

Oral History Interview
with
HENRY P. CHILES

Schoolmate and lifetime friend of Harry S. Truman and Bess Wallace Truman; served as a deputy county clerk of Jackson County, 1919-1948; and treasurer of Jackson County, 1949-1956.

Independence, Missouri
November 1, 1961
and
August 14, 1962

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

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
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Independence, Missouri
November 1, 1961
By J. R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library

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FUCHS: Well, Mr. Chiles, we might as well go ahead now. When did you first...?

CHILES: Well, I knew Harry Truman, I'd judge, about 1895. He moved to the opposite corner of the block. He was on Waldo and I'm on White Oak and the alley ran between, and that was our town meeting grounds in between the two places. That's where we played, up and down that

alley. We'd be playing cowboy or shinny or any game we played -- those are all pretty rough -- rougher than the games they play now -- and Harry would come by. I didn't get acquainted with

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him right away -- his brother played with us, but he did not play much in those rough games because he wore double-strength glasses. He just couldn't get in that kind of a game. But he came by and talked to us and that's when I first saw him. Well, then he finished his grade school at Columbian School and I was in the Ott School district. When we graduated from grade school and went to high school we met and were in the same class. At that time the high school here in Independence consisted of two rooms on the second floor of the Ott School. The rest of the grade school -- the Ott Grade School -- was in the same building.

FUCHS: I see, there were just two floors in the building?

CHILES: I went two years there, and so did Harry. Two rooms in the Ott School were the high school. I believe they had about four teachers because I remember in particular Professor Palmer and Miss Tillie Brown. Professor Palmer was the principal and Miss Tillie Brown was the language or grammar teacher and I think Miss Hardin too -- later on

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she was Mrs. Palmer. We went there for two years and then we all went up to the -- what they call, what is now -- the site of the Junior High School. They built a high school there and there is where Harry and I went to the second two years of our high school.

FUCHS: How did he happen to go to Columbian School when he lived so close to you and Columbian School was farther south?

CHILES: Well, before he moved over here he lived down in the Columbian district and moved during the term, so they let him go back over there, and he went to Columbian and I still went to Ott.

FUCHS: In other words he finished up where he started grade school? He was actually living in the Ott district up here?

CHILES: Yes, he moved to the Ott district but he went back over there.

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Before he lived over here on Waldo, he lived down on Crysler. He lived down there quite a while. We were both boys out of the farm and I think we are both examples that you can take the boy out of the farm but you can't take the farm out of the boy.

FUCHS: When did you move to White Oak?

CHILES: I moved over here on White Oak when I was eight years old. I think in 1890.

FUCHS: You are junior to Mr. Truman, is that right? He is several years older than you, I believe?

CHILES: No, I always thought we were the same age. I accused him of fudging on his age but he didn't and he was two years younger than I.

FUCHS: He is two years younger than you?

CHILES: Almost to the day and our birthdays are both in May. Mine's the 25th and I think his is about the 10th. And I accused him of fudging but he was right. I guess he

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was just smarter than I was, and anyway, we all went to school and we all graduated in 1901.

FUCHS: Do you have any specific memories of him in the neighborhood other than this?

CHILES: Well, I remember when we were playing there in the alley. He took an almost daily music lesson and he came by with a great big leather music folio or portfolio, or whatever you call it, under his arm. He would come by and watch us and maybe he would hit a lick or two in the shinny or try to throw a rope. We not only played cowboys, we really were cowboys. The Trumans, as I say, came off the farm and my father came off the farm, and we both had horses. Each one of us boys had a pony and we'd play real cowboys, and I am not fooling. We would rope each other and drag around. I remember one incident. When we'd practice we would ride down the alley as fast as we could and see if we could lariat a post, a fence post, and then if we caught it we would turn the rope loose and come on back. One time, some

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way or the other my rope got caught around the saddle horn and when I roped the post, come to the end of the rope, there we both were, me and the saddle, and the horse went on. But I remember Harry used to come down there, but Harry didn't -- I don't remember ever seeing him on a horse. Now Vivian, his brother and younger, the same age as my younger brother, they were there and we used to go out and run horse races out on the River Road. There is a straight stretch of road -- that was about the time the Airline was built -- and there is almost a half a mile there. There was a few houses there and Alderson's house was out there, and from that house up to the Airline bridge was our race track. We had many a race up there; sometimes I'd win and sometimes they'd win.

FUCHS: The Airline bridge, now is that where...?

CHILES: The bridge is still there but the railroad has been abandoned. It was a shortcut from the Kansas City, Pittsburg, Gulf and the leader of the Kansas City Belt.

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It was a switch track that ran out to Independence and they came in through here at Delaware Street and they had a trestle goes across from Delaware to College Street. Oh, it was about a half mile of trestle and some forty to fifty feet high. The old concrete abutment there where it ended on College Street is still there. Some of the right-of-way is still there. They had a depot where the Montgomery Ward order office is now. They came in there and backed up and then they went backing for -- they carried a good deal of freight. What it was, was a switch track for the Kansas City Belt. But they carried passengers and when Sugar Creek opened up, a good many years later afterwards, that was the main freight line for Sugar Creek refinery. Besides the Santa Fe went through there, too. I rode the first train that backed into Sugar Creek, that came in there. They would go up to the main line and then back into Sugar Creek about a half a mile and carried passengers from Independence down there and then carried passengers to Kansas City. For years I worked for the Kansas City

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Southern and I had a pass on it and went back and forth on that. They called it the Airline. I don't know why, but it was known as the Airline Railroad. It was a branch of the Kansas City Belt. First it was the Kansas City, Pittsburg, Gulf and then later on they changed the name to the Kansas City Southern, but they at that time owned the Kansas City Belt too.

FUCHS: And you and Vivian used to race horses out to that bridge?

CHILES: We used to race horses out there from the Alderson place into the Airline bridge on River Road. That was the finish line. Harry didn't do that much, those glasses bothered him, but he couldn't do without the glasses, so he just didn't.

FUCHS: You remember him as wearing glasses when he moved up here?

CHILES: Oh yes, he wore them all the time. Ever since I've known him he had thick glasses.

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FUCHS: Did the boys ever seem to kid him, you know, because he didn't engage in...?

CHILES: Well, once in a while they would kid him but he was serious. They wanted to call him sissy, but they just didn't do it because they had a lot of respect for him. I remember one time we were playing, I think, another game that we played, Jesse James or robbers, and we were the Dalton brothers out in Kansas -- that's about the time they got killed -- and we were arguing about them. Harry came in -- we got the history mixed up ourselves -- but Harry came in and straightened it out, just who were the Dalton brothers and how many got killed. Things like that the boys had a lot of respect for; they didn't call him sissy. Nowadays they probably would.

FUCHS: Do you remember his parents?

CHILES: I knew both of them well, they lived over there. His father came to town -- as I say, you can't take the farm out of the boy -- so just more for something to do

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than anything else, he took a horse and went out through the country. Everybody those days had a few cows and -- a little bit farther out this is big stock country -- he would buy cattle, one cow or two cows. One time in particular I remember, he came in with a calf across his saddle and the old mother cow following up. He didn't have to tie her, she just followed the calf. He had bought the cow and calf and come in. And he had a lot on the corner of Waldo that run back to the alley. Oh, it covered several lots wide and had a barn and he kept one to a dozen cattle in there all the time. He'd slick them up and if necessary he'd drive them to Kansas City and sell them to the stockyard. In those days we didn't have any trucks, of course, and the only way to get them there was to ship them on the train or drive them. So people within fifty miles of the stockyard didn't ever do anything but drive them. Mr. Truman would get two or three head and drive them right on down Fifth Street right into the stockyard. Now as a boy many times --

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my uncle, my father and my brother were all stock feeders, cattle feeders -- I would go up there with them and I'd help drive (dozens of times), as many as three hundred cattle right out of the stockcars, down the street to Independence Avenue and on down, sometimes to Buckner, sometimes to pasture around Independence. We drove the stock because it was the only way you had to get them there. It would take more time to get them on the train car and off the car than it would to drive through, so they just drove them through.

FUCHS: Do you remember seeing Harry help in that?

CHILES: No, I don't think Harry ever helped. I think Vivian helped drive stock up to the city, but I don't think Harry ever did.

FUCHS: Where was he taking music lessons at that time? Do you recall?

CHILES: No, I don't. I don't know who his music teacher was. He went uptown. That's what we called it. We always called that uptown you know, and he went up there somewhere but I

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don't know where.

FUCHS: Do you recall him in school? Any particular incidents?

CHILES: Well, no, he was more of a history student and I was just getting by; he was making a record. I don't remember much about him in school; only that he made all pretty good grades, and if I made passing I was lucky. I wouldn't study, they tried to get me to study. I guess that's the reason he got to be President and as far as I got was to be county treasurer.

FUCHS: Well, at that time the library was right in the main school building -- after they moved to the new high school at Pleasant and Maple, isn't that right?

CHILES: Well, at that time they had a very limited library. Oh, a few encyclopedias or something there. They didn't have room for them and then when they moved down there they designated one of the largest rooms. Before we left there after two years that room was filled with books. A little later on, after I got out of school, my daughters went to that school; they woke me up about two o'clock one morning and we saw it burn down and every book in it.

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FUCHS: Do you recall seeing him reading in there?

