

Oral History Interview
with
HARRY EASLEY

Friend of Harry S. Truman since 1932; associate in his political campaigns in Missouri, particularly in Mr. Truman's campaign for senator in 1940; political adviser to Mr. Truman in regard to the Southwest Missouri area; and former treasurer of the Central District Democratic Committee.

Webb City, Missouri
August 24, 1967

by J. R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
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NOTICE

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FUCHS: Mr. Easley, would you relate a little of your background to start this interview?

EASLEY: My folks came to southwestern Missouri about three generations ago, and I was born and raised in Webb City. I attended the public schools here, after which I obtained the bulk of my education at the hands of private tutors and finally went to work for the Atlas Powder Company, at a plant situated not far from Webb City, as a chemist. I was situated at this plant

several years and subsequently transferred to one of the company plants in southwestern Pennsylvania where I was supervisor in charge of chemical

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operations. I moved from this particular plant to Tamaqua, Pennsylvania, where I became the superintendent of the heavy chemical division of the plant and remained in this capacity, spending my time between Wilmington, Delaware, and Reynoldsville, Pennsylvania, until 1931, at which time I resigned and returned to Webb City. This came about through the murder of my brother-in-law, and there were no other male members of either family to carry on the family business. I engaged in business then with my father-in-law, Mr. A. D. Hatten, and ultimately took over the management of the Webb City Bank, with which my family had been associated for many years. Our family owned controlling interest in the Independence Ice and Creamery Company Plant at Independence, Missouri, and it was managed by my brother-in-law, Alvin Hatten. I was on the board and had occasion to visit Independence frequently. During these visits I met many townspeople, and among them

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was Judge Truman, who used to come to the American Legion affairs, and I learned to know him quite well.

FUCHS: What year would you have met him, do you know?

EASLEY: This occurred in about 1932, at which time Mr. Truman was presiding judge of the county court of Jackson County. My acquaintance with him continued and I got to know many other people around Independence, including Roger Sermon who was mayor, and a political luminary, as it were. Finally, there was talk of Mr. Truman running for the United States Senate on the Democratic ticket.

FUCHS: What was your first impression of Mr. Truman?

EASLEY: I found that he was a very congenial person and had the ability of meeting people well, and he possessed a great deal of energy, and it

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seemed to me that he was bent on achieving something worthwhile in life, I was very favorably impressed with Mr. Truman; so when it was finally determined after Mr. Aylward decided that he would not run for the Senate, or Mr. Shannon, on account of his health, also would not run, it then appeared that Mr. Truman was destined to make this race. I was contacted and it was requested that I meet with Judge Truman and attempt to show him around over the territory down in southwest Missouri and afford him an opportunity to meet a number of Democrats in the territory, inasmuch as he was not familiar with the area and was entirely without any acquaintances,

FUCHS: What were the principal counties that you would have taken in in such a tour?

EASLEY: Well, in this we started in the tier of counties extending from Nevada to the Arkansas

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line, a double tier of counties there consisting of about thirteen counties, Finally we moved on over into Greene County and established some excellent connections over there with Mr. Howard Hannah, particularly; and Lester Cox, who was a prominent manufacturer in Springfield, also was interested in Mr. Truman's candidacy, which helped us considerably, especially from a financial point of view.

I might add that the contacts with Lester Cox were made through Mr. Dan Nee, who was at that particular time serving as collector of internal revenue for western Missouri and located in Kansas City. I had known Lester Cox for many years. As the campaign progressed, it began to appear that Mr. Truman was gaining in our part of the country, which we figured consisted of about thirty counties. These counties were ordinarily Republican, but of course this happened to be a Democratic primary, and that's what we were

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primarily concerned with. John Cochran, out of St. Louis, appeared to be the principal person who was offering the most opposition, but Mr. Truman steadily gained on Cochran, who was Representative from St. Louis, Missouri. Tuck Milligan was the other opposition, and we ran into some trouble. He was essentially a Bennett Clark man, and the old Bennett Clark group were pretty well fighting Mr. Truman at this particular stage of the game. They fought him pretty bitterly, as it were. However, Truman consistently gained ground and finally won the election hands down, I think by about 40,000 votes, if I remember rightly.

After he was elected I had the opportunity to see him sworn into the Senate. He was somewhat handicapped by Clark's crowd. Because of seniority, Bennett was the man in the saddle. They were very aggressive, Mr. Truman had a substantial amount of difficulty obtaining

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recognition on patronage. The situation continued until the WPA was set up in about 1934. At that time on account of the kind of campaign he had conducted, he had made himself widely known among all Democratic politicians across the state. As a result of this acquaintanceship and the influence that he could bring to bear, he was in a position to pretty well set up the WPA organization in Missouri, and most of the people in the key positions were Truman people when it came to the showdown. There was quite a lot of friction for quite some time with the Clark crowd, to the extent that there were even fistcuffs engaged in by the proponents of these two fellows from time to time. Along in about 1935 when the organization of the WPA was being set up, I was being considered for director of the southwest Missouri area. However, Matthew Murray, who had been named the state administrator, called me to Jefferson City and said that on account

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of certain qualifications I possessed, Mr. Hopkins had recommended that they consider me for personnel director in the Jefferson City office. Well, I was reluctant to leave home. They told me that it would only take about ninety days to set the organization up and that I would be free to do what I wanted to after that. As things turned out I was in the organization for more than three

years before I got out of it. It developed into a tremendous program, which at one time had 142,000 people on the payroll in the State of Missouri alone. So that is sort of the manner in which I became acquainted with Mr. Truman, and as time passed, on account of the very nature of my work, I of course corresponded with him constantly on matters of patronage, and on the development of the program as it affected our state. During the interval I think the relationship between Senator Clark and Senator Truman became more warm, the strained relationship at

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least seemed to disappear as time passed. But definitely Mr. Truman was the person who had to be reckoned with insofar as matters political were concerned, so far as they affected the Works Projects Administration. I continued my work with this group and ultimately administered the program. In 1937, early in the year, I finally resigned my position, primarily because of the press of personal business.

FUCHS: What was your title?

EASLEY: I, at the time, was deputy administrator. They had no administrator. Murray had been holding down two jobs. He was the director of public works in Kansas City. He received pay for that. He was also Works Projects administrator and he left the responsibility of running the organization on me, and I would frequently go for weeks at a time when I would never even see him. This was not a very happy

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situation and they changed my title, consequently, from that of assistant administrator to deputy administrator; and there was still a sufficient amount of interference, particularly from Kansas City from Mr. Murray and City Manager McElroy, as far as our projects were concerned. It gave me a substantial amount of trouble. I finally broke with them because they were expecting me to sign projects for millions of dollars sight unseen that I had no knowledge of, and this I refused to do. It was essentially and primarily for this reason that I decided that on account of the fact that my business was suffering and there was nobody to run it, I thought it would be a good time to get out, which I did.

FUCHS: Were you living in Jefferson City during this period?

EASLEY: I lived at the Missouri Hotel. I had an apartment there, and then I would come home

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frequently, most every weekend and look after my affairs down here.

FUCHS: To go back a minute, did you know about a movement in 1931 to run Mr. Truman for governor? I understand you met him in approximately 1932, but I was just wondering?

EASLEY: No, the only thing -- I never heard that -- I know that Mr. Truman told me himself that he wanted to be collector of Jackson County at one time, but he could never get the proper endorsement. He was once defeated, I think the only time he was ever defeated for public office, and in that interval, he was made director of the Missouri State Employment Service and it was

operated at Jefferson City. He would go back and forth, and I know that he held that job for a while until he went back onto the court. But I never knew of him to have been mentioned for statewide office.

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FUCHS: There are two stories about his aspiration to be county collector: one referring to 1926, when he subsequently ran for the presiding judgeship, and the other story places it in 1934 when it turned out that he ran for the Senate. Do you know when he had this aspiration, when he hoped to be county collector?

EASLEY: I always understood that it was prior to the time that he ultimately ran for county judge. That's my understanding.

FUCHS: One young historian has written in his doctoral dissertation that Cochran simply entered as a stalking horse for Truman in 1934. Do you have a comment on that?

EASLEY: No, I knew Mr. Cochran. He was a dedicated man. He had a very strong following in St. Louis and he had made an outstanding Congressman. He was crippled. He only had one leg and he had a handicap on that account. I think Mr. Cochran

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was a fine gentleman, he ran a fine campaign, and I don't believe he'd be a party to that, and I am sure that he was in that campaign to win. That's my feeling about it. He made a hard campaign and if St. Louis had been organized from the Democratic Party standpoint at that particular time, as well as it subsequently became organized, Mr. Cochran would probably have defeated Mr. Truman in my opinion. I think that there was a lot of ill will between the Clark crowd and the Truman crowd and that's why Tuck Milligan ran. I've always admired Mr. Truman's ability to forgive people who do him injury, and have done him injury; and his own cousin, "Snapper" Truman, supported Tuck Milligan and worked against him in this particular campaign, as well as in subsequent campaigns. Finally, it's a matter of record that Mr. Truman favored "Snapper" Truman's family and was very kind to him and very good to him in later years.

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FUCHS: You say that he supported Tuck Milligan in the '34 campaign, but do you know that he also supported other opponents of Truman in subsequent campaigns?

EASLEY: Those others, who were in the campaign are of the opinion that he also supported Maurice Milligan, when Maurice Milligan ran against Mr. Truman at the time he defeated Governor Stark.

FUCHS: Who do you remember as being Mr. Truman's campaign manager in 1934?

EASLEY: I really don't think that Mr. Truman had any campaign manager in 1934. To me, from the standpoint of having an organized campaign, he just didn't have it, and he managed his own campaign, in my opinion, and worked tirelessly and endlessly to bring about his own election.

FUCHS: I see. The reason I asked, one account I have read says that James Aylward was his manager,

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and another says that Fred Canfil was his manager, and I just wanted your comment about this.

