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John Paul Bremhorst and Helen L. Bremhorst (September 17, 1972)

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

MR. JOHN PAUL BREMHORST
MRS. HELEN L. BREMHORST

September 17, 1972
Fremont, Iowa

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. and Mrs. John Paul Bremhorst. The maiden name of Mrs. Bremhorst is Helen Louise Cobler. We are in their residence near Fremont, just outside of Ottumwa, Iowa. Today's date is September 17, 1972, Arena interviewing. Before we do get into the actual questions, I am very glad to see that you have been collecting and saving these various items, documents, letters and newspaper clippings that deal with your contacts with the President while he was in Ottumwa, as well as your own direct contacts with the Ottumwa U.S. Naval Air Base. For example, I notice that you have this clipping from the Ottumwa Courier dated May 7, 1943. The caption says "Navy Officers to South Pacific" and I quote: "Two officers attached to the U.S. Naval Air Station were detached for duty in a southwest Pacific theater of war today. They are Lieutenant j.g. Havelock Fraser, Jr., and Lieutenant j.g. Richard M. Nixon. They are both 'old timers'" (notice this is a quote within a quote because I am reading this directly from the newspaper clipping) "in the young life of the Ottumwa station. Lieutenant Fraser was security officer and Lieutenant Nixon served as aide to the executive officer."

This is the end of the article. I also notice that you have some copies of the publication that was issued by the U.S. Naval Air Station, Ottumwa, Iowa, and in this particular edition you do have the name Richard Nixon. I am now reading from some of these Naval base publications. I notice that they change their title from time to time. Now in the one that I have in my hand it says Iowing's. That's the title of this little base newspaper. It says Volume I, No. 12, August 1. No year is given but possibly it could be the year 1943. The President's name is listed under the masthead. The masthead says published semi-monthly in the interests of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Ottumwa, Iowa, Commanding Officer, Captain B. E. Grow, U.S.N., Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander T. H. James, USNR under supervision of Lieutenant Douglas Campbell, USNR, Public

Relations Officer. Now here is where we find the name of President Nixon. Under the words Advisory Committee we have these names: Lieutenant F. B. Zaring, Welfare; next Lieutenant j.g. H. A. Seymour, Chaplain; next Ensign Margaret Gist, listed as Aide to Exec. The editor is Gayle Hayes, Y2c. I see that I have made an error as far as this particular issue is concerned. The President's name is not listed here, but I will continue so that we can complete this particular masthead. Continuing under Advisory Committee, Art Editor, H. Bachemin, Ptr. 3c. As a Navy man, maybe I should ask your help here. That Ptr. 3c would stand for what?

J. BREMHORST: That is Printer, third class.

ARENA: I see. I can see why they would want someone like that on the Advisory Committee. And then it says Printer Leon Gambino, which stands for Seaman, second class.

J. BREMHORST: And the Y2c stands for Yoeman, second class.

ARENA: Thank you. And finally under Staff Members, we have Bill Dullard, Cox. Miriam Coleman, Sk3c.

J. BREMHORST: That is Storekeeper, third class.

ARENA: Thank you. Then Dan Abrams, AMM3c.

J. BREMHORST: That stands for Aviation Machinist Mate, third class.

ARENA: Thank you. And finally we have Stanley Jurgensen. Y3c.

J. BREMHORST: And that stands for Yoeman, third class.

ARENA: Thank you very much. Now in this other edition of the newspaper we have the name Cornflyer and on the front page is a picture of an airplane and the propeller is made up of three ears of corn. This says Volume I, No. 2, February 15, 1943. I notice that the names that are listed here under Advisory Board include Lieutenant j.g. A. M. Nixon, and very likely this was a typographical error. This most assuredly must have been R. instead of A. intended, R. M. Nixon, because his name is listed in another edition. I now have in my hands the edition with the President's name spelled correctly and this bears the title the Cornflyer on the front page. By the way the overall dimension or size of this is about the same of that of Time or Newsweek magazine. It's not nearly as thick. There are ten pages. And the date on this particular edition is Volume I, No. 7, April 30, 1943. There is a large cartoon on the front page. It shows a young sailor with his hat jauntily cocked with a young pretty lady and Superman pretty well knocked out and the sailor walking away from Superman. And the

artist is H. Bachemin, followed by Seaman, first class, United States Naval Air Station, Ottumwa, Iowa. Now under the masthead here we find the President's name, and these other names from the standpoint of future research. Under the masthead, the Cornflyer published semi-monthly in the interests of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Ottumwa, Iowa, under supervision of the Public Relations Officer. Commanding Officer Captain B. E. Grow, USN, Executive Officer, Commander D. D. Gurley, USNR. And here is where we find the name of President Nixon. Under Advisory Committee, Lieutenant S. B. Zaring, Welfare Officer; Lieutenant j.g. R. M. Nixon, Aide to Exec. What would that be completely Mr. Bremhorst?

J. BREMHORST: That's the Executive Officer.

ARENA: And the Executive Officer would be Commander Gurley? Is that the idea?

J. BREMHORST: That is correct. He was the Executive Officer before he was made Commander. Now here, I think, on the previous Cornflyer or a later Cornflyer, we have Commander D. D. Gurley, prospective Commanding Officer and Lieutenant Commander T. H. James, Executive Officer, and then the Advisory Group, Lieutenant j.g. A. M. Nixon, which I believe is a typographical error.

ARENA: Yes, I believe we mentioned that. I think you are looking at something else. That must stand for Nixon.

J. BREMHORST: I believe this was did in our own print shop on the Naval Air Station with people that possibly would hurry through it and make a typographical error in striking the keys. It's listed in several different ones that way, so I am sure that he was the only Nixon on the base.

ARENA: I see. I am sure also. I haven't seen any other myself but we do have various lists. Just to finish through with those who were included in the same edition that I have been reading from, this is still Volume I, No. 7, April 30, 1943. I just read Lieutenant j.g., R. M. Nixon, Aide to Exec. The other and last Advisory Committee member is Lieutenant j.g. H. A. Seymour, Chaplain. The editor is listed as Gayle Hayes, Yeoman, third class, which is Y3c. Art Editor, Harold. . . . Notice that we saw a cartoon on the front page and we listed it as H. That H. must be Harold Bachemin, Slc. The printer is Lionel Ginart, S2c, standing for Seaman, second class. I notice that it says right underneath this masthead, "This is the final issue of the Cornflyer. Starting with the May 15 issue, the name of the station publication will be changed, but as yet no one is certain of the contest winner in the hunt for a name."