CHILES: Yes, I have seen him in there many times, but to tell you the truth I didn't fool around the library very much.

FUCHS: Could they get in there and read on Saturdays or weekends?

CHILES: As I recall it they could, yes. I think, the main thing, they didn't do too much reading there and they took the books out. I saw Harry go home many a time with two or three books on weekends, and I guess by Monday he had them all read. The rest of us just read Jesse James, these little paperback book, Jesse James stories. We were reading those in the barn loft.

FUCHS: In the new high school, I believe you went to different rooms for different types of classes, is that right? At Ott you stayed in...?

CHILES: At Ott, I think, there finally got to be four rooms and they had four teachers besides Professor Palmer, and they continually recited, all the time. And I'd have a

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homeroom and I'd sit there and listen to the other classes recite. They all recited, and whoever was in the homeroom they got over in a corner somewhere and listened to the others recite. I think four rooms is what they had, and they had a little cubbyhole there that they called the library. I don't think they had a hundred books. Harry patronized that more than anybody. He read more history than anybody. He was a great historian.

FUCHS: Yes, they always said he had a great deal of interest in history. Do you recall anything about graduation?

CHILES: Well, I know he was there and I was there. At that time we had forty-five in our class and we were actually worrying what the country was going to do with all that education. That was the largest class ever graduated. Harry was amongst them and so was I, and we thought that if they would have kept that up the country would be over-educated. I think this last time -- I don't know -- that they graduated 12 or 1500 this last graduation.

FUCHS: Quite a difference! So you kind of lost track of him after your graduation?

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CHILES: Yes, after we graduated I went to work for the Kansas City Southern and Harry, I think, went on the farm, and he made a farm hand until the war. I think he stayed there until the war came on, I'm not right sure, but he was clear over in the west part of the county and I was in the east.

FUCHS: Well, he did go to Kansas City for a number of years.

CHILES: Well, I understood he went up there and took a short pre-law course but never graduated.

FUCHS: That was later, that was when he was a county judge. But what I was wondering -- for a few months in 1902 he moved from Waldo and lived at 903 N. Liberty. Do you recall anything in connection with that?

CHILES: No, I was gone after 1901. I didn't see or hear of Harry until he started to run for county judge. I heard of him when he got to be, I believe, captain of the company.

FUCHS: You don't recall anything about his military days?

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CHILES: I lost contact with him. I stayed on the farm and when I came back I got a political job. I still farmed and had a political job.

FUCHS: What job was that?

CHILES: I was the county deputy in charge of the Independence office of county clerk.

FUCHS: You were deputy county clerk?

CHILES: Yes, they started that in 1919. When I first came up here they had the square all decorated up around the courthouse. Decorated with flags and the soldiers were coming home from World War I. Everyday there would be a new company or something come in, and they kept the decorations up for a year. Some big celebration concerning the homecoming of the soldiers would happen nearly everyday. The reason was there was just a few at a time. There would be a company come in here or somebody come in there, or some dignitary would come in. I was noticing this morning in the Forty Year column of the *Kansas City Star*, or *Times*, rather, all those dignitaries -- General Pershing, Clemenceau.

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Well, anyhow, there was five heroes of the World War I up there and I was in Kansas City and saw them. I didn't meet them, but I saw them and the parade. They had a gigantic big parade and I saw them.

FUCHS: That was in 1921, I believe. They are rededicating that now, you know, the Liberty Memorial.

CHILES: They are going to rededicate that memorial up there. That was about the time they built it, I believe.

FUCHS: Was that what these generals were in town for at that time, for that dedication?

CHILES: Yes, that's right, and Woodrow Wilson made a speech. Not at that particular time, not at the time they had the parade, but he came back and made his speech and I went up and heard that at the mall of the memorial.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything of Mr. Truman in the haberdashery in Kansas City about that time?

CHILES: No sir, I don't know a thing in the world about that. I lived in the country and was wearing mostly jeans then.

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FUCHS: Now in 1919 you did come back to Independence, is that right? You lived here?

CHILES: I moved back here off the farm -- back here on White Oak.

FUCHS: Well, he had the haberdashery from 1919 to 1922.

CHILES: Well, I came back, and several times at the courthouse I met Bess. She and I were discussing, or I congratulated her on her marriage, and we discussed it anyway. I knew Bess a long time before I knew Harry.

FUCHS: Do you have some remembrances of her as a child?

CHILES: Yes, they lived over on Delaware and I passed their house going to the Ott School. Of course, in the neighborhood I knew Bess and I knew George and Frank, but I didn't know Fred. Fred was the younger one. I knew George and Bess and Frank. George was a little fellow and Frank, of course, was younger than I was and so was Bess.

FUCHS: They were living farther north on Delaware at that time, right?

CHILES: Oh yeah, they lived over just below Waldo. They lived

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right next to the Paxtons. The Paxtons were all boys. They were about equal in number and they would get in a big row, the Paxton boys and the Wallace boys, then they'd send Bess in there to settle it. They were all afraid of her; she didn't fool around with them.

FUCHS: She was a little tomboyish?

CHILES: Well, you might say that she was a tomboy; she turned out to be the most gracious lady I ever met. And her mother is symbolic of the old Southern ladies that I have been drilled in all my life. She was the nicest -- she had the kind of Southern brogue. In my word she was a typical Southern lady -- just as kind and spoke in kind of a soft voice.

I knew Bessie's father, Dave Wallace, real well, and he kind of sponsored me. He was working in Kansas City and I guess he knew everybody in Jackson County. He was the most popular man I ever knew. He had a job up there with some railroad company -- no, he had a Federal job. I went to Kansas City Southern; I told him I wanted a job, and he said he'd find one for me. I had been working for the Kansas City

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Southern about a week when he called me and said, "I've got a job for you or a prospect and I want you to go down there and see." I went up to see him in the Federal building and told him what I had. He said, "Listen, you keep that job, it's better than I could get you." But he told me to go down; there was a railroad job in a freight yard down in the west bottoms, about where the stockyards are -- I think, the Union Pacific. I went down there to talk to them. He said, "I'd advise you to keep it but you go down and talk to those people." I stayed with the Kansas City Southern.

FUCHS: What was Mr. Wallace's job? Do you remember?

CHILES: No, I don't know. It was some Government job, but I don't know what. He had a job up there in -- down there at 8th and Grand -- the Federal building. He had a great job and a great big office -- very imposing office and desk -- but I don't know what his title was.

FUCHS: About what year was that?

CHILES: Well, that was the latter part of 1901, probably.

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I graduated in May 1901. Sometime along in that fall I went to work up there. And he advised me to keep it but said, "Go down and talk to these people and make up your own mind." I went down and I stayed with Kansas City Southern. Oh, I wasn't cut out to be a railroad man -- my health -- I had always lived outdoors and staying inside didn't suit me, so I quit. I think I worked there until about 1906. I quit and went to the farm, went to farming.

FUCHS: Do you have any other recollections of Mr. Wallace?

CHILES: Well, he was the promising young man of the county. He led all the parades and at that time every time you turned around they had a parade of some kind, especially on the 4th of July. And Dave Wallace led all those parades. He had a big riding horse, a black horse, and he'd ride him and lead those parades. He was just a general -- oh, I don't know what you would call it. He knew how to handle all those things and he was very popular. Everybody liked him and he knew everybody. He kind of managed these parades and always led the parades. I guess he was the most

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popular man in the county at that time.

FUCHS: Do you remember anything in particular about Mrs. Truman's mother in that period?

CHILES: Well, she was just a housewife, and I didn't know them until they moved to the white house -- the Gates place. I knew them too, but I wasn't here and didn't know much about their moving. But when I came back, Bess was living up there and she met Harry the last time there. They knew each other in school of course, and then, of course, the story has been told many a time about her returning a plate to his cousin over there.

FUCHS: What was the story?

CHILES: Well, it has been told many a time. Harry's cousin, the Nolands, lived across the street from the Wallaces and the Gates; and it seems the Gates had sent the Nolands over some cookies or something and Harry came along, he was visiting (from the farm) his first cousins, Ruth, Ethel and Nellie Noland. There was three girls; I knew them very well. They lived there and they had Harry take this

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dish back over, and I believe they returned some cookies or something. It was always the custom if someone sent you a cake you would send them back a pie. Anyway, Harry took that plate back over there and he met Bess all over again and from then on, why...

FUCHS: This was after he was out of high school then? After he was back on the farm?

CHILES: Oh yes, it was quite a while. Oh, a good many years after that; I don't know just what it was. It was after that several years and they met.

FUCHS: Do you remember him being particularly fond of her while they were in grade school and high school?

CHILES: Well no, it was just a mix-up. I don't know.

FUCHS: You don't have any recollection of that?

CHILES: No, I don't have any recollection of that, of anything special. I saw them there. I saw them all there. They didn't have parties then like they have now. They would have one once in a while. Now they have class parties,

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you know, and class picnics. They didn't have them then, they just went ahead....

FUCHS: You don't recall him carrying her books home from school or anything like that?

CHILES: No. I don't.

FUCHS: Do you remember her dating anyone?

CHILES: Oh, she had the normal lot of dates like anybody else, but I don't think she was serious about anybody.

FUCHS: You don't think she was more serious with Harry than with anyone else?

