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Harriett Hudspeth (November 2, 1971)

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

MRS. HARRIETT L. HUDSPETH

November 2, 1971
Whittier, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is an interview with Mrs. Stewart Hudspeth. Her maiden name is Harriett Palmer. And your city and state now, Mrs. Hudspeth?

HUDSPETH: We live in Shady Cove, Oregon.

ARENA: And today's date is November 2, 1971. Just to be sure about the address, would you mind giving your mailing address?

HUDSPETH: Post Office Box 735, Shady Cove, Oregon, 97539.

ARENA: Shady Cove, which is near Medford [Oregon]. And your telephone?

HUDSPETH: 878-2266.

ARENA: And the area code, if you recall?

HUDSPETH: 503, I believe.

ARENA: This is Arena interviewing. This interview is being held in Whittier, California. Would you mind giving us an idea where and, if you don't mind, when you were born?

HUDSPETH: Near Newcastle, Indiana, 1912.

ARENA: For the record, so you have an idea of how that ties in with the biography of the President, he was born in 1913.

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: What, and about when, brought you to California, if I may ask?

HUDSPETH: My grandparents owned an orange ranch in East Whittier, and encouraged my father and mother to move to East Whittier and my folks bought a young orange orchard.

ARENA: Do you happen to know or recall that the President's family then, also, on his mother's side came from Indiana--North Vernon as a matter of fact? Would you happen to know if there was any contact between your family and the President's grandparents or any of his ancestors?

HUDSPETH: Not at that time. After we came to Whittier. . . . We are Quakers and belonged to the same denomination and knew his grandmother [Almira Milhous]. She went to the Whittier Friends Church and we were members of the East Whittier Friends Church.

ARENA: Do you recall--and if you mentioned it, excuse me for asking it again--when your folks did come to California?

HUDSPETH: 1916.

ARENA: And I didn't catch for sure, was it your parents or grandparents who came out?

HUDSPETH: My grandparents came first and then my father and mother and the family came when I was just very young.

ARENA: Then you recall East Whittier much better than Newcastle?

HUDSPETH: Yes, I most certainly do.

ARENA: To get the overall picture, how long did you remain in East Whittier after you came here?

HUDSPETH: Until my marriage in 1935.

ARENA: I see. And will you give a general idea of your educational background, including the names of the schools, if you can recollect?

HUDSPETH: I graduated from East Whittier Grammar School in 1926 and Whittier Union High School in 1930, and went to Los Angeles Junior College for a year, and had eight months nurses training in the Methodist Hospital in L.A. [Los Angeles].

ARENA: Did you happen to have any of the same classes with President Nixon in Whittier Union High School, as he graduated the same year as you did, I note.

HUDSPETH: Yes, we were, I believe, in English III and Latin I or II, but in grammar school we were in the sixth grade together. He came from Yorba Linda when we were in the sixth grade, and we were in the sixth and seventh and eighth grades.

ARENA: I see. Not only did you attend the same schools, but you were in the same classes. What I'm doing now, so you have an idea, is to get the overall picture of your contact, and then we'll go back and ask questions in detail about these general points that we're raising now. Then, of course, on the college level there was no direct contact, in that you did go to a different college. As you know, he went to Whittier College. However, did you ever attend any football games and possibly saw him in some of them, or any Whittier College social functions or theatrical functions, because he appeared in some of the plays? Do you recall that?

HUDSPETH: His father [Francis Anthony Nixon] took us to a football game in Los Angeles when he was playing second string, I think, at Fullerton High School. His father took my father, Ernest Palmer, and me to this game, and it was exciting because it was played in Los Angeles, and that was an honor to be chosen to play in L.A., you know.

ARENA: Actually, then, you saw him play football on the high school level?

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: Fine. We'll get back to that later on, for sure. And there was nothing though during this college period, between 1930 and 1934, that you recall in the way of firsthand observations of the President in any college-connected function:

HUDSPETH: No. I worked for his mother in the summer of 1930. Mrs. [Hannah Milhous] Nixon hired me to take care of Edward [Calvert Nixon]. (Not sure how old he was. Only a few months). Yes, and I remember him. Well, I knew him in church at that time but not in school.

ARENA: I see. Did you happen to attend any religious services where he either sang or played an instrument, played the piano?

HUDSPETH: Yes, he accompanied me when I sang a solo once, in Sunday School, I believe, or church.

ARENA: That we will get back to in more detail--wonderful. And there is this direct religious contact--fine. How about, Mrs. Hudspeth, any post-college contact, say in his capacity as a lawyer, on one side, was there any contact in that way at all, or had you left the community, including Whittier?

HUDSPETH: No. I remember when he was practicing law, we were just about to have our second baby, Warren [Hudspeth], and I met him at the elevator. His law office was in the same building as our doctor's office, and he walked up the street with us, and he was so excited because he had a complimentary ticket to the Rose Bowl game, and he was pretty excited. And whenever I see him being honored at these games, I think back on this time when he was so excited because he received a complimentary ticket.

ARENA: They are still something to get excited about, I understand. Then, was there any contact with him, again directly or indirectly, during this legal period, that did not tie in with law, necessarily, but you might know, for example, that he appeared in some plays with the Whittier Community Players? Do you recollect, possibly, seeing him in any of those plays?

HUDSPETH: No. Our social life was very limited when our children were small. We didn't go to too many of those activities.

ARENA: By the way, to make sure of the pre-college contact, in addition to having classes with him, do you recall his appearance, we'll say, in debating events, on any level?

HUDSPETH: Oh, yes. Many times we've cheered him on, when he was up pounding the table to emphasize some point that he wanted to get across. He usually won the debate.

ARENA: That's fine. Still by way of asking general questions, so we have the range of your contact with the President, is there any contact during the military years, from 1940 to 1945? This is after he left the area, after the legal office period, and then went into military service? No letters that you received or that you read about, or anything like that?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: Now, could we go back to the other contact with the members of the Nixon-Milhous family? For example, you worked in the store, which was practically home, since they lived, of course, so close to the store.