Now, by way of referring to some of these other interesting documents you have, would you mind letting me read into the record

a letter that you wrote to the President and then the reply that was sent. And in this case this would be a poem that was written by Mrs. Helen L. Bremhorst, and it is dated August 31, 1971. Do you mind if I ask you if you recall the date on which it was sent? Does the August 31 date stand for the date in which you actually sent it or would it have been around that time?

H. BREMHORST: No. The date I sent it was September 1, 1971.

LETTER APPENDED

ARENA: That is very interesting. Mrs. Bremhorst, would it be possible to receive a xeroxed copy of that and the President's reply, which I will ask you to read too, the reply to that poem, so that we will be sure about the spelling and sure about the way the lines are structured.

H. BREMHORST: Yes, it will be, but I am going to tell you at this time I made three typographical errors. In Rathbun when I wrote it by hand I spelled it right, but when I wrote it on the scriptwriter typewriter, I spelled it RathbuRn, so drop out the R. Also Lieutenant and sharity are correct.

ARENA: Thank you. My secretary will be sure to make a special note of that. Very good. And this will be the reply of the President.

LETTER APPENDED

ARENA: And just for the overall historical record, would you have any other correspondence, which need not be read at this point but just for the record, about how many other letters do you have between you and the President's family over the years, from the very first time when you knew him, and up until he was President?

H. BREMHORST: We have received two Christmas cards from the President and his wife.

ARENA: Have you received any before?

H. BREMHORST: No, we have not.

ARENA: Have these come--no they would have--I was going to say since this poem in 1971.

H. BREMHORST: Yes, they have come since that time.

ARENA: Oh, I see. This has been since you wrote that poem.

H. BREMHORST: Yes, that's right.

ARENA: I see. That's very interesting. Now I would like for the record to ask each of you to give a little background of your own lives so this can be better evaluated and better appreciated by the historians, in view of not only what has been said already but what will come up later when we discuss your firsthand contact with the President. You don't want it to be ladies first, it looks like Mrs. Bremhorst. All right then, Mr. Bremhorst, can I ask you first, where and when were you born?

J. BREMHORST: I was born in Ottumwa, Iowa, February 2, 1910. My parents was Herman J. Bremhorst and Fannie L. Bremhorst.

ARENA: By the way, were they born in this area or in this state?

J. BREMHORST: My father was born in Ottumwa and my mother was born in Bonaparte, which is approximately sixty or sixty-five miles south of Ottumwa.

ARENA: Mr. Bremhorst would you mind giving a resume of your educational background?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, I don't mind. I came from a family of eight boys and one girl. Back in those days they had large families and I started in parochial school in Ottumwa, Iowa, at old Sacred Heart School. It is not standing any more, but I believe as I recall I went to about the sixth grade there. Then my parents moved to the country and I continued on with my education through eighth grade at a country school.

ARENA: Does that mean that during that period you lived partly in the city and partly in the country?

J. BREMHORST: That is correct.

ARENA: And by city, you mean Ottumwa?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, I lived in Ottumwa and then we moved to the country which was approximately at that time about three miles from the city of Ottumwa or the city limits of Ottumwa.

ARENA: What did your father do in the country? Was he a farmer out there or have a business?

J. BREMHORST: No, he was a groceryman. His father. . . . He and his father and two brothers had a grocery store in Ottumwa.

ARENA: This may be jumping the gun, but since you brought that up, do you recall that in your direct contact with the President anywhere along the line that he mentioned that he grew up in a grocery store family himself? Do you recall that possibly in any way?

J. BREMHORST: No, I don't. I have heard though that his father was a groceryman, but I can't say honestly that I ever heard him mention it.

ARENA: Now, I didn't mean to interrupt you, but I just wanted to be sure because you saying your father was a grocery store man sparked my memory. Do you want to go on with your education, then?

J. BREMHORST: Well, let's see. I graduated out of the eighth grade at the country school and then I went to high school. I finished three years of high school. I didn't graduate. I wasn't a drop-out, but at that time the type of work in my future plans did not require a college education. My time, as well as money, in those days was limited. We operated a small dairy which took considerable time before and after school each day.

ARENA: Was this, excuse me, in connection with the grocery store or after?

J. BREMHORST: No, my father still worked at the grocery store but you might say my mother and I took care of the dairy work. We just had a small dairy.

ARENA: Did you have the actual cows on the dairy?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, we had actual cows. Mother and I milked and sometimes my younger brothers would help. Also, we had to buy milk from different farmers around the neighborhood to supplement our supply. I delivered milk to my father's grocery store as well as to other customers.

ARENA: What other occupations have you had over the years and what is your present one, if I may ask?

J. BREMHORST: My present position now is with Green's Inc., at Oskaloosa, Iowa, and we are the Ford and Lincoln dealer there in Oskaloosa. I am the parts manager for them. I have been connected with Ford as a parts man since 1928, with the exception of three years in the Naval service.

ARENA: Would you mind giving those three years, please?

J. BREMHORST: As I recall that was October 8, 1942, until September of 1945. I am being given a little help here from my wife.

ARENA: That's good. She's a historian as well as a speller in the family. Now to be sure we've got those dates, would you give them again?

J. BREMHORST: From October 8, 1942 until September 1, 1945.

ARENA: '42 to '45. And may I ask where you served in the Navy?

J. BREMHORST: As you know, my wife was the first civilian employed at the Naval Air Base.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: May I ask you at this point, Mr. Bremhorst, just where you served while you were in the Navy?

J. BREMHORST: Yes. I enlisted at the Ottumwa Naval Air Station through encouragement from different officers that would bring my wife home in the evening from work. My wife was working at the Air Base at that time and they would stop there to visit. They eventually talked me into enlisting and serving at the Naval Air Station.

ARENA: And how long about did you serve there?

J. BREMHORST: About two years I would say. At that time when I enlisted they told me they would guarantee me six months at the Naval Air Station.

ARENA: And that was one of the inducements in other words.

J. BREMHORST: That was one of the inducements to get me to join, which I was happy to do, because they said if you did go to sea you would get three good meals a day and not have to walk so far as you would in the Army. So, therefore, it didn't take a whole lot of encouragement for me to join.

ARENA: And the rest of your time in the Navy?

J. BREMHORST: The rest of the time I was sent to Naval Trade School in Chicago--a technical school. I was in charge of transportation at the Naval Air Station. Under the Transportation Officer, I was the leading P.O. in charge. After my tour of duty at the Ottumwa Naval Air Station, I was transferred to Naval Fleet Headquarters on the island of Guam for the balance of my tour of duty.