EASLEY: My feeling is, I know Mr. Jim Aylward and he was chairman of the Democratic State Committee, and he is a fine man and he's a great organizer. Undoubtedly he threw the weight of the State Democratic Committee behind Mr. Truman. It's a well-known fact, however, that had Mr. Aylward wanted to run for the Senate, that he had an opportunity to do so before Mr. Truman was offered an opportunity. And I think that the records will also show that when he turned it down, there had been a lot of friction between the Rabbits and the Goats in Kansas City, which was the Pendergast and the Shannon factions of the Democratic Party, and that Mr. Pendergast, after Aylward's refusal attempted to get Mr. Joe Shannon to run for the Senate. Upon his refusal he then concentrated on Mr. Truman. There were several reasons. I think that Mr. Pendergast and

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the organization, as such, felt like that here was a man that had a good record as county Judge, and while he wasn't one hundred percent for the Pendergast organization, why, he had a lot of qualities that would go over in out-state Missouri. He was a Protestant, he was a Baptist, he was a Mason, he had a lot of qualities which at that time were important factors in out-state Missouri particularly. I think Mr. Pendergast was a real smart politician. I've always had that feeling. And those things were the things in close elections that put a man over, you know, definitely. But as far as the manager was concerned, I saw a lot of his campaigns in those early days and he was a poor man, and he was a tireless worker, and we didn't have organizations aid campaign managers and big organizations to carry a man along in those days that we do now.

FUCHS: Do you know of a subsequent falling out, so to speak, between Mr. Truman and James Aylward?

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EASLEY: No, I do not. Jim Aylward, later on, dropped out of politics pretty well. In other words, he always stayed on the outer edge, but to get in actively, I always had the feeling about Mr. Aylward that after President Roosevelt got Milligan into the position he was in, and "took in" after Mr. Pendergast and Matthew Murray and Mr. McElroy and the group up there, I always had the feeling that Mr. Aylward never had the interest in politics anymore that he had prior to that time.

FUCHS: We mentioned Fred Canfil. Could you put anything on the record as to how Mr. Truman became acquainted with him, and what their relationship was?

EASLEY: They had a very close relationship. Of course, I have no way of knowing how far back it extended. My impression always was that Fred Canfil's first political contact was made

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with Mr. Pendergast, and possibly through this connection he became well-acquainted with Mr. Truman, and Mr. Truman did favor him with political appointments. I know that, while Fred was a rather rough and ready type of person, he possessed the quality of being exceedingly loyal to his friends to the extent that he would fight for them or do whatever was necessary to protect them. Sometimes he might have been mistaken, but he was sincere in what he did, and I think Fred was an honest fellow, and certainly he had a dog-like devotion for Mr. Truman always, to the extent that he arrayed himself against many good friends of Mr. Truman's. And, in my opinion, many times Fred was correct, which events have proven, because from my relationship with him I know what has subsequently happened. He had many good qualities that lots of people didn't recognize. So far as being loyal and honest and devoted to Mr. Truman there was never

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a doubt about that.

FUCHS: Do you think that Mr. Truman relied upon his judgment in many cases?

EASLEY: In many cases; many times he did. I know of instances where, when Mr. Truman didn't want to send anyone else out, he would send Fred Canfil; because Fred would do exactly what he asked him to, and he'd take the word back exactly the way that he found it. I know in many cases this has been true.

FUCHS: Are there any examples that you would care to relate where Mr. Canfil went to bat for Mr. Truman?

EASLEY: Well, on one occasion when a friend of Mr. Truman's made disparaging remarks I saw Mr. Canfil strike him down. So I would say that when he was fired up, he was ready for action most any time. By the same token, I don't think

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this is an unusual thing. I spoke before about the bitterness that existed between the cohorts of Senator Clark and friends of Mr. Truman. On occasion they would get together at Jefferson City and it wasn't an uncommon thing to see some of them show up the next morning with black eyes, and have stories of what happened out on the town the night before. I saw quite a lot of that.

FUCHS: What was the basic factor, as you would see it, in this bitterness between the two camps, Truman's and Bennett Clark's?

EASLEY: Well, Bennett Clark. got off the ground first. He had a famous father, and during the war, like Mr. Truman, Bennett Clark soldiered with a lot of fellows, and when he got in a position where he could favor them, he did. He gave them jobs. Senator Clark was a strange person in many ways. He didn't expect these people to have to work or do a lot of things. I had some of them working for me; it was difficult to get anything out of them.

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If they didn't like the way you were doing something, they'd call the Senator on the phone, or write him a letter, and he'd call you back immediately and dress you down. You see, they had a sense of loyalty and I can name fellows like Redick O'Brien, Neal Williams, Pat Noonan, Hap Rothwell and Fount Rothwell -- they were all good fellows. I liked them, but they didn't do Clark any good. All of them were -- well, anytime he'd get a job for them, it was a sinecure and it reflected on the Senator. It didn't help him, because they weren't doing him any good, wherever they might be. The aftermath of the thing as far as Senator Clark was concerned -- I can recall when he was running for the Senate, and Mr. Truman tried to do everything he could to help him, but Bennett had developed to the point where he lost complete contact with the state. Ed Villimore was his secretary, and we had a big meeting arranged for Clark, for instance, down

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in Springfield, On Lester Cox's farm one night. He never even showed up. I don't know how long it had been since he had been to Missouri, and it wasn't any wonder when it came down to the tape that he was defeated by Roy McKittrick. Roy McKittrick went all over the state with a bunch of cards in either pocket and campaigned from house to house. Well, Bennett then started doing a lot of drinking and he didn't take care of himself at all; and he went on and, of course, McKittrick ultimately lost, but Clark was in Washington without a job and he was in a deplorable state. I can recall one night that Adolphus Busch had a Missouri party at the Shoreham Hotel, and I attended this party along with many Missourians who happened to be in Washington at the time. We left the party, and I left with Jim Pendergast and Dick Nacy, and Victor Messall, and we got out in the hall and we found Senator Clark sitting in a big chair out there. He was completely

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stoned. He was unshaven, unkempt and in a deplorable condition; here was a man who had the opportunity to probably be one of the greatest statesmen that the State of Missouri had ever produced. He had all the qualifications and it was a sad thing. We got a bellboy and found out where his room was and we carried the chair over and put it on the elevator and took him up to his room. Now, this is something that you don't know whether you want to tell people, you see what I mean?

FUCHS: Yes.

EASLEY: It's just one of those things. That happened, see. After Senator Clark got his feet on the ground again, straightened out, what happens? Well, old Harry Truman gave him a job down in Washington as a judge in the District court; that was a sinecure for him for the rest of his life. He took care of Bennett Clark, but Bennett

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Clark was a very bitter enemy of Harry Truman from a political point of view for a long period of years. In that book right there there's some pictures -- let me have it and I'll show this to you -- that scrapbook, which shows the Democratic Party in Missouri in happier days. I'd like you to see this. There's a picture there of a bunch of WPA officials around here, Matt Murray. Here, that was in 1936, see, we had the Democratic State Convention in Joplin.

FUCHS: Sam Wear, Governor Park with Truman.

EASLEY: Here's Park, Pendergast, and here's Jim and Allen McReynolds and myself. And here's old Grover James who was our county chairman at the time! There's Clark -- old Bennett got drunk down here. He was supposed to make the keynote speech and couldn't make it. Here's Redick O'Brien and Pat Noonan and Williams, they accused the Truman group of getting him drunk, which was a stupid thing. We went out to the hotel and he

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failed to show up; he was locked in his room. They kicked in the bottom of the door and crawled in, and of course, he was soused. That was 1936, you see.

FUCHS: One scholar has written that Aylward declined to run in '34 because he didn't want to take the abuse that would come his way because of his connection with Pendergast. Would you care to comment on that?

EASLEY: I am inclined to think that probably there is a great deal of truth in that. Jim was a very ethical lawyer, and he had a family and was widely known. In the back of his mind, while he was an awfully good politician, I think he was worried about this senatorial race and what it might develop into, and I don't think he wanted to subject himself to all of the things that might have shown up. That's my honest opinion.

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FUCHS: Victor Messall, who became Mr. Truman's secretary, was from down in this area. Would you give a little of Messall's background, as you recall it?

EASLEY: I first knew Vic Messall back in high school days. He came down here from western Kansas with his mother and they settled down, He was the only child. He used to work around the drugstores while he was a boy, with Jackson Drugstores, including the one here. We had a lawyer in Joplin, Frank Lee, who ran for the legislature here one year and was elected on the Democratic ticket; and he took Vic up to Jefferson City with him for a couple of years and indoctrinated him with a political outlook. In 1932 then, Frank ran for Congress. In that particular year the candidates were elected at large, and I think there were sixty-five on the ballot. He went to Kansas City and got the endorsement of the Kansas City organization and

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got on their slate, and with whatever support he got he was elected to the House of Representatives; and at that time he took Vic on back to Washington with him, and Vic served as his secretary for two years. In the meantime Mr. Truman had been elected United States Senator, and he felt like he needed to have someone who knew the ropes around Washington. He hired Vic Messall to work in his office because Lee, in the meantime, had been defeated and Vic was without a job. He did stay with Mr. Truman and ultimately became his secretary. Vic knew a lot of people in Missouri and, in my opinion, was able to give the Senator a lot of good sound advice and help around Washington. The very fact that he knew quite a few Missourians was also very helpful to Mr. Truman. Vic continued in this position until -- as a matter of fact he was well liked by the other senators and by their secretaries and whatnot, and he became president of the Little

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Senate group. A couple of years later he left Mr. Truman to enter into public relations work and he still has an office but on account of his health he's not performing very much.

FUCHS: It is known that there was an estrangement between Senator Truman and Victor Messall. Do you have any comment on that?

EASLEY: Well, I think, and it is my feeling that as the Senator became better known, Vic, of course became better known, and it was alleged that he used the Senator's office and the Senator's influence to further his own interests. This became a constant and continual complaint among Mr. Truman's friends that this condition existed, and that he should do something about it. And I know from my relationship with both of them that he was reluctant to do anything about it. So ultimately the relationship did become very strained, and a number of people discussed with me the possibility of going back to Washington as Mr. Truman's secretary,

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which I had no ambition to do. Finally, Victor, when he did get ready to step down, I think things were pretty much at a breaking point; and when he did step down Bill Boyle, who was from Kansas City and did know the people and had all the political credentials, stepped into the office in his stead.

