They're both deceased. What type of work did your uncle do? Was he a farmer?

BAILEY: A rancher.

ARENA: And do you recall the crop?

BAILEY: He had lemons and oranges. Right on the boulevard and his place is where that plaza is now, the Whittier Plaza, I think they call it.

ARENA: One area there is called the Whittwood Shopping Center.

BAILEY: It's beyond there.

ARENA: Even beyond that. When you did visit East Whittier to visit this aunt and uncle, thinking back, did you think that you were going to a better section of Whittier or one that was about the same, or one that was poorer, if you thought about it at all?

BAILEY: It was a nice area.

ARENA: You didn't think you were going into a poorer section, or anything like that?

BAILEY: No. It was a nice area and his aunt and uncle had a beautiful home.

ARENA: Do you recall discussing with your aunt and uncle in any way the Nixon grocery store?

BAILEY: Oh, they used to always talk about going up to Nixons, and I don't know but maybe his aunt took eggs up there. She had chickens.

ARENA: Do you recall going along with them, is that how you got to go into the store?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: You went on your own.

BAILEY: We just dropped in to buy something.

ARENA: Do you recall discussing with the Nixons later on, as the President was growing up, that you had seen him as a little baby?

BAILEY: No. I never discussed it.

ARENA: And even right to this present time. For example, do you know if the President is aware of this, himself?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: You never mentioned that?

BAILEY: No. Because this cousin [Esther McIntosh], she's now married to my husband's cousin, this girl, and we've talked about this and she said, "Well, you know, that's where we went that day." We're the only ones that ever discussed it.

ARENA: It's not too many people that see a President being an infant that young, and you're one of the really very few. Did you have any occasion later on to see the President, for example, when he appeared in debates, or when he played football for Whittier College, or when he appeared in some of the local community plays? Do you ever recall seeing him in that connection in any way?

BAILEY: No. The next that I would say where I noticed him was in the bank. After he came back from the service he was in the bank, I remember he had his uniform on. I think he was a Navy officer. And Mr. Herman Perry was our manager and he came back to me. I came out of my office and he said, "Did you know that young man" and I said, "I certainly did." He said, "We're going to get him to run for Congress." I said, "Well, that is wonderful."

ARENA: That would have been Mr. Herman Perry.

BAILEY: Herman Perry, he was our manager of the Bank of America.

ARENA: Do you recall Mr. Herman Perry doing anything besides that in the sense that did he introduce the young officer to the bank employees as a whole, on any occasion? Was there any special attempt to introduce him?

BAILEY: No. He just came in.

ARENA: It was just an accident that that came up between you and Mr. Herman Perry?

BAILEY: That's right. Because I was in my department and he was out on what we called the platform, and I had no connection with him, you see.

ARENA: As you know the escrow is in a separate part of the bank even now, it's on a separate floor.

BAILEY: Yes.

ARENA: Was that the case when you were with the escrow department?

BAILEY: It was back in the corner. They always shoved you in the corner.

ARENA: Did Mr. Nixon, as a young lawyer, have an occasion to come into your office?

BAILEY: Yes.

ARENA: And you never attempted to mention that fact to him either, by the way, that you can recollect?

BAILEY: No. [Laughter] I never did.

ARENA: It would be very interesting to see the reaction if you had an opportunity in the future. Well, what we're saying now will become a part of history and maybe when he has the time he'll find out indirectly.

BAILEY: I happened to have handled one of the escrows, I think it was when he owned the property down near Houston Meadows. [California] And when they were making this investigation, you know from Washington, [D.C.] regarding that "fund" that they were. . . . I had a call from Washington and I had to go downstairs and hunt up the file and give them information out of the file.

ARENA: And the call was an official call. In other words, they had the right to look into the information.

BAILEY: Yes.

ARENA: That would be another contact. Do you mind if I ask you, if it isn't too personal, what political affiliation do you have?

BAILEY: I am a Republican. My father was a Republican.

ARENA: Although we really aren't concerned with politics-- that would be the period after 1945, and that has not been set up yet as a special project--but it is interesting to know from the standpoint of your own interest. Thinking back to 1945, actually what did you know about the President when he did come up as a candidate? In other words, recollecting this little baby you had seen, is that really the only knowledge and information you had of the President? Or had you heard about him in any other connection?