ARENA: Excuse me. Would you explain P.O. to the non-Navy people like me?

J. BREMHORST: Yes. That is P.O. and it stands for Petty Officer. That is the enlisted personnel below the rank of a lieutenant or ensign. We had a lieutenant in charge of our transportation, which handled all transportation for the Naval Air Station and I was the leading Petty Officer, Motor Machinist Mate 2/c at the time I enlisted. I went in with this rate and shortly thereafter they gave me tests to advance me to Motor Machinist Mate 1/c, which stands for Motor Machinist Mate. Motormack is an abbreviation for Motor Machinist Mate.

ARENA: May I ask you if you had had any interest in motors or mechanics before. I notice you have been with the Ford parts. Had you actually worked with motors?

J. BREMHORST: Yes. In my parts experience I asked when I first started to be a parts man if I could go out into the shop and work part time to get familiar with the different parts on an automobile, which I did. I had had some motor machinist work previous to that, not a whole lot, but I did have quite a bit of experience behind me.

ARENA: Now may I ask you thinking back, when was the first time you actually met or saw, even if you didn't talk with him, but when was the first time you ever noticed President Nixon?

J. BREMHORST: I would say in the latter part of October 1942. At the Naval Air Station we had to hold shore patrol duty, and as I recall Mr. Nixon, although he was Aide to the Executive Officer, he would have to be the officer on duty for shore patrol at different times.

ARENA: And you would have to report to him?

J. BREMHORST: I would have to report to him.

ARENA: How was he to report to?

J. BREMHORST: As I recall right now--my memory isn't the best in the world--I would say he was a real fine officer at that time.

ARENA: Well, let me ask you this just to be blunt and right to the point. Did you ever have any trouble with him? Did he ever reprimand you in any way? Or the opposite, did he ever say anything in the way of praise of your work that you recall?

J. BREMHORST: I can't say that he ever reprimanded me in any way. We always met before we went on duty and he would give us our outline of the duties that we had to cover, or the area we covered.

ARENA: How about the actual inspection of your uniform? I am going by my own experience in the Army. I don't know if you went kind of through the same thing. Did you stand inspection before the officer with your uniform, for example?

J. BREMHORST: We had what we called inspection. Yes, we was in what we called our dress blues, which had the white stripe, the civilians called it, on the collar. We called it piping. We washed our uniforms by hand. We never had them dry cleaned.

ARENA: Did you ever have any problems with the President about any of these inspections--your preparedness, your uniform?

J. BREMHORST: Not that I recall. No, I don't know that he ever reprimanded me on my dress uniform.

ARENA: You need not mention the names, but did you ever hear him reprimand anyone? Did you ever see him dress someone down, so to speak?

J. BREMHORST: No, I can't say that I ever did.

ARENA: Would you say from your recollections of him as your superior officer, even though it was just for this shore patrol duty, what would you say about him as your superior officer? How would you describe him as an officer who was over you?

J. BREMHORST: Well, I would say he would be A-1 in that sense of the word, if we can use that expression.

ARENA: Anything you want to use.

J. BREMHORST: He was just tops as far as I'm concerned. I never run into any trouble with him. He never reprimanded me at any time that I was on duty with him.

ARENA: Did you ever meet him in town and did he recognize you, since you were both living in town--correct me if I'm wrong--he, of course, having an apartment here and I am not sure where you lived yourself? I would assume you had quarters, you and your wife. Where were you and your wife living during this time?

J. BREMHORST: Well, we lived just approximately one mile east of the Naval Air Station.

ARENA: In other words, you were not on the Naval Air Station?

J. BREMHORST: No, we were not on the station. We had our home approximately a mile east and a quarter of a mile south. We lived on my wife's folks' farm. They had quite a few acres in the area, so we built a home there.

ARENA: Mr. Bremhorst just from your overall guess, your overall recollection, about how many young men from Ottumwa did what you did; how many do you think joined the Navy? Did you go in with a bunch, we'll say, of school buddies or fellows around your age? Did you go in in large numbers do you recall? Did some go into the Navy and some into the Army and the different services? Do you remember anything about that?

J. BREMHORST: I can recall a little bit. As I recall there was about eight of us went into the Great Lakes Naval Training Station at the time we enlisted and that was from the Ottumwa area. Now they might have been from surrounding towns but most of them was right from the Ottumwa area, and we went into the Naval Training Station at Great Lakes, Illinois, which was the training base for this area. And since there was no enlisted personnel on the base at that time, they sent us in there for our physical and to get our uniforms. Then we were returned right back to the Naval Air Station Base. We took our boot training as we'll call it right there.

ARENA: Excuse me. Did you have any contact with the flying part of the Naval Air Station or did you just work with the auto mechanics part of the base?

J. BREMHORST: No, I had nothing to do with the flight plan with the exception that we furnished units for the officers or all the cadets. We operated several buses which we would have drivers for and would haul them to different classes and different flight fields.

ARENA: And just to be sure about this shore patrol duty, that was something that you were expected to do from time to time. It wasn't your full time obligation to act as a shore patrolman as happens I think sometimes now, where a person may do nothing but serve as shore police?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, now they mostly have regular shore police. At that time we had different enlisted personnel who would have to be called on to do shore patrol duty and they carried the same authority, you might say, as a policeman did in regards to the enlisted personnel.

ARENA: May I ask you on that point, did you ever have any crises, ever meet with any problems with a disorderly enlisted man or officer in the community or on base? Ever have any problems?

J. BREMHORST: No, I can't say that I ever did. We seemed to have a first rate bunch of Navy boys here. I don't know why, but we had very little trouble and I normally pulled that on the night duty because in the day time very seldom anybody was secured for liberty. We always pulled our liberty at night and then we would have to go around to the different places in town and check on them and see that everything was in order. I never ran into any trouble.

ARENA: Just for the record, you may recall--I surely do--a lot of the old movies showing sailors, excuse me, but drunk, and always a big fight in the bar and the city police would come. Do you think that's overdone? Was there anything like that at all? How were the relations between the people from the base, whether they were enlisted men or officers, and the people in the community. Any troubles between them?

J. BREMHORST: I can't say that there ever was. I never run into any of it personally myself. Sure, in any group or even in civilian life you have different squabbles and things, people gettin' into trouble. I won't say that the Navy personnel didn't get into trouble or different things like that at night, but personally myself I never ran into it. On the whole I don't think we had too much of that trouble here.