FUCHS: Well, now, there's a letter in your file, written in May '36, from you to Mr. Truman in which you said the story was being circulated that you were resigning to become Mr. Truman's secretary, and you wanted some assistance in stopping this story. Would this have been what you just referred to, that early?

EASLEY: Yes, it started that early, and it continued until Bill Boyle finally, I believe, stepped into the office.

FUCHS: I believe Harry Vaughan succeeded Messall in '41.

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EASLEY: I'm sorry, that's right, in '41, This continued until that time, and until he did take over. Harry was in the office for some time before he took over as secretary.

FUCHS: I believe that Boyle took over when Vaughan went back into the service, is that correct?

EASLEY: That's right, that is correct.

FUCHS: Do you have any comments about those two gentlemen and their relative merits?

EASLEY: Well, from the political point of view, Vaughan had no standing at all. He was unknown in the State of Missouri. He had been associated with Mr. Truman and his assignment was credited entirely to the influence of Mr. John Snyder. It is alleged that that is the manner in

which Harry Vaughan got into the picture. And it was a surprise to many of Mr. Truman's friends because they had never heard of Vaughan, never

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seen him, didn't know him, and he did not know the people of the state and he did not know how to communicate with them after he got in a position where he should have been able to carry things out.

FUCHS: Do you think Mr. Truman's work suffered some from having Vaughan there for a period of time?

EASLEY: My personal opinion is that it did. With all of his shortcomings, Victor Messall knew the people, and I don't think Mr. Truman had competent help in the office -- politically I'm talking about now, I'm not talking about the ability of these people to do things from a personal standpoint, but politically, his office suffered a great deal during the time of Harry Vaughan and Bill Boyle.

FUCHS: What was Boyle's relationship and background as you recall?

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EASLEY: Of course, Bill was an attorney, and not a very successful one. He had been chairman of the Jackson County Democratic Committee, and he was well-known there, and Bill was a "sunshine Irishman," and everybody loved him; but he was out of his element in Washington, and it was very much a surprise when he was finally elevated to the chairmanship of the National Committee. He had a hard time controlling his appetite for liquor. Bill was smart, had a fine personality and I liked him very much, but when Bill was in his cups he was useless.

FUCHS: Do you think there was someone who urged his employment on Mr. Truman, or was it solely Senator Truman's doing?

EASLEY: I think he took it on endorsement from political friends in Kansas City, for the reason that Bill wasn't known outside of Kansas City.

FUCHS: Who might they have been?

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EASLEY: I think perhaps Jim Pendergast and the group that was allied with him. Dick Nacy had a great deal of influence with Mr. Truman and, of course, Jim's daughter was married to Dick's son. So, there naturally had to be a close relationship between Jim and Dick, and Bill fell into line accordingly.

FUCHS: You, as administrator of WPA, were well acquainted with Matthew Murray. Do you have any comments about him and his subsequent troubles?

EASLEY: Matt Murray was one of the finest men I ever knew. He was one of the most truthful. I think that his trouble with the Government arose from the fact that he trusted everybody and he

tried to please everybody. Matt had been an engineer with the state highway department, and did an outstandingly fine job as a

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bureau chief. He had a lot of fine contacts in southeast Missouri. He lived around Charleston and Sikeston for years and he was a political powerhouse down in that part of the state. He ultimately went into Kansas City and he became director of public works there, and he loved Mr. McElroy and trusted all his friends. He thought a great deal of John Pryor and Bill Boyle. They were both affiliated with the organization and getting a lot of paving contracts and whatnot. I think that a lot of money fell into Matt's hands, and he was a very free spender and I don't think he kept any record. I think that he was swayed by his friends, and at the time that Matt Murray was finally prosecuted there was a lot of political persecution because of Maurice Milligan being on the other end of it. But I don't think Matt Murray was dishonest; I don't think he was corrupt; he spread himself out too thin; my

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relationship with him was excellent aside from the fact that he loved Kansas City and he would penalize, if he could, the entire State of Missouri for the benefit of Kansas City, as witnessed by the paving of Brush Creek. He laid out and helped design the memorial hall up there, the juvenile court building and the City Hall. All of these things happened while he was there. He built the airport in Kansas City, and while it's becoming obsolete now it's still about the only major airport in the United States where you can be uptown in five minutes, you know. He had visions. He could look ahead. I was very fond of him. But when I left the WPA, I couldn't stand there in good conscience and let Kansas City take all the funds that should have been distributed over the remainder of the states, which, of course, is what they were doing without any conscience. That was not a personal thing, it was a thing that I had to conclude in my own

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good time, but it had nothing to do with any bad relationship I might have had with Matthew Murray.

FUCHS: I believe that when you resigned in February you wrote Mr. Truman that part of your reason for resigning was personal integrity. That's what you just referred to?

EASLEY: That's correct. Those are the things that you can't let your guard down on.

FUCHS: Who was Walker Burriss? There seems to be considerable correspondence in your file about Walker Burriss,

EASLEY: Walker Burriss was district director of the Works Projects Administration, the WPA setup, for southwestern Missouri. He was very active in politics. He knew all the politicians, and while he ran WPA he politicked a great deal.

FUCHS: You don't care to say any more about him?

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EASLEY: No, not particularly. He's dead now.

FUCHS: In 1938 Senator Truman supported Senator Clark. Is there anything you recall of interest about that?

EASLEY: Well, it was just another one of those things. Like I said awhile ago, their relationship after the 1934 election steadily improved and these people who had attached themselves to the Senator fell by the wayside, the friends that inspired Clark to a point of enmity there against Senator Truman gradually lessened. They didn't disappear altogether, but they lessened a great deal.

FUCHS: You wrote Senator Truman in March 1939 that the Young Democratic Convention at Joplin had been, you thought, packed for Dwight Brown and you said "they mended things up," and you thought Canfil had a hand in the deal, and you also thought it was best if Canfil would stay

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away from Jasper County. You said something to the effect that Canfil was aligned with Grover James and George Haworth, who "use patronage rightfully belonging to you." Could you elucidate on that a little bit, if you care to?

EASLEY: Well, I'll tell you what happened. That was in a period that I didn't even know Canfil. That's how I learned that he had a great deal of influence with Senator Truman. The people down here, the organizational group, knew that I had expended a lot of time and effort and some money on behalf of Senator Truman, and so they wanted me for this area job down here. And Truman, I think, originally was inclined to go along with it.

FUCHS: This was a job as...

EASLEY: ...as district director of WPA. Well, then the next thing that happened was his attitude changed somewhat, and there was a fellow down here by the name of George Haworth, and he had

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never been too active politically but the local chairman of the Democratic Party, who was Grover James, was aligned with him and Fred Canfil was aligned with Haworth. And I learned that they were trying to give me a real bad time. However, I didn't particularly want the thing anyway. The next thing that happened, as I pointed out to you awhile ago, Matt Murray called me into Jefferson City. He had been named as director and he wanted me to have an interview with Mr. Hopkins, and on account of the Pendergast organization they felt that since I had had personnel experience and whatnot, I could cope with political problems at that level better than I could down here as district director. Well, I refused to accept this job and came on home. You'll see it in this scrapbook here. And Murray called me back in, and Mr. Truman got in touch with me and so did Bennett Clark. I went back in for an interview and that was when they told me, wouldn't I take it

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for just ninety days. Well, I knew that was to get me out of the way so they could appoint Haworth down here. I had no feeling against George; he was a good friend of mine, as a matter of fact, and I thought, well, if it will help them out any, "I'll take it on for ninety days." But I was in there from that time on up until I finally quit. But that is the reply to your question. And the strange thing about it was, I did take this personnel job and the first time I ever met Fred Canfil, he came down to Jefferson City, and I was in the personnel office. Mr. Pendergast used to sign his name in red ink on letters of endorsement, and I was told that I didn't dare ignore one of those -- I had to put that person to work immediately. So, I made it a point to never put anybody to work that brought me a red penciled letter from Mr. Pendergast. It caused me some discomfort at the local level, but that's a fact. And Fred Canfil came to my office and in the first conversation I ever had with him,

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he said, "I go down to see the Boss regularly, at a certain time. He sends those letters out," he said, "but what I want you to realize and what he wants you to realize is that some of these damn fools come and sit in his office for hours on end to try to get a letter out of him. Sometimes he'll give them a letter to get rid of them." So, he said, "I don't blame you for the action you have taken, and he doesn't blame you either." That was the first inkling of that I ever had, and it was the first time that I ever met Fred Canfil and that was the kind of a conversation we had. From then on he used to come in and see me every once in a while, but he never attempted to influence me. Anytime I was with the Federal Government he never asked me to do anything that wasn't according to Hoyle. Anything that he ever asked me to do, he would ask me to do because he thought it would be helpful to Mr. Truman. He never wanted anything

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for himself.

FUCHS: In that letter there you felt that quite a few people were a little bit disenchanted with Canfil at that time, and that's why you said he ought to stay out.

EASLEY: That's right, that's right. Well, they were, because all my friends when they got to seeing the weight he was throwing around, you know, why, they didn't appreciate it.

FUCHS: How did you participate in the '40 campaign? And in that connection, I want to ask you about the meeting in early 1940, January, I believe it was, in the Hotel Statler in St. Louis. Your memories of that, who was there and so forth?

EASLEY: I'm quite sure that I had a letter from Mr. Truman and then he had Victor Messall call me, urging me to attend a meeting, and that

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they'd like to talk to me, and I did. I know I went up on the train and I spent the night up there. They were registered at the Statler and they had quarters for me, and I spent the night, and we talked over the political situation, on account of my connections with WPA and the fact that we had over 42,000 people working in St. Louis. There were many key people in the WPA

organization, who had contacts; they were committee people, they were active in precinct politics, at higher levels. We discussed all this and I made a list and suggested people, making arrangements for them to be there the next day. I distinctly remember that I talked to Gene Gualdoni, Frank Tomasso, Jimmy Miller -- he's the J.P. I told you about who said, "We vote them out where I live like a machine." Of course, Gene was a committeeman out on what they call "Guinea Hill" and that was the most populous ward in St. Louis, and still is. He is still a committeeman, and incidentally has charge of the Kiel Auditorium

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in St. Louis. At the time I talked to him he was park commissioner. So, we talked to Jack Dwyer, and there was another one; Jack was chairman of the city committee. However, Jack, before I left, had not gotten up, but he was going to support Mr. Truman, and he had a great deal of influence. Since there was no one there from the western side of the state, I called my brother-in-law, Alvin Hatten, and he said that he would be in the next day and that he'd bring Roger Sermon and probably Bill Sermon. However, Bill didn't come; Roger did. I also called Dan Nee, who was Internal Revenue collector in Kansas City, and Dan came.

