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Oral History Interview

with

MR. ARTHUR SUCKSDORF
MRS. FLORENCE A. SUCKSDORF
MRS. ETHEL RAND GARLIEPP

November 15, 1971
Brea, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is interview #1 with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sucksdorf and Mrs. Ethel Rand Garliepp. Mrs. Sucksdorf is Mrs. Florence Annabel Sucksdorf. We're in Brea, California. Today's date is November 15, 1971, Arena interviewing.

May I begin by asking you, Mrs. Sucksdorf, where and when you were born?

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes. I was born in Petoskey, Michigan, 1901.

ARENA: And when did you come to California or your parents bring you here?

F. SUCKSDORF: I was three years old when my parents moved here.

ARENA: And the part of California to which they came?

F. SUCKSDORF: We first lived in Imperial Valley, then we came to Whittier in 1906, I believe it was.

ARENA: And you have been in this area ever since?

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes.

ARENA: Mr. Sucksdorf, could I ask you the same question?

A. SUCKSDORF: I was born in 1900, December 24, in Denison, Iowa. I was ten years old when I came to California with my parents, who bought an orange grove in East Whittier. And I went to the East Whittier Grammar School and Whittier High School. Then after we got married we came out to La Habra [California] on another ranch, and then that was built up and subdivided, and we had another ranch in La Habra Heights [California]. From there, we are selling that and living in Brea now.

ARENA: Mrs. Garliepp, may I ask you the same question?

GARLIEPP: I was born in 1901 in Escondido, California.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you where your parents were born?

GARLIEPP: My father was born in Boston [Massachusetts] and my mother was born in Missouri, but they came to California when they were very young, and they went to Escondido on the first train that went to Escondido in 1888.

ARENA: Could I ask you in general to list your direct contact over the years with President Nixon? Then I'll ask you the indirect contact with members of his family. I would like to establish first the direct contact, even though it might not have been a direct speaking contact. For example, maybe you attended some of his debates, maybe you saw him play football with the college, maybe you saw him in the store tending his fruits and vegetables. All of these would be direct contacts where you saw him firsthand. Summarize, if you will, more or less that direct contact.

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, I think our first contact was in the store. And then after he was married he lived in our neighborhood for a short time. And then when he decided to run for Congress, he stayed at our beach house in Balboa Island [California] while he was writing his speech for Congress. He wanted to be where there was no telephone and people didn't know where he was. And then we went to all of his debates with Jerry Voorhis. That was in the little town of Claremont [California] or Arcadia [California], one of the little towns there. And we attended all of his speeches--his debates they were. And then as far as that is concerned, just now and then we would see him.

ARENA: On those points that I raised earlier about possibly seeing him in football games or in plays where he played with the Whittier

Community Players, you don't have a recollection of that?

F. SUCKSDORF: No, we didn't see him then. He delivered groceries to our house a few times.

ARENA: That would be in connection with the grocery store contact?

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes.

ARENA: Was there any religious contact? You were not members of the same church, but possibly there was some joint religious experiences or something like that?

F. SUCKSDORF: No.

ARENA: Mr. Sucksdorf, can you recall if ever he spoke at any service clubs of which you were a member or any occasion aside from the political one that Mrs. Sucksdorf just mentioned?

A. SUCKSDORF: No, I don't remember any. The first time I was in contact with the President was when he brought the key back after using our beach cottage. I asked him then, "How did your speech go?" And he said, "Well, just the way speeches always go." Then later on when he was starting to practice law in Whittier, another fellow and I went up there to get a little advice. There was one thing he said at that time that I've never forgotten. He said, "I want something bigger than this office. I want to spread out a little more." And he really did.

ARENA: Would this have been before or after his borrowing your home in Balboa?

A. SUCKSDORF: It was after, because he was writing his first speech for Congress when he was down there.

ARENA: When you visited him in his law office, would this have been the one in Whittier?

A. SUCKSDORF: Yes, in the Bank of America Building.

ARENA: What we're doing now is just to set the picture generally, and then we'll go back into detail regarding these specific experiences. Concerning the indirect contact, that is with other members of the family, [Francis Anthony] Frank Nixon, Hannah [Milhous] Nixon, the parents of the President, his grandparents, Franklin and Almira Milhous, the President's immediate family, his two brothers, Donald [Francis Donald Nixon] and Edward [Calvert

Nixon], and then his wife, Patricia Ryan Nixon. Mr. and Mrs. Sucksdorf, would you mind giving a general rundown of these members of the Nixon-Milhous family?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, we didn't know too many of them. We knew Mr. and Mrs. Frank [McClure Milhous]-- that was Frank that lived there? We knew them real well, Chuck's father and mother.

ARENA: This would be [Charles Leonard] Chuck Milhous, the President's cousin.

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes, it's their mother and father. We knew them very well and we really got acquainted with them through the Lowell School, when our son started to go to Lowell School. And then we knew the other Milhous, across the road from there; what was his name?

A. SUCKSDORF: Bill [William Alan Milhous].

F. SUCKSDORF: Bill Milhous. But we didn't know too many of them. And of course, we know [William Alan] Bill Milhous who is running the Sea Fare Inn. We are very well acquainted with him.

ARENA: Who would be the son of Bill Milhous, Sr. [Charles William Milhous].

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes.

ARENA: And Bill Milhous, Sr., is still living, of course. All right, Mrs. Garliepp, could I put the same questions to you? Over the years, what was your direct contact with the President, and then your contact with different members of the family as in the case we just brought up, his grandparents, his parents, his immediate brothers and his wife, Patricia Ryan Nixon. As much as you can recall.

GARLIEPP: I first knew Richard at the store, I imagine he was in college at the time. He was waiting on customers, I think it was around 1932. He worked occasionally in the store, but not as much as his brother did, waiting on customers. Then later he sang in a little choir that I directed at the Whittier Friends Church. That was after he had graduated from law school. He sang for a short time there and was really a very great help to us.

