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George R. Irving Jr (April 3, 1973)

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Whittier College

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Oral History Interview

with

MR. GEORGE R. IRVING, JR.
MR. GEORGE R. IRVING, SR. present

April 3, 1973
Butte Falls, Oregon

By Mrs. Evelyn Dorn

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

DORN: This is an interview with Mr. George R. Irving, Jr., of Butte Falls, Oregon. The interview is being held in Medford, Oregon, on April 3, 1973, Evelyn Dorn interviewing.

Mr. Irving, will you please tell me where and when you were born, and where you got your education?

IRVING: I was born in Glendale, California, on May 7, 1925, and I was educated in Huntington Park [California] and San Diego [California], in Pico [California] and in Whittier [California].

DORN: Did you attend Whittier College?

IRVING: No.

DORN: Whittier High School?

IRVING: Whittier High School.

DORN: I see. Now I understand, Mr. Irving, that you worked in the Nixon store on Whittier Boulevard in Whittier, California.

IRVING: Yes.

DORN: During that time, what years did you actually work there, and how long were you employed?

IRVING: Well, if I remember correctly, I started in the summer of 1939, and I think I worked there for approximately

two years. And I worked there again beginning about in 1949 or 1950, and I worked for a couple of years again.

DORN: How were you employed with the Nixons? Who employed you?

IRVING: I guess it was a family agreement, apparently, between Mr. and Mrs. [Francis Anthony] Nixon and Don [Francis Donald Nixon].

DORN: And where were you living at that time?

IRVING: In Pico [now Pico Rivera, California].

DORN: And what were your duties? Did Donald teach you the art of cutting meat?

IRVING: Well, he started teaching me, in learning, and he taught me as far as he could in the time I was there. But my duties consisted of anything that needed doing in the store.

DORN: In the whole store.

IRVING: I worked; I helped Don in the meat, and I also put up produce, drove the delivery truck and waited on customers. We waited on quite a few people then in the store. We went around and gathered things up for them, rather than having them do it themselves.

DORN: Not like they do today in the supermarkets, is it?

IRVING: No.

DORN: This area was not affluent society. Now, getting back to the meat department, what type of meat was sold there, everything? I mean, was the expensive type of meat sold as much as the lesser type?

IRVING: Well, I wouldn't say expensive, because meat in those days was not real expensive, but we did handle strictly a quality line of meat. Don would buy only the best. We did handle, also, what you might consider to be a certain amount of the more expensive items; in other words, we handled luncheon meats and things like that which were considered expensive at that time; it would be considered stealing today, the prices. But they were expensive. We handled roast pork and baked ham, and we did have a certain amount of customers who could afford things like that, people living up on the hill.

DORN: Do you recall any relatives working in the store, and who were they, if you recall any of them?

IRVING: Well, I worked, of course, with [Patricia Ryan] Pat Nixon. She worked in the store. She helped us put up orders and things like that. This was when the President was still just beginning as an attorney in Whittier.

DORN: She was teaching school most of the time. Was this like on Saturdays when she'd come, or evenings?

IRVING: Well, it was in the summertime, see, because I was going to school, and I did work after school, too. But when I worked with her it was during the summer. She would come in and help us put up orders, and so on.

DORN: I see. Do you recall any other relatives? Do you remember [Thomas T.] Tom Seulke?

IRVING: Yes, but I never did know Tom was a relative.

DORN: Yes, he's distantly related.

IRVING: I didn't know he was a relative, but I did work with him, and there was another fellow. I don't know if he was a relative or not, but his name was Lyle, [Brumfield] and I don't recall his last name. Lyle and Tom were both working there. And then we had another one whom I know was a relative. He didn't work for too long, Roger Nixon, and he lived, it seemed to me, down in Long Beach [California] or Lakewood [California], or somewhere like that. He didn't live real close, but he was a relative and his name was Roger.

DORN: Did you have any relatives working in the Nixon store?

IRVING: Oh, later on I did, yes. After I went to work back again in about 1950 I had three sisters who worked in the store.

