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## E. Farley Hunter (Sheldon) (October 13, 1972)

C. Richard Arena

Oral History Interview

with

MRS. E. FARLEY HUNTER (SHELDON)

October 13, 1972  
Los Angeles, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mrs. E. Farley Hunter. The full name is Ethel Farley Hunter (Sheldon) in Los Angeles, California. Today's date is October 13, 1972, Arena interviewing. Mrs. Hunter, may I begin by asking you where and when you were born, and to give a brief resume of your formal education?

HUNTER: I was born in Roderfield, West Virginia, which is a small coal mining town, on November 19, 1913.

ARENA: And your educational background, including your law school period.

HUNTER: I attended the elementary schools and high school in and around the town of Welch, to which we moved when my brother and I were of school age.

ARENA: Would that also be in Virginia?

HUNTER: West Virginia.

ARENA: Thank you.

HUNTER: I attended the elementary schools there, off and on; "off" when I was sent away to a girl's boarding school which I didn't like, and "on" when I ran away from boarding school and came back home and eventually graduated from the local high school. I then went to Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. At that point the depression hit and I went from Wilson to our state university, the University of West Virginia in Morgantown, West Virginia.

ARENA: Do you recall your major?

HUNTER: Yes, I had a joint major in philosophy and psychology; and then went on to a year of law at the University of West Virginia Law School, transferred at the end of my first year there to Duke University, largely because the climate in Morgantown was very wet and I had sinusitis. The Dean of the law school at Duke had a brother who taught at Morgantown, whom I liked very much, and he suggested Duke, so I went for that rather casual reason.

ARENA: And did you complete your education at Duke and what was your year of graduation, if you did?

HUNTER: I graduated from the Duke Law School in the class of 1937 and since then have done some graduate study from time to time.

ARENA: Just by way again of filling out your own personal background before we get into your personal recollections of the President. Do you want to give a summary of your career to date, beginning with precisely what your position is at the moment?

HUNTER: At the moment I'm a Research Analyst in the Los Angeles County Probation Department. This is the Office of Research and Information Systems. I came here in the fall of '66 from Occidental College in Los Angeles where I had worked with my husband, a sociologist, for the preceding roughly ten years. We had a small organization called the Research Laboratory in Urban Culture.

ARENA: Would you give his full name, please?

HUNTER: Paul Millard Sheldon. He was Chairman of the Department of Sociology at Occidental College for some twenty years, prior to his death in 1971. Before working in the research lab at Oxy [Occidental College], I was a housewife for a time after our two youngest children were born in 1949 and '50, doing a variety of the kinds of things a housewife does--working in the nursery school when the children were there; organizing a little private elementary school when they were in elementary grades and we weren't happy with the public education.

ARENA: Excuse me. Was this always while your husband was with Occidental or was there a move involved?

HUNTER: No. We came to Occidental in 1950 and it was during this interim that I didn't work; but, like so many housewives, worked harder at volunteer work than at a paid job. Before we came to California, my husband was professor of sociology at New York University. There I worked with him in the counseling center

for the gifted, which was a facility of the Sociology Department down at Washington Square.

ARENA: And if this isn't too personal, was there any connection between Duke University Law School days and your husband and you?

HUNTER: None. I can start at Duke and work forward and get to 1950, if that's not going to be too confusing.

ARENA: Whatever is convenient for you.

HUNTER: When I left law school, I studied for the Bar that summer and spent most of the study period in a very warm relationship with an attorney in Durham [North Carolina], Frank Fuller.

ARENA: Would he be any relation to Professor Lon Fuller, by any chance?

HUNTER: No. His was an old North Carolina family. He was a member of a firm of attorneys in Durham. I had met him from having written a brief for his firm while I was at Duke Law School, but they were not related. I think Lon Fuller probably is from somewhere in New England, I'm not quite sure.

ARENA: I don't recall myself. I know he stated that in the interview.

HUNTER: In any event I married Frank Fuller that fall and that ended my formal law career for that period, other than being an attorney's wife and working as a volunteer in the Juvenile Court there in Durham, North Carolina. Our marriage continued for some six years. We had a son. Then we were separated and I went to teach for a brief period at William and Mary College and from there . . .