ARENA: Do you recall, while we're on that subject, that you invited him, or someone told you to invite him, or did he present himself at your choir, saying, "Here I am." Do you recall?

GARLIEPP: Well, I'm sure that he was invited either by a choir committee or by myself, I don't recall which, to come and help us. And his mother was very anxious for him to come and help us, too. He sang bass and he sang very nicely. He read his notes very well and was very meticulous about having his part well. He was well liked by all the choir members and we were happy to see him come.

ARENA: About how many would be in the choir?

GARLIEPP: There were twenty-eight at that time.

ARENA: And how frequent were rehearsals?

GARLIEPP: Every Thursday night.

ARENA: Once a week then.

GARLIEPP: Yes, every Thursday night, and we performed every Sunday morning.

ARENA: Was there any other contact you had with him besides the store, the choir? Did you attend any of the plays in which he appeared in Whittier?

GARLIEPP: No; in fact, he came to me one evening and said, "Mrs. Garliepp, I think I'll not be with you any more in the choir because I can't have two outside activities, and I do want to continue with the . . ." What did they call it?

ARENA: The [Whittier] Community Players.

GARLIEPP: The Community Players in Whittier. And I believe that's where he met his wife, Pat [Patricia Ryan Nixon].

ARENA: Did you ever get to meet her during the choir period at all?

GARLIEPP: No, no, I did not meet her. I knew she was a teacher when my children were attending Whittier High School, and I've heard of her, but I did not meet her until after they were married and Tricia [Nixon] was about six months old, and they came to church. The President at that time was a congressman; would that be correct?

ARENA: Yes.

GARLIEPP: I remember what an attractive couple they were as they sat up in the balcony at the small church, and their blue-eyed baby, Tricia.

ARENA: Would this be the East Whittier Friends Church?

GARLIEPP: It was the East Whittier Friends Church.

ARENA: Do you happen to know if your children who were attending the high school when Mrs. [Patricia] Nixon was teaching there--this, I think, would have been the years 1938 and 1939--actually had her?

GARLIEPP: They did not have her ever as a teacher.

ARENA: How about as an advisor from the standpoint of being members of the Pep Committee, and also possibly as an advisor for their class graduation, if that took place around that time?

GARLIEPP: I know that they knew her, but . . .

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you where your children are now, in case I should like to track them down concerning their direct contact with Mrs. Richard Nixon?

GARLIEPP: My son lives in Upland, California, and my two daughters are in Lido Isle, Newport, California.

ARENA: Do you recall when they graduated?

GARLIEPP: Yes, my son graduated in 1944, one daughter in 1945 and another daughter in 1949.

ARENA: Have any of you recollections of seeing Mrs. Richard Nixon work in the store at any time, the Nixon market place, especially on Saturdays?

GARLIEPP: Patricia Nixon?

ARENA: Mrs. Richard Nixon.

GARLIEPP: I didn't know that.

ARENA: I was raising the question. I have reason to believe that she helped out sometimes. I was just trying to get more . . .

GARLIEPP: After they were married?

ARENA: Yes, 1940 to be precise. But you don't ever recall seeing her?

GARLIEPP: I don't recall seeing her in the store. However, I did see her at Hannah Nixon's funeral, both Richard and Patricia Nixon were there. And Richard Nixon, I had an opportunity of speaking with him a moment, and I said, "I want to thank you for helping us in the choir way back there when you were a young man, and a very busy young man." And he put his arm around my shoulder and said, "And Ethel, you ran a good choir, too." I think that's one of the nicest compliments I've ever had.

ARENA: And you recall that he remembered your name. No one had to tell him your name?

GARLIEPP: Oh, yes, he remembered.

ARENA: Mr. Sucksdorf, can I go back to that direct contact with the President in which he ended by writing his speech in your home? All the facts, details, you can remember in that connection would be very much appreciated. About the date, about the length of time that he stayed in the home, as far as you know, how he ended up--or the parents--asking you about borrowing the home for that purpose. All the details you can remember in that connection.

A. SUCKSDORF: Well, in the first place, I think my wife was down in the store, and the President's mother at that time asked us if we were using our beach cottage on Balboa Island, and she said, "No." And they wanted to know if the President could use it at that time because he wanted to get away from all the confusion in the store and phones ringing and everything. And so, we said of course he could have it if he wanted it. So he went down there and wrote his speech and he was running for Congress. And how long did he stay, a week, two weeks?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't remember. He wasn't there two weeks, I'm sure, but I don't remember. It was a few days.

A. SUCKSDORF: But when he finished he stopped by our house in La Habra Heights [California] and brought the key back and thanked us for the place. And that was about all. I asked him how his speech was coming, and he said, "Just the way the speeches go." That's just about all he said; he didn't say too much then.

ARENA: You don't recall his leaving you a copy or your finding any scrap paper at the place later on?

A. SUCKSDORF: No, but we wished we had asked him to sign the guest book (which we've always been sorry about) while he was there.

ARENA: Do you know if he typed it, by any chance?

A. SUCKSDORF: No, I don't know that either.

F. SUCKSDORF: See, we turned the house completely over to him. They were there alone and we don't know how they worked. He was very modest.

ARENA: And by they you mean the President's family, the President and his wife?

A. SUCKSDORF: Yes.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you if there was any attempt to pay you for the use of it in any way at all?

F. SUCKSDORF: No, we wouldn't have accepted anything. We were very honored to do it. Well, I think we were down one time at the store after that and Mrs. Nixon said, "Here, Richard wanted you to have a leg of lamb." That was when meat was scarce. We just gave them the use of our house and we were very honored to do it.

A. SUCKSDORF: They wanted to show their appreciation.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, do you ever recall doing that for anybody else?

F. SUCKSDORF: What?

ARENA: A similar situation where somebody asked you for the use of your home to do some work of that type?

