

Oral History Interview

With

L. L. BUCKLEW

Associate of Harry S. Truman in World War I as an artillery officer in the 35th Division and friend of his since that time.

Encinitas, California

March 10, 1971

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

The Harry S. Truman Library

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[1]

FUCHS: Mr. Bucklew, to start would you mind giving me a little résumé of your background; when and where you were born, and your education, and what jobs you had before you first went into military service?

BUCKLEW: Yes, I'd be very happy to do that; I have many pleasant recollections, I'll mention some of them. I was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, March 31, 1880. At two years of age my parents moved to St. Louis where I attended local schools. In 1896 I went to Iowa State

University, Ames, Iowa, from St. Louis, and was there when the Spanish American War was declared.

I was in the cadet corps. It happened that the commandant had been a lieutenant in the Confederate Army. The students formed a group to go into the service. I was just 18, and of course had to have

[2]

my parent's consent to go into the service. They wouldn't allow me to, so I returned home to St. Louis.

We had several sessions trying to get their permission. At last my father told me if I would go into the Regular Army where the officers would know how to take care of the men, they'd give their permission.

So, I went down to Jefferson Barracks and enlisted in the 3rd United States Cavalry. Of course, that's when the Cavalry rode horses.

FUCHS: How long was such an enlistment for in those days?

BUCKLEW: Oh, that was for the war.

FUCHS: For the war, duration.

BUCKLEW: Just for the war.

At last, then, having had it put to me that way, I enlisted. I was trained first to ride bareback. Then there were a number of men in the troop, B Troop of the 3rd U.S. Cavalry, that were old Indian fighters.

In the Cuban campaign, the troops were sent to

[3]

Tampa, Florida, the horses and young recruits were left there, the Cavalry was dismounted in Cuba. And then on return, the troops were quarantined at Montauk Point, Long Island. There were three regiments in the Cavalry brigade. One, the 3rd Cavalry, as I mentioned, the other one the Teddy Roosevelt Roughriders, and the other was the 10th United States Cavalry, the latter colored troops; and we got along fine, not friction that they're having these days.

And after quarantine at Montauk Point, Long Island, which -- I better go back a little on this. When the brigade was assembled, the general in command was General Joe Wheeler, the famous Confederate Cavalry officer. It probably was a gesture to create consolidation of the North and South in this combined effort which was a very good step.

FUCHS: Did your unit participate in any of the action in Cuba?

BUCKLEW: Yes, San Juan Hill. I was a recruit and I had to stay with the horses.

[4]

Then from Montauk Point, we went to Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont. Then we were to be broken up into squadrons, at each station, one at Fort Ethan Allen, one at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri and one at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. We were destined for Fort Sheridan, with a stopover first in Philadelphia for the Peace Jubilee. My troop of black horses was selected as escorts for the grand marshal in the parade, reviewed by President McKinley.

We were then sent to Augusta, Georgia, where they were demobilizing the volunteer troops of the National Guard. We were stationed at Waycross Junction between the city of Augusta and the camp where the National Guard were. Between their camp and Augusta was the city reservoir, and then a little farther in towards the city, there was a golf course. There had been a fight in an Augusta saloon one night and a man was killed. The men involved belonged to the 14th Minnesota Infantry, their comrade was in jail.

FUCHS: Was that a volunteer regiment?

BUCKLEW: Yes, a National Guard volunteer regiment. The

[5]

word got out to the volunteer's camp. They assembled a mob to go to town to release their man from jail.

FUCHS: What were they going to do then?

BUCKLEW: I don't know, except that was the purpose so they said, to release their man from jail.

It was about nine something in the morning, when the trumpeter sounded to horse, we had to get out and mounted very quickly. We were told that this group of soldiers were going to town, and we could see them crossing on the ridge of the reservoir. So the captain wheeled us out promptly and we went through the Georgia mud after a rain, and were pretty well plastered, even our faces.

So, we arrived at the far end of the golf course as the men were approaching, and we dropped into single file, circled the crowd, gradually closing in on them until they were pretty well confined, when the captain stepped out with the first sergeant to confer, and called for a leader. A red-headed corporal stepped out, he had a rifle in his hand, and what they were discussing I don't know. But the sergeant had his saber drawn. He suddenly threw

[6]

the saber at this man, knocked him down, and then he got down and helped him up. And they conversed a little bit. And this man, we were told, with several others, were court-martialed and the man given a dishonorable discharge.

From there, we went to Ft. Sheridan, Illinois. That was in the early part of the winter of '98, and this was to be our home station. While there we had another call to break out our equipment and get ready for loading on trains to go to Minnesota. The word that got around was that the infantry at Fort Snelling could not handle the situation that had developed with the Indians, and that we were in reserve and had to go there.

FUCHS: You say this was in the winter of '98, do you mean '98-99 or...

BUCKLEW: Yes. It was in '98-99, that so far...

FUCHS: In other words, it was late in 1898 that this started?

BUCKLEW: Or it might have been in January. I don't recall just the month, but it was about that time. I believe that was the latest friction with the

[7]
troops and Indians.

FUCHS: So your unit was transferred to Snelling?

