

Oral History Interview
with
MR. AND MRS. GEORGE T. HOLT

Residents of Grandview, Missouri and former tenants of a house located on the Truman family farm property.

Grandview, Missouri
February 2, 1981 by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
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JOHNSON: I might mention for the record that I have both Mr. Holt and Mrs. Holt with me. I'll start by asking Mr. Holt about his background. Would you tell me when and where you were born and your parents' names?

HOLT: I was born in Barry County, Missouri, near the little town of Golden. The old birthplace is now a part of Table Rock Lake. My parents were Jiles Burlingame Holt and my mother was Neatie Jane Hartley. Neatie Jane's grandfather, Jesse Wilson, Hartley, came to Webster County, Missouri in 1843, from Tennessee. He had moved from North Carolina to Williamson County, Tennessee, in 1839.

I was born on June 21, 1914. I had a twin sister, Georgia May Holt. She died on November 17, 1914, and was buried at Timber Ridge Cemetery in Webster County, between Eckland and Marshfield. My father sold his

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land in Barry County, and we moved to a place in Webster County, about a mile from the Timber Ridge Baptist Church. I lived there until my wife, Ruby, and I were married. We were married on January 17, 1935 in Springfield, Missouri. We were married by my brother, Reverend Wilbern E. Holt, a Baptist minister.

Shortly after that, in 1936, we moved to the State of California and then came back to the Grandview area in October 1942 from California and have lived in this area since.

JOHNSON: In 1942. Where did you set up your home?

HOLT: Well, we at first lived in Kansas City, and I was employed at the Pratt-Whitney Engine Plant which was on Bannister Road where Bendix Corporation now has their operation. Due to gasoline rationing and tires being rationed, I started looking for a place where I would be close to work. So we rented a house from Vivian Truman which stood where the Grandview Truman Corners shopping center is now. We lived there until late 1945 when we moved to where we now live at the south edge of Grandview.

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JOHNSON: So the first time you moved to this area was 1942?

MRS. HOLT: Yes, we came from Fresno, California.

JOHNSON: To get a little background on you, Mrs. Holt, when and where were you born and what were your parents' names?

MRS. HOLT: Well.. I was born the 11th of November, 1914, at 925 N. Kansas Avenue in Springfield, Missouri, Greene County. My father was William McCord Justice and my mother was Alice May Emmart Justice.

JOHNSON: Then I think you mentioned that you were married in 1935.

MRS. HOLT: The 17th of January, in Springfield, Missouri.

JOHNSON: And moved out to California in...

MRS. HOLT: In '36.

JOHNSON: And you were out there then until '42 when you moved back here.

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MRS. HOLT: Yes, October '42.

JOHNSON: By the way, the Oakies and the Arkies, I guess they were called, were migrating in large numbers to California in the mid-thirties. Is that what you saw along the road?

HOLT: I would say that was at the height of the Oakie migration to the State of California.

JOHNSON: These were sharecroppers that had lost out on the land, victims of drought and so on?

HOLT: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was that your reason for going out there?

HOLT: Well our reason for going out there was I didn't have any employment in the State of Missouri and I did have some relatives out there. Through correspondence with them we had found out that things were a little better there.

MRS. HOLT: He went out in a car with his brother, Wilbern Holt, who was a Baptist minister, and a brother Jesse Bentley Holt. They went in a car and later in March

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I went by train with our young daughter, Georgia Lee Holt, five months old.

JOHNSON: Did you happen to know about, or hear about or maybe even see, Mr. Truman when he was running for the Senate in 1934? He did get around to various areas of the state.

MRS. HOLT: We weren't here then, in '34. We were in Springfield.

JOHNSON: Yes, but do you recall the Truman campaign in that part of the state at all in those days?

MRS. HOLT: I don't remember.

JOHNSON: Did that name ring a bell with anybody in your part of the country, so to speak, back in the mid-thirties or early thirties?

HOLT: I wouldn't want to say.

JOHNSON: But you don't recall his Senatorial campaign?

HOLT: I know he worked with some people who were active politicians, yes.

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MRS. HOLT: His [George T. Holt's] father was a Democrat, but they lived in Webster County at that time, and I lived in Greene County.

JOHNSON: I haven't checked that itinerary recently, but my guess is that Harry Truman did campaign in Springfield, around Springfield, in 1934 and again in 1940.

MRS. HOLT: They had what they called the Jackson Day in Springfield for the Democrats.

HOLT: When dad [J.B. "Burley" Holt] was physically able he always attended that dinner in Springfield.

