



10-21-1971

## Jane Milhous Beeson (October 21, 1971, second interview)

C. Richard Arena

Second Oral History Interview

with

MRS. JANE MILHOUS BEESON

October 21, 1971  
Lindsay, California

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is an interview with Mrs. Jane Milhous Beeson in Lindsay, California. The date is October 21, 1971, Arena interviewing. Mrs. Beeson, shall we begin by my asking you where and when you were born?

BEESON: December 29, 1889, in Jennings County, Indiana.

ARENA: Near what city would that be.

BEESON: No city, a very small little village, Butlerville.

ARENA: And when is the last time you were there to visit? Was it in the past few years or so?

BEESON: 1934.

ARENA: 1934 is the last time. How old were you when you left to come to California?

BEESON: Seven.

ARENA: And would you indicate just what your relationship is to President Nixon? How are you related to him?

BEESON: His mother was my sister.

ARENA: And that, of course, would be Mrs. Hannah Milhous Nixon. And would you mind stating when you arrived and how long you have been living in Lindsay, California?

BEESON: We came here in 1916 and have spent most of the time here since then. I was in Long Beach [California] for about five years back and forth when the boys were in college. Otherwise we have always had the property up here in Lindsay.

ARENA: What is Mr. Beeson's first name?

BEESON: Harold. [Chantry Beeson]

ARENA: And how many children do you have?

BEESON: Two boys and one girl.

ARENA: And you are one of the persons who actually taught the President music and the playing of the piano. Would you just clarify as much as you can recollect about your teaching of music to President Nixon; about when it began, what instrument, where this took place, whatever comes to mind, Mrs. Beeson?

BEESON: Well, we lived on a ranch about four and a half miles southwest of Lindsay at that time, and our boys and Richard attended the Sunnyside School about a mile and a half from our home out there. They walked back and forth. He was with us only about six months but he was a very good music pupil. When he came he was just a beginner in his music, but when he left he was playing some Chopin pieces and the "Rustle of Spring," and he was very good to concentrate and to memorize, and he was studious and yet he was active and full of life, too.

ARENA: Do you recall how old he was at the time and the particular year that that took place? And also, possibly, the months of the year that were involved that he was here at your ranch, best as you can recollect.

BEESON: Well, he was twelve years old. He came up with us after we had been down for Christmas, and he remained with us for about six months. I think it was '25 when he came, but he was twelve years old. He was born in '13 so that would be it.

ARENA: If he was twelve, that would make it 1925 exactly, yes. Mrs. Beeson, do you recollect that that was the sole reason for his coming back with you to take up the music lessons?

BEESON: Yes, I'm quite sure it was. I think his mother realized that he had some talent in music and she knew that I had graduated from music school and was teaching up here, and so she was anxious for him to come with me and see what I could do with him in the way of music.

ARENA: Would you mind giving us a background of your own musical education and teaching experience?

BEESON: Well, the records show that I was registered up at Whittier College in the Music Department for, I think it was, seven years all together. And then I went East to Indianapolis, Indiana, to the Metropolitan School of Music where I was graduated.

ARENA: And upon returning from Indianapolis you have been teaching ever since?

BEESON: Yes, most of the time. I taught one year there at Whittier after I came back from Indiana. Then I was married and we went to Oregon, and the year and a half I was in Oregon I did not teach. Soon after we were established in East Whittier, I started teaching again. And then when we came up to Lindsay I have taught, I guess, all the years that we were up here in Lindsay.

ARENA: I believe you said earlier that you will be occupied today with a teaching group. You are still teaching at the present time.

BEESON: I have twenty-five private pupils.

ARENA: Are the pupils in here individually, or do you take any in groups?

BEESON: I have some group classes in theory and eurythmics, but I have each pupil in private lessons also.

ARENA: What age levels are these children?

BEESON: Oh, from seven through high school. I have two or three seniors in high school, and all those grades in between.

ARENA: Do you mind if I ask you precisely what aspects of music, of course including the piano, but what other aspects of music did you teach the President when he was here?



BEESON: Well, piano is really all I taught him. He brought his violin with him and he practiced some on the violin and my youngest son played violin, so I understood violin teaching. But I didn't talk to him particularly about his violin because I was involved so deeply in the piano and the teaching of piano that I didn't really do much along that line, and it didn't seem to me as if he were as interested in the violin as he was the piano.

ARENA: But he had been taking lessons evidently before he came here. Do you have any idea from whom he might have been taking these lessons?

BEESON: I don't know who his violin teacher was, but he started piano with my oldest brother, Griffith [William] Milhous. He was a piano teacher. He may have taught him violin, I'm not sure, because he taught in the schools. He taught in the schools in Whittier and he had orchestras and choruses and all kinds of music and all kinds of musical instruments he taught. So, he may have taught him violin. I am not quite sure about that.

ARENA: What was the name of your youngest son who was taking violin lessons that you mentioned a moment ago?

BEESON: Sheldon [Chantry Beeson].

