

Oral History Interview
with
JAMES E. RUFFIN

Supporter of a "Truman for Governor" movement in 1931; former Representative to Congress from Missouri, 1933-35; and Special Assistant to the Attorney General of the United States, 1935-53.

Springfield, Missouri
April 19, 1966
by J. R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
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FUCHS: To start, Mr. Ruffin, I would appreciate it if you would give me a little autobiographical sketch of yourself, starting with where you were born, your education, and the various jobs you've held over the years.

RUFFIN: I was born in Tipton County, Tennessee, July 24, 1893. My parents moved to Aurora, Missouri, which was then an active lead and zinc mining town between Springfield and Joplin, in the fall of 1905, when I was twelve years old. I went to high school at Aurora, and grade school there, and graduated from high school in the spring of 1912. At that time, my father moved his livery stock -- he had been in the livery business in Aurora -- he moved his stock to

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Springfield, and we moved to Springfield at about that time. The following fall I entered Drury College (that would be the fall of 1912). I remained there four years and graduated in the spring of 1916.

FUCHS: What did you study, anything in particular?

RUFFIN: I majored in history and economics. I took a full college course and an A.B. degree. I spent one year as director of athletics at what was then Nickerson College and Reno County High School in Kansas. This was one of the few county high schools left in Kansas. Hutchinson was the county seat of Reno County, but Hutchinson was not within the jurisdiction of this school district, as I understand it.

I decided to leave there before war was declared, on April 6, 1917. At that time I intended to get in a position so as to take up and complete a law course. I didn't know where I was going, but I knew that was my main objective. War was declared, of course, April 6, 1917, and I was working for the

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White and Myers Chautauqua Company that summer as I had the three previous summers, and subsequently I applied for and was admitted to the second officers training camp for this section. The first one met in, I think, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, The second one, for which I was eligible, oh, what's that fort just north of Chicago -- Fort Sheridan. I went to the second camp at Fort Sheridan. I entered August 27, 1917, and finished there November 27, 1917, At that time they could give you a commission higher than that of Second Lieutenant. Fortunately I was commissioned a First Lieutenant in the Infantry. Subsequently, after spending a few weeks at Camp Lee, Virginia, and four or five months at Camp Wadsworth, South Carolina, I was assigned to a newly created 53rd U.S. Pioneer Infantry. That organization had originally been the old 47th New York National Guard Infantry, a Brooklyn Regiment. When they formed the 27th Division, which included the New York troops, they had some troops left over. I was assigned to that regiment and we had, as non-commissioned officers, men that had served

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in the old 47th New York. But the main personnel consisted of enlisted or drafted men. In the summer of 1918 my regiment went to France and served there about two or three months continuously before this Armistice was signed. I returned then in the summer of 1919, in command of Company M, 53rd Pioneer Infantry, the regiment I'd been with all the time I was in France. I refused a promotion, as I was getting on the gangplank at Brest because that would have required me to stay over in Europe longer. I would like to have stayed except for one fact: that is, I wanted to get back and get in law school without losing any more time. Consequently, I came back with my regiment, and was discharged at Camp Taylor, Kentucky, on June 3, 1919.

FUCHS: I see. I believe you were attached at one time to the 35th Division in France.

RUFFIN: I was attached to them, yes, for one short period or maybe more than one short period of time. I was attached also to the First Division at one or more times, and probably some more. The fact is, we

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were at one time designated as corps troop but I think our last designation was First Army troops. But we didn't know from time to time when we up at the front, just exactly what regiment we were attached to. We just simply stayed there where we were as we juniors didn't know what was going on out of sight.

FUCHS: You didn't by pure chance come into touch with Truman when he was in the 35th Division?

RUFFIN: No, I didn't. No. I did not.

Now, you want me to go on from there?

FUCHS: Yes.

RUFFIN: I won't take so much time.

FUCHS: Something about the rest of your schooling and the various jobs you held over the years.

RUFFIN: Well, I went to law school in the fall of 1919 at Cumberland University, which at that time was located at Lebanon, Tennessee. It's now part of Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. The

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name is the result of the recent consolidation of what was formerly Howard College and Cumberland University. I got my law degree there in Cumberland, which was then located in Lebanon, Tennessee, in the spring of 1920. I came back and started to practice in Springfield, where I then lived and where I had lived since I left Aurora, in the real sense of the word. I practiced law in Springfield until a date later than we want to start with here. I was practicing law there in the spring of 1931, at the time, or a little after the time that I first had learned much about Harry Truman.

FUCHS: Did you have any city positions or county positions?

RUFFIN: No, I prosecuted for the city when I had been practicing law here for a few years, and was commonly referred to as Assistant City Attorney, but I never took any oath, really. In the technical sense of the word I never had any public position until I was elected to Congress.

FUCHS: I see. Were you active in politics?

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RUFFIN: Yes, I'd been chairman of the Democratic Speakers Bureau here for five or six years before -- two or three elections before -- 1931, the starting point here; and I had a wide acquaintance. I had a wide acquaintance in American Legion -- and State politics.

FUCHS: You were active in the American Legion?

RUFFIN: Yes, I had been adjutant here of the American Legion Post from '21 until about '25, and then I was elected commander for one year and I just graduated out of it to a certain extent, but I was always active here. I was chairman of the building committee that built the home here in 1930. During that time I was active not only in the post here but, as I said a minute ago, I had a statewide acquaintance among the Legion leaders.

FUCHS: Had you met Mr. Truman?

RUFFIN: I had probably met him just casually at some meeting. I knew of him, but I really couldn't say that I knew him.

FUCHS: Certainly.

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RUFFIN: That was the fact about it. I had some friends in common with him. Some of my good friends were good friends of his. This is really the logical starting point of it, because his cousin, General Ralph E. Truman, at that time lived in Springfield. He and I had been active in Legion affairs for some time prior to that, and we were very good friends, as we were throughout his lifetime.

One day, several weeks prior to this Truman meeting, the General said to me, "Jim, I've got a friend, a cousin, Harry Truman, that we may run for Governor, or we might get him to run for Governor (I forget just how he put it). "And I'd like for you to support him if you can."

Well, I said to the General, "I don't know of any reason why I can't support him, if he's your cousin and you want me to. I don't want anything from any Governor," I believe is about the language I used there, "and if he's your friend and your cousin, why, I'll be glad to support him if you want me to, provided, of course, that he decides he wants to run." And I said, in substance, "Of course,

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he isn't going to run without Pendergast's support." The state at that time had been in control of the Republicans for nearly twelve years -- a third four year term had about expired. And I said, "It looks to me as if we're going to have to get as the next candidate for Governor a strong Kansas City man. And if Hawes runs again for the Senate, of course, he'll come from St. Louis." Hawes was then in the Senate. "And if Hawes doesn't, we'll probably want to get a good candidate from St. Louis for the Senate in order to get the party really started somewhere on a state level." In other words, I was discussing politics there with him from a state standpoint. The General didn't seem to be primarily interested in anything except in Truman. He was not primarily a politician anyway, at least not a partisan politician.

FUCHS: Was Ralph Truman, whom I believe at that time was a Colonel, still living in Springfield?

RUFFIN: No, I believe he wasn't. He had been and he left again. He was away from here at the time, but

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I met him several times prior to this initial meeting here. I think that's right. He was not living here at that time.

