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Doris Hemingway and William B. Anderson (September 18, 1972)

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Oral History Interview

with

MRS. DORIS HEMINGWAY
MR. WILLIAM B. ANDERSON

September 18, 1972
West Branch, Iowa

By Dr. C. Richard Arena

For the Richard Nixon Oral History Project

ARENA: This is an interview with Mrs. Doris Hemingway, West Branch, Iowa, September 18, 1972, Arena interviewing. May we begin by my asking you, where and when you were born?

HEMINGWAY: Well, I was born in England in Hull, Yorkshire.

ARENA: Is Yorkshire a county or a hamlet?

HEMINGWAY: It's a state, just like Iowa is a state.

ARENA: I see. And the year?

HEMINGWAY: 1902, May 1st.

ARENA: And would you mind indicating what your full maiden name was?

HEMINGWAY: Doris May Green.

ARENA: And how is it that you find yourself in West Branch, Iowa?

HEMINGWAY: Well, I met my husband in Racine, Wisconsin, and that was where we married. I came over here in 1921 after the first World War, and we were married two years later, 1923.

ARENA: Is your husband still living?

HEMINGWAY: Oh, yes.

ARENA: And would you mind indicating and using the information you have right in front of you, the relationship of the Hemingways to President Nixon?

HEMINGWAY: Well . . . [Interruption]

ARENA: According to the document which you have in front of you, which is a genealogy chart, Almira P. [Park Burdg] Milhous was the daughter of Jane Hemingway?

HEMINGWAY: Right.

ARENA: And your own husband, a Hemingway, is a descendant of the Hemingways?

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: And that would be the connection. Now, I understand that some Hemingways are buried in this area. Would you mind saying which ones, from your own knowledge? Which are the Hemingways that are buried here in this area?

HEMINGWAY: Well, Hope Hemingway and James, the beginning of it--that was Jane's father.

ARENA: I see, you are saying that the parents of Jane--and Jane was the mother of Almira--are buried here. I see; very good.

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: And when you say here, what does that mean? What is the name of the cemetery?

HEMINGWAY: That means in the Quaker Cemetery, Scattergood [Iowa].

ANDERSON: Actually, it is in Hickory Grove, Scattergood.

ARENA: In other words, this is in Hickory Grove.

ANDERSON: Hickory Grove Cemetery, at Scattergood.

ARENA: And Scattergood is the name of the community.

ANDERSON: Scattergood is the name of a boarding school, a Quaker boarding school.

ARENA: I see. And Sir, would you mind giving me your full name?

ANDERSON: William B. Anderson.

ARENA: And would you mind telling me what the B stands for?

ANDERSON: B, no name.

ARENA: Oh, I see, you just use the initial.

ANDERSON: Right.

ARENA: Would you mind telling me where and when you were born?

ANDERSON: I was born near West Branch, Iowa, January 20, 1896.

ARENA: Thank you very much. And I would appreciate your helping us out as we go through this history. Where neither of us is sure, we would appreciate your assistance. Thank you very much. Now, to be sure about this location of the cemetery, would you go over that again completely?

ANDERSON: It's two miles east and one-half mile south of West Branch.

ARENA: And is it considered in West Branch?

ANDERSON: It's in Springdale Township [Iowa].

ARENA: I see. And the complete name of the school again?

ANDERSON: It's Scattergood School and it derives its name from a man by the name of Scattergood who lived in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania] and contributed two thousand dollars to the building of the school. Thence it was named Scattergood.

ARENA: Is the school in operation?

ANDERSON: It's still in operation.

ARENA: And is it a Quaker school?

ANDERSON: It's sponsored by the Quakers, but it is not limited to Quaker people altogether. It's on a high school level.

ARENA: From both of your experiences, do you know if Almira, the President's grandmother, his mother's mother, visited this area, if she was in direct contact physically with the Hemingways?

HEMINGWAY: Yes, she was.

ARENA: And about when was this?

HEMINGWAY: Well, let's see. She was here when the President came from the university that time.

ANDERSON: Duke University.

ARENA: Well, this may be of help. He graduated from that university in 1937, and she did visit him and did attend the ceremony. And you're saying, therefore, that around that time . . .

HEMINGWAY: They stopped here.

ARENA: That's very interesting. Were you present possibly yourself?

HEMINGWAY: No, I wasn't here then.

ARENA: Were you, by any chance, Bill?

ANDERSON: I was in the community but I didn't see them. And there are pictures of them taken here, and . . .

ARENA: That's excellent. Would you have any idea who has these?

HEMINGWAY: The picture of . . .

ARENA: Almira . . .

HEMINGWAY: And the Hemingways.

ARENA: And the Hemingways or Almira in this area.

HEMINGWAY: Emery has it.

ARENA: And what would the full name be?

HEMINGWAY: Emery Hemingway.

