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**Ada J. Sutton (February 10, 1972)**

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

MRS. ADA J. SUTTON

February 10, 1972  
La Habra, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is an interview with Mrs. Ada J. Sutton (J stands for Josephine) in La Habra, California, Arena interviewing, February 10, 1972. This is interview #1. Before we identify these pictures, Mrs. Sutton, may we begin by my asking you where and when you were born, if you don't mind my asking your age indirectly here?

SUTTON: I was born in Indiana, close to North Vernon, Indiana, October 22, 1885. I'm 86 years old. I'm proud of my age.

ARENA: And would you give an idea of your relationship to President Nixon, how you are related to him?

SUTTON: I was his mother's first cousin, and I've known the President all his life. He was born right here in Yorba Linda, [California], and I was very close to his mother all those years, and we've lived right here in the same locality.

ARENA: Do you recall how old you were, and maybe even the year when you left your birthplace area to come here to California?

SUTTON: Well, I didn't come straight from there. We lived in Iowa until I graduated from high school in Iowa, so I was grown. And we came here in 1905, my mother and five children, after the death of my father. She came here to be near her oldest brother [Franklin] Frank Milhous. That was my father's plan for us. He had been out here for his health. He had tuberculosis. He had been out here and he came back to Oskaloosa, Iowa, where we were living, and died there in February of 1905. His plan for us was to come out here. By November of the same year we had sold the farm and made arrangements, and my mother and five children--I was the oldest of the five--came here to Whittier [California] to Uncle Frank Milhous.

ARENA: Did you come right to his home there?

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: And lived inside that home.

SUTTON: Yes, and he helped my mother pick a place to buy, ten acres in East Whittier on Russell Street. It was bare ground, but she had lemons and oranges put out, and we lived there.

ARENA: Of course, Franklin Milhous was President Nixon's mother's father, his grandfather. Can you think of any other case where Mr. Franklin Milhous took in a widow like that, a relative and five children? Am I correct there? Your mother was a widow and she had five children. Did he do that with any other relative that you can think of?

SUTTON: Oh, I don't know, but he helped all of his relatives get established.

ARENA: Did your mother remarry, if I may ask?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask, how could she support herself? Did she run the ranch herself? In other words, how was she able to make a living after she bought the property?

SUTTON: Well, she had some money. We had sold a ranch back there and my father had life insurance. And the one next younger than me was a brother, Roy Ware. He helped Mother. He helped with the work. He was about fourteen or fifteen years old, so he was quite a help to her, I'm sure. Things didn't cost, in that day, like they do now.

ARENA: I want to be sure to get your mother's full correct maiden name.

SUTTON: Martha Jane Milhous.

ARENA: Was she able to obtain an education beyond high school, do you know?

SUTTON: Yes, she graduated from Earlham College in Indiana. Yes, she was well educated for that day.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you when your mother passed away? Do you recall the year?

SUTTON: It gives it here. I'll be sure. Martha Milhous Ware, born in 1861 and died in 1948.

ARENA: While you have that picture, which is also explained with a special sketch on the left, would you take each individual and give the person's full name and whatever little note is given about the date, and then whatever else comes to mind. The nice thing about this, of course, is that not only do you have the picture of the individual, and possibly something like this will be obtained for the [Richard Nixon] Presidential Library, through the efforts of Miss Jessamyn West. Not only do we have the picture with that brief sketch with the names, but we have you to explain what's in the picture, and that's what I would appreciate very much.

SUTTON: Do you want me to begin as they come, or in age?

ARENA: Possibly in age, if you can recollect.

SUTTON: The oldest is Franklin Milhous. It doesn't give any middle name.

ARENA: No, it doesn't. That's interesting.

SUTTON: I don't remember that I ever heard his middle name. Franklin Milhous. Do you want his family?

ARENA: And his years are 1848 to 1919. And then if you will, maybe give all of his family first. Whatever is easier.

SUTTON: Well, this is a son and daughter by his first marriage.

ARENA: Would you indicate what number they are, so that later when someone traces this tape they will be able to correspond what you're saying with what's on the tape.

SUTTON: This number is three.

ARENA: All right, but his number is two. And now you're pointing to number three. The name is . . .

SUTTON: Griffith [William] Milhous.

ARENA: And his years?

SUTTON: He was born in 1873, died in 1943.

ARENA: And you were beginning to explain that he was the child of the first wife, the first marriage.

SUTTON: Yes. Uncle Frank's first wife died and left him with these two children, a son and a daughter.

ARENA: Do you recall his first wife's name? [Sarah Armstrong Milhous]

SUTTON: It was so long ago.

ARENA: Well, we can check that later. I'm sure we can get that information.

SUTTON: Mary Alice Milhous, number four. She is the daughter of Franklin and the sister of Griffith.

ARENA: She would be the full sister of the first marriage.

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: And her dates are given as . . .

SUTTON: 1875, she was two years younger than Griffith, and she died in 1909.

ARENA: Do you know if she also came out to California along with Griffith?

SUTTON: Oh, yes, she was out here and Griffith was too. My children took music lessons from Griffith. He gave piano lessons and violin lessons. He was a music teacher, and my two older children took piano and violin lessons from him.

ARENA: I think we better state also the year when this picture was taken. I believe Miss Jessamyn West mentioned that.

SUTTON: 1887, this picture was taken.

ARENA: And taken in Indiana.

SUTTON: In Indiana, in front of Grandfather Joshua and Grandmother Elizabeth Milhous' home, with his family. After the death of his first wife, he married Almira Burdgo. That's where you get the Burdgo, Almira Burdgo Milhous after she was married.

ARENA: And her dates?

SUTTON: 1849 to 1943.

