

Oral History Interview
with
JOHN J. STRODE

Longtime friend of the Truman family; son of Gilbert W. Strode, a Truman appointee as road overseer; Army service in World War II; auditor in Treasury Department, 1946-48; Assistant Postmaster, 1949-67; Postmaster, 1967-76.

Grandview, Missouri
November 18, 1980
by Niel Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
July, 1981

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JOHNSON: Mr. Strode, we'll begin with your background. Tell us where you were born, and when, and your parents' names.

STRODE: My parents were Gilbert W. Strode and Ethel M. Strode. I can't tell you exactly without going and looking someplace when my father and mother were married, but they were married and I was born on a farm out east of Grandview; the ground is now owned by whoever owns the Longview Lake property. In other words, it's in that valley of the Little Blue River.

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JOHNSON: You were born when, what year?

STRODE: I was born on the 30th of December of 1918.

JOHNSON: How long had your father lived on the farm before you were born?

STRODE: The farm originally, as I understand it -- I can't tell this for sure -- was homesteaded by the Clements family. Sometime shortly before the turn of the century my grandfather, who was John P. Strode, purchased the farm from the Clements family. My grandfather was a cattle buyer in the yards and he had a brother, James W. Strode, who was a horse and mule dealer. There were some where between three and six hundred acres in that farm and it straddled the Blue River east of Grandview.

According to my dad, during my grandfather's lifetime he wouldn't let a plow be stuck in the ground; it was all in pasture and timberland. There was a big old house and two big barns and

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then a kind of semi-basement barn, which was called a mule barn, out on this place.

Anyway, my grandfather ran cattle on it. He'd buy them if he saw some worth the money that weren't ready to go to the killers. As I understand it he would buy them and put them out here on the farm. His brother, my uncle Jim Strode, would buy horses and mules at the yards or wherever they were available, and in the late winter and early spring, why, he was in the trading business. He'd trade and sell horses and mules around, In fact, I've heard him tell about it; they'd collar these mules and horses and tie one of them to the other's tail and he'd take a string of them out and just trade or sell them outright; just go around the countryside.

JOHNSON: Do you think that's what John Anderson Truman, Harry's father, would have done?

STRODE: I don't know, but from what I have heard I would assume that's the same kind of a situation.

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That didn't preclude the fact that if you wanted to go to the farm and trade or buy they would also do the same thing. But, yes, I think that was true.

JOHNSON: Your father was acquainted with the Truman family?

STRODE: I would assume so. I don't know that much. I mean, we're kind of an odd family; there never was a whole lot said about it. We were kind of like Vivian's boys. My dad and my uncle, who was dad's younger brother, John R. Strode -- they never did, you know, try to capitalize on it. They just went along and minded their own business, kind of like Vivian's boys. They couldn't give a damn less. You know, they are proud of the fact and all, but they never have tried to capitalize or commercialize on it, and my family was the same way. We were just friends and that's it. That's all it amounted to.

JOHNSON: Now you say your farm, the one you were born

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on, was east of the Solomon Young farm?

STRODE: Yes, it had to be.

JOHNSON: About how far east?

STRODE: Well, it's three miles.

JOHNSON: About three miles from the...

STRODE: Three miles east of Grandview. As you go east on High Grove Road, and when you cross the Blue River down there -- it's the only bridge on High Grove -- this farm lays to the north of that on both sides of the Blue River.

JOHNSON: And what was that year again that you were born there?

STRODE: I was born on the 30th of December, 1918.

JOHNSON: So, any information you have about Harry Truman while he was on the farm would be more from...

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STRODE: Just hearsay. And as I say, it was enough prior to my birth date that I don't know anything about it. I don't even remember him being on the farm. All I can remember is Vivian, his brother, and his family. I do vaguely remember Harry Truman when he was on the County Court. I can remember when he was on the County Court and dad was a road overseer for Jackson County. Of course, this was way out in the boondocks; this was the last road district before you got to the county line. I can remember my mom fixing fried chicken dinners in the summertime when Harry Truman and the Highway Engineer would periodically come out to make a tour of the roads and so forth. I can remember vaguely them being here.

JOHNSON: Now you probably saw the Truman farm before you saw Harry Truman.

STRODE: Oh, yes, I'm sure we did. Yes.

JOHNSON: Was there anything unusual about the farm?

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STRODE: No, it was just another farm; that's all. I mean the barns were no bigger or no smaller; they were just big barns. I can remember this -- as far as Vivian was concerned, and I'm assuming it was a carryover from way back, that they always had good mules to work with. And my dad was the same way; they, always liked big mules, big husky mules to work, and they worked a hell of a lot of mules.

JOHNSON: Did you hear that the barn on that farm was made from timbers from...

STRODE: The old Hickman Mills? Yes. The boys, Harry and Gilbert, Vivian's boys that are still living, why, we had talked about the fact that when they bought this farm down at Louisburg there was so much good timber and good lumber in that Grandview barn, that after they sold the rest of it off and they still owned the barn and all, they had tentatively planned to take that barn down and move the lumber to their farm down there. They were going to utilize the lumber and the

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timbers to build another barn on their present farm. And because of the historical value of those old walnut timbers that were in it from that Hickman Mills, Harry and Gilbert had told me that they would give me a part, at least, of those timbers. I had planned on having a coffee table or something like that made of it, see. In fact, I've got a neighbor next door who is an artist on working with wood, and I even had a deal worked out with him -- I was going to get enough timber that he could make one too in return for making me one, and when the damn kids burned it down I was sick about it.

JOHNSON: It was a shame all right.

STRODE: It had to be the first time that Harry Truman ran for Eastern Judge.

JOHNSON: This is an anecdote about the first election?

STRODE: Yes. As I say, my dad had been in politics before that even. This was before Mr. Truman

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got involved in it, and it evidently was during the time he was in the clothing store. Okay, during that time, dad was in Politics and he had hooked up with Miles Bolger, who was the political power at that time. My dad's job was predicated on support from Miles Bolger. So when Harry Truman ran the first time -- it had to be -- it couldn't have been the time he was beat.

JOHNSON: The year 1922, then, we're talking about.

STRODE: It must have been. Of course they had somebody else that they were backing against Harry Truman. The Pendergasts were just beginning to get involved in county politics. And Miles Bolger put out the word to beat Harry Truman. And dad had really no alternative, even though he knew the Trumans and all that. The Trumans accepted it; they knew it was because dad's job was predicated on his support of Bolger. Dad had what I think was the whole fifth precinct, which was out across what's now 71 Highway. And

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there was a doctor, an M.D, named Dr. Joseph T. Brennan, who was more or less the precinct captain, or whatever you want to call it, in the old town of Grandview.

Okay, they got out and worked their tail off election day, and they came up with a majority. This had to be the August election, the primary. In those days they didn't call in the results by telephone; they didn't have a computer or anything. They had to take the ballot boxes and the ballots and the poll books and everything to Independence to the Election Commissioner's office. So dad and Doc were just cocky as hell; they had really done what Miles Bolger told them,, So they took the count to Independence and turned them in, and they started computing them on the blackboard, precinct by precinct, and township by township. When they got through, dad and Doc Brennan were one of about two or three precincts in the whole county that hadn't gone for Harry Truman. So there they sat

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out in right field, like a couple of ninnies. Well, dad and Doc came home like a couple of whipped dogs with their tails between their legs and, you know, they got beat; that's all there was to it. They were on the losing side, just like the Democrats are nationwide today.