F. SUCKSDORF: No, because we didn't know anyone that was doing such work as that. We always let our friends stay there, but he was the only one that was REALLY somebody, you know.

ARENA: And I believe we said earlier, when we were going over the general picture of your contact with the President and the family, that your shopping in the store goes back to about the earliest time they did come out to East Whittier, about the early 1920's. The store was actually set up in 1922. Would you say that it goes back that early, your direct contact with the members of the family?

- A. SUCKSDORF: No, because we were married in 1923, so it would have to be after that, and we lived out toward La Habra.
- ARENA: And to be sure about the location of other stores, were there any grocery stores in La Habra at that time?
- A. SUCKSDORF: Oh, yes, in the city.
- ARENA: But this one was the only one between La Habra and Whittier itself?
- A. SUCKSDORF: That's right.
- ARENA: And the only one in East Whittier?
- A. SUCKSDORF: That's right. The rest was all citrus groves all along the road. He had the service station there and then he started the store.
- ARENA: Then you didn't use the Nixon market exclusively. You did shop in La Habra itself, or did you?
- F. SUCKSDORF: We did most of our shopping at Nixon's. They preferred charge customers. They wanted it that way and they delivered, and that was real handy, so we really traded with them most of the time. Most of our shopping was at their store, and they carried everything under the sun. They had full merchandise in there, snaps, hooks and eyes, thread, everything, any old thing that you would want, in that store. It was really a general store.
- ARENA: Do you recall to what extent you did your shopping in person and by phone? Was it about fifty-fifty? You phoned about as much as you went there?
- F. SUCKSDORF: I would say so. We went to Whittier a lot when we were first married, because we were both raised in Whittier and we would stop on our way home because we would go right by there.
- A. SUCKSDORF: One of the reasons we liked to shop there was because he carried the best of meats.
- F. SUCKSDORF: Yes.
- ARENA: And when you did shop there, I imagine at the beginning it was Mr. Frank Nixon who handled the meats. Do you recall about when Donald [Francis Donald Nixon] took over the meat department, the President's brother?

A. SUCKSDORF: No, that's hard to remember.

ARENA: If it's helpful, he must have been out of high school around 1932 or '33. He's a few years younger than the President, and the President graduated in 1930. I'm assuming that near the time he was finishing school he was old enough to work in the meats. Does 1932-33 make sense?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, as I remember it, he would help his father in there. Don't you think, Ethel, that was the way it was? I know we would see him behind the counter after school hours.

GARLIEPP: I know he was working there in 1932.

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes, he worked there a long time before he ever took over completely.

GARLIEPP: He looked very young, but he did such a nice job.

F. SUCKSDORF: But he was a very good butcher and we got the best meat there, and he always took pains to see that you got good meat.

ARENA: Did you find the prices high, in the sense that it was good quality but you had to pay for it, compared to other stores at the time?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't know. In those days we didn't think of the price because we wanted good meat, and I think if you get good meat you pay for it any place.

A. SUCKSDORF: And if you get poor meat at half the price, it's still high.

GARLIEPP: Mrs. Nixon was very nice about telling you how to cook meats in different ways, too.

F. SUCKSDORF: She was wonderful in that store.

GARLIEPP: I remember at the time she gave me several recipes that were really very good.

ARENA: In other words, there was also a great amount of personal contact between the customers and the store owners. You didn't feel as though this was just a store, but you felt as though you knew the people as well as the store owner?

- F. SUCKSDORF: That's right. They were just like one big family.
- ARENA: Do you recall seeing the President in the store and possibly some particular episodes or particular examples involving him? Maybe something he said or did when he was delivering for you. Maybe you saw him handle a customer. Maybe there was an unusual situation in which he was shooing out some noisy children. Anything at all that might come to mind regarding the President in the store in this early period.
- F. SUCKSDORF: No, I don't remember seeing him in the store, do you, Art?
- A. SUCKSDORF: No, I've never seen him work in the store because I wasn't in there too much.
- F. SUCKSDORF: No, Art was working and I usually did the shopping, and I think he delivered some groceries a few times at our house. He would just put the groceries down and leave.
- GARLIEPP: He did work in the store, though, because he has waited on me at times.
- F. SUCKSDORF: Yes, I know he did, but he never happened to be there and wait on me when I was there.
- ARENA: But Donald you recall very definitely. He would be more conspicuous, of course, in working in the meats.
- F. SUCKSDORF: Oh, yes, that's right.
- ARENA: You don't ever recall the President handling the meat department at all?
- F. SUCKSDORF: No, never.
- ARENA: Mrs. Garliepp, do you recall any particular experiences or incidents involving the President and the store, some remarks or some special problems that came up in any way at all?
- GARLIEPP: No, I don't recall. He did wait on customers I know, from time to time, but he wasn't there regularly. It was rather unusual when he was there. I think he was about his books, studying quite a lot when he was a young man.
- ARENA: Do you recall seeing him seated in the store with a book, by any chance, seated over by the fruit and vegetable department, for example, and just reading away there? Do you recall anything like that?

GARLIEPP: No, I don't recall anything specific like that. I always felt that he was such a good student and such a serious young man and his studies were very important to him. Well, I think partly because his mother spoke of it, too. [Interruption]

ARENA: Would you mind repeating the last statement about the fact that his mother would bring up the fact that he was interested in working in his studies?

GARLIEPP: Yes. His mother, I think, had a great pride in the fact that he was a very good student and that he was very interested in his school work.

ARENA: Do you recall that the mother or any of his relatives brought up during this period any mention of what he was going to take up in life?

GARLIEPP: No, I don't recall that.

ARENA: When is the first time, if you can recall, that you knew he was going to become interested in a law career? Had you read in the newspaper, for example, that he had been accepted in law school?

GARLIEPP: Well, I think she spoke of it at different times when he was in law school. I'm sure she did, and both the elder Nixons were so proud of him.