ARENA: May I ask what you taught there?

HUNTER: Yes, I taught three courses in the School of Distributive Education; public relations, something having to do with textiles and the third one I think was merchandising. The position was offered largely because at the time a friend who was Dean of the school had a sudden faculty vacancy and knowing that I was free asked me to take over that position. From there I went to a school in New England where I worked and had my son in the school. It was there that I met my second husband, and we were married. That gets us back to 1950, to the time when we were at NYU [New York University] together and then came to California.

ARENA: Fine. I can't help asking you this question and answer it any way you like. Would you want to compare your experience with law school at West Virginia with that at Duke and then

go on and more or less from your own vantage position as a former student--taking all that into account--and graduate, describe the level of education you feel you obtained, the rating that you feel Duke had as an educational institution in law, and I guess just evaluate it, give your own personal evaluation.

HUNTER: I think Duke is an excellent law school. When I was there it was practically an ideal situation because it was small; ours was, in comparison to classes today, a very tiny graduating class. We knew each other; we knew our professors; we were able to have very close intercommunication between all of the students in the class and all of the professors. There was a personal factor which made us feel like people and not just an amorphous group of students. The physical environment was most attractive. There is something to be said critically about Gothic architecture in terms of ventilation. You are either too hot or too cold but it was beautiful. And it was a very happy time. I think we were a congenial group of people, focused on a common goal. It was a rather dynamic group.

ARENA: Were there any special problems or disadvantages or assets, your being a member of the female sex?

HUNTER: Sure, the obvious disadvantages, three girls to--I forget--something like one hundred boys. Not quite that small a ratio, but there were many more boys than girls and we never lacked for male companionship. I think actually the difference in sex was much less apparent--much less a factor--than in undergraduate situations. For example, the boys tended to treat us like boys. There was very little distinction. We were all law students together and our interests were primarily intellectual. I don't recall any feeling that we were the inferior sex. It was pretty much of a give-and-take situation where we made our own way, and although two of the members of our graduating class did marry members of the class and there was some romantic interest involved, on a day-to-day basis we tended pretty much to forget the differences. At least, that is the way I recall it now.

ARENA: There is one other question I can't resist, given this background you've mentioned and your being a student at Duke. Given your firsthand contact in the educational world as a teacher and even now as a research person, which is an educational function as well as a professional non-educational function, but given your considerable contact in the educational world, would you comment on the policy of scholarships being dependent upon--correct me if I'm wrong--but I got the impression pure competition? Students knew in that group that there were some, no matter how bright they were, who would not receive scholarships in succeeding years. There were only so many, and I understand there were quite a few Phi Beta Kappa students. I was just wondering about that, looking back now and even thinking at the time, what effect did that have, if any, on the education you were obtaining? One could see some enmity among other things, some jealousy. If that person makes it, I might not make it, so to speak. Did that actually crop up in thinking back or did that have any effect at all?

HUNTER: On me it didn't, because it happened I was not on a scholarship. It might have been more important to people whose being able to go to school was dependent on getting one. I was aware that there were a number of fairly generous scholarships; in fact I think that this was perhaps a deliberate device to build up a new law school by recruiting Phi Beta Kappas from all over the country and offering them scholarships to come there instead of going somewhere else, almost as one recruits a football team. If you get enough people who have shown academic aptitude, you are likely along the line to get some winners. We did.

ARENA: Now getting directly to your firsthand contacts with the President and to give you an idea of the direction in which I will be going, I can say for example the student side, the extracurricular side--his working in the library for example--the maybe extracurricular social side, and then finally everything else from the standpoint of maybe meeting his parents or attending events taking place in Durham. So more or less those four categories, the student side, the extracurricular student side--writing for the Law Review--the extracurricular social side and finally everything else. And let me begin by asking you, what do you recall in the way of your firsthand contact from the student side, being in the same classes with him and so forth?