ARENA: Before we get back to the President, do you mind if I ask you the origins of this evidently very deep interest in music that you and your brother Griffith have, in your family? Did that come, say, particularly from your father, your mother, both or other relatives--your own deep interest in music?

BEESON: I think from my father, because his father had been interested in music to the extent that he had almost been--well, I wouldn't say expelled, now I forget the word that they use for the Quakers who did not believe in having music in their homes or their churches, that is musical instruments--disowned, he almost became disowned from our Quaker meeting because he had bought an organ and brought it home. So it showed that his interest was in music to that extent.

ARENA: This would be your father's father. And his name, Mrs. Beeson?

BEESON: Joshua [Vickers] Milhous.

ARENA: You might be aware, I'm sure, that Miss Jessamyn West, a relative, has an incident in one of her books, I believe it's "Friendly Persuasion" . . .

BEESON: Yes.

ARENA: . . . in which she describes something similar to that. Do you think that is the basis for her own account?

BEESON: Yes, that is it.

ARENA: Thank you.

BEESON: I am sure because my husband was very fond of that book and used to bring it out and read little sections of it when he wanted to talk about some of those incidents.

ARENA: Do you or your husband, or any of the members of the family who are members of the Society of Friends here in California, ever have any difficulty like that with church members or pastors? Did you personally have any difficulty because of your involvement in music?

BEESON: No, we were the progressive Friends and we had music right from the very beginning of my memory of our church relations.

ARENA: As far as you know is that still the case, that some members of the church, of the Society of Friends, are opposed to it?

BEESON: I think the conservative branch do not have musical instruments in their church. I don't know about singing. I think even at that time it was all right for a person to get up and sing just spontaneously as a witness or a testimony, but they didn't want the instruments in the church. They thought those instruments were used too much in a worldly way and they didn't want to have it in the church. But I'm sure as far back as I can remember we had music.

ARENA: Did the President's mother, Mrs. Hannah Nixon, your sister of course, have any musical training or play an instrument or sing? I know she sang, but did she have any professional training in music in any way?

BEESON: Well, she played the piano. She had some lessons and played the piano some and was very much interested always in my music and would encourage me.

She was five years older and she was always very encouraging in talking about my music, wanting me to go ahead and she would ask me to play for her whenever we were together and had opportunity, because she enjoyed it. And some of the very last times that I saw her in the rest home [Whittmar Nursing Home, now Beverly Manor East] she would come out where we could be near a piano and she would ask me to play and tell me how much she enjoyed it, and tell me to play some more and play certain pieces that she had remembered that I played.

ARENA: Do you recall back in the period, either at Yorba Linda [California] or East Whittier [California], that the Nixons, your sister's family, had a piano in the home as the President was growing up as a youngster? Do you recall that there was a piano in the home there at the time?

BEESON: Well, I think so. I can't remember exactly when they got the piano. They had one, of course, when Richard was younger because he had had these lessons from my brother. So I don't remember just what period it was when they got the piano, but as far back as Richard was, oh, maybe five or six years old, why they had one.

ARENA: And another opportunity for the President to be in a musical atmosphere and musical environment, so to speak, around the family, would be these annual Christmas get-togethers in your father's home, I would assume. Did musical pieces and songs on the part of the children and grown-ups take place as a regular feature of these get-togethers?

BEESON: Yes, we always had some music. We'd have the whole group singing, like Christmas carols. And then if any of the children had something they could do individually, they were called on to do that. That has been the custom all through the years. It is still carried on that way in my sister's home, Olive Marshburn's home.

ARENA: How many of the relatives usually would appear, especially when the President was a youngster, the period 1913, we'll say, to the time he graduated from college, 1934? How well attended were these affairs in your parents' home there in Whittier, California, Franklin and Almira's [Milhous] home?

BEESON: Well, I don't remember. Of course, we weren't always there after we moved up here.



ARENA: Right. That is what I was wondering. Did you attend even after you moved so far and you came up here? When you were in Long Beach I'm sure there would not have been that problem. I am just wondering if the relatives from long distances would appear as well, the children and their children?

BEESON: Well, we always tried to make it a point to be there for Christmas and have always ever since then made it a point to be where the family gathering was having a Christmas party. We didn't always make it, I think, but that was the plan and the program.

ARENA: Do you recall at any of these gatherings the President personally performing or being given the floor, so to speak, for some musical pieces? I'm sure there must have been a lot of confusion, but I was just wondering if you recall as a matter of fact that he did the honors in entertaining the family?

BEESON: Well, I know that he was called on to play at different times, but I'm not too sure about those Christmas occasions because we didn't always make it at that period. No, I can't say definitely that I remember him performing to that particular group. But I remember he played for Junior's [Russell Earl Harrison, Jr.] wedding. You probably have heard that one.

ARENA: No, I did not. I would like to hear about it, if you don't mind, and precisely who Junior is.

BEESON: Well, that's Russell, Jr., Russell Harrison, Jr.

ARENA: Russell Harrison, Jr., who is now living, I believe, in Ojai, California, whose father is still living and I believe we mentioned a moment ago is touring Europe with his wife.

