

Oral History Interview
with
HARRY E. MURPHY

Member of Battery D (129th Field Artillery Regiment) commanded by Capt. Harry S. Truman in
World War I, 1918-19.

Long Beach, California
March 23, 1970

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

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FUCHS: Mr. Murphy, I wonder if to start you would mind just giving me a brief sketch of your background; when and where you were born, and some of the different positions you held -- a little story of your life up until the time you went into the service?

MURPHY: Well, I was born in Steele, North Dakota, on a ranch, my father's ranch. He was a pioneer in that country. He spent the winter of 1881 and '82 in Bismarck, North Dakota when there was no bridge across the Missouri River. The Northern Pacific Railroad was -- that was the end of the line, Bismarck. I was born on July 22, 1890, and my life up until the time I left the ranch, when I was -- in 1913 -- I went to Kansas City and I never did return to the ranch, permanently. I made many visits there to my folks. I think I counted them up about thirteen

times. Every time I had an opportunity I wanted to go back. I hunted a great deal and had bird dogs and I loved hunting whenever I had a chance;

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ducks and all kinds of game.

FUCHS: Now you're talking! How did you happen to leave for Kansas City? Did you just go out to seek your fortune, so to speak?

MURPHY: There was a boy, a blacksmith's son -- automobiles were just coming into being, and there was a blacksmith's son who wanted to go to the Sweeney Automobile School in Kansas City. I was a little dissatisfied with confinement on the ranch and wanted to do something, so I followed him to Kansas City and we went to this school together. He returned to his father's blacksmith shop and set up an automobile business, and I stayed in Kansas City, worked for my uncle as a -- he was a contractor, the Hasom Pavement Company in Kansas City, Kansas. In the fall of 1913 I obtained a job with the Ford Motor Company and I have been an employee of that company, with the company, or with a dealer for all of my working life until retirement.

FUCHS: Was that first job with the dealership or did they have a plant there?

MURPHY: No, I worked for the Ford Motor Company. I worked for the Ford Motor Company from the fall of 1913 until the Long Beach plant was closed due to the World War II. At that time I went to work in the shipyards for two years with Consolidated Steel. At the end of the war I went to work for a dealer, a Ford dealer, in Long Beach, California.

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FUCHS: Well, this job with them in Kansas City, was that with the Ford plant then? Did they have a Ford plant back in 1913?

MURPHY: Oh, yes.

FUCHS: Oh, they did?

MURPHY: But I went to work for this dealer until I retired. But, coming back to Kansas City, I worked in this Kansas City plant until 1930. I was a foreman, general foreman, a night superintendent, and had full charge of the place at night. It was a big and strenuous job. I think I still feel the effects of it.

FUCHS: So you worked there in the Kansas City plant until you went into the service?

MURPHY: I was working at the plant, and enlisted in the Battery D on Memorial Day.

FUCHS: 1917?

MURPHY: Yes.

FUCHS: You hadn't been in the battery -- in the unit before.

MURPHY: No.

FUCHS: In the National Guard or Missouri Guard?

MURPHY: Prior to that time I had served three years in the National Guard, which I am very thankful that I did, because it gave me Army experience. I knew how the officers thought, I knew how they think, what they expect, and what they expect of you; and I know how they think

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about men and how it helped me to keep out of any extra duty or anything like that. And I always advised anyone that was going into the service to pay strict attention to all regulations and keep themselves out of trouble. Keep their uniforms clean, keep right up to snuff. And if a person is caught for extra duty and they keep on doing these things, they think they are imposed on, but it's their own fault. They allow themselves to get this extra duty due to the fact that they are not up to regulations. And I have talked to many men that were going into the service, and I have advised them this way, that, "If you are on any kind of traveling detail, anywhere, you have orders to go somewhere; I don't care if you are the only one that wants to stay and abide by those orders, do so. Don't be influenced. Sometimes you have to stand it all by yourself. You're the only man that won't go along with some deal that isn't right." And I made that quite plain to newly enlisted men that I talked to. And I contacted a good many that were going into the service during my life.

