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## Leonidas Dodson (June 2, 1972)

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

DR. LEONIDAS DODSON

June 2, 1972  
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Dr. Leonidas Dodson in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, June 2, 1972, Arena interviewing. Professor Dodson, may we begin by my asking you where and when you were born, and you may follow that with a brief biographical sketch from the standpoint of your formal education, including your high school and your career to date, including the fact by the way, and correct me if I'm wrong, that you are a member of the National Archives Regional Division Advisory Committee, which I read in one of the local newspapers.

DODSON: That is true, but since I have difficulty getting around and am no longer driving a car, I am a very inactive member of that committee and probably ought to be kicked off it. I was born on Prince Edward Island, one of the maritime provinces of Canada in 1900, which is mistakenly supposed by a lot of people to be the first year of the twentieth century. I don't want to omit that. I was born on my grandfather's farm, my mother having been born there previously. My parents, who were missionaries in Angola, Africa, were home on furlough. Because they were missionaries in Angola where schools were nonexistent and anopheles mosquitos plentiful, they were for the most part unable to have us with them. My father would have left us in the United States had there been suitable institutions. Lots of people would have adopted us, but they wished to retain possession, understandably, and they found in England--then of course the hub of a great empire--that facilities for taking care of children of absentee parents were much better. And, therefore, we were left there in the home for missionaries' children maintained by the Regions Beyond Missionary Society. That was not my parents' society. They were missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church. I lived in that home until I was ten years old and then I went to a British public school of the usual type, I would say, Queens College in Taunton, Somerset, where I remained until early 1915, when my parents retired from the mission field, my father having spent thirty years there.

ARENA: Would you mind giving your father's full name?

DODSON: My father was William Paterson Dodson, a native of Easton, Maryland. His ancestors were all seventeenth century immigrants from England. Upon leaving Taunton, my parents were returning to this country and we crossed the Atlantic in early April 1915 being very conscious of submarines at the time-- the Lusitania was sunk six weeks later. After visiting relatives in the East, we proceeded to California. I'm afraid I'm taking much too much time on this.

ARENA: No, please take your time and what points you want to make.

DODSON: When it's from memory, I just ramble on and on.

ARENA: Then you have oral history. [Laughter]

DODSON: Well, we spent a couple of months in Huntington Beach, [California] and incidentally there was no paved road into Huntington Beach in any direction at the time, and then moved on to Riverside [California].

ARENA: Do you recall what it was that made your family want to come to California?

DODSON: They had been living in a warm climate for one thing. For another thing, there had been a nasty family fight in Easton, Maryland, and my mother told my father that he could settle anywhere in the United States he wanted to except Easton, Maryland. [Laughter] For the third thing, Dr. Levi D. Johnson, who was one of the early settlers of Whittier--well, not too early either, but early enough to have owned the third car to be licensed in Los Angeles County--lived in Whittier [California]. He had gone out with my father's pioneer party to Africa in 1885, but his wife had tired of it and he had returned to the United States and they had settled in Whittier. The fact that my father knew him and indeed had secured his assistance in certain real estate deals, not always to my father's advantage, caused him to go there.

ARENA: Did your father serve as a pastor in Whittier or in California?

DODSON: No, he was definitely retired and had no charge there. We lived in Riverside for two and a half years and, of course, I went to high school there. The family in October 1917 moved to Pasadena [California]. I didn't have the means to go to college at that time, so I went up to Alberta, Canada, and worked on the farm of an uncle there for a year and then returned to California and largely through the instrumentality

of Dr. Johnson got a chance to attend Whittier College. He found me a job working for my board, and I cleaned his office in return for a room on his third floor.

ARENA: Your graduating class was what year?

DODSON: 1923.

ARENA: And off the tape I believe you mentioned some names that keep appearing in the biography of President Nixon and some stories connected with them, to the extent that you care to and use all the time you wish, please bring up some of these names. I am thinking, for example, of Jessamyn West.