BEESON: Yes.

ARENA: I would appreciate your recounting that episode, his playing at Russell Harrison, Jr.'s wedding.

BEESON: Yes.

ARENA: Please do.

BEESON: Well, as I remember it, that wedding took place at Russell Harrison, Sr.'s home and Elizabeth [Milhous Harrison], I think she was not living at that time.

But it was sort of an outdoor, garden wedding and Richard [Nixon] did the playing there. It seems to me like he played "Rustle of Spring" at that time, at that occasion. I don't remember too definitely about that either because it came at a time when I had not been too well and my memory sort of did tricks for me, so that I don't remember details too much, but I remember him playing at that time and people enjoying it.

ARENA: That's a question I could certainly put to Russell Harrison, Jr. the next time I see him.

BEESON: Yes.

ARENA: Mrs. Beeson, is there the practice or custom or tradition that after a certain period of learning the youngster plays at a small gathering? Is that called a debut? Or is there a particular word for the youngster appearing in public, so to speak, who has been learning? I vaguely recall hearing something like that of youngsters who had been practicing and invited people to attend their, maybe, debut recital or something like that?

BEESON: Well, I wouldn't think it was particularly a debut recital, but it's a recital. I always had lots of recitals and invited family and guests and friends and then we always made sort of a party out of it. And I've had lots of those. And I had recitals in which Richard appeared on my programs up here.

ARENA: That's what I was wondering. Do you recall his very first one and was it in your home here or while he was in your home that one of those took place, during that six-month period that he stayed there?

BEESON: Yes, we had two or three recitals he appeared in. But, of course, that was when we lived out southwest of Lindsay in the ranch house there. And I had my recitals, most of them at my home. Sometimes we'd have the piano out on the porch and seat the guests out on the lawn.

ARENA: How many guests and from where did they come?

BEESON: Well, this was mostly the relatives and friends of the performers and I have had as many as around fifty or sixty, and I used to have that many out at the ranch when we lived out northeast of town.

ARENA: Would there be anything in the way of introduction of the pieces and selections by the performers themselves? I am wondering if this gave Richard



an opportunity for some public speaking. Did he mention that he was going to play or was that in the program? You mentioned a program and publicly announced by, possibly, you beforehand, or did they just go right into their numbers without any previous spoken announcement?

BEESON: Well, I think at the time Richard was there we had just written programs printed usually, and I don't think I had any of the pupils announce their own numbers. I have many times since then had the pupils announce their own numbers, but they like it better, it seemed more formal and more like a real recital if we had programs. That's what they like--always wanted to look over their program to see where they came in the program. But in later years, in the last eight or ten years before my husband passed away, he used to act as master of ceremonies because the children liked that. He had some little, personal thing to say about different ones as they performed. He was a much better public speaker than I ever was. Didn't bother him to speak in public. He was good at it but that always bothers me. I'm not a public speaker at all, so he would announce the numbers and give some personal testimony about the different children that performed and the youngsters really liked that. They thought that was much nicer than even having a printed program.

ARENA: Do you recollect President Nixon's conduct or any particular incidents surrounding any of the recitals you attended? I was just wondering if there were any stories, any incidents of unusual interest in his case that come to mind, or the recital as a whole. Maybe it did not involve him personally but was there anything unusual about any of these recitals? Did he seem, for example, nervous at his recital? Did he seem to be well collected, well poised, in comparison with the youngsters at that time doing something like that in public? Did he seem to enjoy it, which would be a question?

BEESON: Well, I think he did because he always played with assurance, confidence, and some people have said that when he played it made them sit up and listen, because he had something to say in his music. But I think we all felt that more or less, too. There was one incident that we probably should never mention. I really didn't remember it. But one of his schoolmates had told me years afterwards that she sure remembered what I did to Richard one time. When he went to play his piece, he went up to the bench and, well, put his hands down and jumped over the bench.

ARENA: Leap frog?

BEESON: Leap frog--that's what she said he did.

ARENA: The way he sat down for his recital?

BEESON: Well, she said that I had him come back and go to the piano again. Now, I don't remember that incident.

ARENA: It's a fascinating story and you say this was one of the other youngsters who remembered that happening?

BEESON: Told it afterwards, but I didn't let him get by with it. And I don't think he'd appreciate ever hearing it either.

ARENA: Well, I think he might, as a matter of fact. I'll be glad to have you have Edward [Calvert Nixon], his brother, pass it on whether or not we can keep that in the tape. I think it shows what a real boy he was, personally. But, I think you, of course, will have to say what is kept and we can also ask his brother. I think he would be delighted. Is there anything else about the recital that comes to mind? Do you recall any of the comments by any of the people, those who were professional people in music such as yourself, as well as those who were amateurs? Any comments about Richard's playing at that point, the President?

BEESON: Well, I know several remarked about the progress he had made and how well he played at the last recital in which he had performed. I think there were three or four numbers he had on the program, while most of the kids would just have one or two, you know, and they'd probably play in the two-piano number or a duet and a solo and that was it, but I think he had three or four solos.