ARENA: Is there anything about the store period I have not brought up that anyone would like to mention, any incident that now might come to mind, or anything about the President and the store that you would like to bring up? For example, did he wear a uniform, including the white apron in the store? Do you recall him wearing anything special?

GARLIEPP: No, I don't. I remember Don did. But it seems as though Richard just wore his regular clothes, as I recall, and possibly from that I did get the idea that he didn't work there as much as Donald did.

ARENA: Then shall we move on to another period of direct contact? Mrs. Garliepp, would you mind going into the experience of having the President participate in your choir? And again, all of the details and all of the circumstances that come to mind regarding that episode. How was it that he came into the choir,

what he did, including whether or not he ever played any musical instruments. If he ever did any accompanying with the piano for any other member of the choir who might have sung a solo, or something like that. Anything you can recall in the way of his participating in your choir.

GARLIEPP: No, he didn't do any accompanying, because we had a church organist, but he sang the bass part, and quite often he would say, "Now, could we go over that again please, that bass part, Mrs. Garliepp? Could the basses try that once more?" He was very, very anxious to do everything very correctly. He was always there on time, and he came Sunday morning to participate in the singing of the anthem, and he was very well liked by all of the choir members. It was just a small country church and a small choir, but they sang very well, really.

ARENA: Did the choir actually have any social life or any special get-togethers outside of the church? Were there any suppers anywhere? Did you go on a picnic at the end of the year? Anything that would show the President's social side away from the church.

GARLIEPP: Well, really we did have social get-togethers, but I don't recall any at the time he was a member of the choir, because as I said, he was not a member too long; several months, I would say, is all.

ARENA: And to be clear about the question of the President's knowing Mrs. Nixon at that time, Patricia Ryan, you don't recall her ever coming or going with him during this choir period?

GARLIEPP: No, I don't. And I really think that he met her just after he left the choir.

ARENA: As you say, he asked to be excused because he could not handle two social activities, or two interests like that at the same time. Do you recall that there was any other young lady with whom he spent more time than usual, with other young ladies who were members of the choir?

GARLIEPP: No, I don't recall anything like that, although all of the young ladies were very fond of him when he was in the choir, because he was a very attractive, single young man. So there was no trouble getting them all to get there to choir practice when Richard Nixon was singing in the choir.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, do you recall anything in percentages in round figures about those who were married and those who were single,

participating in the choir at that time? Were the great majority single?

GARLIEPP: A great majority were single. They were college people or young people.

ARENA: Was he possibly the only professional man, or were there other young professional men or women who were participating in the choir?

GARLIEPP: Well, yes, there were other professional young people at the time.

ARENA: And if I didn't ask before, I would like to ask you now, what was the precise name of this group?

GARLIEPP: It was the adult choir group. Most of them were college age or older, because the other group was known as the junior choir and they were younger children.

ARENA: Do you recall if the colleges involved were more than just Whittier?

GARLIEPP: [University of] Redlands.

ARENA: [California State College at] Fullerton?

GARLIEPP: Yes, some were from Fullerton, and in the summers several of those who came back from the University of Redlands sang in the choir.

ARENA: Do you recall if the choir did take trips and perform in other churches or perform at other occasions, maybe at school chapels?

GARLIEPP: We did sing at other churches occasionally. In the Whittier First Friends Church we sang occasionally, and at other churches we sang occasionally, but I don't believe he was a member at any of those occasions.

ARENA: Do you recall possibly any cousins of the President ever attending the choir? This particular cousin was a Nixon who was from Pennsylvania. He spent some time, oh, around 1937. He was visiting the family from the East and might have attended the choirs, might have even participated a very short time.

GARLIEPP: No, I don't recall that, but I do recall that John Raitt used to come. He was a friend of

some of the Nixon family, and he used to come and sing solos occasionally. He used to go on our little Christmas caroling. John Raitt, this very great singer, you know, from "Oklahoma."

ARENA: Who also appeared in movies.

GARLIEPP: Yes.

ARENA: That's the same one.

GARLIEPP: And he used to go with us when we went caroling, and oh, his voice was so beautiful in the evening. And he was a very close friend of one of the Nixons, a member of the Nixon family.

ARENA: When you say friend, does that also mean Quaker, or do you mean friend in the sense of a friend of the family?

GARLIEPP: Quaker.

ARENA: He was a Quaker, as well.

GARLIEPP: His father was a Quaker leader of the young boys. He used to take them to camp, John Raitt's father.

ARENA: And you believe that the President knew him personally, also. When you say he was a friend of the Nixons, that would include the President?

GARLIEPP: Oh, I'm sure he knew John Raitt's father. Maybe Eddie went to some of those camps, I don't remember.

ARENA: Is there anything else about the choir that I haven't brought up that you can think of that you would like to touch on?

GARLIEPP: Well, I remember our junior choir. The President's mother and father were very interested in our young junior choir, and several times Mr. Frank Nixon would say, "Now Ethel, if there's anything the choir needs in the way of robes or new music, you just let us know and we'll see that you have it."

ARENA: What period was this, Mrs. Garliepp, that he made this offer? Would this be after the President had entered into politics and after World War II?

GARLIEPP: Yes, it was. I'm sure it was.

ARENA: What would the age level be for the people in the junior choir?

GARLIEPP: From junior high school through high school age.

ARENA: Is there any recollection that the President himself was in the junior choir, as well?

GARLIEPP: No, this was after he was much older.

ARENA: Did you ever have any contact with the President concerning his Sunday school teaching contribution?

GARLIEPP: No.

ARENA: Including a young adult Sunday school teaching, which might have taken place around this time when he was a young lawyer, between 1937 and 1940?

GARLIEPP: I believe he did have a Sunday school class.

ARENA: But this would have been completely separate from the choir?

GARLIEPP: Yes.