DORN: They all worked in the store?

IRVING: Well, that's true, they didn't work in the store. They worked in the restaurant and bakery.

DORN: All right. Now, getting back to the store, the physical aspects of the store, the location, and so on. In the beginning it was a small gas station, but that was before your time, right?

IRVING: Yes. The gas station was gone by the time I started working there.

DORN: Yes, and then there were some shelves put in there where they sold a few groceries. Do you know anything about the Friends church from across the street that Mr. Nixon moved over and put on the location of the market, which became the first store? Do you know anything about that?

IRVING: No. My dad would know more about that. It was already moved by the time I got there.

DORN: All right. Now, I'd like to bring out here the kind of an area that East Whittier was, focusing on the market, of course. During the time that you were there, was that boulevard out there paved, or were the streets paved along there?

IRVING: Yes, it was a three-lane concrete highway.

DORN: I see. Do you recall any of the neighbors particularly? Do you recall any of the people like Harry Schuyler?

IRVING: I remember all these names if I hear them, but I would be hard put to just recall them from memory.

DORN: Did you ever work in the store at the same time that Gladys Starbuck worked in the store? She was a school teacher, and she came over and helped, I expect like Pat Nixon did.

IRVING: I can still remember what Gladys Starbuck looked like.

DORN: We've interviewed her recently, and she told us that she worked there with you. I was going to ask you about flooding in that area. But if it was already paved I'm sure that you didn't have any problem with flooding into the store, and that sort of thing. All right, now East Whittier. Was there a kind of pioneer freshness in that community? The people who lived out there, many of them were ranchers.

IRVING: Most of them were ranchers.

DORN: And where was the Leffingwell Ranch in connection with the Nixon store?

IRVING: It would have been south, down Leffingwell Road. The headquarters and the warehouses, tool shops and so forth, were about a half mile from the store.

DORN: There was a large Mexican population at Leffingwell, right? Was there any language barrier in the Nixon store with this Mexican population?

IRVING: We didn't have any trouble. We understood. . . . Most of them could speak a little English and we could speak a little bit of Spanish. We learned to know the words, the things that they would ask for. We couldn't speak Spanish, but if they asked for lard or butter, and so forth, we got to know what it was they wanted.

DORN: Were there ever any Mexicans hired in the store, that you recall?

IRVING: No, not when I worked there.

DORN: Do you recall any prejudice in that store, as against the Mexicans and the blacks and the Japanese and the Basques? I mean, were they as welcome when they came in the store?

IRVING: I don't recall any problem that way at all. Anyone who came in the store was a customer and was treated like a customer. I don't think we practiced any discriminatory policies at all.

DORN: When the Nixons or the employees greeted customers coming in, was it a friendly, casual attitude?

IRVING: Well, of course, Don and Mrs. [Hannah Milhous] Nixon, you would have to say, were a little more friendly. Frank was friendly but he was friendly in a different way. He wasn't effusive with his friendliness. You had to kind of get to know him, and he was a little gruff, you know, at times. But I don't recall him ever being gruff with customers that he didn't know. If he knew a customer and they were having a little conversation or something, he could just act natural. If he was against something, he was against it.

DORN: He didn't mind saying no.

IRVING: No.

DORN: Did you ever notice that he discussed politics with any of the customers that came in there? Did you ever discuss politics with Frank Nixon?

IRVING: Oh, we would maybe comment on something that was in the paper, or something that came up, and Frank was always pretty conscious of politics. He didn't think too much of some of the things that were occurring at the time with the government, and he wasn't bashful about it.

DORN: How would you compare Mrs. Hannah Nixon with her husband, Frank, I mean as far as their personalities were concerned?

IRVING: Well, she was actually quite timid in her approach to people, but she was always friendly and pleasant. I would say she actually was harder to get to know than was Frank, even though he was more gruff. You knew where you stood right away with Frank, because he let you know.

DORN: Yes. Well now, at any time, for instance, if Frank would upset a customer, did Mrs. Nixon come forth and act as a peacemaker?