JOHNSON: The Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner?

HOLT: Yes.

JOHNSON: So, when was the first time you heard about or knew about Harry Truman?

HOLT: Well, the first time Harry Truman drew my attention was when he was a Senator and he was appointed to investigate World War II expenditures and corruption. That is when Harry Truman first attracted

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my attention and from then on I began to follow his activities.

JOHNSON: Were you in California then when you first heard about Harry Truman and his committee?

HOLT: Yes, I believe we were.

MRS. HOLT: I don't remember that.

JOHNSON: That committee had started in '41 before you moved back. So you had gotten acquainted with him by long distance, so to speak, while you were out on the West Coast.

HOLT: Maybe I paid a little more attention than some people would since my middle name is Truman.

JOHNSON: Is that right? George Truman Holt?

HOLT: Yes sir.

JOHNSON: Well, how is it that you came to rent the tenant house there on the Truman farm? How did that come about?

HOLT: Well, we were trying to find a place close to the

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Pratt-Whitney Engine Plant, and we had been in Peculiar, Missouri to look about a house down there. As I remember, on the way back to Kansas City we passed the house of Vivian Truman's

on 71 Highway and a Mrs. Fogle, who we were then renting from, was with us and she said, "Well, look, Truman's little house looks like it's vacant." She said, "Well, they live back up on Blue Ridge, back of the house." So we went up, contacted them, and later rented the house from them.

MRS. HOLT: Not that day. There had been another family in there and the wife got sick and she went back to St. Louis and they just picked up and left. The Trumans didn't even know they were gone, and they said, "Well, we'll wait awhile and if they don't come back, then you can rent it."

JOHNSON: Do you know how long that house had been there?

HOLT: I have no idea.

MRS. HOLT: It was formerly a tenant house for them, the caretaker's.

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JOHNSON: But you don't know when it was built?

MRS. HOLT: No. It's still sitting over there on Grandview Road.

JOHNSON: It was moved?

HOLT: It was moved, and it sits between the old Grandview Cemetery and the Kansas City Southern Railroad underpass, on the east side of Grandview Road.

JOHNSON: When was it moved?

HOLT: When they found they were going to develop the Truman Corners shopping center; that was when it was moved.

JOHNSON: Did the Trumans have any of their furnishings in that house?

HOLT: No sir, they did not.

JOHNSON: Were there any tools there that came from the Truman farm that you recall?

MRS. HOLT: The only thing I remember was an old iron

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stove in the shed out there, but I don't know where it is.

JOHNSON: You had a shed there next to the house?

MRS. HOLT: Yes.

JOHNSON: I suppose it was demolished?

MRS. HOLT: Well, I'm sure it was.

JOHNSON: You say an old iron stove? Which may have been used once you think in the Truman farm house?

MRS. HOLT: Well, it probably was the Truman's.

HOLT: I suppose it had been used in the tenant house we rented.

MRS. HOLT: Now these are pictures that were taken on the Truman farm. Right in back of our house was a locust tree and there was a water pump right there. This is where their feedlot for their cattle formerly was, and we made our garden there. Here's the old shed.

JOHNSON: Is that a cornfield out there?

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MRS. HOLT: Yes, we planted corn, and raised other vegetables.

HOLT: Just our garden.

JOHNSON: Talking about crops, let's take the Truman farm in two phases. Do you have any idea about the crops that were grown there when Harry Truman farmed it? This goes back even before World War I.

MRS. HOLT: He grew corn I'm pretty sure, because in one of these articles I have here, his mother was telling how her son plowed the straightest furrow.

JOHNSON: I know corn was one of the crops, yes.

When you arrived in 1942, what kind of crops were they growing out there at that time? What seemed to be the dominant crops, do you recall?

MRS. HOLT: I don't remember.

HOLT: Hay, more than anything.

MRS. HOLT: They had cattle.

JOHNSON: A lot of the land was given over to pasture and

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to hay?

HOLT: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was this dairy cattle?

MRS. HOLT: Yes, dairy.

HOLT: Dairy cattle, I believe. I know we did buy milk from them.

MRS. HOLT: From the boys, sons of Vivian and Mrs. Ella Truman, Gilbert and Harry.

HOLT: It wasn't really on a large scale, more of just a family operation for family use.

JOHNSON: In 1940 Harry Truman's mother, Martha, and his sitter, Mary Jane, moved into town. Who was living in that farm house, do you recall, when you came in 1942?