FUCHS: Do you recall who enlisted you in Battery D?

MURPHY: Well, Captain [Charles B.] Allen.

FUCHS: Oh, yes.

MURPHY: Captain Allen. I told him about my previous experience and he said, "Well, fine. I think we had ought to make

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a corporal out of you." And in due time I did receive a corporal's stripes, and that was under Karl D. Klemm.

FUCHS: Did you have any recollection of things in this country before you went overseas?

MURPHY: My first recollection of Lieutenant Truman was when he took charge of the canteen.

FUCHS: Oh, you do remember that?

MURPHY: I remember him in the canteen and he had had no -- he was attached to F Battery, I believe. And the next time that I saw him, and remembered him particularly, was when he took the train leaving Ft. Sill for France. This was on a training detail of which I was a part. He was

in the officer's group. I remember him and I remember the wives of these officers. I remember seeing Mrs. Truman at that time.

FUCHS: You mean you went overseas in advance?

MURPHY: I went in the advance detail that was a part of the officer's detail. Of course, we did not mingle together, and they went to a different place than we did. We were the noncommissioned officers and enlisted men that went over for special training.

FUCHS: Do you recall any thoughts you might have had about this officer at that time?

MURPHY: No, I just observed him. I just observed him. I had seen him in the canteen and I saw him -- I think I saw

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him kissing his wife goodbye at the train at that time.

FUCHS: Your impression of the...

MURPHY: But not his wife, his sweetheart, I should say because he wasn't married at that time.

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: That's my mistake.

FUCHS: As you recall it, is your impression of the canteen being as well run as what the stories have said?

MURPHY: Well, yes. Yes, I think so. I think so. Of course, I just went there to buy candy bars and whatever I wanted to buy.

FUCHS: Do you recall seeing Eddie Jacobson around there?

MURPHY: Oh, yes, I saw him many times. I always saw him there. And I saw him after the war when Truman and Jacobson, Eddie Jacobson, had their shop. I used to go there every time I was downtown; it was sort of a headquarters. You went in there to find out what was going on. Somebody else had been in there, why, that was a news center.

FUCHS: Battery D men primarily?

MURPHY: Battery D men all went there to get the latest news.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything else about the haberdashery?

MURPHY: Well, I know it was right up to snuff. It was a sharp place. It was well run and it was a beautiful layout. Too bad that we had depression and caused different independent businesses to have to close up.

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FUCHS: Yes. What is your next recollection of Mr. Truman?

MURPHY: When he took charge of Battery D, the next time I saw him.

FUCHS: And what do you recall of that?*

MURPHY: Mr. Truman must well remember the day he took charge of Battery D. No doubt but that he thought of the four captains who preceded him. As soon as the men were dismissed from formation, remarks were heard such as, "Well, I wonder how long he will last." To squelch any doubt that he intended to last a long time, his first move was to call a meeting of us noncommissioned officers saying, "I am sure you men know the rules and regulations. I will issue the orders and you are responsible for them being carried out."

As corporal of the guard the first night, I felt it my duty to try to enforce the 9 p.m. lights out regulations. There was a big crap game going on (and whoever heard of an army that was any good that didn't have a lot of crapshooters). A short time before taps I warned them to wind up the game on time. Among them some had been to a French canteen and had had too much to drink. After 9 o'clock, I found the game still going strong and said, "I thought I told you to have lights out."

Someone said, "Who said 'lights out?'"

Just then my lights went out. I hit the floor. As

*At this point in the interview Mr. Murphy read a prepared statement.

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I picked myself up, I saw one fellow being hurriedly carried out -- presumably the one who hit me. Next day one of the fellows asked me what I was going to do about last night. I told him that I hadn't decided -- maybe nothing if they cooperated with me. Thought perhaps that best for the reputation of the Battery and why stir up a big stink on the first day that we have a new captain.