HUDSPETH: Only a few times. My duties were in the home taking care of Edward in the house, doing the housework. Their home was definitely separated from the store. I had just graduated from high school and was getting ready to go to college.

ARENA: I see. And that was the summer of 1930, your year of graduation. Fine. Now, were there any other contacts like that? For example, do you recall having Sunday School class with Mr. Frank Nixon as a Sunday School teacher, or anything like that?

HUDSPETH: No, but Mrs. Hannah Nixon was my teacher.

ARENA: Mrs. Hannah Nixon. Fine. Now, was there any contact with--well, of course, there's the direct contact with young Eddie--how about the other brothers, including the deceased boy [Harold Samuel Nixon] and Arthur [Burdg Nixon]?

HUDSPETH: Yes, when Harold had to go to Prescott, Arizona, for his health, many of us corresponded with him to keep his spirits up; he was very grateful. He sent me a

copy of some music they had there, some special music for Prescott, Arizona, and I still have the music. I thought it was real nice that he was that considerate when he was so sick.

ARENA: Did he possibly send any poetry? In some interview it has come out that he did send poems. Do you have any recollection of any correspondence in which there might have been some of his own poems, or some that he just quoted?

HUDSPETH: No, I can't remember. I didn't keep his letters or anything. I can't remember.

ARENA: That will be an interesting question for the historical record. As a matter of fact, do you have any of the personal letters of any of the family?

HUDSPETH: Well, I have of President Nixon when he was Senator, Vice President and President.

ARENA: And these are still in your possession?

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: Now, we mentioned the two brothers. How about the other brother that is still living, Donald [Francis Donald Nixon], of course.

HUDSPETH: Oh, yes, Don and Clara Jane [Nixon]. We're good friends.

ARENA: And the wife, Clara Jane. Now, we'll move even further beyond the immediate family and go to the relatives of the President's mother's side, Hannah Nixon. There were her various sisters, Mrs. [Rose Olive] Marshburn, now; Mrs. [Janel] Beeson, the music teacher; Mrs. [Martha] Gibbons, who was the nurse, and Mrs. [Elizabeth] Harrison, who died, I believe, after the birth of Russell Harrison, Jr.

HUDSPETH: No, I don't believe you're right there, because he has two younger sisters. He had two sisters. Lucille Harrison Parsons . . .

ARENA: Yes, Lucille Parsons.

HUDSPETH: . . . and Rosellen [Harrison] who died. And then she, Mrs. Elizabeth Harrison became ill. I don't believe it was from childbirth.

ARENA: And I notice you're nodding your head, so you were in contact with these relatives too in a direct way?

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: Are there any I've left out on the sisters? For example, I recall now there's the brother, Ezra [Charles] Milhous.

HUDSPETH: I knew his son, Charles [Eric Milhous].

ARENA: Charles Eric?

HUDSPETH: I'm not sure of the middle name.

ARENA: There is a Charles Milhous, of course.

HUDSPETH: Yes. He has a distant cousin, son of Frank [Franklin] Milhous whose name is Charles Milhous.

ARENA: Yes. So we'll have to be sure, but this would be the son of Ezra. All right. Would there be any other brothers or sisters, such as that? I believe there is a Griffith [William] Milhous, by the way.

HUDSPETH: He was my first music teacher.

ARENA: Oh, fine. I don't recall if he was a half-brother possibly.

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: He was.

HUDSPETH: No, I can't say for sure. I knew that there were some of the children who were not fully related. But Griffith was my first music teacher. (Half-brother is correct).

ARENA: And there's no doubt you knew Mr. Frank Nixon, the President's father, and what about any of the relatives on Frank's side? His brother, Dr. Ernest [Nixon] for example, from Pennsylvania. Of course, he did not live here, but he visited occasionally. You never did meet him?

HUDSPETH: I don't think I ever met him.

ARENA: Or any of the Nixon relatives, his children or brothers that were here from time to time? Does the name Wildermuth ring a bell? A Wildermuth now is in Fullerton.

HUDSPETH: Yes, I've heard of him but I don't know him.

ARENA: Not as clearly as the others. Fine.

HUDSPETH: We knew the Beeson boys.

ARENA: Oh, there's Alden--Joseph Alden Beeson.

HUDSPETH: Yes, and . . .

ARENA: Sheldon [Chantry Beeson] who is now in Long Beach [California].

HUDSPETH: Yes, Sheldon and Dorothy [Beeson].

ARENA: And Dorothy. Now we'll move one step further back and see if you had any contact with the President's grandparents. There would be Grandfather Franklin Milhous . .

HUDSPETH: No, but . . .

ARENA: And his wife, Almira [Burdg Milhous]. I believe she was called Allie.

HUDSPETH: Well, I wouldn't remember that because I was quite young, you know. But I can remember, if you want to know something about her. We have what we call a Yearly Meeting, you probably know about that.

ARENA: Yes.

HUDSPETH: The Friends Church has a Yearly Meeting. She brought oranges and decorated the tables with oranges from their ranch down on Whittier Boulevard. Of course, we had many visiting members from the East and they appreciated the oranges.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, Whittier was the main center, if I'm not mistaken, the main Quaker community in California, and possibly the West. You would know better than I.

HUDSPETH: Yes, I would say that. The Yearly Meetings were always held in Whittier.

ARENA: But certainly in California, and the Yearly Meeting, which would be the main meeting for the Quakers every year, tended to be held in Whittier.

HUDSPETH: Yes, for California Friends.

ARENA: I don't know if that was absolutely every year, but certainly the majority of times.

HUDSPETH: Yes, I believe until just recently it was held here every year. In fact, I have a picture of Richard Nixon at one of these yearly meetings. It's one of these circular pictures.

ARENA: Do you recall what year, or about what year?

HUDSPETH: I think it was 1927, but I can't be real sure of that date.