ARENA: The paths would not cross, necessarily.

GARLIEPP: And they used to ask him to speak quite often at church to the young people. I think this was after he had gone into politics.

ARENA: Is there any other connection regarding the President's religious ties with the East Whittier Friends Church, in addition to the choir and the Sunday school experience, that you can think of? Again, was there ever any discussion between you and the President and the family concerning a missionary role or a missionary activity on the part of the President?

GARLIEPP: I don't recall that, but I do remember we were needing new song books for the church and the committee was composed of choir members to get donations. They wrote to him in Washington, D.C. I don't remember if he was a senator then, but he sent a very nice contribution.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

ARENA: With what other members of the Nixon family did you have contact?

GARLIEPP: I remember that when Mrs. [Hannah] Nixon worked in the store and Eddie was a small baby, she would bring him to the store in the baby carriage and he would sleep there while Mrs. Nixon waited on the customers. I also remember that Eddie was a very shy little fellow and when he was ready for school-- there was no kindergarten in our school, he went directly to the first grade--he didn't want to go to school. I happened to be teaching music at the school on his first day of entering first grade, and I was in the corridor when his older brother, Don, brought him to school and rather picked him up and sat him down at his desk in the first grade, because he was not anxious to go to school and he was kind of kicking up a little trouble. But I think he grew to like school real well after that.

ARENA: Do you recall anything further about the personality and the work of young Edward as the years moved on ahead and he remained at the school?

GARLIEPP: He continued to be very, very shy. I know I tried to get him to sing in my junior choir and he just couldn't bring himself to come. I think he came once, but he was just a very shy boy.

ARENA: Were things like the PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] in use at the school at that time? Do you recall the parents ever visiting in connection with young Edward, any PTA meetings or contributions on the part of the parents?

GARLIEPP: I rather think that they were so busy at the store. They may have come a few times. I think one time the President spoke at an evening PTA meeting. Do you recall that?

F. SUCKSDORF: No, I don't remember.

GARLIEPP: He came one rainy night; he came and spoke but that was later.

ARENA: And this would have been as a result of Edward's being a student, maybe just because he was invited.

GARLIEPP: I think it was just because he was invited.

ARENA: Is there any reason why, as far as you can see, some of the Nixons went to East Whittier

Elementary School and others went to Lowell? As far as you know, did the parents just leave this up to the children themselves, for example? As you know, the President went to East Whittier Elementary School and Donald and Edward both went to Lowell, I believe. Was there any particular reason for the difference?

GARLIEPP: I don't know of any reason, but I think they probably had their preference, because they were right there at the line, right there at the division of East Whittier and Lowell districts.

ARENA: Is there any other information concerning this elementary school period of Edward that you would like to add, including the idea that on some occasions more than one grade was combined?

GARLIEPP: Yes, it was a small school, I think, at this time, about 125 students. And first and second were combined and I think third was alone, and fourth and fifth were combined, something like that. It would change from year to year, depending upon how many children there were for the grades. My daughter was in the grade just below Edward, I believe, so occasionally she would be in the same room with him for a year, and she said that he was very, very quiet; well, I guess a very good student, but very quiet about it.

ARENA: Are there any other members of the family that had a connection with the educational experience that you can think of that you would like to discuss now, besides Edward? I believe that when the tape was off we were talking about the Milhous who was a member of the board of education of the Lowell district.

GARLIEPP: There was. . . . We called him Grandpa [Charles Wright] Milhous. He was the father of [Charles William] Bill Milhous, and he was president of the school board [of Lowell school district] for many, many years. He always wanted the best for Lowell School. And when there was a new piano needed, why he saw to it that there was one provided. And I think he was the president of the school board there for a long, long time.

ARENA: Do you think that this was during the period that young Edward Nixon or even Donald was in attendance?

GARLIEPP: I think Donald was in attendance.

ARENA: As far as you know, did this make any difference? Did any special circumstances result from this connection between Grandpa Milhous and young Donald?

GARLIEPP: I don't think so. I think he was just very anxious to have a good school for all children. That's the way he impressed me.

ARENA: Any idea what the formal educational background of Grandpa Milhous was?

GARLIEPP: No, I didn't know him that well.

ARENA: And the idea even today of a president of a board of education is that it is not one that is a full time position. It is a person who does this in addition to his regular occupation.

GARLIEPP: Yes, he was a citrus man and he had quite an extensive orchard there of oranges and tangerines and some lemons, I believe.

ARENA: Was the name Milhous a very prominent name, in the sense that it was fairly well known at that time, or was it one of several old family names of that area?

GARLIEPP: I think it was rather a prominent name, especially in that area. Don't you think it was?

A. SUCKSDORF: All the way from there to Whittier, yes.

ARENA: Would that be due to people such as Grandpa Milhous and Franklin Milhous, in the present site of the Whittier Quad. Were these the persons who were considered the main Milhouses?

GARLIEPP: Yes, I think they were.

ARENA: And just to make sure, the name Nixon around the same time was scarcely known, if known at all; would that be correct? Especially around the time before the store, before 1922 when Frank Nixon, the President's father, was in Yorba Linda [California]. There was not the common knowledge of the Nixon name that there was with the Milhous name; would that be a safe general statement?

GARLIEPP: I would think so. Not until the store there did the name Nixon become prominent.

A. SUCKSDORF: That's right.

ARENA: What was the general feeling or thinking about the Nixon family at that time while the President was in high school, college and law

school? Did it stand out in any way or as just another of the local families? This would be roughly 1922, when the store opened, to 1936, when the President first started his law career.

A. SUCKSDORF: They were just a good family, well liked in the neighborhood.

F. SUCKSDORF: And they had a good store.

GARLIEPP: The store was the center, really, of the whole community.

F. SUCKSDORF: That's right.

GARLIEPP: Practically everyone traded there.

F. SUCKSDORF: And it was the only one within miles.

GARLIEPP: That's right.