An interesting thing about that meeting in St. Louis -- in the morning when we had just finished breakfast the telephone rang, and I recall answering the phone; and I called Victor Messall to talk, and it was the White House. Stephen Early called and wanted to talk to Mr. Truman. Truman wouldn't talk to him, so Vic takes the message. So, he told Vic, my recollection is,

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that the President had authorized him to advise Mr. Truman that if he would withdraw from the race out here and not file against Governor Stark, then in that case they would name him to the Interstate Commerce Commission with a lifetime appointment, and at a substantial salary, more than he would receive as United States Senator. When this information was relayed to Mr. Truman, he said, "Tell them to go to hell because I've made up my mind that I'm going to run for the Senate." There were a large number of people who went through the rooms that day, and they were all encouraging, and I went back to Kansas City with a group from over there because I had my wife to meet me in Independence. The following day, Dan Nee called me and told me that he and Victor Messall had filed Mr. Truman for the Senate. They'd gotten off the Missouri Pacific at Jefferson City and filed Mr. Truman for the Senate, and paid the fee. So that is

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pretty much the things that I knew that happened at that meeting. I might say that later in the day, which was Saturday, if I recollect properly, Neal Helm and Roy Harper came in from southwest Missouri and they said that John Ferguson was coming, but I didn't see John while I was there.

FUCHS: Do you remember John Snyder being there?

EASLEY: I do not.

FUCHS: Phil Welch?

EASLEY: I do not.

FUCHS: Harry Vaughan?

EASLEY: No.

FUCHS: James K. Vardaman, Jr.?

EASLEY: No, Of course, they could all have come in at some other time. However, my recollection is that we were there until about four o'clock

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Sunday afternoon, and we went back to Kansas City on the Pacific. That was Roger Sermon, Alvin Hatten and myself. Dan Nee was going to stay over, and did; but I know, of course, these other fellows could have come in later on.

FUCHS: Roger Sermon then wrote you on February 20, 1940, and said that he had taken it upon himself to write to Bennett Clark requesting that he do something toward getting Senator Truman a Federal place. He wrote, "Truman states that he has never been offered a place, and I think it is high time that someone is doing something to see that he is made an offer." Do you recall anything about that?

EASLEY: Yes, I think the only encouragement that the Senator had had was in St. Louis. He couldn't get any around Jackson County and that was for sure. And that's what we thought was so strange and what had struck me strange when

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I got into St. Louis, to find that no one from western Missouri was in the meeting at all. The letter to Roger and from him are in the aftermath. The most optimistic person in the whole crowd, in my opinion, was Dan Nee, and of course he had been a Clark man and owed Clark his job as Internal Revenue collector, you know. When this thing got aired out, why, Truman started catching on. That was the first time Harry Vaughan ever came into the picture. They opened an office in St. Louis and Frank Tomasso got the quarters for him in the old, I think it was the Missouri Theatre Building. That was a fine building. He had these lush quarters and had gotten hold of considerable money up there and they put in a guy named Berenstein at the head of the committee up there. He was a Jewish fellow.

FUCHS: How did he come into the picture?

EASLEY: Nobody ever knew. And after Vaughan got

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into the office -- Vaughan, at the time, was selling Wearever aluminum, door to door. Did you know that? Well, he was. And Berenstein, Dave Berenstein -- they finally tossed old Dave out, see, and they put Vaughan in charge of the office over there. Berenstein didn't know anybody, but I guess he knew people who had money. Then, the other thing was, John Snyder hated Vic Messall, see, and Harry Vaughan hated him, because he was John Snyder's boy. So, they decided

that they were going to have to get rid of Vic. So Truman told me, he said, "Now, we're going to have Vic to set up an out-state office and we'll have all our campaign literature and everything in Sedalia. Vic don't know anybody in St. Louis and he'll run that office there in Sedalia." Well, that plowed old Vic under, you see. He was really teed off. Canfil never did like Vic either, and Canfil said he would be a handicap up there and I think he pretty well sold Truman on the idea, too. So consequently,

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we had a big meeting up there but that office never did catch on.

FUCHS: In St. Louis?

EASLEY: No, in Sedalia. As a matter of fact old Frank Monroe, old Judge Monroe, took care of most of the politics around Sedalia, Pettis County and that area. I remember Berenstein, and nobody ever knew what happened to him. The next thing that anyone knew, why, Vaughan was in charge, and no one knew who in the hell he was. It was a messed up thing. I don't know sometimes how Truman ever got elected. We worked down here and we had headquarters in Joplin, and we carried all these counties down here in this area, and he carried them by about 8800 votes. It was just about by that margin that he got elected.

FUCHS: How did you personally participate in the

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campaign?

EASLEY: I did everything I could, and everything they asked me to do. Primarily I got this office opened up over here. I had always had the feeling Truman had been good on patronage and whatnot, and I still had these contacts that I'd had, and I knew I could get a lot of people to work. A lot of people like Truman. This was dead country and he helped us get quite a lot of projects set up down here.

That was a funny deal. I went over there and I talked to Billy Leffen. Truman had appointed his son to the Naval Academy and Billy had a vacant building right down below the Connor Hotel there, and so I said, "We want to use that building for a headquarters for Truman."

He said, "Well, I guess we can arrange it."

I said, "That's just fine. How do we get hold of the keys?"

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He owned a lot of property over there and the family had control of the Citizens Bank in Joplin. Billy's dead now. He said, "Well, I guess they're down at the office. Now, what am I going to get from this?"

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "I mean rental."

And I said, "Why, how would you have the guts to ask us to give you rental on a thing like that. Mr. Truman appointed your boy and he got a \$50,000 education at the Naval Academy. I wouldn't know why you couldn't contribute that building."

Those were the oddball things that you run into. But anyway, we got a nice office there, and we had these regional meetings. We had a real good organization and they went right down the line, too, did a job.

FUCHS: There's a letter from Fred Canfil to you in your records, of March 22, 1940, which seems

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to imply that you had been asked to be campaign manager before Messall was.

EASLEY: I had. You see, what had happened to me, I had been in and out a great deal, and I was operating a bank here, and I was having to spend a substantial amount of time in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, where we had a large interest. I was not enamoured of politics enough that I wanted to get into it to that extent. I didn't want anything particular out of it, and I didn't feel like going in that deep.

FUCHS: Who thought of the idea for a dollar contribution, using ticket books, if you'll recall, in that campaign?

EASLEY: I think that that originated in St. Louis. They had had a lot of success with that during the days of WPA, and they thought it would be a good deal to try to carry it on, and get it over.

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To the best of my knowledge, that's where it originated, in St. Louis.

FUCHS: There were some charges of a "slush fund" for Senator Truman in April, 1940, in connection with the senatorial campaign. Do you have a comment about that?

EASLEY: No, what was the nature of it?

FUCHS: My note simply says that in April, 1940, in connection with the senatorial campaign for Mr. Truman that year, there were some charges concerning a slush fund for Senator Truman. I thought earlier you mentioned something about \$80,000?

EASLEY: Well, that probably gets back to some of the rumors. You always had that going on, you know. It didn't make any difference. The *Star* was always carrying articles. Anything to discredit Mr. Truman, why, the *Star* would come out with it, you know. S. J. Ray would have some cartoons and whatnot on the

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editorial page. But from the standpoint of foundation, I never knew of any kind of fund. As a matter of fact, the only thing that I knew about, they were always after us for money. I had been responsible for a lot of people getting jobs here, there, and yonder, and the technique that I used with these people, I never solicited them to give me the money. I would tell them and point out the benefits they had, and that there was a man responsible for it now needing their assistance and help. I opened an account up here at the bank in his name. I had Truman sign a signature card, and I'd have them send me a bank draft or give it to me any way they wanted me to have it, and then I would put it in a fund up there in his name; and I requested that his office acknowledge it, which they did. In other words, like these deputy Federal marshals, people like them, where you get substantial money. That's the way I always handled

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it and campaign after campaign we did that, you know. Sometimes we'd get considerable and sometimes not so much.

FUCHS: A letter, Mr. Easley, in your files, dated July 1, 1940, which was, of course, prior to the primary, and written by Mr. Truman to you had a postscript, "Bennett is now tearing his shirt for me and it looks like St. Louis is lined up." Could you comment on that and on the situation in St. Louis?

EASLEY: Well, in the beginning, I don't think anyone knew just exactly where Clark would be. He originally came from Louisiana, which was in Stark's territory, and on account of past association I don't think that there was any certainty as to where he was going to be; but after Mr. Truman's campaign caught on, I think Bennett sensed from his friends that most of those people who had in the past supported him, were

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going to go down the line for Mr. Truman. This was particularly true in St. Louis. The remark about St. Louis being lined up -- I had a notation which I had sent to the Senator, and it was given to me by Major Dickmann at the time. And, of course, they were very much interested in St. Louis and Larry McDaniel's candidacy. And I told him there was a possibility that the people down here who were lined up for McDaniel were going to swing to McReynolds, unless they got some kind of positive information out of St. Louis that he had an interest in the Senator. And he did give me a breakdown of all the wards in the St. Louis area indicating the manner in which, in his view, they were going to swing, and it was very favorable to Mr. Truman. So I think that that particular postscript had to do with this switch which was beginning to take place.

FUCHS: Students have written that Hannegan was the one who created a big switch there at the last

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moment. Do you think that's...

EASLEY: I think that Bob had a great deal of influence and I think that basically he was always for Mr. Truman.