HUNTER: Well, I recall liking him very much, because actually I think we did like each other; by "we" I mean all of the members of the class. I don't recall hostilities between any of us. They may have existed; I don't have any recollection of them. We worked together very closely. What playing we did was minimal; we tended to be together, largely because law students are kind of an isolated group. Most people don't want to associate with them because all they do is talk about law, so you gradually are forced into your own group, not only by your common interests but also because you are not very interesting to anybody that isn't that type of hippopotamus. I liked him. We saw a great deal of each other on an everyday basis, but he was one of three students as I recall who were on the Law Review. These were the top three students in the class; the rest of us were in the Legal Aid Clinic, as I recall.

ARENA: If I'm not mistaken, those three and I think in this order were Mr. [William R.] Perdue, Mr. [Lyman H.] Brownfield and then President Nixon.

HUNTER: That is my recollection. This was a slight distinction, in that their activities differed to some extent from ours. But other than that, we were in the same classes. The President was an able student, I think rather a plodder in the sense that he lacked mental agility and perhaps the mental flexibility of some of the other students, but he worked very hard. He was extremely conscientious and rather a solemn person, not characterized by social graces. He was not an easy conversationalist. He

was not comfortable in these situations. He was not particularly gregarious. A hard-working student, rather humorless as I recall, not a gay person; worthy, admirable, hard working, but rather dull socially.

ARENA: How about his relations with the faculty if you recall any opportunity where he so to speak took on the faculty, if there were such situations that could arise? I am thinking of differences on a point of law. Was he the type of student or were there situations--not that he always did this--but were there situations where he disagreed with the faculty and how was that handled?

HUNTER: Well, we all did, because it was that kind of a school. Where you have a relatively small group, there is a great deal of interaction between the professor and the student which isn't possible in a larger group of students.

ARENA: It was a tolerated disagreement.

HUNTER: Indeed, it was encouraged. I remember particularly Professor [Douglas B.] Maggs, who taught constitutional law, and insisted on a great deal of verbal interplay between himself and the students and between the students themselves. We were encouraged to express our feelings, to become aware of our reactions to particular points of law and he found it stimulating, and so did we. So I don't think of the President as having been unique in that way, but rather that this was characteristic of the pattern in the law school.

ARENA: Speaking of some of the subjects that you had at law school, such as constitutional law, do you recall that he excelled or stood out in any way in any particular subject, not necessarily excelling the other students but excelling himself? In other words, was there a particular subject . . .

HUNTER: Area in which he showed a particular aptitude?

ARENA: Yes.

HUNTER: I think he was quite good a constitutional law. He was perhaps more interested than some of us in the aspects of business law, money, credit and banking, taxation, corporate type law. This is the sort of law that he has since practiced.

ARENA: This is getting away for just a moment, but in a way we are still on it--go right ahead.

HUNTER: Excuse me, to amplify that by way of a contrast, law relating to things rather than people is the distinction I think I am trying to make there. Criminal law tends to be law relating to interpersonal relations and disagreements

between people or between the state and an individual. I don't recall his having any interest, or if any at all it was minimal, in people-related law.

ARENA: The thing I was wondering about, going back to the idea that you had as your major the non-typical pre-law major. Correct me if I'm wrong. I believe the typical ones tended to be economics or political science or history. His happened to be history. I am just wondering if that showed up for you personally in any way. Do you think you had any problems or any advantages over a person like the President who had history as a major in an area such as constitutional law?

HUNTER: I think probably he had some advantages and some disadvantages. By the time you reach college you are a fairly well-formed personality with certain areas of interest, which perhaps directed him into history and perhaps directed me into philosophy and psychology. There's almost nothing which you take to law school that isn't of some benefit. There are some things which perhaps would have been advantages, but you can't have studied in all areas very broadly. I think a history major is extremely valuable in an area like constitutional law--any law that is based on development over a period of time--the whole theory of the common law and the rights of human beings is closely related to history. And in my major, where there was a great deal of emphasis on logic, this is an advantage. Does that address itself to your question?