At any rate, nothing was done, and I met him a few times after that and finally I said, "You ought to find out before we get anything started whether Harry's going to run or not."

And finally the General said, "Well, I'll sound him out on it."

I saw him a time or two after that and asked if he'd found out and he said, "No," he hadn't gotten any definite answer for me; that he had talked with Harry and he hadn't gotten anything definite. But on one occasion he said, "Well, I'll get an answer from him." And the General was a pretty determined sort of a character. "I'm going to see him in a few days and I'll let you know the next time I see you."

So, he did let me know a short time after that, and the essence of that was that at that time Harry didn't know whether he was going to run for Governor or not. I think one of the reasons was that Pendergast had promised Francis Wilson his support

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if he ran again. Wilson had been the nominee for Governor four years before that, and of course Harry wasn't going to run without Pendergast's support, and he wasn't going to run if Pendergast, of course, was supporting Wilson. And at that time, we didn't know if he was going to support Wilson or not because we didn't know about the condition of Wilson's health. It turned out that they finally decided that they would go along on that hypothesis, as I understand it. I wasn't present when any of these conversations were held up there -- I'm just trying to state the substance of it as I understood it.

FUCHS: Well, who do you think might have started the movement before Ralph Truman, or do you think it really initiated with Ralph?

RUFFIN: As far as my connection is concerned, it initiated with him. Now what happened back there in Kansas City, I couldn't know about.

FUCHS: You didn't talk it over with him?

RUFFIN: No, my part starts with Harry Truman. It was

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understood between General Truman and me at the time we called this Truman meeting, that Harry might not run but we, using a prevalent expression at that time, were "sticking his lightning rod up," so if he did decide to run later on, this preliminary work might help him. So, it was on that assumption that the meeting was called; not that he was a certain candidate, but that he might be a candidate. Finally the General asked me if I would call a meeting, or maybe I suggested that we call one to sound out some of the crowd here. The whole thing was just starting from scratch here, between him and me. At that time, I hadn't been in contact with Harry about it, and we were just floundering our way along until we could get started effectively.

FUCHS: Were you an officer in a Democratic political club here at that time?

RUFFIN: I don't think I was. I had been president of the Reed for President Club. A few of us organized that at least, once or twice before that, but that was just a local club and it gave us

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a little local publicity. I had held a position here as chairman of the speaker's committee but that's not an elective office. He is appointed by the chairman of the Greene County Committee.

Well, to get back to the starting point with the General, it was decided that I would call meeting here of active Democrats without giving too much publicity to it. And that's the reason why there's an apparent discrepancy on this Southwest Missouri Democratic Club as it comes back to me. In those letters that I sent out, I stated in substance that I wanted to get some Democrats together for the purpose of considering a prominent Democrat from Kansas City who might be a candidate for Governor. I didn't mention Truman for that reason. We didn't want any publicity yet and I didn't want anything to get out in the papers about it until we got further along. I tried to use care in selecting those invited. I didn't want to get too many from Greene County. I wanted just a few here for two reasons: The first was I didn't want the public to think it was primarily a Greene County

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move if something did get underway. And I didn't want the news to leak out that we were considering Truman. The newspaper situation was very competitive here and anything that I would have dropped out there would have been printed in all the newspapers, and I just didn't want that much publicity given to it this early.

FUCHS: What are the principal counties that you feel most closely allied with politically in this area, the most important counties?

RUFFIN: At that time some of them would have been a strip of counties running north to Pettis, and down the river including Lafayette, Howard and Saline counties. I had made the race for Congress in 1930 and my district embraced that territory. Before that it would have been the counties in the immediate section of Greene County. I didn't try to get anybody to attend, I think, from up in the original Seventh District, as it was then constituted. I was primarily interested in, as far as this meeting was concerned, sounding out sentiment down in this

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section, and especially in the counties southeast of here. These were then mostly in the old Sixteenth District. We had sixteen congressional districts at that time. And I then picked out some of the Democratic leaders in each county and mailed letters to them to the effect that we were going to meet for the purpose of considering the availability of a prominent Kansas Citizen for Governor. When we got here, somebody must have moved to call this the Southwest Missouri Democratic Club, judging from the minutes; but I don't remember who did that. I notice also on this letterhead, which contains the minutes there of this first meeting that I was elected president and Justis R. Morrow, secretary, and Joe Smith, who was an old Democratic leader here in Springfield, was elected treasurer. I notice, also, it has "Hawes for Senator," up here on the left, and "Truman for Governor." Now that can be explained, I think, by the fact that Hawes had friends here. Hawes was in the Senate -- and although I think there had been some intimation that he might not run again I didn't know whether he would or not, but I was certain that most everybody there would

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be for Hawes for the Senate if he did run again. And so if some of his friends, and he had some of them there, brought the matter up there wasn't any opposition to it and they probably just passed a resolution authorizing us to support him if he did run again. I don't remember that for I had nothing to do with it. I didn't oppose it because the only time that Hawes had ever appeared in Springfield in connection with an election was at a meeting in 1926 where I either introduced him or presided at the meeting. I intended to support him if he ran again, but we wanted some strong man from Kansas City to balance the ticket. Primarily the reason why I was in this thing -- was because General Truman had asked me to do this for Harry. So that will explain why, as nearly as I can, and I think that's the right explanation, as to why we, in a titular sense of the word, called this tentative organization the Southwest Democratic Club. The stationery indicates that we did that but that didn't have anything to do with my real objective.

FUCHS: This is a typewritten set of minutes under the

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heading of Southwest Missouri Democratic Club, and it is ostensibly the minutes of the meeting called to consider Truman, but there's nothing in these minutes about consideration of a candidate for Governor, and that's why I'm wondering...

RUFFIN: Isn't there? Now wait.

I've explained this the best I can. I think it was undoubtedly the same meeting and I think that...

FUCHS: Perhaps the secretary just didn't get all the minutes in, and where the name came from I don't know.

RUFFIN: I don't know. At any rate, what happened was, we had a representative group there from several counties. We had letters from others there that couldn't come, and you'll find one or two places there, or more, where I explained to some who couldn't come, just what we had in mind but asked them to say nothing about it. We told them we were going to consider Judge Truman, but not to say anything about it. I didn't want anything to leak out

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beforehand about it. When we got into the meeting, there were some platitudes no doubt, for Hawes and there was one fellow who jumped up there and mentioned the fact that somebody down here ought to be nominated for some other office. The main thing I was interested in, of course, was to find out about Truman, but I wanted to be tactful about it and not kick up any dust. I kind of wanted to feel my way along and give them a chance to get anything off their chest they wanted and then kind of slip up on the blind side of them, if necessary, and find out actually how they stood on Truman. We of course talked around there quite a while and finally near the conclusion of the meeting, the oldest lawyer there, a man named Bill Hiatt from Houston Texas County, suggested we ought. to have a whooping, old-fashioned, Democratic meeting there. He said, "We'll have Judge Truman down there to address a meeting."

Colonel Ralph was present at the time. Ralph says, "All right, let's get the meeting organized and I'll get him down here." Well, that was enough. I knew he could get him here. The next step was

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that we did organize a meeting down there.

FUCHS: What was the reaction when you first mentioned Harry Truman as a possibility at this meeting? Was there any opposition?