At the first aid tent, Major [Charles E.] Wilson (I believe he was a cousin of President [Woodrow] Wilson) gave me a medication for my cut mouth and asked how it happened. I told him that I had tripped and fallen down. He gave me that funny look as much as to say, "Don't expect me to believe that!" And he just said, "Uh huh, uh huh!" Well, such was life with old Dizzy D.

Captain Harry was very considerate of his men and very just. One of his officers once accused me of removing a guard from the kitchen allowing some meat to be stolen. One of the men

reported to Captain Harry that the meat had been stolen the day before as he had seen someone take it. Captain Harry made it a point to have me report to his tent and he apologized for the action of one of his lieutenants.

Shortly after armistice a brigade full pack inspection was held. The brigadier general and all the high officers were present. It was a long, long tiresome day waiting

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out our turn for inspection. The men were thoroughly disgusted. When through at last, someone in our group said in a low voice, "All together men, Battery D sound off." All the men sounded off with "Hurray...! [a well-known dirty word]" and for that we had to unroll our packs for another full inspection.

One can well imagine the feeling and rejoicing of the men after armistice. All wanted to celebrate, mostly with drink. A group from our battery was in a small town whooping it up. One fellow insisted that he felt so good that he wanted to jump out the hotel window. He kept several of the more sober ones busy keeping him from doing just that.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything more specific about Captain Truman overseas in any particular engagements?

MURPHY: No. Of course, I had quite a lot of contacts with him. I remember one night that we were in Verdun and we were being shelled by mustard gas and I stayed up at Captain Truman's headquarters. In fact we stood out under the stars and discussed whether we should call a gas alarm or not. We stayed there for several hours and decided it wasn't a sufficient concentration to justify a gas alarm.

FUCHS: You mean they weren't putting the shells close enough to you?

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MURPHY: No, the wind -- they weren't close enough. We were getting a -- just a faint smell of gas, but not enough to justify an alarm.

FUCHS: Did you ever come under gas attack where you had to don your mask?

MURPHY: No. One day I was out walking around and most of the men were in the dugout, the French dugout east of Verdun, and all of a sudden they came rushing out with their gas masks on. There had been a gas barrage forward of our position, but the gas that was used was chlorine gas and it lays very low on the ground. And due to the fact that I was walking around, I never smelled any of it, but it floated right down and went into the dugouts and the men all came out with their eyes watering, grabbing their masks and getting them on. That just shows how that gas lays right down on the ground, it's heavy.

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: That's the only time that -- we had gas alarms a good many times, but it just did not necessitate putting on masks.

FUCHS: I see. You know, of course, of the famous, or infamous, I don't know which, "Battle of Who Run?" Do you have your version of that?

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MURPHY: No, I wish I did. I would say one thing. I want to say one thing in regard to this. I heard about it. I had traveling orders. I would have been there, but I had traveling orders to go to a school of instructions on gas; and I was later made the gas noncommissioned officer after I returned from this. That's how I come to not be there, and for many years I never could get anybody to talk about that Battle of Who Run. Finally Jim [James J.] Doherty came out here to see me, not many years ago, and he gave me the full story as he saw it. He said that he was so anxious to go up there and he should never have gone up there because he wasn't accustomed to riding, but he wanted to be up there. So he rode one of the teams for one of the sections. What I wanted to bring out was, there was a certain noncommissioned officer, Corporal Bill [William A.] O'Hare. I had always admired him and I had a feeling that I liked to be close to him. He was such a calm fellow under all conditions, and I don't know why it was, but I just liked to be around where Bill was.

FUCHS: He gave you confidence.

MURPHY: He gave me confidence just to be around him. And Jim Doherty said that he felt that Bill O'Hare should have a Croix de Guerre for the way he acted in this Battle of Who Run. And I was glad to hear that because I had picked Bill as being one of the real brave men.