MRS. HOLT: There was somebody by the name of Logston lived there, and I don't know what their first names were.

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JOHNSON: Did they help farm the land?

MRS. HOLT: I don't recall anybody helping them. Now I can't remember their first name, but I know they had children who were similar to the ages of our daughters. Later, I knew of a Nadine McWilliams who used to iron for Mrs. Vivian Truman. The McWilliams lived on Grandview Road.

JOHNSON: I know a Maxine Williams who lives there now. In fact, she's the one that mentioned you coming out to see her, and that's how I got your name. Her husband died about two months ago. Do you have any children?

HOLT: We had two children when we moved there, and our oldest son was born while we lived there.

JOHNSON: I see.

MRS. HOLT: This is our son; he was born September 29, 1943, when we lived there.

JOHNSON: I see, and what are the names of your children?

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MRS. HOLT: Georgia Lee Holt is the eldest; she was born October 7, 1935; and then Alice Jane was born August 6, 1937 in Fresno, California. Georgia was born in Springfield. And Ted, Theodore Lewis Holt, was born the 29th of September 1943. Second son Jack William Holt was born 19 August, 1949, and a son Robert Edward Holt was born 21 May, 1953, both born in Kansas City, Missouri.

JOHNSON: You commuted to the Pratt-Whitney factory?

HOLT: It was the Pratt-Whitney Engine Plant, yes.

JOHNSON: And so you didn't farm any of the land?

HOLT: No sir.

JOHNSON: How much acreage did you have there? You had a garden...

MRS. HOLT: Maybe an acre.

HOLT: Possibly an acre, a garden and a lawn.

JOHNSON: You mentioned earlier to me, that there was some equipment, or implements, and I want to be

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sure to get this on the record.

HOLT: I remember seeing some old farm implements in the field that belonged to the Trumans. They were west of the Kansas City Southern Railroad tracks and to the north of Greaves Road. Now the field sits between Greaves Road and Martha Truman Road, probably known to a lot of people as Kernodles Road.

JOHNSON: Who does that land belong to, do you know?

HOLT: I have no idea who that belongs to now.

MRS. HOLT: I don't know, but there's a Cartwright Trucking Company south of Kernodles Road there.

HOLT: That building is on part of the land.

JOHNSON: This was what kind of equipment, do you recall? What kind of implements?

HOLT: I don't remember; it seemed like to me it was some old turning plows or something. It was some old rusty farm implements.

JOHNSON: A gang plow?

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HOLT: It seemed like there was.

JOHNSON: A riding plow, horse-drawn?

HOLT: Yes. I would say it was horse-drawn as I remember.

JOHNSON: Well now, you know, Mr. Truman does mention that he had an Emerson gang plow that he used. We know about the threshing machine, L. C. Hall's threshing machine, but we don't know the makes of other equipment that he used on the farm. If we could tie down the makes, then I suppose we could try to get similar kinds of equipment.

Then was the last time you saw this equipment out there in the field?

HOLT: It was when I was over there cutting hedge posts to fence this five acres that we purchased here. We bought this acreage in November 1945.

MRS. HOLT: November 1945.

HOLT: In 1945 we bought this, so I would say it was about '45 or '46 that I was over there cutting hedge in Vivian Truman's field, and saw these

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implements.

JOHNSON: They were just sitting out in the open?

HOLT: Yes. Yes, I remember they sat off to the north and just a little east, and in a little valley there from the little house that Vivian's once lived in, that was still standing at that time.

JOHNSON: You mean this was the house that he lived in before he built the house next to the Blue Ridge Extension there?

HOLT: I understand it was, yes.

JOHNSON: And that house was torn down you say?

HOLT: I don't know, but in driving down Greaves Road I just haven't noticed it down in the field.

JOHNSON: Where is this in relation to the farm house itself, this place we're talking about?

HOLT: One-fourth to one-half mile, mostly west and somewhat north.

JOHNSON: It could be seen from the road?

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HOLT: Yes, it could be seen from Greaves Road, if it was still there. This was Vivian's home before he built that house on Blue Ridge.

JOHNSON: And that's where these implements were?

HOLT: Yes, out in this field there not too far from the house.

JOHNSON: Do you recall anything like that cultivator with Mr. Truman riding it?

HOLT: No, I really don't. I do recall having seen this picture before.

JOHNSON: Where did you first see it?

HOLT: I presume it might have been in the *Kansas City Star*, I don't. know.

MRS. HOLT: In Vivian's home maybe.

JOHNSON: Did you see pictures in Vivian's home, or any of his albums?