DODSON: Yes, Jessamyn West was a classmate of mine and she took her first two years at Fullerton Junior College and then moved on to Whittier [College]. I believe I was telling you a while ago that the regulations there were somewhat more rigid than would be acceptable to the present generation of undergraduates, and one of them was that the lights were turned out in Redwood Cottage, the girls' dorm, at 10 o'clock. They were turned off at the main switch and they had no honor system in this respect. However, they did allow a light to be left on in the bathroom, and I am authoritatively informed, although I did not presume to invade the girls dormitory, that Jessamyn West and her roommate, Florence Ford, made a practice of carrying pillows to the bathroom and squatting themselves, one at each end of the bathtub and proceed to continue their reading.

ARENA: You may be interested in knowing that Redwood still stands. Up until recently it was the History Department's headquarters. It still is the headquarters for Political Science and Sociology.

DODSON: It was a very charming building but an old fire trap.

ARENA: You do know, by the way, that Old Main did succumb to fire.

DODSON: Yes. I'm glad it didn't succumb while I was sleeping on the fifth floor. Of course, the fourth and fifth floors were the men's dormitory in my day.

ARENA: We were mentioning some names such as Dr. [Absalom] Rosenberger, Dr. [J. Herschel] Coffin, particularly Coffin, and any of these recollections that come to mind would be of use because some of these, of course, and their children have had direct contact with the President, who was in classes with Homer G. now Dr. Homer G. Rosenberger.

DODSON: Well, Dr. Absalom Rosenberger had been president of Whittier College some time before. He was, as I recall it, in retirement at the time, but his second wife--not the

doctor's mother--who was Florabel P. Paterson Rosenberger was very active as a teacher in the college and one of the best teachers I have ever known. Dr. Homer Rosenberger [Sr.] was practicing in Whittier at the time but I did not have the privilege of his personal acquaintance.

ARENA: Had you known Dr. Herschel Coffin?

DODSON: No. Herschel Coffin and Walter Dexter both came in 1923 as I was graduating and I met them very casually as I was about to depart for Madison, Wisconsin, to start graduate work.

ARENA: Maybe it would be wise for us to conclude your formal education, your career highlights, your position at time of retirement and then go back and go into depth.

DODSON: All right. As I say, I went to Madison, Wisconsin, to begin graduate work.

ARENA: This was, of course, the University of Wisconsin?

DODSON: Yes, I took my M.A. there in 1924 and intended to take my Ph.D. there. But my major professor, Winfred Trexler Root, going off to the University of Iowa, went down to Iowa as chairman of the department and four of us thought so highly of him that we followed him down there and, therefore, sometime a little later in 1927, I got my Ph.D. at Iowa.

ARENA: I assume your major at Whittier College was history?

DODSON: Eventually. I was one of these people who wasn't quite sure what they wanted to do. I majored in chemistry for a while and then like everybody else who had lost their way, I majored in English and then finally settled on history. Interestingly enough, by some queer psychological quirk, I resisted majoring in history because I was so interested in it, and felt that I was following the course of least resistance in so doing. Just why I had that elaboration I don't know. After getting my degree from Iowa, I taught at the University of South Dakota for one year. I was the rank of assistant professor. I then got a chance through a person, Walter Phelps Hall, who taught summer school at Iowa in '27 to go to Princeton [University]. Hall is affectionately known to everybody as Buzzer. He was deaf and had a hearing aid. He was a Yale man and when he first went to Princeton he had a bulldog which, of course, was called Eli. Eli had passed to his reward before I knew Buzzer.

ARENA: Would that possibly be Eli or had their been a bulldog before?

DODSON: This was his personal bulldog. It wasn't the mascot. Oh I suspect there had been several generations of Elis, even more than of Lassie. I was at Princeton for two years and would have been happy to stay on. Unfortunately, there were five of us who were primarily interested in English history and I was low man on the totem pole and I knew there was no prospect there, so when I got a very attractive offer from the University of Pennsylvania in 1930, I took it. I was a member of the History Department there for the next forty-one years and in 1945 became part-time archivist. I retired in 1971 with the rank of associate professor.

ARENA: And one of your former fortunate students was one, C. Richard Arena. [Laughter]

DODSON: Yes, it was my good fortune to have many fine people study with me.

ARENA: Back in the days of Riverside and Southern California, how would you describe the community in general from the standpoint, let's say, of contact with Whittier. Was Whittier known as a Quaker community by the local people? It had been started as one, as you know, around 1887. Did it have any sort of reputation or stereotype from the standpoint of neighbors?