ARENA: Just for the record, did you ever see the President's wife, either on the base or in the city of Ottumwa while you were here?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, she worked at one of the banks here in Ottumwa and I would see her at different times when we would go into the bank or see her on the street.

ARENA: Thinking back of Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Nixon, thinking back at the way she looked at that time, how would you describe her? What did she look like in those days 1942-43? How did she dress? Did she strike you as being a beautiful woman? Anything that comes to mind.

J. BREMHORST: Well, she was a very attractive dresser I think at that time. With my wife sitting here . . .

ARENA: Of course, you weren't looking at other girls, I know that. You were married. [Laughter] But you might have some recollections.

J. BREMHORST: She's sitting right here so I can't say too much. [Laughter] But as I recall . . .

ARENA: You'll have to leave Mrs. Bremhorst! No, I'm just kidding.

J. BREMHORST: I never had too much of an acquaintance with Mrs. Nixon. I knew her on sight and possibly I spoke to her at different times, knowing who she was and she probably knew who I was, because we lived there close to the Naval Air Station, and he was one of the first officers to be assigned to our base. I think there was more of a family type of relationship between the officers and the enlisted personnel at that time on the early building of the base than it was later on.

ARENA: By family type relationship, you mean a good close personal relationship?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, it was closer than being an officer and enlisted personnel; it was more like, say, business acquaintance than anything else.

ARENA: In other words, I have forgotten the Army expression, but there is something about when they demand Sir and are very particular and very meticulous about recognizing the rank. I have forgotten the word for that. But were they very demanding off the base if you came into contact with the officers off the base, were they very demanding?

J. BREMHORST: No, they weren't. The personal acquaintance I had with a few of the officers, they were on a first name basis with me off the base.

ARENA: Did you possibly have that first name basis with the President at that time?

J. BREMHORST: I can't recall whether I did or not right now.

ARENA: How about your own immediate commanding officer and what was his full name?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, I did have with my own immediate commanding officer that was Lieutenant Stanton R. Haight. He is now of San Francisco, California.

ARENA: Excuse me. I think we have his name in this list. According to this roster of officers, U. S. Naval Air Station, Ottumwa, Iowa, dated March 12, 1943, we have Stanton R. Haight. And before we leave that name, I believe you were saying off the record that both you and your wife maintain your association and correspondence with this gentleman and wife. I would appreciate your saying whatever you recall about him. For example, was he there all the time that the President was there as an officer as far as you know and, secondly, very important, where do you think he is now so that we could interview him also for this project?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, Stan and I were very good friends and we carried a first name basis off the base. What I mean by that, when we were on duty, we always had to address an officer with the title of Mr. We very seldom called them lieutenant or commander, but we did at different times call them Mr. Haight or Mr. Nixon, very seldom ever said Lieutenant Nixon or Lieutenant Haight, so it was more of a personal deal in that way. With Mr. Haight, he was my superior officer in my division; therefore, we took quite a few trips around the country in setting up different projects.

ARENA: Excuse me, by the country, do you mean the area immediately around Ottumwa or do you mean around the whole country, the U.S.?

J. BREMHORST: No, I mean say a fifty mile area around Ottumwa or the Naval Air Station. We got to know each other pretty well that way by going together. We'd be gone maybe for a half a day or a whole day in regards to some outlying fields. In our flight training they had to have outlying fields or airports as people would know them.

ARENA: May I ask you this? As far as you know, is this correct: Under the same official sheet I am looking at of the roster of officers of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Ottumwa, Iowa, March 12, 1943, effective March 13, 1943, Commander Gurley will be officially designated as Commanding Officer of this station. And Gurley's full name is Dorris D. Gurley. And on that same roster for the duties of your officer, Lieutenant Haight, it says, Public Works Officer, Transportation Officer, Safety Engineer. Does that describe his duties?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, and later Security Officer.

ARENA: And that would be your duties under him?

J. BREMHORST: Yes. When he first came here as did Mr. Nixon, they assigned them to different departments and he was known as the Public Works Officer, which had supervision of all the equipment and machinery on the base.

ARENA: And along those lines for duties listed under Richard M. Nixon, Lieutenant j.g., we have Aide to Executive Officer. That's the full explanation for his duties, as we were saying earlier when we were reading those newspapers. I believe you have in your hand an autograph book or an address book.

J. BREMHORST: Yes.

ARENA: Would that have the present address of your friend, Mr. Haight?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, it does have.

ARENA: I would appreciate your reading that into the record.

J. BREMHORST: Yes, the present address of the Hights is:
Stanton R. Haight, 83 Farnsworth Lane
San Francisco, California, 94117

ARENA: And just for the record, does it give the phone number by any chance?

J. BREMHORST: No, it doesn't have the phone number here.

ARENA: Well, it's possible we could find it.

J. BREMHORST: Yes.

ARENA: While you have that in your hand, are there any other officers or any other personnel that were connected with Ottumwa that come to mind where you could give us the address and names?

J. BREMHORST: Well, to be honest with you I can't, because this is our address book which my wife takes care of and it is kind of foreign to me, in the sense that I haven't too much to do with it.

ARENA: I see. Maybe we should give it to her to translate the foreign language. Very good. And while she is looking for some other names which will be very helpful for us, is there anything I have not asked you so far, Mr. Bremhorst, about your connections with the President or about your life in Ottumwa and any association with him? For example, I haven't mentioned and I was wondering if you had any contact or would know about religious opportunities? How could these gentlemen with different religious interests--as you know in his case Quaker--how could they practice and worship their particular preference?

J. BREMHORST: Well, now on that, Mr. Nixon was a Quaker and at Oskaloosa, Iowa, which is approximately twenty-five miles north of Ottumwa--it is more of a Dutch settlement--and they have a Quaker church there and also a Quaker college, Penn College, which is an accredited college. There was a chapel on the Naval Air Station for all denominations. If they did not want to worship there and only at a Quaker church, they would have to drive to Oskaloosa.

ARENA: Now, as a matter of fact, would you know if he ever attended any church, even though it was not a Quaker, in Ottumwa possibly?

J. BREMHORST: No, I would not.

ARENA: From your own personal recollections?

J. BREMHORST: From my own personal recollections, no. But they would have a church worship there on the base.

ARENA: Was there a chapel on the base?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, we had both a Catholic chaplain and a Protestant chaplain.

ARENA: Just out of curiosity, how about a Jewish temple, would you know?

J. BREMHORST: There was one at that time in Ottumwa.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you, I meant to ask this when we were going over your own personal background, what nationality is Bremhorst?