ARENA: And who would he be from the standpoint of relative in relationship to your husband?

HEMINGWAY: Well, they're farther . . .

ARENA: He's not an immediate relative. He's not a brother, for example?

HEMINGWAY: No, no.

ARENA: I see. But you would know how to locate him for future reference?

HEMINGWAY: Uh huh.

ARENA: For future reference, it's good to know. While we are on the subject of pictures or correspondence, do you happen to know in your own family, what papers, what documents dealing with the Hemingway, Milhous, Nixon connections there are in general? Do you have any letters of the original Hemingways, for example?

HEMINGWAY: I don't have any letters--well, I do have these letters from Mrs. Milhous.

ARENA: And which Milhous would this be, Almira?

HEMINGWAY: Almira, when they lived in--I don't know whether it was Ohio or Indiana.

ARENA: Well, as a matter of fact, she lived in Indiana.

HEMINGWAY: He had a nursery.

ARENA: That's right. Now that nursery was in connection with the President's grandfather, her husband, who was Franklin Milhous.

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: And then he moved from Indiana to California, if it's of any help, this took place around 1897, just ten years after the founding of Whittier. And you do have some correspondence that goes back to that period?

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: That's very interesting. And when I say you have it, this would be right in your own immediate possession?

HEMINGWAY: I have it, yes.

ARENA: Any idea about how many letters there may be?

HEMINGWAY: Oh, three or four, I think. Probably some of them got thrown away, but I did keep one that had the heading on it of the nursery.

ARENA: I wonder if you wouldn't mind going over a moment the contact between this Quaker community and the President's community where he grew up, Whittier, in this sense: Was there any formal religious contact; anything like sending representatives to the Yearly Meeting in Whittier?

HEMINGWAY: They do come from Whittier here.

ARENA: And those Quakers from Whittier do come here?

HEMINGWAY: Yes. The President's aunt was here. Let's see, what was her name?

ARENA: One of the aunts, if this rings a bell, is Rose Olive Marshburn.

HEMINGWAY: Yes, Rose.

ARENA: I see. Rose Olive Marshburn. That's interesting. If it isn't too personal, would you mind if I ask you if you are a Friend yourself?

HEMINGWAY: No, I'm a Methodist.

ARENA: And Bill, how about you?

ANDERSON: I'm a Methodist.

ANDERSON: My background--I grew up in a Quaker neighborhood. My wife was a birthright member of the Quaker church. She was born in Ohio.

ARENA: Could I ask you about your husband, Doris. Would he be a Quaker?

HEMINGWAY: He's a Methodist, but he really is a birthright Quaker.

ARENA: I see. He was originally a birthright Quaker.

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: I don't know if you are aware of this, but the President's father was a Methodist who then became a Quaker himself. I think the regular term for that would be convinced. To what extent is this community founded by the Quakers from your knowledge of local history? Do you think it was actually founded by Quakers, as in the case of Whittier? Whittier was founded in 1887.

HEMINGWAY: Well, now if I had known that, I had a book when Grandmother Hemingway taught school for five

dollars a month, and it was Quaker. It told about the meeting houses, the first ones that they had, and I'm sure it was founded by Quakers, wasn't it, Bill?

ANDERSON: I'm sure, yes. I think I can say that.

ARENA: To what extent are there active Quaker churches here now? Of course, I've seen this meeting house that was used by President [Herbert] Hoover, which is a part of the national historical site for President Hoover's birthplace, but I wonder if there is a meeting house now in the community that is used by Quakers?

ANDERSON: Yes, they have a residence in the east end of town. The park service took over the area--the National Park Service--where the meeting house that was being used was located and the changeover came about by buying a residence. The group is quite small now.

ARENA: Bill, I notice you go way back to the birth of the election of another famous Republican, one Willaim McKinley. I wonder if you were present here when Herbert Hoover's family was living here, or you yourself were present when he was living here for a few years, I understand to age eleven?

ANDERSON: No, that would be before my time.

ARENA: I see. How about his immediate family? I am thinking of younger brothers or sisters; did you have any contact with them?

ANDERSON: In later years, his brother Tad [Hoover], who was older than Herbert Hoover; and then, of course, my connection would be with the President and his family. He had two boys, Herbert, Jr., and Allen. Herbert, Jr., is deceased now. Allen is the only surviving one of the family, and then some grandchildren.

ARENA: Would either of you know or have either of you had any occasion to see other members of the Nixon family who have been here, where the question of the common ancestry came up? For example, I notice that you have had your picture taken with the President's daughter, Mrs. David Eisenhower. I wonder if you and she touched on the fact that we are discussing right now, that there is a connection between this community and the President's own ancestors?

HEMINGWAY: Well, I showed her the book and I showed her her grandmother's name in the book, and she said that was very interesting.