ARENA: Was it known that the President's grand-parents, Franklin and Almira Milhous, were a very hospitable couple, and that they loved to have company on Sunday afternoons?

A. SUCKSDORF: They probably did, but we didn't know it at that time.

ARENA: You were not in that vicinity either. Well, was there anything like that as far as the Nixons were concerned? Were Sundays full of relatives and full of friends from church who would be over there having a big Sunday dinner, as far as you can recollect?

F. SUCKSDORF: If they had it we never knew anything about it or heard about it, did you Ethel?

GARLIEPP: No, but I imagine they did.

F. SUCKSDORF: But they were very hard-working people.

GARLIEPP: Yes, they were busy.

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't think they had time to entertain. They had their family and they were hard-working people.

ARENA: Do you recollect that Mr. Frank Nixon, in addition to running the store, did any other type of work on the side? Did he do any carpentry, especially for hire? Did he have any orchards?

Did he have any farm land that he looked after while he was looking after the store?

A. SUCKSDORF: Well, the only thing would be his lemon grove in Yorba Linda, and I don't know if he had it at that time. I don't know just when he sold it, but that's all the farming or citrus growing that he ever had, I think.

GARLIEPP: And that little store was a pretty full-time job for both Frank and his wife.

F. SUCKSDORF: Because they baked pies. Why, they just had orders after orders of those pumpkin pies.

GARLIEPP: Oh, she baked pies, didn't she? I'd forgotten about that.

F. SUCKSDORF: In fact, they both did. And I know one time I mentioned his pies being so good and he told me what spices he used in them, and to this day I use the very same thing that he told me in my pumpkin pies.

GARLIEPP: I use the meat recipes she told me about, too.

ARENA: As far as you know, did Mr. Frank Nixon have his recipe and Mrs. Hannah Nixon have her own separate recipe for the pies, or was it a common family situation?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't know. They all tasted the same. They were real good pies.

ARENA: And when you ordered these pies, could these be ordered right up to the time the President was in law, and were these sold along with other merchandise? Were the Nixon pies made right up to 1940?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, I think they made pies about as long as they had the grocery store. They were baked fresh every morning.

A. SUCKSDORF: Who did he buy that corner from for his service station? He didn't own that lemon orchard over there.

ARENA: Mr. [William Frederick] Mundt.

A. SUCKSDORF: That's right. Anne Gillmore's father.

ARENA: Is there anything else regarding the members of the family aside from the President, any

unusual or regular circumstance concerning Donald, concerning any of the other members of the family that you would like to bring up at this point?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, I know when we were having our carnival and special events at the Lowell School, I was president of the PTA in 1941-42, I guess. And the Nixons were always so willing to donate anything they could from their store for our carnival, for whatever we needed, things to be sold. They donated pies, they donated everything. They were very generous to help out in every way they could, anything we needed at the school. All we had to do was mention we were having a little carnival or something, because our carnivals were different from what they are now. It was just like one big family party, and they were so willing to help in every way they could. I know they donated an awful lot.

ARENA: Do you recall if the PTA also had any brochures or announcements and the Nixons purchased advertisements in them, or the school yearbook and similar publications like that, where you would be selling advertising space?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't think we ever had anything like that. We didn't advertise.

ARENA: I wonder if I can ask you--any one of you can begin and the other add when you wish--a description of the personality of the individual members of the Nixon family, beginning with Frank and Hannah Nixon? And we will begin with Frank, because he was probably the oldest and the head of the family. How would you describe Mr. Frank Nixon?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, I don't really know. Being around the store was all I really knew him, but he seemed quite generous and good-natured.

A. SUCKSDORF: And he liked to debate--I guess you wouldn't call it argue, and talk politics a lot.

GARLIEPP: He was very outspoken and he said just exactly what he thought, and it didn't matter whether others agreed with him or not.

F. SUCKSDORF: That's right.

GARLIEPP: He gave his point and he knew why.

F. SUCKSDORF: Maybe they weren't always just choice and all that, but that was his idea.

ARENA: Did this ever cause business complications, especially where he disagreed with a customer?

A. SUCKSDORF: It could have.

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes, it could have.

ARENA: And in what way was Mrs. Hannah Nixon like or unlike Mr. Frank Nixon in that regard?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, she was just about as lovely a person as you would ever want to know. She was kind, good-natured, always had a smile, willing to do anything for you.

GARLIEPP: Yes, she was.

ARENA: And you would see her in the store about as much as you would Mr. Frank Nixon, too?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't think I ever went there that Mrs. Nixon wasn't in the store.

ARENA: Do you recall where the living quarters of the family were? For example, if you walked in, would the store be empty and then someone would come in from the living quarters? Were you ever invited into the living quarters yourself?

F. SUCKSDORF: No.

ARENA: If she were having some tea or coffee, was there that type of informality in the store, or was it that business was business and the social affairs were held at a different time of the day or a different hour of the week?

F. SUCKSDORF: We never were in her home.

GARLIEPP: I was at one time, because we were going to move from the house where we were living on East Whittier Boulevard, and she had an apartment there that was for rent.

GARLIEPP: And she asked me to come to see it, that possibly we would want to move there. So I was in that part, and I think where they lived was either part of that or next door, something right there by the store. They used to enter the back part of the store from their living quarters. There was some sort of an entrance there I think in the back.

ARENA: During this period and right up to 1940, is it your recollection that the store was always isolated; that is, that there was very little

between La Habra and Whittier, and the store was one of the few things there besides the orchards. In other words, the store always dominated that open area from that time till at least 1940, when the war began.

A. SUCKSDORF: That's right.

GARLIEPP: The store and the church were the two main buildings.

F. SUCKSDORF: That's right.

ARENA: Which is quite a contrast with what you have now. There is no store there now, but the whole area is filled up. But there was nothing like that up until World War II?