ARENA: Did he have any particular favorites from the standpoint of selections and from the standpoint of composers that you recollect?

BEESON: Well, I know this one particular piece, I guess it was about the last one he studied with me, "Rustle of Spring," and when I was back at the inauguration Donald [Francis Donald Nixon] came over to me when Richard asked me to play--I played "Waltz Caprice" or something like that--and Don came over to the piano and said, "Play 'Rustle of Spring,' that's Dick's favorite."

ARENA: And he certainly played that while he was practicing here during that six-month period, too. Would you mind describing, Mrs. Beeson, more or less

the schedule of the President, on a day-to-day basis, while he lived with you during those six months? How the music lessons appeared. The question of his attending school, because this was during the school year, and any chores that he had to help around the farm with. Could you give more or less an idea of the schedule that was maintained during that period?

BEESON: Well, I'm not sure that we had a very rigid schedule, but I know at one period of that time he was here I had sort of a contest going between my boy and Richard to see which one practiced the most.

ARENA: Excuse me, again, would this boy be Sheldon?

BEESON: No, Alden [Joseph Alden Beeson]. They would get up early in the morning and get at the piano, and a lot of times two pianos would be going at the same time. But Richard, whenever there was any kind of a contest on, he was going to win or else, so he did.

ARENA: What precisely was the nature of the contest? Who played the better and you were listening?

BEESON: Who put in the most time and was most conscientious about their practice, because I could keep tab of them. I don't know whether I've ever mentioned this to Alden, if he remembered about it or not, but I know that's what we did and I know that Richard won the prize.

ARENA: Where is Alden now, Mrs. Beeson?

BEESON: Palo Alto [California].

ARENA: And what is his position?

BEESON: Well, he has been principal of a school until about a year and a half ago. He had some slight strokes and even after he recovered from the strokes he taught for a while, but he finally resigned because it affected his speech to some extent and slowed him down and he felt that it was better that he not try to continue in the position.

ARENA: And as far as the average number of hours of practice per day, what would you guess? For example, did he practice before he went to school each morning, when he came back in the evening, and about how much time?

BEESON: Well, I don't imagine it would be more than an hour, and it was mostly done in the morning since I would be giving lessons in the afternoon and we didn't



do much of that in the evening, of the real practicing. It was mostly, as I remember it, before school in the morning.

ARENA: Do you recall if he would come directly home from school? Would he play, say, with your boys and other boys after school? Where and when did play time come in during this average day?

BEESON: Well, yes, it would be after school and after chores. It seemed to me that they played "Kick the Wicket" out in the yard and around the place.

ARENA: Would you describe that? I believe it's the first time I've ever heard of "Kick the Wicket."

BEESON: Well, I never did play it myself, but my boys and even their father was out with them. I don't know exactly what they kicked, whether it was a ball or a rock or whatever, but one time when Harold's [Beeson] uncle was visiting us, he must have been fifty-five or sixty and he was playing "Kick the Wicket" with the boys. So, I can't describe that game particularly because it seemed like I was never out with them, watching them, but it was something they kicked and ran and had a big time with.

ARENA: And how was Richard, the President, from the standpoint of behavior? Was he a discipline problem for you or your husband? Was he a disruption in the house? Did he do his chores? How was he in that regard?

BEESON: Well, he was always very obedient and he was helpful. We had company quite a bit, and whenever I had company I remember him coming and saying, "Aunt Jane, is there anything you would like for me to do?" He was helpful and cooperative and I don't have any recollection of his being disruptive in any way at all. He entered into the things the boys were doing, took part. But he was a little bit shy, I would say. He wasn't as outgoing as my youngest son was.

ARENA: Your son, Sheldon, told a very interesting story and I would like to ask you to see if you recall it, and therefore could confirm it, about a little mischief that Richard and Sheldon and possibly some other boys got into when they began chewing garlic in school. This disrupted the girls and the class and they were punished for it when they got home. But your husband would not punish Richard physically. And Richard, though, asked that he be allowed to share in the punishment. I was just wondering if you happened to recall that. This probably took place in the woodshed and maybe you were not there. You might have heard your husband mention that incident in some way.

BEESON: Well, now, I don't remember that one. I remember another one along that line when the boys were out cutting corn and they got mischievous and started throwing the corn around and wasting some of it, and my husband caught them at that and he punished Alden and Sheldon and he didn't touch Richard. But Richard walked up to him and said, "Uncle Harold, I threw the corn too." And Harold told him not to do it again. He wouldn't touch him because he wouldn't think of touching any of Frank's [Francis Anthony Nixon] boys.

ARENA: Why do you think that was so? Do you think he thought maybe Frank would not like it or that he just did that as a matter of policy? He would not discipline someone else's children that way, physically? Do you think it was just in the case of Frank, or was it just because he had that policy?