CHILES: No, I don't think so, as far as I can remember. Of course, when a party would come along some boy or acquaintance would ask her to go and she went; but, as I remember, she didn't have any special -- in those days they didn't go steady like now.

FUCHS: Then later on they did meet through this cookie deal?

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CHILES: His cousins lived across the road and they met that way, that is they renewed their acquaintance. And from then on there was the courtship. Just when they got married I don't remember -- it was all history; I don't know.

FUCHS: They got married in June 1919 when he came back from the service, after he got his discharge.

CHILES: Well, that's when I met Bess in the courthouse. They had just gotten married a little time before that.

FUCHS: Then you continued in this job as Jackson County clerk?

CHILES: Yes, I stayed there in that one job, I think, thirty-five years. In that one job, first I was just an ordinary clerk; well, I never was anything but an ordinary clerk as far as that's concerned. I did get to be chief deputy and I stayed in charge of the office. I think I got chief deputy after about four years and then I stayed chief deputy under four county clerks. At that time, and even

now Jackson County has two courthouses. The county court, which the county clerk is a clerk to, met on alternate months in

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Kansas City and Independence. When it met in Independence, I was county clerk as far as everything was concerned. I did the duties. I waited on the court and at that time I presented the bills (they have an auditor who does that now); but at that time I presented the bills and did all the things that were necessary for a county clerk to do.

FUCHS: You were in a particularly good position then to observe the county court, the judges and Mr. Truman from day to day, weren't you? You must have seen a great deal of him then?

CHILES: Now when Harry commenced to run for county judge, why I thought, "That fellow, I've known him ever since I was in high school -- thick-glassed boy -- I don't think he'll ever make it."

FUCHS: How did it come to your attention? Through the newspaper or some of the...?

CHILES: No, these things you know when you are in the courthouse. The courthouse lives on rumors. Of course I heard the first rumor and Vivian, I believe Vivian, came up to talk to me and wanted to know if I would be for him. I

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said, "Now Vivian, you know how politics are, you are a 'Goat' and I'm a 'Rabbit.' If the Rabbits are for Harry I'll be for Harry, but if the Rabbits are not then you know I can't be." And Harry went as a -- I'll explain -- Goats were Pendergast and the Rabbits were Shannon. That was the nicknames. They were called the Goats and the Rabbits. I told him, "Now I'd be glad to," and we got together and Harry agreed that the only difference between electing him and Bob Hood -- I believe it was run against him in the primaries -- would be that he'd have a job or Bob Hood would have a job, and he needed it. Well, I said I'd do anything I could but I had to protect my own job and "If the Rabbits are for you I'll be for you." Well, the Rabbits were for him and after the primary (of course we had another fight in the primary) but after the primary we were 100 per cent for him; we elected him.

He agreed to divide the patronage (the old saying in them days was "fifty-fifty") he'd match job for job with the different offices. But when he got to be judge, he

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was doing what the Goats told him and I was doing what the Rabbits told me, because I wasn't concerned in it at all. But then when he got in there Tom Pendergast had a brother, Mike, and Mike was a militant sort of a fellow. He wanted to "kill" everybody who didn't agree with him and he wanted to "kill" all the Rabbits and he did -- he made Harry fire every Rabbit in the courthouse. They just looked around and looked for them and fired them. Harry didn't want to do

it, but he agreed to do what his side agreed on. And Mike was out handling it here, so that made us sore -- made the Rabbits all sore -- and when he came up for re-election, well the Rabbits resented it. At that time there weren't very many Republicans, but we had enough Republicans and we beat him.

FUCHS: You supported the Republican candidate in that election?

CHILES: I supported and worked for Henry Rummel, an unknown, a nice old fellow. He was a harness-maker and a merchant here, nice fellow, didn't have anything against him, or anything in particular for him, but he was running against

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Harry. We elected Rummel and I hated it because I was in the same precinct as Harry (the same precinct here) and Harry lost in the precinct. So the next morning after election, I was as ashamed of it as I could be, but I stuck to my job (they would have fired me if I hadn't of stayed with them, of course) I saw Harry coming and I said, "Well, I didn't want to see him this morning."

So I crossed over the street and then, just down from the square, he saw me and called me over there, stuck out his hand and said, "Now I want you to understand there's no hard feelings."

I said, "Harry, yesterday was the hardest day I've ever had of any kind, let alone in politics -- many more of that and I'm going to quit. I had to go out and fight you yesterday and I hated to do it, and I'm ashamed of it now, but I did it."

He said, "Don't worry about it, there's no hard feelings. You did what your gang told you and I did what my gang told me." He said, "There's no hard feelings," and shook hands and said, "Now let's forget all about it."

Well, we did forget about it, we had four years of wild politics, strenuous at least, and then when we got together again they ran Harry for presiding judge and

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every Rabbit voted for Harry for presiding judge in the primary. And Harry was elected twice as presiding judge and he led the ticket every time. His name was almost magic for vote-getting -- he just got all the votes there was.

FUCHS: Why did the Rabbits support him when he came back and ran again in 1926 for presiding judge?

CHILES: They made up and they taught him his lesson, I guess -- they thought they did.

FUCHS: Well actually, in 1923 when he first went into office, Mike Pendergast, as I understand it from your story, violated the principle of fifty-fifty and had the Rabbits who were to get fifty per cent of...

CHILES: Yes, yes, he did. Harry didn't deny that he agreed to, but they wouldn't let him. They would have annihilated him in politics if that's what their organization decided. His brother Tom was the big boss in Kansas City and he backed Mike. They turned Mike over this part of the county, the eastern -- they are divided in eastern and

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western. Kansas City was the western district and all out east in Jackson County was the eastern district. Well, Mike handled the eastern district and that's what he decided best and Tom backed him up, and Harry had to do what he said.

FUCHS: Now, how did some of you Rabbits manage to survive in that first term of Mr. Truman as eastern judge?

CHILES: Well, he didn't have anything to do with my job. I worked for the county clerk and all the county court could fire was the immediate appointees of the county court itself. You see, he had nothing to do with recorders, the engineers, etc.

FUCHS: The county recorder was elected and the county clerk was elected?

CHILES: Elected to office. They had nothing to do with the election more than the county court had to do with their own and he just could fire those people. Of course that was the big job because they had road men and road overseers at that time a great organization was the road overseers. The county was divided up, I think, in about forty districts

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and they had a road overseers district over that (they appointed a man who could handle his district not only for the road but for the votes) and they fired all the Rabbit road overseers and hired Goats.

FUCHS: Now, the county clerk, who was your superior, was an elected officer -- was he a Rabbit?

CHILES: Yes, oh yes.

FUCHS: How did he happen to get elected when the Goats seem to have been pretty powerful and swung the election, at least for the county judges?

CHILES: Well, that was the agreement. The only fight they had was the county court, and at that time they beat both the western and the eastern judge. They didn't just want to pick on Harry, they wanted to pick on the eastern judge. And at that time the presiding judge didn't come

up, and then after they got over their hot spell they all got together again. Tom and Joe (Shannon) always got together and talked it over and they were unanimous in their division of Kansas City -- dividing the candidates up.

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The Goats got so many. The county clerk was always a Rabbit.

FUCHS: Now you said Mr. Truman, you thought, ran against a Bob Hood in the primary. Was he the candidate of the Rabbit faction? And they had a little fight there but Mr. Truman won and then the agreement was that...?

CHILES: Later they elected Bob Hood county clerk. I served under him eight years. He was an Independence man and I served under him eight years as chief deputy in charge of the Independence office.

FUCHS: That's very interesting. Do you recall anything more about the first time Mr. Truman ran, how they happened to select him?

CHILES: Well, I don't know how they selected him -- but I really do too, because he belonged to what was called the Harpie Club. That was a little club that used to meet around -- well, it originated in the Brown Drug Store. That's where the boys all used to meet.

FUCHS: Where was that store?

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CHILES: That was on the south side of the square along about where the Singer Sewing Machine is now, I think. And for years Claude and Frank Brown ran that store. They all bought in there and they just would congregate in there. They ran the pinball machines -- just kind of a social club. Well, I think they formed that in there, and then they graduated and had a hall of their own where they had their friendly games. As I understood it, it was originally a French Harp club. I'm not right sure about that. I didn't belong to it because that was a Goat club.

Anyhow, it was called the Harpie Club, and that Harpie Club decided that Harry would be a good candidate. Everybody liked Harry, nobody would ever say anything against him. And they brought him up and I wasn't concerned, only I didn't think he would make a very good candidate. He wasn't very well known and I didn't know whether him just being a student that way -- well, politics in those days was a pretty rough game. Anyhow they put him up and we had an awful primary fight and he won over Bob Hood. We all got behind him.

FUCHS: They put him up, but what were the mechanics of

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putting him up? Do you know that they had to go to either Mike or Tom and suggest his name?

CHILES: Oh, yes -- well, somewhere the deal was made. It was made somewhere; I don't know where or who with, but Tom or Mike -- or Tom had to pass on it. I guess he told them that if they thought they could get the votes, and they said they could and they all got behind him. I understood he told them he couldn't afford to run, that he was just in this haberdasher business that wasn't doing very well and he didn't think he could afford to run. So they, as I understand -- and I may be wrong -- but I understood they bought him a Ford car to make a campaign in, and he did make the campaign and, of course, won.