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I would call him a real brave man. And I had always thought that if Captain Truman ever gave me orders to pick some men to do something where danger was involved and real good judgment, Bill O'Hare would be my first choice.

FUCHS: Do you recall just what he did in this incident?

MURPHY: No. I was not there. But I thought so much of Bill that he was the last man I went out of my way to go and bid goodbye when I left Kansas City in 1930. And that was the last time I saw him. He passed away many years ago.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything about the orchard at Cheppy?

MURPHY: Oh yes, yes.

FUCHS: What is the significance of that?

MURPHY: Well, when I had got into that first night at Cheppy, we had fired the night before and I had helped -- on the first day in the advance I had been out real late with some fellows trying to get a caisson out of the mud, and I failed to get anything to eat and I hadn't had

anything to eat for two days, practically, and no sleep. And the first night that we slept there at Cheppy I went to sleep right on the ground with a blanket, and later there was some food came up, but it was not very good. It was kind of stale. And Vern Chaney, my buddy that I slept with most of the time, brought me up a boiled potato and

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tried to awaken me. He said he took me right up in his arms and shook me and he just could not wake me. He just could not. He tried everything and he just couldn't wake me. So, he put that potato in my hand and when I woke up in the morning, here was that boiled potato in my hand.

FUCHS: You must have been pretty tired out.

MURPHY: I was really tired out.

FUCHS: Have you any other recollections of battery action or Captain Truman, in France?

MURPHY: No. Now, he was -- you see he was not at the battery. He was always in the forward position. There's where [Floyd T.] Ricketts, possibly, and some others -- I think Ricketts was in charge. I'm sure he was in the instrument detail and had to do with communication between the Captain and the battery.

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: He should be able to give you some good information.

FUCHS: What were your exact duties in the -- were you in a particular gun section?

MURPHY: No, I was in the -- after the action started I was the gas noncommissioned officer.

FUCHS: Where would you stay?

MURPHY: I stayed as close to Captain Truman as I could stay, at all times, because I wanted his judgment. If something

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come up, I wanted somebody to help me make a decision, help make decisions.

FUCHS: Then you were in physical proximity to him most of the time?

MURPHY: Well, except when he was at the front.

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: Except when he was on the observation post.

FUCHS: I see, the Captain was normally on the OP?

MURPHY: That's right.

FUCHS: I see.

MURPHY: That's right.

FUCHS: What were your reflections as to how he fired the battery, so to speak? Did you ever think about him in comparison with some of the other batteries?

MURPHY: No, I couldn't compare it, but I know when those orders came down, that gun squad worked just like clockwork. It was just -- it was a sight, they just were perfect. They just got those rounds off so fast that -- unbelievable. And those marvelous French 75 guns, they were marvelous. Without them there would have been -- it would have been a bad war.

FUCHS: Well, you were born on a ranch and you must have had at least some experience with horses. How come you didn't get into the horse detail or go into the cavalry?

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MURPHY: I read a book, a small pamphlet, on the life of an artillery horse, and I decided that if I was ever in the service where there were any horses involved I didn't want to have to care for them, be responsible for them, because they had such a hard life. And our horses had just that hard life. They were -- we were not able to have adequate feed, they got so weak and in such bad condition they practically died in the harness.

FUCHS: You didn't have any desire to go into the cavalry?

MURPHY: No.

FUCHS: Did you have a chance to observe Mr. Truman's horsemanship?

MURPHY: Well, yes. What I observed, he was good, he was a good horseman.

FUCHS: Did you return on the *Zeppelin*?

MURPHY: Yes.

FUCHS: Do you have any recollections about that? Anything that happened that might add a little to the story of either Mr. Truman or the battery that would be of interest?