As I say, dad's appointment ran out; they all had to be reappointed, It was a shuffle every year and the one that swung the most political power was the one that got the job. It was strictly a patronage thing. So dad came home; he wouldn't even go to Independence. I mean he went ahead and served his term out which would have been for September through December after the election.

Well, it came time in January for the new County Court to take office. Of course, Harry Truman was elected in November, as the Democrat, and it came time in January to make all these political appointments. Dad was so damned ashamed of himself that he wouldn't even go to independence to ask about it. He just sat out there and said,

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"To hell with it, I'm not going to ask," you know "because," he said, "I don't deserve it, and I'm not going to ask for it."

Of course, dad and Vivian were good buddies, and one evening in February or sometime around then, Vivian drove out to the farm. By that time dad had sold this farm and had another one over there. Vivian drove out there and said, "Harry told me to come by and tell you to come in to see him; he wants to talk to you."

Dad still didn't know, but anyway, he went into Independence. By that time it was a foregone conclusion that Miles Bolger was done. He had had his ears pumped and he was done. The result of the whole thing was that Harry called dad back into Independence and reappointed him. He and the court reappointed him, and he went on then for years as an overseer, In fact, it was during part of this time, when they had a Republican Highway Engineer, old Leo Koehler, who was the only Republican in all of the elective offices; the rest of them were

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Democrats. Of course, dad was under him. Also for a period of time dad was a deputy under Doc Brennan who was the county medical examiner, or whatever they called it back in those days. He worked for him for years. Anyway, that's the little old story about my dad and Vivian and Harry.

JOHNSON: Being a friend of Harry's brother, Vivian, was the thing that made the difference?

STRODE: I think so, and the fact that Harry Truman was a politician; let's don't forget that. He knew that if he got Doc Brennan and Gil Strode in Washington Township -- if he gave them a job then he knew he had their support from then on, and he did, for the rest of dad's life.

JOHNSON: He finally then became a pro Truman Pendergast Democrat, as they say.

STRODE: Right, and carried a card from there on.

JOHNSON: One of the "goats" as they called them.

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STRODE: He was a goat.

JOHNSON: We've just looked at some political items that belong to Mr. Strode including a very tiny, small pin in the shape of a goat, which was apparently worn back in the twenties, right?

STRODE: It had to be in the twenties and thirties.

JOHNSON: There were some other items, too, that were on that display that were very interesting, of a political nature.

I think you were very well-acquainted with Vivian. Were you acquainted at all with other members of the family, other than Mary Jane?

STRODE: Mary Jane -- we knew her real well; the only other one in connection with that family that we knew well would have been Mrs. Campbell, who was Mrs. Vivian Truman's mother. I remember her and we used to visit with her. Then, there was George Wallace, who was Bess Truman's brother. He worked for the county for years and years in

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the Highway Department. He was directly over my father in the County Highway Department. I remember him very well. He and my dad were very close also. In other words, they worked together all the time, and I remember him, but other than that, that's about it.

JOHNSON: Have you heard about Harrison, Harry's Uncle Harrison, who lived down...

STRODE: Harrison Young, I've heard of him, but I don't remember him. Of course, they were all before my time.

JOHNSON: Vivian got married, I believe it was 1911, and then he moved to another farm. Isn't that correct?

STRODE: I cannot tell you dates, but somewhere after he and Mrs. Truman, Miss Louella Campbell were married, they lived out there on this place where I was born, in that same house. I'm not sure of this, but when my dad and Vivian were both bachelors

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they lived out there together. I'm getting my cart ahead of my horse a little bit. My grandfather and grandmother never did live on that farm the year around; the old home place was at 23rd and Summit on the southwest corner, and that's where my dad and his family grew up, Somewhere along the line, grandpa bought this farm from the Clements and sometime, I can't quote you dates, after grandpa bought the farm Vivian and my dad, I think, lived there as bachelors by themselves.

JOHNSON: On the Clements farm?

STRODE: Yes, on that. And then subsequent to that, as I understand it, after Mr. Vivian Truman and Miss Louella were married they lived there; the three of them lived there for awhile.

JOHNSON: Was that during the First World War?

STRODE: It would have to be before the First World War. It would have been during the time when

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Harry was farming.

JOHNSON: If Vivian was married in 1911, it could have been right after that period. During World War I apparently Mary Jane and her mother managed the farm, and Vivian still was living then on the Clements farm at that time.

STRODE: It must have been on that farm over there. Now, I'm not sure.

JOHNSON: During the war?

STRODE: Yes. And sometime during that period J.C. was born. He's the oldest son of Vivian. As I understand it, J.C. was a twin; there was a boy and a girl born, and the girl didn't live. I don't know whether that's a matter of record anyplace or not. I'm not sure of that, but I've always understood that. Then Fred came along. You may know from talking to him how old he is. I'll be 62 in December and Fred is a couple or three years older than I am. And then Martha

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Ann is approximately the same age as I am, and Harry and Gilbert are younger. I always understood that Gilbert was named after my father who was Gilbert Strode, That's where I understand that his name came from.

JOHNSON: That's interesting.

After the war was over Harry Truman came back, very briefly, to the farm out here, and then they sold the equipment. Did they then rent the farm?

STRODE: I cannot tell you that. As I understood it, there was what...

JOHNSON: It was a 600 acre farm.

STRODE: There were four 80s that faced on Grandview Road and then ran through to what is now 71 Highway. That would have been 320, so another 280. I think some of it was west of Grandview Road and some of it was east of 71 Highway. But as I always understood it, somewhere along the

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line they divided that 320. Miss Mary had the first 80 on the north end. Blue Ridge Boulevard and Kansas City Southern Railroad make every thing out of kilter down there when you go through. But her 80 ran straight through, and on the southeast corner of it is where that filling station is; that was on her property. She built that and rented it and leased it for years and years as a source of income; then subsequent to that she sold it, I guess to Jack Merriman where the Ford tractor parts building is; that was her 80. The next 80 to the south was Vivian's. Again, everything is all screwed up on the east end because of the road and the railroad going through there at an angle. In other words, it went down like this and then an angle on the end of it because of the railroad and then across the railroad it went down to square off again on 71. The next one, I guess the one with the house on it, I'm not sure, belonged to Martha Truman, the mother -- Grandma Truman. Then

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Harry had the south 80. Now this was when it was divided up sometime; I don't know when.

To go back to Vivian, and again I can't tell you when, except that I remember when I was a kid big enough to go out on my own, horseback, Vivian Truman lived on the old Goode farm, which was across the road from my grandfather's old place, that in the meantime my dad had sold. When I was a kid growing up, Vivian lived on this Goode place, which originally had been the Makin place -- belonging to Harold Makin and Nell Makin Hall's parents. As I understand it, when Vivian's children were kids they lived on that farm. Vivian didn't own that; he rented it from somebody.