ARENA: And that's number thirteen in the sketch.

SUTTON: Yes. It takes it this way.

ARENA: I see. And you were about to say something, Mrs. Sutton, about her.

SUTTON: Well, I started to say their oldest child was Edith, which is now Edith [Milhous] Timberlake. She was born in 1880 and she is still living.

ARENA: She is number 12 in the sketch. And another person you recognize?

SUTTON: Well, these are her children. This is Martha Milhous Gibbons.

ARENA: And she is number 20 in the sketch.

SUTTON: She was born in 1882 and died in 1968. And then there's Ezra [Charles Milhous]. Well, the next in age would be Hannah [Milhous Nixon].

ARENA: I see.

SUTTON: Hannah, the mother of Richard. That's Hannah.

ARENA: I see. And her number in the sketch? Number 22. And her dates?

SUTTON: She was born in 1885 and died in 1967.

ARENA: And some of the other children of Franklin and Almira Milhous?

SUTTON: Ezra, the youngest that they had up to 1887. They've had children since. I mean, they did have children since.

ARENA: Yes.

SUTTON: Ezra, and he's 21. Ezra Charles Milhous, born in 1887 died in 1970.

ARENA: Do you recall him clearly?

SUTTON: Oh, yes.

ARENA: Because so many do not. He moved around a lot, I believe.

SUTTON: He lived for quite a while up at Lancaster [California], and we used to think it was quite a trip to go up and see Lima and Ezra.

ARENA: Lima?

SUTTON: Lima had lived next door to us over in East Whittier on Russell Street, was a neighbor, Lima Hudson.

ARENA: And she became his wife.

SUTTON: Yes, and the mother of all these children.

ARENA: Some eleven all together, I am told. Do you recall anything about Mr. Franklin Milhous' relations with his son, Ezra? Did he ever have any hopes that he might have been something other than a land-leveler or had become a professional man?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: That never came up.

SUTTON: No, I didn't hear of it.

ARENA: He was the only full son of Almira and Franklin too.

SUTTON: Yes, they had three daughters after Ezra, three more daughters: Jane, Elizabeth and [Rose] Olive.

ARENA: Do you recall that his personality was very different from that of the girls, granted he is a boy. Did he seem to be quite a bit different in any way?

SUTTON: Well, he was very, oh, bashful, I would say and quiet, kind of--what do you call it?

ARENA: Reserved, maybe?

SUTTON: Yes, he wasn't outgoing.

ARENA: He didn't have the desire to go on to college either that some of the others in the family did.

SUTTON: I don't believe he did. I don't remember that Ezra ever went. I don't know if he ever went. I'm quite sure that he didn't graduate. He might have gone a little, but . . .

ARENA: Do you recall him from the standpoint of his manners, his overall relations with other people? Was he an argumentative sort of person, or a person who liked outdoor activity a lot, in a rough sort of way?

SUTTON: Yes. He and his boys did work up there.

ARENA: Would you say that he had a very hard life too, that it was a hard life that Ezra took to, in the sense of working outdoors, handling horses and so forth?

SUTTON: He was a hard worker, but I don't know whether he would consider it hard or not. That's what he wanted to do I guess.

ARENA: It was what he wanted to do, from your recollection.

SUTTON: Yes, I think so.

ARENA: Shall we move on? Are there any other relatives in connection with Franklin and Almira's family?

SUTTON: That's his family.

ARENA: That takes care of everyone there. Another family?

SUTTON: The next in age is Uncle Jesse [Griffith Milhous].

ARENA: Excuse me. Now, we're talking about the children, when you speak of age of whom?

SUTTON: Joshua and Elizabeth Milhous.

ARENA: They're the oldest in the picture and this is the entire family?

SUTTON: Yes, that's their family up to 1887.

ARENA: Joshua is number 14.

SUTTON: Joshua Vickers Milhous.

ARENA: And his age?

SUTTON: He was born in 1820 and died in 1892.

ARENA: And do you recall what his occupation was and his education?

SUTTON: I couldn't tell you that. His wife was Elizabeth Price Milhous.

ARENA: Number 15.

SUTTON: She was born in 1827. She was seven years younger. But she lived till 1923. She died out here.

ARENA: You recall her very clearly.

SUTTON: Yes. See, I was married in 1909, so I was full-grown then.

ARENA: And you came here in 1905 so you knew her very well.



SUTTON: Our children all remember Grandmother [Elizabeth Price] Milhous. All we older ones remember her. She didn't die until 1923--1827 to 1923--age 96. I think she had all her faculties, just died in her sleep one night.

ARENA: Was she the person who sometimes is referred to as "The Preaching Quaker," too?

SUTTON: Yes, she was a Friends minister. That was in the day when they had quiet meetings. If anybody felt that the spirit moved them, they talked, but Grandmother was considered the minister and she had charge of it.

ARENA: Now, when the spirit did move her and she did speak, were you ever present possibly? Do you recall how she spoke? Did she have a loud voice, or a quiet and clear voice? Do you recall how she spoke?

SUTTON: I think it would be very quiet but clear, and I don't think she was a loud speaker at all in my memory. Of course, she was up in years when I remember her best, when she came out here and lived with the different children. At that time the Grandmother Elizabeth lived, part of the time she was at our house, part of the time at Aunt Edith Hadley's, part of the time at Uncle Frank's.

ARENA: She did like to live and mingle and meet with different people.

SUTTON: I don't remember that she minded it at all, and we loved to have her.

ARENA: Do you recall that she did this preaching even in California?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: This had been done back in Indiana, and you had heard about that?

SUTTON: No, I don't believe she did any preaching out here. It wasn't in the form of preaching hardly anyway.