HOLT: I never did look at any albums in the home. I don't

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recall whether I saw any pictures or not, I do remember seeing a picture of Vivian's and Harry's mother hanging on the wall in the Vivian Truman home.

MRS. HOLT: Mary Jane, the sister, lived on 13th Street. I don't know when she moved there, but I used to be an Avon lady and she was my customer. I saw pictures of her brothers, and her mother, there. I will say one thing about Mary Jane; she always was a charming person, even though she was in pain, suffered with her back, and things. She always was cheerful.

JOHNSON: You met Vivian Truman when you rented the house over there. Did you ever talk to Vivian Truman about his brother, the President? Did that come up in any of your conversations?

HOLT: Yes, it did, but I don't recall the conversation, or how it went.

JOHNSON: When was the first time you saw Harry Truman?

HOLT: I believe that was the time that Vivian introduced

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me to Harry, and to Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn. I met all of them up in the pasture back of Vivian's barn.

JOHNSON: Yes, let's look into that. Do you have any idea when this was?

HOLT: Well, it was just shortly before the talk started, and the article was in the paper, about him being a possible running mate with Franklin D. Roosevelt as Vice President.

JOHNSON: This would have been perhaps 1944? That was the year of the convention?

HOLT: I would say it was 1943 or '44.

JOHNSON: Do you remember what season, what time of the year it was?

HOLT: I would say it was in the spring. It was a lovely morning.

MRS. HOLT: I can tell something that was kind of comical. I don't know what spring it was, but it was that

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spring when they were talking about President Roosevelt wanting to make him Vice President. It had snowed some, the 5th of May and we were making a garden, and the garden was really wet. So George had bought onion plants and they had been wrapped in newspaper. And so I was planting these onions and I was looking at that paper (we didn't take a paper), and I was looking at that newspaper and there was a picture of Mr. Truman and they were saying there was a possibility that he might be chosen as Vice President. I yelled at my husband and I said, "Wouldn't that be something, for Missouri to get a Vice President, and the possibility later he might become President?"

And he just scoffed at me, "Oh, no, that won't happen." The paper was the Kansas City paper, the Kansas City *Star* or *Times*.

JOHNSON: Well, actually he wasn't being considered seriously for Vice President until that late spring or early summer of '44, That was about the same time that Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson were out there?

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HOLT: It was very close.

MRS. HOLT: It probably was later, because it was cold and snowing and rainy, at that time, and that was the 5th of May.

HOLT: I think it was probably the same spring.

MRS. HOLT: So that paper was probably printed before the 5th of May, because that's the day I was planting onions.

JOHNSON: I see. You say Senator Rayburn and Johnson came out here to visit Harry Truman, and they came to the farm. Do you recall what the reason was for the visit, just social?

HOLT: No, I really don't. I know they were discussing the cattle and the horses. Vivian had a couple of pretty nice saddle horses there in the pasture. It used to amaze me when Vivian's son, Fred Truman, would come home from the military. I have been told he was in the cavalry in the military, and I believe he was at West Point.

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MRS. HOLT: He was at West Point.

HOLT: What he would do, he would get on that horse and ride all over the pasture, and he would go through the ritual that the cavalryman did at West Point, while he was riding that horse in the pasture. We would stand and listen to that.

MRS. HOLT: That was on the east side of 71 where they've built other things there now.

HOLT: Most of it is still vacant.

JOHNSON: Was that open pasture there?

HOLT: Yes, where the brush is now.

MRS. HOLT: Across from the old 71 Highway, east of it.

HOLT: He would get over in the field and ride that saddle horse, and he would go through this ritual, that I presume he did at West Point.

JOHNSON: Where did you see Rayburn and Johnson and Mr. Truman? Were they just moving around various parts of the farm there?

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HOLT: Well, I saw them up in the pasture between the house we rented and Vivian's house. They were near Vivian's house.

JOHNSON: I see.

MRS. HOLT: I imagine that Mr. Truman had come out to visit his mother and they just came with him, and then visited the brother and the sister, too, while they were in Grandview.

HOLT: You know, when I think back on this, those three outstanding politicians being together at Vivian's, I've always felt like this is when the movement for Harry Truman as a running mate for Franklin Roosevelt as Vice President was starting. I've often felt like, when I think about this since, that this might have been part of the beginning of that.

JOHNSON: And Vivian you think was ready to support, or be involved at all, in supporting or promoting his brother as a candidate?

HOLT: I would sure think he would be.