ARENA: Maybe this is not a fair question, but from the standpoint of historical interest, did she say that she knew that or did not know that before, and that this was the first time it had been brought to her attention?

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: That's very interesting.

HEMINGWAY: And I also showed it to the President when he was here.

ARENA: And what occasion was that?

HEMINGWAY: When he was here with President [Dwight David] Eisenhower, but I don't know what year that was.

ARENA: In other words, this was during a campaign when he . . .

HEMINGWAY: It wasn't a campaign.

ANDERSON: No, it wasn't.

ARENA: Do you think it may have been when he was in office with President Eisenhower? See, he was Vice President between '53 and . . .

HEMINGWAY: No, I don't think they were in office.

ANDERSON: It was on the occasion of initiating the Hoover stamp. It was on August 10, 1965, when President Eisenhower came and Nixon was here, and [Donald] Johnson.

HEMINGWAY: And Mrs. [Patricia Ryan] Nixon was here, too.

ANDERSON: And Allen Hoover and his wife here here.

ARENA: I see. Do either of you recall bringing that subject up with President Nixon?

HEMINGWAY: Yes, I . . .

ARENA: What do you recall? Take as much time as you need.

HEMINGWAY: They had a luncheon at the Hoover School, and Don Johnson, who is now Veterans Administrator in Washington, lived here. And I said to his wife, "I have that autograph book. I'd sure like to show it to the Vice President." And she said, "Come on with me."

So we went to the back of the table and I showed it to him, and he said, "My, that's interesting, my grandmother. Isn't that interesting." And I said, "She wrote her name in that book, and I thought it would be kind of nice if you did." He said, "I sure will, and you tell Pat to write hers in it, too." So I gave it to Mrs. Nixon and she wrote hers in there, too.

ARENA: Would you mind opening that book and reading the names that have been signed by various members related to President Nixon? Would you just read them off and if you know the date, would you read the date, also?

HEMINGWAY: Well, they have Almira P. Milhous, 1849. I have Richard M. Nixon, 1913. I have Patricia Nixon, no date, and Julie Nixon Eisenhower, no date.

ARENA: But from your own recollection, when did Julie sign that, Julie Nixon?

HEMINGWAY: I guess when she was here August 10.

ARENA: On the occasion of the dedication of the formal establishment of the site here.

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: Very good. And would you give precisely the title of that book, by the way?

HEMINGWAY: Well, this is a birthday book that was given to Clara Hemingway, who was a first cousin of Mrs. [Almira Milhous].

ARENA: I see. Is there a date for the publication of the book?

HEMINGWAY: No, there is not.

ARENA: Oh, would you mind reading . . .

HEMINGWAY: It just says, "Merry Christmas to Clara Hemingway, from Prairiedale Sunday School." That was a little tiny wooden school, wasn't it?

ANDERSON: Country school, about two miles north of here.

ARENA: I see. That is very interesting. Do you recall anything else concerning President Nixon's reactions to this information that his ancestors

are buried here in another famous Republican president's hometown? Do you recall anything else that may have come up in that connection?

HEMINGWAY: It might have, but not right then it didn't, because they were ready to give the invocation and I just had time to get my book signed and I didn't have time to talk with him afterwards, only that I did meet Mrs. [Patricia] Nixon in the park, and she said, "I know that you're a Hemingway," but that's all, because there was such a crowd there.

ARENA: Just to be sure, were there any other relatives of the President, say, possibly his own mother who may have stopped through this community in West Branch at any time?

HEMINGWAY: Oh, yes, she did.

ARENA: And this would be Mrs. Hannah Milhous Nixon?

HEMINGWAY: Hannah was here with Mrs. Milhous.

ARENA: I see. When Mrs. Milhous came, Almira, Mrs. Hannah Nixon was with her, as well.

HEMINGWAY: Yes. But she had been here at other times, too.

ARENA: I see. Had you ever been with her on any of these occasions when she had stopped through?

HEMINGWAY: No, but Mary Knight met her several times.

ARENA: What is the name of this person?

HEMINGWAY: Mary Knight. She is the same relation we are.

ARENA: And she is a resident of?

HEMINGWAY: Iowa City [Iowa].

ARENA: Of Iowa City, and in order to get in touch with her we could do it through you?

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: From the standpoint of possibly explaining the similarities or differences between this Quaker community and the Quaker community of the President in some easy fashion. . . . For example, I happen to know that the Quakers do believe in the use of pastors. I am wondering if the services are conducted with a pastor or what is called the silent meeting.

ANDERSON: We have both types of meetings here, and the one that Herbert Hoover and his folks were involved with was the silent meeting. Just a few years later there was a separation within the conservative Friends, which is the silent meeting that you're speaking of, and the other branch, and this meeting house across the street here was the one that was converted then in 1884 to the type of meeting that's in Whittier, California.

