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Anne Gillmore (November 8, 1971, second interview)

C. Richard Arena

Second Oral History Interview

with

MRS. ANNE GILLMORE

November 8, 1971
Whittier, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #2 with Mrs. Anne Gillmore of Whittier, California. The date is November 8, 1971, Arena interviewing. I believe you may recall, Mrs. Gillmore, and with your permission it will be Anne, and I'm Dick.

GILLMORE: That's fine.

ARENA: Thank you. I believe we were discussing the sociable side of President Nixon as a young man, and I believe you were about to recall your experience of dancing with him. Would you to the best of your recollection, and take all the time you need, recount that experience, all the circumstances and so forth.

GILLMORE: Well, you know it was a long time ago that this happened but it was at a Rotary Ladies Night dinner and Richard was taken by Dr. and Mrs. Horace Wilson as their guest because Richard was a member of the 20-30 Club. Maybe he was president of the 20-30 Club. And after the dinner there was always a dance. Well, naturally I lived next door to Richard, so I suppose Richard felt it was his duty to dance with me, so I danced with Richard Nixon, and he was a very smooth, fine dancer.

ARENA: Do you recall that he danced a lot, normally, did he dance with other ladies and do you recall if at that time he had a date?

GILLMORE: No, he did not have a date. I do not recall that he danced a lot. I don't remember. Maybe he did but I don't recall that.

ARENA: Do you recall if his mother was possibly there also?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Does that mean the way with which you say your "no" that she did not attend dances--period.

GILLMORE: That's right.

ARENA: Now as a matter of fact the Friends in Whittier looked down, I won't say looked down but did not promote dancing, I'll put it that way, as a matter of tradition.

GILLMORE: Right.

ARENA: Was that always the case, even after the President attended affairs like this that Mrs. [Hannah Milhous] Nixon never, as far as you can recollect, were there other occasions that she did not attend?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Did you ever recall an exception, even after as a matter of fact?

GILLMORE: You know Whittier didn't have many dances years ago. As a matter of fact we didn't have anything in Whittier. We didn't even have a movie house of Sunday movies until maybe twenty years ago. So, of course, I don't know whether Richard went to dances or not but I don't think he did because I talked to him, I don't remember, years afterward and he said something about that he was responsible for Whittier College changing their attitude toward dancing and allowing the students to dance.

ARENA: And you recall his saying that to you?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: And as a matter of fact that is a matter of historical record. He was running for office and that was his campaign pledge when he ran in the spring of 1934--I beg your pardon, the spring of 1933--and he graduated in 1934. So it would be very interesting your recollecting what he said about that whole business, about his bringing it on. Do you recall the occasion, the circumstances?

GILLMORE: I haven't any idea.

ARENA: Other than that just comes to mind his saying to you . . .

GILLMORE: The reason I was impressed was because I told you before Whittier College didn't approve of me because I had a dance at my house, and I think I told him that and then he said he promoted dancing up there at Whittier College.

ARENA: Very interesting, because it is true. He ran on that platform and eventually. . . . I don't know that necessarily it took place while he was president.

GILLMORE: I don't think so.

ARENA: Neither do I--president of the student class--but I do know that he ran on that platform and he did win and the trustees also talked it over with him and listened to his arguments and so forth.

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: Is there anything else you recall about that particular experience of dancing? For example, was it a matter of your being seated at the time and his walking over to you? Was it a matter of his cutting in? Whatever details like that that might come to mind.

GILLMORE: No, he just came up and asked me to dance.

ARENA: Do you recall where you were or with whom you were, by the way, at the time?

GILLMORE: No, you know after all it was a big party. I think there were probably one hundred people there, and he lived next door to me. It was just like one of the family and it wasn't anything. . . . He wasn't an important person at that time. He was just my neighbor.

ARENA: Of course not.

GILLMORE: And so I danced with him.

ARENA: But as far as the details, NOW they would be important if you can remember them. I don't want to badger you, but I'm just trying to prick your memory obviously and if you can't remember, you can't remember. However, sometimes things that are brought up do remind you and that is why I mention this idea if you did go with a date. Was there drinking allowed at that time?

GILLMORE: Oh, no.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, did you say this was held at the East Whittier Women's Improvement Club?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Where was it held?

GILLMORE: It was held at the Masonic Temple up . . .

ARENA: The one on Greenleaf [Avenue]?

GILLMORE: No, it was up at the Whittier Women's Clubhouse, and there was no liquor. There was never any liquor at any Rotary [Club] party until maybe the last ten years. Up until that time we never had a drop of liquor at a Rotary party.

ARENA: And this wouldn't be just because of the Quakers. This was a general rule?

GILLMORE: Well, I think there was Quaker influence there because a lot of us people were Quakers and things just weren't done that way in Whittier. We didn't have any bars in Whittier and cocktail parties weren't very common during those days. I never went to a cocktail party and none of my friends ever did. We just didn't do those things then.

ARENA: Do you recall possibly seeing the President from a distance dancing? For example, in the discussion with Mrs. [Florence] Sucksdorf, who was your friend and the wife of your cousin, Mr. Arthur Sucksdorf, she recalls dancing with him at some affair and possibly that same one.

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: It was not that same one. Well, then, he danced on more than one occasion with the ladies of acquaintance, such as you and Mrs. Sucksdorf. Well, I was just wanting to ask if you noticed him from a distance? Did he seem to be smooth?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: As well as dancing with him close up?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: And was there any feeling that this was forced or that he was not enjoying himself?

GILLMORE: I don't think so.

ARENA: Do you recall if he talked with you while dancing? Was he concentrating on his dancing? Does that come to mind?

GILLMORE: NO, I think we talked.

ARENA: Do you recall if the occasion was a dance? Was it a supper-dance? Was it a supper entertainment dance affair that the Rotary Club had?

GILLMORE: It was a supper. It wasn't an entertainment affair but they did install the new officers, and so we went through the process of demoting the . . . That's what they do. They demote the president and install the new ones, but the ones that are demoted get more attention than the new ones that are installed. They make a big issue out of that.