MURPHY: The only thing that irked me on that trip on the *Zeppelin* coming back was -- I never felt this way before -- but I was on guard, as usual. Of course I can't tell all this tale, but I was very much irked at -- and I shouldn't have felt this way, but there were a bunch of nurses on

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this boat and they were on the forward section of the boat and that was confined to officers. Somebody had put up a sign across from the bulkhead to the rail, "Officers Only," and when I saw that I was just burned up you know, that I couldn't even walk around where those nurses were. I couldn't even see them. I hadn't seen an American woman for two years, and that really burned me up. But it's just one of those things that had to be that way, I realize that.

FUCHS: Do you recall seeing Captain Truman on the ship?

MURPHY: No. I don't believe I recall seeing him. I must have, but I don't recall any incident on there. It was kind of a rough trip, and I had never been seasick. I went over on the *George Washington* and it was just crammed with men, and the air was bad and everything, and I didn't get sick at all. We had had some shots the day before we went aboard the *Zeppelin* to come home; and I had walked down to my bunk, and I was undoing some rope that you -- this was a brand new ship, it never even had a shakedown.

FUCHS: Oh, is that right?

MURPHY: I was undoing some, raveling some rope to make a mattress. You were supposed to fill the mattress with this. I started to do that, and I got so sick that -- I just never had been so sick as I was then, sick at the

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stomach. And I looked out the porthole and we weren't even moving. The boat was just -- a slight movement; but that reaction from that shot I had had made me sick. Well, of course, I got over it in fine shape, and enjoyed the trip home.

FUCHS: How long did the trip home take?

MURPHY: Well, I couldn't say. It was several days of course, five or six days.

FUCHS: Do you have any recollections of Colonel Klemm overseas?

MURPHY: Yes.

FUCHS: What were your impressions of him?

MURPHY: I'm glad you asked that question. If you want to know about it, I'm very glad you asked that question. He's a man I've always felt sorry for. He was a West Pointer I understand, a very strict -- very high headed, arrogant, he demanded perfect discipline. He wanted perfect discipline, and I think that was hard to attain in our National Guard outfit as compared with his West Point training. When on our first day advancing to the Argonne Forest, we came to a ravine where there had been a bridge blown out; and he called a meeting of the officers, I don't know how, but anyway he stood -- he called a meeting of the officers and he had a map to make plans for a detour across the ravine at a certain point. While he

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was talking to these officers he had his back to the front line. I heard several rifle bullets whizz by, and we also had an over and short shrapnel round on us, which made it a very difficult time. And Colonel Klemm stood up there just like he was on parade ground. I never saw such a cool cookie in all my life. He really was a soldier when the chips were down, as far as I'm concerned, what I observed. That's the only time I observed him, but I'm glad you asked the question.

FUCHS: When the unit landed back in this country and came back into Kansas City, according to one account I read, he was in civilian clothes in the crowd.

MURPHY: Who was?

FUCHS: Colonel Klemm.

MURPHY: Yes.

FUCHS: Why was that?

MURPHY: Well, I don't know. I wouldn't know about that. I wouldn't know about that. I don't know why he preceded the battery. I don't know anything -- official orders or something. I don't know what it was.

FUCHS: Did you have any contact with Eddie McKim?

MURPHY: Oh yes. Yes.

FUCHS: What were your impressions of him as a soldier?

MURPHY: Very good. I liked Eddie. I saw him back at our fiftieth anniversary and had quite a lot of talk

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with him. In fact my wife and I rode from the Union Station where we had breakfast, back up to the Muehlebach Hotel with him in his car. He had driven down from Omaha.

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: I was very much surprised to hear of his death. He was only seventy-four and that sounds -- my next birthday I'll be eighty and seventy-four sounds kind of young to me.

FUCHS: Did you see Spencer Salisbury overseas?

MURPHY: Salisbury?

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: Yes, I did. Yes.

FUCHS: Do you have any memories of him?

MURPHY: No. No, not -- only just, I remember seeing all the officers when Klemm was talking to them. I remember seeing different ones there.