ARENA: It would be then, maybe during the high school years, before 1930, you think?

HUDSPETH: Yes, 1927, I think. Yes, it would be.

ARENA: Now that we've more or less established the overall range of direct contact between you and the Nixons and Milhouses, and it evidently is quite extensive, and I want to be sure you know how much I appreciate you letting us know. So that you have an idea of this particular project, Mrs. Hudspeth, we're not going into the political years. It's really the President's pre-political life, so your contacts are especially important for our purposes, and I'm very glad you're taking the trouble to come.

HUDSPETH: I appreciate being able to help.

ARENA: Thank you. Now, what I'm going to do is go back over these areas, and we'll begin with the President again first. We'll concentrate on your direct contact with him. Let me ask you, what was the very first contact, either school, religion-wise, or just plain social? Maybe you walked into the store one day. What is the very first contact you recall having with the President?

HUDSPETH: That's really difficult, because . . .

ARENA: All these things blend together.

HUDSPETH: . . . at the sixth and seventh grade level--the eighth grade was probably the first time I realized that he was even around. [Laughter] And this is rather comical. I don't know how much you want, but he got to sit in the back seat of the row that I sat in because of his good discipline. They didn't have to worry about his discipline. I sat in about the second seat of the same row as I remember. [Laughter]

ARENA: Well, in all frankness, you cannot say too much, so all that you remember, and those details are precious, really. It is our fortune that we do have the time to gather all of this information, and possibly in some cases it might be the last time, as you know. Mrs. [Edith Milhous] Timberlake, another aunt, whom we didn't mention earlier, but she's quite ill and has been bedridden for months as a matter of fact. The President, I know, visited her in the hospital during this period. So don't hesitate to recollect any of these details.

Then, the first clear period you recall would be in the school situation, and that he did occupy the last seat in the row. Would you mind explaining, as much as you can, the nature of that school? Was it an elementary, say from kindergarten through to high school, through the eighth grade; was it an intermediate period as it is today?

HUDSPETH: No, we had no kindergarten. It was first through eighth.

ARENA: It was first through eighth. I see. It is no longer that way, you might be interested in knowing. It is called an intermediate school, and it is somewhere between the basic elementary and high school.

HUDSPETH: Yes. I also played in the school orchestra. Richard played the violin. I don't know whether that has ever come out in any of the interviews or not. He played the violin and so did I.

ARENA: He played that in the school orchestra? Did he ever play the piano as well, which he did take up, of course?

HUDSPETH: I don't believe in the orchestra, but he played it at home. Of course, I heard him play at home, and one of his favorite pieces was Percy Grainger's "Country Garden", also "Rustle of Spring" piano arrangement. The summer I worked in the home he just wore that out, and then I was able to go to the Hollywood Bowl and hear Percy Grainger play it himself, which was quite a privilege, but I knew it pretty well by that time.

ARENA: Do you recall if the President ever heard or saw Percy Grainger in person?

HUDSPETH: No, I couldn't say.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you if you recollect his competency? I've never belonged to an orchestra. If a person needs attention, is not carrying his own, what do conductors do at that level, do they kick them out?

HUDSPETH: In grammar school they do very little, because they're just learning, you know. I'm sure none of us were very good.

ARENA: But there was no problem of his not being allowed to play or anything like that? He was good enough to always be allowed to continue in the school orchestra?

HUDSPETH: As far as I know. I read an article in the Los Angeles Times written by one of the girls who played in this orchestra. She thought that he acted up pretty badly one day, but I didn't know about that. I guess I must have been absent or something that day. But he kind of poked her in the ribs with his bow, according to her report.

ARENA: That never happened to you personally? And you don't recall her saying that to you?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: By the way, was that fairly common? If not the President, did someone ever poke you in the ribs while, say, waiting for the conductor? Was there the usual bit of children's mischief?

HUDSPETH: I don't know. I didn't remember it at all. I suppose we didn't behave well, but then I can't remember exact cases.

ARENA: Speaking about the situation of discipline, anyway, do you recall any occasion where the President was involved in any mischief such as that, where you recall any of his teachers saying, "Richard Nixon, you will stay after class," or "you will write so and so?"

HUDSPETH: I'm afraid I can't. He was pretty serious most of the time. However, he liked to go out and play football with the neighborhood boys. The street he lived on was a quiet street, and my brother-in-law [J. D. Brannon] played with him. He lived up the street a way, and they would go out and play football in the street.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask your brother-in-law's name?

HUDSPETH: No. J. D. Brannon.

ARENA: And where is he living now?

HUDSPETH: He lives in La Habra, 621 Honeywood Lane, La Habra, California, 92631.

ARENA: Because possibly, if he doesn't mind, we'd like to interview him.

HUDSPETH: And his wife, also, my sister-in-law, Edith Brannon.

ARENA: And she is your . . .

HUDSPETH: She's my husband's sister.

ARENA: I see the way it is. That's fine. That's very helpful. Now, still concentrating on this very early period, at the elementary level, and still explaining the nature of the school, was this a case where there was more than one grade in the same room, which does happen in small schools, and did happen to the President in some circumstances, I know. I was wondering if it happened in your case? Did you have more than one . . .

HUDSPETH: It could have been in the sixth grade, but the seventh and eighth were just seventh grade and eighth grade.

ARENA: Only. I see.

HUDSPETH: Seventh grade only and eighth grade only.

ARENA: But sixth grade, possibly, had more than one grade?

HUDSPETH: It could have; it's very vague to me.

ARENA: I see. Now, regarding the academic side of the President, can you recall the teacher calling on him, and I presume you would have the same teacher the whole day. You were not changing classes, or were you?

HUDSPETH: No. We may have had an art teacher who came in, or something of that sort, but we had a room teacher, I think they called them.

ARENA: And then the classes where the subject matter, such as history, math, with maybe some exceptions such as art, but these academic subjects generally were handled by the same teacher, so you would be with them the whole school day?