ARENA: Do you recall if President Nixon was a speaker or held any part in those formalities at all?

GILLMORE: He may have said a few words because he was--I don't know if he was president of the 20-30 Club or not, but I am sure he represented the 20-30 Club. He was a guest of Dr. [Horace] Wilson. He may have said a few words but he was not involved in any of the entertainment or the program.

ARENA: And his first name?

GILLMORE: We just called him Dr. Wilson.

ARENA: And I presume a medical doctor?

GILLMORE: Oh, yes, and he's been gone a good many years.

ARENA: I see.

GILLMORE: Horace--and his wife is gone too. I mean Doctor and Mrs. Wilson both have passed away.

ARENA: I do recall that on one occasion at least, and I intend to interview the person involved, the President was brought as a student guest to the Rotary Club and even spoke as the guest of his patron, the one who brought him. You don't recall that occasion or hearing anyone mention that--his speaking at the Rotary Club?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Representing Whittier College.

GILLMORE: Well, it seems to me that Bob did talk about, that Richard was there that particular day and talk. Yes, I think maybe he did say something about that.

ARENA: By Bob you mean . . .

GILLMORE: Mr. [Robert] Gillmore.

ARENA: Because your husband was a member of the Rotary Club?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: Do you recall anything else that might come to mind that he said about Richard speaking?

GILLMORE: No. You know it was just very natural to talk about Richard as a part of the family, because we lived next door to him and, of course, we didn't know he was going to be so important or we would have remembered a few more things, see.

ARENA: I have heard that by many persons I have interviewed and I will continue to hear it, I am sure. Do you recall Mr. [Francis Anthony] Frank Nixon in any way going to your father [William Frederick Mundt] concerning financial difficulties on the payment of the land he had purchased?

GILLMORE: No, I don't, and I wish I had gone down to my brother's house. He still has the book that my father kept records in, I think, from the time he was a young man. And probably in that book it will say exactly how he made his payments. I know he paid \$5000 for the acre and my father was a great one to have people pay \$35 a month, because after the depression he wasn't gonna get caught again. So when he sold land or anything, they paid him \$35 a month, which was interest and principal. That's probably the way Mr. Nixon paid it out, unless you have heard differently, have you?

ARENA: Not on that point at all. I believe this is the first time that anyone has mentioned the actual price. What I would like to know, if you don't mind, from the standpoint of seeing whether that book is still available, because obviously it would be very interesting.

GILLMORE: I will.

ARENA: Could I ask you your brother's name?

GILLMORE: Walter Mundt.

ARENA: And your brother's telephone number?

GILLMORE: 698-4925.

ARENA: Since it was common for your father to have those arrangements, it isn't likely--or is it very possible--that they were the same arrangements with Frank Nixon too?

GILLMORE: Well, I never heard my father say that any of his people didn't make their payments. You see he subdivided all that frontage there. When Mr. Nixon took that acre, the rest of the frontage on Whittier Boulevard was subdivided into lots or half acres or whatever it was, and he sold them all on this \$35 a month basis. And the five acres down below Nixon's store, that's where I lived.

ARENA: I see. You were the immediate next door neighbor?

GILLMORE: Right.

ARENA: And would this have been on what is now the Whittier Boulevard side or the Santa Gertrudes [Avenue] side?

GILLMORE: It's on the corner of Santa Gertrudes and Whittier Boulevard.

ARENA: That's where the Nixon property was itself. And which neighbor were you? You were a frontage neighbor too, I'm sure.

GILLMORE: On the Santa Gertrudes Avenue. I didn't get in on the [Whittier] Boulevard frontage.

ARENA: I see. Now this Leffingwell Ranch arrangement, did that completely surround you people?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: They completely surrounded you there.

GILLMORE: Up to Whittier Boulevard. This was part of Leffingwell Ranch. I don't know why, but they sold off maybe forty or fifty acres of the ranch, and so my father bought the ten acres which was on the corner.

ARENA: I see. Just for the sake of tying it in with what we're discussing now, your father concentrated on which crops, if I may ask, as a farmer?

GILLMORE: Oh, oranges and lemons.

ARENA: And he stayed to those throughout?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: Do you recall if Frank Nixon himself attempted to grow crops profitably on a part of that one acre?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: He did not use the land at all for that purpose? Do you recall his having any animals, including a cow for milking purposes?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Or a horse or anything like that?

GILLMORE: No, they had no animals.

ARENA: No goats either?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: He had, you may recall, come from a farm before that. It's rather interesting in a way that he went from one extreme to the other, from where he was mainly growing crops, lemons, to a case where he didn't handle them at all. Was it your impression that that land was considered good farm land?

GILLMORE: Well, it was considered good citrus land. Now, I don't know whether that would be considered good farm land. I suppose it would.

ARENA: Yes.

GILLMORE: But it was citrus; it was all citrus through there.

ARENA: Around the time that your father sold land to Frank Nixon, he sold other lots to others. How long did Frank Nixon's store remain the only store; one, the only grocery store and two, the only store or commercial enterprise of any type? How long was he surrounded by the farming community, if I make myself clear?

GILLMORE: Down the road a little ways a cafe went in, just a little lunch counter. That's the only thing that I can remember for miles and miles.

ARENA: Until about what year? Up to the war itself? Did that remain that way, just agriculture?

GILLMORE: The middle of the war.

ARENA: Well, it broke out in Europe in 1939 and then we got into it in 1941. So that year 1940 would be a good general year. Was there anything in the way of competition?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Up until the time of the war generally?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Good out of interest. The other question I had in mind was, do you recall the Knotts coming in close to any of that area too, Walter Knott of Knotts Berry Farm?

GILLMORE: Oh, no, they weren't in our area.

ARENA: They weren't in that area at all?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Somewhere along the line I did hear something to that effect. However, since Frank Nixon owned other land in other years, there might be another area that's involved.

GILLMORE: No, I didn't know that Mr. Nixon owned any of. . . . He had a lot . . .

ARENA: I was thinking of Yorba Linda for one.

