

THE NIXONS:
A FAMILY PORTRAIT



EDWARD C. NIXON

AND

KAREN L. OLSON

Book Publishers Network
P.O. Box 2256
Bothell, WA 98041
Ph 425-483-3040

Copyright © 2009 by Edward C. Nixon and Karen L. Olson

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in, or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

LCCN 2008943469
ISBN10 1-935359-05-3
ISBN13 978-1-935359-05-0

Nixon, Edward C.

The Nixons : a family portrait / Edward C. Nixon and Karen L. Olson.
— 1st ed. — Bothell, WA : Book Publishers Network, c2009.

p. : cm.

ISBN: 978-1-935359-05-0

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous). 1913-1994
2. Presidents--United States--Biography. 3. Nixon family
4. Milhous family. I. Olson, Karen L. II. Title.

Editor: Vicki McCown
Cover Design: Laura Zugzda
Interior Layout: Stephanie Martindale
Indexer: Carolyn Acheson

Cover photo (l-r) Ed, Gay, Dick, Pat, Clara Jane, and Don Nixon.
Courtesy of Clara Jane Nixon.

Permission has been requested but not yet granted for photos on
pages 132, 194, 200, 237, and 303.

*Dedicated to generations yet unborn
and to those parents and teachers who
will lead them with absolute honesty.*

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	VII
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	IX
INTRODUCTION	XI
CHAPTERS	
1. STORIES OF OUR HERITAGE	1
2. OPPOSITES ATTRACT	21
3. IMPROBABLE NEWS	39
4. CURRENT EVENTS	109
5. NEW DIRECTIONS	127
6. INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT	165
7. CAREER CHANGES	205
8. A BROTHER IN THE WHITE HOUSE	241
9. "NIXON NOW MORE THAN EVER"	295
10. A TERM CUT SHORT	317
11. THE NIXON LEGACY	331
12. RETRACING FOOTSTEPS	357
13. FINAL JOURNEYS	411
14. CHALLENGES	419
EPILOGUE	423
APPENDIX: RICHARD NIXON ON THE ISSUES	425
BIBLIOGRAPHY	435
INDEX	447

FOREWORD

The complexity of Richard Milhous Nixon is legendary. This book unravels some parts of the mystery with a portrait of the 37th President's ancestral roots and family life that manages to combine fraternal loyalty with human fascination.

Life as seen from the inside of the Nixon-Milhous families has never before been written. The cast of characters is almost Shakespearean in its historical colour and personal depth. At the beginning of the story, in and around the Nixon's Mom n' Pop grocery store in rural California, we learn about the versatile but irascible father Frank Nixon and his "rough Appalachian ways"; the still deep love of his wife Hannah, whom neighbours called "a Quaker saint"; the redoubtable poetry loving matriarch of the clan, Almira Milhous; and the charismatic eldest son Harold who died of TB on his mother's 48th birthday, the second loss in the family as 7-year-old Arthur Nixon also passed away from the same disease.

Ed Nixon and his co-author Karen Olson capture the poignancy and the passion of these tragedies together with the hardscrabble yet ambitious poverty of the future President's upbringing. When the Nixon family set off for Dick's graduation at Duke University in 1937,

Ed is amazed by the expenditure on gas for the long drive. “I had never before noticed Mom and Dad spending money on something that was not a necessity,” he writes.

Dick is a good older brother and mentor to his youngest sibling. The age and experience gap between them is bridged by many personal bonds and episodes. From the White House years we get accounts of Tricia’s wedding, rides on Air Force One, official banquets for Arabian princes and Apollo astronauts, and an understanding of the President’s private friendships with Bebe Rebozo, Bob Abplanalp and Gavin Herbert. There is not much on Watergate. The subject is apparently “not important”—surely a euphemism for too painful—for the brothers to discuss.

Despite this and other curious omissions from the Nixonian passion play of personal and political dramas, this book is an enthralling read, full of rare insights into Milhous-Nixon family life. Some of the glimpses are quirky, others unconventional. The end result is a portrait of the 37th President and his roots, which goes deeper in intimacy and understanding than the writings of most political commentators.

↵Jonathan Aiken

Jonathan Aitken is a former British Member of Parliament, who served in the Cabinet as Treasury Secretary and Defence Minister. He is the author of *Nixon: A Life*, which won The Churchill Prize for political biography in 1993.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Authors of non-fiction books often thank an extensive list of collaborators. For me to acknowledge the countless people who contributed to this long story, however, would require a total recall from my memory banks. I am grateful to so many that such an effort would risk slighting those inadvertently omitted.

I especially wish to thank my wife Gay Lynne and our daughters Amy and Beth for their stories and for the many hours they spent reviewing the manuscript. Cousins, nieces, and nephews also constitute a special group, all of whom had a vital part in verifying significant details of chronology and dialogue.

My family is very large, but friends, associates, and acquaintances comprise an even longer list. Many of their names appear in the index, and they deserve thanks for all their encouragement and suggestions.