FUCHS: Who do you think were the principal people in this Harpie Club who might have proposed his name? Did they have officers in this club?

CHILES: I presume they did; but I never went in, and I never attended one of the meetings. I don't know, I just don't know who was. I knew them all but I couldn't tell you to save my neck who was instrumental. I think they were all

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that way. I know there was two Phelps boys, Moreno Phelps and Bob Phelps, who were members of that club and I think Frank Wallace was, but I just didn't -- as a matter of fact all the Goats in Independence belonged to it. It just happened to be the old boys who hung around the Brown Drug Company, and they got out and campaigned for him.

I heard him make his first speech. Well like I did, he kind of stammered and hummed around but he got through with it.

FUCHS: Where was this speech given?

CHILES: I don't know. I think it was in the court room up in the courthouse. He didn't make any oratory at that time, that I remember, but he got by with it. Probably better than I could if I'd have to save my neck.

FUCHS: Was this some sort of a rally that was held at night?

CHILES: Evidently it was. I think they'd have a political meeting in every neighborhood, you know, and this one was up in Independence. Harry made a little speech, not very long and not very impressive, to tell the truth, but he

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got by with it.

Then when he got in on the court why -- of course it was my business when the court met in Independence to attend every meeting -- well, the county clerk was right across the hall from the courtroom and it was my business to take the bills, unpaid bills in there. Well, at that time, Jackson County was financially in bad shape. They had to start out paying their bills with, say

1906 money, when they got the 1906 money, well they'd start out to pay their bills. When that money ran out, they registered the warrants. That meant that they registered them, your name and amount, and your number -- see you were registered numerically, if you were number 10 or 10,000 that's when you got your money, if and when, they ever got any money. Oh, it got to be so, along in November people commenced to hustle around and try to get their bills paid. We had an awful time trying to scare off the creditors. They all wanted their money before the money ran out, you know. There was a lot of politics played in that because everybody would want their friends to get paid off. There are several years we had to get a registered warrant for pay

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the last two months.

FUCHS: Well now, these, as you say, were numbered serially. Was the theory to pay them off in numerical order regardless of the amount of the bill or who it was owed? But it wasn't done always that way?

CHILES: Yes, it was done that way once they registered, but if you would get your bill in ahead, get your check issued, well, you'd have a low number when you registered. Number one of course had preference -- was paid first. They kept on that way and Jackson County was getting a bad name. So Harry got in there and went down to the legislature and got the necessary bills passed.

FUCHS: This was as presiding judge?

CHILES: Yes, as presiding judge, and he got the legislature to pass a law. First they got permission -- voted a bond issue to retire all those registered warrants -- and then he had a budget law passed whereby the county court was liable if they issued a nickel's worth more if they didn't have the money to pay for it. Harry straightened this

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county out. They paid off those registered warrants. I don't know how many thousands of dollars -- the bond issue. They sold the bonds and paid those warrants off. From then on it would have been a criminal act for a county judge to issue warrants if there wasn't money in the treasury to pay. Then there weren't any more registered warrants.

FUCHS: This was due to the fact that they could not ask for work to be performed unless they had the money to pay for it, is that correct? Or they could not buy supplies?

CHILES: No, that didn't have anything to do with it. I don't know. I guess they were kind of particular about the debts they incurred, but it didn't make any difference, if they owed anybody they couldn't issue a warrant to him until the money was in the treasury to pay.

FUCHS: In other words, he was just "stood off" for his money until the money became available, then they could issue a warrant which he could draw on the county treasury.

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CHILES: He didn't get anything for his work until the money was in the treasury. Of course that made the county court a little more cautious and they didn't issue warrants for more money than they had in the treasury. But as I recall it that didn't happen, that is, these warrants weren't paid, until after Harry got out of office.

FUCHS: That would have been 1934. You mean after he became Senator because he served two terms as presiding judge, from January 1927 through 1934.

CHILES: Well, Harry had been in there and that being county judge was strenuous -- just fighting all the time; if you're not fighting amongst yourselves, you're fighting everybody else and the Republicans and it was a strenuous life. Harry wanted to get out of there and get a more paying job and not so much fighting and I think he wanted to run for collector.

Anyhow, they was considering him for collector and then, when this senator business came up, I think he was just as much surprised as anybody when they tapped him on the shoulder to be senator. I really don't think he really

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wanted it. I don't think he wanted to make the effort, but he did. It made an impression on me because when they had gotten a signing machine to sign all the county warrants, the presiding judge had to sign it and the county clerk had to sign it; and this was run through automatic like -- this check machine, you know. It was a Todd machine, and Harry's name was in there and they didn't have anybody else's to substitute for that. When he was gone, and when he was still on campaign the last year, we had to sign all county warrants -- and there were thousands of them -- by hand, and the month they were in Independence I had to sign them all for the county clerk.

FUCHS: Quite a job he left you with? Do you recall much about his demeanor, that is, the way he transacted the business of the county court?

CHILES: Harry was always just as fair as he could be. Regardless, if I'd go in there and it didn't involve a lot of factional politics, he would treat me just as fair as one of his own Goat members. He was noted for that. Of course he stayed with his organization, like he told me, "I'll stay with my gang, you stay with yours (if I hadn't you'd been after me),

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and in county court Harry was always for the fair and just decision unless his organization put their foot down against it. I've seen him many a time say, "You know that's not right; why did you come in here." He'd tell somebody, "Why do you come in here and ask something like that, that's not right, you know what's right"; and that's the way he'd vote. I have heard him tell many a person that, that come in and wanted a special favor, you know. Probably they didn't tell him so

in court but they supported him. "Now, you know that's not right, now let's do that the way it ought to be done." That's the way he'd vote and he was always just as fair as could be.

FUCHS: Did you ever see him get rather angry because someone badgered him or did he just...?

CHILES: No, he never got mad. Oh, he was under duress and strain all the time in county court. Everybody picking at him you know and he had the final decision. They wanted this and wanted that and Harry would always do just as near the just thing as he possibly could. At any time he wouldn't favor the Goats over the Rabbits, unless it pertained to some factional argument or discussion.

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FUCHS: How did he seem to get along with the other judges on the court? There was a Judge Vrooman and later on there was a Judge Barr and then a Judge Bash.

CHILES: He got along with all those fine. I think Bash and Barr -- Bash was a western judge and Barr was an eastern judge at one time. Of course Harry was on there eight years and I can't remember exactly who were his contemporaries.

FUCHS: Yes, they changed. I think they started out with Vrooman. Purcell was a judge later.

CHILES: I was there and saw it all happen. But he got along with them fine. Most generally all of this was hashed out before it came to the court -- these patronage jobs. As far as I remember, after Harry got to be presiding judge there never was any open fight about patronage of the county court in the court. It was all agreed on before they came to court.

FUCHS: Do you recall any individuals around town having any particular complaint against him as a man or his actions

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as a judge?

CHILES: No, I don't think Harry ever had any arguments or anything. He was a Goat and I was a Rabbit and that primary day was about the only time we ever had an argument. And then in those days this Goat and Rabbit business was all figured out in Kansas City before it got to us. They had the ticket, they had the slate, and generally they all agreed. The only time was when Harry and Hood ran and then, of course, they beat the Rabbits. Harry, of course, was nominated and then the only time we didn't agree was the election where Harry was beaten. All the Rabbits were as I was, they hated to do it. They all liked Harry.

FUCHS: Judge Rummel, now, was a Republican supported by the Democratic Rabbit faction. Was that justified, or didn't they bother to justify it to the public, and what were Rummel's chief complaints against the way affairs were handled? In other words, he must have put forth some arguments.

CHILES: The old "ins" and "outs" against the "ins." I guess "He'd had it too long" and "bossism;" he brought all those

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charges. The fact of the matter is, Henry Rummel didn't make much of a campaign. We made it for him. I don't remember him ever making a speech. I guess he did and he got in there.

The old man got in there and he was an honest old man as I have ever met, and they just got him so tangled up that he just didn't know what he was doing. He came into the county clerk's office one time and I had the light on. It was probably as light as it is now, and he turned the light out and said, "You ought to watch those expenses." -- little things like that.

They had quite a controversy about a road out by Longview. Some contractor -- they accused him of not building the road according to specifications and they had quite a time and Rummel was just sitting. They held up his pay and they finally paid him for it. The county treasurer held up the warrant. They had a lawsuit over that. Thank goodness I wasn't county treasurer at that time. It was a Republican county treasurer and he held up the warrant; and finally years after they paid the man, but they didn't for a long time.

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FUCHS: Well, do you recall anything about Mr. Truman's senatorial campaign?

CHILES: Well, no, only we were all for him, a hundred per cent. Jackson County went for him, I think, Republicans and all. Of course, all I know was that it was a very strenuous campaign. I think he ran against Milligan?

FUCHS: The first campaign he ran against Jacob Milligan from Richmond.

CHILES: Well, Milligan was right across the road there. I knew Milligan; most everybody in Jackson County knew him, but he didn't get very many votes in Jackson County. Harry was gone most of the time -- for the time, I think, his campaign lasted -- in July, August and September, mostly.

FUCHS: That was the primary campaign -- it was the big campaign.