GILLMORE: Oh, yes.

ARENA: That would be one area, and I think he worked areas for other people, including his father-in-law, Mr. [Franklin] Milhous had land in Lindsay [California] as well as in that immediate area, and I'm not sure if he even did work for his father in that immediate area for a while. I have heard this account that some area that was owned by Frank or near

Frank Nixon was purchased by Walter Knott, which became very profitable. I thought maybe somewhere along the line this might tie in with your . . .

GILLMORE: Well, not since we lived out there or since Nixon bought the property from my father, and I think that was about 1921 or 1922.

ARENA: When he first came, 1922.

GILLMORE: So I don't know what Mr. Nixon did before that time.

ARENA: But he was coming, as a matter of fact, from Yorba Linda, where the President had been born in 1913 and, of course, the President's father had been a farmer in that area. Why, just to clear out or make sure there's no confusion on this point, did Frank Nixon ever have any words with your father, as far as you know, concerning any of the financial aspects of that transfer of land?

GILLMORE: I don't know anything about that.

ARENA: You don't know anything about it. How did Mr. Frank Nixon and your father get along--again from your own personal experience--after that transaction? Were there ever any words or misunderstanding?

GILLMORE: I don't think so and I don't think my father ever saw him probably. My father let the bank--people went into the bank and paid him through the bank.

ARENA: I see. Do you know if Mr. Frank Nixon subletted or sold a part of that acreage to anyone else?

GILLMORE: Yes he did. He sold it to Harry Schuyler.

ARENA: I see. And was Harry Schuyler at that time representing the Leffingwell Ranch people or did he buy this personally?

GILLMORE: He bought this personally, but he was with the Leffingwell Ranch as the citrus manager. He was manager of the packing house.

ARENA: I see.

GILLMORE: You see, Mr. Nixon had, I think it was an acre. And they didn't use very much for the store, so there was quite a bit of land between their house--well probably 150 feet and maybe a little bit more than that. And Mr. Nixon didn't do anything to the land and so Harry Schuyler bought that little strip of land in there.

ARENA: And you wouldn't have any idea of the price?

GILLMORE: No. I think Nixon needed some money or something. I really don't know but there was something about it.

ARENA: Do you recall if this was during the period that Harold Nixon was ill?

GILLMORE: Well, it might have been, I don't know.

ARENA: And that might have had something to do with that situation?

GILLMORE: That's right.

ARENA: Now, from the standpoint not of business now, but from the standpoint of a pure neighbor, how were the Nixons as neighbors from all you can recollect? We discussed the Nixons as you being a customer in their store on our last interview, you might recollect. We discussed them as business contacts in a way, buying land from your father. Now everything you can remember about their being neighbors.

GILLMORE: Well, I would say probably they were the quietest neighbors we ever had. We never saw them.

ARENA: No question of piano practice or anything like that that drifted over to your area, do you recall?

GILLMORE: Oh, yes. I don't think it drifted over but when we went by we could hear it, but other than that we never saw them. I think they were just too busy working in the store, and they didn't seem to ever have company. I don't think they ever had company for dinner or any family reunions, not that I remember. They were very very quiet people.

ARENA: Do you recall ever tobacco or anything like that being sold in the store?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: And you don't recall any of the members of the family either drinking or smoking?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: I just wanted to make sure about that. Do you recall these periods when Mrs. Hannah Nixon had to be away with sick Harold [Samuel Nixon], sometimes Prescott, Arizona, and on other occasions, other areas, recommended for his health? Do you recall shopping in the store, for one thing, while Hannah was away and was that rather frequent?

GILLMORE: I don't know. When did Harold die?

ARENA: I believe that was somewhere possibly around the time the President was in high school and maybe around the time of his senior year, which would be 1929 or 1930, but I'll have to check up on that.

GILLMORE: I don't remember that Mrs. Nixon was ever away from the store, but I don't remember. She may have been. No, I don't remember.

ARENA: Do you recall if Mrs. Nixon did drive the car?

GILLMORE: No, I never saw her drive the car.

ARENA: And that would be at any time?

GILLMORE: That's right.

ARENA: You don't know if she ever did drive at all?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Do you recall any members of the family, while you were there in East Whittier, belonging to any of the social groups, maybe the library or maybe the Women's Improvement Club and her participation in any of these local social groups?

GILLMORE: No, she was an honorary member of the East Whittier Women's Club, but her mother-in-law, Mrs. [Almira Burdg] Milhous, was a member of the East Whittier Women's Club.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you what the dues were or what the assessment was at this club?

GILLMORE: Well, maybe it was \$5 a year and, of course, \$5 was a lot of money I suppose in those days. Then it went up to \$10 and now we're \$15, and I think it cost \$10 to join. It wasn't much, but I suppose at the time it was in keeping with the . . .

ARENA: Are you a charter member as a matter of fact, Anne?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: You don't recall if possibly Almira, the President's grandmother, Almira Milhous, was a charter member?

GILLMORE: Well, it seems to me that she was a charter member.

ARENA: It was founded, I understand, around 1900, maybe 1901. I have that date in the back of my mind.

GILLMORE: Let me get my book.

ARENA: You can get the actual book. Fine.

GILLMORE: I've been a member for a good many years, forty-seven I think, but they were in existence before I joined.

ARENA: I see. You have been a member for about forty-seven years and yet they were members, this is Almira, even before you?

GILLMORE: She didn't come when I was a member. She never . . .

ARENA: I see.

GILLMORE: Now we have honorary members. We have Mrs. Richard Nixon, and I didn't know she was an honorary member when I wrote for that stitchery thing. No, they don't have--they used to print the names. We were organized in 1901.