BAILEY: I had heard about him because he was a member of the Friends Church and I was also a member of the Friends Church, and naturally you hear about the different members. But some of them you don't know, they don't cross your path.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, are you a member of the East Whittier Friends Church?

BAILEY: No. I'm a member of the Whittier Friends Church.

ARENA: On any occasion, at any time, before or after politics, did you ever attend an affair when the President spoke?

BAILEY: Yes. I was out in East Whittier one day--I can't remember just what it was--but he was there. They got him in and out before anybody could speak to him.

ARENA: At this point he was the President?

BAILEY: No, I think he was Vice President.

ARENA: Somewhere between 1952 and 1961.

BAILEY: Somewhere along there. We went out there. We didn't expect him to be there, but he happened to be there.



Another contact I had with him was when he spoke at the college, the college commencement. Now, I don't remember what year that was, but my nephew graduated that year and he was given tickets to the reception, so he let me have one of the tickets and as we passed through the line and each one introduced, you know, to the next one, I came to Dean Spencer and he said to Richard, "This is Mrs. Bailey." And Richard said, "Oh, I know Tempe Bailey." So I felt like he didn't have to be introduced to me, anyway.

ARENA: Were you surprised a little bit that the President remembered your name and called you by your first name like that, Mrs. Bailey?

BAILEY: Well, yes. Because he was way up in the world and I was just a little unimportant person and our paths had not crossed in many years.

ARENA: I believe a moment ago you said that although you had not grown up in his neighborhood and knew him, it was when he was a lawyer and would come to your office that he got to know you and knew your name. Over how long a period, would you say, that you knew him that way, and on the average how often would you see him? In the sense that he became a lawyer--to refresh both our memories--in 1937 and then left for active service in 1942. So, he would be a lawyer from '37 to '42, that would be one thing. The other thing is how often during the week, or would it be a question of months, that he would come in and do work in your office or have to deal with you?

BAILEY: A lot of it was over the phone. But I remember waiting --I worked across the street at the old Whittier National [Bank]--on his father there and his mother. I used to see his mother a lot. But you don't remember people coming in and out of your office, you know. Because at the Bank of America I was snowed under all the time.

ARENA: When you saw them coming in and out of the other bank-- did I understand you correctly, you were with the other bank or you just happened to notice?

BAILEY: No. I worked over there, the old Whittier National, which is now United California. [Bank]

ARENA: Would you mind explaining, for those who might not have an idea of what escrow is, just what the Escrow Department of a bank does and therefore what the President's business would be in visiting you or calling you up? What would he have to find out from the Escrow Department?

BAILEY: An escrow is a transfer of real property and we would draw all the papers, we handled for the buyer and the seller. We're the neutral party, the third party in it. His connection with an escrow would be from a legal standpoint. It might be through an estate he was handling, or possibly someone in his office, or that way.

ARENA: So he would be representing a client and the interest of the client which would be involved in the transfer of property, and that would be one part of the involvement, the escrow. When do you think that the name Richard Nixon became very clear, both the name and the person, in your mind? For example, you don't recall the name and the baby very clearly, except the occasion. But when does Richard Nixon really stand out in your own mind, for the first time, you could see him as a person?

BAILEY: I really don't recall. It was a gradual thing. You see, people. . . . We'd meet in the elevator down there, meet in the lobby, and that way.

ARENA: That was this very same building that is now located in the Bank of America building?

BAILEY: Yes. That's right.

ARENA: How would you describe him during this period, from the standpoint of looks, dress, manners, tone of voice, did he seem to be in a rush, did he seem to be sure of himself or not sure? Whatever you can recall from the standpoint of description around this time, when you first saw him going up and down in the elevator or when he appeared in your department, bearing in mind he didn't have time to really chat.

BAILEY: Oh, I thought he was an outstanding person and a perfect gentleman and very gentle, well mannered. He

never seemed to raise his voice, he always seemed to know just what he wanted, and he always knew you.

ARENA: Did you ever see him handling clients? Did he bring someone into the office with him, for example? And, too, did you ever see him in court in any way?

BAILEY: Not as I recall.

ARENA: On the first question, did you ever see him with a client?

BAILEY: No. I believe most of it--he would bring papers in and say we'll use these in "so-and so's" escrow.

ARENA: Did he seem to be in a usual rush or did he put you or anyone else ill at ease in any way?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: What things did he do? What did he say to give you the impression that he was well mannered and courteous?