CHILES: Yes, that was the big campaign. There wasn't any fight in the general election; that is, of course there's always a fight where there is two candidates, but Harry wasn't in any danger of being defeated. There was quite a strenuous fight between Milligan and Truman. It was pretty

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bitter at times but that didn't exist in Jackson County. I don't think that Harry was ever in any danger in. Jackson County.

FUCHS: How did you participate in these campaigns? Did you go out...

CHILES: I was a precinct captain. The Rabbits they handed me this precinct out here. "Now that's your precinct, now you had better go out and come up with something." And I appointed the judges and clerks, that is, suggested them. I saw that the judges and clerks were there and I stayed at the polls all day. I had a poll list and I had my orders.

Funny thing about when Truman was running against Rummel -- Roger Sermon, the mayor of Independence, he lived on the next block (he and I grew up together, too). He was the Goat captain and I was the Rabbit captain, and I said, "Roger, I don't know what about this. I'm going to have to go against Truman and you are going to be for him"

He said, "Well, that's all right."

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We -- Roger and I -- had a system we'd have one car to haul the passengers, to haul the voters, and he'd go down one side of the street and I'd go down the other. And we worked all day that way. He was for Truman and I was against him.

FUCHS: You went around and picked up...

CHILES: Yes, we did, and Roger and I agreed on it. I said, "Well, if you want to I'll work independent and you work independent."

He said, "No sir, we've been working too long together."

Roger was a Goat but finally he turned from a Goat to a "Sermon." And Sermon worked up one of the biggest organizations eastern Jackson County ever had.

FUCHS: How would this work? You would be going to these homes -- you would have already contacted them before the election day and you would know whether they were going to vote one way or the other?

CHILES: Well, sometimes and sometimes not until that day -- we'd go to them that day. If I could influence one, why....

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FUCHS: You'd get in the car and maybe on the other side of the car...?

CHILES: Maybe he'd have a Truman vote and I'd have an anti-Truman, a Rummel vote, right in the same car.

(A few general remarks were then exchanged and the first interview was terminated.)

The second interview with Henry P. Chiles at his home in Independence., Missouri, August 14, 1962. By J. R. Fuchs.

FUCHS: The last time we were talking Mr. Chiles, you were telling about the 1924 campaign when Mr. Truman was running against Rummel; and you indicated that Roger Sermon was on one side in the campaign and you were on the other.

CHILES: That was the old "Goat" and "Rabbit" affair. There was Sermon and Pendergast -- Sermon was a "Pendergast" and I was a "Shannon." We were friendly and we polled the same precinct. On election day, we only had one car between us. He'd take one side and I'd take the other side. He'd get a vote for Truman and I'd get a vote for Rummel. Sometimes we'd go down in the same car, because we were

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just that friendly. I know, on everything else -- all the rest of the ticket, we agreed on and we worked for the Democratic ticket. Not Democratic but the slate that we had selected.

FUCHS: Well, do you have any recollections of the campaign for senator, the first time he ran?

CHILES: No, not particularly. We put him over big when he ran against -- I don't know who the Republican opponent was.

FUCHS: He was running against Patterson, who was the incumbent Republican senator at that time.

CHILES: Well, we put him over big anyway. We made a big majority here in Jackson County. He won all over the State with a good majority.

FUCHS: What was the feeling, as you remember it, in regard to Mr. Truman's first six years in the Senate, from 1934 to 1940 ?

CHILES: Well, we were proud of him. The biggest job he did, he was on a senatorial committee to investigate these different ordnance plants that the Government was backing.

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FUCHS: I think that was in his second term, starting in 1941.

CHILES: Well, that's right. I was thinking it was the first. But anyway, he got along all right. I have several letters we wrote back and forth.

FUCHS: Oh, is that correct. What did you have to discuss in those days?

CHILES: Well, there was a friend of mine who had a job in New York -- some kind of a Government coordinator, I don't know what it was, supplies or surplus commodity, and the people in his department were going to move him. He was in New York, but they moved him to Boulder, Colorado and that's where he wanted to stay. I wrote to Truman asking him what he could do. He said he didn't know what he could do, but he would do his best. He kept him there.

FUCHS: He wanted to stay there and he thought they were going to move him again?

CHILES: Yes, he thought they were going to move him again and he stayed there -- oh, I guess he stayed there until he retired.

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FUCHS: Do you remember his name?

CHILES: It was George Hall. He is in the county office in Clay County today. He and I have something in common. My son married his daughter. Probably the last letter Truman signed as Vice-President, I think I got it -- the last day or two while he was in office.

FUCHS: When he was Vice-President?

CHILES: When Roosevelt died and he took the Presidency it was just a few days after he wrote that letter.

FUCHS: What was that letter about?

CHILES: It was a letter saying he was going to do what he could about Mr. Hall.

FUCHS: I see. Do you remember if there was much talk about Mr. Pendergast's relations with Mr. Truman as senator?

CHILES: Well, there was a lot of talk and Harry said that he was a Pendergast man and he wasn't ashamed of it. He said he never did anything to be ashamed of and I don't think he did. Pendergast got in bad, you know, the grand jury

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investigated him and finally indicted him for irregularities in the city government. And when Pendergast died -- I guess that was when he was still Vice-President.

FUCHS: That was in January, 1945.

CHILES: I think he was still the Vice-President. Anyhow, Harry Truman flew here, and he made the remark that he like to never got rid of, that he wouldn't desert a sinking ship and the papers made all the world out of it. The original quotation was, "A rat wouldn't desert a sinking ship," or something like that. Of course, they magnified that. He said that he was a friend of

Pendergast and he wasn't ashamed of it, and he flew here especially from Washington for Pendergast's funeral.

FUCHS: Did you ever meet Mr. Pendergast?

CHILES: Oh yes.

FUCHS: Did he ever come to Independence?

CHILES: Very seldom. Well, when I knew him he was just a kind of a king on a throne. He knew everybody; and he knew all his workers and his lieutenants. I don't know, I only

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met him once or twice. I was the other gang; I met Joe Shannon lots of times.

FUCHS: I see. What sort of a chap was Joe Shannon?

CHILES: Well, sir, he was a very polished gentleman. He came up from the ranks. I don't know what he did -- he got to be a lawyer. He was slow-spoken, a very deliberate speaker, and he stayed the head of the faction as long as he lived. They started out -- first it was two Pendergasts and two Shannons and Pendergast's brother died (I've forgotten what his name was). Tom was the younger brother, and he took over. Then there was Charlie Shannon and Joe Shannon. Charlie died and he was more the leader than Joe was; when he died, Joe took over.

They ran politics in Kansas City for a long time. I think they deliberately just had contests just to test their own strength out. They nearly always agreed, but when they didn't agree, a Republican was elected. The Shannon people had a mayor in Kansas City -- I don't recall his name right now, I should. He ran and he was almost sure for election. The Pendergasts got in there and joined the Republicans and elected a Republican. Jost --

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I think his name was Jost. [Henry Jost, Mayor of Kansas City, 1912-1916.] I'm not right sure, but I think that was the name. Anyhow, he'd served one term as mayor of Kansas City and what they always split up on was the division of the patronage. They have that saying, "fifty-fifty" -- that was fifty-fifty division of the patronage. They were always fighting and each one of them always claimed they were behind. Anyhow, they didn't like what Jost was doing, so they beat him and put a Republican in. I can't recall the Republican's name. Pendergast did that and later on when Truman kicked over the patronage, they elected a Republican in his place. It was the old argument about fifty-fifty.

FUCHS: Do you have any memories of the second campaign, when Mr. Truman ran for senator in 1940? That was when he ran against Stark and Maurice Milligan?

CHILES: Yes, I remember it; I don't remember any particular incidents. We were all for him and we put him over big here in Jackson County, but it was a mighty close race.

FUCHS: Shannon supported Mr. Truman from the start, is that correct?

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CHILES: Well, I don't know from the start, but at the end he did. They always held back, you know, for trading purposes, but we were for him; everybody was for him in Jackson County, and he won by a big majority. That helped him out-state, because Stark was pretty strong out-state.

FUCHS: You were still in the county clerk's office at that time. Then, as you said, Mr. Truman in 1941, set up this committee to investigate defense production and...

CHILES: Yes, he made a speech or something in there and it ended up by him being the chairman of that committee. He went all over the United States investigating and he came to Lake City [Lake City Arsenal, southeast of Independence.] -- Independence. Of course, it was done in Kansas City. He thoroughly investigated, and if there was anything wrong, he called their attention to it. But he never found anything wrong here.

FUCHS: Did you see him at that time, when he came out here?

CHILES: Yes, I saw him several times.

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FUCHS: Did anything particular occur that you might recall?

CHILES: No, he was pretty busy; he'd come through the court house, you know and say, "Howdy," and generally he was in a hurry. Most of this was done under guard, almost, in Kansas City the committee was guarded. I don't know who guarded him. They kept everybody away from there while they was testifying. They were taking testimony from everybody and anybody, but they didn't find anything wrong with Lake City. It was a powerful committee because they did find something wrong several places. It was done all on the square, and he made an impartial investigation of everything -- they went through the books and everything at Lake City. They didn't find any irregularities at all there.

FUCHS: Do you have any memories of conversations that occurred when Mr. Truman was nominated to be Vice-President? Did people generally feel that he was big enough to...?