A. SUCKSDORF: That's right.

ARENA: I believe you were mentioning when the tape was not running that the Nixons employed youngsters in the neighborhood. Would you mind repeating that, and give whatever information you have about that, their employing youngsters of local families in the store. Would these youngsters be from Whittier and East Whittier and La Habra, or just the immediate vicinity of the store and East Whittier itself?

GARLIEPP: The ones that I knew were from East Whittier and La Habra. The Nixons would ask different young boys who were going to high school at the time to come one at a time, and maybe for a month or maybe for two months, and work in their store as clerks, and they would give them some training. The boys were glad to make a little extra money, because that was during the depression, and they always enjoyed themselves. It was quite an honor to be asked to work in the Nixon store. I knew of several besides my son who worked there and enjoyed it very much.

ARENA: Do you happen to know if that was the particular idea of either Frank or Hannah Nixon, or just something that the Nixons did?

GARLIEPP: I thought it was the idea of both of them. I don't know. I think it was the idea of both of them.

ARENA: And do you recall just what kind of work these youngsters did when they did work in the store?

GARLIEPP: They waited on the customers, because their store was one where a customer would come in

and say, "I would like a loaf of bread," or "I would like a pound of butter," and the clerk would go and get it for the customer.

ARENA: Up until World War II and even the end of it, 1945, there was nothing like a self-service business or self-service set up at all. . .

GARLIEPP: No.

ARENA: . . . which is so common now. Even in some of the small local stores there is so much on open shelves, but there was nothing like that at that time?

GARLIEPP: No, and the clerk would weigh up the peas or the potatoes or however it was and did all of that which the customer now just does for himself. I recall one time when I was in there and Mr. Nixon had quite a stack of groceries on the table there and he said, "I'm going to take my son out on the desert and we're going to go out and camp for a while." It was the boy who was sick.

ARENA: Harold [Samuel Nixon].

GARLIEPP: And he passed away, oh, sometime after that, but Mr. Frank Nixon used to take him out on the desert and the two of them would camp out there for the boy's health.

ARENA: Do you recall, any of you, at this point of the special problems the Nixons had because of this ongoing illness with Harold Nixon; the trips that were made away from the store for periods when, for example, Mrs. Hannah Nixon was not present and looking after Harold? One period, of course, was in Phoenix, Arizona, and there were others as well. Do you recall anything special about that period of their lives?

GARLIEPP: No, but I think they worried a great deal about this boy.

ARENA: Do you recall that the father, Mr. Frank Nixon, and the son Richard, and the other son Donald, would be in charge of the store and the appearance of the store during this period, without the presence of Mrs. Hannah Nixon, for example? It was nothing unusual, for example, when Mrs. Hannah Nixon was not there. Maybe a little more dust on the shelves or something like that while she was away and they had to do their own cooking and their own household work while she was away with Harold?

GARLIEPP: I think they were pretty competent youngsters. I think they could handle things themselves.

ARENA: You didn't notice anything strange or unusual because of her absence during this period either?

GARLIEPP: No, I don't recall. I think Frank used to go over on the desert with the boy, just the two of them quite often, too, and she would stay at the store.

ARENA: Would this be for overnight camping trips?

GARLIEPP: Oh, I think for several days because he had quite a store of groceries there that he was taking on this particular camping trip.

ARENA: Speaking of camping trips, it could have been for the purpose of health of Harold, taking him out for that type of air--desert air--on a doctor's advice. Speaking of that and also of the camping trips as a means of recreation, what do you know or recollect of the hours that the family spent and the way in which they spent these hours for recreation? Were these camping trips not only with Harold but maybe with the other boys, were these trips the main means of recreation for the family as far as you recollect?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't know.

GARLIEPP: I don't recall. I think they were such a busy family, I think that was mainly to help Harold's health.

ARENA: Do you recall the store ever being completely closed and if so, about when and how long a period of time?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't remember at all.

ARENA: Did you call in or did you do shopping on Sunday with the idea you would find it open?

GARLIEPP: I thought it was always closed on Sunday, wasn't it?

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes, but I thought you meant any length of time.

ARENA: I did mean both. In other words, was there ever a period of time when the store was

closed, maybe for a week, and the whole family took a vacation?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't recall that, but I know it was always closed Sundays. You couldn't buy anything there on Sundays.

ARENA: Do you recall the period when the President graduated from Duke Law School, if there was anything in the way of special excitement or special attention as far as the store was concerned about that, when he graduated in 1937?

A. SUCKSDORF: There were some proud parents in the store, I can tell you that.

GARLIEPP: Yes, indeed. Yes, they were very proud.

ARENA: Do you recollect the grandmother, who I understand went along on the trip to attend the graduation ceremony? Do you recollect Mrs. Almira Milhous, the President's grandmother? As a matter of fact, not only on that occasion but on any occasion, do you recollect her visiting the store, or did you ever see her in Whittier itself?

F. SUCKSDORF: No, we didn't know her.

ARENA: Could I ask you to describe your feelings about the idea of the local boy who had made out well in school, law school, about this young boy going into politics, not necessarily from the standpoint of politics but from the standpoint of the idea that he went into politics, knowing him as you did all the way up to that time?

GARLIEPP: It didn't surprise me. He seemed suited for that sort of thing.

F. SUCKSDORF: And I know one day after he had made his speech for Congress--and we had attended all of his debates--why I was talking to Mrs. Nixon in the grocery store and I said how sorry I was that we didn't think to have him sign our guest book at the beach and I said, because some day he's going to be President of the United States. I just felt that he was going places. We have always felt that about Richard Nixon. And when he was Vice President why someone said, "Well, he is Vice President now and he will be laid on the shelf," you know, like a lot of Vice Presidents used to be. But we never felt that about Richard. We knew he was still going places.