BAILEY: It was his manner of talking to you. I can't recall his conversation. I just know that he was a very nice person to deal with. Some people have a way of rubbing you the wrong way, but he never had that about him.

ARENA: During this period that you knew him, and he was a lawyer, was there any notion, any hint at all that he would some day enter politics either directly from your conversations with him or indirectly, and before that time Mr. Herman Perry said that he's going to be a new candidate?

BAILEY: I didn't know anything about any political aspirations. I didn't pay any attention to politics in those days.

ARENA: Was he the first local boy, in a way, that you ever knew personally who went into politics and was successful at it?

BAILEY: I've known others. One real estate man that went into politics.

ARENA: Did you find him unusual in his approach to politics? Again, I'm not interested so much in the political side of the President, but as a personality that you had known before. Did you think, for example, that he changed in any way from the time you knew him before to the present time, especially when you ran into him and he was famous? Do you think that he has changed in any way as a result of all of this world and international attention?

BAILEY: No. That's why I was so surprised that he called me by name. I didn't expect that he would even remember me, and that's why I thought, well, he's really down to earth. Because, you know, you can go up the ladder a lot and you don't remember the ones who helped you get up the ladder.

ARENA: I think we mentioned once that you did see him in church. I just want to be sure that we have covered that completely. You might, or might not, know that he did teach Sunday School for a while, he appeared in the choirs, the East Whittier Friends choir, for example, under Mrs. [Ethel Rand] Garleip, which made visits to other churches from time to time, and possibly one in Whittier itself, the First Friends? Is there any recollection of seeing him in any of these capacities or possibly you had a relative, a nephew or a niece who attended his Sunday School classes?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: Did you have occasion to meet with any of the other relatives of the President on a closer basis? We'll begin with his grandparents first, for example, Grandfather Franklin Milhous and Mrs. Almira Milhous, the President's grandmother.

BAILEY: No. I didn't know them. I probably had seen them in church but I was just a kid.

ARENA: Grandfather Franklin Milhous came to Whittier in 1897. Grandmother Almira Milhous remained alive quite a few years, afterwards, as a widow. She lived to see the

graduation of the President from Duke University Law School in 1937. You might have had more of an opportunity to see her than the grandfather. You don't recollect anything clear about them. The next group would be the President's parents, Mrs. Hannah Nixon and Mr. Frank [Francis Anthony] Nixon. And here again, whatever you can recollect not only about the store but possibly the fact that Mrs. Hannah Nixon baked pies and these were purchased around the community and maybe you bought one of the pies one day. Or maybe she appeared in some capacity at your church in Whittier, or maybe you attended a service in East Whittier where either she or Frank had some connection. Both Frank and Hannah taught Sunday School also, by the way. Is there any tie or connection with either of these two you can think of?

BAILEY: I remember waiting on Mr. Nixon, Frank Nixon, and I remember he was a conductor on the P.E. Railroad. [Pacific Electric Railway] When we used to go to town, as we called it, on the red car he was the conductor on it. And I recognized him when he would come into the bank. I met Mrs. Nixon on a number of occasions. I think we had her at our club one time, I think it was the Business and Professional Women's Club that she was honored in some way.

ARENA: Just to be sure about this P.E. system, is that the Pacific Electric system in which Mr. Frank Nixon was a motorman?

BAILEY: Motorman, I thought he was a conductor.

ARENA: Some people say motorman, some people say conductor. One gentleman, whom I don't mind repeating--I'm sure he would not object--who knew him fairly closely was, and you might know the same gentleman, he is more or less a contemporary, Mr. Russell Harrison, Sr.

BAILEY: Yes.

ARENA: He remembers him and he was very emphatic about the idea of his being a motorman.

BAILEY: Well, he probably was.

ARENA: It is not surprising. I don't think he was a motorman too long. People would hear one or the other and confuse them. There aren't too many that recall that period when he was a motorman. So I would like to ask you from the best of your recollection what you do recall of those days of Mr. Frank Nixon as a motorman?

BAILEY: He was always a very friendly sort of person and he always was interested in--well, there would be a bunch of us girls going to town to shop, you know, we were just kids, we would go on the car. I wouldn't do it now, but we'd get on the red car and he'd be there to kind of look after us.

ARENA: By saying you're going to town, you mean going to Los Angeles? [California]

BAILEY: To Los Angeles.