FUCHS: Were you confident of Mr. Truman's victory in 1940?

EASLEY: In 1940 after getting out into the State several times I felt sure that he was going to be elected. I felt that he would have the organized forces in St. Louis and Kansas City and particularly down in southwestern Missouri, which is sort of a weather vane. It was overwhelmingly in favor of Mr. Truman. And I thought that was a very good sign. And I figured if he could slip by the two metropolitan areas and carry a reasonable amount of out-state support, he wouldn't have any terrible difficulties. But as it was, the election really was not determined, I don't think, until along -- things started to

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change in about June, and they changed real fast and more and more people got on his bandwagon.

FUCHS: There was a Guy L. Wade in Newton County, who wrote you in July, 1940, that the situation there was unfavorable to Senator Truman's renomination. Who was Guy Wade, and do you recall anything about the situation?

EASLEY: Well, Guy Wade -- that statement I would take with a grain of salt. Guy Wade was from Springfield. He was district director of the WPA area, in that particular section of southwestern Missouri. He had gotten this job as a compromise appointment through Senator Clark, and he was always basically and effectively a Clark man. When was that letter written, did you say?

FUCHS: July 27, 1940.

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EASLEY: Guy was just a little behind the times, I'm afraid. He was a good friend of mine but he was losing out, and there was a great deal of criticism against him in all of the Springfield papers of the manner in which he administered the office. He was, ultimately, removed and replaced. But it went back, in my opinion, to the old Clark attitude, and I don't think Guy realized that Clark had withdrawn any serious objections that he had had to the reelection of Senator Truman.

FUCHS: Is it true that Jasper County went Republican in the '40s rather consistently?

EASLEY: No, it's not particularly true. As a matter of fact, during that period of time when Senator Truman was in the United States Senate, there were times when the Democratic Party had complete control of the entire courthouse, as well as the town. And he contributed a great deal to

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it, because we were never, on account of our proximity to Kansas and Oklahoma down here, favored with any state patronage of any consequence. And Mr. Truman was religiously faithful about seeing that our area was properly considered whenever any patronage in the territory came up. So that isn't, as a matter of fact, true.

FUCHS: I don't know where I picked up that statement.

EASLEY: I think you will find that most people, particularly if they don't live here, always talk about this being a Republican territory; but I would point out again, as I stated awhile ago, when Mr. Truman was elected over Governor Stark we carried twenty-three counties in southwest Missouri for him, and they had developed a majority for him in the Democratic primary of more than 8,000 votes, which was enough

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to elect him. Had he not gotten them, he would not have been a senator. This thing changes from time to time, although at the present time this is ordinarily considered Republican territory.

FUCHS: I see. Was Bernie Dickmann of St. Louis not particularly a strong man for Truman?

EASLEY: Well, Bernie Dickmann was essentially for Bernie Dickmann. Finally he was postmaster there and he was considered Clark's appointment. His first loyalty was to Bennett Clark. Funny thing about that, when the appointment was made Gene Gualdoni was a candidate for the postoffice in St. Louis, and he intimated to me that he could get Truman's support, but that Clark wouldn't give him any encouragement, and that Clark finally did give him some encouragement and told him to get on the train and go back and he'd take care of it. Gene told me that when he got

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back to St. Louis they had a piece in the paper that Dickmann had been named postmaster. Gene always attributed it to the fact that he was of Italian descent, that Clark wouldn't give him consideration for the appointment. In this connection, I'd like to point out that when Roy McKittrick ran against Bennett Clark for the Senate, Gene Gualdoni turned out the guard and worked his head off for McKittrick in St. Louis; and my recollection is that Roy McKittrick carried St. Louis. That shows how your chickens come home to roost.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything in connection with defense construction in this area, related to Mr. Truman?

EASLEY: He was always very helpful to this area. He did a great deal, I was just reading in one of my diaries here yesterday, I went back to Washington with a group from Pittsburg, Kansas,

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and he took Kenneth Spencer and myself to the White House and we had a conference with Harry L. Hopkins. He had just had his stomach removed, part of it, and to see Hopkins you had to pass the President, and President Roosevelt was mothering Hopkins that much. We went upstairs and they took us into Hopkins; he was staying in the Lincoln bedroom. We had quite a long interview with him. He said that he had been down in this territory, which he had. I'd been down here with him and Madame Perkins, Secretary of Labor. They had gone all through the mining fields, I noticed in the press, and he said that on account of Senator Truman's interest, on account of the fact that they were coming up to some of these war plants, that he would see the site committee paid particular attention to this area. And I think it was entirely through Senator

Truman that we finally wound up with the Jayhawk Ordnance Plant, which was between Joplin and

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Pittsburg, Kansas. It still operates and is now owned by the Gulf Oil Corporation. We had a great deal of airport improvement, and a tremendous amount of roads and bridge building and we always got very substantial support from Mr. Truman. Had it not been for his efforts, this establishment would never have been located at that particular place. After erection of Camp Crowder and its establishment as a military base, he showed continuing interest during the entire time it was in operation.

FUCHS: I believe Victor Messall came into the picture down here on that. Did Mr. Truman approve of that?

EASLEY: Well, at the time Victor Messall came into it -- I have a file right here which -- here's a letter dated August 29, 1941, which I directed to Victor. You see, he had resigned from Mr. Truman's office and he had gone into public

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relations work; and I suggested to our group down here that we retain Vic to help us further our projects, because in the conversation that we had with Mr. Hopkins (I had worked for him on WPA) he said, "Now, Harry, when you go back, don't let the steam die down. Keep it generated. Get somebody that's on the ground here to look after your interests and report to you regularly." Our group did retain Vic on a monthly salary and he did a very good job for us.

FUCHS: There was a Fred Black, Jr., who was apparently interested in some job in Kansas City and you in '41 wrote Mr. Truman about it and said, "He called me this morning, however, and tells me that Jim Pendergast and Shannon Douglass are going to insist that you help him get this appointment." What did that involve, do you recall?

EASLEY: Of course you know who Fred Black is...

FUCHS: No, I'd like to first know who he is.

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EASLEY: Fred Black was a young man who came from Carterville, Missouri. He was very personable and a fine looking young fellow, and he played the ragged edges of things. He was a person who -- his record was not entirely savory. He hadn't done anything particularly wrong outside of circulating hot checks and whatnot; but he had unmitigated gall, and he would tie himself on to political people and more often than not he would be able to use them to his advantage for a job or whatever it might be. Through his father, he met an old gentleman who at one time had been associated with Henry Wallace in the publishing business up in Iowa. He got this old gentleman to write a letter to Mr. Wallace, who at the time was Vice President. He carried the letter back and Mr. Wallace took him in with open arms and became his patron. Floyd Odlum was in the Office of (it seems to me) Production Management in the old days, and he was going back to his

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brokerage firm in New York, and Mr. Wallace had recommended Fred Black for this particular job. Prior to this time he had worked for Donald Nelson -- that was the Office of Production Management. I've forgotten what title Mr. Odlum had. In any event, Mr. Wallace had recommended him and he obviously was not qualified to fill the job in any sense of the word. He was seeing everybody he knew that would do anything in the world for him to try to sew this thing up. That could have referred to that particular incident, though there were others, there were many others, of the same kind. Now, Fred Black went ahead and got tied in with North American Aviation; they have a plant down here at Neosho. He got in this vending machine business, together with -- I've forgotten his name, in Washington, he was partner -- he was Secretary of the Senate...

FUCHS: You mean Bobby Baker?

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EASLEY: Yes, he was Bobby Baker's partner and they had that vending machine business and were partners. Internal Revenue Service convicted Fred of income tax evasion in the amount of two hundred and eighty or ninety thousand dollars plus the accrued charges and whatnot. He carried it to the Supreme Court and contended that they had bugged his apartment in the Shoreham Hotel in Washington where he had become a public relations man; and the Supreme Court threw the thing out because the Federal Bureau of Investigation admitted that they did have his room bugged, and that they had obtained the conviction on the basis of the tapes. He was down here just a short time ago when his mother died, and I went to the funeral, and he came to see me and he was telling me about it. He attributed a lot of his troubles to Senator Williams from Delaware, and he told me that Jack Anderson, who had taken him to the plane

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that morning, and who was associated with Drew Pearson, had written a book called *Expose in Washington*, and that in this book was related the manner in which Baker and Black had quieted Senator Williams. So, it sounds fantastic.

FUCHS: Anything you remember in particular, anecdote or otherwise, in regard to Mr. Truman and his investigating committee?

EASLEY: No, not particularly. During that period of time I saw him rather frequently. I happened to be in Washington and I did go down with him and he held the first hearings in the chambers in Washington. I remember distinctly that Stimson, the Secretary of War, was his first witness. Of course, I followed his activities rather avidly for quite a long time while it was going on.

FUCHS: Senator Truman wrote you on November 22, 1941, and thanked you for your letter of the 15th, about

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Fred Canfil, and said, "He is one of the best that ever came over the pike. He is anxious to get away from the Kansas City territory, and I thought this would fit in with his plan." I believe that

you were writing about an attempt to get the job with Spencer Chemical at Pittsburg, Kansas for him.

EASLEY: Yes, the motivation of that letter was the fact that the Senator intimated to me that Fred would like to get down to this part of the State. He wanted to do what he could to bring that about. He suggested that I might talk to Kenneth Spencer because after all Spencer's plant would not be there if it had not been for the Senator, in my opinion.

So, I talked to Bob Lemmon, who was an intimate of Spencer's -- Spencer was gone -- and I told him about Fred, and he said that they would work out something for him. I related this information to Mr. Truman and Fred came down and

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visited with me about it, and he seemed very upset, because he said he didn't have any intention of leaving the State of Missouri and that the job that he wanted, and the job that had been promised to him, was that of Federal Marshal for Western Missouri. He felt he was entitled to have it and he didn't have any interest in going over to see Mr. Spencer or anybody else. So, I furnished Senator Truman with this information later on; but I had made the contact that he requested, and Fred could have gone over there and they'd have put him in a good position, there's no two ways about it. Subsequently, Fred was appointed Federal Marshal and I remember when Truman did make the appointment, they started to raise a lot of Cain in the Senate about it, because Fred was sort of a mysterious character and they couldn't dig out all the information they thought they should have. Truman, to avoid having all this contest

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and fight, made a temporary appointment, you know. He kept renewing those appointments. I don't recall whether Fred was ever confirmed by the Senate or not. I really don't. He made a real good Federal Marshal, and he loved it, and he sat on top of it, and he was all right.