RUFFIN: There wasn't a bit of opposition to it. I was feeling my way along, as I said. I was walking a thin board there for the reason I was explaining to you, we didn't know whether Harry was going to run and I was very eager to find out what the sentiment was. I didn't want to force myself into it too strongly, either. I was really surprised before we got through. Most of them said, "Well, I don't know him personally; I've heard of him, but I'm willing to go along on this theory." Well, that was the general sentiment; there wasn't any opposition to it at all. That's why we went ahead and finally concluded the meeting there and formed what I thought was the Truman for Governor Club -- I've always felt that's what that was.

FUCHS: It probably came out in the papers.

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RUFFIN: That's what it amounted to anyway. So after that consummation of the situation at that meeting, Hiatt did go on and organize the meeting at Houston. You've been to Houston, have you?

FUCHS: No, sir.

RUFFIN: Well, it's a small town in a heavy Democratic county, and that's the largest county from the standpoint of territory in the state.

FUCHS: What county is that?

RUFFIN: That's Texas County, named for the State of Texas. Houston had about 1,000 people and was the county seat and the largest town in it. So, the General said, "I'll get him down there, if you want to organize a meeting." So we either decided then the exact time of the meeting or decided it later, but we decided we were going to have one in a short time. I've forgotten just how far we then went into it -- first we had to know whether Harry could come or not. The General said he'd get him down there, and he did. Of course, he took it up with Harry

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and found out that he could come at that time and we did go on and hold the meeting in Houston at the date which the record shows here that it was held. At that meeting Harry came down with his driver and with Emmett O'Malley...if there was anybody else...do you remember whether there was a fourth in that crowd?

FUCHS: Did Fred Boxley come with them?

RUFFIN: Oh, yes, Boxley did. He was his attorney there, at the county court. He was a Republican...

FUCHS: Yes, I believe he was the assistant city counsel or county counselor.

RUFFIN: I think he was a county counselor at the time. Yes, he came over. I think those constituted all who came.

FUCHS: Fred Canfil wasn't with them?

RUFFIN: I don't believe so. I think there was one carload.

FUCHS: Did you know Fred Canfil at that time?

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RUFFIN: I didn't know him at that time, no. No, now I may have met him after that and I can't place him now as a matter of fact. But I remember Boxley very well and I remember O'Malley and the other man that came -- now Canfil may have been the man that drove them, that came along -- he may have been the fourth one. There was a fourth one that came. Would that be Canfil?

FUCHS: I don't know whether it was or not.

RUFFIN: I don't remember his name but there was a fourth man that came. They divided here in Springfield and scattered into different cars and went to Houston. There were probably four or five cars from Springfield went down; and we got there and they were having a dinner in the hotel and a meeting in the school building there.

FUCHS: What hotel would that have been?

RUFFIN: It's the only one there, but I've forgotten. They just have one. It was back before we had any motels out on the highway. It was downtown. That

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was 35 years ago.

FUCHS: Your records show this was on Saturday, June 6, 1931. Did they come down the day before?

RUFFIN: They came down that Saturday. They didn't spend the night. They came down Saturday and he called me -- Harry called me. I was right across the street. He called from the Colonial Hotel just as quickly as he got here and said he was ready. I think he said he had to change clothes or clean up a little. At any rate, we started down there within a short time after that. We didn't have lunch here together. We started down in the afternoon and got down there probably about 6 o'clock. We got there sometime before dark.

We had dinner at the hotel there at Houston and the meeting was to convene about 8 o'clock. There was a large crowd; the place was full. Bill Hiatt, the lawyer who was responsible for the original suggestion to hold the meeting there, presided and introduced me after the preliminaries. I in turn introduced Harry, who addressed the

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meeting for a few minutes. He didn't make a long speech. There had been some speeches made before that, and there may have been some observations made afterwards. I'm not certain because it went on in the old-fashioned way; but at any rate, nobody was restrained from speaking and the meeting lasted probably two hours altogether.

FUCHS: Do you recall the gist of Mr. Truman's remarks?

RUFFIN: No. I really don't. He did not make a long speech, and I do not remember the gist of his remarks. I don't remember the gist of anybody's remarks except one phrase of mine. When I introduced him I briefly told of his standing and concluded, in substance, by saying, "I want to introduce a gentleman now whom I think will be the next Governor of Missouri." Well, of course I was wrong in that respect because he didn't run.

FUCHS: What were your impressions of Mr. Truman as a speaker that day?

RUFFIN: He was not nearly as good a speaker as he was

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later. He developed fast as a speaker. He made a good impression on the people but he didn't speak nearly as effectively and as smoothly as he did after he had had more experience. He didn't make any enemies, I'll say that. He made friends down there.

FUCHS: What occurred next in the course of the campaign for Governor?

RUFFIN: A short time after that, I heard that Pendergast was going to support Wilson again, whom he had supported four years before, and that Truman would not be a candidate. And that's the last I remember hearing of that line of activity. I've heard about it from time to time since then, but that terminated it. Wilson, of course, was nominated for Governor in the campaign the next year. This was all preceding the campaign in 1932, you see; we were starting early. Wilson got the nomination and died after the primary and before the general election, and the state committee met and named the candidate who was Judge Park, Wilson's close personal friend,

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and circuit judge of Platte County, and other counties, but he lived in Platte City. Judge Park was nominated and elected Governor in 1932. Truman was re-elected presiding judge of the county court -- I think he had to run that time -- wait a minute. Maybe he didn't.

FUCHS: No, he had been elected in 1930.

RUFFIN: He had been elected in an off-year election. He didn't have to run that time. He was elected in '30 for a four-year term. If he had been associate judge he would have had to run that time.

FUCHS: That's right.

RUFFIN: That's right. He didn't run but he did, of course, run for the Senate in '34 and was nominated and elected Senator.

FUCHS: Do you know Stanley Fike?

RUFFIN: How do you spell that?

FUCHS: F-I-K-E. At that time he was, I believe, editor

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of the *Inter-City News* and a supporter of Mr. Truman for Governor.

RUFFIN: Where is that paper? Independence?

FUCHS: Fairmount, it's not a part of Independence. It was then the inter-city.

RUFFIN: I don't remember him. I may have met him. After that I ran for Congress and met lots of people over the state. That's subsequent to all this though, you see, but at that time, among the Legion leaders, I had a good acquaintance over the state but not nearly as numerous as it was among the Democrats. I did not have a wide acquaintance over the entire state among the Democratic leaders at that time, because I had never been in statewide politics. I do not remember him. Now, I may have met him some -- I remember the gentleman that edited the *Missouri Democrat* out there in Kansas City at that time, let's see, Bradshaw, I believe, was his name. I remember him. I imagine I'd meet Bradshaw at Democratic rallies. I don't remember this other gentleman.

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FUCHS: Did Bradshaw seem to be a strong supporter of Truman?

RUFFIN: I don't know. I really didn't meet Bradshaw until after this was over with. Bradshaw took the position that he was for Democratic candidates after they were nominated. That was his general attitude. I remember that from other experiences.

FUCHS: How about A. J. Adair who headed the *Odessa Democrat*?

RUFFIN: Well, now, I knew Mr. Adair because I had met him when I first ran for Congress.

FUCHS: Well, I wondered if you had met him. He early published an editorial favoring Truman for Governor, and I just wondered if you had come in touch with him and had any recollections of significance?