ARENA: Not certainly in the sense that you have a pastor giving a sermon out here. It wasn't anything like that.

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: Did she like to write? Did she leave poems or any articles of any type, do you think?

SUTTON: I don't remember.

ARENA: Do you think you might have some letters that she wrote to you or anything like that?

SUTTON: I might look them up. I have some old letters that I brought from my mother's home when she died. I'm not sure that I do. She was in Oskaloosa when my father died. She was at our home. She went wherever you were having trouble.

ARENA: She would leave California to go to Oskaloosa, because she was out here by then?

SUTTON: I don't think she was out here.

ARENA: You don't know if she came when Mr. Franklin Milhous came in 1887?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: She did not come then, I see. It was his wife [Almira Burdgy Milhous], of course, that came.

SUTTON: Her husband didn't die till 1892, and I know they lived here, but he died in '92. My father died in Iowa in 1905, and she was at our house there when he died, had been there quite a while and was with us through that. But she didn't come out here with us. She must have stayed. Uncle Charlie [Charles Wright Milhous] wasn't out here when we came; he came later. I think Uncle Jesse's family too. Uncle Jesse is the next.

ARENA: And Jesse is number 1 in the picture.

SUTTON: Jesse Griffith Milhous. He died in 1930, born in 1851. I remember him. He lived in East Whittier near my mother. And this is his wife, number 11, Mary McMannaman Milhous. We called her Aunt Molly.

ARENA: Any idea why she got a Molly out of Mary?

SUTTON: I don't know. I was surprised at that name, because we called her Aunt Molly.

ARENA: McMannaman, that must have been her maiden name.

SUTTON: Yes, it was her maiden name, Mary McMannaman. She died in 1913, before he did I know.

ARENA: She was number 11 as you noted.

SUTTON: And their children, there's two, Walter Raymond Milhous was the boy, and Edith Milhous Timberlake. Oh no, cross that off. No, I'm getting over into there.

ARENA: That might be these numbers 10 and 19. 10 is right. Now, your Walter Raymond Milhous, born in 1880. And number 19 looks like Grace Anna Milhous West.

SUTTON: Yes, Grace Anna. That was Uncle Jesse's daughter.

ARENA: That's the present name; that's fine.

SUTTON: That is my cousin Jessamyn West's mother. That's the two children of Uncle Jesse and Aunt Molly. Then their other son was Uncle Charles, Charles W. [Wright] Milhous.

ARENA: He's number 5 in the picture. And his full name is Charles W. Any idea what the W. stood for? And they frequently seem to refer to him as C. W. Milhous, didn't they?

SUTTON: I don't know.

ARENA: Was he the person who was also a pharmacist?

SUTTON: Yes, in Indiana.

ARENA: And he is the one who was with the Board of Education in Lowell [School District]. And the person next to him.

SUTTON: Aunt Rose.

ARENA: Number 6.

SUTTON: Rose McClure Milhous, Aunt Rose.

ARENA: Would you give her dates?

SUTTON: She was born in 1862 and died in 1946.

ARENA: To be sure, what were his [Charles Wright Milhous] dates?

SUTTON: 1858 and died in 1939.

ARENA: Thank you.

SUTTON: He died before she did.

ARENA: And are their children listed?

SUTTON: They only had one at that time, and that is Frank McClure Milhous.

ARENA: That would be number 16 in the photo.

SUTTON: They just had their older child, and he died in . . . He was born in 1884 and died in 1960.

ARENA: Did he always seem to look that distinguished? He has a clear moustache, and a well-trimmed one, along with this gentleman, who is Mr. Jesse Griffith Milhous.

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: Mr. C. W. looked rather scholarly; yes, I guess there's more than one.

SUTTON: It was the style.

ARENA: Shall we move on to the next person?

SUTTON: Then the next is their mother, Edith Hadley.

ARENA: She would be number 9, Edith Milhous Hadley.

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: Number 9 in the photo--her dates, it looks like, are 1850 and 1924. Do you know anything particular about Edith Milhous Hadley? Did she come to California?

SUTTON: Oh, yes, she was over here. He was pastor of the East Whittier. . . . This is her husband, Uncle Lewis Isaac Hadley.

ARENA: His number is 18. Born 1848, died 1922. So he was the charter, founding pastor?

SUTTON: Oh, no.

ARENA: Not he.

SUTTON: But he was by the time I was married. It was pretty quickly. Who was the first pastor? But anyway, in 1909 he was pastor.

ARENA: Had he been a pastor when she married him, I wonder?

SUTTON: Well, I don't know. They came out from Indiana and he was the pastor. I don't know whether he was the pastor when she married him or not.

ARENA: Maybe we can get the names of their two children.

SUTTON: Well, there are four.

ARENA: Oh. Number 7 is up top there, and that looks like a girl, Florence Hadley.

SUTTON: Florence Elizabeth Hadley Purviance.

ARENA: Oh, I see. All the way over here.

SUTTON: No, that's the wife. This is Elizabeth Hadley Purviance.

ARENA: She's number 7 in the picture.

SUTTON: It isn't marked that she is dead, but she is. Elizabeth Hadley, we called her Bessie. Bessie Hadley has been dead. . . . That's a mistake, but I don't know when she died.

ARENA: That's one daughter.

SUTTON: [Emma] Florence Kenworthy.

ARENA: Number 8.

SUTTON: That was their older daughter, and she lived in East Whittier. She didn't die till 1960.

ARENA: Born in 1873.

SUTTON: Yes. [Emma] Florence Hadley Kenworthy. And then, Ethol . . .

ARENA: Number 17, Ethol [Ruth Ethol Hadley Georgel]. It's interesting the way they spelled Ethol.

SUTTON: Now, she's living.

