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Carl F. Stambaugh (October 6, 1971)

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Second Oral History Interview

with

MR. CARL F. STAMBAUGH

October 6, 1971
Anaheim, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena
and Mrs. Evlyn Dorn

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is an interview with Mr. Carl F. Stambaugh of Menges Mills, Pennsylvania, where the President's parents lived for a brief time, beginning in 1947. Would it be in 1957 or 1947, Mr. Stambaugh?

STAMBAUGH: 1947.

ARENA: 1947, when the President had just been elected to Congress from California. Today's date is October 6, 1971. He liked to have his parents live nearby in Menges Mills [Pennsylvania].

At the present time you are Postmaster from Menges Mills, and you are here attending the National Postmasters Convention in Anaheim, California, not too far from where President Nixon was born in Yorba Linda [California] and where he grew up in nearby Whittier [California]. I also want to add that present at this interview is Mrs. Evlyn Dorn who may ask some questions and make some comments.

Will it be all right if I begin, Mr. Stambaugh, by asking you a little bit about yourself so people will know who it is making these remarks and something about your background. If it isn't too personal, where and when were you born?

STAMBAUGH: I was born May 18, 1904, in Thomasville, York County [Pennsylvania].

ARENA: What would be the main city in that York County?

STAMBAUGH: York.

ARENA: And about what is the population now?

STAMBAUGH: The city proper is about 65,000, but with the suburbs it is about 125,000.

ARENA: And where does Menges Mills come into that picture?

STAMBAUGH: Menges Mills lies twelve miles west of York, between York and Gettysburg. [Pennsylvania].

ARENA: And would you mind describing to the best of your recollection just what the property was that the President's parents owned there?

STAMBAUGH: It was a farm, with a beautiful spring, of about sixty acres, including a nice picnic ground along the stream, and the Pennsylvania Railroad running through the property.

ARENA: Would this be considered again right in Menges Mills and in that village limits, or would it be considered in the county of York, near Menges Mills?

STAMBAUGH: It was one mile distant from Menges Mills.

ARENA: The mailing address would have been what--and still is by the way?

STAMBAUGH: The mailing address is still Menges Mills and was at that time.

ARENA: And do you recall if this property belonged to the President himself, President Nixon, or did it belong to his parents?

STAMBAUGH: It belonged to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. [Francis Anthony] Frank Nixon.

ARENA: And going back to this idea of a little background about yourself. Then you grew up in this area your entire life or did you ever move away and come back for any length of time?

STAMBAUGH: I moved there in 1929 and lived there ever since.

ARENA: But Thomasville is how much further away?

STAMBAUGH: About four miles.

ARENA: I see. So you really belong to that area. How about your parents, Mr. Stambaugh?

STAMBAUGH: They lived at Thomasville all their lives.

ARENA: Born there as well?

STAMBAUGH: Well, they were born at Admire [Pennsylvania], a small village three miles from Thomasville.

ARENA: Your roots are really quite deep in York County. Would you mind explaining, too, again for the person who isn't acquainted with this area, just what the makeup of the people and their economy is? Is it practically all farming? Is there any industry there at all, and do you recall possibly from what country these people migrated originally?

STAMBAUGH: Most of the people migrated from Germany. They were called Penna German pioneers.

ARENA: This wouldn't be the Pennsylvania Dutch idea?

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: Pennsylvania Dutch, although that's really a misnomer isn't it. They say Pennsylvania Dutch but they're really from Germany.

STAMBAUGH: It is a farming land region mostly, with industry in York--lots of industry in York--York Manufacturing Company, Borg Warner, Allis Chalmers. They built most of the turbines that were used at Hoover Dam. They are still in use there. Also a large paper mill in nearby Spring Grove [Pennsylvania].

ARENA: Is it your recollection or your knowledge that this industry is recent, we'll say since World War II, or had there always been some industry in that area before?

STAMBAUGH: There was always a lot of industry in York.

ARENA: Was there a special period though when it really became important--more and more industry, say, since World War II possibly?

STAMBAUGH: That's right. Caterpillar [Tractor Company] and the Bendix Corporation moved into York, and quite a few large corporations.

ARENA: Do the people of German background, as happened in many other German communities that I know of, maintain a newspaper, maintain the choirs, maintain

some special tie to the old country where they meet regularly or is there nothing like that in that area?

STAMBAUGH: There's not anything like that. A Missouri Synod Lutheran Church where they preach a German serman, one a year.

ARENA: For example, do you yourself speak German?

STAMBAUGH: I can speak it but I can understand it better than I can speak it.