JOHNSON: Now this is called, you say, the Goode farm?

STRODE: Goode, I think it was. They raised purebred shorthorn cattle.

JOHNSON: You say Hall's lived there?

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STRODE: Well, no, the Makins. Now the Makins had been there first. Whether they homesteaded it or not I cannot tell you. You would have to talk to Nell Hall or someone about that.

JOHNSON: Since we have brought up the Hall family, I have this picture of the Hall thresher, apparently on the Truman farm,

STRODE: It could very easily be.

JOHNSON: You mentioned some names. Some of the people in the picture have been identified, one or two of them rather tentatively. Do you know the people that are in that picture?

STRODE: I remember Connelly Pugh and I remember Gene Adams, yes. Old Connelly Pugh was a carpenter in later years, and he had a brother Vernon. Vernon built a lot of houses around here. Connelly died years and years ago. To go back a little bit, to when Connelly was younger, there was another fellow named Al Farris; he was an

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electrician who lived in town. When they were young bucks Connelly Pugh and Al Farris, so the story goes, had a motorcycle and they were out one night and had a wreck with it, and both of them had to have a leg amputated. From the time I was a kid, I can remember Connelly Pugh swinging that leg, and Al Farris, too. Of course they weren't as sophisticated as they are today, but they both wore an artificial leg. This hasn't any bearing on what we're talking about but I can remember when I was a kid, dad built a lake out on that farm that we lived on on Raytown Road. Connelly was in on it, and Al Farris, and a bunch of fellows around town. They were all younger fellows then, and they built a dock in this lake to swim from. They were all going to have someplace to swim. There weren't near as many lakes then as there are now around here.

I never will forget how fascinated I was with that new lake. The first night after we finally got water in that lake and the bunch of

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them came out in the summertime to go swimming, they were all men, and they were way down in the pasture and they all stripped down naked. I can remember being up on that dam and watching everybody I was getting ready to go swimming too. Connelly Pugh and Al Farris sat down and got their clothes off, and they unhooked those artificial legs and laid them down and I can still see those two buys hopping out on that dock and diving in, and I had never seen anything like that. I had never seen a one-legged man before and I remember how shocked I was to see something like that.

JOHNSON: But they are in this picture?

STRODE: Connelly is. He's Mary Pugh's father, or Mary Murdock now.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Stanley Hall?

STRODE: L.C. Hall was the old man. There was Stanley and Hobe Hall; they were the two sons. Then there were Miss Ella, who is dead, and Ruby, and there was Esther...

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JOHNSON: Who married a Grube?

STRODE: Yes. And then there was another ore...

JOHNSON: Nell Makin?

STRODE: No, Nell was an in-law. Stanley and Hobe and Cecil were the boys, and there was Miss Ella and Ruby and Esther, and there was another sister who's dead now. She lived down on Raytown Road. There were three boys and four girls that I know of.

JOHNSON: Did you ever see this threshing machine?

STRODE: Oh, yes, I can remember that great big puffing thing.

JOHNSON: Do you know what make it was?

STRODE: No, I can't tell you.

JOHNSON: But it was still being used when you were...

STRODE: When I was a kid. In fact, as I told you

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awhile ago, my dad was a road overseer and there was this Kurzwell Road. My grandfather's old farm lay on the east of it, and this Goode farm lay on the west side of it. When you go north off of High Grove onto the Kurzwell Road, as they called it, there was another family by the name of Vincent Kurzwell who lived across the road from my grandfather's place, too. Anyway, down towards the north end before it gets to Pittinger Road, there is a real steep hill and there was an old iron bridge down at the bottom of that hill. This hill had a lot of rock in it. Back in those days, every summer they graded the ditches and worked the roads all up and that was my dad's job, I can remember when they did it with teams before they even got tractors.

They'd get this hill all fixed up and get it graded, and then they'd oil it. Those were the days when they put road oil on. It took awhile for that oil to set, in fact weeks, and sometimes it wouldn't really set hard until it

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got cold. Of course they had to do that in the summertime when it was hot so all this oil would penetrate. Invariably, it was at the same time of year that the threshing crews had to go around, and I've heard my dad absolutely throw a damn fit about old L.C. Hall coming up that hill with this thresher. You can see how wide these tires are on this thing, and an iron wheel on that road oil will just pick it up, and peel it off. I can remember my dad getting so mad at L.C. Hall he could kill him because he didn't anymore get that Kurzwell Road hill all shaped up and be so proud of it, that they got a good do on it, and L.C. Hall would come along with the threshing machine and tear it up.

JOHNSON: How long do you think that was used? Was that into the 1930s? Do you think it was that late?

STRODE: No, I; wouldn't say that long. I would say probably somewhere in the twenties. I can't

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remember the last...

JOHNSON: You mentioned the steam engine that was...

STRODE: Yes, the steam engine is what supplied the power. See the old thresher had a pulley wheel on it. This is the belt. They'd fire up the steam engine after it got up head, and then there was a lever and they'd kick in the drive wheel and you could hear those old belts a squealing and a squawling until it got up momentum because it would have a tendency to slip. There was a certain amount of resistance because everything was dead. The same thing would happen when you were threshing. See there's a bundle, a load of bundles they call them, and the wagon man would stand there pitching. Well, if you would happen to get a bunch of wet bundles that hadn't cured right or they weren't capped right and they got wet in the bundle, and you'd throw two or three of them in, those belts would go to squealing, the old thresher would kick in,

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and the smoke would just fly from the engine to build up extra power to...

JOHNSON: Yes, I've seen a thresher like that run during the thirties. And of course, he was pulling this over the roads too.

STRODE: Yes. And old Gene Adams that worked for Mr. Hall, he was the operator. He would operate this and look after the threshing machine. I can remember they'd pull in, like they'd pull into our place in the morning and the first thing they'd do, they'd come in and dad would tell them -- he never did have Hall as I remember -- but anyway, he would tell the man where you wanted the straw stacked. Usually it was close to the barn someplace.

The first thing they would do would be to grab a handful of straw or hay or something and throw it in the air, just like you see a guy wet his finger to hold it up, to see which way the wind was blowing, because they wanted the wind blowing the straw away from the operation.

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Then they'd swing this thing around and they'd get it just about where they wanted it and then they'd take a shovel and dig a hole into the ground for each wheel to drop in so the thing couldn't move. The same way with the old thresher; they'd dig a hole to drop these big wheels in so that when they kicked a belt in it wouldn't pull the machine. It would set there and...

JOHNSON: Keep the tension I guess. Do you remember Vivian working on this?

STRODE: I don't remember him personally working on it, I'm sure he did. Back in those days ordinarily you didn't go out and hire anybody to help you. In other words, the only ones that you paid were the threshing crew. Everything else was trade labor. In other words, when Bailey got ready to thresh, for instance, my dad and whoever else was around -- maybe the Botts family -- would send a wagon and a driver; they came themselves. They'd bring a wagon -- either a bundle wagon or a grain wagon -- and you'd work so many days. When

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you got through here, you'd go to somebody else, and then Vivian would send his teams and wagons and so forth. There was very little actual hired labor.