- ARENA: Do you mind reading the precise title of that little brochure?
- GILLMORE: "The East Whittier Women's Improvement Club". I don't know why the improvement. Maybe that was a good thing in those days, I don't know.
- ARENA: Do you possibly have in that brochure the aims of the society or club?
- GILLMORE: No.
- ARENA: What do you see, and do you think they've changed from the beginning; what do you see as the aims of that club?
- GILLMORE: Oh, we have a lot of charitable things that we do. We raise a lot of money for different organizations. We give to nearly all of the different things in Whittier, like the Junior Blind. They have a float for the parade and the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts and a lot of things like that, the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association].
- ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you how often your formal meetings are?
- GILLMORE: We meet the second Wednesday of each month for a luncheon and the fourth Wednesday of the month for a potluck supper, which includes the family--husbands and children. So, it's sort of a family club. We don't go in for a lot of, you know, intellectual speakers and controversial things.
- ARENA: As a member of forty-seven years standing, has that been the policy pretty much all along, which would indicate the policy when Almira was a member as well as Mrs. Frank Nixon, an honorary member?
- GILLMORE: Yes. Well, of course, they have a clubhouse here in Whittier, the Whittier Women's Club, and out in East Whittier, mostly from East Whittier belong to it, and they want us to have our husbands and the children, so once a month everybody brings something to a potluck supper and we have supper and a program that is suitable for the husbands and the children. And we've had a waiting list for years. People are very anxious

to come into our club because it is well sort of the old timers that are left and we get together and enjoy ourselves.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, do you have a general idea of what the general membership is now?

GILLMORE: We are only allowed 125 members, due to the fact that we are certain square footage according to the city of Whittier and Fire Department regulations, so we can't have more. However, we do have 150 on our mailing list because we do have some non-resident members and we have some inactive. I've gone inactive. I don't have to work any more if I don't want to.

ARENA: Does the inactive and the honorary member pay dues?

GILLMORE: I don't know whether the honorary member does, but I do everything the same, but I can't hold an office or I can't promote a new member.

ARENA: Are you allowed to vote?

GILLMORE: Oh, yes. And I don't want to hold office. I'm a past president.

ARENA: I was about to ask, were you ever an officer? You are a past president. Are presidents elected every year for a term of office?

GILLMORE: Uh huh.

ARENA: To what extent has your club brought some changes into the community? For example, you could maybe nail down some general information. I've heard that it was your club that helped to preserve the Pio Pico mansion and helped to interest the state into making it a historical landmark. Did you have anything personally to do with that?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Were you in office or were you a member at the time possibly?

GILLMORE: I possibly was.

ARENA: But you don't recall that specific question coming up?

GILLMORE: Well, I remember something about this walnut tree down here.

ARENA: That would be another thing, this walnut tree.

GILLMORE: And I remember something about the Pio Pico place.

ARENA: Would you mind giving what you do know about the background of this walnut tree that your club helped to preserve?

GILLMORE: I don't know nothing about the background of that tree.

ARENA: Except that it's quite a striking one, very large.

GILLMORE: Beautiful.

ARENA: The problem was that it is right in the middle of a main thoroughfare.

GILLMORE: That's right.

ARENA: That was the problem, but they were successful in getting the road, and it is Whittier Boulevard, to be constructed around it and not destroy it. Now that East Whittier is a part of Whittier proper, has that made any difference at all in the way of membership? For example, even in the East Whittier name, when that was a separate community, were there members? Well there would be if we say that Grandmother Almira was a member, because that was considered . . .

GILLMORE: East Whittier.

ARENA: Oh, was the Milhous ranch, under Franklin Milhous, considered in East Whittier then?

GILLMORE: Well, I'm pretty sure it was. It was below Whittier Boulevard.

ARENA: That's right. In other words if it was on the other side of the [Whittier] Boulevard, that would have been considered outside of Whittier proper and in the East Whittier limits?

GILLMORE: Uh huh.

ARENA: I see. Because it was certainly on the other side, the area that is now the Quad.

GILLMORE: That was not Whittier.

ARENA: Do you recall about what date that does become Whittier, all of these places?

GILLMORE: Oh, mercy no, I don't remember.

ARENA: Was it before the war, as far as you know? For example when President Nixon was a lawyer.

GILLMORE: No, I think it was after the war because then people started to build and they were building out there and subdividing the orchards, digging up the trees and subdividing and then they finally went into the city limits of Whittier. During the war, you see, we didn't build at all.

ARENA: Do you recall, speaking of the war period, and the special problems that this meant for the ordinary store owner, especially a grocery store owner such as Frank Nixon, do you recall the rationing and the difficulty of obtaining goods and how this affected your purchases at the Nixon grocery, or were you not living in the area at the time? And the war years would be '40 through '45.

GILLMORE: Well, we left out there in '43 because the OPA [Office of Price Administration] wouldn't give us gasoline to drive in, which was five miles out there and five miles in, ten miles a day, and my husband was a lawyer and then he had to go to the courthouse in Los Angeles [California]. Well, the OPA said we could use the bus. They wouldn't give us the gasoline, so we finally had to sell our place and move into Whittier. That was the reason we came inside Whittier was on account of the OPA. So that's what the war did to us.

ARENA: I see.

GILLMORE: And, you know, I'm a great believer in "everything is for the best." So maybe it was for the best. I don't know.

ARENA: Do you ever recall speaking with the President about his experiences with the OPA? You may or may not know that that was the thing that brought him to Washington, to work in the OPA office.

GILLMORE: And then, of course, he was gone and went into the Navy. And so, no.

ARENA: You don't recall that ever coming up?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Do you recall speaking with Frank Nixon or Hannah Nixon about their particular relations or problems with the OPA business?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: You don't recall their complaining in particular about OPA regulations or things like that?

GILLMORE: We probably all did complain but I don't remember.

ARENA: There was nothing unusual or out of the ordinary. Do you recall difficulties stemming from the gasoline business that Frank had? Do you recall possibly that he might have shut down his gasoline pumps?

GILLMORE: Oh, no, he shut that down long before that, because too many people were asking for groceries, so he went into the grocery business and he didn't have enough boys to take care of the gasoline business, so they just closed the gasoline business entirely.

ARENA: I see. Do you have any idea how important financially that gasoline business was to him along this period, even from the very beginning? Was it a main source of income do you think?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: It was, especially during the beginning part, when he first opened up the grocery store?