ARENA: Did you get it from your parents?

STAMBAUGH: I did.

ARENA: Have you ever traveled to Germany, by any chance?

STAMBAUGH: Never, my son did.

ARENA: Do you think you might like to some day?

STAMBAUGH: Perhaps.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you what your early education was like? How large was the school you attended, we'll say in elementary school, and is that school still standing?

STAMBAUGH: I attended a little red school where I completed my eight grades in elementary education. I had the same teacher all eight years. Then I graduated from York High [School] in 1922. Attended Shippensburg State Normal School.

ARENA: If I'm not mistaken, is that the same high school from which Edward Nixon, the President's youngest brother, graduated?

STAMBAUGH: No, Edward graduated from West York [High School], a suburb of York.

ARENA: A newer school, too.

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: Was this little red schoolhouse you mention also one room, or more than one room?

STAMBAUGH: It was one room with a potbelly stove.

ARENA: And is that still standing by any chance?

STAMBAUGH: It's still standing and is now being used as a residence.

ARENA: Do you recall when it ceased being used as a school?

STAMBAUGH: About twenty years ago.

ARENA: Did you go on and do anything on the college level by any chance?

STAMBAUGH: I attended Shippensburg State College.

ARENA: Would that be four years or a two year program?

STAMBAUGH: It was a four year program, but I taught school one year and then I took up bookkeeping for a wholesale house in York, and the salary for a bookkeeper was \$120 a month. School teachers got \$65, so I never finished my college education.

ARENA: I have a little bit of Pennsylvania blood in me, too. I went to schools in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]. Then you eventually went into the post office, evidently. When was the first time you went into the post office?

STAMBAUGH: I bought the general store in 1929. I was appointed Postmaster February 28, 1931.

ARENA: Do you think it might have been another year?

STAMBAUGH: No, it's February 28, 1931. But I didn't take over until April 1, 1931.

ARENA: So that would have been President [Herbert C.] Hoover's administration, by the way.

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: Did you ever meet him by any chance, Mr. Stambaugh?

STAMBAUGH: I didn't.

ARENA: There were no campaigning opportunities for him to come by your way or anything like that?

STAMBAUGH: But I had to go to Washington to get the appointment from the congressman at that time.

ARENA: Do you recall who he was?

STAMBAUGH: The Honorable Franklin Menges, a Republican.

ARENA: What do you know about the Menges family and why the community was named after Menges?

STAMBAUGH: The Menges family goes way back. In fact, the mill in the town was started by a man named Hershey. The Mengeses intermarried with the Hersheys and they have run the mill for perhaps one hundred years.

ARENA: That Hershey wouldn't necessarily be the chocolate people, by any chance, because they do have a town in Pennsylvania, I understand.

STAMBAUGH: I understand there were three Hersheys came to this country from Germany, and the Hershey from Hershey, Pennsylvania, the chocolate king, and this Hershey were brothers who originally came to York County.

ARENA: Very interesting. And the idea of running a general store and running a post office at the same time seems to be a fairly common occupation in the United States. Would you happen to have any idea, especially while you're attending this National Association, just what the proportion might be? Has that ever come up in any way, the number of people who have that sort of a combination--running a general store and post office?

STAMBAUGH: Up until probably five years ago, I would say that all the small post offices in the county were run on that basis, the general store with the postmaster.

ARENA: Would you mind explaining just what your duties would be as a postmaster in that type of arrangement? To what extent do you deliver mail to people personally or not, and so forth?

STAMBAUGH: People call for their mail at the post office except special delivery, which we were required to take out and deliver personally. We would sell money orders and stamps.

ARENA: How wide a range, when you say people would come; what would be the furthest resident, say, from your store you could expect?

STAMBAUGH: Well, the Nixon family was probably the farthest distance. That was about a mile.

ARENA: That much--not more than a mile. That's interesting. Practically a good walking distance, in other words. If it were more, then there would be another post office for these people to attend. Where does the rural delivery business come in? What is the cutoff point; where do they determine to use rural delivery or have the people come in as in your case and pick up the mail? What's the determining factor, I wonder?

STAMBAUGH: I don't know if I could answer that except that the Postmaster General probably would make it so that people who live not within walking distance would have rural delivery from a larger town.

ARENA: Generally the larger the town, the more likely there would be rural delivery or delivery by the postmaster and the people who would work under him. Would I be correct in assuming, too, Mr. Stambaugh, that you had no one working under you; you were in complete charge and you had no mailmen?

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: If it's not too personal, where does retirement fit into this picture?