I remember when I was a little kid, before I got big enough to work on that, I got 50 cents a day. I had a Shetland pony and I'd carried water. We'd take gallon jugs and wrap them with burlap sacks, and then you'd go to the well and fill those up. I'd usually have two of them on a rope and I'd hang one on each side. Well, my job for 50 cents a day was to go around in the field to the pitchers that stayed out in the field and pitched this stuff to the guys on the wagons. I kept them in water. Of course, usually the crew had a water jug or something there, but sometimes if I had fresh water, why, they'd holler for water for them.

JOHNSON: That was in the 1920s that you're referring to?

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STRODE: Well, that was pretty much up into the twenties, that which I remember.

JOHNSON: Do you remember seeing any of the implements from the Truman farm?

STRODE: Hell, I know I did, but I don't know what they were.

JOHNSON: Mr. Truman mentions an Emerson plow, gang plow, that he rode. That's the only brand name that we have come up with. Would you have any idea of what kind of brands of binders, grain drill, and cultivator...

STRODE: And they probably had a disk and a harrow back in those days.

JOHNSON: He doesn't mention disking and harrowing but I would imagine that was part of it.

In the twenties you didn't do any of the work over on the Truman farm?

STRODE: No, I didn't. No, See I got out of high

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school in 1936. I was 17 years old in 1936.

JOHNSON: Do you recall hearing about Harry Truman as a farmer being scientific so to speak, conservation and...

STRODE: No, that was way before my time.

JOHNSON: Apparently Mr. Truman was involved early in the Farm Bureau which started about 1913.

STRODE: I don't know that. I know that my dad belonged to it years ago, but...

JOHNSON: Washington Township Improvement Association, did you ever hear of that?

STRODE: I don't remember ever hearing of that.

JOHNSON: Do you recall a church and cemetery over there by the farm house?

STRODE: The cemetery is still there. I don't recall it; all I know is by hearsay that the old church that was there, at that time was called the Blue

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Ridge Church. When Grandview started to grow, they moved the church up to the corner of Main Street and Grandview Road, on the southwest corner. But the old cemetery is still there; in fact my grandfather is buried in it.

The records were very incomplete. My grandfather died in 1911 or 1913, I don't remember, but anyway he was buried there and there was supposed to be a plot there for my grandmother, Mary Strode. Of course that was five or six years before I was born. The story goes that when they got ready to dig what was supposed to be the Strode plot, they dug into the side of another grave. So they had to move over in order to bury my grandfather. After I was born I can vaguely remember my grandmother Strode; she lived that much longer. When she died, they were afraid to try to dig another grave beside grandfather, because the records were so incomplete. They didn't know for sure what they would find. So she's buried at Forest Hills, on Troost, because

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they were afraid to bury her down here.

JOHNSON: In other words that was one of the last burials?

STRODE: No, there have been some buried there since then, but not in that immediate area where my grandfather is buried.

JOHNSON: The church building that was there, you say, was moved here to Grandview.

STRODE: Now that was my understanding, As I say, that was before my time, but the old building was moved up there on the corner.

JOHNSON: Do you know what happened to the building?

STRODE: It was eventually wrecked. I mean the Baptists were in it for years and years and they built a big extension on the south end of it. I remember going to church there when I was a kid. I used to go on Sunday nights to what they called the BYPU, Baptist Young People's Union.

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Anyway, somewhere along the line, I guess when Mr. Truman was President, the Baptists finally built this building up on Main Street, and they subsequently sold the old building to the Assembly of God people. Now when the latter started to grow, they had to have more space and more room, and as I understand it -- I'm not positive on this -- they traded it to Mr. Truman for the ground where their present church is down here on Grandview Road across the street from this cemetery we're talking about, on the west side of Grandview Road.

JOHNSON: Mr. Truman was a member here of what is it called, just the Grandview Baptist?

STRODE: Grandview First Baptist.

JOHNSON: Yes.

STRODE: Now I know that Miss Mary was a member.

JOHNSON: Did you ever see Mr. Truman here...

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STRODE: I've seen him at church, yes.

JOHNSON: At the church. He helped dedicate it.

STRODE: Yes, he came here for the dedication. There's a plaque there.

JOHNSON: Were you there for the dedication?

STRODE: I don't recall whether I was or not; I can't tell you that.

JOHNSON: There was a Tenth Ward Democratic Club that Mr. Truman got involved with rather early, Do you recall anything about a Tenth Ward Democratic Club?

STRODE: Tenth Ward, that had to be in Kansas City, because you see these were all, precincts out here in those days.

JOHNSON: I guess it was.

Missouri National Guard, I suppose you've heard about that.

STRODE: That was before my time, yes.

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JOHNSON: Going back to 1919, after he had come home from the war, he decided that he wasn't going to be a farmer any longer. He sold the equipment and apparently the farm's livestock was sold, too. Then his mother, Martha, and Mary Jane lived in that house.

STRODE: In that house, yes; I can remember them there.

JOHNSON: Up to about 1940.

STRODE: I'll go back a little bit to show you my only connection with that, and the reason for my recalling it. I was telling you about those 80 acre plats. Okay, the second one was Vivian's and he originally planned to build a house. We're talking about the depression times. The Vivian Trumans were living on and renting that Goode farm out here east of town, and somewhere along the line Vivian and Mrs. Truman came up to this 80 acres of theirs on Grandview Road and built

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a garage-house. There was a storm cellar out in front, fruit cellar, or whatever you want to call it, and this garage and there were some out-buildings in the back. I can remember playing with Fred and Martha Ann over there on the Goode place, and subsequent to that, they moved over here and that put them in the Hickman Mills School District. So the kids started going to school at Ruskin instead of at Grandview. They lived there for a number of years, and then somewhere along the line after they had been there for a number of years, they came over on Blue Ridge, which was still on part of Vivian's 80, and built that house where they were living in when he died, the one that faces Blue Ridge, that stucco house. They lived there then, oh, when I was a teenager. I can remember being there to...

JOHNSON: That was before 1940 then; that was in the thirties.

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STRODE: Yes, it had to be. As I say, the kids were close then to Grandma Truman and I can remember going with Fred over to see his grandmother and his Aunt Mary. We'd just walk through the pasture to get there.

JOHNSON: You know the farm was mortgaged and it was foreclosed on in 1940 when the family was unable to repay a \$35,000 loan.

STRODE: I remember that. I remember vaguely. I remember my dad talking about it because the same thing happened to us. We lost our farm back in those days out on...

JOHNSON: In other words, this is not untypical?

STRODE: No, hell no. I don't remember how big I was, but I can remember going with my dad to Independence and standing on the Courthouse steps and watching them sell our farm, because dad couldn't pay for the son of a bitch. That's all there was to the matter; he couldn't pay for it. I remember I was a good-sized kid standing

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there and crying, tears running down.

JOHNSON: The 1920s was not a great period for farming, as far as prices are concerned. The gold age, they say, was the decade before World War I. And when the depression hit, I guess the farms were hurt most of all.

STRODE: I guess that's typical of what happened. My dad was an example of it, and I guess the Trumans were too.

JOHNSON: They had mortgaged at least part of the farm to pay off claims, inheritance claims, of other members of the family.