IRVING: Oh, she would try to smooth things over if he was being a little bit too rough.

DORN: I knew Mr. Nixon well and he was a delightful man. I know what you mean. In the store, did they stock any tobacco or alcoholic beverages?

IRVING: Not alcoholic beverages, but they did stock tobacco.

DORN: They did?

IRVING: When I worked there they did.

DORN: All right. Now, do you recall the first time that you ever saw the President, Richard Nixon?

IRVING: Well, he used to come in the store very often. He came in actually every evening, that first summer that I worked there, because he came in to pick up Pat and they'd go on home.

DORN: This was when he was a young lawyer.

IRVING: Yes. So he'd usually come in in the evenings to pick her up and then stay and talk to his parents and Don, and so forth, before they left. I used to see him quite often. And I can remember one thing that I was very much impressed with. He'd bought--I think it was a '41, must have been--a '41 Oldsmobile that didn't have a gearshift transmission, it had an automatic, and I didn't know that such a thing was possible. When Don told me that you didn't have to shift that thing, you just stepped on the gas and it did the shifting, why I was disinclined to believe that they were making cars that would do that. So I had to go out and have a look at that car; it was an Oldsmobile.

DORN: Well, let's see, then. When you worked in the store, Richard Nixon was already out of the store as a young chap. I was going to ask you if you knew anything about him working and taking care of the produce, but that was before your time, wasn't it?

IRVING: Yes.

DORN: Now in the store, were there slow and busy days? Did you take telephone orders and make deliveries?

IRVING: Oh, yes. Most of the telephone orders Mrs. Nixon watched over very closely. She was very fussy about that, because it required quite a bit of memory work, for one thing. People would say a can of tomatoes but they didn't mean a can of tomatoes, they meant a can of Del Monte tomatoes. And the next person may have wanted another brand, and she knew all this, so she would try to take most of the orders on the phone. However, we did take some. I did take some, and Pat did take some, too; Don took 'em, but she took a good share of 'em by herself and supervised the putting up. She was very fussy about the orders, to make sure that people got just exactly what they were accustomed to getting.

DORN: Who delivered the orders? They had a little truck, didn't they.

IRVING: They had a little '37 Chevy panel, a little blue one. And when I first went to work there, Tom [Seulke] helped deliver and so did Lyle [Brumfield], and then both of them left, and I don't remember the circumstances about their leaving, but I kind of think it was a little better job, you know, more money than they could make in the grocery business. And then Frank delivered for a while. By this time I was getting about old enough so they could teach me, so Frank taught me the route.

DORN: Did Frank Nixon object to going out on deliveries himself, personally?

IRVING: Not especially, he didn't object. The only thing he objected to was when, after he had gone and come back, someone would phone in late and he'd have to drive five or six miles with a late order. He did kind of take exception to that.

DORN: I understand Mrs. Nixon--well, Frank too--they both baked cakes and pies. I was wondering if someone phoned in for a pie, was that delivered in record time, as fast as a large order might be? Supposing someone called in and said, "I'd like to have a spool of white thread and a cherry pie." How did they feel about delivering things like that?

IRVING: Well, Mrs. Nixon, of course, took most of the orders, and she would deliver it.

DORN: Did she go out in the truck?

IRVING: Oh, no. But Frank would say, "If they don't call in by 3 o'clock they don't get anything."

DORN: That sounds like Mr. Nixon. Now then, Mr. Irving, was there credit on the books? Did they carry credit accounts?

IRVING: Yes, they carried credit.

DORN: How about people less fortunate? For instance, did the Nixons live by the Golden Rule, helping others? Did they extend credit to people they weren't sure were going to pay, or that they would be a long time in collecting from? Do you know anything about that?

IRVING: Well, I really don't know what their policies were in that regard. I do know they had some that did take a long time to collect on, because I can remember hearing him bellyache about that, especially Frank; he would complain. So they must have had some, but as far as the actual policies for accepting people for credit, I don't know what they had decided on. They must have discussed those things among themselves when we weren't around.