STAMBAUGH: I have forty-one years just about completed as postmaster and probably a year and a half sick leave accumulated during this time. The salary, by the way, of a post office as I remember when I took it over in 1931 was \$168.00 a year.

ARENA: What was supplied in that instance? Did they supply any sort of equipment at all?

STAMBAUGH: They did not. The only thing they supplied was the stamps and cash book and, of course, blank money orders we were to use.

ARENA: And your business would consist of, of course, receiving mail for people. Did you also sell stamps and other services--taking money orders for people to handle?

STAMBAUGH: I did.

DORN: Getting a post office in a general store like that, did that tend to bring people into your store? Is that one of the attractions?

STAMBAUGH: That is one of the attractions.

DORN: I know [Francis Donald] Don Nixon had a post office out there in his store, and also Mr. Frank Nixon when he ran the store in East Whittier, but I don't think they collected mail there. I think it was just a place where they sold stamps and money orders and that sort of thing.

STAMBAUGH: Well, they dropped the letters into our box and we dispatched it by railway car. We had a cowcatcher hanging by the side of the railroad track. We'd put the pouch out two or three times a day and the mail train would come along and take it.

ARENA: How is that handled now, by the way? Do you still use that system for dispatching?

STAMBAUGH: Well, we had highway post offices for several years and how we dispatch it by star route.

ARENA: You might know a gentleman who is now in charge of the mail room at Whittier College, and he might even be attending this meeting, by the way. His name is [George R.] Zeigler. I know he's from that area and he moved into this area in Southern California and he has had children who graduated from the same high school as Edward Nixon, too. I am almost sure he knows you or knows of your store. I was wondering if the name rings a bell?

STAMBAUGH: I know some Zeiglers, but it doesn't ring a bell.

ARENA: Again, if it isn't too personal--remember these questions are being asked by people who will be studying your remarks that I'm going to ask about the Nixon family, and it will help them form a picture of yourself, but at the same time if you don't want to answer them don't hesitate to decline--are you a registered Republican?

STAMBAUGH: I am a registered Democrat.

ARENA: May I ask how long you have been a registered Democrat and if the Republican registration is in the picture anywhere along the line?

STAMBAUGH: All my life I was a registered Democrat because my father and mother were, I guess. But my father was a real hard Democrat the same as Frank Nixon was a solid Republican. And I want to here add that my whole family are registered Republicans--my daughters, my son and his wife were before our tragedy.

ARENA: I might say due to the fact that obviously you are a personal friend of so many members of President Nixon's family, as we know, that is very interesting. And do you mind if I ask also, did you ever campaign or actively engage in politics in any way, including being, say, on the board of education in the community or anything like that? Do you have a personal interest, not interest, but actually involvement in politics?

STAMBAUGH: Not too much. Being the postmaster, we were not allowed to. However, I was very much interested in the local church.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask what denomination?

STAMBAUGH: Lutheran.

ARENA: If I'm not mistaken, there's a Missouri Synod and the other is called . . .

STAMBAUGH: The Lutheran Church of America.

ARENA: I had taught, by the way, in the Missouri Synod school known as Hartwick College and that is where I got just a little bit of knowledge about the Lutheran Church.

ARENA: And you say you belonged to the Missouri . . .

STAMBAUGH: No, the Lutheran Church of America.

ARENA: The Lutheran Church of America. It's kind of interesting that the Missouri Synod would be in upstate New York, but they were the ones who were in charge of Hartwick College.

STAMBAUGH: I have a daughter who belongs to the Missouri Synod.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you just what your immediate family consists of--how many children?

STAMBAUGH: My immediate family consists of two daughters and six grandchildren. One of them is along on this trip.

ARENA: How old is the granddaughter on this trip?

STAMBAUGH: Seventeen--Martha Ann Eyster.

ARENA: Now I would like to move into where your personal acquaintance with members of the Nixon family comes into the picture here. And I will begin by asking

you when was the first time you had any direct contact with any members of the Nixon family that you can recall?

STAMBAUGH: With Frank Nixon, I believe. He was in the locality probably a week or two ahead of his family. And the next one I met was Mrs. Hannah Nixon, the mother of the President.

ARENA: And the year was?

STAMBAUGH: 1947.

ARENA: And what do you recall of your very first impression of Frank, you being a Democrat, for example, and his being a solid Republican? Just out of curiosity did that come up in any way? Did you discuss politics on the very first meeting with Frank?

STAMBAUGH: No, we did not. However, it was only a matter of a few days until I learned he was a very staunch Republican.