FUCHS: Did you have any contact with Salisbury after you were back in this country?

MURPHY: No, I did not.

FUCHS: These four officers who preceded Captain Truman, do you recall who they were and why each of them...

MURPHY: No, I wouldn't know why. Captain Allen was the first one, and there was one maybe in there that I don't even recall. Captain Allen was the first one, and I don't -- between Captain Allen and Captain [Rollin] Ritter there

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was some officer, but for a very short time, and I don't even recall him. And then there was Captain [John H.] Thacher.

FUCHS: Why was he replaced, do you know?

MURPHY: Well, they made a major out of him, so I wouldn't know why that was. He must not have been too bad. He was very well respected -- the men liked Captain Thacher very much. He was very well liked.

FUCHS: Well, do you think there is more fiction than truth in this story that the other captains weren't quite able to handle the battery as it should be handled, this rough, tough, incorrigible Irish battery?

MURPHY: Oh, I think they all made some mistakes, and I think that when Truman called that meeting of the noncommissioned officers and practically turned the battery over to the noncommissioned officers, that was the key to his success.

FUCHS: It gave the noncommissioned officers a lot of confidence, and a feeling of authority and...

MURPHY: That's right. It gave us to understand that he was going to back us up to the hilt for anything that we did. All we had to do was do our duty and he was going to back us up, and he did.

FUCHS: Your arrival back in Kansas City, what do you recall of that?

MURPHY: Well, it was a big affair. It was a big celebration.

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I've never experienced anything like it, you know, the enthusiasm of the crowd, the cheering and all out. We went into Convention Hall and had a big feed, and for that evening I had a date with a girl that I had known for a long time, and I guess that I stayed out quite late, yet not too late; I had always said that when I got back I was going to sleep, really get a night's sleep. Well, I went to sleep that night. I had a room at the Gates Hotel, as I remember. That flatiron building that was right down in the middle of Main Street. Well, I put a "No Disturb" card on my door, and when I awoke and got up I presumed that maybe it was morning, something. I got dressed -- I didn't have a watch at the time, I had lost my watch -- and I went down in the lobby and things looked kind of funny. It was 3:30 in the afternoon. I really got my sleep.

FUCHS: I know that Mr. Truman was given a loving cup as the captain of the battery. Do you have any recollections of that?

MURPHY: No, I don't know anything about that. Oh, I should, but I don't. I don't recall it.

FUCHS: You don't remember any collection being taken up or anything for that?

MURPHY: No, I really don't. I know that I must have heard about it if anybody was supposed to contribute to it,

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I'm sure I did. But it has slipped my mind right now.

FUCHS: Mr. Truman was married a short time after he got back from France, in June. Did you attend the wedding?

MURPHY: No, I was unable to attend that wedding due to my connection with the Ford Motor Company. Something came up, overtime, nights, Sundays, or something prevented me from attending. I've always been very sorry.

FUCHS: Were all the battery members asked?

MURPHY: Well, now I wasn't there, but a good many went. All of -- must have been a lot of them around Kansas City. I've always regretted that.

FUCHS: Well, did he send out invitations to all the battery members?

MURPHY: Yes.

FUCHS: Was that a written invitation or just by way of mouth?

MURPHY: Written.

FUCHS: It was?

MURPHY: If I remember, it was a written invitation.

FUCHS: What did you do then upon your return, go immediately back to work at the...

MURPHY: I went to the Ford plant and -- to let them know that I was back. And the superintendent wanted me to go to work that day. And I said, "Listen, I've been gone for two long years, and I haven't been home or anything."

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I said, "Don't you think I ought to have a week or two to just vacation and go on up home?"

Well he said, "We sure need you awfully bad."

Well I said, "I think I'm going to take those two weeks. I'll see you. I'll be back, and I'll go to work in a couple of weeks," which I did.