STRODE: I guess; I don't know. I never did know the details of it. I don't know.

JOHNSON: That never did enter into your father's difficulty?

STRODE: No, my dad was like a lot of people, and I hope it doesn't happen to them, but I'm afraid

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of what's happening today. He had good times there before the war, and he sold this farm where I was born to Bill Ewell, and went over there and bought this 120 acres from an uncle of his who had homesteaded it originally in 1835. There was a house on it, but dad was young and full of vinegar; so he proceeded to build a big fancy two-story house and a big fine barn and had to mortgage it to do it, and he never did get loose from it.

JOHNSON: As farm prices kept going down.

STRODE: Yes.

JOHNSON: I suppose there were other farms that went the same way, that were foreclosed on around here.

STRODE: That's right. Again, I can remember vaguely that the Kansas City Life Insurance Company had the mortgage on it. They were the only ones that even bid on it in that day and age, and

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after they bought it -- in other words after they bid on it to protect their investment -- they didn't know what to do with it. So they made a deal with my dad, and we continued to live on that farm for I don't know how many years after that, and didn't pay any rent or anything. They just wanted somebody there to take care of it and operate it because they didn't have anything else to do with it.

JOHNSON: I guess the school board had somehow loaned the money on this farm, and then foreclosed on it. And then it was bought back by friends of the Trumans.

Are you acquainted with some of the other farm neighbors, like the Babcocks?

STRODE: I remember the Babcocks when I was a kid. My mother belonged to the Christian Church at Hickman, and I remember a Babcock family. They had a boy. I can't even tell you what his name was.

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JOHNSON: Gaylon?

STRODE: It could have been; I; don't know. But he was a boy about my age. I remember playing with him some when I was a kid.

JOHNSON: And the Arringtons?

STRODE: There were Arringtons around here; I didn't know them.

JOHNSON: Slaughters?

STRODE: Oh, yes, old O.V. Slaughter.

JOHNSON: Did he talk about the Trumans; any of these people?

STRODE: Well, Ruth's daughter, Mrs. Barry, is still living, and she's down in Joplin now. [At the time of this interview Ruth Barry was still alive. She passed away February 13, 1981. She lived with her daughter, Mrs. Carrick White.] Her husband is in a rest home. She's living with her daughter down there.

JOHNSON: The Halls, have you heard them speak of the Trumans?

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STRODE: Oh, yes, They were always very good friends. Miss Ella and Miss Mary were the best of friends, Both of them were very active in the Eastern Star and did a lot of running around together.

JOHNSON: Now you say that Ruby still lives here in Grandview?

STRODE: She still lives in Grandview, Esther still does.

JOHNSON: Along with the sister-in-law.

All right. Do you have any stories about Harry Truman visiting the Noland cousins, his Noland cousins?

STRODE: I don't know anything about that. That was all in Independence and I don't know.

JOHNSON: Apparently he took the train. It wasn't too difficult to get to Independence.

STRODE: No, they used to call it the "Old Leaky Roof" as I remember it -- the "Frisco" railroad

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train. It ran through, here and through. Hickman, I noticed here it mentioned Jeffrie Station. The settlement of Hickman was up on the hill east, and this Jeffrie Station was right where that Williams Ford place is now. That was referred to, and I can remember even up into the fifties and sixties, when the Frisco train stopped at Jeffrie's and that's where they unloaded the Hickman mail. They had a contractor that met the train and took it up on the hill to the Post Office.

JOHNSON: He had a Stafford car at one time.

STRODE: I don't remember anything about that.

JOHNSON: When did you first meet Mr. Truman, or at least saw him? Do you recall when that was?

STRODE: I don't remember anything about him when he was farming. In other words, I wasn't born until 1918, but I do remember him when he was on the County Court, just vaguely. I can remember

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mom fluttering around and frying chickens and fixing dinner when periodically Harry Truman and whoever might have been the Highway Engineer, or whatever they called him at that time, would come out for a tour and dad would bring him home for lunch out there.

JOHNSON: Was this during the week or Sunday dinner?

STRODE: No, it would be during the week, during the working days and all.

JOHNSON: And she would invite them in for dinner?

STRODE: Yes, they'd come out. Well, I mean, in those days it didn't make any difference, you know. Everybody was your friend, you might say, and you just...

JOHNSON: Do you remember eating one of those dinners with Mr. Truman?

STRODE: I just know we had them. It didn't mean a damn thing to me; it was just somebody for dinner,

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and we got a little extra, little fancier meal. That was about what it amounted to.

JOHNSON: So your mother and apparently your father swiftly changed their loyalty, so to speak, or your father did.

STRODE: Well, you know it was a practicability thing.

JOHNSON: How long did he serve as overseer down here?

STRODE: Oh, I don't know. It had to be way back there. Then there was a period of time, whether it was when Leo Koehler was Highway Engineer or it could have been when there was a Republican court subsequent to that, but there was a time when dad wasn't with the Highway Department. Then he was with the Jackson County Health Department.

JOHNSON: You mentioned a sign, a road sign that you had seen out here that was put up in the days that...

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STRODE: When this road system was built. As I recall it, and I won't say that this is right, but as I understand it, the starting point was Linwood and Paseo. Then these roads were put in, and for instance, Raytown Road, I think, was five miles east of Paseo, so therefore that was designated as 5-E. And you went on further east and it was 10-E and so forth. Then on roads running east and west, they were X number S. And some of them over on the other side, like Kentucky Road, as I recall it, were designated a numerical number M, and so forth. As I understand it, that was the way they designated those roads. Of course, in addition to that they had local names such as Raytown Road, and what's now 150 Highway was referred to as the Outer Belt. Prior to its being a part of this system, a lot of it was rock road. They called it the Outer Belt because it was a mile in from the county line and it ran along the south side of the county and then went north on the east side of the county,

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approximately a mile in from the county line -- from the Johnson County line over there.

JOHNSON: Blue Ride Boulevard was extended and that's what came angling through the Truman farm.

STRODE: Right. It came from Raytown under this program; that was when it was put in. Now, either immediately prior to that, or right after that, the Kansas City Southern built that railroad through there also. In other words, Blue Ridge, until you get way down there, is parallel to the Kansas City Southern, on an angle through here and then it starts north. I can vaguely remember, as a kid, that before the Kansas City Southern did that, they used the Frisco Lines. At that time the Kansas City Southern came to Grandview and stopped. Down where the old Kansas City Southern station is now, immediately west of that, there was a great big tipple, I think it's called, where they hauled coal, and they would run these cars way up on there and dump them. There was a huge pile of coal there.

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The lake out west of town, which was referred to as Robinson Lake, was built to supply water for the railroad. They had a pipeline, a water line, that ran from Robinson Lake out there, and there was a big water tank there. That is where the Kansas City Southern engines refueled and filled up with water, at Grandview.