ARENA: Did you learn that from him personally?

STAMBAUGH: I did. And he did not have too much time for Democrats in his early stages of visiting the store.

ARENA: Would you say that there was--and again you don't have to answer this if you don't want to--did you ever get into a heated argument with Frank Nixon on any aspect of politics?

STAMBAUGH: No, I did not because they were such fine people that you couldn't argue with them.

ARENA: Now, be very careful. You say you never got into an argument with Frank on politics, not necessarily that you became enemies, of course. Was there never any really vigorous discussion, let's put it that way, some real vigorous going back and forth on politics?

STAMBAUGH: I wouldn't say very much.

ARENA: All right. Do you mind if I ask you this--and you don't have to mention any names--did you ever see Frank discuss politics vigorously with anyone, say in your store?

STAMBAUGH: I did.

ARENA: And would you describe any one of the incidents, again without mentioning any names unless you want to? What brought it on? Did Frank start the discussion, do you recall? Anything you recall about it.

STAMBAUGH: No, I think mostly the people in our community were Democrats and, of course, Frank held up his side very well against all of them.

ARENA: You don't recall what some of the topics might have been, or I should say, when did you know that he was a congressman's father? Was that from the very beginning or did that come on later?

STAMBAUGH: I believe when [Hannah] Mother Nixon came, I soon learned that Richard was the congressman from California.

ARENA: Do you recall if Frank Nixon himself participated in any way actively in politics? Did he attend any of the local meetings, either with the Republican Party there or local school boards? Did he in any way, to your knowledge, engage in active politics?

STAMBAUGH: To my knowledge he did not, except he would talk for the Republican Party in our store, which had long benches and farmers would come in there and they would get into heated discussions at times with Frank.

ARENA: Would this be at any particular time, for example, all during the year or around campaign time, obviously around campaign time in particular? But would it be fair or accurate to say that if Frank came in--Frank Nixon, of course--and he was there for a while, that before long there was a political discussion going on? If he happened to be there, maybe buying something, but he was there for any length of time, you could almost count on there being a discussion on politics?

STAMBAUGH: I think so, mostly at campaign time.

ARENA: You might be interested to know, and I'm sure this doesn't come as any surprise, that that was the case back in Whittier and back in Yorba Linda, and what we are showing here, of course, is the continuity of a man's personality. And again, no one would know that better than you. And these questions are not my trying to force you to say things you don't want to say, but are just so that the reader will have all these tapes and all of these transcriptions and some day will benefit from what you are letting us in on here. There is so much more of what we can say about Frank. And if you don't mind, I am just going to shift for a moment and we will get back to Frank and his wife and Menges Mills and your contact with them.

I would like to get some of your impressions on Mrs. Hannah Nixon, the President's mother. Do you recall the very first occasion in which you met her and just what you talked about the first time? Do you recall, maybe she just came into the store, bought something and left, or was there some particular experience that took place?

STAMBAUGH: As I remember the very first recollection was when she came into the store to use the telephone to call Richard in Washington.

ARENA: What was the telephone arrangement by the way? Is it a closed booth or just an open phone in the store?

STAMBAUGH: An open wall telephone in the store.

ARENA: With the coin . . .

STAMBAUGH: No coin.

ARENA: Oh, how did one pay for the use of that?

STAMBAUGH: The operator would be called and she would tell you what the toll charges were and she'd add it to our bill.

ARENA: And then she'd clear that with you?

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: Was that the common practice with all the people in that area who did not have a phone?

STAMBAUGH: That was in 1931.

ARENA: Do you recall when that ended?

STAMBAUGH: About 25 years ago. It wouldn't be 25--15.

ARENA: But that was the system when Mrs. Hannah Nixon used the phone?

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you again--don't mention any names--but did you get stuck on that system, for instance someone moving out before he made an accounting, and was it very serious, the amount of money you lost?

STAMBAUGH: Oh, I could have, but not from the Nixon family, never.

ARENA: That never crossed my mind, I was thinking about the overall question by the way. Now, that's the very first occasion that you met Mrs. Hannah Nixon. Might I ask you to describe the impression she has left in your mind--an overall impression. You knew her day in and day out. She came in for many reasons. Did many things. Did she--what overall impression did she leave with you?

STAMBAUGH: Well, the impression she left with me was, she was one of the sweetest, finest ladies that I have ever known. She was kind, compassionate, and a wonderful mother. She just made you love her, you couldn't do otherwise.

ARENA: What were some of the things that she did that makes you feel that way? Can you recall some instances where she did express compassion or where she did help people, how she related with other people? What comes to mind in the way of experiences?