RUFFIN: I met him in the campaign of the thirties. This was the year before when I first ran for Congress and was defeated in the primary. I ran against Sam Major who had been in and out of Congress for a long time. Sam died a short time after that, and

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I met Mr. Adair up there at that time. When did he run that first article on Truman, do you remember? Was that before '30?

FUCHS: 1930. I believe it was after he was elected presiding judge?

RUFFIN: That would have been before this. It is my recollection that I learned later that Adair had been for him, but I don't recall of having been in touch with Mr. Adair at this time concerning this matter. I'm certain that I had met the man, as a matter of fact.

FUCHS: Well, your records show, that after that meeting of May 4th, you later had a meeting with Ralph Truman at the Colonial Hotel in Springfield on May 15, which would have been ten days later, roughly. Do you recall what occurred then?

RUFFIN: That doesn't indicate...you don't have anything to indicate that that was a meeting; it was just kind of a conference, wasn't it? I met General Truman when he'd come to town so many times

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from time to time. I recall vaguely that we did meet after this and he let me know that Harry would approve the date that we had set down, or else we adopted the one that Harry suggested. I've forgotten which it was. It's very probable though that we set the date tentatively and then Harry said, "That's all right, I can come." I'm almost certain we did have a conference about it. It could have been over the phone, but I think it was probably a personal conference with him about it in which we agreed on details on both ends.

FUCHS: Who was Carl L. Ristine?

RUFFIN: Carl Ristine was a prominent lawyer of Lafayette County -- that's the county adjoining Jackson -- and a very close friend of Bennett Clark's. He had gone to school with Bennett. Ristine was captain of the first important football team that the University of Missouri ever had. I didn't go to the University,

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but know that he was a prominent athlete there. He was captain of the team that Bill Roper coached. Roper came out from Princeton to coach them and they beat Kansas that year. They hadn't been doing that. They lost no game and Ristine was one of the most prominent young men in college in the State, because he was captain of the football team, captain of the basketball team and Missouri Valley College tennis champion. He commanded a company -- the so-called Lexington company -- during World War I. He had an impressive military record because he came out a full-fledged colonel. He went in as a captain, as I understand it. After he went out of school, he coached at Wentworth Military Academy in Lexington. He coached at the military school the first year or two and formed a partnership with Judge Lyon, who was of an old line, prominent family there. It was the Lyon and Ristine firm for years. He married a young lady who had lived in Lexington, and he ran for the Supreme bench in 1926 and was defeated in the primary. I had known him since I was a boy and he was a friend of Bennet Clark's

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and he had served with General Truman in the National Guard, and with Harry, too, in a broad sense of the word, I think; but I knew the General knew him. As I recall it, I wrote and asked him to support Truman, and he wrote back and said he could not, because he understood that Francis Wilson would run again, and if so, he would have to support him. The essence was he had promised to support him and he'd have to do it. And that accounts for a letter probably there in the files. Well, that's about it.

FUCHS: He was an influential politician in that area?

RUFFIN: Oh, yes, he became a special assistant to the Attorney General in Washington and handled the Black case and the investigation of the outgoing Republican administration, after they'd been in twelve years. He was, really, the man who knew me and brought Joe Keenan, head of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, to meet me. I was then a member of the Judiciary Committee of the House. Keenan then asked me to get his so-called

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Crime Program through the Committee, where it was then hung up. However, all this took place in 1934 -- three years after the meeting at Houston.

FUCHS: Who was Colonel [Clement C.] Dickinson?

RUFFIN: Colonel Dickinson was an old member of Congress, who represented the, at that time, the 6th District of Missouri. He lived in Clinton. We had sixteen

districts prior to the redistricting -- prior to the time we had to run at large in '32. We didn't get redistricting straightened out until after the '32 election. In other words, we didn't get back to the district system until the '34 election; but the Colonel -- I called him Colonel -- a lot of people called him Judge -- was a Virginian who came out here in the early days and married a relative of an attorney in Clinton named Parks, I think. I think they were brothers-in-law. Jim Parks, whom I've known in the later generation, was a nephew of his. And the Colonel was in Congress several terms there. He was defeated once or twice, but he was re-elected in 1930 and was holding over

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then.

FUCHS: Did he know Truman?

RUFFIN: I don't think he did. He knew of him. He was too old. The Colonel at that time was eighty years old. He was still active in politics. He had a son killed in World War I, and the American Legion post at Clinton was named for him. He probably did know Judge Truman -- Judge Truman at that time. I don't know.

FUCHS: Did you know Tom Pendergast?

RUFFIN: I did not meet him until after this Truman meeting.

FUCHS: What about Jim Pendergast?

RUFFIN: I didn't know Jim personally before that. I knew of him, but if I'd ever met him it was just casually in a meeting such as I'd met Truman. I couldn't say really that I knew him.

FUCHS: Were you acquainted with Joe Shannon?

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RUFFIN: I had met Joe Shannon before that. I probably had just met him. I didn't know him. My first definite contact with him was a short time after that in '31 in Sedalia. That was the first distinct recollection I have of having met him.

FUCHS: There's a John Farrington of Springfield who was later active in Mr. Truman's subsequent campaigns. Did he play any part in this and who was he?

RUFFIN: Farrington?

FUCHS: Yes.

RUFFIN: Judge Farrington was elected judge of the Springfield Court of Appeals here in 1912; that's when the Republicans were split. This court was organized in 1910 by Governor Hadley, a Republican who appointed three Republican lawyers on it, all of whom had retired after the

election in 1912. At that time in the election in '12, there were three Democrats elected, to succeed Republicans. Farrington was one of them. They drew for terms

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and he drew the twelve year term and served the Court of Appeals until the first of January, 1925. After that time he formed a law partnership with Arthur Curtis, who was a prominent Republican and a short time after that was named chairman of the Republican state committee. The firm still exists now, that is the elder Farrington and Curtis, have died but the two Curtises, one of whom is a state senator, a Republican, and Dick Farrington, son of Judge Farrington, still constitute the firm of Farrington and Curtis. Judge Farrington had nothing whatever to do with this initial campaign. I'm almost certain that he never knew Harry Truman at that time. I have no reason whatever to believe that he did. The Judge was fifteen years older than I am; he was not in World War I; he had no Legion connection at that time; and I'm almost certain that if he ever knew Truman it was just a casual acquaintance. He wasn't asked to come to this meeting, because he was practicing law at that time, and I didn't want to get too many there from Greene County. I picked my crowd pretty carefully from Greene County. I wasn't necessarily trying to get the ones best

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known. I was trying to get the ones that likely could get the most votes.

FUCHS: What about Sam Wear? He was later very active.

RUFFIN: Sam and I officed on the same floor until the fall of 1930. I've known Sam Wear since I went to school here. He graduated from Drury College as I did and we graduated from the same law school. Sam had been chairman of the Greene County committee along about '20; then he was back tax attorney here for a while. He got back in active politics, a short time before the; campaign of '32. So after that, he was elected to the state committee. I'm certain Sam didn't know Harry Truman. He probably knew Ralph Truman, but Sam was not in the Legion crowd. If you trace this back to its original connection, it was the Legion crowd, you see, not connected with the Legion over the state but they were not my friends, you see. The group that he and I had in common were for the most part the American Legion crowd.