ARENA: Oh, yes, definitely. In this area of the academic side of your contact with the President and his personal side, I am thinking for example of his religious upbringing. I don't know if you realized it then but you realize now I'm sure, he was brought up as a Quaker. Did that Quaker side of him, did that training, which was just as important, of course, as his formal education anywhere along the line, show itself on the academic side in any way? I am thinking in the area of church-state problems or the area of the question of torts. This might be looking at it in hindsight now, of course. Where you do have questions of violence and so forth, is there any indication that that--and I am asking you for your opinion as well as your personal recollections--but that whole question of the Quaker upbringing of the man and the law he was studying, did that show itself in any way?

HUNTER: That's an interesting question. I don't recall that it did. I think his personality, the rather solemn approach to life and the lack of vivacity and gaiety and savoir-faire could be attributable to the nature of his upbringing. I think there are Quakers and Quakers; Philadelphia Quakers can be very joyful, gay people. Quakers in California tend not to be. They tend to be more characteristic of the personality generally associated with the Midwestern farmer, I think, the prairie pioneer who was a person of great virtue but minimal charm.



ARENA: This would put us in another category for a moment, unless there are any other academic aspects you would like to bring up, I'll leave the academic side.

HUNTER: I'm sure those have been well covered in your other interviews.

ARENA: I am wondering from the standpoint of extracurricular activities if you ever attended any religious services or open chapels? I am thinking of the School of Religion at Duke, and if I'm not mistaken the head at that time was a Quaker himself, the name doesn't come to me at the moment, but I do happen to know that he was a Quaker. I am just wondering if you came across that in any way yourself?

HUNTER: No, as a matter of fact, I wasn't even aware that the head of the School of Religion at the time was a Quaker, because Duke, as you know, was a strongly Methodist college.

ARENA: Yes, and that is why it is so remarkable.

HUNTER: It's most interesting that there was that combination which was the same combining of forces in the President's life.

ARENA: The gentleman had come from Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. Unfortunately the name doesn't come to mind at the moment, and since it doesn't come to your mind either, we'll drop it. Getting to the extracurricular side itself, I wonder if you recall seeing him engaging in his part-time work or full-time work out of the classroom. I understand he did earn part of his income or had maybe responsibilities tuitionwise or scholarshipwise. I am wondering if you recall anything about that side of the education?

HUNTER: I think he worked with Professor Lon Fuller and worked conscientiously with him. I associate the two closely because, as I recall, Professor Fuller's office was on the top floor of the law school building and that's where he (the President) generally could be found. I think he probably enjoyed it a great deal, in addition to it being his duty.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: Regarding the question of student extracurricular activity, I am thinking of sports. I understand there was opportunity to listen to some bands that were available to students. One was the famous Les Brown who is still alive and kicking. I've seen him on TV [television] recently. And the other was Johnny Long who is deceased. I'm wondering what your recollections of that situation were? In particular, do you recall the President attending some of these sessions and playing the piano, for example, at the sessions, or anything like that?

HUNTER: I don't recall that the President was really a skilled pianist. We did, of course, all dance or listen to the bands. We weren't aware that we were listening to famous bands because they weren't then; they were simply the bands that played after dinner in the Student Union. They played for college dances, which I don't recall the President having attended. As I recall, he didn't dance or, if he did, not all that well. And I'm afraid I don't recall his participating at all in any of those social events. Somehow I don't associate it with his particular personality structure as it was apparent to me.

ARENA: How about his student government role? I understand he was elected head of the student government organization or what was called I believe the Student Duke Bar Association.

HUNTER: Yes.

ARENA: I was wondering what you recall about that. For example, did he ask you to vote for him or was there any campaigning to that extent or was it a subdued sort of thing?

HUNTER: It wasn't a matter of any great consequence as I recall. It was just sort of an informal organization. I don't recall that we did anything particularly in the Bar Association other than to get a little practice in running for office, which most of the people had already had in their undergraduate years. No, I didn't think of the President as a politician. In fact, when some years later I read in Time magazine that he was in Congress, I remember thinking, "Good old Dick, imagine him being in Congress. I can't think of anybody less likely to go to Congress."

ARENA: Excuse me, would that not be the case of someone like Basil Whitener, whom I have had the pleasure of interviewing? Were you not surprised?