DODSON: I'm not sure that it did very clearly. Of course, the name Whittier identified it as Quaker-oriented. It had a big edifice there, the First Friends Church of Whittier. It was the headquarters of the California Yearly Meeting and it was, therefore, something of a Friends' center. But, of course, there were other Friends' centers. There had been a quite strong Quaker settlement in Pasadena before Whittier was founded, and Whittier got much of its support from this group. It might be noted in passing, there was one Friends Church in Whittier. There was one Friends church and two Friends Meetings in Pasadena.

ARENA: From the standpoint of its economic position, again going just by your own recollections, was Whittier considered a well-off community by the standards of that time or just another community?

DODSON: Well, I think in general it was well off. Of course, it was in the citrus country and admittedly the citrus industry had its ups and downs. It had its good years and its bad years and it was feast or famine for a good many people. I remember Howard Hockett who taught music at Whittier. He said he taught to tide himself through the bad years on his orange grove. This may be a slight embellishment of the fact, but there is probably a measure of truth to it. It seemed to be a promising community and the packing house of the Southern California Fruit Growers Association specialized in Sunkist oranges and was the principal thing there, although there were--I should have mentioned before--quite

a number of oil wells around. The old oil wells were almost pumped out, but while I was still in undergraduate work there, the new oil field at Santa Fe Springs [California] was discovered and quite a boom took place. Sometimes a well caught on fire. I remember sitting on the roof of Founders Hall trying to read by the flickering light of the burning oil wells three miles away. It wasn't entirely efficient, but you could make some of it out.

ARENA: Was there a decided distinction among those who worked in the oil industry and we'll say the regular inhabitants, anything noticeable that comes to mind?

DODSON: Not too much so. For a while during my undergraduate career I waited on tables at the Greenleaf Hotel, which was a building which had originally been up on North Painter Street and was moved a couple of miles. It was sawn in two for that purpose and then rejoined. That is the way it is recounted I think in [Charles W.] Charlie Cooper's book.

ARENA: Historians like to get more than one version, as you know, so I welcome your recollections.

DODSON: Well, there were several oil men who lived there and ate there and I am not sure that they were particularly distinguished from the rest of the community. One man by the name of Allen I recall who was an ardent IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] advocate. . . . I have been told by those who have studied the history of the IWW that he had quite a prominent place in it and at least a few years ago was still living in the San Francisco [California] area. He was a very interesting chap and quite a proselytizer, and if I didn't join the IWW it was no fault of his. He had, by the way, invented a drill or a new attachment for a drill, out of which he had made, I understand, a very respectable fortune, but this apparently had not changed his social philosophy.

ARENA: I believe we were also mentioning off the tape a person who the President has acknowledged as a man with a great deal of influence on his education. I am thinking of Paul Smith, the historian, and former president of Whittier College.

DODSON: Paul Smith came to Whittier in 1922 at the beginning of my senior year and as I was a history major, I, of course, worked with him. He had come from Wisconsin. I had already decided to go there but, of course, the fact that he was coming from Wisconsin didn't make me the less attracted by him. He was a very dynamic teacher. I think some of his eccentricities may have been natural and I think some of them probably were copied, particularly from Carl Russell Fish, who was a very successful teacher at the University of Wisconsin. Fish had gone out there as a very young

man from Harvard. He knew that they were going to think he was queer anyway, so he decided to capitalize on it, and did so, wonderfully.

ARENA: Why do you think Dr. Smith was dynamic as a teacher? What characteristics or traits or techniques--we get into a little bit of educational methodology here--make him stand out in your mind?

DODSON: I think that part of it was just the way he did things. He was a very alive person, a very vigorous person and you couldn't very well go to sleep in his class even if you were disposed to. I remember there was a little girl, Elizabeth Rees, in the class. She was the sister of Gurney Rees who was on that famous football team. But I remember one time he was talking about this, that and the other and all of a sudden he shot loose, "Didn't he Betty?" And poor Betty, who was a little thing anyhow, nearly hopped over the back of the seat. [Laughter] He would sometimes make comments, deliberately or not, to excite discussion. I remember one time he was talking about things worn for adornment, rather than for any practical purposes, and he pointed to a brooch that one girl had on her blouse and he said, "After all, that's just for adornment. It doesn't serve any useful purpose."