DORN: Yes. Did they have a lot of credit down at Leffingwell Ranch, do you know?

IRVING: Well, they did have credit at Leffingwell Ranch; they had a ranch account; well, we had some other accounts down there, too. But I don't think we had any, oh, say, like a labor account. I doubt if those people would have asked for an account.

DORN: Well, they probably got their pay check every Saturday night and just came up and bought their groceries.

IRVING: Yes, and I don't think that they would even have realized that such a thing was possible. I think they would have just expected to pay cash for whatever they got.

DORN: Did Mr. and Mrs. Nixon work long hours in the store? And how about you employees? Did you work more than the eight hours that we do today?

IRVING: Yes, we worked. . . . Let's see, I think our hours there were actually only nine to six. But you know, if you came up to the end of the day and there was still something left to do, you did it.

DORN: Do you know whether or not Mr. Nixon and Mrs. Nixon worked in the store after closing hours, restocking shelves and things like that?

IRVING: Well, they did some. Yes, they did some, and Don did, too, used to come down in the evenings and work. There's always a certain amount of that. And then, of course, with their credit accounts, they always had to be taking this type of thing, they took it home with them many times and did that at home, after they got home.

DORN: Who did the bookkeeping, do you know? Was it Frank or Hannah, either one?

IRVING: Well, they both worked on it, but I think Hannah did more than he did.

DORN: What about the social activities centering around the church and the school in East Whittier? Did you ever attend any of those with the Nixon boys, with Don, or . . .

IRVING: No. See, I lived in a different community and we went to the church in our community.

DORN: Are you a Quaker?

IRVING: No.

DORN: Did you ever go on a trip to Los Angeles with Don or any of them?

IRVING: No.

DORN: I expect a trip into the city was quite a rarity, and something important in those days.

IRVING: Well, Mr. Nixon, that was one of the things he did a lot of, too. He did used to go to the produce market quite often. Yes, he'd have to leave quite early in the morning. Some of our produce was delivered by produce men who did go down there and get it and deliver it to the stores. But he did go to the produce market some himself, too. He would, of course, have to leave and go down there about four or five o'clock in the morning, and get back to the store with the produce.

DORN: It was a long day, wasn't it?

IRVING: Oh, yes.

DORN: Did you ever attend any of the debates that Richard Nixon took part in at any of the schools that he attended?

IRVING: No, I couldn't. That wouldn't have been possible because . . .

DORN: You didn't live in that area, that's right. He was a young attorney by the time you were there. Do you ever recall his mother and father talking about any of his achievements, like they might say, "Did you hear Richard last night?" or something of that sort?

IRVING: No, I don't think they ever did do that, no. Of course, by the time Richard was running for Congress and for the Senate, they weren't around the store too much. They had gone back to Pennsylvania for a while. Then when they did come, they just came in the store to shop, and they'd stop and talk for a few minutes.

DORN: How did Mr. Frank Nixon feel about being out of the store and Don being in the store? Do you think he had any qualms about. . . . You know, sometimes we hate to give up something that we've started from the beginning. Do you think he was enjoying not having to be in the store every day?

IRVING: Oh, I kind of doubt it. I think he would have enjoyed staying in the store. But his approach to running a grocery store was altogether different than Don's, and so he felt that Don was far too extravagant in his views, and that you didn't need all these fancy facilities, and that you could get by with much less than Don expected. Don wanted, you know, a nice store, a good-looking store with good equipment, and Frank felt that the investment was greater than the potential return.

DORN: Did Don expand the size of the store?

IRVING: Oh, yes.

DORN: What did he do? How did he do that?

IRVING: Well, he added a wing, an ell on the old church building, kept that and remodeled the inside of that. But he added the ell on and then put in that frozen food locker plant, and the meat department, and then the checking area was all in that section of the store. Then there was also room for the bread racks and the frozen food racks, and such as they had there.

DORN: Now, was there some sort of a counter there where you could have your lunch? Were there booths there at that time or did that come later?