HUNTER: Basil Whitener, yes--oh, many, many political types in the class and they have, most of them, become politicians. But not Dick Nixon. No. This was the farthest thing from my mind. I thought of him actually as being a rather plodding lawyer who would do a solemn workmanlike job in a law office in a small community, and be a worthy pillar of the community and of the church; a person of many virtues and little distinction; so that, as I said, I was completely amazed when I saw that he was in Congress --and DELIGHTED. "Good old Dick, this is just great."

ARENA: From the standpoint of the non-school side of his life, I am wondering if you ever did meet, under any circumstances, any members of his family, including his wife?

HUNTER: No, I knew no other members of his family and I've never met Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Nixon.

ARENA: And was there any occasion where you and he were thrown together, say, off the campus--it might have been during the school year--or off the campus in a place such as Durham where you could see his reactions, say, to living in a southern town, someone who came from as far away a place as California?

HUNTER: No, I don't, as a matter of fact. He participated minimally in social situations as I recall. He worked very hard, he studied hard and he worked hard at his job in the law school. Some of the students would go down on Saturday night and drink beer and play poker, which was actually a very innocent kind of fun and really about the only socializing we did.

ARENA: Excuse me. Would this have been in town, in the city of Durham itself?

HUNTER: Yes. But most of the time was spent studying. We studied very hard. We were actually a hard-working group of students. I don't know that our assignments were any more difficult than in any other law school, but because there was such a high proportion of students who were accustomed to studying very hard, the pace was faster. We set our own standard of work, in a sense, which was considerably above that of the average law school. Not that most law students don't work hard, but we were a bunch of bookworms. We studied four or five hours a day and there was very little social life. Occasionally listening to the bands play in the Union after dinner, a Saturday night poker game with one or two beers, and that was the extent as I recall of most of our social life.

ARENA: As a matter of fact did you ever, not only on Saturday night, but did you ever see the President drinking beer or smoking?

HUNTER: No, he didn't join any of these mild social activities that we engaged in. I don't recall ever seeing him either smoke or drink beer. That is, I don't say that he didn't; I just never saw him and he was not that sort of person as I recall.

ARENA: The name of the head of the School of Religion just came to me, maybe during the drinking and smoking part, Dr. Elbert Russell. That does ring a bell with you, but you don't recall by any chance seeing him and the President together?

HUNTER: No, I don't. I was reared an Episcopalian and attended the Episcopal Church, so that it was not likely that I would have seen them together.

ARENA: Just for the record and come right out with it, did you ever experience with him, either personally any prejudice, either religiouswise or indirectly through his comments where it was not you yourself involved, but do you recall any examples of prejudice along those lines?

HUNTER: Prejudice in what way?

ARENA: Well, religiouswise in the sense of making derogatory statements regarding a Catholic or Episcopalian or any denomination?

HUNTER: No, I have no such recollection. I think of him as being a person of rather fundamentalist faith--perhaps this is judgmental--in an unsophisticated type of religious faith, and to me, having known only Philadelphia Quakers, it wasn't really Quakerism at all. It was closer actually to Methodism. I don't recall his being in any way proselytizing or really I don't have any recollections of him in a religious connotation because there was so little of that in my contacts with him, which were primarily at and in relation to law school.

ARENA: Do you recall when you did find out that he was a Quaker and do you recall being surprised by that fact or is this, of course, reading back?

HUNTER: Well, I don't think of him as a Quaker, of Quaker belief. I think of him as a person affiliated with the Quaker Church, but he does not exemplify my concept of Quakers. But as I said, my association with Quakers has been with a somewhat different group. I would think of him as a fundamentalist Methodist.

ARENA: I wonder if I could ask you this general philosophical and maybe even psychological question, bearing in mind that we do not go into politics per se. What is there in Richard Nixon today that reflects the Duke years, that you having accompanied those years firsthand, you know is something that he got from Duke? Of course, one can never be sure, but I am just thinking what part of his personality stems from the Duke education, all-around education and living experience, if you could?

HUNTER: I would guess that it at least reinforced his interest in internationalism and his emphasis on the foreign policy of the United States as contrasted to our internal problems. It seems to me that he has focused in that area.