ARENA: She is. I see.

SUTTON: I noticed that.

ARENA: You don't think that's a misprint. That is correct, that E T H O L?

SUTTON: I don't know. I never noticed that until I got this picture. That might be.

ARENA: [Ruth] Ethol Hadley George.

SUTTON: Yes, and she's living.

ARENA: Born 1882.

SUTTON: She's three years older than I am. She's 89. She's in a rest home in Oregon, the same one that [Eldo Roy] West was, and died in.

ARENA: She was number 17.

SUTTON: The baby she's holding is Chester [Allen] Hadley, but he's dead. 1888, he died in 1940.

ARENA: And he's number 26 in the sketch. Now that takes care of the family.

SUTTON: No, not my mother.

ARENA: Oh.

SUTTON: My mother had two girls. My father isn't there. I don't know what hindered him.

ARENA: No, but I mean, that finishes this gentleman's family.

SUTTON: This is their daughter.

ARENA: Right. But I mean, that finished the family of Edith Milhous Hadley. Now, we're moving on to your own family and your mother.

SUTTON: My mother was the youngest child of these grandparents. Martha Milhous Ware.

ARENA: I see, and that's item number 24 in the sketch.

SUTTON: And she was born in 1861 and died in 1948. And her children are Elsie Ware Mitchell . . .

ARENA: . . . born in 1884, died 1936. Number 23 in the photograph.

SUTTON: And I am Ada Ware Sutton.

ARENA: Ada Ware Sutton, number 25, born 1885 and very much with us right now. [Laughter] Well, that means we really have taken everyone into account now, haven't we?

SUTTON: 26 people. In 1887 they had a family of 26 people counting themselves.

ARENA: You mentioned your father is not there. Would there be any other missing persons that you think of besides your father? Would you give his first name, Mrs. Sutton?

SUTTON: Wilmer Chase Ware, named for the governor of Indiana when he was born, Governor Ira Joy Chase. But anyway, Wilmer Chase Ware, W. C. Ware, and he was born in the same year as my mother was, 1861, and died in 1905. He was 43 when he died.

ARENA: Do you recall anything in particular about that house which is behind in the photo?

SUTTON: No, I don't.

ARENA: Was it built, possibly, by Mr. Joshua [Milhous]?

SUTTON: I don't know. Those articles tell a lot about it there.

ARENA: These are the articles that were in Outdoor Indiana, and one is dated November 1971; the other October. And these two give a sketch. And I believe they are put out by the Government of the State of Indiana, one of the particular offices. It has some interesting pictures as well. Just in case anyone would like to get a copy . . .

SUTTON: The Nixons were there, but he [Richard Nixon] never lived there. No, he was born out here.

ARENA: Just in case anyone would like to find this in the future, it is published by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Room 612, State Office Building, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46204. Do you mind if I ask you what you recall about Hannah Nixon, her personality, especially as you were growing up in Indiana before she left?

SUTTON: Well, I don't remember in Indiana, because . . .

ARENA: You were, of course, quite young too.

SUTTON: My father was a carpenter, and he went to Iowa. My school days were all in Iowa, so I went there pretty young. We lived in Des Moines first, for years, and my father was a carpenter. Then as he got older, his health was failing and he took to ranching and moved out in the country.

ARENA: By any coincidence, did Mr. [Francis Anthony] Frank Nixon ever do any carpentry work for your mother? Since he was a carpenter, did you ever see an example of his carpentry work?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: I believe--and you would know, maybe, better than I-- that he built the home in Yorba Linda. Did you hear that, that he did build that?

SUTTON: Yes, I have read that. I didn't remember it . . .

ARENA: . . . at the time. Do you recall where you were and what you were doing when a youngster by the name of Richard Nixon was born in Yorba Linda January 9, 1913? Where were you on that day?

SUTTON: I was living on the ranch in La Habra. We had a five acre ranch right up Cypress Street. Richard was born in the next year after my second child was born, the daughter that lives here with me. He's 59 and she'll soon be 60, my daughter, Winifred [Sutton Winget].

And for the first two high school years, Richard went to Fullerton High School, the first two years, because the school bus came that way. There was no bus to Whittier [High School] and my daughter went on the same bus and was the same age. They were together for two years. Of course, my daughter graduated from Fullerton [High School]. After he had gone to Fullerton High for two years, they established a bus to Whittier High. Then they were in that store over there. They were really in Whittier district.

ARENA: As far as you can recollect, then, the main reason for the President going to Fullerton High School first was because of that bus situation.

SUTTON: Oh, yes.

ARENA: There was a bus to Fullerton High School at first, but not to Whittier [High School] and then when they did establish one to Whittier High School, then he transferred.

SUTTON: He was in that district, of course, East Whittier. He graduated from Whittier High School.

ARENA: Do you recall your daughter and the President ever studying together or talking about some of the common problems at Fullerton High School, because they were going and seeing one another every day? Did he, for example, ever come home with your daughter and stay for supper, maybe?

SUTTON: I don't remember if he did. He was a pretty busy boy in the store, helping his folks by the time he was a high school boy; he was a pretty busy boy. They all worked in that store, even Hannah. Hannah was a regular. She was there all the time in the store.



ARENA: What do you recall about the President as a youngster? Whatever comes to mind when you knew him during this period.

SUTTON: They lived in Yorba Linda quite a while and then over there. We visited and saw them once in a while. We didn't live close together until he was a young man in high school, and then he lived in East Whittier. But he was a very nice boy.

ARENA: Do you recall any particular incident, any particular experience with him, maybe at a birthday party when your daughter was having a birthday, or when your daughter and you went to his home because of a birthday, and you saw him play the piano, maybe, as a youngster?