FUCHS: Canfil wrote to you in February, 1942, about coming down to talk with you. He said, "There are a number of gentlemen well known to you in the State who seem to be accomplishing quite a job, and all against our friend, Harry." Do you know what was behind that?

EASLEY: 1942, I don't know. Without reviewing some I don't know whether I could answer that or not. Fred had ways of getting information, and when I checked him out I rarely ever found that he was going on without a reasonable basis for his thinking.

FUCHS: What do you think the relationship was between

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Roger Sermon and Mr. Truman? I've noticed several things that indicate that he might not have always been so much on Mr. Truman's side as normally has been accorded.

EASLEY: You must remember -- my feeling, and I know Roger quite well, and regarded him very highly -- we need to remember that Roger Sermon and Harry S. Truman were born and raised and brought up in the same town and there were undoubtedly jealousies that existed

between them, and they had conflicting opinions, and Roger was in politics long before Mr. Truman was. I think he was mayor of Independence for probably twenty-six or twenty-eight years, and he was the seer and the father confessor for all the people around in the territory. And as Mr. Truman commenced to emerge, I always had the feeling that maybe some of the warmth of their old friendship in certain areas would get a little bit ragged.

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I had that feeling a number of times, I believe it actually existed. I know that at one time, and I visited with Mr. Truman about it, Roger indicated to me that he would like to have the appointment as collector of internal revenue in Kansas City. The job at the time was open. Mr. Truman apparently did not give it any consideration because he appointed relatively an unknown person to the job. That was Carl Lockhart, he came from over around Cameron somewhere. So, every once in a while, little things would develop which led me to believe that there might be some rough edges. But on the other hand, basically, they had great respect for each other, and their relationship was good, I have attended poker sessions and whatnot at Roger's home, and other places, too, and I know it wasn't anything too deep-seated, it couldn't have been.

FUCHS: In November of '42, you wrote Canfil and attached

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a letter which you wanted him to hand to Senator Truman, and it regarded what you termed, "a serious situation and one that deserves attention." The letter was from a Tom Molloy, who is a personal friend of yours, and you said for obvious reasons you did not want him to be mentioned in this matter. The letter was not present in the file. One further statement said: "This condition is one which reaches every little town and hamlet as well as the big cities, and I would like for the Senator to take time to read it."

EASLEY: I can't think of anything that might be behind that other than the fact -- and I don't know who the Senators secretary was at the time. What year was it did you say?

FUCHS: In 1942, it would probably have been Boyle, Vaughan left for the service, I think in...

EASLEY: Sometimes, being familiar with the machinery

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of the office, I had the feeling that any important mail, or mail that I deemed to be important, was not reaching the Senator. In this particular instance, as nearly as I can remember, Frank Lee, who had been a patron of Victor Messall had decided to recall his son-in-law from Oklahoma City and put him into the post office in Joplin. This would have been a tragic thing to have happen. It would be just like taking a mail carrier out of Kansas City when he wanted to go back to his own hometown and take a job away from some local person who had lived there for thirty or forty years. A group of us here who were interested in the Joplin postoffice wanted Tom Molloy appointed postmaster. Well, I got hold of Roy Harper -- Roy Harper at that time was state chairman -- and he went to bat with me and we did get Tom appointed postmaster, and he still is postmaster. But on account of the connection between this Frank Lee and the

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son-in-law, who lived in Oklahoma and wasn't even a resident of Missouri, it seemed to me that the obvious thing to do was to have the Senator check it real closely and see; because still inside that office were people who were real close to Vic Messall, and Vic, regardless of the fact that he was a good friend of mine, was probably a better friend (in all due respect) to Frank H. Lee, and he would do anything he could to try to get that job for Frank's son-in-law, if he could bring it about. So, there were times things like that would come up and I would have Fred -- and he'd go to Washington frequently -- and I'd just get Fred to carry the letter in. After Mr. Truman became President I used to write Rose Conway, and I'd attach a letter, and have her see that he got it, you know, because I figured in the shuffle, these things were likely to get lost.

FUCHS: Did you know Rose from her previous work with

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Vivian Truman?

EASLEY: Vivian Truman, yes. But those things happen and you can see how important it is. I knew that if Mr. Truman knew that Frank Lee was going to bring somebody that was in his family from outside the state, and give them one of the plush jobs in the postal department in the State of Missouri -- because Joplin is one of the big towns, you see that he wouldn't countenance such tactics. For instance, just to show you what I mean, Vic had girls working in that office, and they were his girls, see. They worked with him. They might owe their jobs to somebody else but he had a way of getting their absolute loyalty. Millie Dryden worked in that office. Do you know who she was?

FUCHS: Yes.

EASLEY: You've heard about her. I guess she still lives in Independence.

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FUCHS: No, she's in Washington.

EASLEY: Oh, she is? Well, I didn't know, I lost track of her. But Millie was in there and she reached a point in the end where I think that in the administration of the office they lost confidence in her, and eventually she went out. But I know with that kind of a situation existing in an office, it's an easy matter to bypass important mail and that sort of thing. She had been there for many years and she knew who his friends were and all about them. Anything that someone might write in which was derogatory could very well, be channelled out. Probably it isn't right to feel, that way, but when you're on the receiving end of some of these things sometimes, why, you are aware of the fact that it does happen.

FUCHS: You think Mr. Truman lost confidence in Mrs. Dryden?

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EASLEY: In the end, yes, I feel that he did. Somebody did, that I know. I like Mildred. She started doing, towards the end, a lot of drinking. She was just not herself at all. She was a fine

person, and I think, originally, her contact was with Mrs. Truman because she was an old Independence girl and I think Mrs. Truman thought a great deal of her. But she never did get herself built into much more than a routine job in that office, which -- it pretty well speaks for itself.

FUCHS: What about the governor's race in 1944, which I believe involved Dan Nee and Roger Sermon to some extent. Do you recall anything about that?

EASLEY: Let's see now -- 1944. Is that when Roger ran?

FUCHS: Yes.

EASLEY: Of course, the trouble with that whole race

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in the first place, let's see, Roger...He ran against Forrest Smith, too, didn't he?

FUCHS: I believe that's right.

EASLEY: The thing about Roger was, of course, he was a hero around Independence and he had the faculty of making people like him. He could speak their language and be real down to earth; but Roger's campaign fell completely flat, and it fell flat because -- it makes me think of an old boy over here at Springfield one time when Bennett Clark failed to show up. These people would come in there, one hundred and fifty, two hundred miles around, you know, to attend the rally; and then Ed Villimore showed up -- you know, who was Bennett's secretary -- and explained that the Senator wasn't going to be there. This old boy said, "Well, I think I'll leave."

And somebody said, "What are you going to leave now for?"

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He said, "I came over here to see the stud horse and if the stud horse ain't going to be here, I'm going to get the hell out."

And this is like Roger. We arranged a big rally for Roger at Neosho. We had the band out and everything going for him. At heart, all Roger Sermon ever was was a groceryman; he loved his grocery store. He'd walk around there -- he had a nice store and everything -- he'd walk around with an apron on -- he didn't need to -- and visit with everybody coming in, and he couldn't leave that store. They commenced calling me from Neosho and there was a big crowd going down from Joplin one day. I called Independence and got him on the phone and he said, "We're just so busy here this morning, I can't get away. I just can't make it down there."

So I told him on the phone at the time, "Don't ever ask me to go any further, I'm going to vote for you, but I'll never embarrass my friends by having this kind of thing happen

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in the future, because you just can't operate that way." That is characteristic of the way he ran his campaign, and he couldn't have been elected dogcatcher and run a campaign let alone be governor of Missouri. Now, that's just what happened, as I understand it.

Dan Nee, when he ran for the office, I had encouraged him to give up the job there, because Dan was too good a lawyer to stay in a Government job like Internal Revenue collector. It didn't pay enough and Dan had literally thousands of contracts on tax matters, he was one of the finest tax attorneys that ever hit the Middle West. And it developed that it was right, because when he quit he had more practice than he knew what to do with. He had always toyed with the idea of running for governor. He had been a great athlete and he was one of the finest football players to ever come out of Missouri University, and had broad contacts.

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But Dan was running against, probably, the most political governor that the State of Missouri ever had, and that was Forrest Smith. He made everybody that worked in State Government thank him for his job and he worked at playing politics every minute. He would write 150,000 letters a couple of times a year to the old age pensioners, call them by name, and tell them who he was. He was up against that kind of campaigning and it was just an insurmountable thing. He was defeated; he made a hell of a campaign and that was all there was to it. There was just too much going for the other man.

FUCHS: I believe Bennett Clark asked you to be his manager in 1944?

EASLEY: Yes.

FUCHS: Would you recount that episode?

EASLEY: Well, at that particular time, I was very

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much surprised. Of course, I had grown to be very fond of Bennett. I knew what his weaknesses were, but he had a deep sense of loyalty and he could be very kind and he had an awful lot of friends who were good friends of mine. I think they encouraged Bennett and he took it up with me on several occasions. I was kind of running out on politics and I had a lot of responsibility at home, including considerable sickness; and we had a very large project in the Rio Grande Valley, and I had to be in the State of Texas a great deal of the time, back and forth. The other thing about it was that, knowing Bennett as I did, I didn't know whether anybody could help him very much. I finally told him that I couldn't take it on. I did give him help in some places; I got him some local managers, including George B. Lang, who took over for Bennett, he had been in the organization before; he did a real good job.

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That was primarily my reason for turning it down.

FUCHS: Canfil wrote you in May 1944 and said, "I have never seen things quite so messed up in politics as they are in this state. I suppose you know all about what the 'kingmaker' Dick Nacy

is doing. The placing of that St. Louis crowd and Mrs. Howard Graves on the Big Six is about the last blow to democracy in this state. I have just found out who put Mrs. Graves on." He wanted to talk with you about this. Do you recall what the situation was?