BEESON: Well, I think it was just in the case of Frank, because whenever our grandchildren have been with us, our children have told us to treat them just like they were ours and they have been treated that way. Because one time when we had one of Sheldon's boys up here and Harold was saying, "Well, my grandchildren mind me." The topic of discipline came up. "When I speak, they know that I mean it." And then Eugene [Harold Eugene Beeson] spoke up and said, "Yes, and we know that you paddle." So that proves the point. Harold did use discipline when it was necessary with the grandchildren but he wouldn't touch any of Frank's boys.

ARENA: Was there any indication, during this period that the President lived in your home, of homesickness for either his brothers or his parents, or just to be back home? Did he actually try to leave, we'll say? Did he write home and say, "Come and get me." Was there anything like that?

BEESON: I don't remember it or I don't have any occasion to think that--well, he didn't show it in any way that we were conscious of it.

ARENA: How about the President's appetite. Any particular likes or dislikes, or any of his habits that you might recall about this period?

BEESON: Well, I remember when it came to having to use Listerine, I guess it was, that he objected very strenuously. He couldn't stand that. But I don't remember about his habits of eating particularly.



ARENA: He just ate everything everybody else did. There was nothing like any special preparation for him or anything like that?

BEESON: I can't remember that there was. We just treated him like he was one of ours and he took it.

ARENA: Did he have any special chores on the farm while he was here that he was supposed to attend to?

BEESON: Well, our boys always had chores. They fed the rabbits and the animals and they always milked the cow, too, at that age. And I can't remember about Richard, whether he helped with the milking or not, but whatever there was to do, he just went along and helped with whatever there was to do. He did his part. He was never a slacker.

ARENA: Was there ever any unusual event, such as, maybe, a trip by the family in which you took Richard along or some relatives whom you had not seen in a long time and, therefore, there was a party or a celebration? Was there anything unusual that happened to have taken place during this six month-period, do you recall?

BEESON: Well, I can't think . . .

ARENA: Some great city fire or anything like that. The purchase of a radio. Was there a radio in the family at that time, 1925?

BEESON: I think we had one.

ARENA: They were just coming out, I believe.

BEESON: We had one pretty soon, I know, after they came out but I can't remember at that time of us having anything, because that's why the boys could get their practicing done because television now hinders a lot of the students I have. They don't get in near as much practice or accomplish near as much as they did in those days when they didn't have those things.

ARENA: Was there a nearby movie house?

BEESON: No. They didn't go to movies.

ARENA: How did Richard, the President, get along with your husband? Did they have any conversations together?

BEESON: Oh, yes.

ARENA: Do you remember some of the things they talked about?

BEESON: Well not particularly, but I know Richard was always interested in politics even when he was as young as he was when he was with us. He would always like to look at the newspapers. My husband was a great person always to have the newspapers and they would talk about events, well, in the nation and politics and that sort of thing. They had a lot of conversation that was mutually enjoyed. I know that Richard was older in his comprehension than most kids that age. I remember very definitely his lying down on the floor with the newspaper spread out in front of him that time of the Teapot Dome Scandal. He was reading along and he was really interested. And he said, "When I get big I'm going to be a lawyer and I'm going to be an honest lawyer and not have things like that going on." Or something to that effect, and I always remembered it because it kind of stuck with me. And it was so unusual.

ARENA: Had you any hopes that he might go into music instead of law? You don't recall him saying, "Well, why not go for a musical career," or anything like that?

BEESON: No, I don't remember him saying that, but I know I told him that if he had gone ahead with his music and really taken it seriously that he could have become a concert pianist. But he decided he wanted to go into law and politics, and so forth.

ARENA: What do you think that music has meant to him as the years went on? Was it a relief? Was it something he did as a hobby? Was it something that allowed him to appreciate concerts and musical programs more? From your own personal knowledge, and possibly even talking this over with him, what did you . . .

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ARENA: Is there anything else you want to add to that question about what music has meant to the President, even though he did not become a concert pianist, which could have been possible?

BEESON: Well, I know he played for Sunday School down in the East Whittier church when he was a boy.

- ARENA: Were you ever present, by any chance, when that did take place?
- BEESON: No, I lived up here then, when he was living down there in East Whittier.
- ARENA: But you do know that he played for his East Whittier Sunday School class. About how old would he have been then?
- BEESON: Well, I think maybe thirteen or fourteen. I'm not sure about the age, but I'm sure he did. Different people have spoken to me about it and he has mentioned it, too.
- ARENA: How would a young man conduct a Sunday School class in the Society of Friends? For example, this playing of music. Would this be something that would start the class?
- BEESON: It's accompanying the songs. It was the song service in the general assembly and he would be playing for the general assembly--just hymns. And then they would divide up into classes and go into their classroom for the Sunday School service.
- ARENA: Were you aware that he had a Sunday School class or a special class for pre-married couples?
- BEESON: No, I knew he had a young people's Sunday School class there at East Whittier [Friends] Church at one particular period, but I thought it was just more or less teaching a Bible class of that age group.
- ARENA: But not necessarily for those who were getting prepared to marry. It was just a youngsters' class.
- BEESON: Well, young people's class, it would be called. I'm just not sure about the type at all of teaching, but I would suppose it was Bible study as we have always had in our Sunday School. And he certainly went with us to all the meetings at our church, Sunday School and church in the morning and Christian Endeavor in the evening, prayer meeting on Wednesday night. He mentioned that one time when he was giving a speech over at Tulare [California], they were traveling through by train and he was on the back coach of the train, you know, and stood up there and gave his speeches at Tulare, and he mentioned that. He remembered living a few miles from there with his aunt and uncle and about going to church three or four times a week, morning and evening on Sunday, and Wednesday night to prayer meeting, and different people have spoken to me about that.