ARENA: Would that be because of a particular professor or the overall faculty emphasis?

HUNTER: It would be the overall faculty emphasis. Duke was not a parochial school in the sense that we were not primarily oriented toward North Carolina. A high proportion of students came from other states. Ours was a much broader interest in

terms of fields of law with which we were concerned. Most of the professors came from outside of North Carolina, and while the school itself was in North Carolina and was in the South, it was in no way a Southern university as such. This was true of the undergraduate school as well as the graduate colleges. But more than that, I think the faculty had a very broad interest which has since manifested in the World Rule of Law, for example.

ARENA: That would be former American Bar Association President, whom I have had the pleasure of interviewing, Charles Rhyne, who did not graduate [from Duke] but attended Duke.

HUNTER: Yes, Charlie was very much interested in that sort of thing. Well, we all were, and this breadth of background of the students and the faculty, I think, tended to make us see the law in a much broader context. We had a great deal of interest in the field of international law. That is the one area where I would think perhaps the President's present interest and activity might have been influenced by his contact at Duke because certainly I think that would not have been true of his earlier years and his earlier education. Afterthought--Note: This probably is incorrect; Whittier's international contacts are unusually strong.

ARENA: Correct me if I'm wrong, but that was also the period when such names on the Supreme Court were receiving national and maybe even international attention--[Benjamin N.] Cardozo, [Louis D.] Brandeis, [Felix] Frankfurter--who represented something new in the history of American law and represented a turning point. To what extent did that situation, this new swing in American law, have an effect do you think, on you as students at that time, and in a lasting way? Were they the heroes of the faculty, for example?

HUNTER: They were definitely Mr. Maggs' heroes and, of course, this was reflected in his bias--and he cheerfully admitted to a broad bias. In many ways he was a liberal. He admired the liberal members of the court. In terms of the President, however, I would think that it would be perhaps not a particular manifestation which would be appealing to him. I think he was then and is now a much more conservative person, and he is not to me a person with an adventurous mind or interested in charting new fields in terms of human freedoms and human values, and I didn't see him that way then. So that I don't think our particular courses in constitutional law would have been especially inspiring to him. That perhaps doesn't say it well, because I think he worked closely with and greatly admired Professor Fuller who was intellectually adventurous and has pursued abstractly new fields of thought, new ideas, new concepts; but not in relation to the here and now, rather as an intellectual exercise. I can see this as being something that would interest the President, but not in charting new areas of human rights and human freedoms.

ARENA: While we in a negative way indicated that he was not likely to go into politics--I think we were discussing that--as was someone like Basil Whitener, what did he seem likely to go into? I am wondering if you, either directly or indirectly, saw his leanings towards going into a corporation, being a corporation lawyer, if that came up, and maybe you know or know about the little sojourn to New York City [New York] maybe over the Christmas holidays? I was wondering if any of that comes to mind?

HUNTER: Not particularly, no. There were a couple of students from New York City and I really don't actually recall the incident. Yes, I guess I do vaguely, but with no particular emphasis. I would not have thought of him as a New York attorney. But then I think it's been apparent all the way through that there was a great deal about him of which I was completely unaware in terms of his ambitions and his potential. It may have been true that the association there with the students from more sophisticated backgrounds may have opened up whole new worlds to him and new goals, new horizons. It probably had a great deal of influence on him.

ARENA: As a final question I would like to ask you if there is anything I have not brought up, any subject that I have not covered that you would like to bring up and comment on at this point? Take as much time as you like.

HUNTER: I think not. You see, my contact with the President was limited to the two years of law school. I have not seen him since. Obviously I am not one of his great admirers, but on the other hand during the time we were directly associated I liked him very much and he was a part of what was for me a very happy time of life. But I am sure that I have nothing to contribute that hasn't already come to you from other sources and in much greater detail.

ARENA: Well, I just don't think anybody can speak better for you than yourself and for that contribution I am very grateful, as well as for your answering all of my questions so frankly and fully and giving me this time. And I know my fellow historians join me in that. Thank you.

HUNTER: Thank you.