FUCHS: You would say then that much of this Truman for

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Governor movement was really under the aegis of American Legion friends?

RUFFIN: Well, it was the American Legion friendship. I would say that really the bottom of it was. When we branched out, I didn't confine it to those I'd asked to the meeting. I didn't confine my list of invitations to the Legion crowd at all. I was trying to choose them very carefully to get active Democrats, but some of them were Legion members. That was after we got it started though. But the initial hookup was dupe to Legion connections, that is, from my standpoint; that is the initial understanding between General Truman and me, which was based on Legion connections and not on Democratic connections. When we started to branch out, we considered it

a Democratic matter and went to inviting active Democrats then, of course. But I'm certain that Sam Wear had nothing to do with it.

FUCHS: You have a letter in your files from one H. G. Cherry, who was secretary of the Stockyards Democratic Club in Kansas City, dated August 21, 1931,

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in which he says that he and Judge Harry Truman had attended a couple of meetings yesterday, which would have been August 20, 1931, one at Higginsville and one at Urich, Missouri. Now it doesn't say in so many words that that was in relationship to his governorship campaign, but may we assume that they were still active that late, in August of '31?

RUFFIN: Whose letter was it?

FUCHS: Cherry, who was secretary of the...on the letterhead of the Stockyards Democratic Club?

RUFFIN: Oh, yes. I remember Cherry. I'll tell you what that was. A short time after this meeting, our old Congressman here died, Sam Major. We had to have a special election and the nominations had to be by the congressional committee. That was in 1931; about September. It was a short time after we had this meeting at Houston. Cherry was a stockyards man who went around over the state, ostensibly with the stockyards connection, to help boost the Democratic nominee for Congress in this district.

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And I saw him several times getting around over this district during that campaign.

FUCHS: You think, then, that this letter, stating that he and Truman attended meetings at Higginsville and Urich toward the end of August, '31, was not connected with the Governor campaign?

RUFFIN: I am certain it was not.

FUCHS: As one might imply on reading the letter.

RUFFIN: No, I think it was that race for that special election for Congress, because Sam Wear and I made a speech up at Marshall during that campaign, the same day. And the nominee asked me to make a special trip to go around and see some friends in his own county. I made that extra trip up there too, so I was active in it myself. I'm almost certain that's what it was, a special election for Congress in the 7th District.

FUCHS: The Truman for Governor movement you think would probably have been ended prior to August?

RUFFIN: It would have ended about that time. Wait a

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minute. I've got a letter somewhere in the file -- I don't know whether you caught it going through there or not, a newspaper clipping, stating in substance that Francis Wilson had made a statement that he was going to run -- did you catch that?

FUCHS: I saw that.

RUFFIN: That is about the time I considered the Truman for Governor phase of the matter terminated, because I knew he wasn't going to run, if Wilson ran.

FUCHS: When would you say was the inception of your campaign for Congressman-at-large?

RUFFIN: I'll lead up to that. In 1931 while this congressional race was pending we had the state American Legion convention at Joplin. I managed the campaign of Pete O'Brien of Sedalia for state commander of the American Legion. He was in my original congressional district and had been one of my active supporters when I ran for Congress. He served one term of one year. He was a close

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friend of Jim Pendergast, and of Truman's, too, for that matter. I had that possibility in mind about the same time of these other activities, all in '31, you see. But to follow it up here along the line that you're interested in, our Democratic nominee for Congress was elected in that special election and that was out of the way. The next thing I can think of, of consequence was the regular Jackson Day Banquet, which was a statewide affair as it is now. At that time it was held on January 8th, commemorating the Battle of New Orleans. And it was held on January 8 here, the following year, 1932. Truman was down here and Pete O'Brien was here, and, of course, there were a lot of leaders here from all over the state. I had no idea of running for Congress up to this time, because I didn't know but what the state would be redistricted and Johnson be left in Congress. I wasn't going to run against a new Congressman.

FUCHS: In other words you hadn't done anything openly prior to this Jackson Day Dinner of January 8?

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RUFFIN: I hadn't done what?

FUCHS: You hadn't come out...

RUFFIN: No, no, no. Pete O'Brien and I had had some discussion about the possibility of me running again. I wouldn't say I hadn't thought about it at that time. As time went on it's very probable that I began to realize more and more the possibility they'd have to run at large. But I didn't, as I recall it now, I didn't give it very serious thought until way in the middle of 1931. I thought probably they'd redistrict. But Pete was down here at that Jackson Day Banquet that they held January 8, 1932. As I said a while ago, Harry Truman was in town, and of course I had met him, and we had a brief get-together -- I wouldn't say it was a meeting -- with Truman in which

Pete said in substance to Truman, "I want you to get the Pendergast support for Jim Ruffin for Congress." You see, Pete was State Commander of the American Legion then.

And Truman said, "Well, I'll certainly do what I can to do it." That was all on the theory that they'd run at large, of course. We still didn't

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know we were going to have to run at large. Truman said, "I'll certainly do what I can and I'll see the old man."

A few days after that Pete called me and said that either Harry or Jim, I don't know which one it was, had a meeting with Pendergast arranged and wanted me to come to Kansas City. So I went up to Sedalia, spent the night with Pete, and we drove into Kansas City early that morning. It was a very cold morning, I remember that. That was a few days after January 8, 1932. Pete knew where to go and the meeting was in a two-story building upstairs somewhere on Main Street. By the time we got there it was hardly daylight -- there was a large crowd assembled there trying to get in to see Pendergast about various things. Harry Truman came down to the bottom of the stairs and met us and said, "Come on up. You fellows" (he was a little impatient) "you'll get to see the old man if you come on now. What's kept you?"

Pete said, "Why, we're here earlier than we're supposed to be. We were supposed to have been here

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at a certain time and we're early."

"Well, that's all right, he'll see you now," he said.

So, we went on up and did get an audience with him. Otherwise we might have had to stay there all day if we could have got one at all. Jim Pendergast was there, too. So, within a few minutes, we went in there and assembled were Tom Pendergast, Jim Pendergast, Harry Truman, Pete O'Brien, state commander, and myself. As I recall it there wasn't anybody else there. It was the only transaction I really ever had with Tom Pendergast. He operated just about like you'd expect him to. There wasn't any waste of time. Tom talked a little while and then pointed to Truman and said, "Now, he's your friend."

Then he looked at Jim and pointed to Pete O'Brien, "Now, he's your friend." Then he pointed to Pete and looks at me and says, "Now, he's your friend. So, that makes all of you my friends."

And Pete had told Harry or Jim before this: "We want to know definitely what he's going to do.

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We don't want to get into this thing, unless we know we're going to get the full Pendergast support." I had to have some real organized help and needed his full support over the state. I wasn't going to get into it otherwise. And the old man anticipated that.

I had told Pete on the way up there,. I said, "Pete, I don't know what position this senatorial race is going to get into."