GILLMORE: Uh huh.

ARENA: Because I believe it was you who said that was the only gasoline station for miles around and certainly the only one in East Whittier.

GILLMORE: Yes. And the people wanted groceries along with their gasoline, so that's how he started with the groceries.

ARENA: Do you recall if there was anything like a credit arrangement on the gasoline as well as with the purchase of groceries?

GILLMORE: That I don't know because we never bought our gasoline there. I don't know why we didn't.

ARENA: Maybe that particular brand was something your husband didn't like.

GILLMORE: I don't remember.

ARENA: But it would not have been anything personal against Frank Nixon because you did continue to buy there.

GILLMORE: No, no.

ARENA: Other things in the grocery store.

GILLMORE: I assume they were all--no not necessarily because there were a lot of Mexicans and people who worked at the Leffingwell Ranch and the Murphy Ranch that were paid regularly, but the citrus growers, they paid their bills when the crops came in.

ARENA: On the question of the gasoline, by the way, do you recall some of the persons, or were you aware that Frank Nixon did lease this out. For example, someone like Merle West . . .

GILLMORE: No, I don't believe he ever leased it out.

ARENA: But there were these youngsters working there?

GILLMORE: Well, this West was and this other boy . . .

- ARENA: That's right, there was, oh, I beg your pardon. Russell Harrison, Jr., worked there, helped out in the gasoline station and knew cars quite a bit.
- GILLMORE: But there was this boy who worked in the grocery store who was also . . .
- ARENA: There was a [Thomas T.] Tom Seulke who worked there.
- GILLMORE: That's it, Tom.
- ARENA: And did he help out in the sale of gasoline too? Would they interchange between selling gas and groceries?
- GILLMORE: Well, I don't remember much about the gasoline because I think by the time I moved out there they were through with the gasoline then. I don't think that gasoline business lasted more than a year or two and then he went into the grocery business. I don't think.
- ARENA: Do you recall any particular emergency due to bad flooding or bad storms that dealt the store a really severe blow during this period?
- GILLMORE: No.
- ARENA: You do recall some flooding though where water came up possibly to the front steps, or do you?
- GILLMORE: Well, I remember one time I looked out of my window and the whole road was covered with water, so I'm sure they got it, because they were right off of the boulevard, and it was just a little slope on the way down past our house. And, yes, it probably came up to their front steps, because their house was practically level on the ground and they probably had only one step to go in. And I don't know what happened to that house. It was a two-story house that they lived in.
- ARENA: And this was one apart from the church which had been purchased?
- GILLMORE: And this faced Santa Gertrudes Avenue. It was right down below the gasoline station. But that house disappeared and I don't recall when it disappeared.

ARENA: Of course, you were away you say after 1943. You moved away in 1943.

GILLMORE: Came up on North Friends [Avenue].

ARENA: To Whittier and I didn't catch the name.

GILLMORE: Up on North Friends we went.

ARENA: North Friends Avenue. Where is that in relationship, say, to the Methodist Church at Friends and Bailey [Street]?

GILLMORE: It was up the street. We were the second house from Beverly Boulevard south, on the east side of the street. And I lived there until I came down here. And my brother still lives in the same house that we came. We came from Iowa in 1909 and he still lives in the same house on the corner of Mar Vista [Street] and Pickering [Avenue].

ARENA: Would Mar Vista and Pickering, that would be considered Whittier still, wouldn't it?

GILLMORE: Oh, yes. And it went then from Pickering down to Whittier Boulevard. It didn't used to do that. My brother had ten acres in there and they took what they needed to go down to the boulevard.

ARENA: I know, as you said, that Mar Vista goes right to the boulevard, as well as Pickering, of course, and crosses it. Does Mar Vista cross over to the other side as well, do you recall?

GILLMORE: I don't think it does.

ARENA: If it does, it certainly does not use that name. And it was your original father's land that is involved here that your brother operated.

GILLMORE: Still living on it.

ARENA: I see.

GILLMORE: We owned from Pickering to Whittier Boulevard, and the railroad came along and took a little strip off. And then we had citrus in there and then when the city decided to put Mar Vista through, they took another acre the other way. So my brother finally sold the frontage and Southern Counties Gas Company is on the back end of his property.

ARENA: Do you recall if your father, or if he mentioned, that he came with friends that would help him when he got here? Were there members of your father's family here ahead of him?

GILLMORE: Yes, Orville [G. Espolt], my father's cousin.

ARENA: I see. And Orville Espolt as you know is very interested in local history and that would be one of the reasons is this old connection. Do you happen to know how long he had been here before your father?

GILLMORE: Well, I think they came in about 1896 or '97 that his folks came.

ARENA: I see, which would have been around the same time as President Nixon's grandfather, Franklin Milhous. And when did your father pick up the land that he sold to Frank Nixon, if you can recollect?

GILLMORE: Well, after we lived here, my father bought six acres on Beverly Boulevard past Norwalk Boulevard and then I don't know how he got in touch with Leffingwell Ranch, but they offered that for sale and my father bought that.

ARENA: Because of the ringing of grandfather's clock--maybe that's a sign of something--do you mind repeating that again to be sure we have it on tape. When do you think your father did pick up the land that eventually he sold to Frank Nixon?

GILLMORE: Well, I'll tell you, Harry Schuyler could tell you that. I really don't know. I went away to college in 1919 and we had it then, so he must have gotten it before then, maybe 1915 or '16 somewhere in there.

ARENA: I see. Had your father developed this land in any way at all, or was it just as he purchased it?

GILLMORE: No, no, it was lemons.

ARENA: It was lemons at the time that he sold it? From your knowledge--and I imagine it's a common sense thing and maybe I know the answer ahead of time, but I would like to hear it from a person like you firsthand--land that had been improved would be more valuable than land that had not been improved, or is that necessarily the case? The fact that your father had improved the land made it that much more valuable.

GILLMORE: I don't remember any land not being improved around here. Everything was in citrus.

ARENA: In this area?