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: Do you recall his strong subjects, we'll say, and his weak subjects? I realize that at that time you were not paying much attention, not realizing that he was going to be the President of the United States. But, to the best of your recollection, what do you recall about his ability in these various subjects, including where there were special occasions where he spoke before the class or recited before the class in an academic setting?

HUDSPETH: Well, his penmanship was poor. That's the only thing I can say that his penmanship was poor.

ARENA: What do you recall brought that out? Was he asked to write on the board?

HUDSPETH: No, when he signed his name or wrote any paper or anything. In fact, he autographed my high school annual, and you could hardly make out what it was.

ARENA: Do you recall--and I recall this in my case--where sometimes the teacher would allow us to correct another student's paper, and you would get to see the penmanship that way. I was just wondering what your precise recollection of the handwriting was. One would be the signing of his name, of course.

Now, aside from the academic side of things, what do you recall about the musical programs, the orchestra, in addition to what has already been said? For example, who was the music teacher of the school at the time? Was it Mr. Griffith Milhous himself?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: He was not.

HUDSPETH: I can't remember his name.

ARENA: If you can't remember the name, that's all right.

HUDSPETH: One of our orchestra leaders was a Mr. Hopkins.

ARENA: I just wanted to be sure it was not Griffith Milhous, because I understand he did offer lessons, and the President did take lessons from him, but where and under what circumstances remains to be seen.

HUDSPETH: Well, his Aunt Jane [Milhous Beeson] taught him--I believe he lived with her a year.

ARENA: That's right, about a half year, and he left during the school year, possibly during 1926 or '27.

HUDSPETH: Last year we had the pleasure of staying overnight and visiting a short time with her in Lindsay [Californial], and she showed us all the pictures and the things that Richard had sent her, and we reminisced some about the time that he spent with them. I was thinking it was a year, but it was just part of a year.

ARENA: Yes. I left her not more than two weeks ago myself, as a matter of fact, and that was the primary subject, his leaving East Whittier to come to live with that family to learn how to play the piano. I thought it was rather interesting. Just out of curiosity, did that happen to you? Did you have a music-teaching relative, and you were just sent off like that?

HUDSPETH: I was fortunate to have a father who was a musician, and he also taught me. I learned in the home, and Griffith came to our home and taught. We didn't go to the teacher. He came to our home, and we lived eight miles out in the country and he lived in Whittier.

ARENA: I see. How would you describe this relative of the President, this uncle, Griffith Milhous? To the best of your recollection, how would you describe him?

HUDSPETH: He was a very gentle man.

ARENA: Was he conscious, we'll say, of his dress, as some men tend to be? Was there anything about his dress that stands out?

HUDSPETH: No, his posture wasn't real good. He sort of settled down in the chair, you know, when he taught, if that's very descriptive.

ARENA: Did you have others at the time of the lessons, or would he come to your house and only give you private lessons?

HUDSPETH: No, it was a private lesson.

ARENA: You said he was gentle. Does that mean he did not lose his patience or raise his voice?

HUDSPETH: No, he was gentle as long as I played all right. He would even be nodding, as I had another teacher do, but when I made a mistake, I can't remember whether he tapped me on the fingers or what, but he stopped me and asked me to correct my mistake, but he awakened when I hit the wrong notes. Of course, it was only the beginning of piano, so . . .

ARENA: Was he your very first teacher, then, or possibly your father?

HUDSPETH: My father was my first teacher.

ARENA: And then he became your regular private teacher. To be sure, what instrument was it?

HUDSPETH: The piano.

ARENA: As you say, the President played the violin. Do you know if Griffith Milhous taught the violin as well?

HUDSPETH: I didn't take violin from him, but he could have taught it, I can't remember.

ARENA: Now, from the standpoint of the school orchestra, how frequent and where were the practices held; were they always held right in the school?

HUDSPETH: Yes. We played, I guess it was the National Anthem. The children assembled out in front of the school. They stood out in front of the school and saluted the flag, and then they sang and we played while they marched to their classes. As I remember we played some patriotic song.

ARENA: This would be the school orchestra that would do that.

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: Not just a single person with the piano?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: Would you describe the school orchestra of this period from the standpoint of numbers--I realize you're recollecting from a few years back--but from the best of your recollection, how many students, their age levels, was it comprised of all the grades?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: Just certain students from certain grades?

HUDSPETH: I believe it was seventh and eighth. And we were all beginners, either first or second year students, so you know we weren't too good. And there were probably thirty or thirty-five perhaps. Of course, the second year students could drown out the first year students, I suppose, and that might have made it sound a little better.

ARENA: Were any public events or public concerts put on away from the school? As happens now, sometimes the service clubs will invite a group of school children. Do you recall anything like that?

HUDSPETH: Not in grammar school. This has nothing to do with the President. Later on in high school, I sang for service clubs when I took voice lessons in high school.

ARENA: While we're on that subject, while you were singing, is this the occasion or was it in church that the President accompanied you?

HUDSPETH: It was in church.

ARENA: And while we're on that, would you describe that? Was it an episode, or was this a fairly frequent thing around this time; did this happen more than once?

HUDSPETH: He didn't accompany me but just the one time, but he played the piano for the Sunday School, what we called our opening worship service.

ARENA: Would that be where all the Sunday School children were together

HUDSPETH: . . . and the adults.

ARENA: Before they went to their individual classrooms. I see. Do you recall what song or songs you sang, what the President's role was and how long a period this was? In other words, the musical accompaniment to your singing, whatever you recall about it.

HUDSPETH: It was "Beardsley VandeWater, the Penitent." The theme of the song was taken from the story of the prodigal son.

ARENA: And this, again, was done where?

HUDSPETH: In the church for Sunday School.

ARENA: And this would have been the East Whittier Friends Church, not the First Friends. I see.

HUDSPETH: Yes. We were members, the Frank Nixons and the E. O. Palmer families were members of this church.

