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Edith Holt (August 22, 1973, third interview)

C. Richard Arena

Third Oral History Interview

with

MRS. EDITH HOLT

August 22, 1973
Whittier, California

By Mrs. Evlyn Dorn

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

DORN: This is an interview with Mrs. Edith Holt, August 22, 1973, in the office of the Richard Nixon Oral History Project in Whittier, California. The purpose of this interview is to supplement prior interviews with Mrs. Holt, especially with regard to special interests and anecdotes she may recall in connection with the Citrifrost Corporation, a small business enterprise which Richard Nixon went into when he was a practicing attorney in Whittier, California. Evlyn Dorn interviewing.

Mrs. Holt, how did you happen to get interested in Citrifrost? Were you approached by anyone? How did you hear about it?

HOLT: I was a friend of Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Nixon, President Nixon's wife; we were teaching school together, and we were very good friends, and one day she said, "I have to get going. Dick is so interested in some Citrifrost affair, and I want to go down to the factory, because he is working down there and working like a fiend." And I said, "What is Citrifrost?" And she told me. And I said, "Well, that sounds interesting. Is it a company? Is there any chance in the world of my getting some stock?" And she said, "Oh, Señora (that is what they always called me), you don't know whether this is going over or not, but he is working very hard at it, as several people are, and that is all I can tell you, and I don't think you ought to be interested in it." And I said, "Goodness, I have made a dash in several stocks; that sounds very good to me. It is something very different and new, and I would like to put some money in it. Do you think Dick would let me put in a hundred dollars?" She said, "Oh, be careful; you don't know whether this is going over or not."

And I said, "I want to. You say there is some place where he is working? Won't you let me go down there and see this factory where they are working?" And she said, "If you want to, but it is sort of dreary, but we can go upstairs and see it."

So I did. I went down with her and I was very interested in the machinery, and in seeing what they were doing. So we talked about it, and I said, "I am still extremely interested. I want to at least put in a hundred dollars." She said, "Well, if you do, you are going to do it at your own cost, you know." I said, "I know that. I have taken chances on things that I would say are not as safe as this, which is new and a chance to make some money." She said, "Well, of course, that is up to you if you feel that way about it, but I just wish you wouldn't do it." And I said, "Well, I am going to do it; when can I give you the money?" And she said, "Don't give it to me. There is a company, and if you really want to, give it to the company."

DORN: How did you actually give your money over to Mr. Nixon for the stock?

HOLT: I don't recall that I gave it to Mr. Nixon. Maybe I gave it to the company.

DORN: Did you come up to his offices in Whittier? We were on the sixth floor of the Bank of America Building. Do you recall that?

HOLT: No, I don't.

DORN: Well, that is a minor thing. I was just wondering about your stock. When you visited the Citrifrost plant, what do you remember about the building, the location, et cetera?

HOLT: It was out of Whittier quite a ways, on Whittier Boulevard at Pico Rivera [California], I guess it was, and it was a very dark building. We were a way up high and watched them down below and they were all working as hard as they could.

DORN: What sort of an operation was it down below? Was there running water on a belt? Were they washing the fruit and cutting it?

HOLT: It has been so long ago I can't remember the details about it, except I know there were lots of oranges they were washing. I can remember a little about that. I was so interested in the whole thing, because it sounded marvelous to me.

DORN: Did you know any of the people who were working down there? Do you recall seeing Mr. [Francis Anthony] Frank

Nixon, the President's father, who used to help out there, or was Richard Nixon himself working when you visited?

HOLT: Yes, Richard Nixon himself was there. I don't recall seeing Frank Nixon.

DORN: Was it in the daytime or the evening?

HOLT: Well, it was after school, and I can't remember whether it was evening or shortly after school. But it would have been later in the afternoon, I am sure, probably evening, because I think Pat and I went out and had some dinner first, but I know it was darker than usual.

DORN: Speaking of the purchase of the stock, do you recall how much money you actually put into Citrifrost?

HOLT: I put a hundred dollars into it.

DORN: That was probably for one share of stock?

HOLT: Yes, it was.

DORN: After you went into this Citrifrost Corporation, was there any other discussion about it between you and Mrs. Nixon at school?

HOLT: I don't recall that we had any other discussion about it.

DORN: After this company reached its climax and fell apart, what happened then? Was there any attempt by the Nixons to square anything with you? We all know it was not necessary, but did they come to you at any time and try to square things with you?

HOLT: Well, not right away. I did hear that it hadn't worked out. I thought maybe it was the machinery or something, but they didn't say anything to me right away. After Mr. Nixon was in the service and Pat was working in San Francisco [California], and when he came back, right away he and Pat came up to see me, and we were talking about other things, and Pat said to me (I think Dick had gone and the two of us were talking quite a while). And she said, "Now, Señora, we want to return that hundred dollars to you that you gave us for the stock certificate." And I said, "What! Don't be ridiculous. I have gambled in lots of stock and lost so much more than that. You asked me not to and I said I definitely wanted to," and she said, "We probably have more money now than we ever will have, because Dick has been working in the Navy, and I have been working. Now he is out of the Navy, and I wish you would let

us give it to you." And I said, "No, please don't say more." They have done so many things for me that are worth more than plenty of hundreds of dollars.

DORN: I am sure they have, and I know you have been very good friends throughout the years, and I thank you, Edith, for coming in for this interview.

HOLT: You are welcome, Evlyn.