GILLMORE: In this area. I don't think there was any unimproved land around.

ARENA: I see. It is interesting that in some parts of California, possibly near Lancaster [California] there was land that people managed that needed improvement, and maybe this was land that at one time had been improved or needed to be changed, but I did get the impression that one of the Milhous sons, Ezra [Charles Milhous] was employed as a manager of some of these lands, and I thought maybe this might be a similar situation. But as far as you know, your father's ownership of land and purchase of land always involved land that had already been improved?

GILLMORE: Oh, yes, as I say, there wasn't any unimproved land around here.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: Anne, may I raise that question again about any other matter that I haven't covered on this interview that comes to mind, and I believe you just mentioned recollecting Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Pat Nixon helping out in the store. Whatever you have to contribute about not only Pat Nixon's working in the store but any aspect of your contact with her would be very valuable.

GILLMORE: Well, the only contact I had with her was up in the store, and she was just beautiful. We always just thought to have such a good looking clerk in the store

and she always wore beautiful pinafore aprons. She was just a picture. It was a pleasure. That's the only time I ever really had any contact with Pat.

ARENA: Would this have been during the war years after or before, do you recollect?

GILLMORE: It was probably right after they got married and, of course, he was a lawyer then.

ARENA: That's right, and they were married in 1940 and then he left in that same year for Washington, but for a while, of course, they remained here. Do you happen to recall dealing with her personally, and how was she as a person to deal with?

GILLMORE: Oh, yes. Well, she was a very fine clerk and, of course, in those days we didn't go look for our own groceries like we do now. She would go get them and put them in the sack and she was very pleasant. We always enjoyed having her wait on us. Not that the rest of them weren't the same way, but it was kind of fun to have Pat wait on us.

ARENA: Did she seem to be as efficient and as at home in handling the merchandise as were the other members?

GILLMORE: Yes, she was.

ARENA: Were you aware at the time that she had been a teacher in the Whittier High School and was she at that particular time, if you recall discussing that with her, that she had been a teacher?

GILLMORE: Oh, I knew she had been a teacher because this Elizabeth Cloes was a teacher out at Lowell School and she and Pat went to the Community Players together, and I used to have Miss Cloes for dinner once a week and then sometimes she would go to the Community Play practice with Richard. And she talked about, she sat in the middle of the car, the three of them were sitting in the front seat, and that Richard proposed to Pat and Elizabeth was sitting in the middle of the two.

ARENA: Do you recall her telling you just how that proposal went?

GILLMORE: No, no, I didn't know how it went.

ARENA: Now to make sure, Miss Elizabeth Cloes, it is Mrs. now?

GILLMORE: No, Miss.

ARENA: It still is Miss Elizabeth Cloes?

GILLMORE: I think so.

ARENA: And she taught at the high school also?

GILLMORE: No, she taught at Lowell School.

ARENA: At Lowell School. Then the lady I mentioned a moment ago who taught at Lowell School, Mrs. [Ethel] Garliepp, would very likely know her.

GILLMORE: Oh, yes.

ARENA: And her whereabouts, and as far as you know she is living now?

GILLMORE: Oh, yes, she is living. Yes.

ARENA: Fine, because she certainly would be worth contacting.

GILLMORE: I think I have her address here.

ARENA: That would be fine. Then before I leave I would like to see if you do have it.

GILLMORE: Okay.

ARENA: She would be a most worthwhile contact. Is there anything else you can recall about that subject now that it has come up. In other words the courtship of Miss Patricia Ryan by one Richard Nixon. Is there anything else that comes to mind concerning that courtship?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: I believe I did ask you and I just want to make sure whether or not you ever attended any of these plays in which both Pat and Richard Nixon were?

GILLMORE: I don't know whether I did or not. I know we used to go to the plays, but I can't remember whether they were in them or not.

ARENA: Do you recall that Mrs. Pat Nixon in the store discussed any of these items at any point?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Did she discuss Richard Nixon's law practice or anything connected with him?

GILLMORE: No, not to me anyway.

ARENA: Do you recall her relations with the different members of the family from your position as a customer and a next door neighbor?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Do you recall that there were unpleasant relations?

GILLMORE: Oh, no.

ARENA: You never got the impression that there were unpleasant relations?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Do you recall that she was living, and Richard, in the store at the time, or in the living quarters in the building?

GILLMORE: No, as I remember they lived on Beverly Boulevard in a--I think there were five or six little apartments there and I think they lived in one of those apartments. I think.

ARENA: Yes, there were several moves, I think, by Richard and Pat Nixon. On one occasion, and you might know about this period, they lived above a garage in La Habra [California].

GILLMORE: Oh, no, I don't know about that.

ARENA: As a matter of fact when they were first married, that was their first apartment, and that was mentioned by your cousin this morning, and he mentioned the name of the person who owned the apartment who is now deceased.

GILLMORE: Do you know who it was?

ARENA: I don't but I'm sure he does. It just doesn't come to mind. He did mention it and it was atop a garage.

ARENA: Is there anything else about Mrs. Patricia Nixon that comes to mind?

GILLMORE: No. I have a lovely letter from her. I made her a Squaw dress when she was the Vice President's wife, and I have a very nice letter from her thanking me for sending her the dress.

ARENA: Would you mind spelling that word, Squaw dress, and for the laymen, and I mean men especially in this case, describe what a squaw dress is. Would you spell the word first?

GILLMORE: S Q U A W, an Indian squaw.

ARENA: Same idea as . . .

GILLMORE: Indian squaw. If you'll take about five seconds, I'll go get my squaw dress and show you what type a dress that it is so you can see.

ARENA: In addition to that though what's more important is as much as possible describe the nature of the dress.

GILLMORE: Okay, it's a skirt that's made in three tiers and the bottom is eight yards, and the next tier is four yards and the next tier is two yards, all stitched with gold and silver braid, and the blouse has some gold and silver braid on it.

ARENA: It's a complete dress and not just a skirt?

GILLMORE: It's a complete dress, uh huh.

ARENA: And are there, as we have in certain women's clothing, and it's a solid color?