What's his name [Joe Buckmaster] the captain on our football team, former Army top sergeant. Well, I can get it later maybe.

ARENA: One person who went on, I don't know if it would be the same one, but there was a [James] Ferguson who went on to be a general. I don't know if he was a Whittier man, General Ferguson.

DODSON: There WAS a Ferguson who came back from the war as a Lieutenant. Now what happened to him after that? He wasn't there very long. But I am amazed that I can't remember this man's name. I'll get it later on. He played tackle on the football team. He became a Colonel in the Army--oh [Samuel] Pickett. His father owned the Greenleaf Hotel there in Whittier. Well this man anyway, be who he may, perked up immediately when he said this wasn't a useful device, and whispered rather loudly in the back row to Joe Buckmaster--I don't recall her name--"my God, doesn't he have any sisters." You can expunge that if you like.

ARENA: No, the more the better. Was there anything in particular about your years at Whittier, either academically, during the academic part of your life or non-academic, that above all stands out in your mind? Obviously four years is a lot of years and a lot of things happen, but was there some specific event--did Mrs. Lou Henry Hoover possibly address your class or anything like that?

DODSON: No. She wasn't around in those days. After all . . .



ARENA: Oh, that's right. That would have been 1920 and 1928 when he [Herbert Hoover] became President, although she grew up in Whittier for a few years.

DODSON: Oh, yes, I can understand that. I did not know her and as far as I know the Hoovers had no connection with the college or anything like that whatsoever.

ARENA: Even in President Nixon's time the Whittier College was known as a strict college. You did give that one example about Jessamyn West's problems. Did you want to cover any further on that, to the extent that that was not that unusual for those times?

DODSON: Oh, I don't think it was at ALL unusual for those times. In Whittier, no smoking was allowed on the campus.

ARENA: That included faculty if I'm not mistaken.

DODSON: It had to include the faculty and I never saw any faculty smoking on the campus. I was quite astonished when I got to Wisconsin. Of course Paul Smith had been . . .

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

DODSON: Professor Smith had been a graduate student there until 1922. I went there in '23. There were many persons who had known him there and among other things I was astonished to discover that he was famed as a smoker of a pipe. I had never suspected anything of the sort. Another thing which interested me--after I had been there for quite a while, one of the graduate students remarked--I heard about this naturally by the grapevine route, it wasn't said to me directly--but she remarked that she would think more of Dodson if he didn't have such a high opinion of Paul Smith. I think that Paul Smith was a little bit of a playboy in his graduate days without--I use the term playboy in the sense of someone who had a good time, not with any sinister, immoral connotation.

ARENA: Would you want to discuss anything about the presence or lack of presence of prejudice for those who were not of the Quaker faith, those who were members of the college such as yourself, or members of the community? One, were you a member of the Friends yourself at the time?

DODSON: No, I was not.

ARENA: Whatever you want to say about that subject.

DODSON: To the best of my knowledge and belief, there was no more prejudice in this connection than would be unavoidable in

a community which took its religion seriously. I did not sense that I was treated any differently in Whittier because of being a non-Quaker. I am not sure that the Quakers were any more prominent in student activities than the non-Quakers, and in general my feeling is that the whole situation was remarkably free from anything that could be considered an atmosphere of prejudice.

ARENA: Dr. Dodson, knowing the Quakers of the West as you do firsthand, and knowing the Quakers of the East, particularly Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], of course, would you want to comment on the differences from the standpoint of serving as background for understanding the environment and the community in which President Nixon grew up?

DODSON: I think that the comparison is one that would be expected by anybody acquainted with the history of the American frontier process, if I may so call it. I think it is generally believed, known if you please, not by me because I am not an expert, that churches like the Episcopal and the Presbyterian, which insisted on high educational qualifications for its ministers, tended to lose out to the Methodists and the Baptists, which were less strict in this respect. You will understand that as a Methodist myself, I am not attributing illiteracy to these two groups. It's all a comparative thing. It's one of these social processes which is naturally the matter of relatively low gradations.