Charlie Howell, at that time, was running from Kansas City. He was chairman of the state committee. Charlie Hay, a leading prohibitionist, who had been nominated for the Senate before in '28, lived in St. Louis and was running, and Bennett Clark had just come out. Immediately preceding the Jackson Day Banquet here, Bennett came down here and I spent two or three days going around here with him. That was the start of his campaign for the Senate. Of course, I didn't know at that time whether Pendergast was going to support me or not, but I knew that I would have to support Clark. I had promised to do so and said we might

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as well settle that to start with. I knew of course that Pendergast would support Howell, and I told Pete going into Jefferson City that morning, I said, "Now, Pete, I don't know what the old man's going to say, but I'll tell you this so you can be forewarned on it in advance. If he says to me that I'll support you provided you support Howell, I'll just have to thank him and tell him I can't do it." I said, "I'm committed; I'll have to support Clark and if I can't do so I just won't run."

I had probably told Pete that before, because when I got there Pendergast anticipated that, and he said, in substance at that brief meeting: "Now, I know you boys are friends of Clark's," meaning me in particular, I think. And he said "I like Clark myself, though I can't support him because Howell is one of our own men and has always been regular and one of our strong supporters here and if he runs I'll have to support him." But he said, "That isn't going to make any difference." He said to me, "You go out in the state and make your campaign and don't talk too much about what

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I'm going to do up here. Get out there and make your campaign."

Pete had told Jim Pendergast that we wanted my name on all the ballots that the organization sent out over the entire state. Pendergast at the meeting said, "Your name will be on all ballots I'll send out." In other words, "You will get my full support." This was said when he knew that I was going to support Clark against Howell. That was settled then and I thanked him and left.

FUCHS: I was wondering about a letter HST wrote you on October 12, 1931; he said, "I believe you are on the right track." He congratulated you for a victory in the 7th District and then he said, "I haven't anything to report on the other matter in which you and I are interested, but you never can tell what will happen between now and June." Now, that was October, 1931, and I wondered if you remembered What that had reference to?

RUFFIN: That was Harry?

FUCHS: Yes.

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RUFFIN: 1931?

FUCHS: October 12, 1931.

RUFFIN: Have you got the letter here?

FUCHS: Well, it would be in the file there.

RUFFIN: Wait a minute. I don't know. I just can't recall. It was something we were mutually interested in, obviously.

FUCHS: Well, it's logical that you might not recall at this late date.

How did Mr. Truman, if he did, participate in your campaign for Congress in '32?

RUFFIN: In 1932 the same day that we had the meeting with Pendergast,, Harry said, "I want you to come by the Hotel President for lunch."

FUCHS: There is a Hotel President in Kansas City.

RUFFIN: He had a room reserved there, or one which he had access to. "I'm going to have lunch to celebrate the occasion." I went. Pete and, of course,

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Harry was there. I think Jim Pendergast, Boxley and a few more were there. Harry told me in substance that "You don't have to do anything in Jackson County. Just get on out in the state and make your campaign. Don't spend your time up here." So far as I know, that's about all he had to do with my campaign. I don't doubt but what when he came in contact with friends of his around the state, he helped me when he could. I don't have any memory of any particular incidents.

FUCHS: Who was the Dr. Wooley? Do you recall?

RUFFIN: Wooley? Where was that?

FUCHS: Well, on February 3, 1932, you wrote Harry Truman and you sent regards to Jim Pendergast, Mr. Boxley, Dr. Wooley, and Emmet O'Malley, and I just wondered. I just have the list of names there; I don't have the letter.

RUFFIN: That sounds like the crowd that went to Harry's luncheon, excepting Jim Pendergast. Boxley and O'Malley...I don't remember Dr. Wooley. It's

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been such along time ago. At that time his name was probably fresh in mind and it could have been I knew him for a period of time there and then forgot his name. Is that something you picked up from going through here. Wooley...I do not remember him.

FUCHS: No.

RUFFIN: I can't place him. He could have been some man that attended the meeting that lived in some of these surrounding counties. I don't remember a thing. Of course, there may be a case or two where I'd invite a particular man and he'd bring a friend along with him, you see.

FUCHS: Yes. Who was George Moore of St. Louis, who was an individual that Truman advised you to get in touch with for your campaign purposes?

RUFFIN: George Who?

FUCHS: George Moore, and Senator Mike Kinney and Judge Benjamin Thomas, who he said was "Our bond attorney?"

RUFFIN: I don't remember. Did you find that in a letter

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from Truman to me?

FUCHS: Yes.

RUFFIN: I can tell you who Judge Moore was. Judge Moore had been United States Collector of Revenue, what they now call United States District Commissioner of Revenue during the Wilson administration. He was a very close friend of Bennett Clark's and later on he was appointed to the Federal bench in St. Louis, and served there until he died. That's who George Moore was. I don't remember that particular letter from Harry.

FUCHS: You don't recall talking to him about it?

RUFFIN: I don't recall talking to him about it, and to tell you the truth, I never met Judge Moore until that was over with. He was a close friend of Bennett Clark's, and I knew that later on. He had run for Governor one time, but I don't remember that incident; I don't remember ever having really met him until after the campaign was over. I knew who he was; I knew of him, but I don't recall having met him.

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FUCHS: On August 9, 1932 you wrote and thanked Mr. Truman for his efforts toward your victory in the primary election, and then you added: "Judging from sentiment over the state, I am firmly convinced that it is not going to be long until the boys are going to thrust a real job upon you, and when the time comes you know where you will find me." Had you anything specific in mind? Had you heard anything about sentiment for Truman for other jobs?

RUFFIN: Well, no, that must have been...I don't recall. What date is that?

FUCHS: August 9, 1932.

RUFFIN: That was before this notice came out in the papers that Wilson wasn't going to run.

FUCHS: In '32, not '31.

RUFFIN: Oh, was that '32?

FUCHS: Yes, August 9, 1932, after you had been nominated and what I'm getting at was, were you just expressing

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a general feeling that Truman was coming up and they were going to eventually...or did you have something in mind that they were going to run him for, for this, for Congress, or run him for the Senate, or...

RUFFIN: I don't recall anything in mind at that time, It must have been this: "Governors can't succeed themselves in Missouri." I probably had this in mind. He would be in line for Governor of Missouri the next time. That's undoubtedly what I had in mind. I'm certain it wasn't to run for the Senate, because I never thought about running him for the Senate until after this was over with. That must have been what it was, but I don't recall any particular, and I'm satisfied there wasn't any particular incident happened to cause that. It was just a general feeling that I had, that he was on the make and, of course, I was for him.

FUCHS: Do you think Joe Shannon was generally friendly toward Mr. Truman?

RUFFIN: As far as I know, he was. I never knew Joe

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Shannon profoundly. There was quite a bit of agitation around in the Missouri delegation at that time about who was going to run for the Senate. An old member of the House, Lozier, wanted Pendergast's support and wanted to run. Jack Cochran, who did later run, of course, I don't know how early Jack got his lightning rod up, but there was quite a bit of discussion around. I remember one time in talking to Joe Shannon about it -- Joe may have had notions of running himself, I don't know, but he never told me he was going to -- and in discussions with me, most of the time, if anything was said about Truman, it would be on the theory that he knew that Truman and I were good friends, you see. There was something said one time in a conversation I had with Joe after Truman had announced. The tenor of it was -- that Joe wasn't going to get into it. He said, "How do you think Truman will run among the soldiers' or how do you think he'll run?"

And my answer was, "I think he'll run very well. He's popular among the soldiers." I

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remember that. So far as I can recall now, that is the only time I ever had any discussion with Joe Shannon about Truman. There certainly was nothing in that to indicate that he was not for Truman.