Most of the switches are gone now, but there used to be a circular switch that came off the Kansas City Southern and came around beside what's now the May Milling Company. The Kansas City Southern also maintained what they called a helper engine in Grandview. There was an old man named Fred Latty -- there were others but he was the only one that I can remember -- who was a fireman or something on that helper engine. What is was, the Frisco grade was so steep coming out of Kansas City that whenever there was a train, a Kansas City Southern train, ready to come out of Kansas City, this helper engine would back down into Kansas City and hook onto that train and help it up the grade until they got to Grandview, Then

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that's where all these switches were that I'm talking about, and they would switch it around and then get it on their own track. The helper would then disconnect and go on. This was before my time, and when I was just a little tot that this helper engine was here.

JOHNSON: But the road was built before the railroad was put on the same right-of-way, or were they...

STRODE: No, no. It was two separate deals. I guess they purchased right-of-way.

JOHNSON: That's one of the stories about Harry Truman as Presiding Judge -- that he did not accept payment for right-of-way on the road that came through his farm. The question is -- did others get paid for right-of-way?

STRODE: I don't know. I know O.V. Slaughter owned land immediately east and north of it there, and I know that on the Slaughter farm, the railroad and the road combined cut off the old house,

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the big old house and barn, which used to sit up there behind what is now Hicks Brothers -- cut it off from the farm. In other words, it was just a little tract of ground there.

JOHNSON: Barnyard and house were on one side and the...

STRODE: And the farm was across the way. And then subsequent to that they built that little tenant house and that's where Harry Ensminger's folks came from Stover and lived in the little house.

JOHNSON: Mr. Truman's mother, Martha, says that Harry learned all of his commonsense on the farm; he didn't learn it in town.

STRODE: That's probably true.

JOHNSON: I guess you think that farm experience must have been good for him.

STRODE: Yes. I think it's a darn shame that there aren't more young people that have the farm

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experience, and you know, just everything that's connected with the farm. There are so many things that you're absolutely dependent upon, but a lot of people don't have any concept of what it amounts to today.

JOHNSON: Of course, you got to be your own boss, make your own decisions.

STRODE: Make your own decisions, and you can't wait two or three days to do it a lot of times.

JOHNSON: You do remember the days of the County Court? He was Presiding Judge from 1927 to 1934, and then of course, was elected to the Senate. Do you know of any anecdotes or stories regarding the building of the roads?

STRODE: Not really. All I know is that one of them went right in front of our house -- of our farm out on Raytown Road.

JOHNSON: Was it concrete?

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STRODE: Yes.

JOHNSON: Some 220 miles of highway apparently were paved.

STRODE: I know that from the Outer Belt, Raytown Road went clear to Raytown. That was one of them that was built. I lived out there and I can remember one thing that I made. You know, farm kids are always trying to make a dollar someplace and we were milking and I can remember that mom used to fix up pint jars and quart jars of milk. I had a wagon I pulled and I can remember wrapping the milk jars in sacks and wet paper, and at the noon hour when those guys were working close to the farm, I used to sell milk to those guys for their lunch.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Harry Truman ever coming by to inspect?

STRODE: I can't remember, not during that period of time. I'm sure he did, but I don't remember it.

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JOHNSON: I'm sure you've heard the story about some of the Pendergast friends who wanted...

STRODE: Yes, I've heard that.

JOHNSON: ...favoritism, and he wouldn't give it to them.

STRODE: Right, I remember that. There was, a group of those people, and this is a thing that people can't understand. Harry Truman and Vivian Truman and my dad, and Les Rollins, for another, were into politics during that period of time. And with the power they had, the contacts they had, they all could have been wealthy people. But they were of the turn, or however you want to say it, that they didn't believe in it, and they wouldn't do it. I've heard my dad say it, and I've said it since I got old enough to know it. If dad and Vivian, Les Rollins, John Strode, who was dad's brother, if any of them had wanted to have been crooked, like you read about today, they

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could have all been wealthy people. But they didn't believe in it and they -- well, they believe in being...

JOHNSON: Believed in honesty.

STRODE: Well, it's the way you were raised and all. I can remember my dad saying -- he told me this from the time I was knee-high -- if you give a man your word, you live by it. And if your word's not any good, your signature's not worth a damn either, so there's no use signing for it. And this was the philosophy all of them had. I mean they just believed that way. If they made a deal with you and you shook hands, that was all there was to it. There wasn't any use to writing it all down and saying we'll do this and that and the other because as I say, if your handshake didn't mean anything, your damn signature wasn't any good either.

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear any stories of Mr. Truman as a haberdasher, and the problems of paying

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off his debts on that?

STRODE: No, except what you read over the years that he wouldn't declare bankruptcy, or even if he did, that he paid his bills eventually. I guess he was Senator before he finally got them paid off.

JOHNSON: Was your dad involved in any of the campaigning for Mr. Truman?

STRODE: Yes.

JOHNSON: After that first election?

STRODE: Yes, always from then on he was for Truman. I don't even know where it is, but there's a whole portfolio of stuff. Dad was sent an invitation to come to the inauguration when Mr. Truman was elected. There was the invitation to that and the invitation to the inaugural ball. There was another card for a parking permit to park in a certain place, the whole bit. It's all here somewhere but I don't know where.

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JOHNSON: Did he go?

STRODE: No, he didn't go; hell, we were poor people, we couldn't afford to go.

JOHNSON: Was he involved in the senatorial campaign at all, in '34?

STRODE: Oh yes, absolutely. I can tell you a little story about that campaign. This was when Harry Truman got in that old car and went all over the state.

JOHNSON: In a heat wave.

STRODE: And he was way down in south Missouri someplace at a meeting. I think it was on a Friday night, and it was just a political gathering. At the same time there was another old-timer around here, Sid Copeland, who was in the, carnival business. Just by coincidence, Sid had a carnival in this same town that night. There wasn't any connection with the two at all. So

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dad and my Uncle John and I'm sure Vivian were in on it, There were about three or four carloads of them, who were ardent Truman supporters. They decided that since it was a weekend that they would all go down to whatever this town was, just to swell the crowd for Harry Truman for that meeting. Well, this uncle of mine, who was dad's younger brother, was quite a joker. They got there early in the afternoon before the meeting, so Uncle John and two or three of them decided that they would go out to the carnival. Someway or another they found out that Sid was out there and they had known each other all their lives. So they went out to the carnival to see Sid Copeland.

Well, Sid didn't even know that Harry Truman was coming to town that night; he was wound up in the carnival and all. And so they got down there and Sid couldn't figure out what John Strode and all these guys from Grandview were down there for. So they had him all set up --

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telling him that they heard he was down there and they all had came down to the carnival just to see him.

I've heard Uncle John tell about that one, laughing. Of course, the three or four carloads of them had gone down there to swell the crowd to make it look better for Harry, when he was there on his senatorial campaign. Yes, they were all active. But they told Sid they were just there to see him.

JOHNSON: That was some campaign I'll tell you, especially because of the heat and how many places he had to visit during that.

STRODE: There's another little anecdote I'll tell you about Sid Copeland. This house that I was talking about where Miss Mary and Grandma Truman lived when Grandma died; it sat over here,

and the railroad went through here, and then there was a street went through here and right on this corner there was a little old shacky house and

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that was where this Sid Copeland lived. Of course, he had known the Trumans for years and years, and they knew him and trusted him. In other words, he mowed the yard and ran errands for Miss Mary and all. He was always the sloppiest looking of man you ever saw and would always wear a pair of bib overalls and they weren't buttoned on the side and they were about three sizes too big. He was just a good hearted old boy and didn't ever have anything to amount to anything, but he thought the world and all of the Trumans.