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

SUTTON: I liked it so much, this picture, because I knew all of those adults, and these are good pictures of them.

ARENA: This is a picture that Jessamyn West sent you over the Christmas holidays.

SUTTON: Yes, last Christmas.

ARENA: The picture that we explained on Side I of the tape. This is Side II of the taped interview with Mrs. Sutton, and we were discussing your remembering any particular incident with Richard, maybe attending his graduation from elementary school or high school, or you had your hands full with your own children.

SUTTON: Yes, I have four children; they're all living.

ARENA: Did Richard play with your children do you recall, or did they play with him? Not while he was in Yorba Linda, I don't imagine, but when Mr. Frank Nixon moved to East Whittier in 1922. Did the children see one another, do you think?

SUTTON: Well, once in a while, but only at family gatherings. You know we drove a horse and a buggy in those days, or maybe we had a car. We got our first car in 1912. I guess we had a car. But we didn't get around as easily as you do now.

ARENA: Did you drive, yourself, Mrs. Sutton, at an early time?

SUTTON: Yes, from 1912 on, and I'm still driving.

ARENA: You're driving now?

SUTTON: I have the car out in the garage.

ARENA: You be careful and drive defensively. [Laughter]

SUTTON: I know. But I don't go on long trips--to church and to the store.

ARENA: Mrs. [Jane Milhous] Beeson is that way, and until recently she used to drive down to attend musical meetings here, I understand. And now she just drives locally. She says the same thing, in Lindsay [California]. Would you mind if I ask you to reminisce as much as you can about the time that you were attending Whittier College and possibly did you attend Whittier Academy before the college?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: Because you had completed high school in Iowa, that's right.

SUTTON: I had graduated, and I taught school a few months in Iowa after I graduated, and then I came out here and planned to teach school, but I got married instead.

ARENA: What year was it you got married?

SUTTON: 1909.

ARENA: As you said, one year, or the following year, [it might not have been a full twelve months] but the year after Hannah Milhous married.

SUTTON: Hannah was married in June of 1908. I couldn't say the date. I can find out. And I was married the next June 15, 1909.

ARENA: Did you have any of the same classes with Hannah while she was a Milhous at the college?

SUTTON: Yes, we went to college together and I think she started a year or two ahead of me. I was out here a year or . . . I came in 1905. She surely graduated before she was married.

ARENA: You're not sure she graduated before she was married. I don't know that most people would say that she did finish college. I believe she was still attending college when she married. The person I have in mind especially--you might know the cousin of Mr. Oscar [Marshburn] and his sister, Elsie Marshburn [Haigler] who are both living now in Anaheim [California]. I don't

know if you've seen them, but they're the ones who were pretty definite that she did not finish.

SUTTON: She didn't finish, well . . .

ARENA: They're the ones I had in mind. What do you recall about some of the common things, even though she was in a different year? Did you have gym class together? Did you take the same bus to school together or anything like that?

SUTTON: No. My mother rented her house and moved to Whittier for three years so that my brother, Roy, and I could go to Whittier College. It was a little harder in those days to get back and forth. That WAS before cars. And you either drove a horse or rode a bicycle or something, and it was quite a ways. So she rented her house in East Whittier and moved and rented a house in Whittier, so I didn't go back and forth with Hannah. I was living . . .

ARENA: You could walk to the college.

SUTTON: Yes. My brother and I went to Whittier College.

ARENA: Do you recall where you lived when you went to Whittier College?

SUTTON: I don't remember just . . .

ARENA: Would it be within, say, two blocks? Would it be that close?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: No. It was in the city, but not right near?

SUTTON: I think it was on Pickering [Avenue].

ARENA: I see, up towards Beverly Boulevard?

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: I notice that you have an Alumni Association certificate. It's called a Golden Anniversary Club, Whittier College.

SUTTON: Fifty years, you know.

ARENA: Fifty years. You were a graduate of the class of 1911 of Whittier College. That is fine. Do you recall what the girls did when school was out? For example, did you or

did Hannah Nixon work in any way in the community, or stay at home and work at home during this period? Was there something like a canning factory where some of the girls worked at that time, do you think?

SUTTON: I don't remember that Hannah worked at all.

ARENA: Did she seem to have more than her share of the family load, in the sense that she was one of the older girls, and she was looked up to to do a lot of the housework?

SUTTON: She was the third daughter. Two were older than she. I don't remember that they ever felt worked too hard. I don't remember that we ever considered that.

ARENA: Do you recall doing some work in the Franklin Milhous home? For example, maybe, after supper helping with the dishes. Do you recall chipping in like that?

SUTTON: Oh, of course.

ARENA: Do you recall, when the family reunions were held around Christmastime--and I believe it was Aunt Almira [Milhous] in particular who liked to have these--but do you recall when you first attended the Milhous family reunions?

SUTTON: I expect it was the first Christmas I was out here. We were probably still living there, if I remember right. We only came in November and came to their house. I think we were there.

ARENA: And they held a family reunion even that early.

SUTTON: Well, their family was all at home.

ARENA: You showed me, of course, that newspaper clipping of the very large picture of all the Milhouses and other relatives of the President. I was wondering about those large family get-togethers.

SUTTON: Well, of course, they invited all the relatives--but that was in 1960, wasn't it?

ARENA: That particular one, I believe so.

SUTTON: Yes. The President was Vice President, so the family . . .

ARENA: He was Vice President between 1952 and 1960, yes.

SUTTON: And by that time the family had grown. All the children were married.

ARENA: Did you attend those reunions also when they were that large?

SUTTON: Well, I was there.

ARENA: Have you been going every year?

SUTTON: Oh, no.