FUCHS: Mr. Truman announced in May, 1934. Do you recall that you had the feeling Truman was well-known around the state?

RUFFIN: Well, you mean in '34? You mean early in '34?

FUCHS: Yes, but the middle of '34 when he announced, did you think Mr. Truman was well-known?

RUFFIN: Do you remember when he did formally announce?

FUCHS: May 14, 1934.

RUFFIN: Was it? Yes, by that time, I had the idea -- I knew more about him, more about his connections, and I had the idea at that time, he would probably be as strong or stronger than I thought he was when I first heard of him. I was in Washington, you see, a large part of the time in the first part of '34. Congress was in session then. The impression

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that I was getting from him was good. I was getting them from various places and, yes, my recollection now is that I hadn't heard anything to indicate that he wouldn't run well. I'll say this, I was surprised to hear that he intended to run for the Senate, though, in the first place. If you'll give me just a minute, I'll tell you why. One day, comparatively early in '34, he came into my office there, just by himself. He met my wife and me. We just had a brief talk. That was early in '34 and he said, "Jim, I can have the nomination for county collector in Jackson County, and I can come out of there with \$50,000." I don't know whether he said to me, "What do you think about it," or not. I don't know that he did that, but he said, "I can do it." He didn't say he was going to do it. I felt at that time he would run for Congress. You see, there was going to be another district added in addition to Joe Shannon's district. I don't remember whether we discussed that potentiality or not. My wife and I often talk about that, because she remembers the incident distinctly. She recalls

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that we discussed the possibility of his running for the House. I do know there wasn't any inkling of him running for the Senate at that time. I never dreamed he was going to run for the Senate at that time. He couldn't run for Governor then. Of course, that was an off-year election, you see. He could have run for the House and then run for Governor two years after that. I didn't know what he was going to do. I was completely surprised when I learned later on that he was going to run for the Senate.

FUCHS: One young scholar has advanced a theory based on some information he received from a gentleman whose name I don't recall, that Cochran entered the race in '34 simply as a stalking horse for Truman. What would you say about that?

RUFFIN: I never knew Jack Cochran very well. What contacts I had with him were friendly. I just do not know. My own inclination was, that -- and I don't have any definite conversation or anything on which to base this, it's just a general

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deduction on my part -- Cochran ran because he thought he could win. There has always been a certain amount of feeling between various interests in those two cities, being in the same state. You know that. It boiled over party lines. I just think that Cochran thought (he never told me this) "I can run and win because I can solidify the Democratic organization in St. Louis and get enough newspaper support to win in this primary." I don't know; I never discussed it with him, but I really think that he thought he could win. I don't think he was out as stalking horse. Now, the man who threw the monkey wrench in the machinery, in a sense, was Milligan. Milligan saw he was likely to be defeated for Congress, as a result of redistricting there, by Duncan. He finally decided to run for the Senate. Well, of course, Milligan had Clark's support. Milligan never confided in me but he knew, of course, that I was for Truman -- and so did Cochran for that matter -- there wasn't any use to discuss that; both knew where I'd stand on it. They never discussed any details with me, but as sentiment

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began to consolidate against Pendergast in the Party because of St. Louis jealousy, and also because of various other matters, the primary was to be looked upon as "Pendergast" versus "anti-Pendergast." Well, of course, the more candidates that came out, the better it would be for the Pendergast candidate, because he didn't have to have a majority. All he had to have was a plurality, and that's the way it worked out. Nobody can tell what would have happened in the race between Cochran and Truman if Milligan hadn't got in there. To a certain extent Milligan and Cochran bumped heads, because they both were considered, whether they were or not, they were both considered largely anti-Pendergast by most people.

To get back to your original question, I have no reason whatever to believe that Jack Cochran was figuring that he didn't have a chance of winning. Of course, he did cover up, you see; he had it arranged so that if he was defeated -- he had a friend of his to run and get the nomination for his seat in the House. I don't know that, but that's

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what he did and I have no doubt but what that was prearranged. I never discussed it with anybody; I don't think there's any doubt about it though; that's what happened.

FUCHS: As you probably know, Ralph Truman was involved with Tuck Milligan's campaign in '34 and Mr. Truman and Ralph had a falling out at that time. Did you ever discuss that with Ralph?

RUFFIN: He never did discuss it with me at all. I understood -- just between you and me that it happened but he never told me. I've just drawn my own deductions about it. There were two reasons for it: One, was the fact that he and Tuck Milligan had served together in France and he had promised Tuck in advance that he was going to support him before he knew Harry was going to run. I think that was the main reason. However, I don't think he and Pendergast were very friendly. I never had any reason to believe they were not but this is just my own deduction about it. He never explained it to me. That's just my own deduction on those

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points.

FUCHS: Did you know A. R. Hendrix who was a campaign manager, as I have read, for Mr. Truman in northwest Missouri in 1934?

RUFFIN: What's his name?

FUCHS: A. R. Hendrix -- H-E-N-D-R-I-X.

RUFFIN: Where did he live, do you remember?

FUCHS: St. Joseph, I believe. He's supposed to have later been convicted, presumably, for vote fraud.

RUFFIN: I don't remember him. I may have known him. But I will say this about the '34 campaign, Harry and I were both running in '34, and of course I did what I could for him and he did the same thing for me. It was through his influence that I carried Cass County up there. He supported me but Pendergast didn't. Pendergast went with the state organization. But Harry told me, "I'll support you, Jim." He told me after he found out I was going to run "You're going to have a hard time," he told my

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wife and me.

FUCHS: You were running for what district then?

RUFFIN: Well, that was the new 6th District. Harry said in substance, "You're going to have a hard time." I knew it and I didn't file for a long time, but I finally thought Dickinson might die and that would give me a break. I thought I could win against either one of them alone. But he said, "I'll do what I can. I've got personal friends in Cass County and other places," and he did. I carried Cass County over the winner; I carried it about three to one through the influence of Harry's friends, even though the Pendergast crowd and the state organization were against me. That's what he did for me in '34, even when he was running himself.

FUCHS: Do you recall any anecdotes concerning Mr. Truman in any of these campaigns, in '34, or '40?

RUFFIN: No, you see, in '34 I wasn't in close touch with him, because he had the whole state and I had

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my district, and I was in Washington until way long in the summer. I really didn't see him much.

FUCHS: Were you acquainted with Barney Dickmann of St. Louis?

RUFFIN: Yes, I knew Dickmann slightly. Is he still living?

FUCHS: I believe he is.

RUFFIN: I haven't seen him in many years. I knew him slightly, yes.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything of his true feelings toward Mr. Truman?

RUFFIN: My recollection is that Dickmann was very active in Cochran's campaign for the Senate in '34. I remember being in Sedalia one time there where he was present -- I think he was on the platform, as I recall it. It was a local meeting and I just happened to be in town. Now, further than that, I don't know. I never had any contacts with Dickmann in my life. I met him and that's all. I

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knew who he was. His father had been mayor of St. Louis -- at least his father had been sheriff at one time, and probably mayor.

FUCHS: You knew Sam Rayburn personally?

RUFFIN: Oh, yes.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything in connection with him and Mr. Truman?