The Quakers moving West were moving into an atmosphere where religion was more emotional and many of the people thought that a change was in order. Dr. Levi Johnson, to whom I referred earlier, who was brought up a Quaker, though he was a Methodist when I knew him, told this story which I think is suggestive: At one meeting in Iowa, the wife of a member of the Quaker Meeting, who had been brought up a Methodist, got up in a Meeting to sing a hymn. And Dr. Johnson said that the elders--they didn't call them elders--but the "weighty" Friends left the meeting shaking their heads. They were sure that she was a good Christian woman, but they thought that she should have been very sure that she was moved by the spirit before she got up and sang that hymn. Dr. Johnson's father must have been brought up in a very strict Quaker tradition. Once, he told me, he inadvertently addressed his father as Sir. His father said, "Levi, thee will go up to thy room and think over what thee has said." Well, at all events, one did introduce singing and, of course, one made a very decided break when one introduced a paid minister.

At Whittier when I knew it, of course, there was a paid minister. There was a choir. They didn't introduce the robed choir until after my departure, but I know they have had one since and, of course, the theology was all very definitely evangelical and trinitarian. For years--the practice may still be continued--it was the custom, of course, for the Quaker Yearly Meetings to send letters to one another and in the old days the Whittier Yearly Meeting received and read the letter from Arch Street, the orthodox Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia

but refused to accept and to read the letter from the Race Street Yearly Meeting, which was the Hicksite Meeting. Had they known how little difference there was between the two groups, who were then separate because of ancient animosities, the reasons for which I have forgotten, they may not have worried so much. Of course since, thank goodness, the two Philadelphia Yearly Meetings have reunited.

ARENA: Could I ask you to comment on your recollections and associations with one particular Quaker gentleman in Whittier who happens to be related to the President, and whom we have both discussed off the tape, but just so the world can know what the Whittier Quaker can be like. I am thinking of Mr. Oscar O. Marshburn, since we both know him.

DODSON: Oscar Marshburn was a graduate of Whittier [College] in the class of 1917. When I was there he presided over a soft drink parlor. Everybody knew him as Doc and everybody was very fond of him as I am sure they have been since. I think they called him Doc because of his father who was an M.D.

ARENA: Certain people still call him Doc yet today.

DODSON: Yes, his father was married three times and sired thirty children.

ARENA: Remarkable.

DODSON: I think you will find that is a correct statement. Of course, there are others who would verify it, including Oscar himself. I believe he was his son by his third marriage. In talking about Oscar, I wouldn't want to insist that he was conditioned too much by the Society of Friends. I remember having had occasion to remark to one of my daughters recently who was telling me of the very fine social activity of a lady who she knows who happened to be a Catholic. I said, "You don't have to be a Quaker in order to be a Christian." And, therefore, I would not think of Oscar as being necessarily a Quaker, because he is the sort of splendid person you find in almost any environment. I couldn't quite present him as a typical Whittier Quaker. Would that he had been. [Laughter] I mean, would that the average would have been up to his standard.

ARENA: When one thinks of the Quakers, he thinks of the pacifist position they take in history. Do you recall anything concerning his having taken a pacifist position during World War I? Were there any overtones when you knew him?

DODSON: Well, Oscar was a member of the American Friends Service Committee which was established during World War I and one had to be of pacifist persuasion in order to belong

to it, so obviously he did take that view. But I think the community was divided as well as so many others and I think to some extent the opinion in the college was. Of course, the people who wanted, for example, to go into ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] had left for that purpose.

I entered Whittier College in 1918 when the student body totaled 52, eleven of whom were men. At the end of the war and the disbanding of ROTC, students flocked back and the student body was soon very much larger, but undoubtedly the war affected the enrollment at Whittier very adversely. As I say, I think opinion was divided, as one would expect and there were those who didn't feel they could take the Quaker position. It was, I suppose, not too unlike the Quaker attitude toward World War II with which I am very much more familiar.