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JOHNSON: The times that you met Vivian did he show a good deal of interest in his brother's political career?

HOLT: Very much so. I don't remember the statements that he may have made to me, but he made various statements from time to time that helped me see things were moving in the right direction for his brother Harry.

JOHNSON: Was Vivian head of the FHA at that time here in this area?

MRS. HOLT: I think so.

HOLT: He told me what his job was, and I know it was downtown, and there was something about housing. But I never did know just what it was.

JOHNSON: Did you ever see Harry Truman at other times here at the farm?

HOLT: Just the one time; that was the only time I saw him there. I was in Grandview numerous times when he became Vice President and President, and I saw

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him visiting with Mary Jane and his mother.

JOHNSON: I believe you said Vivian was with them on that visit to the farm.

HOLT: Vivian was there too. Then I walked up, and Vivian introduced me to the three.

JOHNSON: Do you recall anything about the conversation?

HOLT: Oh, just admiring the saddle horses and the cattle in the pasture there.

JOHNSON: They were dairying at this point?

HOLT: Yes.

MRS. HOLT: The boys were, Vivian's sons.

JOHNSON: Vivian's sons, yes. This morning I was told that Mary Jane had said that they did not keep dairy cattle out there because they didn't like to milk cows.

MRS. HOLT: Well, they were there when we were there.

HOLT: Well, this was Gilbert's project. I don't think

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Vivian or any of the rest of them was too much involved. I think this was Gilbert's income.

JOHNSON: Did you buy milk from him?

HOLT: Yes, we did.

MRS. HOLT: It wasn't a large operation.

JOHNSON: It was still a 600 acre farm wasn't it when you moved here in 1942?

HOLT: I don't recall; I think it was something like that.

MRS. HOLT: They owned the land where Woolco is.

JOHNSON: And Fred Truman was one of those farming it, or did he do any farming at all?

MRS. HOLT: No, no.

JOHNSON: Okay, was it Gilbert?

MRS. HOLT: And Harry.

HOLT: Harry was in Europe in the service.

JOHNSON: So Gilbert was on the farm.

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HOLT: Gilbert was the only boy at home that was doing the farming. What farming he was doing, he was doing while he was going to high school at Ruskin.

JOHNSON: I was wondering, if you've got a dairy herd you need labor.

MRS. HOLT: It wasn't that big.

HOLT: It wasn't really that large. Just like when I grew up, eight cows was the maximum we ever had to milk.

MRS. HOLT: I do remember when these cattle were out in this field that one morning we got up early and there were coyotes in that region because there were ditches and brush and stuff east of old 71 Highway. Anyhow, these coyotes got mingled right in among the cattle.

JOHNSON: The coyotes did?

MRS. HOLT: Yes, And Mr. Truman, Vivian, I don't know what kind of gun he had, but at quite a distance he shot one of those coyotes and he killed it. We

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thought that was kind of marvelous, He killed the coyote right among the cattle.

JOHNSON: And that's right out here next to Highway 71 now?

MRS. HOLT: That's where Truman Corners is.

HOLT: I would say that Vivian killed that coyote pretty close to where the Milgram store sets now.

MRS. HOLT: That or Wards, about in there.

JOHNSON: You mentioned the implements that you saw out in this field. Did they have a shed, an implement shed, up there on the farm anywhere? Or did they keep their implements in the barn?

HOLT: I believe they must have kept them in the barn.

MRS. HOLT: They had two barns out there; where the big house was, and then where Vivian's lived there was a barn. The one where the old farm house is, of course, burned.

JOHNSON: Were you around when the barn burned?

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HOLT: I lived here, 13819 Norby Road, Grandview, Missouri.

MRS. HOLT: We lived at the present address.

JOHNSON: Do you know what they did there? Did they just bulldoze over that site?

MRS. HOLT: Probably.

HOLT: I don't know.

JOHNSON: In other words, I'm wondering if there might be some remnants underground there, you know, hard objects, metal objects that might have survived the fire?

HOLT: The Williams family who now live in the big house, which the Federal Government has recently purchased for a historical site, they moved into the little house down on the highway after we came over here.

JOHNSON: Oh, I see.

HOLT: And then when they moved the house over onto Blue Ridge; then they moved into the big house where

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they now live.

MRS. HOLT: I know that where we lived down at this little house on old 71 Highway, that ground, or soil, was black gumbo, and you couldn't work it when it was wet, or it would get just like a brick, So another family moved in right after we left there -- I don't know what their names were -- but one day we went over there, and she was taking those big clumps of gumbo and

throwing them in the driveway, and we just had a big laugh about that because we knew it was going to get full of mud when it rained -- sticky mud.