STAMBAUGH: Well, there are just too many, I can hardly pin any one down. She was always considerate of others.

ARENA: For example, were there some local affairs, some charity affairs in which she participated, which you could describe?

STAMBAUGH: There were not too many charity affairs, but whenever something was needed in the community, Mrs. Nixon was always right there.

DORN: I think her genuine interest in other people had a lot to do with the way friends responded to her. She was a good listener and she was thoroughly interested in people and their families. I doubt if she ever saw you, she didn't ask you how your family was getting along or something. She was genuinely interested in people.

STAMBAUGH: She sure was. She was awful kind-hearted and she would never say one word to hurt anybody's feelings even if she didn't agree with what they were saying.

ARENA: Do you recall her expression of interest in politics during this period?

STAMBAUGH: Well, she was interested to the extent that Richard was always, I would say, in the forefront of her thinking, and after Richard visited our store for

the first time I was so impression by his genuineness, his warmth, which it is so hard for him to convey to people today. I told her then as we got to talking about Richard being in politics, I said, "Some day I think Richard is going to be President," and she put her finger to her lips, remember how she would do?

DORN: Oh, yes.

STAMBAUGH: And she said, "Oh, Mr. Stambaugh, that is almost too much to hope for." But I know in her heart she thought it.

ARENA: And you say you recall that came up the very first time you met the President, who at that time was a congressman from California. Do you recall that you had that discussion with Mrs. Hannah Nixon?

STAMBAUGH: I do.

ARENA: And may I ask you, to the best of your knowledge, what did take place in the way of a conversation between you and the President, when you met him? Was it a question of Mrs. Nixon saying, "This is my son, Congressman Nixon," and that was it, or did a discussion take place?

STAMBAUGH: Well, I think first the President's daughters visited with Miss Rosemary Woods on a weekend.

ARENA: Excuse me. Rosemary Woods is the President's secretary now, and was the secretary at that time?

STAMBAUGH: She was.

ARENA: Thank you. And as you were about to say, you recall some of the conversation that took place on the very first occasion.

STAMBAUGH: Of course, Richard was interested in the store, and how the store was doing and how the family was.

ARENA: Were his parents with him at that time, by the way?

STAMBAUGH: Yes, they were.

ARENA: Did they actually bring him in to meet you?

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: Did Richard and you get together either on that occasion or any other, discussing the fact that he helped his father in his father's general store? Do you recall that coming up?

STAMBAUGH: I believe he said he worked in his father's store when he was in Whittier and, of course, then Don had bought the store from his parents before they moved to Pennsylvania.

ARENA: Had you met the son, Donald, by the way, while the Nixons lived in that area? Had he ever been in your store?

STAMBAUGH: I sure did. I came to Los Angeles [California] to the National Postmasters Convention in 1947, and Mrs. Nixon told Donald to be sure to take us out to Whittier to see their home and their store. We stayed in a big hotel in Los Angeles, I can't remember the name that time where the convention was held. But Donald called and said he was coming in and that he would meet me in the lobby. I never saw Donald except from a description his mother gave me.

ARENA: You had no picture?

STAMBAUGH: I had no picture, and as I remember the call came to my room that Don was in the lobby waiting for me. I got off the elevator and I saw this man, and I had a visual picture in my mind, and I said, "Are you Donald Nixon?" And he said, "Are you Carl Stambaugh?" And that's how we met.

DORN: And you've been friends ever since.

STAMBAUGH: And we've been true friends ever since.

ARENA: Just for the record, isn't Donald, and possibly Mr. and Mrs. Donald Nixon--Donald's wife, Clara Jane--going to be your host for some event tomorrow? Do you mind playing that on the record--telling us what the event will be?

STAMBAUGH: We are going to, with Mrs. Donald Nixon, or Clara Jane, visit the Western White House tomorrow morning.

ARENA: I think that is a very clear indication of the affection with which you are held by the Nixons. I think that is self-evident. That's why I am glad to mention that, Mr. Stambaugh.

Getting back to Menges Mills and our discussion concerning President Nixon, what were some of the other experiences that you personally encountered with the President during this period? For example, did the President, himself, while he was a congressman, do any campaigning--well, he wouldn't have reason to campaign for himself--but campaigning possibly for other candidates in that area at the time? Did you ever see the President engaging in any political campaigning?

STAMBAUGH: I did not until after he was Vice President. Then he paid numerous visits to York County.

ARENA: Do you mind describing your recollection of the President as a campaigner--your personal recollection?