ARENA: This would be directly from Whittier itself?

BAILEY: Whittier, yes. I remember him coming in the bank, too, and telling me they were moving back to Pennsylvania and I thought, my heavens, what's he going clear back to Pennsylvania for?

ARENA: And you recall his talking to you about that, of his getting ready to move to Pennsylvania?

BAILEY: A conversation was all. I think I probably handled some escrow papers for him, I don't remember. You know, that's a long time ago.

ARENA: To be precise, that period would have been 1947. And he stayed there some six or seven years, until about 1953. So it was a brief time and I think they contemplated moving from there to Florida, but before long they were back in Whittier. Do you recall the manner in which Frank Nixon got along with others? For example, he was friendly to young, pretty girls. How about the young fellows who sometimes were boisterous or mischievous on these cars? Was he a man who gave you the impression he would maintain discipline on the car?

BAILEY: He maintained discipline.

ARENA: Did you ever have occasion to see him exercise it when there were some rough kids on the car?

BAILEY: No. I was a bashful little girl.

ARENA: How did you get to know his name? Did someone point out to you that that's Mr. Nixon? I presume that was before he was married to Mrs. Hannah Nixon.

BAILEY: Oh, no.

ARENA: He was married at the time.

BAILEY: Oh, sure. 19 . . .

ARENA: 1908.

BAILEY: That wasn't when he was a motorman.

ARENA: It was later than that?

BAILEY: Later than that because I was probably in high school. It would be about 1913 or '14.

ARENA: Let us check on the date of marriage. So to the best of our recollection the President's father came from McArthur, Ohio in 1906. Lived for two years in East Whittier, 1908 to 1910, then he moved to Lindsay, California for a few years. Coming back in 1912 and going to Yorba Linda. And the President was born in Yorba Linda in 1913. So, somewhere in this period when he was in the immediate Whittier area, 1906 and the time he left for Lindsay, about 1910. Somewhere in there he must have been this motorman.

BAILEY: No. I think it was after he lived in Yorba Linda.

ARENA: Possibly while he was in Yorba Linda?

BAILEY: I think it was after they lived in Yorba Linda. I think they lived out there at that ranch and after he worked as a motorman then he started that little store. It was just a real little corner market, you know.

ARENA: And that just wasn't enough, maybe, to support them. Especially right at the beginning.

BAILEY: No. And they had this service station out in front. She used to bake pies I know. My aunt would go and get pies there.

ARENA: So, there's no doubt in your mind that when you knew him when he was a motorman he was married. That's very clear. Good.

BAILEY: Yes.

ARENA: I'm glad to hear that. Now from the standpoint of other characteristics of the President's father, did you ever see him in any type of sports?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: Did he always look healthy to you? Would you describe him as a good looking man?

BAILEY: Yes. He was a very jovial sort of person.

ARENA: Do you recall his participating in church activities from the standpoint, I believe I mentioned the idea of Sunday School, but did you ever see him in any connection regarding the Friends Church?

BAILEY: I don't think so.

ARENA: If I could ask you your opinion on this question, knowing the President as we all do now from television and newspapers, radio, knowing the President before he became famous and before he became President, and knowing the President's father as you did, what qualities in the President do you see as coming from Mr. Frank Nixon?

BAILEY: I think he was thoroughly honest. I think both his father and mother were very honest people and hard working, and I think they were a deeply religious family.



ARENA: Now, we'll move over to Mrs. Hannah Nixon. What do you recall about her, the President's mother?

BAILEY: I really don't know in particular because my days were all taken up with working.

ARENA: That's true and I realize it's hard to pick and choose these little things, but when you ask a lot of people you'll be amazed what a full story we'll get. So, it's quite helpful, even though it's one minor point. And we will ask and talk with hundreds, really. By the time it all comes in we'll have a true picture.

BAILEY: You'll have his life story.

ARENA: Yes. From people who would know him better than anyone else, his neighbors such as yourself, people who attended the same church, people who rode the same motorcar that his father drove. Well, how would you describe her? And to make sure, were you aware of the event when they got married, you didn't have a connection with the family? You don't recall it being announced in church or anything like that?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: This would have been, of course, 1908. And you were about ten years old at that time. How about subsequent years, do you recall Mrs. Hannah Nixon and some of the special problems she had, such as the tragedy of her two boys who died and the extra burdens that this put on the family? Were you at all, at any time, conscious of that, of those problems of her and the Nixon family?