ARENA: Is it difficult to separate Richard Nixon, the President of the United States, and Richard Nixon, the grocery delivery boy? That's a question only you can answer. Do you find that it is difficult to see the two?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, at that time, you don't--if we knew what was going to be ahead of him, why we probably would have noticed him a little more--you know what I mean. But you just can't realize things like that until he was actually up there and going into politics, you know. And then you start looking at him and you think back what he has been and then you have a feeling that he can really go places because he had it in him. But I think when a person is so young, you don't picture them that far ahead.

A. SUCKSDORF: He probably didn't know himself at that time, I don't think. It's just step by step, isn't that the way it goes? He just kept right on fighting until he got there.

F. SUCKSDORF: And after he was really up there quite far, why then you really see what he is going to do and you know he can accomplish it, don't you feel that way?

ARENA: From the standpoint of speaking with him on an intimate basis from time to time in the store and then seeing him at a distance as you do today, what characteristics, what traits as you see him today, remind you of the young Nixon before he became famous? What in Nixon today reminds you of the Nixon of the Voorhis debate days, and even before that? Have you ever thought about that question; if you haven't, if you think about it now, how would you answer that?

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't know. To me he was always powerful.

A. SUCKSDORF: He was determined.

F. SUCKSDORF: Determined, yes.

A. SUCKSDORF: Just as he is now.

F. SUCKSDORF: And powerful. He had something in back of his speeches you know. There was something there that I think he always had, I mean, ever since he has been in politics.

GARLIEPP: I think having known him, maybe we hear him a little differently from some people who

did not know him, because I have heard people say, "He's a cold person." But he's really not, and he never seems cold in his speeches to me. But I've heard people say that. I think it's because we have known him and understand his personality.

F. SUCKSDORF: I think so.

ARENA: Are there any experiences that come to mind, especially of a sociable nature, which you want to bring up at this point? Did you ever attend any dances or any other sociable affairs in which you saw him?

F. SUCKSDORF: Oh, yes, we were at the Hacienda Country Club at a dance one time and Richard and Pat were there. And Richard was so nice, he came up and asked me to dance, and I was pleased to dance with him. He is a nice dancer and they say he doesn't dance much, but he was dancing that night and a good dancer.

ARENA: Do you recall what steps by any chance? Were these regular fox trot numbers? Were there any rhumbas thrown in, by any chance? Do you recall what the dances were?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, I don't remember any rhumbas, but it was just ordinary dancing like we used to do in those days.

ARENA: Do you recall, if it isn't too personal, somebody stepping on somebody's feet, or any clumsiness?

F. SUCKSDORF: He never stepped on mine. He was a very good dancer.

ARENA: Did he give you the impression of being ill at ease in any way?

F. SUCKSDORF: No.

ARENA: Or that he was not enjoying himself.

F. SUCKSDORF: No, he didn't. He was thoroughly gracious. He was just as nice as anyone could be.

GARLIEPP: His manners were always very nice as a young man and as an older man, too.

F. SUCKSDORF: I felt real proud when he came over and asked me to dance.

ARENA: If it's not too personal, would I be correct in assuming that you were married at the time?

F. SUCKSDORF: Oh, yes.

ARENA: Do you recollect precisely how he came to you and asked you to dance?

F. SUCKSDORF: Oh, no, he just came.

ARENA: You were seated at a table at the country club?

F. SUCKSDORF: No, this was not a table, this was not a dinner dance.

ARENA: I see. This would have been in an open room that is used for dancing.

F. SUCKSDORF: Yes, an open room.

ARENA: Were you seated around the room at the time and he had to go out of his way to come to you to ask you to dance.

F. SUCKSDORF: That's right.

ARENA: It wasn't a question of you and he standing together when the music started and he was more or less put in the position to ask you to dance.

F. SUCKSDORF: No, he walked across the floor and asked me to dance, and I believe it was after he had written his speech. I just don't remember the exact time. Do you remember those years we used to go up there to the dances?

A. SUCKSDORF: No, I don't even remember that dance. I was trying to think what I was doing while you were dancing with the President. I should have been exchanging dances with Pat. [Laughter]

GARLIEPP: Was that when they were living in the La Habra Heights?

A. SUCKSDORF: Could have been.

F. SUCKSDORF: I don't remember where they were living at that time. You know the time didn't mean anything. I just remember we were up there

and I thought it was so nice of Richard to come and ask me to dance. He used to have a lot of charm, really.

ARENA: Finally, knowing the President's father and mother as you do--obviously the parents have a great deal of influence on the personality of the children--what traits do you see of Mr. Frank Nixon and of Mrs. Hannah Nixon in President Nixon, in your opinion?

F. SUCKSDORF: Well, I don't know. I think Mrs. Nixon was such an honest, sincere person, which I think Richard is certainly that, a good American citizen. I don't know how else to explain it.

A. SUCKSDORF: Well, and as far as his father is concerned, the President probably takes after him some from his determination to something, especially in his debating and things like that. He would never give up, you know, Frank wouldn't.

F. SUCKSDORF: No, stayed with it.

A. SUCKSDORF: Stayed right with it to the end, and the President's got some of that in him.

ARENA: Was the approach of the President's father, Mr. Frank Nixon, in discussing politics as you think back and maybe can still see Mr. Frank Nixon discussing politics, did he do it the same way that you have seen the President do it, not necessarily now but during the campaigns when he was running for politics; was their approach the same, taking into account, of course, that everyone is a little different?

F. SUCKSDORF: I wouldn't know how to answer that.

A. SUCKSDORF: Well, I imagine the President was a little more refined in his debates than Frank would be back of the meat counter, you know.

GARLIEPP: Not quite so outspoken as his father was.

A. SUCKSDORF: Right, right.

ARENA: I want to thank you, as this interview comes to a close, very much for your wonderful cooperation in making this contribution to history and to the Richard Nixon Presidential Library, of which this will form a part. Thank you very much.

A. SUCKSDORF: We feel honored.