ARENA: He is, yes. He still is, and that was mentioned in the press. Going back again to the elementary years and that orchestra of yours, is there anything further you

would like to add? For example, do you recall his ever taking on solo parts during the playing?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, did anyone?

HUDSPETH: Not that I recall.

ARENA: And do you recall if the practice sessions were after school always or in the evening?

HUDSPETH: No, it was during the class period.

ARENA: Right during the regular class period.

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: Do you recall if the instruments were owned by the students, loaned by the school, or rented by the students? In your own case . . .

HUDSPETH: Yes, I owned my own.

ARENA: But was it necessarily the case that one did?

HUDSPETH: I just can't remember. I think that came later on, the loaning of the instruments to the students.

ARENA: I see. Were there, during this period, milk breaks? I recall in my day there would be a recess and the milk and crackers were given out. If I'm not mistaken, this was a government program; I'm thinking of New Jersey in particular. Was that sort of thing taking place in East Whittier?

HUDSPETH: We had milk served at lunch time, I think, and I can't remember whether it was a government program or not. I helped serve the milk, so I didn't have to pay for mine. I remember that, for a year, maybe, or a brief time.

ARENA: Speaking of these services that the students performed, I recall, in my own case, clapping erasers outside.

Do you recall any of these services being done by the President, including, possibly, being a milk server sometimes? Did you come to school early?

HUDSPETH: We came on the bus together. You see, it was a rural area, and it was a long way around the route, and there was only one bus service, so right after school we had to leave, go on the bus and go home. There were no after-school activities, as I remember, because our parents only had one car, and there was no other way to go but by the bus.

ARENA: When you say bus, this would not be the school bus?

HUDSPETH: Yes, the school bus. And it would go out in the rural area. You see, East Whittier was on Whittier Boulevard, and we lived on Leffingwell Road. And the Nixons lived on Santa Gertrudes [Avenue] and Whittier Boulevard, so it was a big swing.

ARENA: And when you say we, you're talking about yourself, not necessarily the President.

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: Oh, he was on the bus as well.

HUDSPETH: Yes, he rode on the bus.

ARENA: Because, if I'm not mistaken, it's not too far from their grocery store to the present location of the school.

HUDSPETH: It was at least one and a half miles approximately.

ARENA: And it's still the present location.

HUDSPETH: Yes. East Whittier School is in the same location.

ARENA: But new buildings have come up.

HUDSPETH: Later on, if you want to take time, there is a picture of our sixth grade in this book.

ARENA: I would like to see that. As a matter of fact, would you mind finding it now and tell, as much as your recollection allows, the names of those sixth graders? Would you read into the microphone as many of those as you can? Just read whatever names you can recognize.

HUDSPETH: Joe Lord, Edward Flutot, George Loomis, Bob Plotts, Estalyn Davis, Emma Ranken (Walker), Dora Howe, Miss Esther Williams, Barbara Cogburn, Margaret Samson, deceased, Elizabeth Reese (Glover), Cecilia Harris (Mrs. Charles Wright), Beulah Galt (Mrs. Louis Bardwell), Julia Tomkins, Ruth Lily McGee, Margaret Mitchell (Mrs. Laurance Smith), Mildred Wright (Mrs. Forrest Beard), Doris Hinshaw (Mrs. Howard Cullum), Ruth Ware (Garrett), Wallace Morrison, Dick Nixon and Linniel Taylor.

ARENA: Did you mention every name?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: About how many did you leave out?

HUDSPETH: About eight or ten.

ARENA: Thank you. That will be very helpful in rechecking the present whereabouts of these students. Do you mind if I ask you, concerning this period, what the social activities for the students were? For example, were there field trips, visits, maybe, to the Huntington Library by bus; were there parties at Halloween? What do you recall in particular and, of course, how the President acted during these affairs? Were there field trips to museums, were there school parties, a birthday party, and finally, the actual graduation ceremony itself? There was a graduation ceremony for this particular school?

HUDSPETH: Yes, we had a nice graduation ceremony (grammar school). The girls had to limit their dresses to cotton, because they wanted everybody to look more or less alike. I don't remember what the boys had to wear, but the girls were limited. Some were from quite wealthy families, and some of us were middle income to poor. And as far as socials were concerned, our social life was held in the church among the church people.

ARENA: Was it your impression that practically all, not just a majority, but practically all of the students in the East Whittier School at that time were members of that church as well? Were they Quakers who were attending that particular church? Do you recollect, for example, that most of the students you saw in school you also saw in Sunday School or in the church services?

HUDSPETH: No. In fact only three or four were Quakers. Now Richard Nixon's cousin is here (in the picture). Do you know Margaret Mitchell Smith? Have you interviewed her?

ARENA: I'm glad you're mentioning her name, Margaret Mitchell Smith (Mrs. Lawrence Smith).

HUDSPETH: She lives in East Whittier.

ARENA: And she's still there.

HUDSPETH: However, she was not a Quaker. Her grandmother was a Quaker but she was not. And there are only about three of us here that were Quakers, so it wasn't a Quaker school.

ARENA: It was a public school. As a matter of fact, was there a private Quaker school, either in East Whittier or Whittier, to the best of your recollection, on the elementary level?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: I believe they did have the Whittier Academy at one point, which later on became the college, but I don't recollect that the academy continued after the college went into existence. You might recollect that there was an on-going academy. I have the feeling that the academy just passed on and became Whittier College, but we can check that.

HUDSPETH: Do you have the book that Benjamin Arnold wrote on the history of Whittier?

ARENA: I have some books and I'll recheck that. I'm glad you are giving me the name. That's called Benjamin Arnold, fine. It is on the history of Whittier.

HUDSPETH: And in that he tells something about the academy.

ARENA: Fine. I do have the book on the history of Whittier College. As a matter of fact, you might see it, by Mr. Cooper, Whittier-Independent College in California. I believe that gives some of that background too. Well, going back in detail on what must have been one unforgettable public and social

event, the graduation ceremony, going back to that again for a moment, do you recall that the President had a particular role in that? Did he read or deliver an address at that time or recite a poem?