Well, I can't remember whether it was when Grandma was sick or when it was, but it was early on a Sunday morning, and Sid was uptown in Grandview. Back in those days there wasn't anybody, no activity, on Sunday morning. Everybody was getting ready for church, or sleeping in or something. But he was going someplace and he was walking catawampus across Main Street. Of course, Sid was a great one for cussing when

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he wasn't around women, and he was telling about this. He said, "This goddamned old couple drove up in a car;" he was just about on the sidewalk, and he said, "they pulled up out in the street and they honked their horn." They didn't pull in and get out; they honked the horn and motioned for him to come over to the car. He said, "This old gal rolled the window down and she said, 'Where does Grandma Truman live?'"

And Sid said, "Who?"

And she said, "Where does Grandma Truman live, the President's mother?"

Sid said, "Hell, I never heard of her," and he just turned around and walked off and left them sitting there. He said they had New York or New Jersey license on or something. He said, "I bet they're still talking about that dumb old s.o.b. from Grandview that didn't know where the President's mother lived."

MRS. STRODE: I was fortunate enough to meet her. John's mother took me one afternoon over to her

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house and I met her.

JOHNSON: This was Harry's mother, Martha?

STRODE: Yes.

JOHNSON: At the farm house or was this...

MRS. STRODE: No, at the same house you were talking about; while she was up in that house.

JOHNSON: What were your impressions?

MRS. STRODE: Well, she was just a real lady. She was getting pretty old, but she was really nice and still had so much interest, you know. She was interested in meeting me, and of course, I was interested in meeting her.

JOHNSON: Was this while Harry was President?

MRS. STRODE: He was Senator.

That's what I got this book out for. My mother-in-law probably was secretary when she wrote this letter, but she was the only member of the club that died while she was president.

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And this was in 1940.

JOHNSON: What club?

MRS. STRODE: This is the Grandview Study Club; it's the General Federated Women's Club. It's national. She died while she was president, but she was in it for years. She was the first one that took me to this club.

JOHNSON: Mary Jane was a member?

MRS. STRODE: She never was.

STRODE: She was always so involved in Eastern Star that she just didn't have time.

MRS. STRODE: She was so very interested in Eastern Star but you know Mary Jane wanted a simple funeral. She didn't want to have an Eastern Star ceremony or anything. She just wanted a normal funeral.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Martha Truman talking about

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her son at all while you were there? Did she talk about Harry when you were visiting her?

MRS. STRODE: Well, she was as proud of Vivian as she was of Harry. She made that plain to everyone that she was very proud of both sons, and her children were all the same. She was a real mother.

JOHNSON: Didn't play favorites.

MRS. STRODE: No, not one bit. And of course, Harry just had one daughter where Vivian had this big family of children, and their lives were altogether different. I think Louella Truman

helped me probably more than anyone in this community when we were young and with our children and all. Just like when John was growing up; whose clothes was it you got? You got Fred's?

STRODE: Fred's I guess, or J.C.'s. I don't know which it was.

MRS. STRODE: That he'd outgrown; and so they passed

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them on to John and John outgrew them and he'd pass them on to Harry and Gilbert, you know, and that's the way they'd do. When I was sewing for my little girls, we had three daughters first and then a son, and Mrs. Truman would give me old suits I could make over and maybe get a skirt and jacket for one of the little girls. That's the way she was; she was very saving, and nothing was ever wasted, One of the first things that impressed me -- we were at some kind of a party, a shower for someone and she said, "You know, always save all of your ribbons and wrapping paper." She said, "You'll be surprised how much money you will save not having to go out and buy it, and you can use it all." And I really thought, you know, that's using your head.

JOHNSON: Well, when they lost the farm she had to move into town. And I believe she broke her hip. Do you recall that incident of her breaking her hip?

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STRODE: No. I just remember that it happened, but don't remember anything about it.

JOHNSON: I suppose in a way she missed the farm.

STRODE: I'm sure she did. Talking about seeing her, I can remember vaguely, I wasn't too big, but I can remember spending time with Fred, Vivian's boy, and going over to the old farm house, and I can remember Grandma Truman. At that time that porch wasn't screened in on the south side; it was all open. I can remember her sitting out there on a chair and Fred and I sitting there on the steps, talking to her.

JOHNSON: That was before 1940 then.

STRODE: It had to be, because I wasn't very old then.

JOHNSON: You mentioned a letter that...

STRODE: I got a letter someplace.

JOHNSON: Senator Truman wrote to your father.

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STRODE: He wrote to my father and it had to do with someone that my dad had asked help for in some kind of a political appointment. It goes into some detail about it. I don't even remember whether it could be done or couldn't be done.

JOHNSON: Do you have the letter?

STRODE: I've got it but I swear I can't tell you where it is right now. I've got to get that stuff together some day.

JOHNSON: I'd sure like to see it.

STRODE: As I say, I have at least two of those on Senate stationery acknowledging correspondence from my mother where she had written as a representative of this club about some particular legislation or something, and he was indicating his support of it or something.

JOHNSON: Do you think you have that?

STRODE: Yes, I've got it someplace. It's out in that

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old desk of mine somewhere. I'm very careless about some of that stuff.

JOHNSON: Well, one of these days perhaps you'll bring it together and maybe we can look at it.

STRODE: Yes, I'll bring it over sometime. [See Appendix for these letters to Mrs. Strode, dated May 2, 1938, and June 1, 1943, respectively.]

JOHNSON: Are there any other stories or anecdotes that you can remember concerning Mr. Truman either here as Presiding Judge or as Senator or President?

STRODE: One thing I can remember -- and again this is hearsay -- and he's dead now. My uncle, John R. Strode, was 17 years old when the First World War started, and, of course, my grandfather was dead, Uncle John was the baby of the family. There had been three girls and a boy, my father, ahead of him. Uncle John wanted to go to the Army so bad he could taste it. He was too young to go and Grandma wouldn't sign the letter or whatever it took. Harry was mixed up in it somehow, I don't know what. Of course, my grandmother

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knew the Trumans. So eventually, and as I say I can't remember the circumstances, but eventually Grandma signed a permit for Uncle John to go into the Army. And as I understand it, it was through some intervention by Harry Truman on his part, So, kid like, he went through training down at Ft. Sill and he was shipped to France. Somewhere along the line he was in Harry's -- I think Harry was involved in another battery before he took over Battery D. Wasn't it Battery A, or Battery...

JOHNSON: There was an F Battery.

STRODE: F Battery, Uncle John was in that F Battery when he went in. They got to France, and, kid like, Uncle John didn't write home, Grandma got perturbed, which was so typical of a

mother, because she wasn't hearing from Johnny. So she finally wrote to Harry Truman to find out what was happening to Johnny, and why he wasn't writing. And I don't remember the exact circumstances, but I've heard Uncle

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John tell about it. Harry Truman called him into his tent one afternoon, company headquarters, one afternoon, and literally ate him out one side and down the other and said, "You're going back to your tent and you write to your mother." He put a limit on it -- once a week or once every two or three days -- but he said, "By God, I want you to write to her every so often, because I don't want her writing to me anymore wanting to know what's wrong with you." I can remember Uncle John telling about that.