FUCHS: Did you go on up to North Dakota then?

MURPHY: Yes.

FUCHS: You did? Your folks were both still living?

MURPHY: Yes, they were.

FUCHS: Then you came back, and -- where was the Ford plant at that time?

MURPHY: Eleventh and Winchester.

FUCHS: What were they building there?

MURPHY: Ford cars.

FUCHS: Just cars.

MURPHY: Ford cars.

FUCHS: Complete assembly of them?

MURPHY: Yes, complete assembly.

FUCHS: I see. Then did you stay in the Reserves, by any chance?

MURPHY: No, I didn't.

In regard to that Ford plant, I had worked on the first moving conveyor that was in that Ford plant, that we actually -- they had previously pushed the chassis along

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the line, but in the spring of 1914 they put in a moving conveyor, and I remember the first day that I worked on that conveyor.

FUCHS: That's interesting. Did they have enlisted men's reserves then or was there just an officer's reserve?

MURPHY: Oh, you could have. You could have joined something, but I guess I thought I had had enough of it.

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: I thought I'd had enough.

FUCHS: Did you keep up an interest in the battery reunions at that time?

MURPHY: Yes. Oh, yes. I attended all battery reunions until I came to California.

FUCHS: Now, have you any recollections of Captain Truman in connection with any of these events?

MURPHY: Well, you'll get them from somebody else, there's no use in me telling you.

FUCHS: Might not. They might say the same thing.

MURPHY: Well, they will say the same thing.

FUCHS: Well, I'd like to have them.

MURPHY: Well, of course I'll never forget the first reunion we had. As I remember, it was at the Elk's club, or the Eagles, or some club. Anyway, we had a beautiful banquet table and I was just going to enjoy that evening, but really you know, we had so much liquor around there that

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things got really rough.

FUCHS: What happened?

MURPHY: Well, they even got up and walked on the table, some of them. They called the police. There was a dance going on upstairs, they called the police, and as luck (I suppose you'd call it luck), would have it, two of our members who had joined the police force were sent down there to quiet things down. I'll never forget one of them. He was Sergeant [George F.] Brice. Somebody was standing on the table and they reached down and took his gun away from him and wheeled it around.

FUCHS: Did he laugh or get mad?

MURPHY: Well, they just laughed. They didn't do anything. They couldn't do anything. You can't do anything with a bunch like that.

FUCHS: Anything else you recall about that first reunion, which I am sure would be of interest?

MURPHY: Well, I understand that Captain Truman had to pay for a lot of broken dishes.

FUCHS: He had to pay for it?

MURPHY: Yes, or he did pay. I understand that he did pay for a lot of broken dishes at that battery reunion. And we had many more funny reunions.

FUCHS: This first reunion, now what year was that?

MURPHY: I think it was the first one. I wouldn't know for

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sure.

FUCHS: Another incident that happened at one of these reunions?

MURPHY: Yeah, I remember another incident where we had a reunion at the old Coates House. I understand that building is still standing.

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: I don't know, I don't think it's operated as a hotel. But anyway, in the lobby they had a trash can a good deal like what we used at Ft. Sill, and you were required to urinate in that before you could get into the dining room.

FUCHS: This was quite an outfit. Anything else that you recall about Battery D reunions, or the American Legion? Did you become a member of that?

MURPHY: Yes, I belonged to the Legion for many years, but when I came out here I dropped a lot of things. I should never have done so. I don't know why I did, but I just did. Right now I'm not a member of the American Legion. I'm ashamed of it, too.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything in connection with any of the conventions, of Mr. Truman and the American Legion?

MURPHY: No. No. I didn't go to any conventions. I belonged to the Sanford Brown post.

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FUCHS: Oh, yes. What about Mr. Truman's entrance into politics in 1922 after the haberdashery failed? Do you have any recollections of that?