HUDSPETH: Not in grammar school, but he did in high school because I still have the little program and the speech that he made.

ARENA: Then he did deliver an address.

HUDSPETH: In high school.

ARENA: Fine. Going back again to this business of social life, and maybe we'll use that as a bridge, in a way. You don't recall anything as far as the public school elementary years were concerned. Certainly there was nothing like dancing or even square dancing?

HUDSPETH: No. Parlor games were all that we played. I think that's what they called them. We had cook-outs.

ARENA: If we can continue then, Mrs. Hudspeth, we'll use the social experiences that you recollect and move into the church and ask you what you do recall, then we'll go back in detail, in the way of formal contact with the President in church? Do you recall who were your ministers at this point, or your pastors, around the time of the elementary and high school years, when you and the President were attending the East Whittier Friends Church?

HUDSPETH: Well, Harley Moore was our minister for twelve years.

ARENA: Would this be during the period right through and including high school, do you think?

HUDSPETH: Well, it was twelve years, so it would include, I'm sure, most of that period.

ARENA: Do you remember a Pastor [Ernest A.] Lamb? If he came in during this early period?

HUDSPETH: Yes, Ernest Lamb was in our Yearly Meeting. I can't remember that he was our actual pastor. He was an interim pastor at one time but not . . .

ARENA: But not over a long period?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: Fine. Now would you describe some of the contact experiences you mentioned earlier, such as the Sunday School arrangement, the format, including the role of the President in playing for the pre-Sunday School class, when all the teachers and students got together?

HUDSPETH: Well, it was called the opening worship service and at that time we had singing and scripture reading and prayer, and we were given the announcements for the coming week and dismissed to our individual classes.

ARENA: About how long did the opening worship last?

HUDSPETH: About twenty minutes, I expect.

ARENA: And do you recall about how many were involved altogether, from the standpoint not only of pupils but also the adult teachers?

HUDSPETH: It was quite small, probably eighty to a hundred, maybe.

ARENA: And did you say you had Mrs. Hannah Nixon as your Sunday School teacher?

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: Would you mind describing as much as you can about her as a teacher, as a personality and as the mother of President Nixon? Whatever you can recall.

HUDSPETH: She was a very intelligent woman, very calm, and she was very patient, because we were probably pre-teens, probably ten or eleven years old, I guess, and our discipline left something to be desired. She was very patient, and I'm sure that we didn't appreciate all of her intelligence then as we did when we became older and realized that we had a wonderful

teacher. She had a good Bible background and was able to give us some very fine instruction.

ARENA: Do you recall some of her methods of teaching? I'm thinking in terms of, was it a question of using a particular Sunday School missal or book? Was it her not using the book so much as her bringing up experiences or points, having discussion, and to what extent, as far as you can recollect? Did she touch on contemporary events, if there was a famous event that took place, such as [Charles A.] Lindbergh in 1927, flying, of course, over to Paris? Did she bring in events of the day to the class instruction, or did she stick pretty well to pure historical, religious themes, the life of Christ and mainly topics of that nature?

HUDSPETH: We had quarterlies, which were the lessons for the quarter of the year, you know, three months, and I just don't remember in that much detail her teaching.

ARENA: Do you recall that she had a need for patience, because there were some students who just wouldn't settle down?

HUDSPETH: Well, not any particular incident, I guess.

ARENA: I was just wondering, where discipline had to be exercised, how did she exercise it? Was it a question of raising her voice, staring the students down, or other means that you can think of? How did she exercise obtaining the attention of the students, say, even just to begin the class?

HUDSPETH: No, she never raised her voice. She probably just waited until we got settled down and then started the lesson.

ARENA: Do you recall her inviting the class to her home for a potluck social or anything like that during this period?

HUDSPETH: This isn't right along that line, but she had a nice dinner for my brother, Ralph Palmer, the night before he was married. I think this has probably already been told by my brother, Ralph, that Harold gave my brother a party, and Hannah Nixon was the one who prepared it, of course.

ARENA: No, as a matter of fact, that has not been told, and I would appreciate your recounting as much of that as you can.

HUDSPETH: Well, it was what they called a stag party, I guess, but it was a nice dinner.

ARENA: Excuse me. The connection between Harold and your brother was through the church or the school or just neighbors?

HUDSPETH: Well, they met, of course, in church, but they were very close friends, and he wanted to do something for my brother the night before his wedding.

ARENA: Do you recall the dinner? You were not there, if it was stag.

HUDSPETH: In fact, I helped Hannah, but other than that I wasn't in on the party, of course. They brought pretty little baby things and wrapped them up and gave them to him and they had quite a lot of jokes.

ARENA: Do you recall what was served at that dinner--what you made, what Mrs. Nixon made.

HUDSPETH: I helped roast some almonds, and I think they burned. I believe it was apple pie; I believe it was a regular roast, a very nice dinner. Mrs. Nixon had a real good reputation for her delicious pies. I have her recipe for cherry pie and also a lovely casserole dish.

ARENA: Do you recall how many were there, about?

HUDSPETH: Oh, at least ten or twelve.

ARENA: And it was held in the Nixon home, and would this have been by the grocery store at that time?

HUDSPETH: Yes. In fact, the front of the grocery store was on Whittier Boulevard, and the front of their house faced on Santa Gertrudes.

ARENA: Do you recall that that house was completely detached, or was it a part of the same building, only in the rear?

HUDSPETH: No, there was a garage connected with the house.

ARENA: Connected with the house or the store?

HUDSPETH: Connected with the house, and there were stairs from the back of the house up to the bedrooms over the garage, and the boys had their bedrooms up there. Is that a clear picture?

ARENA: Oh, yes. And the garage, with the bedrooms above, that was attached to the house, but none of that was attached to the store itself.

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: And do you recall, or did you note, that the former, possibly the original East Whittier Friends Church building was a part of that?

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: And the question is, what part; was it the house or the store?