ARENA: How about when Aunt Almira, or Grandmother Almira Milhous was alive? Did they have them every year and were you there?

SUTTON: Not--maybe her own family, but I don't remember going there really after I was married. Mother had family Christmas and now, of course, I do. Well, Uncle Frank's family grew pretty large. She could have her children and grandchildren and be quite a crowd.

ARENA: Now, I'd like to ask you about the courtship of Hannah Milhous and Frank Nixon. Do you recall when they were keeping company? Do you remember how they first met, for example?

SUTTON: Not much about it. Frank came into Whittier from some place else. I don't think they went together too long until they were married.

ARENA: Of course, the year was 1908. Was there anything like a shower, or anything like that that you attended or helped to prepare?

SUTTON: There may have been, but I don't remember. There surely was.

ARENA: There was something about not marrying in the church because of a recent death in the family.

SUTTON: They were married in the East Whittier Women's Clubhouse. That magazine article says they were married in the church but I was there, and I know it was in the East Whittier Women's Clubhouse.

ARENA: Which is still located on the same spot in that area.

SUTTON: I think so.

ARENA: And the club itself is still in existence. There is an East Whittier Women's Club as well as a Whittier Women's Club.

SUTTON: You'll find that Hannah Nixon was married there.

ARENA: I'm sure that everyone of the local area knows that. They do make mistakes--people who come from out of town from time to time.

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: What do you recall about the marriage? If I'm not mistaken, you were there as a bridesmaid. What do you recall about the marriage ceremony?

SUTTON: Well, it was just a nice wedding. I don't remember. You have to remember that was pretty near seventy years ago.

ARENA: 1908 and this is 1972. Do you recall possibly what you were wearing?

SUTTON: Sixty-four years.

ARENA: Yes, sixty-four years. Do you recall what the trimmings or the dress and gowns were or anything like that?

SUTTON: No, I don't.

ARENA: Do you happen to know if Hannah kept her dress, particularly, of that occasion?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: Was there a special luncheon or bridal breakfast in connection with the marriage?

SUTTON: It was at night. It was in the evening, and I think they served refreshments. Had the reception right there.

ARENA: The reception was also there.

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: Do you recall who the pastor was?

SUTTON: No, I don't.

ARENA: Do you recall anything unusual that took place?

SUTTON: No, I don't think so.

ARENA: Do you recall where they went or where they were planning to go on their honeymoon?

SUTTON: No, I don't.

ARENA: Do you recall that Mr. Frank Nixon was going to work on Mr. Franklin Milhous' ranch? Do you recall that he did do that for a while?

SUTTON: I don't remember.

ARENA: The idea that he was a foreman, for example, that doesn't come to mind, his working as a foreman there?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: Do you recall when Frank Nixon and Hannah left the first time after they were married and where they went? They did not go right to Yorba Linda, you might recall. It was another spot. For example, Lindsay. I'm wondering if that was the first place. I know they went there before they went to Yorba Linda. I was wondering if there might have been some other place. Mrs. [Jane] Beeson showed me a little church brochure, the Friends Church in Lindsay, in which the names of charter founders were listed, and they included the names of Frank Nixon, Hannah Nixon and Harold Nixon. They were all listed as charter founding members of that church. I was just wondering if maybe Hannah wrote to you or kept in touch with you about her experiences in any way up in Lindsay. You don't recall their being a part of this new church that was being built or anything like that?

SUTTON: I don't recall it.

ARENA: Then when they did go to Yorba Linda, which was around 1912, were you aware of that now you were back in touch with her when she comes back to Yorba Linda?

SUTTON: Oh, yes, I saw her every once in a while.

ARENA: Do you recall that the boys were born in different places? For example, the President was born in Yorba Linda, but the very next year Donald was born in Whittier, in that home, I understand, the home of Mr. Franklin Milhous. Can you account for that in any way, why he should not have stayed and been born where the family continued to live, in Yorba Linda, like President Nixon? Any particular reason why he was born in Franklin Milhous' home?

SUTTON: I don't know.

ARENA: And then, of course, Edward, third living son, was born in the Murphy Hospital, then. There is no longer a Murphy Hospital as you know. It's a dormitory on the college campus.

ARENA: Did you ever become a member of the East Whittier Women's Club yourself?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: If I'm not mistaken, Mrs. Hannah Nixon was.

SUTTON: Oh, I expect. She lived there. I didn't live there, only a short time while I stayed at Uncle Frank's [Franklin Milhous].

ARENA: And you attended which church?

SUTTON: East Whittier Friends.

ARENA: As did the Nixons when they came back and lived in East Whittier.

SUTTON: Yes. I understand he's a member yet, of the East Whittier Friends Church.

ARENA: The President.

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: That's my understanding also that he is.

SUTTON: They lived right across the street, or had the store. When they had the store they had a home right in there.

ARENA: Did you hear from Hannah or anyone else that Mr. Frank Nixon helped to build the first Quaker church in Yorba Linda?

SUTTON: No, I didn't know that, but I wouldn't doubt it. He might have.

ARENA: When you visited Yorba Linda, did you notice that there was a nearby Quaker church by any chance?

SUTTON: I don't remember.

ARENA: Is there anything concerning this early period, the period of moving out to Yorba Linda, the marriage of Hannah and Frank, that you would like to bring up that I have not asked about at this point? Any particular incident or happening that you think should be recalled for the sake of history?

SUTTON: No, I don't. That's a good many years ago.

ARENA: Oh, yes.



SUTTON: A lot has happened since.

ARENA: What do you recall when the Nixons did move back into East Whittier? What do you recall about the store and the family living there? Were you aware that Mr. Frank Nixon bought the old East Whittier Friends Church and set it up as part of his property there on that corner? Do you recall that very well?