J. BREMHORST: It is German. My grandfather came from Germany when he was seventeen years old.

ARENA: Did you know your grandfather yourself by any chance?

J. BREMHORST: Yes. He lived to a ripe age as I recall of ninety-one or ninety-two years old.

ARENA: Do you recall what his occupation was and from what part of Germany?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, he was a groceryman and in fact he started a grocery store on wheels at that time of going from house to house when he first came over here. My grandfather came from Nevenkirchen, Germany.

ARENA: And do you know where that was, where he first settled and had this grocery store on wheels?

J. BREMHORST: As I recall, they settled around St. Paul, Iowa, which is in the southeastern part of the state here and then moved to Ottumwa at quite an early age.

ARENA: What do you recall in the way of his accent and in the way of his learning English? Had he learned English completely although he spoke it with an accent if you remember?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, he spoke English, but it was with a German accent, and I would say it was quite broken and my grandmother,

she was of German extraction also, but she couldn't write English. She could read and speak English but she could not write English. Now in the grocery store they had quite a German trade and my father spoke German as well as my grandfather did with the German-speaking customers.

ARENA: When you mention that there were Quakers who were Dutch, of Dutch extraction, do you think that may have included any German Quakers as well or are you pretty sure about the Dutch?

J. BREMHORST: Well, no. I'm not an authority on that at all and I have been under the impression that Quakers were more of the Dutch descent than of the German descent, but I could be wrong. There is, no doubt, German Quakers as well as Dutch Quakers.

ARENA: On getting back to the base and your recollections of that period, what do you recall that the gentlemen and their families or the bachelors had in the way of recreation? Were there any special USO [United Service Organization] shows that would come out to the base? What was there, we'll say, in the way of night clubs or special clubs for entertainment in either Ottumwa or the surrounding area?

J. BREMHORST: Well, there was several different night clubs in Ottumwa and also we had quite a recreation program going at the Naval Air Station which would bring in very talented, no doubt at that time, movie actors and different movie producers. Also this base was known . . .

BEGIN SIDE I TAPE II

ARENA: We are beginning the second hour and I just want to clear up one or two questions, Mr. Bremhorst. We were discussing the matter of entertainment, what shows came out to Ottumwa and what form of recreation or entertainment they had. But just to be sure, you may or may not know that the President used to enjoy appearing in plays back in college and in amateur acting companies in Whittier. In case he did anything like that here, you may know. Do you know if they ever put on any amateur plays, either on the base or maybe the community had some amateur actors and players who put on things?

J. BREMHORST: Not to my knowledge, he never did. Now I know that I did hear in a roundabout way at that time that he was, you might say, an amateur actor, but to my knowledge I never attended one or knew of him ever puttin' on a play of that type. Speaking about different recreation, they had quite a basketball team at the Naval Air Base and speaking of entertainment, we had the Globe Trotters here several different times and big college basketball teams come to this base to play.

ARENA: One of the particular loves of the President back in his college days was football. You may know that he warmed the bench quite a bit. Was there a football team in Ottumwa and did you ever see him discussing or even attending any of the football games?

J. BREMHORST: No, I can't say that. . . . The high school had a football team. We never had one on the base. It seemed to be more of a basketball situation there. We had quite a few big names--college players in the Navy, either in flight training or stationed on the base itself as enlisted personnel and they played on the Navy team there, but as to football, we just had the local high school here--this is not a college town--therefore, we wouldn't have any, I would say, any recreation of that type here.

ARENA: Just to be sure as this interview comes to a close, is there any point or any subject or any question I have not raised about the President and your association with him that you would like to bring up yourself at this time?

J. BREMHORST: Well, we have covered quite a little bit of our President, Mr. Nixon. I can't recall anything. There is one thing that I do recall, just how he would remember, I can't say, but when he was here dedicating the Rathbun Dam . . .

ARENA: Who was Rathbun? Would you know after whom it was named? That's something we could check with the Chamber of Commerce. I thought it might come to mind.

J. BREMHORST: I think that Rathbun was the town that this here dam possibly took over. It was an old mining town actually.

ARENA: I didn't mean to cut you off but you were talking about that and I wanted to get the President's appearance here.

J. BREMHORST: Of course, he was here to dedicate this Rathbun Dam and Lake, and they landed at the Naval Air Station or it is now just Air Station in the big plane and then they flew to Rathbun in the helicopter. So, we was like all civilians at that time, we was anxious to see Mr. Nixon, our President, so we stood there at the airport waiting for him to come back in his helicopter from Rathbun Dam. So I had my camera with me, as did practically every other person that was standing there to welcome him, and by coincidence I was right up to the gate or the fence, when he landed in his helicopter. Whether it's a coincidence or whether he did recognize me I can't say, but he immediately got out of the

helicopter and came directly to me and shook my hand and said, "Your face is familiar to me. What is your name?" Which I told him and that I had been in service with him at the time he was here. Of course, with all his other aides and all, he said, "Well, your face was familiar." So I still think that it must not have been a coincidence that he walked directly to me to shake my hand from the helicopter and then he went on shaking hands with the people along the exit route.

ARENA: That is very interesting. Just to be sure, Mr. Bremhorst, we were discussing off the tape precisely where you were located in relation to the office of President Nixon when he was stationed at Ottumwa on the base. In other words, you had your own duties to perform and where did you perform them?

J. BREMHORST: Oh, yes. Our transportation garage was directly back of the Ad building or Administration building, as it was known as, where Mr. Nixon had his office as Aide to the Executive Officer and, therefore, we issued all transportation units to the officers for them to go to different areas and for their use. So I would see Mr. Nixon quite often, and he would come over to the transportation garage where we would issue him a vehicle for his use and then he would have to bring it back to us and turn it back in again.

ARENA: Just for the record, in your contact with him in that regard, how was he in having his papers in order, in getting the vehicle back in time, if he had a certain time? Was he reliable in that regard?

J. BREMHORST: Yes, he was. He was very prompt in that and if he was late in getting the unit back, normally he would be at a place where he could call in and say he was going to be thirty minutes getting the unit back in to us. So I would say he was very prompt and courteous in that regard.

ARENA: Just for the record, I was thinking here, as a legal officer, legal advisor, do you recall that he had any legal problems that may have involved the station, have involved individual sailors and maybe you were present if there were, say, a trial? Did anything come up that involved him legally that you witnessed yourself?

J. BREMHORST: No, I can't recall of anything like that. No doubt there was different incidents, what we called the Captain's mast, a person would be the same as in a court of law and would come up for trial. I never attended one of those, so I would have no occasion to know the circumstances or how he handled the cases.