You were speaking of the environment in which Richard Nixon grew up, and here I am going to confine myself to a factual statement without comment because I don't think comment would be helpful. One can draw what inferences one sees from this and related facts. Richard Nixon was born and spent his early boyhood, at least, at Yorba Linda [California]. There was at Yorba Linda a Friends church and the minister there, who was said to have very great influence with young people was named [William] Kirby. He came to Whittier once--he may have come many more times--but I remember one time when he came to Whittier to talk to the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] and his address was concerning the language on a deck of cards. Where he possibly could have secured his information, I have no idea, for what he had to say was completely uncorroborated by anything that I have learned elsewhere. He said, for example, when gamblers got together to play cards and they were in a room which contained the portrait of one of their mothers, the son got up and turned the portrait to the wall. But I think the most astounding thing that he said was that the Jack stood for the jackass who got the Virgin Mary pregnant with Jesus of Nazareth.

ARENA: As you know there was a very strong condemnation of card playing by the President's father as well as by Quakers in general.

DODSON: Yes, there was.

ARENA: And that sort of a sermon would probably have been well received at that time.

DODSON: Well, they may have gotten some of their ideas from Kirby. As I say, I don't know enough about Kirby to be sure but judging from what he said on that occasion, he was a very ignorant figure. I was a pretty orthodox boy myself. My family was strongly opposed to playing cards, but what he said was so utterly inconsistent with what I believed, and certainly now believe, to be the facts of the case that I thought it was outrageous. But this

was apparently the official spiritual guide of the community in which the President grew up. To what extent he was influenced by Kirby, of course, I have no idea.

ARENA: May I ask you where and when you did meet the President for the first time and whatever comes to mind concerning your recollections of him on that and any subsequent occasions you want to go into?

DODSON: I presume I first met him when I was out in California in 1923. I knew there was a get-together of the Milhous clan, but I do not recall Richard Nixon particularly. He would have been one of quite a number of young cousins of my wife. Pardon me, 1925, did I say?

ARENA: I think you said 1923.

DODSON: 1925 I should have said. I should have said my intended wife. We were not yet married. My first really clear and vivid recollection of Richard Nixon came in September, it must have been of 1928. At the time he was in Prescott, Arizona, staying with his mother who was taking care of his elder brother, Harold [Samuel Nixon] who was dying, as I then understood it, of tuberculosis. I think he was actually dying of tubercular meningitis. [Francis Anthony] Frank Nixon gave us the instructions to drive there and gave me, I might remark in passing, a very useful tip as to how to get along on corduroy roads. He said with high pressure tires, you just had to take it, but if you had balloon tires, and we did, what you did was to keep the car going about twenty-five miles an hour all the time and just skip over the bumps. Since I used the information on that and on many other occasions in these days of dirt and gravel roads, I have been very grateful to Frank Nixon for it.

When we reached Prescott, since we had already known that another cousin, Russell Harrison, Jr., and my brother-in-law, Carleton Milhous, were going to drive directly up there from Whittier, and return by way of Arizona, the natural thing seemed to be for us to relieve poor Richard's vigil. He must have found this--he had just graduated from high school--a rather rough assignment. No, no, he was about to enter high school. He was fifteen.

ARENA: His graduating class was 1930. He entered college in the fall of '30.

DODSON: Well, then it would have been while he was in high school. Well, in any case regardless of his age, it was a tough assignment for anybody just staying there with his mother and his dying brother, and so we suggested to Mrs. [Hannah Milhous] Nixon when he was out of the room that it might be a good thing if he would go up to the Grand Canyon [Arizona] with us and then come back with Carleton and Russell. He came back into the room and she

said to him with her usual gruff manner, though she was a most kind person, "Richard, how would you like to go to the Grand Canyon with Lee [Leonidas Dodson] and Esther [Milhous Dodson]?" And he looked at her very sheepishly, "Oh, Ma, you wouldn't let me!" No one could have told me at that time that this shy kid would become President of the United States. This is one of my most vivid, in fact THE most vivid impressions I have of the young Nixon. He did go to the Grand Canyon and I believe you have from other sources the information as to what went on there. After we had left, because I had to get back to my job in the East, Russell, Carleton and Richard and I believe another friend they met there went down into the bottom of the canyon.

ARENA: Whatever you do recall though from your own recollection, even though you think you are repeating what has been told us, it is interesting to get the same story from others.