JOHNSON: Do you know anything about that garage next to the old farm house? There is some old wallpaper on it and I've been told that that was the old Post Office here in Grandview.

MRS. HOLT: Oh, really. I never heard that.

JOHNSON: Did you get up to the old farm house at all when you were living out there?

MRS. HOLT: The big house?

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JOHNSON: Yes, the big house.

MRS. HOLT: Now our children might have, because like I said, the people by the name of Logston who lived there had a daughter, I think she was a little older than our daughters, and I think they had some sons.

JOHNSON: Were they using tractors when you moved to the tenant farm?

HOLT: I don't recall a tractor that Vivian Truman had.

JOHNSON: So what were they using then for power?

HOLT: I couldn't really say.

JOHNSON: Did they have any mules out there?

MRS. HOLT: I don't think they had any mules.

JOHNSON: Draft horses?

HOLT: I believe they had some draft horses, but I don't recall a tractor. They may have had one.

JOHNSON: Do you remember seeing them plant corn or cultivate?

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HOLT: No, I don't,

MRS. HOLT: Who made that corn crop south of us on the Truman land? We picked up corn.

HOLT: That wasn't on the Truman land; that was over where the Grandview Bank is, It belonged to Mr. Nichols, the old barber in Grandview, That sat just south of the Truman land.

JOHNSON: Have you heard of the plow that's in the Agricultural Hall of Fame in Bonner Springs, the hand plow that belonged to the Trumans?

HOLT: Only what you mentioned to me on the telephone in our previous conversation a few weeks ago.

JOHNSON: We're trying to do what we can to track down these implements, and it would be great if we could find out what happened to this old cultivator that's in this picture.

Did you see Harry Truman in town when he came back to visit?

HOLT: When he'd come to visit his sister and his mother.

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MRS. HOLT: I saw him, and I've written this down. One time he came back to visit his mother, I think she may have been ill, and it was wintertime because there was snow on the ground. I think we probably lived here then; I'm not sure. But anyhow, I asked my husband to drive us up there. I wanted my little son Ted to say he saw President Truman. I started to go from the car to the walk and there was sort of a ditch there, and I fell down in the snow and I thought that was so funny. I was trying to see President Truman -- have our son see him -- and I fell in the snow.

JOHNSON: Did he see you?

MRS. HOLT: I don't think so; there were a lot of people around there.

JOHNSON: Did you get a chance to talk to him at all?

MRS. HOLT: No, I never did.

JOHNSON: Mr. Holt, was that time on the farm the only time you got to talk to President Truman? That was before he was President of course.

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HOLT: Yes. Well., after he served his term as President I did talk to him for just a minute up at the ball park at a baseball game one night. He and Bess were there and I just spoke to him, saying, "How are you?"

JOHNSON: So they were at a ball game here, in Grandview?

HOLT: Yes, a town ball game. That was after he had been President, and when he had moved back to Independence. They came to a baseball game one night. As I remember, Mary Jane was with him and Bess.

JOHNSON: Did you see Bess Truman or Margaret out here in Grandview at all?

HOLT: One time I saw Margaret.

MRS. HOLT: She was driving in a convertible car.

HOLT: She was driving in her car; I don't recall whether it was convertible. It was a car that was her own.

MRS. HOLT: We'd see them go up and down old 71 Highway.

HOLT: Up on Main Street in Grandview.

JOHNSON: Do you remember when his mother was very sick here in 1947, and he was out here to see her?

MRS. HOLT: That's probably when I saw Margaret.

JOHNSON: Did you ever visit with Mary Jane and Martha Truman when they lived in that house by the tracks?

MRS. HOLT: No.

HOLT: No, we didn't. It wasn't until after they sold that house and she moved over on 13th Street, after her mother passed away.

MRS. HOLT: And like I said, I was her Avon lady and I'd just visit with her when I would call on her.

HOLT: We did see her at church frequently at the First Baptist on Main, in Grandview, Missouri.

MRS. HOLT: Yes.

JOHNSON: I understand that a lot of the furniture from the old farm house was brought into town when they moved in. Do you have any idea where there might be

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any furnishings at all from that old farm house?

MRS. HOLT: I wouldn't know.

HOLT: I don't know what happened to the furnishings that Mary Jane had when she passed away. I don't know whether she had any of the old collectible items or not. Do you, Ruby? You've been in the house; I never was.