CHILES: Everybody was for him. Well, there was some people who weren't and some people who were. Everybody knows he said he was scared to death. When this happened the

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job just suddenly fell on his shoulders. Of course, that was all in Washington and we didn't know much about, only what we saw in the papers here in Independence. About that time, why he didn't come near Independence; he didn't have time.

FUCHS: Did you ever get to Washington while he was in the Senate, or Vice-President or President?

CHILES: While President. I visited him Thanksgiving -- the last Thanksgiving (not on that day, but a few days before) before he went out of office.

FUCHS: That would be 1952.

CHILES: Yes, I went there and I went in and had quite a conversation with him, I'd say near an hour just talking over old times.

FUCHS: Was this in the west wing of the White House, in the President's main office?

CHILES: The main office. After he got through, he said "Well, I'd like to visit with you longer, but for over

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a half hour, I've had a bunch of people waiting for me out there." So he called the butler, I think it was, a man in livery (in uniform) and he showed us all over the place, everywhere. They have a regular routine for the visitors going through there, you know. And he said, "Now, I want you to show them everything." And he did; we saw every little crack in the White House -- the dishes of the Vice-Presidents, and the dresses some of them wore.

FUCHS: You went and saw more than the average tourist saw?

CHILES: Oh yes. Well, the tourists were going through there and every once in a while, we'd go through a door and some tourists would try to follow us. They thought they were missing something, which they were. They took us around and showed us the pool that Roosevelt had made, you know; the porch -- we saw everything.

FUCHS: You say it was a man in uniform who conducted it; did it happen to be one...?

CHILES: It was a regular butler.

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FUCHS: I thought maybe it was one of his military aides...

CHILES: No, it wasn't one of the regular guides; I assume he was the butler. That's just kind of a title for the head man there I think. Anyhow, he showed us all around and was very particular,

and then when he got through, he said, "Now if there's anything else you can think of that I can show you, we'll go see it." Of course, I didn't know. We took over an hour to go through.

FUCHS: Did you Mrs. Truman when you were there?

CHILES: No, I had an appointment to see him about three or four days before and something happened and my son had to go to Washington, and to get a ride down there and go with him, I changed that appointment -- they just happened to put me in extra. It hadn't been that -- he said "Bess and I figured on visiting with you, but she had to go on an appointment today. The day you were coming, we were, both of us, going to take off and have a visit with you." Of course, if I'd known that, I'd probably have waited until that day.

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FUCHS: How did you happen to be going to Washington in the first place?

CHILES: Well, my son was chief of staff at the Army school at Carlisle -- it's just driving distance, and he was going up there and I thought it was a good chance for me to go up there without getting lost. He took me up there and I called Miss Conway. I've forgotten the man's name who was head of appointments.

FUCHS: Matthew Connelly?

CHILES: Yes, I called Connelly and he referred me to Miss Conway. She said, "Well, I think I can put you in at ten or ten thirty" -- the next morning. She did and we got there. We drove through a storm -- it's about thirty miles from Carlisle to Washington. We drove through a storm and we thought we were going to be late; and we drove up to that White House outside guard gate just exactly at five minutes to ten.

FUCHS: Do you recall any of the conversation; did you just talk about old times?

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CHILES: Oh, we talked about old times and the precinct back here. I don't recall any particular thing we talked about. We had plenty to talk about, but....

FUCHS: When he got out of office and returned to Independence, did you have occasion to see him?

CHILES: Oh, I met him once or twice, yes. I was up there and he had a Kansas City office....

FUCHS: In the Federal Reserve Building.

CHILES: Yes, that's right. And I went up there and had a visit with him twice. My brother was with me and we talked over politics. I'd had two terms as county treasurer and he wanted me to run for the third, but I didn't run.

FUCHS: You figured you'd had enough of it?

CHILES: I was getting along in years and I thought I'd just get out of it. The factions had all changed around and there wasn't any Shannon faction and very little Pendergast faction any more.

FUCHS: How did you happen to come out for county treasurer in '48?

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CHILES: Well, it was a good job and I thought I'd get it if I could. I talked to Shannon before I filed and he thought that was a pretty good idea.

FUCHS: Was he still active here in '48?

CHILES: No, this was Frank Shannon.

FUCHS: He was the son of Joe Shannon, and he succeeded Joe as the head of the Rabbit faction?

CHILES: Yes, but he didn't click. They finally took it away from him and a man by the name of Nordberg, [Ben Nordberg] county clerk took over -- Nordberg's dead now and this Harry Gallagher that's now running for -- got the Democratic nomination for county clerk -- his brother and Nordberg, took it over. His brother died, and Nordberg took it over and now Gallagher has it. And he was successful. That faction won with most of their candidates.

FUCHS: In '48 when you ran and then again in '52, you had to consult with Frank Shannon at that time?

CHILES: Oh yes, he backed me. And then, as a Rabbit, I went and told Pendergast that I was Frank Shannon's man and he

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endorsed me.

FUCHS: This was James Pendergast, the nephew of Tom. Mike Pendergast's son.

CHILES: Yes, Mike Pendergast's son.

FUCHS: So they were still operating under the "fifty-fifty," pretty much.

CHILES: Well, they got down when Frank Shannon took over, to about "seventy-five and twenty-five;" Pendergast took the big end of it. That's all the Shannon people could get and they

took it. Anyway, they all got behind me -- oh, Pendergast ran a man against me both times in the primary. They do that for safety measures, you know. If something would happen to me, they'd have a candidate.

FUCHS: Who did they run?

CHILES: Let me see; I can't think of his name. He was deputy sheriff - he's still deputy sheriff up there. He was a fingerprint man up at the county sheriff's office. Hilburn -- Lloyd Hilburn, I think his name was.

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He ran for the nomination. All the workers were instructed to work for me, and he didn't get a whole lot of votes; but the whole organization was for me and, of course Shannon was, and I didn't have any trouble. Fact of the matter is, the second time, I led the ticket -- the whole county.

FUCHS: Why would Mr. Truman have been interested in 1956, when you didn't run again and he was interested in having you run? Just from a personal standpoint?

CHILES: Well, he was just interested in the "backlash" of politics, I guess. I remember he came here and we organized quite a reception for him when he came to the Kansas City courthouse. Independence had, I guess a hundred cars ready to go up there to welcome him. As he came off the train, we were all lined up along to welcome him, and he saw me and came over and shook hands and said, "How did you come out in the primary?" -- I think he said "primary:" He said, "How did you come out?" There was thousands of people there trying to shake hands and the guards were pushing him along trying to keep people away from him, you know.

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FUCHS: This was when he was coming back to vote in '52?

CHILES: It was sometime between the primary and the election -- I don't know. He came and we wanted to give him a big reception, so the Independence police department organized quite a reception committee. There were lots of people from Kansas City. When we got up there, there were policemen who kept everybody from mobbing him, but he did break through and come over and shake hands with me and asked me how I come out in the primary.

FUCHS: Did he come over from Kansas City or did he come in here on the train?

CHILES: He came in to Kansas City on the train.

FUCHS: Does he ever go by here on walks; did you ever see him walk this way?

CHILES: Yes, he has been by here, but not lately. While he was President he was by here once in a while. He gets out and walks, you know, and those Secret Service men would have to trot to keep up with him.

FUCHS: I guess you used to see quite a bit of the Secret Service

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around here?

CHILES: Oh yes. Well around the clock, they guarded the home up there, you know. There wasn't any fence around it and they got to pulling weather boarding off and everything, so they had to put that iron fence around there. Why, they'd pull the leaves off the trees and just anything for a souvenir from the Truman home. They were tearing it up so they put that fence around there.

FUCHS: I believe you remember Mr. Truman's father -- John Anderson Truman.

CHILES: Yes, I knew him. He and my father were both farmers who moved into town and they still were farmers. My father still ran his farm. I think Mr. Truman rented his. He started out a little business of his own by buying up a calf or a cow, or a dozen cows, and taking them to the Kansas City market. In those days, you could drive a drove of cattle from here to the stockyards. I've helped many a time; both my father and my uncle had herds of cattle. We took two hundred one time and drove them right through, down 5th Street into the stockyards. You couldn't

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do that now. Mr. Truman, Harry's father, went out every day to buy a cow or a calf. I've seen him several times buy a cow and calf and put the calf on the saddle and the cow would follow. They had a little lot over here on Waldo, and a barn, and he had one to a dozen cattle in there all the time.

FUCHS: I've heard he was a short man; do you recall him as having, a nickname?

CHILES: No, I don't. It was Mr. Truman when I was here, that's all I know about it. But he was kind of a short, stocky fellow, and he'd get on that horse and come back with a cow or two and he traded considerable. He'd get a bunch -- he sold some here or if he couldn't sell them here, he'd take them to the stockyard.

FUCHS: You don't remember him having mules?

CHILES: No, I don't think he ever traded much in mules, or he didn't bring them here. He might have, you know, and somebody was always trading a cow or a calf.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything about his temperament; did he seem to have a bad temper, as you remember it?