EASLEY: Well, of course, Dick Nacy was executive vice president of the Central Missouri Bank & Trust Company at Jefferson City and he had been state treasurer once. Dick was a good politician. He was widely known all over the state, and he had given Truman a lot of trouble for a long period of time. Fred knew it. Anyone who knew

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Truman knew it, because Dick was devious. Then, I think later on when his family became allied with Jim Pendergast it became more noticeable, because I think Jim got on the bottle and he got to the point where he sort of belittled Truman. Functions would come up which Jim would never miss before, and you wouldn't see him there. So, what happened at that particular time, they moved in on the state committee and took over; and of course anybody that knows anything about the Central Missouri Bank & Trust Company knows that Howard Cook up there and his entire family are with the faction that wins. Right now they're out in the cold because they supported Hilary Bush instead of Warren E. Hearnes and he took all the money out of their banks. But Dick seized control of the state committee. He was ruthless. He got to Truman -- and I think Jim used his influence too -- they got Dick placed on the National Committee. I think that wasn't for any purpose except window dressing

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for the bank down there. He'd go back to the Mayflower where the Democratic Committee had their offices and Dick held forth there, whenever it was convenient, and the rest of the time he'd be back here with his bank, where he belonged. But everything that he did, had to do and was measured by the activity and success of the bank. Of course, I never could hold that against Dick. Dick was one of these boys who started out at the bottom, and he had a lot of hard knocks and he worked hard and he got a lot of prestige and built himself up, and while he was doing it he built that bank up more than anybody else. And when Fred talks about the party being in "bad shape," he's never seen it like it is now. He should be here now, because it's really in bad shape.

FUCHS: In July '44, I believe you resigned as the treasurer of the Central District Democratic Committee. Would you care to comment about why

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you did that?

EASLEY: Well, I can't think of any particular reason except after a while you just get tired. I had been treasurer of the committee for about sixteen years and that just meant that every time they had an election I had to go out and raise the money. I thought it was about time someone else started in doing it. At the same time during some of these campaigns and whatnot, I was down in Texas a great deal; so I think that was primarily the main reason.

FUCHS: You mentioned in an earlier conversation a trip that you took to Oklahoma with Senator Truman.

EASLEY: In the early summer of 1944, as nearly as I can recollect sometime in June, Senator Truman called me and asked me if I would take time out long enough to make a trip with him to Oklahoma

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City. He stated that the State Democratic Committee was having their State Convention at that particular time, and they had asked him to address the convention and make the keynote speech.

Mr. Truman was aware of the fact that I was acquainted with Governor Bob Kerr and a number of other active politicians in Oklahoma. My acquaintance with Governor Kerr arose from the fact that he practiced law in Webb City as a young attorney in the office of Wilbur J. Owen, who was an old friend of our family.

I advised the Senator that I would be glad to accompany him on this trip. The following Sunday, together with Fred Canfil, he arrived at our home, and after lunch, my wife took us to the Joplin Airport, where we were met by "Boots" Adams, president of the Phillips Petroleum Company, who had flown in one of the company planes to transport us to Oklahoma City.

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We arrived at our destination in the early afternoon and were met by a delegation headed by Harry Bailey, who was the City Manager of Oklahoma City. At that time this group took us to the Biltmore Hotel, which had been set up as headquarters for the convention delegates. The Biltmore had been selected by the committee rather than the Skirvin Hotel for the reason that the Skirvin Hotel was owned and operated by Perle Skirvin Mesta, whose father had founded the Hotel. It appeared that Mrs. Mesta had given a great deal of aid and comfort to the Republican Party in Oklahoma, and it was for this reason that the committee had blacklisted the Hotel. Nevertheless, late in the afternoon we attended a cocktail party at the Skirvin, which had been promoted by Perle Mesta, and it is my belief that this is the first time that Mr. Truman ever had an opportunity to become acquainted with this unusual woman, who after Mr. Truman became President attached herself to him and other members of his

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family and became known as the outstanding hostess in Washington and was ultimately appointed ambassadress to Luxemburg. (There was a story circulated in Oklahoma to the extent that Mrs. Mesta and her sister had their father adjudged incompetent in order that they might get control of his fortune, which was accumulated through oil operations.) The cocktail party was largely attended and the guests included Governor Kerr, who was a non-drinker; all of the Oklahoma politicoes, including Senator Thomas, who was up for reelection, and who faced opposition. Senator Thomas, a member of the Agriculture Committee, was charged with using confidential information of the Committee to speculate and enrich himself on the Board of Trade and stock market by speculation in commodities. (Senator Truman on this trip wanted to do whatever he could to render assistance to Senator Thomas.)

Senator Truman was rather concerned about

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how his speech was going to sound. He had not had an opportunity to make too many appearances of this kind, and he seemed to feel that it was because of his prestige, with particular reference to the Defense Investigation Committee, that this opportunity had arisen. (After all, Mr. Truman was in the limelight and his comment was reported on a nationwide basis.) At the meeting on the following night he did make a very good speech and it was well received.

On the following day, all of the defense plants of consequence, including Southwestern Air Base, Tinker Air Field, etc. were visited by Mr. Truman and most of the Oklahoma delegation in Congress.

In the late afternoon, we left Oklahoma City and flew to Bartlesville, landing at the One Hundred and One Ranch, which was the home of Mr. Frank Phillips, founder of the Phillips Petroleum Company. It was Mr. Phillips' birthday,

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and the group stayed overnight, after which I was flown home, and Mr. Truman and Canfil were returned to Kansas City.

My observation of Mr. Truman's trip to Oklahoma is that the trip was a very important one in view of events that occurred at later dates as a result of this trip. He became acquainted with Bob Kerr, the Governor, and later United States Senator. He also became acquainted with Roy Turner, operator of the Hereford Heaven Ranch at Ardmore and a multi-millionaire oilman, who succeeded Bob Kerr as Governor of Oklahoma. He was very generous in his support of Mr. Truman's candidacies and when Truman ran for the presidency in 1948 with Alben Barkley, Roy headed up a group, which organized Truman-Barkley clubs across the United States. After serving his term as Governor, he did not follow through in a political line. He presently spends most of his time on his ranch and looking after his business. He

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is quite a fellow, however, and I have high regard for him and have maintained my contacts with him.

Incidentally, Senator Thomas was defeated for reelection, and Bob Kerr ran for the United States Senate and was elected, serving in this body until his death.

FUCHS: Do you have any thoughts about Robert Hannegan being appointed National Chairman, about his qualifications, performance and so forth?

EASLEY: Well, I thought that Bob did all right as National Chairman. I didn't have any fuss with that at all. He first broke into the administration in Roosevelt's administration and of course it's been customary for the Postmaster General being chairman off and on for a long time, But Bob made it work and Bob worked at it. And of course, I think he worked in his own interests, too, but you can't fuss with success. He was a successful chairman in my

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opinion.

FUCHS: Is there anything that stands out in your memory about the 1944 convention and Mr. Truman's nomination as Vice President?

EASLEY: I never will forget all the hollering and cheering going on under the platform. But they were telling the story up there, you know, at the convention -- and I don't know how true it was -- but Roosevelt said he would take Douglas, Judge Douglas or Truman. The fellows up there said Bob Hannegan got hold of the Roosevelt letter and switched Truman's name to the first position. That was just repeated every once in a while. I heard it not too long ago someplace. But that was actually a matter of fact on the convention floor up there, that Hannegan had changed the names, see, in order to push Truman, because he was from Missouri, and I guess Hannegan thought he'd have a lot better chance with Truman in

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there than he would with Douglas. I think the most embarrassed person up there was Wallace, because I don't believe he figured that, in spite of everything, that lightning was going to strike him like it did. He had a funny personality, he was a brilliant man but he was sort of weird in a lot of ways too.

FUCHS: Do you think Mr. Truman really did not want the nomination, as he says?

EASLEY: Oh, I don't know about that. He worries a great deal. He called me up here at the bank right after the election. It must have been just a few days because it seems to me that the old Battery "D" crowd had this reunion. They used to always have it on Armistice Day. He called me from Washington and wanted me to come into Kansas City, be up there. He wanted to visit with me. I went up there and they had the penthouse there at the Muehlebach. And I stayed with him that night, I slept there with

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him. He told me just lying there in bed after things quieted down that he had been lonesome ever since the day they put the Secret Service on him, and that he had not yet seen the President at all. He told me that the last time he saw him that he had the pallor of death on his face and he knew that if he lived that he would be President before the term was out. He said he was going to have to depend on his friends. He was talking about people like me, he said. We sat there and had quite a long deal. He never at any time told me that he didn't want the nomination, but he knew that he was going to be the President of the United States, and I think it just scared the very devil out of him, I think it frightened him, even the thought of it. Later I went on back and went to the inaugural. The war was going on and they had the inaugural on the portico in the back there, and then they had a party afterwards in the White

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House. (I never will forget, I went down that morning, and I don't remember who in the hell came by for me. It seems like it was John Snyder. I was staying at the Carlton Hotel.) We went to the White House, and they had a wheelchair for Roosevelt ready and had him in there; and they had these braces to put on him, and they also had that Inverness cape that he always wore. I

remember my conversation with Truman and by God the President had the pallor of death on his face right then. For a long time they got away with the myth that there wasn't too much wrong with Mr. Roosevelt. They'd never let anybody see his lower extremities, you know, he was always swinging on his arms. But, what the hell was his doctor's name -- McIntire -- they got around and they were going to put these braces on his legs, and he said, "Just get the hell out of the way. I've stood on my own feet three times before and I'm not going to stand on those

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things this time. You just take me out there and I'll do my talking." And they did. They just rolled him out in the chair, you know, and he never did put those braces on, I imagine they were painful, a man as big as he was. But I've always thought about that, because that inaugural was no sooner over than he went to Teheran. Then, when he came back I happened to be in Washington. When he came back he had that stroke on the *Augusta* and it circled at sea -- the war was going on, and it circled out there for quite a long time until they found out, and then they waited for the air force to come out there and escort them on in. Mr. Truman, I've just conjectured, he couldn't have seen the President over three or four times, because I happened to be there at that time and he told me that they got the word that Roosevelt had had this stroke.