IRVING: Well, the restaurant was, and the little place where the restaurant eventually started was there, but they had just an ice cream counter, and he leased that out to somebody. Oh, there were quite a few of them who actually had leased that little sandwich and ice cream stand, but they

couldn't make it, and so eventually he decided that he would see what he could do himself.

DORN: That's how he got started in the restaurant business, wasn't it?

IRVING: That's how he got started.

DORN: How about the store's economic progress? Was business improving year after year when you were there, and getting busier? I know it was a small store.

IRVING: Oh, I'm sure it was increasing, but business was fairly stable when I was first there back in the late thirties and early forties. Your business remained fairly stable. You had the same customers week after week, and we weren't having the influx of new people into the area in those days, and the business always seemed about stable. But then, of course, later, in the early fifties or early forties when I was there, business was increasing constantly; every year it was better.

DORN: You spoke about Pat Nixon working in the store. What was your impression of her the first time you saw her? First impressions make lasting memories. Do you recall anything in particular about Pat that you were impressed with when you first met her? Now, she was already married, right?

IRVING: Yes. Well, if I could remember a first impression, I wasn't surprised. . . . I remember this: I wasn't surprised when they told me she was a school teacher, because she kind of had a school teacher's way. When she was trying to get me to do this or that, or something else, she went about it as a school teacher would. But she was very pleasant and she was a good worker. I never heard or saw a cross word out of her. She was always pleasant.

DORN: How was the relationship between Mrs. Nixon and Pat? Was it congenial?

IRVING: Oh, they got along very well.

DORN: And Mr. Nixon?

IRVING: Oh, he was very fond of her. He liked her.

DORN: And what about young [Edward Calvert] Ed Nixon? Let's see, Eddie was born in '30, so he was just a youngster around the store when you were there the first time. Well, how can I put this? A lot of people say, "I remember that skinny little kid." But was he in and out of the store a good deal?

IRVING: Yes, Eddie was quite a terror. He was into everything, and he was especially interested in mechanics, anything mechanical, and he would tear apart the coffee grinder if you didn't keep your eye on him, or anything else that was mechanical or electrical. That was his interest. And he was a pretty determined little boy. He pretty much did what he wanted to.

DORN: Was he into the cookie jar quite often?

IRVING: I never noticed Eddie. . . . As a matter of fact, I think the opposite was true. Eddie was the one they worried about. Now like with Don, he has a compulsion, but with Eddie now. . . . I can remember them watching him to see that he drank his milk and that he ate his sandwich that they made him. When Mrs. Nixon used to go out and make the pies and things like that, she would usually whip up a meal for the family, too, so they'd have a meal at noon.

DORN: They lived right in back of the store, didn't they?

IRVING: No. They were living . . .

DORN: They lived in a house that faced on Santa Gertrudes?

IRVING: Little house on the back.

DORN: Yes, that's what I meant. I didn't mean right in back of the store.

IRVING: That's right; they were living there. Yes, they were. It was later that they moved to the home in Whittier.

DORN: Up on Worsham Drive.

IRVING: I was trying to think. They never did live in those little places. They had two or three more little homes along the boulevard.

DORN: No, I don't think they lived in those.

IRVING: No, I don't think they ever lived in any one of those, no. Well, what I'm talking about is, she had a little screened kitchen, what would be more like a summer kitchen than anything else, just at the side of the store. And she would go out there and take the leftover produce, peaches that were getting a brown spot, or anything, and she'd make pies and then we'd sell them in the store.

DORN: She had wonderful pies.

IRVING: Yes, they were good.

DORN: Were you in the store when they moved up on Worsham Drive into that lovely house up there? Now Richard was practicing law, and you must have been there at that time.

IRVING: Oh, yes, I carted furniture up there.

DORN: Did you? That was a lovely house, wasn't it?

IRVING: Oh, very nice; it's a beautiful place.

DORN: Yes. I attended an engagement party for them up there, and that was a beautiful home. They didn't live there very long, though, did they?