RUFFIN: No, because when I was in the House -- Truman and I were not in Congress at the same time -- I was just a freshman member of Congress. I knew Sam Rayburn. He was chairman of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. Sam was a very close friend of Tuck Milligan's when they were in the House. There was a little clique there, the present Speaker, McCormack, Sam Rayburn, Tuck Milligan, and John McDuffie of Alabama, and Jack Garner, the Vice President. They were very close. Of course, I wasn't in it. They'd been friends for years; I wasn't in the clique, but I know that they were. Milligan and Sam were close friends.

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And I never knew anything about the relationship between Truman and Milligan because Harry and I were not in Congress at the same time.

FUCHS: You have told me, as your records show, you went into the Justice Department in 1935. Is that correct?

RUFFIN: Yes.

FUCHS: And you didn't have much contact with Mr. Truman subsequent to that?

RUFFIN: Not a great deal. Once in a while I would see him, but not a great deal. The first year or two there, Sam Rayburn was chairman of the Speaker's Committee, and he wrote and asked me if I would make some speeches. I wrote back and told him I would when they arranged the

schedule. There was some other chairman or somebody else connected with the National Committee as I recall it, who contacted me a short time after that. I told them, in substance, the same thing. As it happened I was in and out of court during this time.

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FUCHS: Do you recall Mr. Truman as having a quick temper? Do you think he had a quick temper?

RUFFIN: Well, I would say yes. I would say both of the Trumans had. That puts them in the same category that I'm in. Yes, they were both quick tempered people, I would say. I don't say they had uncontrollable tempers, but they were very definite in their views and I'm the same way. If something comes up they don't like they fly off right now. Yes, I think that's a characteristic of Harry and Ralph and myself, too. I think we're all that way.

FUCHS: That would be a controlled temper. There might be a distinction in a sense between a hot temper and a quick temper?

RUFFIN: Yes, a quick temper. I think he's fair minded. If he got off on the wrong tangent he'll get right back, and I try to do that myself. I couldn't say that he wasn't a person that could be moved rather quickly if something came up and if his feathers were ruffled the wrong way. That's true. And I think that was true of Ralph. I know it's

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true of myself. Bennett Clark was that way, too. If things didn't go right with him you'd find out in a hurry.

FUCHS: Did you ever have any occasion to observe Mr. Truman's drinking habits?

RUFFIN: His what?

FUCHS: Drinking habits. Would you say he drank...

RUFFIN: My understanding he didn't. You see, I never spent any large amount of time with Harry at any time. I've met him on many occasions, but they were for brief visits, and a large part of my connection with him has been through correspondence. You can see that. Therefore, I'm not in a position to observe this as somebody would who was more closely associated with him. But I'll say this, I think he did not smoke at all, and I never saw him drink to amount to anything. I won't say I never saw him take a drink; I probably have, but it certainly was very sparingly taken. He was not what I would have called a drinking man at all.

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FUCHS: As an observer of the political scene, how would you assess Mr. Truman as a politician?

RUFFIN: I think he was a very smart politician, and I think he was very shrewd. First, and fundamentally he is an honest man. He had that to start with. Whereas some people may think

that doesn't serve you best, but in the long run it's mighty hard to find a substitute for. In other words, he was the kind of a man that, if he knew that he ought to take a position on something, he took it. He took it in such a way that there couldn't be any misunderstanding about it. He didn't want any misunderstanding about it. He was a good judge of men, and I think he was what you would call a smart politician. By that I don't mean in the narrow sense of the word -- I mean in the broad sense of the word. When he ran in the first campaign for the Senate he didn't have what you would call a broad state-wide acquaintance. Yet, he got out and won. During his time he had some hard issues to meet; but he never pussyfooted around when something came up that required action on his part. He

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would come out and act as quickly as he could, and he'd act in such a way that everybody knew where he stood. He didn't try to cover up or camouflage anything. Some people think that a man that does that too much is not a smart politician. To a certain extent that's probably true. I've known some locally that you think stand for nothing. When you get into Congress, you've got to pass on issues, and take stands on issues, make decisions which are going to work both ways, some of which are going to hurt you. I've known some who would try to gloss over all of the issues and smooth them over and take no stand except when they had to. That's not generally Truman's idea, and some people think that the smarter course is that followed by the ones I last mentioned. I don't; I think that the course generally followed by Truman is the more admirable one. And in a large percent of the cases I think it will get you farther. Now, I don't mean by that that he was running around and hunting an issue and sticking his nose in every little dispute that arose over the state. There's a distinction between having the responsibility cast

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on you in different situations. Some of them you've got no business in, in the first place. The ones where you do have, where you're required to pass on as part of your duties, you should take a stand, even though you've got to make some enemies. Harry Truman's course, generally, as I can remember it, was to step right in and take a stand, a definite stand, and get it over with, let the chips fall where they may. I think it's the smartest politics under the big tent, for a man in high positions, especially in Congress.

FUCHS: You know Theron Lamar Caudle in the Department of Justice?

RUFFIN: Yes.

FUCHS: Do you have any observations about the Caudle-Connelly-Sachs case that might be of interest to historians?

RUFFIN: I first met Caudle about a year or two before he came to the Department of Justice in Washington. He was the district attorney for one of the districts

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in North Carolina. I was special assistant to the Attorney General at the time, and I went down there to conduct a grand jury investigation of to watch a grand jury investigation which involved a man who was a personal friend of Caudle's.

Well, the next thing I knew about Caudle was several months after that when he came to Washington as head of the Criminal Division. I liked Caudle personally. He was very nice to me. He got over in the Tax Division. I have no personal knowledge of the actual facts involved in his difficulty. I had no official connection with it because I wasn't in the Tax Division and I probably wouldn't have had anyway. However, I have from time to time thought about it quite a bit, and from my general knowledge of the situation and my general knowledge of Caudle -- I don't think the man was guilty of any crime. I think it was due largely to just a lack of experience. The expression I've often used: I think it was just a case of a country boy getting to town too fast. He got up there in those positions and there are always large elements

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around Washington, of course, that are trying to advertise themselves and further themselves by contacts and supposed contacts they've got with people in responsible positions. I think he was over-flattered, and with his limited background and limited ability he finally got himself into trouble. As I say, I can't base that on any personal perusal into the facts, because I didn't do that. But I base it on considerable experience I've had, in comparable cases. Generally, I really think that his conviction was a miscarriage of justice. I don't blame Truman for having let him out of the department, because he shouldn't have been in that position to start with. That's where the mistake was made and I liked him personally; but he simply should not have been appointed. He simply was not qualified to head either the Criminal Division or the Tax Division.

FUCHS: Thank you.

Do you have any other anecdotes about Mr. Truman, any conversations or anything humorous or otherwise that might delineate his character?

RUFFIN: I wish I could think of some.

FUCHS: It's hard to do.

RUFFIN: I can think of one instance that I've often thought of. He was in the Senate when the announcement was made that the Germans had turned on the Russians. At that time Harry was a very prominent member of the Senate because he was chairman of the Truman Investigating Committee. He was one of the Senators whom a representative of one of the news media interviewed. He made what was a characteristic statement of the situation, the essence of which was "Damn it, let them fight and let them eliminate each other." That was the sentiment of a large part of the people in the country. But I'm sure that when he stated it there -- he stated it all in one shot with very few words. I've often thought about that.

FUCHS: That's about all I have unless there's something else you can think of.

RUFFIN: I can't think of anything else.

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