DODSON: Well, I don't know. We wandered around and took pictures of people in positions which seemed almost more dangerous than they were, straddling precipices and things of that sort.

ARENA: How was he from the standpoint of a conversationalist?

DODSON: Oh, I think, I mean once he felt at home, it was fine. Once the reserve was broken, I think he did very well. He was obviously a very intelligent chap.

ARENA: Were there any particular subjects that come to mind that interested him?

DODSON: Not a thing that I can recall. It's been a long time, of course.

ARENA: Would you say this reserve, in view of the fact of your knowledge of the community, of your knowledge of Whittier Quakers, and your knowledge of the family--I'm thinking that you did know the parents--what part of this was Whittier, what part of this was the Quaker in him, what part of this was just plain Richard Nixon?

DODSON: I think, so far as I'm concerned, that the overrunning bulk of it was being the son of Frank Nixon . . .

ARENA: Would you want to elaborate on that?

DODSON: . . . who in my judgment was an overbearing, domineering, demanding parent. I might say in this connection I have heard and I presume the present investigation has exposed it, about the poverty of Nixon's youth. My father could have done very well with some of the poverty of Frank Nixon. In other words, they were good, solid middle class. I am sure that Dick's boyhood

did have its privations, but it was because his father was a highly acquisitive person and a slave driver. He worked all his children and he worked his wife to run the store, and I don't doubt for one bit that Richard had a very tough time of it, but that didn't stem in my judgment from stark economic necessity. It stemmed rather from a strong-willed rather grasping sort of person, who was determined to get ahead in the world. I might add that this is one part of what I am saying now that I would want kept confidential for some time. [Interruption] As you know the Milhous family was a big family with various in-laws and they talked freely about each other, naturally. By all odds, the least popular member of that large family group was Frank Nixon. I believe there is no question about it at all. Some thought that Harold Beeson was somewhat on the same order but not to the same degree. And I don't know whether this should go or not, but it is definitely a part of it. I was talking to Carleton Milhous who was returning from having been with the President at the White House at the time, about the general situation, and we were discussing the President's mother. We agreed that she was a saint, and I remarked that she had to be in order to live with his father, and Carleton concurred heartily.

ARENA:        Would you want to comment while we are on that subject about the difference between the apparent formal education of Frank and Hannah? As you know, she had gone to college, had been in college and the President has acknowledged, actually in his acceptance speech for the last Presidential election, that his father did not have more than a sixth grade education. There is that difference and there is a difference in the obvious personalities. If opposites attract in a way, they were certainly very attracted to one another.

DODSON:       Well, I suppose so and yet they were both hardworking, thrifty kind of people and so there would have been ways in which they supplemented as well as complemented each other. One difference I presume would be family background. I remember hearing Frank brag on one occasion and I don't blame him for it. I would probably brag on the subject too if I could about being descended from a general in the Revolutionary War. There were two Nixons, by the way, who were generals in the Revolutionary War, one was a general in the Continental Line and I believe the other was not, and it was from the one who was not that the Nixons were descended. I am not sure about that. I am not well up on the Nixon family history at all, but I do recall when somebody was asking Frank about Dick's background, and he went off into something of an articulate rigamarole. Well, I told them they ought to ask George Washington about it, and so forth and so on.

ARENA:        Do you recall having any discussion with Mr. Frank Nixon yourself concerning politics? Evidently he liked to argue politics.

DODSON: He probably did. He probably considered me beneath his dignity as an authority on politics. I don't recall that we ever discussed it.

ARENA: Is there any other incident that comes to mind concerning your firsthand contact with the President over the years that you want to state at this time?

DODSON: Well, I might mention, I don't know what its significance is, that during World War II when he was a lieutenant in the Navy, but before he had gone out to join Admiral [William F.] Halsey's staff, he visited at our home in West Philadelphia, and while I don't remember details of the visit, it was an entirely delightful occasion as I recall it. Richard was pleasant and vivacious, and we all had a very good time.

ARENA: Maybe on that note we should bring this interview to an end.

DODSON: Good.

ARENA: And I thank you very much Professor Dodson for the hospitality of your home and answering all of my questions so frankly and fully.