FUCHS: You mean the one that killed him?

EASLEY: No, this was on the way back from Teheran.

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Truman told me that Sissy Roosevelt, she was the only one really close to the President. He told me that there wasn't a lot of affection in the family. I guess the President was kind of estranged as far as Mrs. Roosevelt was concerned. It was just one of those things. But this Sissy could do more with him than anyone. And they flew her down to meet the boat when it got in. Mr. Truman said that she brought that old man out of it and that he didn't look too bad at all -- they kept him sort of sequestered. But he never brought Truman up to date on anything, nothing, apparently. Then he went on down to Warm Springs and died in April, the 12th of April. Well, the inaugural was in January, I've forgotten what date.

FUCHS: The 20th.

EASLEY: So, you see, I've always thought about Truman's anguish, when he made that statement about the

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load of hay falling on him. I can sure as hell understand it, because he didn't have any guidance into that job or anything else. It was just fortunate that he had the senatorial background and the experience that he did before he fell in there. I never did hear him say that he didn't want the nomination and I think he thoroughly enjoyed it after he got in there.

FUCHS: On August 18, 1944, which would have been after the nomination, you wrote Canfil, "I hope that we can work things out so that we can keep the Senator's feet on the ground during the coming months. He is now surrounded by a group of -- I guess it's supposed to be "parachute

jumpers" but it reads -- "parachute jumpers and people on whom he can not depend," You felt that you'd have to give him a lot of assistance. Who were you referring to?

EASLEY: I was referring to these guys like Harry

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Vaughan, and people like that. They'd never been in a campaign and they didn't know their tail from third base about anything. They had to be educated, see. And then the minute they got in, what happens, they want to be generals and they want to be everything else. Jake Vardaman was the same type of person. Jake Vardaman -- Truman put him on the Federal Reserve Board, and hell, he cut Truman's throat every time he got a chance on Federal Reserve policy. So, to me, those were "parachute jumpers." They were people that were just liable to show up any place in the air -- and they were in the air, too. They didn't have a sound thought in their minds, I don't mean personally -- there's no personal. Feeling. Hell, I got along with them and I knew most of them, John Snyder got his St. Louis boys in at that time, there's no question, and he exerted a tremendous influence on Truman, and a lot of it was not good. He made a lot of mistakes on account of John Snyder, in my opinion.

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FUCHS: What about the story of the Lamar vice presidential nominee notification ceremonies? Is there anything about that of interest that is not in the records?

EASLEY: I don't know, I think you've got pretty good coverage on that, haven't you? But one thing that I remember up there: for the first time since I've been interested in politics of any consequence, there were quite a few colored people came to the announcement party, and there were a lot of them from St. Louis and quite a few from Kansas City; and because I happened to be the chairman of it, why, the politicians sent them all to see me, instead of talking to them themselves. They wanted to do everything from participate in the program to sit on the platform and what have you, and of course you didn't even know who they were and you had never seen them, and it never entered in my mind that we'd have that kind of problem develop, but we sure did. I've often thought

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about it. That's a long time ago now. It was commencing to happen even at that time. The only thing I can say about the Lamar situation is never to have a big affair in a small town. I think, and it was conservative, there were thirty-five thousand people there, probably; because, in any event, there wasn't any room for anything. They had no toilet facilities of consequence. The sewer system was inadequate. They built privies over the manholes, and we finally had to put out steel tanks with tin cups tied to them, so people could get a drink of water. The cars were parked clear back to the highway. It had rained a couple of days before and the field which we had prepared for a parking lot -- it wouldn't have held them anyway but we couldn't even use it; and I was real happy when the curtain rang down on it. But it was a successful affair. I remember old Tom Connally was the speaker of the occasion and he gave one of these old fashioned oratorical speeches, for

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which he was famous. He was really a colorful old man. Did you ever see him?

FUCHS: No, I didn't.

EASLEY: He really poured it on. He was all right.

FUCHS: In one letter here, you refer to the "Whispering Tenor." Would you identify him?

EASLEY: The "Whispering Tenor" was the moniker that Matt Connelly applied to Fred Canfil. Connelly was ultimately appointments secretary to President Truman, prior to that he was on the Truman Committee, investigation committee; and Fred Canfil was one of his traveling campaigns because he was employed by the committee, too. Matt always referred to Fred as the "Whispering Tenor," because he had such a tremendous voice which could be heard so far but it was certainly not tenor. I think Matt was thinking of "Whispering Jack Smith." Old Fred, he was a great fellow.

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FUCHS: Was Mr. Truman strongly in favor of Frank Briggs to succeed to his position in '46 when he was up for reelection?

EASLEY: Now, Mr. Truman told me that he wasn't consulted, he didn't have a word to say about it. He said that Governor Donnelly who appointed him took the full responsibility, and he didn't know anything about it until the Governor was ready to announce it. Apparently he didn't refer it to the committee. Of course, Donnelly was an individual and he paid no attention to organization anyway. He never did. Mr. Truman told me that. I think he liked Frank Briggs, and Frank was a real nice fellow. Of course, he had the background of publishing the paper and being a state senator from Macon. Frank was a real nice guy and he tried. I worked with Senator Briggs when he was campaigning for reelection. It was a bad time and I think most anybody that ran against a Democrat at

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that particular time could have probably been elected. We got as a result, one of the poorest senators we ever had in the history of the State of Missouri, that was old Jim Kem. He was really an old fox.

FUCHS: There is correspondence about an appointment for an assistant to Dan Nee, a Glenn Jamison, and discussion as to whether or not the President was really interested in the appointment, and Eddie McKim came into that picture. Do you recall anything about that?

EASLEY: Glenn Jamison came originally from Joplin, and he was from a good, old Democratic family. His father was county judge here for a number of years, and he has a brother Howard, who runs a big drugstore there in Joplin now, and Glenn is a real nice fellow. He was Dan's assistant and he was also a Clark appointee. There was quite a lot of milling around after the job.

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Dan wanted Glenn to take his place when he stepped down. There was so much milling around and fighting around on the thing, I talked to the President about it, and he appointed Glenn to succeed Dan. They transferred him out of Kansas City and he is now running the Internal Revenue Office in San Francisco. He's about ready to retire.

FUCHS: Canfil wrote to you that he was sending two letters which showed that McKim was doublecrossing the Chief in his presentation of that one name.

EASLEY: With reference to the Jamison appointment? I don't know. It doesn't occur to me what that might have been. I know Eddie -- I can't imagine that Eddie would have had very much influence, because I can remember when I was in Washington, and Truman told me about -- Eddie was another one of these boys who rushed to his side. John Snyder and some of them, you know. I hadn't seen him for a while and he told me, "I just

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had an unpleasant task."

I said, "What was that?"

He said, "I just had to fire Eddie McKim."

I said, "What in the world happened to Eddie?"

He said, "Well, he's always been a good friend but it seems to me like -- " what the hell was he, was he the best man at the wedding or...something. He had some part in the wedding of the President and Mrs. Truman. But anyway, he said, that what had happened, he slipped Margaret out of the White House without the knowledge of the Secret Service or anybody. He had her slipped out and he took her out on the town, and had her out until about one o'clock in the morning. Of course, that suited her all right, but they were having a hell of a time, they didn't know what had happened to her. He said that wasn't the first time that silly things like that had happened. He said, "I

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just can't have him around, That's all there is to it. So, he's gone."

I said, "Where did he go?"

He said, "He went back to Nebraska."

FUCHS: Canfil wrote to you in June 1945, and mentioned a man -- and, on the basis of other correspondence I believe he was writing about Martin Lewis -- and he said, "He did fine work for me in connection with the Big Three in Jefferson City when they were conniving against the Vice President."

Do you know what he was referring to there?

EASLEY: Well, I'm thinking of Martin, Lewis. Martin Lewis, he was a Republican, and he was a lobbyist for the Portland Cement Company. Now, Truman always thought that Martin was a good friend of his, because he had the faculty of showing up at function which he couldn't have gotten into without some kind of an invitation or bid. But I don't know just exactly what that letter

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might have meant. I don't recall.

FUCHS: Is there anything in connection with your Government position in 1945 with surplus property that you'd care to relate?

EASLEY: Oh, not a great deal. I just agreed to serve until the organization was set up or until the war was over. It was a nightmare, the whole thing was, organizationally and every other way. It started out with the Treasury Department and then they broke it down and put the surplus property under Treasury and we were working for Treasury, and then they took it out of Treasury and put it into Commerce; then they took it out of Commerce and put it under RFC, and then they took it out of RFC and started to make WAC out of it. By that time I had done most of the things that he wanted me to do. He had some things around Kansas City that he particularly wanted straightened out. Hell, you

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don't know from one day to the next who you were working for or what Department you were in, and what your authority was, or anything else. Any place I'd go I'd have people sitting out at the back door waiting, you know, to try to buy some surplus property or something, in Washington or someplace else. It became real trying, and it got sickening after a while the way they kept harassing one. I guess, it's the only time that I've ever gotten into that kind of a deal. So I just thought, "Well, what the hell. I've got most of the work done and I'm going to let them have it, which I did."

FUCHS: Were there any events in 1949 at the inaugural that stand out in your memory?

EASLEY: No, no more than what I told you about this morning, you know, you see a man go in as a senator, to be sworn in, and then he's sworn in again as senator; then you see him sworn in as Vice President, and then finally you see

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him inaugurated as President of the United States. That makes it real nice, but it couldn't happen anywhere else. You get a sort of a thrill out of it.

FUCHS: This is from the excerpt you were reading from your diary.

Well, is there anything that I should have asked you about that you can think of?

EASLEY: It looks like we covered a lot of territory to me. What do you think?

FUCHS: Quite a bit. Well, thank you very much.

EASLEY: Well, I've enjoyed all the things that I've done, and I certainly never made any money out of it. I wouldn't go through it again for a million dollars, though,

FUCHS: Thank you very much. I've enjoyed the interview.

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