GILLMORE: Solid color.

ARENA: And the stitching that you mention would be around the hem or around the . . .

GILLMORE: On these different tiers and would have gold and silver rickrack and then fancy braid and then some more gold and silver rickrack. And they were very decorative, very beautiful.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, were these dresses worn by Squaws or is there another reason for the term?

GILLMORE: No, they were worn by the Indians. They were made that way, so the Americans copied it and made a version that we all could wear.

ARENA: And this was popular around that time?

GILLMORE: Yes, and Senator [Barry M.] Goldwater I know had a picture taken of all of his girls that worked for him that wore their squaw dresses, and they were all sitting on the steps of some building in Washington, D. C.

ARENA: If I may ask, bearing in mind the changing nature of women's length fashions, what length did these come to?

GILLMORE: They were about six inches below the knee.

ARENA: At that point. Do you know if this style is in any way making a comeback now?

GILLMORE: I think it is.

ARENA: If you don't mind and if it isn't too much trouble, I would like to see it and describe it from a man's point of view for the tape.

GILLMORE: I will do that.

ARENA: And thank you very much for obtaining this example of a squaw dress. As I see, this is a two piece, in that you have what appears to be a separate blouse and a separate skirt, but in actual effect, does it become a one piece. They are sewed together. They are not maintained in two pieces. Is there any reason why this is two piece?

GILLMORE: No, there's no reason why.

ARENA: It should be one solid piece. Another thing I would say you have, is that called a wide open collar, or is there a special women's designation for that type of collar?

GILLMORE: There's no collar at all.

ARENA: No collar. That's what I mean. And how does one designate that?

GILLMORE: Well, it's just a "V" shape.

ARENA: It's a "V" shaped open neck, would you say?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: And this material, you mentioned something special about that. It's called cotton georgette. And I believe you said that was the same type of material, only in the case of Mrs. Pat Nixon instead of it being a rose color as this is, the one you made for her was . . .

GILLMORE: . . . a lovely shade of blue. It wasn't dark and it wasn't light. It was just a pretty shade of blue, maybe more on the light side.

ARENA: What gave you the idea, one, to do this and secondly that she might be interested in that style and that dress?

GILLMORE: Well, they were just coming into being, the squaw dresses, and altogether I made eighty during my time.

ARENA: Eighty?

GILLMORE: Eighty of them for my friends and my friends' friends. So Bob said one day, "Gee, you're making so many squaw dresses, why don't you make one for Pat Nixon?" And I said, "Well, why don't I?" So I made one for Pat Nixon.

ARENA: And about when was this Anne?

GILLMORE: Well, it must have been about 1952 or '53.

ARENA: Just around the time that he was running or was Vice President?

GILLMORE: He was Vice President.

ARENA: He was Vice President at the time. Would you happen to have the letter in which Pat Nixon acknowledged this gift?

GILLMORE: Uh huh.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you about how old this dress, this particular model is? Would this be the same year possibly?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: As the one you made for Mrs. Nixon?

GILLMORE: That's right.

ARENA: It looks in very good shape. A girl could wear that now or would it be . . .

GILLMORE: I wore it the other night. Everybody's wearing all these crazy things, so I thought, I'll get out my squaw dress.

ARENA: Very interesting. And now you're about to read.

GILLMORE: You read it.

ARENA: The "Thank You" letter from Mrs. Pat Nixon. And I notice at the very top in printed block letters is Mrs. Richard Nixon. There is a date at the very end

of the letter, just June 12. And possibly you have the postmark of the envelope which would have the year. And according to this, the postmark is Washington, D. C., June 14, 12-M, 1954. And the return address on the envelope is Mrs. Richard Nixon, 4801 Tilden Street, N.W. (standing for Northwest), Washington, D. C. I will now read this letter into the tape:

"Dear Mrs. Gillmore:" (And if I'm not mistaken Mrs. Gillmore this is the correct spelling of your name too that she has.) "The dress you sent to me just arrived and I hasten to write to let you know how beautiful I think it is and how delighted I was to receive it. Every detail about the dress is perfect, your superb workmanship, the fit, the soft blue shade of the fabric and the unusual and attractive braid. From my sewing experience I realize the thought and the hours of work you put into making this dress and consequently I appreciate it even more. Through the folks we hear about you. However, I hope we will be able to be in Whittier this summer so that we can have a real visit and so that I can model my dress and at the same time thank you personally. In the meantime my appreciation for your thoughtfulness and kindness! Sincerely, Pat."

If I may, could I ask you how you were able to make such a perfect fit for an absent model? Had you gotten the measurements from Mrs. Hannah Nixon?

GILLMORE: Right.

ARENA: And if you don't mind, was this through her showing you some former clothing of hers?

GILLMORE: No, all I need to make a squaw dress is to have your waist measure and your bust measure and the length, because there is no fit to them really. It is a gathered skirt. It just goes around your waist and you know if you are a size fourteen or size twelve or whatever.

ARENA: You have been interested in sewing at least since this period and possibly even earlier. Do you mind if I ask you to explain a kind of current interest that you have and the East Whittier Women's Improvement Club in holding the Stitchery Arts Exhibit? Would you explain what this exhibit is all about?

GILLMORE: Well, the reason we are having the exhibit is to pay off the debt on our East Whittier club and we are always thinking about new ways of getting money. And I

had been in Phoenix [Arizona]. I attended a stitchery thing there, which was a much bigger stitchery affair than we're having and they had Julie Eisenhower's Great Seal there. So I came home and told the East Whittier garden section about it, and consequently I got the job of running the stitchery thing. And that's why we're having it. And so I wrote to Nixons to see if we could have Julie's Great Seal and they wrote back and said they would be very happy to let us have it. So that's an added attraction for our Stitchery Exhibit.

ARENA: I notice the date for this exhibit is Thursday, November 18, 1971, from 11:00 to 4:00 p.m. Would you happen to know from your own recollection that Mrs. Patricia Nixon was interested in sewing? Did she sew her own clothes around the time you knew that she was working in the store, for example?