JOHNSON: That is probably something that we don't have written down anywhere. Any other things that you can think of that we might want to record?

STRODE: I can tell another one. Uncle John is dead and gone now, and I don't guess it will make any difference. This was after they were in France. Of course, they had horses in that field artillery, and they had a tent for the horses. They had built up a windbreak; they had bales of hay stacked

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ground it as a windbreak, a sidewall, and Uncle John was on guard duty one night. Like I say, he was only 17 or 18 years old, and it was cold and he was sleepy, and he got inside this tent and squatted down behind one of these windbreaks and went to sleep. Harry Truman was the Officer of the Guard that particular night, and Harry Truman came through there and caught him asleep. And I've heard Uncle John say, "If you ever heard a kid get an ass chewing," he said, "I got one for about thirty minutes and," he said, "if it had been anybody but Harry Truman at that time I would have been court martialed for sleeping on guard duty. But," he said, "I never did sleep on guard duty from there on out after the chewing that Harry Truman gave me that particular night."

JOHNSON: And that was over in France?

STRODE: That was in France, yes.

JOHNSON: Did your uncle end up in Battery D?

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STRODE: I'm not sure about that because I know Uncle John used to go to these old get-togethers in town, when they'd have one of those annual get-togethers. I don't know. He was in Battery F and Battery D both, and which time I don't know. As I recall it, at the time that Mr. Truman made captain I think Uncle John was still in another battery; he didn't get transferred over with him.

JOHNSON: Do you recall your uncle or your father patronizing the store?

STRODE: I don't have any idea; that was when he came back and I was just a little tike. I would assume they did, but I don't know.

JOHNSON: You mentioned having some letters; did you have a scrapbook or clippings?

STRODE: No, I never did.

JOHNSON: You don't have any artifacts that are Truman related except perhaps for those political items?

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STRODE: Not political, other than that stuff you saw in there on the board; that's about all I have. I have a big picture out there over my desk in the office that Mr. Truman autographed for me during the time he was President.

JOHNSON: Did you see Mr. Truman when he came back after leaving the Presidency?

STRODE: Oh yes, after he retired, yes. I, saw him quite a few times over at the Library. I remember one time, right after my oldest daughter was married, and something came up and I said, "Hell, let's go see him."

So, I called Miss Conway and of course, I'm not being egotistical, but she recognized my name, who I was, and so I made an appointment and I took my son-in-law, Charles Harbert, over to see him in that office that he had over there in the north wing, And my son-in-law still talks about it. He was raised a Republican really in Colorado, but he still talks about what a

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wonderful person Harry Truman was and how down-to-earth and how outgoing and friendly he was, and so at ease. It wasn't like he was trying to get rid of us or anything.

JOHNSON: Did he reminisce a bit about Grandview while you were visiting with him?

STRODE: I don't remember what we talked about. At that time my son-in-law was still in college, at the university, working on his doctorate in chemistry. I know Mr. Truman was quite interested in his education and what he was doing and what he was going to do and so forth. I can remember that. He was always that way about it.

JOHNSON: Did you see him at all while he was President?

STRODE: I was in the Army in 1945 when he became President, after Mr. Roosevelt died. Then I got out of the Army in January of 1946 and I don't think I ever talked to him, you know, or actually

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had contact with him. I remember seeing him down at Mr. Vivian Truman's; he used to come down there. I was in the Post Office from '48 on. I can remember the caravan coming into town

and going over to see his mother and Miss Mary, and also down there on the farm to see Vivian and the kids down there.

JOHNSON: You say you graduated from high school in 1936?

STRODE: I did, in 1936.

JOHNSON: You did what after graduation?

STRODE: I went to school for a couple of years at Finley Engineering College and then worked and knocked around some. I worked on the farm some, and did this and that and another, and then in 1940, I guess it was, I went to work for the Corps of Engineers when they were building the Lake City plant. I worked for them, and we went from Lake City to Salina, Kansas and from there

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to Casper, Wyoming with the Corps of Engineers. Then my mom died and I got my notice from the draft board all the same time.

JOHNSON: What was your job with the Corps?

STRODE: I was a materials expediter with the Corps.

JOHNSON: Then after you got out of the Army?

STRODE: I got out in '46, out of the Army, and didn't get back with the Corps of Engineers because I would have had to have gone to Denver, Colorado in order to exercise my reemployment rights. We couldn't afford to, to be quite frank about it. We were broke and had two kids. I was just coming out of the Army. So I went to work for the Chevrolet plant that fall. In the meantime I had taken some Civil Service exams and I went to work for the Treasury Department on my birthday, December 30, 1946 I guess it was.

JOHNSON: In what kind of job?

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STRODE: I was junior auditor. I worked at that until April of 1948, when I got an opportunity to come into the Post Office out here in Grandview, which was home. So I transferred out here and that's where I stayed the rest of any life, in the Post Office. In August of '49 made Assistant Postmaster, and I was Assistant postmaster for about nineteen years; then I made Postmaster, and I was Postmaster for about nine years, until I retired in February '76.

MRS. STRODE: You were Assistant Postmaster from 1949 to '67.

JOHNSON: When did your father die?

STRODE: Debbie was a year old, when was that?

MRS. STRODE: He died in '49.

JOHNSON: Well, anything else before we finish-up here? Anything that might come to mind that we probably wouldn't see in print somewhere?

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STRODE: I really don't know what it would be.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Mr. Truman coming back when his mother was very ill?

STRODE: I can remember him being in town. I remember him coming through. Mom, get my apron out of there will you? I can remember him coming back to Masonic installations and things of that nature.

JOHNSON: Are you a Mason?

STRODE: Yes; that's what I wanted to show you. I think he was Senator then, but he participated when I took my third degree in the Masons. Dad had asked him to.

JOHNSON: Do you remember about what year that was?

STRODE: Let's see what the date is on it. This was in 1940 when I was made the third degree, and he participated in this. He was Deputy Grand Master at that time; he hadn't made Grand Master yet. But he participated in that.

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JOHNSON: And this was at the local lodge?

STRODE: That was at the local Masonic lodge here.

JOHNSON: So you saw him as he looked with his regalia?

STRODE: Oh, hell, yes.

JOHNSON: You've seen our portrait up there?

STRODE: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, I guess we've come to the end of this conversation. I sure appreciate having the chance. We've gotten some good interesting material here.

STRODE: How do I want to say this? There are a lot of people that loved, and I don't say this to be derogatory, but there are a lot of people that just glory in getting mixed up in this, you know, and citing little incidents, even through they are embarrassing incidents. I think there was a

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generation that I'm a part of and that Vivian's boys are a part of, that it doesn't make a damn bit of difference whether you're a millionaire or whether you're flat on your back, if you're a friend, you're a friend, and that's all it amounts to.

JOHNSON: Well, he was that kind of guy.

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