- ARENA: Just to make sure we do have that clear, what was that schedule of attending services during the week? Would you go through that again. Just what days and what time of the day, and how long a period, if you can recollect as precisely as you can.
- BEESON: Well, Sunday School started at 9:45 Sunday morning and we were in Sunday School until 11 o'clock, when we dismissed Sunday School and went into the morning service, the worship service, the preaching service, which lasted from 11 to 12 [o'clock]. And then in the evening it was Christian Endeavor, which usually started about 6:30 and lasted about an hour. That was group meetings for the different ages. And the evening service would be from 7:30 to 8:30.
- ARENA: That would be three services on Sunday or three different occasions on Sunday, in a way.
- BEESON: Well, it would be two different occasions but each time was divided into two parts.
- ARENA: I see. And the other days?
- BEESON: That would be prayer meeting on Wednesday night every week. And that is our same schedule that we use now.
- ARENA: Is there a time for praying in the home during any particular time on a daily basis?
- BEESON: Well, in the morning we would have Bible reading and prayer around the table before breakfast, was our usual custom.
- ARENA: Was Richard participating in that also?
- BEESON: Yes, he always took his part. We often had verses from the Bible memorized that we would repeat sometimes.
- ARENA: Do you recall if he did that, if he had memorized some and recited them?
- BEESON: He took part in anything that we were doing. The boys occasionally would offer prayer, too, and that wasn't just every morning but occasionally we would call on them to offer prayer.
- ARENA: Do you recall, Mrs. Beeson, if there were any special problems of a young man coming to a new school, new friends and his making adjustments?

One sign would be, say, notes from the school teacher. Did Richard have any problems in school because of that change in the middle of the year, going from one school to another? And how would you describe that overall situation, of making a school change like that and how he reacted to it?

BEESON: I don't remember that there was any disruption of any kind or any notes from the teacher or anything like that. I think he adjusted very easily and naturally as you would expect a well-trained boy to do.

ARENA: Do you recall, of course, living in the country as you did, there were not too many neighbors as there would be in the city. But did he have the opportunity to meet some new friends and go play on their ranch or in their homes, or was it mostly a question of staying right at home and at school while he was here?

BEESON: Well, it was mostly that, but there were times when there would be groups of school kids coming to our place, riding bicycles, and I'm not sure whether the kids were riding horses at the time Richard was here or not. They did a lot of that. We always had horses that could be ridden. And I'm just not sure about whether Richard did much of that or not. But I do know at different times when he was up through here and stopped at Porterville [California] for speaking and my husband insisted on having the kids he had gone to Sunnyside School with meet him and having pictures taken of the group. And when they arrived, this group--I believe it was out at the airport, maybe--when he came in he had these pictures taken and Richard was speaking to the different ones, and he came to one boy. His name was Harold Cameron. And Richard said, "Now you're Harold Cameron, aren't you? You used to be the captain of our ball team." Well, Harold just never got over that because this was several years after and the kids were grown when Richard was coming through campaigning. And he remembered who Harold was and how he had been one of the big ball players down at the Sunnyside School. Harold said that was real remarkable to him how that Richard could have called his name before he was even introduced, you know.

ARENA: Did Richard belong to any particular team, football or baseball, outside of the school where he played on a regular basis?

BEESON: No, they didn't have those out there in the country. Their games were all connected with the school.



ARENA: And then the little games they played around the area. Was your husband interested in sports and do you know if your husband and Richard got together to talk about sports?

BEESON: Well, my husband was always interested in sports and after we got television he spent a lot of time watching games. And I don't remember that particularly, only anything our boys were doing, Harold was interested in. And whether it was at that time--I think it was at a later time--he had a tennis court put in out there at our place. Harold [Beeson] was always interested in tennis and played with our boys a lot. I don't think we had that tennis court until after Richard left.

ARENA: I know you must have had your hands full raising your own children and teaching, but can you ever recall finding time to sit down with Richard alone, or if he sought you out for any special problem or just a special subject? Do you recall any private conversation, so to speak, or even conversations with groups, in which he participated and in which he discussed certain things that you can think about now? You mentioned his interest in politics. Was there anything besides that?

BEESON: Well, I can't say that I remember any special time, because I didn't have as much time as I probably should have taken with the individual members of the family. I had quite a large class even at that time out there in the country, and lots of housework and cooking problems, so that I didn't spend as much time as I should have with the children in that way.