ARENA: Thank you for finding these two clippings which deal with a question I asked you earlier. You were not sure about whether or not there was a football team that was sponsored by the Ottumwa Naval Base and according to these clippings which you have in your collection, evidently there was.

J. BREMHORST: Sorry my earlier statement said that the Ottumwa Naval Air Station did not have a football team. Since finding the clippings and reading them, I do recall.

ARENA: I'm glad you did take the trouble to find this information. It will enable me to look into a subject that I was not aware of at all, Mr. Bremhorst, and I thank you, not only for this but everything you have done for me regarding this oral history interview today.

J. BREMHORST: I was very glad to help you.

ARENA: Mrs. Bremhorst, may I begin, as I did with your own husband to get some idea of your own background, by asking you where and when you were born?

H. BREMHORST: I was born August 16, 1911, just about two miles north of what we were referring to, the former Ottumwa Naval Air Station.

ARENA: Now would you want to say something about your actual home in the sense of, was it a farm for commercial purposes or just for personal purposes, raising local crops for your own family?

H. BREMHORST: It was a family farm producing livestock and grains. Back to where I was born, as I said, about two miles north of what was the former Naval Air Station, then at the time in 1942 when the Naval Air Station was built, we were living just one mile east of the 1440 acres that was bought by the government to build this Naval Air Station. We were living in a home of our own which was on a farm owned by my mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. David J. Cobler.

ARENA: And I believe we were saying off the tape and I believe it would be interesting to get it on the record, giving some idea of the background of the community in which the President lived. He not only lived on the base but he lived in the community as you know. What was the national background of your own family and did you say something in particular about the spelling of the name and how it could stand for a certain city. That is what I wanted to put on the record.

H. BREMHORST: My father's grandfather was one of the first pioneers in Wapello County. He came here to this country in May of 1843 and settled. Then my parents moved to the location I am referring to as one mile east of the former Ottumwa Naval Air Station in March 1919. So, therefore, I was a small child and had lived in this community all of my life. I attended grade school and graduated from eighth grade from White School, located immediately across the road from southeast corner of Naval Air Station.

ARENA: Would you mind giving a resume of your educational background, the school you attended?

H. BREMHORST: Well, first of all, there is one thing I forgot to tell before, Cobler now is spelled C O B L E R, but somehow it has been changed from the former spelling with our ancestors coming from Germany as K O B L E R, and the name originally was taken after the name of Coblenz, Germany. We were told this by some ancestors, but recently have learned it to be incorrect, from a relative in Germany. But the original spelling was Kobler.

ARENA: How is Coblenz spelled, do you remember offhand?

H. BREMHORST: I believe it is C O B L E N Z but I could be wrong. It could be KOB.

ARENA: Thank you. Now I believe you were going to go into your educational background.

H. BREMHORST: I attended grade school located just southeast of Ottumwa Naval Station and graduated from the eighth grade from the rural area. Then I attended Ottumwa High School and graduated in the year of 1928 at the age of sixteen.

ARENA: Can you account for your extra two years of grace there? Usually students graduate at the age of eighteen.

H. BREMHORST: Well, possibly one reason was, I attended when I started a little Mt. Tabor country school that my father had attended as a boy, in Wapello County, Iowa, which would be possibly two miles northeast of the home I have been talking about. My father had started to school at the same school when he was a boy. Then in moving and changing schools skipped a grade due to no other students in my grade.

ARENA: Your continuing education. You had graduated at the age of sixteen.

H. BREMHORST: Then I attended a local commercial college which was Ottumwa Commercial College.

ARENA: And how long a period did you attend college there?

H. BREMHORST: I believe it was possibly. . . . I started immediately after I finished high school and I went full time and then I accepted a position as a secretary in a local lawyer's office.

ARENA: Had you accepted the position after you finished college?

H. BREMHORST: I wasn't finished yet. I worked part time and went to school part time until I graduated and the lawyer's name--he has been a resident of California, but has passed on. His name was Mr. C. C. Maddy.

ARENA: Do you think it might have been about a year at this commercial college?

H. BREMHORST: Possibly six months to a year I would say.

ARENA: Was it a private one or a city sponsored one, in the sense of--well, one thing would be, did you pay or not?

H. BREMHORST: Yes, I paid.

ARENA: Would you be sure whether it was a private or semi-private school. I am thinking maybe sponsored partly by the City school system?

H. BREMHORST: I don't believe it was.

ARENA: You don't remember for sure. I just wanted to check. Would you say that was the basis for your getting all of your commercial positions later on, including the one at Ottumwa, or had you taken some commercial courses also in high school?

H. BREMHORST: I had taken commercial courses in high school such as shorthand and typing, bookkeeping and so forth.

ARENA: Now may I ask you your own personal connection with the U.S. Haval Air Station at Ottumwa. About when you became connected with it in any way? I realize we were talking off the tape a while ago about the plans for it coming here and I believe you had some connection with that. So, in other words anything dealing with the coming of the U.S. Naval Air

Base as well--not going into detail at this point--the number of years from what years were you connected with it from beginning to end in some way?

H. BREMHORST: Well, let's bring up the gaps in between the years. I had worked in an office as a bookkeeper or stenographer from '28 on to 1942. In 1942 I was employed at the Chamber of Commerce as a secretary to the secretary who was Mr. Louis Bein. Mr. Bein has passed on. He retired after that time and I have forgotten but I believe possibly ten years later he passed away. But while working at the Chamber of Commerce as a secretary I had the privilege of opening the telegram that came on July 9, 1942, saying that Ottumwa was going to have the Ottumwa Naval Air Station.

ARENA: Had there been any inkling, had there been any interest in the community before that time that was kind of generally known by the public, or was this a kind of an inside operation in that only a few people were really interested?

H. BREMHORST: I happen to know of two men who had been working very very hard, namely Mr. Louis Bein, Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, and Mr. Horace Brown. I believe he was president of the Ottumwa Water Works at the time. They had made as I recall--it's been thirty years ago--at least two trips to Washington, D.C. on this matter. As far as the community, there were lots of other men and women working for it.

ARENA: Do you recall what you did after you received the telegram and if there was general excitement in the immediate area? Was this at the end of the day, for example? Does that incident stand out very clearly in your mind even now?

H. BREMHORST: The incident does stand in my mind. I can still see myself. There were only the two of us in the office and I can remember ripping open the telegram and reading it, and Mr. Bein, he was so elated. I can't remember who he first called, but there was lots of excitement that I remember later.