MRS. HOLT: She had a fireplace in the front room I remember, and these pictures. I always admired the pictures on the wall. They were family pictures; Mother Truman, Vivian, President Harry, and Mary Jane Truman.

HOLT: Have you talked to the people that lived just across the street from Mary Jane on 13th, the people that she gave her car to, because they had looked after her and helped her out?

MRS. HOLT: The Roberts?

JOHNSON: Had she given them that Chrysler coupe?

MRS. HOLT: No, it wasn't a coupe.

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HOLT: Her Oldsmobile, that she had when she got to where she couldn't drive. There were people right across the street on 13th Street, the Roberts, that still live there.

MRS. HOLT: She gave it to the son of the Roberts.

HOLT: She gave it to the son because he would bring her paper and take care of her lawn, etc.

JOHNSON: You've seen the Chrysler that we have? It's in the museum.

HOLT: That's the one Harry drove when he was Senator. That's the one that he used to drive back and forth from Independence to Washington,

JOHNSON: Do you ever remember seeing him drive that car?

HOLT: No, I never remember seeing him drive it.

JOHNSON: Probably that was the car that he was using, or had come out to the farm in.

HOLT: I have no doubt that it was the one that he was driving then.

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JOHNSON: If you get a chance, and you're up in that area there, do you want to take a look and see if there is any evidence of any old farm equipment left there?

HOLT: I thought I'd get over there before you got out here, but I've got so many projects going since I retired that I...

JOHNSON: That's good, keeping busy. But when you do get out there, and if you do see any evidence of any equipment, why, I'll leave my name and phone number for you.

HOLT: I'll call for Niel Johnson over at the Library.

JOHNSON: That's right; you do that.

HOLT: I thought I'd get over and go through those fields because I do that since I've retired. I get around and walk through fields and...*

JOHNSON: Well, it's good exercise. You don't read gravestones for genealogy do you?

*Interviewer's note: In a later search of the area, no trace of a cultivator or other implements could be found.

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MRS. HOLT: I do. He takes me places.

HOLT: I take her places and get bored.

MRS. HOLT: I've got a whole bookshelf of books like this on our family genealogy.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, the Holts.

MRS. HOLT: This is his family -- like the cemetery records, and the marriage records.

JOHNSON: My wife is very much involved in that; in fact she's an officer in the Jackson County Genealogical Society. You mentioned you have an album here, an album of pictures taken on the place where you lived on the Truman farm. Do any of them show the old Truman farm house?

MRS. HOLT: I don't think I have one of the farm house; it's just that little old house.

JOHNSON: Well, if you happen to come across any photographs that show the old farm house, we'd be interested.

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HOLT: Now there's a picture of that little old house.

JOHNSON: Yes. That was moved, and you say it is still standing?

MRS. HOLT: It's over on Grandview Road.

JOHNSON: I have three sheets of paper here, handwritten by Mrs. Holt, say we add this as an appendix to our transcript when we type up this conversation?

MRS. HOLT: Yes, you can. Somebody would have to edit it. That's just some of the things that happened when we were there.

JOHNSON: All right, fine. We'll probably just add that as an appendix to that transcript.*

MRS. HOLT: I ought to sign my name on that.

JOHNSON: Are there any other incidents or stories, not something that you necessarily witnessed, but any stories or anecdotes relating to the Trumans that we haven't mentioned so far? Anything else?

MRS. HOLT: Well, there's this one that I thought was

*See Appendix.

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the most interesting thing that happened to me. [Paraphrasing from the handwritten note]: It was the 12th of April of 1945 when President Roosevelt died. Our daughters made a habit of stopping at the Trumans as they came home from Hickman Mills School, and Mrs. Truman would always have some goodies for them, cookies, or hot bread or something. This was evening when they came home -- it was late afternoon I guess -- why Mrs. Martha Ellen Truman was there, and the girls saw she was upset; she was crying. I was out in back of this little house washing on the board, washing clothes; we had no electricity, no water, and no lights in this house. So they said, "Momma," and they were talking so fast I could hardly understand them, "Momma, Momma, President Roosevelt died and Grandma Truman's crying." She was upset because she knew what responsibility President Truman would have.

JOHNSON: Now this was at Vivian's farm house?

MRS. HOLT: Yes, this was at Vivian's farm house, And they walked down Grandview Road from the Hickman

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Mills School every evening and then would come right down the fence row from their house down to our place.

JOHNSON: I can understand how that would have been a shock.