IRVING: No, they didn't.

DORN: It was a little difficult, I would think, going back and forth out there to the store.

IRVING: I don't really know what. . . . I can recall asking Mr. Nixon something about that. It seems to me that he said it was just too expensive. I think he felt that they couldn't afford to live in a home like that, and so that's the way he felt. I don't know how the rest of them felt. I can remember talking to him something about that and he said that that home was just too expensive; they couldn't afford it.

DORN: And it was on a hillside, too, and it was like three stories down. That was a lot of stairs for both of them to climb. I can remember that Eddie was a little boy, and he'd have the little Harrison boy, I think, stay over night with him, and they'd just have a big time running up and down the stairs--Russell Harrison, Jr.
Have you had any contact with President Nixon since he became President?

IRVING: No.

DORN: You saw him coming into the store as a young man, stopping and chatting and that sort of thing. Was he always very pleasant? Was he always very pleasant with his family, with his mother and father?

IRVING: Oh, yes. They had quite a high regard for him and his opinions, even then. Of course, I can remember them asking him what he thought about this and what he thought about that.

DORN: So many people have depicted him as being aloof and a loner. Did you ever feel that way about him? Did he ever come into the store and act a little aloof

with anyone, or was he always just very congenial?

IRVING: Well, he wasn't congenial in the same sense that Don was congenial. When he came in in the evenings to pick up Pat, he usually spent most of his time talking to his mother and dad. I don't believe I ever did really chat much with him. I would say hello and so on, but as far as actually stopping and having a conversation, I don't think I did. Of course, I was just a kid, you know, and he was twelve or thirteen years older than I was, and you don't do that too much. But he wasn't. . . . You couldn't say that he was congenial like Don was.

DORN: He wasn't outgoing like Don.

IRVING: Don always had a . . .

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

DORN: Mr. Irving, did you ever know Harold [Samuel] Nixon or the little brother Arthur [Burdg Nixon] who died? Did you ever hear the Nixons speak of these children?

IRVING: Yes, I heard from, I think, either Frank or Don; they mentioned one who had died. On several occasions something came up and that was brought up, but I wasn't there.

DORN: You were not in the store when Mrs. Nixon took Harold to Prescott, Arizona?

IRVING: No.

DORN: I see. That was probably before your time. When they spoke of this, did Frank or Hannah Nixon. . . . Well, how did they act when they spoke of these children they had lost? It was a great sorrow. Of course, it would be, losing a child or two. But I knew Mrs. Nixon for MANY years, and she never once brought that name up, and I just wondered, in those earlier days, if they talked about the children they had lost.

IRVING: I don't think that I ever heard her mention it, either. I think what I heard came from Don. I'm not positive of that, but I do recall some one of them--and I'm almost positive it wasn't Mrs. Nixon--telling me about the brother that they had lost, the one that had tuberculosis.

DORN: Yes, that was Harold. And then they had the little brother, Arthur, who died at, I think, seven or nine. And of course, that was a great loss. And then along came Eddie. I think Eddie sort of filled in there and made it a little bit easier.

Can you think of anything else about the store or about the Nixons that you would like to relate?

IRVING: Well, it was just a typical family-type of operation, with a little bit of discussion quite often about how this was to be done or how that was to be done, and everybody getting their opinion in on it, and eventually some decision being arrived at. Just a very pleasant store.

DORN: A nice family store. If you needed advice on how to do something in particular in the store, would you ask Frank or would you ask Hannah or would you ask Don? Of course, in the meat department you'd probably ask Don.

IRVING: I'd ask Don. Well, I kind of sided with Frank. I used to ask him.

DORN: You knew you'd get a direct answer.

IRVING: Right. And I usually liked what he told me better, you see, so I had a kind of selfish reason. Because Frank would have done it the way I would have done it more, and I wouldn't have done it the way that Hannah would have done it, so I sided with him.