ARENA: Mrs. Bremhorst, do you think the original telegram may be around some place with the records of the Chamber of Commerce, for example? Have you ever seen it since that time?

H. BREMHORST: I assume the telegram is still in the records. I have not seen it since that time because this was July 9, 1942, and Mr. Bein made an appointment for

me with the first officer coming to Ottumwa in regards to the Naval Air Station, which was Lieutenant H. G. Wilson. He was the officer in charge and he had made this appointment for me on Saturday morning which I knew nothing about, called me up, which ordinarily I would not be working on Saturday, and asked me to come down. I went down to the Chamber office and he said, "I have a man here who wants to talk to you." I said, "What about?" He said, "I want you to work for the Naval Air Station." We had the interview, which was very out of the ordinary when a man employs you to say, "I'm not ready to go to work." I said, "Well, two couples of us have planned to go to Chicago [Illinois] for a few days." I remember well, Lieutenant Wilson said, "Go on to Chicago and have a good time. Come back to work the first day you are home." That I did, which as I recall was 31 July--in the Navy the day always comes before the month--31 July 1942.

ARENA: If this isn't too personal, do you recall--you would recall, of course--do you want to say whether the position was worth it financially, leaving the position you had with the Chamber of Commerce.

H. BREMHORST: Yes, it was worth it financially. I cannot recall my first starting pay, but we were on a probation period of six months and then we went on Civil Service the rest of the time with ratings.

ARENA: How long did you hold that position, from that date to what date?

H. BREMHORST: I believe the appointment date was 25 July, 1942. I went to work 31 July, 1942, and held that position in charge of civilian payroll, which at one time amounted to over four thousand people, until March 19, 1948, being the last civilian to leave with the exception of one person who was going to ship out the final supplies.

ARENA: From your own general knowledge, would you say that the Navy payroll during that period was the largest in the area? I am thinking of the idea of the other private companies, such as I understand the John Morrell Company and the John Deere Company were here then.

H. BREMHORST: Yes, without a doubt. Not at that time but, of course, this was a new thing. I believe the Navy broke ground August 13, 1942 and it grew. We had what we called. . . . Downstairs in this first building was all the contractor employment laborers and workers; upstairs were all Naval personnel--later called Public Works Building.

ARENA: I would like to ask you before we get to your personal contact and association with President Nixon, I would like to ask you the same question I put to

your husband, about the nature of the community, only in this case it will be from a woman's point of view so to speak. What type of community was Ottumwa? What did it offer, do you think for the Navy personnel and their wives, and in your own view, what was the percentage do you think of Navy personnel that was married of the entire numbers there?

H. BREMHORST: Well, as far as the community, it is more or less a farming community. Of course, we had the John Morrell Company which had considerable employment and the John Deere Company in Ottumwa were our two main employment agencies. What was the other question?

ARENA: To what extent do you remember the percentage of married Navy people?

H. BREMHORST: That is very hard for me to say because I was in the civilian end of it. Now my husband was in the Navy end of it. Of course, we had things coming up all the time--all of our work we worked together with the Navy personnel, even though we were Navy civilian personnel. I would say, of course, we had cadets, we had the enlisted men, we had the officers and the WAVES. Altogether, I'm not too sure at this time, but I do know that we grew until we had over four thousand employees and I am sure that the Naval personnel grew to four thousand or possibly more. So in my mind I would think that possibly one half of them might have been married, but I am not sure.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE II

ARENA: Is there anything else, Mrs. Bremhorst, that you would like to bring up, again before we get into the President directly, about the nature of the community which would have a bearing and help us to understand what life was like for Mr. Nixon when he was here? For example, bearing in mind that he was brought up in Southern California, which has a certain climate, and bearing in mind that he was brought up as a Quaker, where the community, especially the Quakers, frowned upon drinking, gambling, dancing and smoking. Do you think that would have been easy for him to adjust to the way of life of the people of Ottumwa? Were they similar; were they not similar? Whatever you care to say in the way of describing the nature of the community of Ottumwa, 1942-43?

H. BREMHORST: Well, Ottumwa is a small city. I believe at that time the possible size was around thirty-one or thirty-two thousand. When you add eight or ten thousand more possibly for that size town, it certainly bulges it, in the way of housing, transportation, roads and churches, schools and many other ways. The climate here usually has cold, windy and snowy winters which is much different than climate in Southern California. It did seem strange to tear out and destroy the Iowa corn

fields for Navy planes. As to the drinking, gambling, dancing and smoking, we must realize and appreciate this is a free country and everyone can make his own decisions.

ARENA: Do you think that large size caused, say, problems for both sides and can you remember specifically that there were occasions. . . . Well, let me put it this way. Were the overall relations between the base and the town good?

H. BREMHORST: Yes, I think it was very good. I think really we felt like it was good for the city. I know they put on many performances at the base that in those days anybody living through World War II would realize and appreciate with gas rationing, tire rationing, sugar, flour and everything else. They had performances there I know that I attended, not with my husband, because he was in service, maybe once in a while we could go together, which we received very much enjoyment from. As far as the town, I remember well, there were lists and lists of people looking for a place to live and the churches I know it was good for them. There were several churches in Ottumwa with increased attendance considering the cadets, enlisted men and WAVES. I don't believe there would have been much increase in school attendance. I do recall one of Paul's superiors, Lieutenant Stanton Haight, he came here as a single man.

ARENA: And I believe you were mentioning that he was the Commanding Officer?

H. BREMHORST: No, he was Paul's--J. P. Bremhorst's.

ARENA: Oh, his immediate superior officer.

H. BREMHORST: He was possibly one of the first officers on the base, but he was Paul's immediate superior and he was a Lieutenant coming from San Francisco, California. As I said before, he came here as a bachelor, and his lady friend came here in 1944 from California too, and they were married. I remember that they finally found a house in Ottumwa and we--Paul happened to have liberty a couple of nights--and we went down and I took down the curtains, washed them, we scrubbed floors, and we did everything because the house had to be redone. How happy they were to find a place to live. It was that hard. We don't realize nowadays, but it was difficult to find a place to live at that time.

ARENA: May I ask you if you still continue your association and contact with Mr. Haight?

H. BREMHORST: Yes, we do. Through the years we have become very good friends. We never miss a Christmas receiving a gift from the Hights and hopefully we have sent

one to them every year. Mrs. Haight--I do not recall her maiden name at this time--but her first name is Lois, and they are one fine couple in our minds.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, was she a local girl from your recollection?