BAILEY: No.

ARENA: Now still discussing some of these close relatives of the President whom you had contact with, possibly there is one more point you could throw light on. When the President did become famous--and, of course, by now you were aware who the Milhouses were and who the Nixons were--do you recall the special way that this affected the President's relatives back here? He would be in Washington or he would be

in India, but do you recall coming across Mrs. Hannah Nixon or Mr. Frank Nixon in this situation? Even though they didn't talk to you, do you recall that this caused any hardship or they said things that referred to the fact that their son-- of course, they never had the pleasure of seeing him as President but they saw him as a Senator and Mrs. Nixon saw him as Vice President--do you recall on any occasion this coming up with them?

BAILEY: No. If she was in the bank I probably said something about Richard, but I just don't recall.

ARENA: I believe you said earlier, and I don't think I spent too much time on it, but that she was invited or she spoke at a particular club. What club was that?

BAILEY: I believe it was the Business and Professional Women's Club and I think she was honored as the Mother of the Year, or something similar.

ARENA: This would have been when her son was well known?

BAILEY: Yes. Oh, yes.

ARENA: Do you recall if she spoke on that occasion?

BAILEY: No. She was just a guest.

ARENA: Now, going on to some of the other relatives who had a close impact as an important influence on the President's upbringing, there were his relatives the Marshburns who probably had more direct contact with your church than the Nixons who belonged and attended most of the time the East Whittier Friends Church. What would you say in the way of describing the Marshburns, both Oscar and Mrs. Rose Olive Marshburn?

BAILEY: Oh, they're very lovely people and they're a deeply religious couple.

ARENA: Do you ever recall either one bringing up the subject of the President, their nephew, at any time? Not just after he became President but on any occasion.

BAILEY: You mean with Oscar?

ARENA: Either Oscar or Mrs. Marshburn.

BAILEY: Oh, every once in a while because my brother and his two boys own Laurel Square in the quad with Oscar Marshburn so we quite often chat about Richard, because I see Oscar once in a while. Oscar has been on the Historical Committee and I see him there. I also knew Russell Harrison's wife, what was her name?

ARENA: Would this be the first wife, the sister of Hannah? Elizabeth. [Milhous Harrison]

BAILEY: Elizabeth.

ARENA: I've forgotten, but was she nicknamed Betty do you recall, or something like Betsy? She did have a nickname, I believe.

BAILEY: Seems like they called her something else.

ARENA: Possibly it was not Betty. Were you aware that Mr. Russell Harrison had a son Russell Harrison, Jr. who also worked in the store with the Nixons and therefore had an intimate relation with the family? What is your over-all impression of the Nixon-Milhous family in the area?

BAILEY: I think they're very honorable people. They're very down to earth, they're not what you call the high hat people at all.

ARENA: Knowing them from before the President became famous and knowing them now, would you say that the success of the President did make any change in their attitude towards you in particular, or towards others in the community?

BAILEY: No. I don't think he changed any.

ARENA: In what sense do you think the Marshburns, the Harrisons--of course, the Harrisons where you have Mr., Sr., related by marriage, but the other children are related by blood through the mother--in what sense is the President like or unlike his relatives?

BAILEY: I think he's kind of like his father. His father was always kind of jolly and Hannah was, too.

ARENA: Do you recall that the father liked to discuss politics and liked to argue with people?

BAILEY: No, because I never argue with people.

ARENA: When he did argue you were not in sight?

BAILEY: Not in business. We don't discuss or get argumentive. At least that was my policy.

ARENA: Is there anything about the members of the family that I have left out that you would like to bring up at this point, as the interview is coming to a close?

BAILEY: No, I think you've covered it very well.

ARENA: Would you mind repeating for the sake of the interview, Mrs. Bailey, the story you just mentioned about Mrs. Elizabeth Harrison, who was the wife of Russell Harrison, Sr. and was also the sister of Hannah Nixon, and please make it very clear whether this is something that was told to you directly by Mrs. Elizabeth Harrison or was it something you heard from someone indirectly, the story about the idea of having more children, and Mrs. Elizabeth Harrison's remarks about that?

BAILEY: I remember Elizabeth Harrison making the remark in a group, I think she had two children and she wanted more children because that would only take her place and Russell's place in the world.

ARENA: Thank you very much, as this interview comes to a close.