DORN: I see. Now, Mr. Irving, you're still in the meat business, I understand. I'm sure you heard the President on nationwide television the other night making the freeze on meat. Just for the record, compare the prices of meat today with what you sold, steak or roast beef, in the Nixon market in those early days. How did round steak sell? How much a pound did it sell for, approximately? I can remember going to the store for my mother and saying, "Give me a pound of round steak," and it would be thirty-five cents.

IRVING: That's about what we got for it back then. An expensive cut of meat would be in the forty-cents-a-pound range. That would be an expensive cut of meat. Of course, if it was something like a tenderloin it would probably be about a dollar a pound. But your average cuts were in the twenty-five and thirty-five-cents-a-pound range in those days. And of course, in 1950 we had the OPA [Office of Price Administration] and they regulated the price of meat. At that time I think a T-bone steak was the most expensive steak we were allowed to sell. I think it was a dollar thirteen cents a pound.

DORN: All right; now, supposing they would run out of round steak--I don't know if they ever did or not--and somebody wanted to pay thirty-five or forty cents a pound for steak. Would you say, "I'm sorry, we're out of round steak," or would you give him a better cut at that lower price? That has come up in one of our interviews; someone has said that, so I wondered if this was so, that you recall?

IRVING: I don't recall any situation like that.

DORN: You probably didn't run out of round steak.

IRVING: No, I doubt if Frank would. Oh, Don was not a good businessman from the standpoint of. . . . He wanted the best of everything for his customers. Frank also wanted the best for his customers, but he felt that they ought to pay for it if they were going to get the best. Don sold everything too cheap, according to Frank.

DORN: Well, Don is a very, very big-hearted person. He's a marvelous man. He's been a wonderful friend, a great guy. Everybody loves Don.

IRVING: He's a good businessman, but he does have a tendency to give people more than they have coming for the amount of money that they're putting into it.

GEORGE IRVING, SR.: You must have gotten that from him.

IRVING: Well, I don't know. I do the same thing.

DORN: Do you recall when the President went into the service? Do you recall anything particular about when he left to go overseas, how the family felt? Mrs. Nixon being a Quaker, of course, objected to war, but she felt he wanted to serve his country. But how did they act about his actually going into the war zone in the Pacific?

IRVING: I can't answer that because, you see, I had already left there by the time the war came along. I had probably quit working six months or so prior to the time the war started. So that didn't come up while I was there at all.

DORN: I was trying to think just when it was that he went into the South Pacific. Yes, it was in '42 he joined the Navy.

IRVING: I joined the Navy in '42, too.

DORN: Is that so? Yes, and he went to the South Pacific. Do you have anything further that you can think of? Anything at all, you know, because someone looking up a particular aspect of his life might just find some little thing out of your comments that would be of value.

IRVING: Well, I would say this, that I certainly wouldn't have foreseen, from having been around the family, and the President also to a certain amount, anything like what has happened. I would say they were pretty much an average American family. There was nothing really that distinguishing about them so that you would say this would produce

a President. I've thought of that myself quite a few times, that if all of our President had come from circumstances like that, people would not have said, "Well, that boy's going to be something some day." But I certainly wouldn't have expected something like that.

DORN: Well, when you consider that his father got a fifth grade education, and of course, Mrs. Nixon had attended the Whittier Academy, but it is rather astonishing that this boy would be the product of this environment and become President.

IRVING: There was nothing there to really indicate anything to me that there would be something special come of him.

DORN: One more thing. You were younger than Don, quite a bit. You didn't ever double date with Don.

IRVING: No.

DORN: Did you know Clara Jane [Lemke] Nixon before she married Don?

IRVING: Oh, yes. I thought Don. . . . I have to admit I thought Clara Jane, for the first couple of times I thought, if Don marries that gal, which he told me he was going to do--he told me he was going to marry her--she's a real nice girl. She's a real pleasant person.

DORN: She still is. She's a lovely girl.

IRVING: I always liked Clara Jane.

DORN: I certainly thank you, Mr. Irving, and I'm going to talk to your father now if you'll change seats with him. Thank you very much. I certainly appreciate this.