ARENA: And this is one of the reasons why there is this continuing direct contact between Whittier and West Branch. I wonder if I could ask you this concerning, again, similarities or differences: You may or may not know that the President's great-grandmother, in this case an Elizabeth [Griffith] Milhous, who would be the mother of the President's grandfather. Now the President's grandfather was the husband of Almira, Franklin Milhous.

HEMINGWAY: Yes.

ARENA: The mother also moved to California. Her name was Elizabeth, but she was a preaching Quaker, a preacher. I was wondering, had you heard or did you have any knowledge of that? Did that ever come up, possibly through your meeting with Mrs. [Rose Olive] Marshburn or any other Quakers from California?

HEMINGWAY: No.

ARENA: Well, that's one point. The question, though, is: Was there anything like a preaching lady in this area? Was there someone who was a Quaker lady who preached at any time, even though I realize there are conservatives and . . .

HEMINGWAY: Well, President Hoover's mother was religious, wasn't she?

ARENA: Would you give her full name, please? [Interruption] Now, Bill, could we go back to this question of just what was the name of President Hoover's mother and explain for the record, as you just did for me off the record, how she would preach from time to time?

ANDERSON: The Hoover family came here from Ohio by covered wagon, sort of the last end of the covered wagon days, in 1853, and this was a Quaker community, settled by Quakers . . .

ARENA: Do you remember offhand the jumping-off place when they came by covered wagon? They came from where?

- ANDERSON: Muscatine. They ferried across the Mississippi [River] at Muscatine, and it was known at that time as Bloomington [Iowa].
- ARENA: And that would be in what state?
- ANDERSON: Iowa, about thirty-five miles from here. It's on the Mississippi River, and they came here and they settled here in West Branch, Herbert Hoover's grandparents, on a farm just a half a mile west of West Branch. The Minthorns came a few years later, 1856. And may I correct a statement I made?
- ARENA: Certainly.
- ANDERSON: The Hoover family came in 1853, and the Minthorn family came from a Quaker settlement in Canada in 1856.
- ARENA: That would be Hoover's mother's family?
- ANDERSON: Right; President Hoover's mother's family. And they settled on a farm three miles from West Branch and through this acquaintanceship of the Quakers, Jesse Hoover became acquainted with the daughter of the Minthorns, and a courtship developed and they were married then.
- ARENA: And President Hoover's mother's name?
- ANDERSON: Hulda Minthorn. They were members of the Quaker meeting and, of course, she was a very well-educated person, as they were in those days. She attended meeting regularly, and she is one of the ones in the conservative meeting who spoke quite regularly at the meetings, if the spirit so moved her. The Quaker meeting is conducted on the basis of what your feeling is, whether you have anything important to say or not that might be helpful to the other people assembled there. You have that privilege, whether you sit in the facing benches or even in the audience.
- ARENA: And just for the record, this Quaker meeting house located on this historic site is the one that was attended by President Hoover as a youngster, and would this be the very one where his mother preached from time to time?
- ANDERSON: She did, yes, and she also visited other meetings and spoke. Her last illness followed a meeting at a community that is a little older than West Branch, five miles east of here where they had a Quaker meeting. She was there and her illness developed from her exposure at that time, and her death followed.

ARENA: I see. Maybe we can bring this to a conclusion with one more interesting direct link between President Nixon's hometown of Whittier and Hoover's hometown of West Branch, touching on the life of his wife, Lou Henry Hoover. Would you mind repeating the background of Lou Henry?

ANDERSON: Lou Henry Hoover, her parents lived in Waterloo, Iowa, and they moved to California, and the acquaintanceship that developed between Herbert Hoover and Lou Henry came at Stanford University [Palo Alto, California]. They were both interested in the same subjects. Herbert Hoover was a member of the first class at Leland Stanford Jr. University. She became a student there, and they were interested in the same subject, geology, and so forth.

ARENA: Would you happen to know if she had ever been in West Branch for any reason before the marriage? Had she ever had any contact with West Branch, from your own knowledge?

ANDERSON: Not to my knowledge.

ARENA: Finally, you being a Methodist, what were the relations between the Quakers and other religious groups, from your own knowledge, recollection and study of the period, as far as West Branch is concerned?

ANDERSON: There has always been a very congenial relationship between churches of all denominations. The Quakers were a group of people, and still are, that are very understanding and accept the theology of other religious groups, and so forth, and they welcome them to their meetings. Anyone is free to come.

ARENA: One final question that comes to mind concerning your meeting with President Nixon and his obvious interest in personal history. Do you recall that he himself brought up the question of the contact of Lou Henry and Whittier? Did he mention that she had been brought up in Whittier?

ANDERSON: Not to my knowledge.

ARENA: I want to thank you both very much for coming in at the last minute like this and allowing me the advantage of this really very enlightening interview. Thank you very much.