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: Do you recall going inside and noticing that this was something that had formerly been a church?

SUTTON: No, I don't remember that.

ARENA: Do you recall that the President taught Sunday school or played any musical instruments for the East Whittier Friends Church?

SUTTON: Well, that would be after we were out here and probably members of the Methodist church here.

ARENA: That is after 1922?

SUTTON: Well, yes. I moved out here in 1909 and was married. There was no church here until 1912 and then the Methodists organized. Dr. Levi E. Johnson of Whittier came out and organized it. And we were driving a horse and buggy back and forth to East Whittier Friends Church, but that was quite a little ago, and so we joined them, and we're still members of the Methodist church here.

ARENA: Do you recall ever discussing the idea that Mr. Frank Nixon had been a Methodist before he married? Did that ever come up in any way?

SUTTON: Yes, I knew that. I guess Hannah had told me.

ARENA: Did that cause, as far as you recollect, any complications concerning the marriage itself, when they did marry in the East Whittier Women's Club?

SUTTON: I don't think so. I didn't hear of any.

ARENA: It will be interesting to know for sure if he was a Quaker at that particular time. He certainly became one later, of course.

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: But I don't know if he were a Quaker at the time of the marriage. I don't know if anyone does. Possibly the records of the church might show. Did I understand you correctly to say that you attended the Methodist church yourself?

SUTTON: Here? Yes. We belong and we have belonged since 1912.

ARENA: I see. Do you mind if I ask you what it was that made you change from your Quaker church to the Methodist church?

SUTTON: Well, as I said, we were driving a horse and buggy back and forth, and we owned property, my husband was in business, we knew we were going to stay here, and they organized this Methodist church, and my own mother advised me, she said, "Ada, belong to the church where you live." And I never thought it . . .

ARENA: You didn't find, or did you, any problems or any great differences between the two?

SUTTON: My friends--and I taught the women's Bible class for fifteen years--all knew I was a Quaker, and it was rather a joke. I've been a Methodist all this time, and we have 1800 members now. I expect I'm the only one that has never been baptized. When I joined, the young preacher accepted the letter from East Whittier for my husband and me. He had been a United Brethren before he married me.

ARENA: There was quite a group of United Brethren in Whittier, I understand, in this early period.

SUTTON: He had been baptized, but he joined the Friends church with me--my husband--after we were married though. And then the young man in the Methodist church here received us by transfer, and he didn't mention baptizing me, and you know Quakers don't have the (baptismal) founts, so I never had been baptized. So, some ten years later, the preacher that we had, the minister, looked on the record and found that I had never been baptized. I'd been playing the piano for everything, teaching Sunday school. It was just a small church in the beginning, you know. He came up here and had it all planned that I was to go down in front the next Sunday and be baptized. I thought they'd think that I'd put something over on 'em, or something, and I said, "No, if I can't be a Methodist now, I'll go back to the Friends church. We have a car now. I can drive." "Oh, no," he said, "But if you ever feel that you want to be baptized, why . . ."

ARENA: And that was the only time there was anything said about that, or any little bit of difficulty?

- SUTTON: Yes. We laughed about it up here. Every once in a while you sign something, where were you baptized, and I'll have to explain it.
- ARENA: Do you attend Quaker services also from time to time?
- SUTTON: Not very often. But I'm a regular attendant at my church.
- ARENA: By the way, would this be the Methodist church in Whittier, the First Methodist Church at Friends [Avenue]?
- SUTTON: No, La Habra.
- ARENA: How close is the Methodist church to you here?
- SUTTON: Oh, five or six blocks.
- ARENA: And the one you belonged to, that period, how close was it, still the same one, the same distance, when you first began to attend the Methodist church?
- SUTTON: No. The first church was down in the middle of town. It's a community church now, but we built a bigger church and moved up here.
- ARENA: If you don't mind my asking, did any of your friends or relatives ever give you sort of a rough time or ever criticize you in any way for your joining the Methodist church. You mentioned your mother said to belong to one and gave you her blessing. But did any of the other men or women or cousins ever criticize?
- SUTTON: No.
- ARENA: And just for the record, did the President ever say anything about this in any way or criticize this in any way?
- SUTTON: No.
- ARENA: I don't know if you knew that before. I want to make it very clear that this period for which I am doing research is his growing up years, and his family up until 1945. We do not touch the political period. But as he did grow up and went on, we'll say, to Duke Law School, were you kept aware of how he was doing? Did you know when he went off to Duke Law School, for example?
- SUTTON: I suppose I knew when he went. I knew he was back there.

ARENA: Did you ever see him when he was in college here at Whittier College by any chance? Did you ever attend any of the affairs where, say, maybe he was in a debate, or where he was a speaker, or maybe with the alumni, when you went back to attend some of the alumni meetings, Mrs. Sutton?

SUTTON: No, I don't remember. My daughter probably heard him debate or something.

ARENA: During the high school years?

SUTTON: Yes, or even the college [years]. I have a daughter, I told you, about the same age.

ARENA: Where is she living now, your daughter?

SUTTON: Right here with me.

ARENA: Fine. When is she usually at home?

SUTTON: Well, she's working in Anaheim [California] in a drug store, Jackson's Drug Store. She has Sunday and Wednesday off. She's always home Sunday and Wednesday.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you what she does in the drug store?

SUTTON: Clerk. My oldest son is a pharmacist. He's a graduate of USC [University of Southern California] and had a drug store here, but they widened the street and he thought it was a good time to retire. He's nearly 62. And this daughter that lives with me will be 60 this month. She was alone, and when her father died. . . . For twenty-three years she was head of that Released Time Religious Education, both in Los Angeles and Long Beach, and then when her father died she was transferred to Whittier so as to live here. She was in that for twenty-two or -three years. But then it got to be quite a thing, hard on the nerves and, you know, it affected her hearing and her sight, and so she quit it for a while and helped her brother in the drug store here. She was living here. And she meets people well and speaks Spanish, and so she has done that kind of work.