ARENA: If this isn't too personal, Mrs. Beeson, do you mind if I ask you if the music teaching that you did was an essential part of the family income, or was this something you did on the side because you had the training, but it wasn't essential to the income needs of the family?

BEESON: Well, I never thought of it as that. I did it in the first place because I was contacted. They knew I was capable of giving lessons and there wasn't much opportunity for the youngsters in that part of the country to get music lessons. That's how it started. But I never have advertised in any time in my life for pupils or asked for them at all. They have just come to me and that's still the case. I never have advertised or asked for pupils. And I always thought of it as being something that I could do to help kids that never had that opportunity. There was a preacher that lived close to us who had several children

and I knew they didn't have money for lessons, so whenever I sent the bills I'd always cut them in two for him because I knew that these children would probably use their talent for the Lord and that was what I was interested in in that case.

Of course, we never did have a lot of spending money, as far as that goes. We were developing the ranch business and at times we'd get red ink on our fruit, and times wouldn't be easy at all, but I just never considered that I was doing it to help out the situation in that way, except that I did enjoy having money that I could feel that I had freedom to use as I needed it. So it did help out, I know, many times. But I never like to consider that I had to give music lessons to help us along, but it did help, of course.

ARENA: And if this question isn't too personal, the fact that you were living on a farm and the fact that you had this very excellent musical training yourself, did you recall yourself wishing that you had stayed in the big city, Philadelphia [Pennsylvania] or New York where you could attend concerts of the masters which might not be as easy, living as you did out on a farm in this section of California?

BEESON: No, I can't ever remember wishing to live in some big city. I would like to have been able to hear more musical concerts and things like that than I did, but I tried to make the best of the situation. I have always held memberships in the Civic Music Association and have had tickets for those concerts that would come along through the years. And I've had access to good musical programs.

ARENA: Do you possibly recall that the President in any way, at any time, seemed to indicate a hankering to not be himself, or to be, which he now is, of course, a world traveler or a big city boy? Did he in any way seem to bring that up that you recall?

BEESON: I never recall anything like that. He was always making the best of the situation, adjusting well to any conditions like he did when he was working for his folks in the grocery store and all that. He just tried to do his best in whatever situation he was in and I don't think it's been because I've been particularly prejudiced, but I think that was his nature. He was a lot like his mother. She certainly adjusted to situations that she hadn't been accustomed to.

ARENA: What would some examples of those be, because I was going to ask you to describe your sister, the President's mother, in as complete and frank and as voluntary a manner as you would. Obviously, she had a great deal of influence, any mother would, on the President, and she lived to his early manhood. So, anything you would care to say about her would be very helpful for future students of history.

BEESON: Well, I think she was quite outstanding in her personality and in her interest in people. She was very sympathetic and understanding and made herself available to some people that we thought maybe she shouldn't have, because they took so much out of her in the way of demanding sympathy and all that sort of thing. She really didn't have time for that, but she was always very patient and kind in her attitude.

ARENA: She was not one to lose her temper, I take it. And what other characteristics like that stand out in your mind, say that either put her apart from some of your other sisters or from anyone from that standpoint? What made her personality so unique?

BEESON: Well, I think she was deeply spiritual and depending on the Lord a lot for her strength and her understanding of people in their varied situations who needed help. She was always thinking about others and giving herself in sympathy and understanding and helpfulness to others.

ARENA: Was it a surprise to the family, maybe even a shock, that she married a Methodist?

BEESON: Well, I just don't remember about that particularly. We didn't quite accept it maybe, wholeheartedly. It was never criticized openly in our family.

ARENA: You don't recall your parents saying 'No' or anything like that?

BEESON: No.

ARENA: How about their advising her to think twice about it or a little bit of discouragement. Do you think that might have taken place?

BEESON: Well, I suppose it could have. I remember overhearing my folks talking when they didn't know that I was anywhere around and they were talking about me.



There were two different young men that I was going out with and my father said, "Well, I think that Harold [Beeson] is much the better for her to be interested in because he is of the same faith that we are." The other boy was a Methodist and Harold was a Quaker.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, Frank did become a Quaker.

BEESON: Oh, yes, he joined the church, the Friends Church, after they were married, or before. I'm not quite sure when it took place. But I know he was a member.

ARENA: This is a question that only a person like you could answer and I would feel guilty in not asking it, because I know people would be interested, and if you would care to answer: What is there in President Nixon that is his mother, Hannah, and what is there in him that is Frank, since you knew all three so intimately?

BEESON: Well, I think he's a great deal like his mother in his kindly attitude, understanding and sympathetic and being interested in people. And I think he's like Frank in his urge to do the thing he sets out to do with all his might and be a winner. I don't know that Hannah had that so much as Frank did. But Frank was very interested in politics always and very decided in his opinions and expressions, which isn't exactly like Richard is, but at the same time I imagine Richard got quite a bit from his father along those lines.