This book has been a labor of love underway for at least twenty years, but until 1998, when Karen Olson volunteered to join the effort, I was getting nowhere. Therefore, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to my coauthor Karen and her husband Dennis Olson.

I also wish to thank my friends Bruce Herschensohn and James Humes, who wrote testimonials for the back cover, and Jonathan Aitken, who wrote the Foreword and also a testimonial.

Under publisher Sheryn Hara's leadership, Vicki McCown, Laura Zugzda, Stephanie Martindale, Carolyn Acheson, and the entire Book Publishers Network team patiently collaborated with the authors to bring the work to fruition. Such dedication to service deserves special recognition as a model of great teamwork.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge Tricia Nixon Cox and Julie Nixon Eisenhower, my nieces, for permitting us to quote from their father's extensive writings.

INTRODUCTION

*Relying on
Research to Reveal Heritage
Memories to Recount Lives
Questions to Review Legacy
Persuasion to Renew Hope*

—Edward C. Nixon

Strangers at the airport, at the restaurant, on the street often stare at my profile. Some hear me speak. The bold ones ask, “Are you related to Richard Nixon?” Others simply inquire, “Are you related?” I guess my nose and voice are dead giveaways.

For some people, meeting me is one degree of separation from meeting my famous brother. Reporters, autograph seekers, and people naturally curious about my life want to know, “What was it like growing up as Richard Nixon’s brother? How did being related to the President affect your life?”

To answer accurately, I’d have to say Dick was more than a brother. Because we never shared a boyhood, he assumed the role of assistant father and mentor. At the time of my birth, he was seventeen and getting ready to start college. But he realized he could be an important influence in my life, and he took his self-imposed responsibility seriously, always listening to his kid brother. I considered Dick to be outgoing with his ears—not with his mouth. Through thought-provoking questions, he encouraged me to learn and solve problems. More than anyone else in the family, he could stand back from a contentious situation and give impartial and convincing advice.

Frank and Hannah Nixon raised five sons—Harold, Dick, Don, Arthur, and me—in a close-knit family, teaching us the importance of religious faith, traditional values, and a strong work ethic. Family life revolved around Dad and Mom’s store, the Quaker church, and family gatherings. In many ways, Dick’s rise from humble beginnings to the presidency of the United States epitomizes the American dream—a dream in which my family and I participated.

Yet, I’ve done nothing to deserve public notice except to be related to a celebrity. Although not well-known in my own right, I’ve lived all my adult life in the shadow of one of the most influential and controversial men in the twentieth century, and such proximity has led me down paths I otherwise would not have trod. When Dick became President, doors opened that put my family and me in the midst of exciting and historic endeavors and gave us access to national and foreign leaders everywhere we traveled. Suddenly, heads of state, reporters, and business leaders sought my opinions both on Dick’s presidency and on environmental issues. As the President’s brother and a geologist, I welcomed the chance to share my view of the Earth in many developing countries.

While my family and I are truly grateful for the many opportunities we’ve had, there also have been times of grief and pain. With fame comes risk. What happens when the celebrity falls from favor and is fairly or unfairly attacked in the press? What impact does that have on the family?

Over the years, friends and acquaintances have urged me to write the stories about Dick and our family that I’ve told in public speeches and privately. My brother Don, too, would often say, “We’ve got to write a book.”

In August 1997, I wrote a few letters of inquiry to New York publishers but received no encouragement on my book proposal. Then on December 3, 1998, I heard my niece, Julie Nixon Eisenhower, speak at the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace. At the luncheon following her speech, an acquaintance asked me how I was coming on my book.

I told him, “I haven’t made any progress. I need a writer to help me get it moving.”

At that point, Karen Olson, the lady sitting next to him, jumped up and said, “I’ll help you!”

I learned that Karen had her own story of meeting my brother and that she lived not far from me in the Seattle area. After hearing her describe that meeting, our collaboration began in earnest.

Because memories, some more than seventy-five-years-old now, are fragmentary and fallible, I have tried to confirm my recollections with family members and friends who participated in the events. Karen also did extensive research on the people and occurrences mentioned in the book. I included dialogue only when my memories of those conversations are vivid or when quotations appeared in published sources. Conversations with family members were easy to reconstruct; I can still hear them talking in their distinctive manner.

While volumes have been written about Dick’s life, this book includes never-before-published material about him, our family, and my own life from a perspective only I can give. In some instances, *The Nixons: A Family Portrait* sets the record straight, correcting the errors that have been written and disseminated. Readers seeking tell-all gossip, however, will be disappointed. No, Dick did not share with me any revelations on Watergate. Instead, we discussed matters that seemed to us far more important.

In this book, I have attempted to answer the many questions that pique people’s curiosity. I share a positive view of the Nixons, examining our heritage and the influence it had on all of us. I also recount the experiences I had with Dick during my youth and adulthood. Through these anecdotes—snapshots, so to speak—my goal is to give readers a personal portrait of Dick and our family. I hope people will consider Dick’s character, accomplishments, and legacy in a new light. Finally, I hope to rekindle interest in what Dick taught this nation. The wisdom and knowledge he left us certainly bear upon the challenges we face today.