ARENA: Do you recall if she and the President ever spoke Spanish together? Do you know if President Nixon studied any Spanish?

SUTTON: I don't know about that.

ARENA: Where did she learn her Spanish, if I may ask?

SUTTON: Partly from having Spanish friends and I think she took some in school.

ARENA: Do you recall if you ever studied any Spanish yourself?

SUTTON: No, I don't speak Spanish.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you how you got along with your Spanish-speaking neighbors and Spanish-speaking, maybe, business people that you and your children came into contact with?

SUTTON: Well, we've had many Mexican friends here. My husband was with Sutton's Orchard Service for forty, fifty years, and had about as many Mexicans working for him as Americans.

ARENA: Does that mean he was, basically, a nurseryman, as was Franklin Milhous?

SUTTON: No, he sprayed and irrigated and hired help. Had quite a business. He was an agriculturalist though--Sutton's Orchard Service, which La Habra had for a long time.

ARENA: Do you recall when the President opened up a branch law office here in La Habra by any chance?

SUTTON: Oh, yes.

ARENA: What do you recall about that?

SUTTON: Yes, I attended, oh, a year or two ago, when they put a plaque up on the building, and now they're talking about remodeling it and making it kind of a memorial. It's down on our street. Yes, he was in the law.

ARENA: Did he stop here by any chance while he was working in his new branch office? Was he, in any way, did you find, changed when he became a professional man, a lawyer, from the little boy that you used to know?

SUTTON: No.

ARENA: Did he remain courteous and respectful toward you?

SUTTON: He's a much more outgoing man if you're with him than if you just see him speak. He's much more friendly and warm if you're with him.

ARENA: Have you ever been with him where there have been a lot of close friends like that, say, at a party or a social affair that you can recollect? Did he like to dance, for example, when he was among friends?

SUTTON: I don't know if he ever danced or not.

ARENA: Could he be humorous? Could he tell funny stories?

SUTTON: Yes, I think he could.

ARENA: As you know, people frequently make a comparison between the personalities of Frank Nixon and Hannah Nixon. Evidently they were quite different.

SUTTON: Yes.

ARENA: Do you see that the President has parts of both, that his personality is a composite of these two, or is that too simple a way to put it?

SUTTON: Well, maybe.

ARENA: I was just wondering what side of Frank Nixon, whom you knew very well, being a bridesmaid and you remember him from the beginning, what side of Frank Nixon do you see in the President and what side of his mother do you see, even today?

SUTTON: Well, he's very courteous, like his father was courteous. But I think there's more of his mother in him really.

ARENA: What makes you say that?

SUTTON: Well, she was very warm and friendly and close, and I think he's more like his mother than like his father, but I knew his mother better, so maybe. . . . Frank Nixon wasn't a person easy to get acquainted with, as well as Hannah.

ARENA: Did you ever see Mr. Frank Nixon lose his temper or get excited?

SUTTON: No, I never did. I guess he did sometimes.

ARENA: Did you ever see the President lose his temper, as a youngster, or as a young man, or anything like that?

SUTTON: I can't think of any.

ARENA: Knowing so many of the other relatives as well, and of course remembering Mr. Franklin Milhous, having lived in his home, do you see some of the grandfather and grandmother in the President, some particular personality traits? Is there anything else you would like to bring up as we bring this

interview to a close? Mrs. Sutton, you've been more than kind. I've gone well over an hour here, and you've been more than patient.

SUTTON: I wish I could help more.

ARENA: Oh, you certainly have.

SUTTON: You realize how long it has been since those things that you ask about. If you ask me when I saw Hannah the last few times, I could tell you more than I can about what happened seventy years ago.

ARENA: Let me ask you about Hannah in that connection. You know, being in politics they say is very rough on the family. And I'm sure you remember Hannah as a youngster, and I believe you said, but several have said that, she was reserved and was rather quiet. Now, the life of a politician is one where the family are really given a rough time. How did she hold up to that do you think? As you met her when he was going campaigning, and I'm sure that there was an awful lot of activity, how did she hold up, being a quiet, reserved person, to this sort of pressure?

SUTTON: She just knew everything would be all right. She wasn't one to get worried or worked up about it.

ARENA: Were you surprised that she held up so well? Do you think that was something that you knew she could do all along?

SUTTON: She was very proud of her son and all, but I think she . . .

ARENA: Excuse me. While you were speaking, our clock reminded us of the time again. And you said that she was very proud of her son, is that correct?

SUTTON: Oh, yes.

ARENA: I wanted it to be clear.

SUTTON: And she was just as proud of him when he lost. She knew he was all right.

ARENA: Did she ever talk to you about some of her happy moments, some of her disappointed moments about his career? How she reacted when he lost and the disappointment that must have been experienced? Did she ever discuss that with you?

SUTTON: Oh, I just don't remember.

ARENA: When you saw her, we'll say, after one of these elections where he lost, did she seem to have changed seriously, or did she seem to hold herself up pretty well?

SUTTON: Yes, I'd say she did. Of course, for several years before she died she was in rest homes, toward Fullerton and then over here in East Whittier. I saw her many times, both places, and so she was going down those last few years. I don't think she would have realized that he was elected President. She died before he was elected President.

ARENA: Mrs. Sutton, thank you very, very much for making this contribution to history.

SUTTON: Well, I wish I could remember things better.

ARENA: You did very well. Thank you.