ARENA: How would you compare the President's father and his discussion of politics--not going into politics as such--how Frank would discuss politics compared to the President as a youngster, when you knew him as a youngster and growing up, and his discussion of politics? I am wondering in particular about the reasonableness, the calmness of the discussion that would take place, and how the two were alike or unlike in that case.

BEESON: I think they're unlike like that because Frank was just out and out just right now, he had his definite ideas. He wasn't influenced as much as Richard because Richard would look at the problem from all angles and more quietly, comprehensively understand the situation.

ARENA: As a matter of fact, do you recall some political discussions between Mr. Frank Nixon and anyone else, say in particular your husband? Can you recall some of these that you would describe or care to describe in a general way?

BEESON: Well, I don't think any more than I have said. Now, my husband was very calm or more quiet-mannered than Frank was. He was always very outspoken and quick to make decisions, very expressive with ideas, while my husband was more calm and speculative and he would consider things from all angles more than Frank would.

ARENA: Again, this is a question which you don't have to answer but students of history would be interested in knowing: How did Mr. Frank Nixon and Mrs. Hannah Nixon get along as husband and wife in general, if you don't want to go into detail?

BEESON: Well, I think she always managed to keep level-headed and calm when he would sometimes get explosive and get too loud and so forth, she would quietly answer him and sort of settle the situation by her manner. She made it a point to get along and make the best of the situation. I don't know how hard he tried but they got along. But sometimes it sounded like he wasn't as considerate as he could have been.

ARENA: Was there a period between the time Mr. Frank Nixon moved to Whittier in 1906 and the time he moved to Yorba Linda [California] where the President was born in 1913, was there a time when the Nixons moved out here to Lindsay, and I was wondering if you recall anything about that period?

BEESON: Well, I know they were up here. I think he came up to work on my father's ranch, probably. And at that time our church was established and they were charter members of the little church over here.

ARENA: Frank would be a charter member. Would that be, if a person, for example, were a Methodist or a Catholic or of any other faith and is converted, or becomes a convinced Quaker is the correct way of putting it, the evidence would be his signature or a record of that fact in the records of the church?

BEESON: Oh, yes. I have a little book that shows where they were charter members.

ARENA: Therefore, there's no question that Mr. Frank Nixon became a Quaker after he was married and that would be some of the evidence, because that has come up and this is the first time that I can say there is possible evidence in black and white, written evidence, and that would do it.



BEESON: Well, now I could get you a little copy that would show you that. You want to turn this off a little bit.

ARENA: Fine, while you get the copy. [Interruption]  
Thank you for returning with this very interesting booklet which is in your possession, Mrs. Beeson. It gives a history of the founding of the church here of the Quakers and it also mentions who the charter members were. First, let me read briefly the statements regarding the founding of this particular church building. I quote from the booklet which you have given me which is labeled as "Directory, Lindsay Friends Church, corner Hermosa and Gale Hill Streets, Lindsay, California. Reverend Andrew F. Mitchell, Pastor, Mans 521 North Mirage Street." And then we have this brief historical sketch inside. "In May 1911 at the close of a prayer meeting held at the home of John H. Morgan, steps were taken to raise money for the construction of a church building. A committee consisting of Charles S. White, Robert Meredith and Elmer H. Gifford were appointed to solicit subscriptions. At the organization of the monthly meeting in July following, the committee reported \$705 available as a building fund. At the recent Yearly Meeting held at Whittier, \$715 had been pledged to assist in the construction of the new church. A suitable location was secured and the commodious bungalow church was erected on the corner of Hermosa and Gale Hill Street. The promptness with which this work was done shows the energy and earnestness of the pioneer Friends of the meeting. The building was dedicated on May 26, 1912. The dedicatory service was preached by H. Edwin McGrew, Pastor of the Friends Church at Whittier." A particular reference to the President's family is this information. Under the title, "Charter Members" may be found the names: Frank Nixon, Hannah Nixon, Harold Nixon. Also under the title "Christian Endeavor" may be found some interesting names and I'm looking here for Richard Nixon. Would that be here as well, Mrs. Beeson, under "Christian Endeavor"?

BEESON: Yes, the very last one.

ARENA: I thought you had pointed that out to me and I suddenly can't seem to find it.

BEESON: Right there.

ARENA: Thank you very much. There is the name Richard Nixon. And this booklet was probably put out in 1926, as it does indicate officers who were members of the church and the earliest dates that are given is 1926. It might be of interest for future historical research to note some of the names of those who were members of Christian Endeavor at the same time as President Nixon. These names

are: Officers: Superintendent: Jane M. Beeson; President: Edith L. Runnells; Vice President: Alden Beeson (son of Jane Beeson); Secretary: Sheldon C. Beeson (son of Jane Beeson); Treasurer: Esther Smith. And those who are listed as members include: Myrtle Smith, Betta Banta, Pervis Frye, Harold Hubbard, Eva Hubbard, Phillip Curtin, Elsie Dennis. And that's followed by Richard Nixon.

Could we conclude this interview, Mrs. Beeson, by your playing the President's favorite selection. This is "Rustle of Spring" by Sinding. Lovely. Thank you.