HUDSPETH: It was the store. In fact, I attended the old meeting-house, they called it, before the Nixons bought it and put it on this ground for a store. The first store they had--maybe you know--was a filling station with just a few groceries in the back, because our closest store was five miles, in Whittier, and so they would have candy, maybe some canned goods, and things of that sort, in back of their filling station. Then they bought the East Whittier Friends Meetinghouse and put it on Whittier Boulevard, and the room below the belfry, they used for the office.

ARENA: Do you recall how they got up there; was there an inside stairway that led up to the belfry?

HUDSPETH: Oh, yes.

ARENA: So that was completely enclosed. And was there a balcony effect around the inside of the belfry with a railing, do you recall? How did he get perched up there?

HUDSPETH: No, there was a stairway up to this room.

ARENA: I wondered if he could be up there and look down on what was going on in the store or was it completely cut off? Did it look just like a floor down there and all you could see was the ceiling? Could you see, from the inside, that there was a belfry effect?

HUDSPETH: I just don't remember that much about it.

ARENA: But from the outside there's no question there.

HUDSPETH: No, because you could see the belfry from the outside.

ARENA: Very interesting. Now, going on, and continuing on with the religious services, at this point, in addition to his playing the violin, you now see him playing the piano.

HUDSPETH: Well, he played the violin. We had an orchestra in the old church, the old meeting house, when we were quite young, when we were seventh and eighth graders. Same as the school orchestra, 1924-25. We built our new church in 1927, but it was preceding that year, preceding 1927. We had the orchestra in the old church. He played the piano in the new church which was after 1927.

ARENA: I see. Was there ever any discontent, not only from local members of the church, but by some visiting Friends from Philadelphia [Pennsylvania] or those Quakers who did not take to the use of music, either by instrument or by voice, as being a part of the religious life of the community? Do you ever recall anything like that, and especially what the reaction of the Nixons or Milhouses was, since I believe they were quite prominent in their love of the use of music?

HUDSPETH: No. In fact they used the instrument, the old-fashioned organ in my father's time, but he recalls having objection to the organ in the church, and they had a little trouble getting an organ in the church, as he recalled when he was younger.

ARENA: This would be in California?

HUDSPETH: No, that was in Indiana. No, the California meeting accepted the music quite well, but they didn't want choir robes.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, were choir robes not used then?

HUDSPETH: Not until twenty years ago, maybe. And at that time I happened to be chairman of the Music Committee, and we had to do a lot of explaining about why we thought it was much better to have choir robes, because we thought that the different color of dress detracted from the worship much more than a plain robe, so I think that they accepted it after we explained it.

ARENA: Regarding the President's family, do you recall if Mrs. Hannah Nixon expressed a view any way, for or against the idea of the use of the robes, or any members of the family?

HUDSPETH: No, but I wrote to Richard and told him that the choir was getting robes, and asked him if he would like to help, because we were each purchasing our own robes if we wished. Some members of the choir needed some financial help so other contributions were needed.

ARENA: I see. He would have been in the Senate at that time, around 1950. As you say, this was about twenty years ago.

HUDSPETH: As I say, I can't tell for sure. But I wrote and told him, because I thought he would appreciate it.

ARENA: If it's not too personal, it would be interesting from the historical standpoint to know what the price of a robe was at that time.

HUDSPETH: \$12.50 per robe, and he sent money for two.

ARENA: Very interesting.

HUDSPETH: And at the same time, I mean, two or three years later (I happened to be chairman yet), we bought new hymnals, and he was real generous with a contribution of a hundred dollars toward this project. We didn't have to have that much to reach our quota, and we were just overwhelmed with his generosity.

ARENA: As you know, he is still officially a member of the church. Obviously, he takes more than just a passing interest. Reverend [T. Eugene] Coffin was recently

honored by being invited to give a sermon (at the White House), and he is, I know, very interesting to listen to when he discusses that experience, which he has with me personally, and I imagine it would be unforgettable to do ANYTHING in the White House.

What was there in the way of social activity that you can recollect, regarding these years that the President and you were attending Sunday School and were attending regular worship? What type of affairs were conducted and, in particular, what do you recall about the President's behavior in his participation in the different social events?

HUDSPETH: Well, one night we went to a conference, Christian Endeavor convention, it was, in Long Beach [California]. My brother, Ralph [Palmer] and his wife, [Betty Boynton Palmer] and Dick and I went together. And it dismissed pretty early, around 9 o'clock, so we went to the [Long Beach] Pike, and we really had an awfully good time. That was the first time that I could remember that he just was relaxed, and we went on these cars, you know, where you turn it one way and it goes the other way.

ARENA: Would the Pike be the idea of a carnival or the merry-go-round?

HUDSPETH: Do they not have the Pike now?

ARENA: Frankly, I don't know. I have not been to Long Beach since I was stationed here in 1943. Was the Pike sort of a Coney Island amusement park?

HUDSPETH: Amusement park, yes.

ARENA: And it was called the Pike then?

HUDSPETH: Yes, in Long Beach.

ARENA: And you do recall he was enjoying himself?

HUDSPETH: Oh, yes, a lot. And another thing that was rather personal, but it's in the book.

ARENA: The book by Bella Kornitzer.

HUDSPETH: Yes. My mother had heard of an accident on the roller coaster just a week or so before, and she had asked me if I ever went to the Pike, to please not go on the

roller coaster. So, all four of us thought it would be fun to go, but I said, "Well, I can't go. I promised my mother I wouldn't." So Dick stayed out with me while my brother, Ralph, and his girl, Betty, went, and then he went all alone. I thought that was real thoughtful of him.

ARENA: Yes. He knew you were keeping your word to your mother and acted in that way. Very interesting. Is there anything else that you recall in the way of social activity; say, for example, a community holiday? Do you recall how the Fourth of July was celebrated in those days? It just so happens that it is hardly celebrated at all recently. I was just wondering if it stands out in your mind and if you recall the President or members of his family attending, whether it was a Fourth of July celebration by East Whittier or by Whittier itself?