CHILES: No. I think he was very even-tempered. One time, he was

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mad, he was mad as a hornet. He put him a fence around there and then he got him a new gate. It was one of these woven wire affairs, you know, with a rim of pipe and then the wire was woven back in a fancy design. He put that up and he was awful proud of that. Well there was some boys went there on Halloween and took a wire cutter and cut that gate all out -- all the center cut of that gate, all that fancy work. He was mad then! I drove cows, collected up and drove my own out there, and then for fifty cents a month, I'd take another cow -- somebody else's cow and I had eight or ten cows. The next morning I went by there, driving cows, and he was out there just as mad as a hornet. He says, "Come here. I know you didn't do this, but I know you know who did." I did know -- I thought I knew; I actually found I was right, who did it. I didn't tell him.

FUCHS: Why did he think you knew?

CHILES: Well, just the boys around the neighborhood, you know. I knew who it was and I never did tell him. He says, "I'll give ten dollars for the information who did that." I never told him. He was mad then -- mad as he could

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be. I sympathized with him. I suspicioned when he was talking to me who it was, and afterwards I found out who it was.

FUCHS: Did he replace that gate?

CHILES: Yes, he had another gate. That was up there on the corner of Waldo and River. But, as far as I know, he was an even-tempered fellow.

FUCHS: Do you have any recollections of Mrs. Truman, Mr. Truman's mother?

CHILES: Well, just in the house with the boys lots of times. She was just around like anybody else.

FUCHS: Nothing stands out in your memory -- any incident that occurred.

CHILES: Oh, I know I've seen her hundreds of times. She was taking care of the boys, keeping them clean, you know. The same as my mother was trying to do with me.

FUCHS: Mr. Truman worked in a drugstore and there are several

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accounts of that. Some say he worked there when he was about eleven; others say it was when he was around fourteen. It would have been when he was in grade school if it were when he was eleven....

CHILES: I don't think Truman lived here when he was eleven. When he came here he was in high school -- no, he was in the eighth grade. He lived over there on that corner and I lived on this corner and he went to one school and I went to another. He went to Columbian School and I went to Ott. I think it was after that.

FUCHS: He moved to Independence in 1890 when he was six and then he started to school in 1892, when he was eight. Well then, he moved up here to Waldo Avenue in 1896. At that time, of course, he would have been twelve years old. I just wondered if you remember when he did work in the drugstore.

CHILES: No, I don't remember ever seeing him at the drugstore, but I know he did work in Clinton's Drugstore over there on the corner of the square. I think it was in his last year in grade school and then in high school, too. I was

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pretty busy; I carried papers. I carried the *Kansas City Star* and I was pretty busy; I didn't have time to loaf around town very much. I carried papers all the time I was in high school.

FUCHS: Well, did Mr. Truman seem to be fairly close to Mr. Southern -- William Southern who was editor of the Independence paper?

CHILES: Not until after he ran for county judge; I don't know if they ever had any business at all together.

FUCHS: The story is, of course, that Mr. Southern supported him and that he knew a great deal about Mr. Truman's political activities. I just wondered if you were aware of anything at that time?

CHILES: No. I didn't. Of course, I knew Mr. Southern; I knew Harry, but that was quite a race - - everybody drew sides. It was a pretty hot race. Emmett Montgomery was a banker in Blue Springs and Harry was just a boy; all he had back of him was his soldier record. Everybody thought "What did he know about being county judge," but he did get there.

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Then the next time, they brought out their best candidate -- Bob Hood. We thought sure we were going to beat him, but we didn't.

FUCHS: Mr. Truman supported John Miles for county marshal in 1920. Now is that a job that died out?

CHILES: Yes, it's been abolished. It used to be in Jackson County -- there used to be a sheriff who took care of the civil affairs of the sheriff's office and this marshal, the criminal. He had the jail and he patrolled and arrested; he was like police. But, the marshal handled the criminal end of the thing.

Johnny Miles ran and Johnny was a very popular. Republican. Nearly all of these veteran soldiers backed him. I had a nephew who went out and worked for him, and I give him the dickens and he just worked the same. I understood Truman backed Miles.

FUCHS: Later on, I believe by 1924, Miles was serving as sheriff and I wondered about the two jobs.

CHILES: Miles was marshal; was he ever sheriff?

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FUCHS: Yes, he later on served as sheriff and I wondered if as you say, if the sheriff later on took the job that the marshal did in those days?

CHILES: They did combine the two, but I think that was after Mile's time in office. The sheriff's job was entirely civil and the marshal had the jail and the prisoners and did the patrolling and the arresting; but Miles, he won by a big, big majority. All these veterans were for him, everyone of them. You couldn't get a one of them to vote against him. I had a nephew that I thought I could have some influence over, and he wouldn't listen to me.

FUCHS: Mr. Truman has stated that in school he took some geometry, some music, some rhetoric, and logic and a smattering of astronomy, history and biography; do you recall...?

CHILES: Well, I knew he was there, but he wasn't in any of my classes.

FUCHS: Did you have those same subjects?

CHILES: No, I never took any biology or astronomy -- I just took ordinary arithmetic.

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FUCHS: Do you recall that they taught those subjects in the high school? Did they have astronomy classes?

CHILES: Yes, they had an astronomy class. They had somebody -- old Professor Bryant at the Woodland College running it at that time. They'd go over there and use his telescope. It didn't concern me much because I didn't take it.

FUCHS: In other words, you had a certain amount of electives; you could take certain courses and not take others. Everyone didn't take the same curriculum.

CHILES: Oh, no. I think there was four majors and a minor, or something like that, you had to take; algebra and Latin and history and English -- I don't know. You had to take five subjects, I think, and there was at least ten on there that you could choose from. I didn't choose any biology or astronomy.

FUCHS: Do you remember Mr. Truman, or any of the other judges, marrying anyone?

CHILES: Yes, it happened once -- it happened once. Les Byam -- now he was a judge at one time, but not while he was judge --

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he came in and some member (it wasn't Truman) of the county court married him. It was either just before or just after he was judge. But Les Byam out here at Fairmount -- he was a judge at one time; and he came in there with a very beautiful French girl, and they were married there in the courthouse. I was present and everybody in the courthouse went in. I have an idea it was after he was judge, if I remember correctly.

FUCHS: He was a county judge at one time?

CHILES: He had the same position as eastern judge that Truman had, and whether it was before or after I can't recall. They were married there in the courthouse. That's the only time I ever knew of a county judge marrying anybody.

FUCHS: Well, I saw several notices where the judge -- one judge or the other -- had married someone and then the other day I read that Mr. Truman in July, 1930 married a couple.

CHILES: Well he could have, but I don't recall only that one instance.

FUCHS: That's interesting.

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CHILES: Most anybody, with any title at all, can marry a person; a justice of the peace or any kind of elected office, if you know, can marry anybody. This is perfectly legal and Les Byam was married there.

FUCHS: Do you recall Mr. Truman's activities with the Community Savings and Loan Association, which was established in the early twenties?

CHILES: Yes, I knew he was there. They furnished a nice office and when they split up....

FUCHS: Where was the office?

CHILES: I think it was on Liberty Street. They had some very nice furniture and some way or other, the county bought that or Truman retained it. Anyhow, that furniture was down there for a long time and it was in Truman's office -- his office as county judge. I remember that furniture being around. I don't know what ever became of it, but it was nice walnut furniture and they split up some way and Truman got out of it.

FUCHS: He was associated with an Arthur Metzger and Spencer Salisbury.

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CHILES: Arthur Metzger's dead and I met Spencer Salisbury the other day. His health's failed; he can hardly walk. I met him just the other day. They split up and Metzger and Salisbury took over, and the whole thing blew up and an entirely new bunch of stockholders took over.

FUCHS: Mr. Salisbury, of course, got into a little trouble later on. Do you know the facts relating to that?

CHILES: No, I don't -- just what I heard. He got into some kind of a bond affair -- he went on a bond for somebody. He's been in several and he just got out of one not long ago. He went on bond for some murderer, a convicted murderer who skipped to Mexico. This is just recent, within the last five or six years.

FUCHS: Oh, is that right?

CHILES: Oh course, Salisbury was on his bond and he located him down in Mexico -- knew where he was. He tried to get that bond set aside. He knew where he was and couldn't get him back. I don't know to this day whether he ever paid off or not. That fellow's still in Mexico if he's still alive.

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FUCHS: You mean Salisbury was acting as a bonding agent?

CHILES: He went his bond -- \$50,000, I think, or something like that. Salisbury went down to see him and located him. And what they ever did about it, I don't know. It was hushed up.

FUCHS: I hadn't heard of that one.

CHILES: Salisbury's broken in health now; he can hardly get around. He's in worse shape than I am.

FUCHS: You're not in bad shape.

CHILES: I just met him here last week. I hadn't seen him for years.

FUCHS: When Mr. Truman was campaigning in 1926, Robert Barr came out for eastern district judge; and someone wrote in the papers, (apparently a reporter talked to a Rabbit faction man) and said he was not going to be for Barr because Mr. Truman was the one who brought him out, and he wasn't going to be for anyone Mr. Truman was bossing. Do you think Mr. Truman...

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CHILES: Well, Barr ran on the Goat faction, but he didn't take this factional politics very seriously. He was a West Pointer; he graduated from West Point and resigned from the Army. He had a farm out east of here. He and Truman had some little differences; I don't know what.

FUCHS: You mean, he didn't take it seriously in that he...

CHILES: I know when Mr. Truman ran for the Senate, Barr was for his opponent; of course, that was their own affair, I don't know much about it, but Barr was for the opposition. He claimed Truman snubbed him or something, I don't know what.