STAMBAUGH: Well, he came into York County working for local Republican congressmen.

ARENA: Do you recall his name by any chance?

STAMBAUGH: Congressman George Goodling now. He's still serving in Washington.

ARENA: Where did the campaigning take place; for example, was it in a building, street campaigning? Do you recall the nature of the campaign he was waging as Vice President you said at that time?

STAMBAUGH: I believe so. He came into the airport at Thomasville, and then campaigned at the Hotel Yorktown at a dinner for our local congressmen.

ARENA: Did you attend that, even though you were a Democrat by any chance, Mr. Stambaugh?

STAMBAUGH: I did not, but Mrs. Stambaugh and I met him at the Thomasville Airport and spoke to him at that time and had quite a few minutes of visitation.

ARENA: I just want to ask this for the record--and again, don't hesitate to decline, I think I know what the answer will be--were there ever any differences, any unpleasant experiences between you and the President since he, of course, is Mr. Republican himself and you're such an ardent Democrat? Was there ever any unpleasant experience between you and him, even though you had these different political views?

STAMBAUGH: There were not.

DORN: Mr. Stambaugh, what year was that, that he came in there for your representative? Was it '54?

STAMBAUGH: It probably was about that time. I just don't remember.

DORN: Because I was on a campaign tour with him in '54 and we stopped at several places in Pennsylvania, and I'm just wondering if that wasn't one of them.

ARENA: Of course, he ran for Vice President with President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower in '52, was sworn in in '53. And then they had the so-called off year election, so there would have been elections in '54.

DORN: He was trying to get a Republican Congress for Eisenhower.

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

DORN: This is what he was doing. This is why he was out barnstorming.

ARENA: So he would have been around in the '54 year, somewhere around then.

DORN: Yes.

ARENA: That's probably the year you're thinking of also. Do you recall, Mr. Stambaugh, any personal incidents, say, where the President visited some of the schools, some of the hospitals and you saw his contact with the local people of that area, even if it were something like the shopping section or anything like that? Did you ever see the President on that level where he was meeting local people and would you describe the type of meetings that took place?

STAMBAUGH: Probably the best time I remember is when he spoke at commencement exercises at West York High [School].

ARENA: You were present at the time?

STAMBAUGH: That's right. My daughter graduated along with Eddie. [Edward Calvert Nixon].

ARENA: What is your daughter's name?

STAMBAUGH: Marguerite.

ARENA: What do you recall of that speech? Is that possibly the one that was sent to Mrs. Dorn, or your mentioning someone sending some information?

DORN: No, this was an article that was written about the President stopping to see you as postmaster.

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: Do you think that might be on record, including the school yearbook, possibly? Would you know for a fact or do you think, by the way?

STAMBAUGH: I think it would be in the yearbook of West York High [School].

ARENA: Aside from whether or not it would be interesting to get a copy, of course, do you recall what the speech was about and the impression it made on the audience at the time, and its reception by the audience at the time?

STAMBAUGH: The reception of his speech was terrific. He was straight and to the point. I do not remember his topic any more, but he was very forceful.

ARENA: Do you recall if he read the speech, or spoke off-the-cuff, so to speak?

STAMBAUGH: He spoke off-the-cuff as he does today.

ARENA: And that's the only time that you personally heard him speak formally before an audience. Of course, you've seen him on TV [television], in the news, but you actually heard him speak on that occasion?

STAMBAUGH: I did.

ARENA: Is there anything I have left out concerning the President's political activity that you recall personally in this area that you would like to bring up? Anything that I have not mentioned that you think you would like to talk about?

STAMBAUGH: I don't recall anything of the President except his mother was very much concerned the time they brought up that fund the people had supplied here in California--the time he made that terrific radio speech. If I remember correctly, him and Checkers.

ARENA: That's the famous Checkers speech, and that's right, his parents were living there at the time that took place. Do you recall any comments, any of the reactions of the President about that, your yourself?

STAMBAUGH: As I recall it, I am sure his mother was very much upset about that, and I assured her that he was going to come out with a clear slate, which he did.

ARENA: He certainly did. If we can get on now to other members of the Nixon family that you have met personally; how would you describe your meeting with the President's wife at the time, Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Pat Nixon?

STAMBAUGH: She was a very graceful lady who came into the store on different occasions with the daughters [Tricia & Julie Nixon] and always with [Hannah] Mother Nixon.

ARENA: Since you had done some part-time teaching, or maybe full-time teaching for part-time--I'll put it that way. You were a part-time, full-time teacher and she was a teacher, do you recall ever discussing that with Mrs. Pat Nixon?