MRS. HOLT: Yes, and that's these little girls here, see; Georgia Lee Holt, and Alice Jane Holt.

JOHNSON: This was Martha, the mother, crying?

MRS. HOLT: The mother. The mother of President Truman; yes, she was really upset and they were probably all crying I would think.

JOHNSON: She did say something, or they recall her saying something?

MRS. HOLT: They probably asked her why she was crying; I don't know, but she was really worried because he had all that responsibility on his shoulders, you know, during the war. That was such a short time before the war closed.

JOHNSON: I think it was the first time that he saw

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his mother after he was president, and as he was leaving she said, "Now Harry, be good, but be game."

MRS. HOLT: She was a spry little thing all right.

JOHNSON: Does that kind of reflect her personality?

MRS. HOLT: Yes.

HOLT: Very much so.

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear her opinions about any particular thing, or about politics?

MRS. HOLT: The only thing is what I read in these articles, I saved the articles and became a fan.

JOHNSON: Right. Well, perhaps we can xerox some of these. Please let me look them over and if I think that perhaps we don't have them, then we'll xerox them.

If there's nothing else, I guess we will conclude this interview. If something should come to mind that would be worth putting down, why we can add it to the transcript after you get it.

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We appreciate the time you've given.

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APPENDIX

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SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF MRS. GEORGE T. HOLT

February 2, 1982

In August 1943, we moved to the Vivian and Ella (Campbell) Truman farm. The little house, I understand, was their tenant house. It was located on old 71 Highway east of the Vivian Truman farm home, and where Truman Corners Shopping Center is now located. The little house was moved to Grandview Road just south of the Southern Pacific Railroad on the east side of the road.

The little house we lived in had no water, lights, or bathroom and kitchen facilities. There was a water pump out back of the house about 100 feet west, under a locust tree and several hundred yards east of the Vivian Truman home.

We had a good garden by this small home of ours. It had originally been a feeding lot for the Trumans' animals.

One late spring -- it had snowed in May -- we purchased some onion plants, and they had been wrapped in a Kansas City *Star* or *Times* newspaper. In this newspaper I noticed an article about Sen. Harry S. Truman being considered for a running mate for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. As I was planting these onions practically to the black gumbo mud, I said to my husband, George T. Holt, "Say, wouldn't

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that be something if Missouri would get a Vice President and possibly some day a President?" And my husband just laughed and said, "That probably never will happen."

There were some incidents that were interesting to us while we lived on the Truman farm. One day we had an electrical storm and a tree that was south of our house was struck by lightning. The tree jumped up in the air somewhat, and started smoking and fell on the ground by a gully. The tree was probably 10"-12" in diameter.

In another incident that happened in this same field south of our house, some cattle were grazing early one morning and among them were several coyotes. Mr. Vivian Truman was quite a distance away but he shot one of those coyotes dead.

The most interesting and historical thing that happened to me while we were living there was on 12 April, 1945. We had two daughters, ten year old Georgia Lee Holt, and seven year old Alice Jane Holt. They attended the Hickman Mills Grade School on Grandview Road, located right at 115th Street. As they walked home each evening they would come south on Grandview Road, cross a field on Blue Ridge Road and go into the Trumans' yard. Sometimes they would stop in at Mr. and

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Mrs. Vivian Truman's home; Mrs. Vivian Truman would give them goodies of some kind, such as cookies, a slice of warm homemade bread, or something else. Anyway, this particular afternoon, Grandma Truman was there, and the family had received the news about the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Grandma Truman, Mrs. Martha Ellen Truman, was crying because of the great responsibility thrown on her son, Harry S. Truman, because of the involvement of the U.S.A. in World War II with Germany and Japan. I was out in the back yard behind the house washing diapers -- on the board -- for our son, Theodore Lewis Holt, born 29 September 1945. Our daughters, Georgia Lee and Alice Jane, came running just as hard as they could and they said, "Mama, Mama, President Roosevelt died and Grandma Truman is crying."

I remember one time when President Harry S. Truman came home to visit his mother, Mrs. Martha Ellen Truman, in Grandview. There was quite a bit of snow on the ground, and I asked my husband to drive us up there so our little son, Theodore Lewis Holt, could say he had seen a president of the United States. As I started to walk from our car up in front of Mrs. Martha Ellen and her daughter Mary Jane

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Truman's home, I stepped into a ditch and the snow was so deep I fell with our son. It struck me funny!

Mrs. George T. Holt
(Nee: Ruby Ruth Justice)

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