MURPHY: Well, you see I was working at the Ford Motor Company, and in the summertime I was living out at Fairmount Park. A bunch of us boys hired a cook and we had a summer camp out there. There used to be as high as twelve or fourteen of us. We were all single, you know, and there was a lake and we went swimming. I was kind of out of things out there. I was so much involved with the Ford Motor Company that I just didn't have time for other things.

FUCHS: You don't have memories of him then serving on the county court?

MURPHY: Well, I know that he did. I know that he was elected county judge, wasn't that right?

FUCHS: Yes.

MURPHY: And wasn't he a road commissioner?

FUCHS: Well, when he was younger before he went into...

MURPHY: Well, that all happened...

FUCHS: ...the Army, he had been a road overseer, but with the County Court, building roads and public buildings and things like that was one of their main jobs. You don't have any recollections of the battery being involved in campaigning for him as a group, or collecting monies or...

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MURPHY: Most of that came up really after I left Kansas City.

FUCHS: Yes. Well, perhaps you have something that you would like to say in summation about Mr. Truman as a captain of the battery, your general overall impression of him?

MURPHY: No, I don't know about that, but I do know that as I have heard it and as I have observed it, and used it, when Captain Truman got to be Vice President, when he was President, all you had to say was that you were from Battery D and the doors were opened to you. I never found them closed to me and I never heard of anybody else.

FUCHS: It was a good entree there, being a member of Battery D.

MURPHY: Yes, it was. I will try to tell a little story about one morning -- since I was here in California, of course. He was on the campaign trail, and I picked up a Sunday morning paper, and I saw that Mr. Truman was staying at the Biltmore Hotel; and I told my wife, Ruth, I said, "Get your duds on, I'm going to take you up. I want you to meet the future President of the United States." I thought nothing of having any problem to go in there or to see him. It was just like I would go to see anybody. I went up there, up into the hotel, got my car parked, and went up there. In fact, Eddie McKim was outside of the door where he had a suite of rooms.

FUCHS: Now was this when he was campaigning for Vice President

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in 1944 with Roosevelt, or was this when he was campaigning in '48?

MURPHY: I guess it was in 1944, he was the Vice President. He was Vice President. Eddie McKim was there outside the door or somewhere, and he saw me and he come over and said, "Why, hello Harry."

And I said, "My wife and I come up to see Mr. Truman, Captain Truman."

"Well," he said, "gee, there's nobody in there right now, go right on in."

So we went in. And Truman paid me a lot of high compliments and to this day, Ruth, my wife, believes those things and she has been a staunch Truman man ever since.

And to show how he has that quick way about his action, we had not more than gotten in there and talking to him, when somebody poked their head in and said, "Mr. Truman, there's a committee from the Chamber of Commerce waiting to see you."

Well, he said, "Just tell them to keep on waiting. I've got company."

FUCHS: You had another little statement that you wanted to make about your feelings for Mr. Truman.

MURPHY: Yes.

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FUCHS: Perhaps you'd care to close with that.

MURPHY: Well, I think I will. I wish I had this printed. I think of Battery D as the most mischievous, unpredictable, and difficult to handle unit in the whole AEF. But when the chips were down, to the man, they were a fine bunch of soldiers. I am proud to have been one of them. Captain Truman, who did successfully handle this outfit, deserved to be President of the United States.

FUCHS: One more question. Did you go back to the inaugural ceremonies in Washington?

MURPHY: Oh, yes.

FUCHS: Do you have anything that stands out in your memory about that in 1949?

MURPHY: No, only that we were treated like kings. That's all I've got to say. We were treated like royalty, I'll say that.

FUCHS: Fine.

MURPHY: There wasn't a hitch in that. We had the front seats, we had the whole show with us. Battery D had the front of everything.

FUCHS: Very good.

MURPHY: He saw to that. He sure did. He had made the statement if he ever got to be President he was going to have us up there and he did. He really put it on.

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I have many pictures around here about that.

FUCHS: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

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