STAMBAUGH: No, I do not, for they were always so busy. They would come up and Richard would sit on the back porch of the homestead and think.

DORN: Mr. Stambaugh, do you recall Donald Nixon and Clara Jane coming to Menges Mills at the same time that the President and Pat were there, or they came down from Washington? Do you recall them meeting there as a family gathering?

STAMBAUGH: I believe so. Donald and Clara Jane and the children drove across the country. For about three years we lived in York while I was remodeling my store and they had dinner with us, and Donald's girls slid down our childrens sliding board, and they had a great time. Donald remarked the other night about the big York County strawberries we had that evening for dessert.

ARENA: I think I cut you off when you were about to mention your meeting with Donald Nixon for the first time. And since this side of the tape is about to come to an end, we will pause for a moment and go to the second side.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: You do recall then coming to Los Angeles and meeting with Donald at that point. Was that the last time you were in this area by the way, Mr. Stambaugh?

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: And would you mind recalling just what your contact with Donald and Clara Jane was the first time you came here.

STAMBAUGH: Well, Donald came in and picked us up at the hotel in a little old Chevrolet and he gave us a fast ride to Whittier. And, of course, there we met Clara Jane. And I would have to say next to Mrs. [Hannah] Nixon, she is just as sweet and she has always been so nice to us.

ARENA: And you had met her before in Menges Mills?

STAMBAUGH: No, this was the first time I met Clara Jane.

ARENA: Did you sleep at their home or had you taken a place in the area while you were visiting?

STAMBAUGH: We stayed at the hotel and we spent the afternoon and had dinner with them at Knott's Berry Farm.

ARENA: Did you know that Donald was interested in the restaurant business at that time, by the way, and I was wondering if you ate with him?

STAMBAUGH: We had dinner with him and his wife, but I didn't know that he was interested in the restaurant business.

ARENA: Because he's always had the reputation as a very gracious host. Of course, what you say just confirms that. Is there anything about Donald or Clara Jane or your visit that you would like to bring out that you would like to mention at this point?

STAMBAUGH: Well, they were so wonderful and accepted us so graciously that I don't have any words to describe it.

ARENA: And you have had contact with the Donald Nixons all along, ever since then, for the inaugural events and so forth. Now maybe we can move to another member of the family that you knew well during the Menges Mills period, and that would be the President's youngest brother, Edward. Do you recall when you met Edward for the first time and what impression you had of him?

STAMBAUGH: I think I met Eddie the time his dad brought his mother into the store and Eddie was a very shy boy, seemed to be, rather impressive, but a boy of not too many words but very bright.

ARENA: He was of high school age at that time and again if I'm not mistaken, did you say your daughter graduated the same year or one year after?

STAMBAUGH: She graduated the same year, the one daughter, and the other daughter graduated a year later.

ARENA: And this one daughter I believe you said was Marguerite.

STAMBAUGH: That's right.

ARENA: Did she have any classes with Edward, do you recall?

STAMBAUGH: I'm sure she did, but I wouldn't know what classes.

ARENA: You don't recall particularly her mentioning the type of student he was in class and his interest in school? Or do you recall anything about Edward's school activities and school work at that time?

STAMBAUGH: I recall her saying that Eddie was a very good student, but my younger daughter always had a good eye for Eddie.

ARENA: Do you recall some of her comments about Eddie?

STAMBAUGH: Well, she was younger by about two years than Eddie, but she always liked Eddie Nixon. But Eddie was very shy and so was my daughter.

ARENA: Were there school dances or social events at that point where possibly they could have danced, either square dancing or ballroom dancing, do you recall?

STAMBAUGH: There could have been but I don't recall.

ARENA: Is there any subsequent period where you have met Edward Nixon, for example, during his college years or would the next time be in Washington, D. C. during the Inaugural Ball?

STAMBAUGH: Oh, I have met Eddie on many occasions. In fact, whenever he is in our part of Pennsylvania he never forgets to call us, and invariably if he is in Harrisburg or nearby, he calls and we have lunch or sometimes a dinner together. This goes for Donald, too.

ARENA: Thinking back, Mr. Stambaugh, with the overall experience with the Nixons in Menges Mills, is it your feeling that they enjoyed living there while they were there? Or did you get the impression any of the members, Edward or Frank, were not happy there and anxious to move away?

STAMBAUGH: I think they were happy there, very happy, but after Frank had his accident with the farm tractor and had broken his arm, the cold weather didn't agree with him very well, so then they decided to move to a warmer climate and they moved to Florida.