H. BREMHORST: She was not a local girl. I am not positive on this but I think she was a secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, I am not sure whether it was Stockton or San Francisco, California. Do you know, Paul?

J. BREMHORST: No.

ARENA: Would you have any general idea to what extent local girls did marry through the presence of the Naval Base? Was it something noteworthy that it was very easy for you to comment on?

H. BREMHORST: Well, at the time, of course, I was married, therefore only hearsay. At one time I had fifteen girls working under me and we would have coffee times in our lounge. I remember hearing the girls talking about their dates. I do know that some local girls did marry through the presence of the Naval base, but not how many.

ARENA: Now, may I ask you, Mrs. Bremhorst, to think back to the very first occasion when you recall seeing or having any contact with the President, even if you did not speak with him, do you remember that you did see him and what he was doing at the time?

H. BREMHORST: Yes, at that time, of course, we didn't think that we would have a man stationed at the Ottumwa Naval Air Station that would eventually be the President of the United States, but I do recall having seen Mr. Nixon, or Lieutenant Nixon, at that time, because I was in charge of all the time clocks that had to do with my civilian payroll, and it was my duty, having been a civilian with a security pass, to drive on the air station. There were only four of us and I happened to be the only lady and three men with passes that were allowed to drive on the Air Station, which covered a considerable distance, over 1440 acres of land. I would have to go around at least once a week and check the time clocks. Of course, I had girls and men working to pick up the time clock cards, but I had to check them to see that everything was in working order. I remember we had one located not too far from the Ad building where Mr. Nixon would have been located with his office, which was the main building on the Naval Air Station. The Administration Building was often called the Ad Building. I remember seeing Mr. Nixon along with all the other officers as I would go by, or go in, or go through. I know that

many a time I have taken papers over to the Ad Building, maybe picked up papers or would be over there for a business meeting and I would see Mr. Nixon.

ARENA: I don't know if this might be too much of a detail, and you couldn't be expected to remember, but I would like to ask it anyway. What was the appearance of his office, that is physically; how much room did he have; did he share it with someone else; and secondly, how about his own desk, did he keep it neat, did you see him with his feet up on the desk; did he have his jacket open? Whatever you can remember of the overall appearance of the office and the President himself at that time?

H. BREMHORST: Well, when Mr. Nixon was stationed at the Ottumwa Naval Air Station, he was an Aide to the Executive Officer, and I don't believe having seen and been around and seen many an inspection by the Naval personnel that there would be anything in Mr. Nixon's office or in the Exec's office that would not be neat, clean and in order. I don't personally recall seeing his own private office. I believe he was in the Exec's office. I don't think you would have seen Lt. Nixon, a Naval officer, with his feet on the desk.

ARENA: Did you ever have the occasion to run into him in the city or any place outside the city, that is off the base?

H. BREMHORST: I don't recall that I have run into Mr. Nixon off the base. I can say this, having lived one mile east of the Naval Air Station on Highway 63, Mr. Nixon had to pass our home every morning and every night to go to and from unless he stayed on the base for duty.

ARENA: Do you recall ever seeing Mrs. Richard Nixon, Pat Nixon?

H. BREMHORST: Yes, I recall seeing Mrs. Nixon working in the Union Bank and Trust Company. That happened to be our banking place of business. She was more or less a quiet person and as I understand did her work very well, and was very efficient.

ARENA: Do you recall ever seeing them together, possibly walking in the community or doing some shopping or even riding in a car?

H. BREMHORST: No, that I don't recall. That was the gas rationing days. There was very little driving around. You would only go where you had to go, from base to town or back. But in their case I have been told by others, that they were seen walking together in town at different times. Of course, we lived out about three miles from town and about all I got done was work.

ARENA: Is there any question that I have not raised or any topic that I have not raised concerning your personal contact or your witnessing something involving the President and his wife, anything that I have not brought up that you would like to bring up at this time? I believe we had discussed your sending your poem to him and his response in the very first cassette. Maybe something may come to mind now and I would hate to bring the interview to an end without your having a chance to say everything that you would like to say about your associations with the Nixons.

H. BREMHORST: Well, there is one thing I have not mentioned. We very happily received two Christmas cards from the White House from President and Mrs. Nixon, and also I am very happy to have been working at the Naval Air Station and my husband there on duty with the U.S. Navy, at the same time that our President of the United States, President Nixon, was stationed there.

ARENA: Just for the record, we mentioned a moment ago that your husband happened to be standing by the gate when the President came here to dedicate the dam, came to this area, and he and the President got to talk to one another. How about you? Where were you on that occasion, Mrs. Bremhorst?

H. BREMHORST: Well, I'll tell you. We stood out in front of our house when the Spirit of '76 flew over. They came to the road right south of our house and turned. Paul and I stood there with our binoculars and waved at the President, not knowing whether he saw us or not. We had been told, listening on the radio and television that nobody could be at the airport for security, but then we heard at the last minute that they could. We listened and we heard that there were people there, so we decided to go down and see him when he came back. So we did, and luckily I got in the front row, but I knew that my husband had had President Nixon as his superior, so I thought it better for him to take my place because he wanted a picture and shake his hand if he could, so I stood back. I pushed until I got him up and I stood back in the second row. Then the President got off the helicopter, came over to the fence directly to my husband as if there was nobody else there, but there was, approximately four thousand people and said, "Your face looks familiar. . ."

ARENA: Excuse me, would you mind stating the source of this article you are now reading?

H. BREMHORST: Yes, the source of the article that I am going to read is the Ottumwa Courier, dated Thursday, August 5, 1971. "President Nixon's visit contained a surprise

for Johnny Bremhorst of Fremont [Iowa]. When the President returned from Rathbun Dam Saturday, he walked over to the spectators along the fence at the Ottumwa airport and shook Johnny's hand. He said, 'Your face looks familiar. What's your name?' Johnny answered, 'J. P. Bremhorst.' He had served in the Motor Vehicle Department at the Naval Air Station when Nixon was stationed here." I do not know who put this piece in the paper because they called him Johnny. Anyway, it was there.

ARENA: I want to thank you, Mrs. Bremhorst, as I did your husband for granting me the privilege of this interview, all of this time you have both given me and your very friendly hospitality--coffee, homemade cake, cookies--and allowing me to make a shambles of your beautiful living room with all these tables and paraphernalia, and allowing me to borrow for purposes of xerox copying some of these very interesting historical clippings that you have been saving. I am very very grateful. Thank you.

H. BREMHORST: It has been a pleasure.