HUDSPETH: They used to have parades, but that was quite a long time after we were in grammar school, I'm sure. They had parades here in Whittier.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you about the attraction to the people of East Whittier, people like you and the President, of that era, the attraction of what was attracting the whole world at that time, namely, Hollywood, California. Did movie stars have the attention, the fascination? Did they make public appearances, for example, and do you remember attending some of these, such as Mr. Grainger, who was, not a movie star but a noted celebrity? What was life like for someone who lived near what was considered a magical, wonderful life, to the ordinary citizen of the United States and many other countries, I'm sure, the fascination of Hollywood in the twenties and thirties?

HUDSPETH: Of course, our parents had the conviction, felt that the people in Hollywood were not the people that they wanted us to pattern our lives after. My father was very strict. He thought "Ben Hur" was a good show, and we as a family went to "Ben Hur" but we could almost count the number of movies we went to on one hand.

ARENA: Do you recall ever visiting, or would you recall that the President visited a movie set or movie studio?

HUDSPETH: No.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, when you had relatives visit you from other parts of the country, do you recall their asking about Hollywood and asking to be taken there? Did that come up as, maybe, a minor family delicate crisis?

HUDSPETH: Yes. Well, not in my younger years. Probably in the thirties or so we could take them over on Sunset [Boulevard] and Hollywood [Boulevard] and show them where the studios were. But mostly they would like to see the beaches, and we would take them to the beach. That was one of our big attractions at that time. And citrus was a big industry here, you know. And they liked to go see the packing houses, see how the oranges and lemons were packed. That was one of the things that they would like to see. And the mountains, they wanted to see the mountains.

ARENA: These were the relatives from Indiana, I presume.

HUDSPETH: Yes.

ARENA: I just want to be sure we have completed the religious contact that you and the President had together. Can you recall any specific instances where you heard the President speak in church, or in Sunday School where he made some sort of address?

HUDSPETH: I don't recall the exact time, but my sister-in-law reminded me that we had what we called testimony meetings--if we were grateful for something, in our Christian Endeavor meetings which were a very small group. And he at one time said that he was so glad that he had a mother who taught him to pray.

ARENA: Did the Christian Endeavor meetings include both boys and girls, unlike the Sunday School classes?

HUDSPETH: Yes, in the evenings.

ARENA: Were they for the more mature youngsters, maybe teenager level, rather than the elementary level?

HUDSPETH: Well, they did have small groups. They had two or three groups, as I remember. This would be in our intermediate years.

ARENA: You and the President were in the Christian Endeavor there?

ARENA: May I ask you to describe the debate that you witnessed in which the President participated? Is there one that stands out above all the others; or, describe whatever you can about any of them including, possibly, we'll say, the subject matter, what the subject was?

HUDSPETH: Well, let's see. One was--and I don't recall it too much, but somebody brought it up not too long ago-- "Which is better, to own a home or to rent a home?" And I believe he took the part that to own a home would be better. I can't remember that too clearly.

ARENA: Do you recall his style? Do you recall how he addressed the audience, and do you recall the reaction of the audience to him, for example?

HUDSPETH: Well, he took a positive stand, you know. He really gained the confidence of the audience.

ARENA: Did he read from a prepared speech, from notes which he held in his hand, or did he constantly seem to look at the audience?

HUDSPETH: I just can't recall that.

ARENA: Do you recall his receiving applause, or was applause allowed? Maybe it was not.

HUDSPETH: I can't remember that either.

ARENA: Do you recall, in your own mind, that he did or did not stand out as a speaker at that time? Do you recall that he really was more forceful, more attention-getting? Do you recall that he did get your attention at that time as a speaker?

HUDSPETH: Yes, because he was a little more sure of himself, I believe, and he emphasized his points with the pounding of his fist, if he really was excited. And he had a real good command of the English language, too. He expressed himself very well.

ARENA: What was the earliest level? Was this during elementary level that you saw him doing this debating?

HUDSPETH: Yes, eighth grade.

ARENA: Before he went to high school then?

HUDSPETH: Yes, because you see, he attended Fullerton [High School] the first two years, and we were just juniors and seniors together.

ARENA: Yes. Now would you mind describing your recollection of him in one of the classes on the high school level, from the standpoint of his reciting in the class? Do you recall the teacher reading one of his essays? Do you recall the teacher pointing him out in any particular way?

HUDSPETH: No. He said very little except when he was called on.

ARENA: What was the subject for that year, if you recall? Did you study [William] Shakespeare, for example, novels?

HUDSPETH: That's a long time ago. I know we had three years of Shakespeare.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you about the commencement address that you heard him deliver upon graduation, and what you recall about that incident?

HUDSPETH: Well, I don't really remember it too much. I just came across it in my little scrapbook the other day. It was what was called a "Junior-Senior Banquet." We had formal dresses, and it was quite a nice affair. At that time there were two or three people spoke, gave short talks. I have it at home, the title of it; it's something about "leaves."

ARENA: Would you mind describing the incident of the football game, which I believe you said was on the high school level, which you attended with the President's father and your father? Do you recall if anything unusual happened? Did the President get hurt in the game? Did he play throughout . . .

HUDSPETH: I can't even remember that. I just remember that it was quite a thing for us to get to go to Los Angeles to begin with, and he got to go and that was quite an honor for him to be chosen to go on the team and all.

ARENA: Do you recall who drove the car?

HUDSPETH: Oh, I think Frank did. Frank did, because he took us.

ARENA: It was his car. I see, he took you. Did he seem to be excited?

HUDSPETH: Oh, yes. My father was so sore the next day from my pounding him that he said he would never take me to another game. So it must have been an exciting game, but I just can't remember any details.

ARENA: Mrs. Hudspeth, I really can't thank you enough for coming and taking this time, and I assure you that you will be sent the typed copy, which you can edit and then send back when it's convenient. I thank you very much.