GILLMORE: I don't know. I know she had an awfully cute pinafore apron on and I'm sure she made it because I don't think at that time you could buy anything as cute as what she used to wear.

ARENA: Do you recall other personality characteristics? For example, how did she keep her hair; was she soft-spoken; was she so soft-spoken that you could not hear her; was she businesslike and courteous and not in a rush when she looked after you and the other customers? How would you describe her?

GILLMORE: I would say she was very businesslike and very neat, and she was just great.

ARENA: And as far as you recall her appearance at the store was just on Saturdays?

GILLMORE: That's right.

ARENA: Would that be the busiest day of the week usually?

GILLMORE: Yes, I think so.

ARENA: Was there any other experience on any occasion that you had with members of the Nixon family, including their own children, Julie [Nixon] and Tricia [Nixon]?

GILLMORE: No, I think I told you about the time I took them for a ride when Richard was first nominated for the Vice Presidency. They were out here in Whittier with the Nixons, and I went out there to see if I could help them in any way and Mrs. Nixon suggested I take them down to the store, because Julie and Tricia were scared of the Secret Service men. They were everywhere. And so I took the two little girls of the Nixons for a ride. And that's the only other experience. I think Tricia was about four and the other one about two.

ARENA: Thank you. Are they a list of other papers and documents that deal with the President?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: Would you describe and not read but more or less describe the individual documents that you have?

GILLMORE: Well, my husband used to write to Richard quite often and Richard always answered every letter, and so there are letters here from Dick and I had several from Pat. She used to always acknowledge the birthday greetings. I always sent her a birthday greeting. And, well, there's one letter here in 1958 that Bob wrote something about Charles E. Merrill to Richard Nixon. I don't know whether you know who Charles Merrill was. You know Merrill Lynch Pierce Fenner & Company. Well, this is Mr. Charles Merrill of Merrill Lynch & Company, and Bob wrote to Richard because Mr. Merrill had given the American Legion of Whittier a flag, and I think Bob wrote to Richard and said, "Get in contact with Charles Merrill. He also belongs to the same Legion Post you belong to and maybe he can do something for them," because after all Mr. Merrill was an influential man.

ARENA: Was your husband also a member of that same Legion Post?

GILLMORE: Yes, and also a Past Commander.

ARENA: Do you recall your husband or you ever attending a Legion affair in which possibly the President was a speaker?

GILLMORE: No. I didn't go to many Legion affairs. They didn't have any affairs except their Legion meetings. They never had any dinners or anything like that.

ARENA: Do you recall if they had, as some Legion Posts do, drinking or a bar in this particular one?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Do you happen to know if that Legion Post still occupies the same building it did in President Nixon's period? And do you happen to know about when he joined? Was it immediately after the war that President Nixon joined the American Legion?

GILLMORE: I really don't know that, and I don't know if it's still down on south Greenleaf [Avenue] or not.

ARENA: But that's where it was located at the time, south Greenleaf?

GILLMORE: Uh huh, down there by the Fire Department. It may still be there, I don't know.

ARENA: Do you recall possibly what action was taken on the basis of that letter, if the President did get in touch with Mr. Merrill?

GILLMORE: That I don't know either.

ARENA: And some of the other correspondence or articles you have there, Mrs. Gillmore?

GILLMORE: Well, this is a dinner we attended. I don't know. I went to it. "The Honorable Richard Nixon, Vice President of the United States, 1958."

ARENA: And there is no occasion mentioned? It is just a dinner?

GILLMORE: Well, I guess he was just here to give a talk. It was a big affair. They had an awful lot of people there. It says, "The United Republic Finance Committee," sponsored by The United Republic . . .

ARENA: It could have been in preparation for the coming campaign as President.

GILLMORE: Probably. And this one you saw the other day, the one that had the picture of Richard when he came out to Whittier College to dedicate something. And then you saw this one . . .

ARENA: That would be early campaign literature.

GILLMORE: And this is the one I said on here, "Some day he probably will be the President of the United States." You know I told you about that one.

ARENA: Early campaign literature in which you made your own personal comments.

GILLMORE: Yes. I said, "We think he'll be the President some day." I wrote on this. You can see how long ago that was. You can tell by the children.

ARENA: Yes, they're both very young.

GILLMORE: So I saved them all. I've got to have that picture.

ARENA: The photograph that you're looking at now is a large color photo showing the marriage of Tricia Nixon [Cox] and the President, of course, is behind Mrs. Nixon. Looking at that do you see in her, from your recollection of Mrs. Pat Nixon working in the Nixon grocery store, do you see a close resemblance? And, of course, you can only tell so much from a photograph, but can you see the Nixons in that picture of Tricia?

GILLMORE: Yes.

ARENA: In what sense?

GILLMORE: Well, maybe it's the smallness of Tricia, cause Pat really was a very small person and the daintiness or something and I think Julie is like her father. I think that resemblance is there.

ARENA: Would the phrase "quiet power" or "quiet strength" seem to fit Mrs. Patricia Nixon from your personal recollection of her in the store?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: It's easy to see that now where she has had to put up with so much, in the Venezuela tour where there was real danger to life and limb, but going back to that period, did she seem to give that impression?

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: Not at all?

GILLMORE: She didn't to me.

ARENA: What impression did you get?

GILLMORE: Well, I just thought she was a very beautiful woman.

ARENA: Did she seem, as a matter of fact, fragile and maybe a strong wind would blow her over?

GILLMORE: No, she wasn't fragile looking to me. She was just a very pretty woman, just the right size, everything about her.

ARENA: Is there anything else you would like to add in this second interview that we haven't brought up concerning the brothers of the President, Edward [Calvert Nixon] and Donald [Francis Nixon] . . .

GILLMORE: No.

ARENA: . . . which we possibly did not discuss in the first interview? Then I want to thank you again for your most kind cooperation in contributing to the history of the President and his times, history which will be maintained in the Presidential Library, known as the Richard Nixon Library-Museum. Thank you very much, Anne.

GILLMORE: You're welcome.