FUCHS: You don't think that in '26 Mr. Truman was actually the boss of Barr; he may have backed him, brought him out, as they say?

CHILES: No. Truman never was a boss, only as county judge he had to make the appointments that Pendergast wanted. Bill Southern used to say that none of them would make a decision until they went and called their bosses, but I don't think that was the case. But they followed their factions pretty close.

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FUCHS: Did you know General Stayton, who worked on the road program with Tom Veatch?

CHILES: Oh yes. General Stayton sponsored my son. I was broke and he wanted an education. I wasn't able to send him to college, so he got this brilliant idea of going to West Point -- get an appointment. So we looked around, and he went out and talked to General Stayton. And he said, "I'll tell you what you do, you apply for an appointment in the National Guards." National Guard at that time had two appointments at the time Jack went in. It doesn't amount to an appointment; you've got two candidates, you might say. Jack applied for one of those, and General Stayton helped him; and he joined the National Guards under Stayton's instructions. They met, then, at the armory out in the south part of Kansas City. He'd go to these Guard meetings and instead of drilling, he'd study. All the candidates for this West Point job had to take a competitive examination. He was one of the two highest, and he got to take the examinations.

FUCHS: What year was that?

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CHILES: It must have been 1931 or '32. I guess it was '31. He went there in '32. He took that competitive examination in Jefferson Barracks -- he got to be one of the two candidates from the State of Missouri. The governor was a Republican; the senator was a Republican and he didn't have any chance for a direct appointment so he took these examinations for a chance to take the examination for West Point. He won, through the National Guard; he had to get the highest grade and he did. That gave him a chance to compete with the candidates of all the senators and the governors and everybody else's candidates from Missouri. They all went to Jefferson Barracks and took the competitive examination. He again, got in the upper bracket. That gave him a chance to take the competitive examination with everybody in the United States. Missouri had

two chances; New York maybe had four or five -- each state had so many. He took all his examinations at Jefferson Barracks at St. Louis. To get the actual appointment you have to get in the upper half. Well, he got in the upper half -- just where he was, I don't know -- but he got in the upper half and got his appointment to West Point. Senators, Governors and representatives --

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all had appointments, you know. There was fourteen of them. They got together, I think, at Jefferson City and all went on together. Out of that fourteen, only two of them graduated. At West Point, you know, they pour it to you pretty hard. If you make it, all right; if you don't, you just don't.

FUCHS: General Stayton, I believe, came up through the National Guard; he wasn't a West Pointer, was he?

CHILES: No. I can remember -- he always took an interest. The first I remember of Stayton -- Independence had the world's champion basketball team (there was only about two teams in the United States). Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, came here and we won the world's championship. Stayton was just out of college then, and he got up and made a speech; and he kept making speeches until he died. He was a natural leader. He studied engineering, and he had several big projects down in South America. He built all these concrete roads we have. Well, he didn't build them; Truman really built them. Truman got the money and Stayton furnished the engineering of it.

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FUCHS: He and Tom Veatch participated in that.

CHILES: Well, Veatch was here and established and I don't think Stayton was. But Stayton and Veatch got together, and they planned all these roads. Truman maneuvered the bond issue and built some of the best roads in the United States, I guess.

FUCHS: That's what they've always said.

There seem to be many people named "Chiles" around Independence; are they all related to you?

CHILES: Well, the saying is, that if they spell their names C-H-I-L-E-S, we're all kin. The C-H-I-L-D-S, is a different bunch. My grandfather had, I think, seven sons. They were successful farmers in Kentucky, and just one at a time they came out here and all settled around in the Six Mile district. I can go down there and show you where their homes were.

FUCHS: What was your grandfather's name?

CHILES: Joel Franklin. My great-grandfather, John Henry (Jackie) Chiles, migrated from Virginia to Kentucky in the late 1700's. He married Sarah Ballenger. To this union there was ten

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children, eight boys and two girls. Joel Franklin Chiles, their sixth child, born January 2, 1806, was my grandfather. He married Azubah Skinner from Platte County. They had twelve children.

My father, Henry Clay (Bruz), their fifth child, was born in Jackson County, May 28, 1838. He married Julia Perrin from Platte County and had eight children, three boys and five girls -- Janie, Frank P., Azubah, Margaret, Susan, Henry P., Morton P., and Jessie, who died in infancy.

None of the girls married. Frank married Belle Hudspeth. They had five children, two girls and three boys. Morton P. married Julia Shawhan and had five children, four boys and one girl. I married Virgie Ragan from Lee's Summit in 1905. We had six children.

Julia Warren and Virginia Ragan both died in infancy. My son, John Henry, is a graduate of West Point (1936). He married Lucile Hall of Liberty. They had three children, Lucylee, Joy, and Jack Hall. He is now Brigadier General in the Army located at Ft. Hood Texas. Gene Tate married Margaret Madden. (Tate is now Judge of the Clay County

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Court and operates Maurer Park, Excelsior Springs.), They have three children -- Virgie Lee, Gene Tate, and Charles Madden. Virgie Lee married Dudley Alexander and they have a son Perry, my first great grandson. My daughter, Rebecca Ann, married Robert Rogers of Detroit. They have three children, Rebecca Ann, Linda and Julia Warren. They live in Lexington, N.C. My other son, Robert Carr, married Lee Stout from New London, Missouri. They have three children -- Susan Ragan, Henry Perrin II, and Robi Lee. Robert has his own insurance adjusting agency at Maryville, Mo.

My first wife died in 1937. I married Emma L. Corder in 1950.

Starting in 1825 my great uncle, Richard, came west with one of Daniel Boone's expeditions. When he reached this area he left the expedition and entered land in present Jackson County, which land is now part of Independence, Missouri. In time all of his six brothers followed to Jackson County and settled in the Six Mile neighborhood.

Joel Franklin came in 1830. He brought with him livestock

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and farming machinery to start in the new country. He also brought about 40 Negro slaves. He prided himself of the fact that he never bought or sold a slave with the exception of completing a family. My great uncle, Richard B. Chiles, was the first assessor of Jackson County and later was Eastern Judge and later Presiding Judge of the County Court. William G. was Eastern Judge about 1890. C. C. organized the Bank of Independence about that time.

Of all the sons of Joel Franklin Chiles, my father, Henry Clay, was the only one leaving male heirs to carry on the Chiles name. He had ten grandsons.

FUCHS: How many sons did you say your grandfather, Joel Franklin Chiles, had?

CHILES: Well, I know six got to be grown.

FUCHS: Were most of them born here or born in Kentucky?

CHILES: All but one was born in Missouri. The oldest one was born in Kentucky.

FUCHS: What was the oldest one's name?

CHILES: Neal or C. C. He started the Bank of Independence.

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FUCHS: C. C.? Where does the Neal come in?

CHILES: Cornelius. They called him Neal, and he was very successful and a typical banker. He was the kindest old fellow you ever saw, but he was just as cold as ice when you'd mention money.

FUCHS: What were Joel Franklin's other son's names?

CHILES: Well, the oldest one was Neal, then William and Colley and Joel and H. C. (Henry Clay) and Pheonis. Pheonis went to California. The funny thing about that is that with all those people, only one of them had a male heir, and that was my father.

FUCHS: That was?

CHILES: H. C. They used to call him Bruz -- that was his nickname. Nobody knew him by anything else. On the other side, a cousin of my father's was Sam Chiles. He was marshal of Jackson County.

FUCHS: Most of the Chiles' originally settled around Six Mile, you say?

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CHILES: Down there, all within a radius of three miles. I can show you the farms where they settled.

FUCHS: They're all related? Then there's a Chiles family in Lexington, I believe.

CHILES: Well, they're cousins. They came out from Kentucky themselves; they didn't come through this country. There was a Henry Chiles down there who was a lawyer, and he married a

girl I went to school with, Mary Chinn. He went to Germany as a Provost Marshal (he was a lawyer and had quite a practice in Lexington) and never did come back. He didn't get killed; he's still over there. He had no children.

FUCHS: He was a cousin of yours.

CHILES: His father was a cousin of my father's. No, it goes back farther than that. He wasn't a son of any one of these who came here; it was a cousin back of the grandfather.

FUCHS: I thought maybe he was a son of a brother of your grandfather?

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CHILES: Yes, that's right.

FUCHS: Well, are there other interesting anecdotes you might recall about Mr. Truman?

CHILES: Not that I can recall right now. You don't think of those things when you should.

FUCHS: I think you mentioned to me one time that when Mrs. Truman was a young girl she was able to whistle pretty good?

CHILES: She was the first girl I ever knew who could whistle through her teeth. She could do a good job of it. The boys used to whistle through their teeth, you know, and it would make a real shrill sound. She could do that. When she was growing up, she played ball -- anything a boy could do, she could do a little better. You'd think she was a tomboy, but when she was grown, she was the most gracious Southern lady you ever met, as demure as anybody can be. Her mother was a typical Southern lady and Bess was the same way. When she was growing up with all those boys, she had three brothers, and the Paxtons lived next door (they were all boys) -- she had to protect herself and she was a pretty

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good fighter.

FUCHS: Well, I guess that just about covers the ground, Mr. Chiles. Thank you very much.

CHILES: That's all right.

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