ARENA: The unhappiness and inconvenience that comes from a broken arm can be attested to by Mrs. Dorn not too long ago. And I think I can understand, and she can understand more than myself, how that must have affected him and taken a bit of the spirit out of him, I am sure. Did it lay him up in bed actually or just meant no work on the farm and that type of a situation for months at a time?

STAMBAUGH: It didn't hold Frank down. He had it in a cast for a while but he kept working, driving his truck and his tractor.

ARENA: Precisely what was the occasion of his breaking his arm? I don't think we mentioned that on tape. Maybe you might want to go over that and how you helped him get to the hospital.

STAMBAUGH: As I recollect, he was cultivating his corn and somehow or other he got his arm caught between the electric light pole and the tractor. At the time I was alone in the store. He came down the road, called me out and said would I take him to the doctor? So I called my wife over into the store, got the car and took Frank to the doctor. He wasn't home so we decided to go to the hospital and on the way to the hospital where we were headed for, which was the York Hospital, he got such terrific pain that he said, "Drop me off here at the West Side." And, of course, there he had his arm set and they didn't do too good a job. At the hospital he had to have it broken and reset the second time and after that Frank complained having a lot of pain in that arm.

ARENA: And this affected his personality and took away what might have been a more happy experience in Menges Mills. Do you mind if I ask you, Mr. Stambaugh, in view of what we've said and your very close association and very friendly association with the Nixons at that time, would you say that they were among your very closest friends in the area at that time? In other words, could you say there were four or five families that you knew very well and that the Nixons were among them at that time? Or did this come gradually over the years, this very close affinity and affection for the Nixon family you have now and they have for you?

STAMBAUGH: I think from the very beginning we had so much in common in our background that we were the closest of friends. In fact, they didn't live at Menges Mills very long until Mrs. Nixon invited us up for dinner. None of us had ever eaten roast leg of lamb. She had the most delicious dinner, this roast leg of lamb, that I can ever remember.

ARENA: Did she make any pies, by any chance?

STAMBAUGH: She did.

ARENA: She has a reputation for that in the Whittier area.

STAMBAUGH: She was a good cook--a delicious meal was prepared by her.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you this, and excuse these personal questions, but I am trying to get this down for the record and I feel guilty if I don't ask it because people would be interested. Yours is a small community and the general tendency--I might be wrong--but the general tendency is for outsiders not to be accepted so easily by a small community no matter where it is. Would you say that was or was not the case when the Nixons moved into your community? Obviously they were well accepted by you. I am wondering about the community as a whole.

STAMBAUGH: No one could fail to accept the Nixons as they lived in our area. They were always kind and thoughtful of other people, including Frank, although he was a staunch Republican in a community of Democrats.

ARENA: I take it the majority might be Democrat in your area by the way, too?

STAMBAUGH: They sure are. York County had a majority at that time of probably twenty some thousand Democrats. However, when Richard ran with Eisenhower as Vice President they carried York County by eighteen thousand votes in a really Democratic county.

ARENA: Now, could we go to something that we did not discuss on tape of the move away from Menges Mills by Frank and Hannah Nixon. Would you go over that again, please, where they moved to and what happened there?

STAMBAUGH: As I remember, they bought a home in Lakeland, Florida. They sold the farm soon after they leased it to a Thompson family.

ARENA: And I believe you said this was something like six years or seven years after they moved there, after 1947, so that would be about 1953.

STAMBAUGH: That's about right. Of course, when they bought the home and said they were moving to Lakeland, Frank started to move the furniture to Florida with a pickup truck. He made several trips before the family, his wife Hannah and Eddie, moved along with him to Florida. The piano was not moved at that time. It was left in the farmhouse with the understanding to the tenants that if ever Richard got to be President, Mrs. Hannah Nixon would like it to go to California.

ARENA: Do you recall the name of those tenants, Mr. Stambaugh?

STAMBAUGH: I believe the first tenants were the Carroll Thompson family. Afterwards it was sold to Amy Miller.

ARENA: The second family you are trying to think of is the family that turned the piano over?

STAMBAUGH: No, the family that lived in the farm house by the name of Earl Miller.

ARENA: Well, we can always check that out later, but the point I was trying to make . . .

STAMBAUGH: The final family that lived in the farm was a family by the name of Sterling Myers, still the present owner.

ARENA: And that's the family that turned the piano back again to the Yorba Linda Richard Nixon historical group, from that original understanding if he should ever become President that would take place. That is very interesting that it went through those different families and the word was kept.