BUCKLEW: No, they called it off, we were the reserve. They had settled it. So, I missed being an Indian fighter.

Well, the Adjutant General issued an order, General Order Number 40, authorizing discharge of all those men who had enlisted for the duration of the Spanish war, and I happened to be one of them. So, I took my discharge in February of '99 and went to my home in St. Louis.

I had a very close friend in the troop. He was a son of a retired major of infantry. He was living at Ft. Leavenworth, the name was Townsend. And he was to be out at the same time I was, but his discharge was delayed and he promised to come down and visit me in St. Louis for a day or two before going home.

He arrived. The next day in the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* was an article mentioning that the 38th United States Volunteer Infantry was being organized for expedition to the Philippines.

Well, we knew that the 3rd Cavalry wasn't going to go anywhere, that's one reason we wanted to get

[8]
out. And here was a chance for service in a foreign country. We read the article about it being organized down at Jefferson Barracks. We thought we'd like to go down and find out about it.

We went down, there were two men in the office, we were early birds. A first lieutenant of Cavalry walked in and the conversation opened up, he asking us if we'd been in the service, and who our officers were, and this lieutenant then said, "My name is Willard A. Holbrook and I'm a Regular Army Cavalry officer, but I have a temporary commission as a major of Infantry. We're

organizing this regiment for the Philippines and we'd like to have men in it who have been in the service."

After more conversation and inquiring of each of us, Townsend and myself, who our officers were, he told Townsend that he would appoint him acting sergeant major -- he would need a sergeant major; try out and see how he'd prove himself. And he turned to me and said, "Well, I'll make you a corporal. We need some clerks here at headquarters while we're organizing."

So, we signed up. So the troops came in (all volunteers) from various places; one company from

[9]

Indiana, another one from Kansas, and another one from Texas. When the regiment was filled, the Adjutant just made out a list of we clerks, and marked what company we'd be assigned to, and I was sent to H Company, 38th United States Volunteers. They were all from Texas except the second lieutenant. So I know Texans. We became well-acquainted and continued as very good friends. Townsend was given a permanent appointment as sergeant major, and I was only a corporal, but I was the senior corporal in the outfit. That didn't get me anywhere with those Texans.

We went to San Francisco, got on the transport, and Townsend, because of his job and grade, was entitled to share a cabin. Well, we were close friends and he, in order to get me there with him, had me detailed. They requested the detail from the company that I be sent up for some ship work. I lasted two days because the sergeant in my outfit saw me in this cabin. The captain of those Texans requested that this sergeant be appointed instead of me. So, I went back below deck.

FUCHS: He pulled his grade?

[10]

BUCKLEW: Yes. We went on to the Islands and I have pictures taken all through, many of these incidents. About the week before we reached Manila there was a typhoon and one of the transports was lost. I don't remember which it was, I think we had a *Sheridan* with us, but I don't think that was the transport that was lost. And landing in Manila we camped on the Luneta, that's the beach around the bay. At the Luneta, at this area where we stayed, there was a bandstand. The troops were assembling because the Navy had occupied Manila after the Cavite defeat of the Spaniards and were waiting for the troops to arrive.

After enough of the troops arrived, two expeditions were arranged, one to go north and one to go south. I was in the one that went south. We moved from the Luneta in Manila down to Cavite, out to Maricaban, Santa Tomas, Lipa and Batangas, all that being in Batangas Province. We operated there for many months, and in two of these places we released Spanish prisoners that the insurrectos had been holding. And because the insurgents had proceeded to do what damage they could to the Spaniards, before we got there, the Spaniards

[11]

were soldiers stationed out through the Islands. There were a number of cases of that kind of liberated Spanish soldiers.

[Emilio] Aguinaldo proceeded to operate against the American troops. He had contacted [Admiral George] Dewey before they came to the Philippines, and Dewey brought Aguinaldo, who later became leader of the Filipinos insurrection.

He expected the country to be turned over to him; of course it wasn't. And so then he created his insurrection, and that insurrection continued on up to the -- I think the last of them was with the Moros maybe ten years afterwards. The Moros held out. It was all that type of fighting that we had.

After getting things settled in southern Luzon, our outfit was ordered to the Island of Panay which has not been taken over yet. Part of our expedition landed on the east coast, part on the west coast, then we converged and met in Iloilo, and operated through the Island of Panay. We're getting along into the spring of 1901, and Panay Island had been pretty well pacified, except the Moros and we left for the United States in June 1901.

[12]

When I returned, I didn't go back to Ames, Iowa, I wanted to learn the lumber manufacturing business. I went down below Shreveport, Louisiana, worked at a sawmill. And I was given a partner to work with, a middle-aged Negro. We'd cart the lumber around to the stacks where it would go. And I will always remember this man very, very kindly. He was considerate, he didn't want to hurt my feelings because he knew more than I did about this. So, one day he said, "Mr. Roy, I always learn something new." I appreciated that. And then there were pleasant details of other incidents that I won't go into.

I came back to headquarters of the company in St. Louis in 1902, but I was still suffering with malaria. I had had the chills and fever regularly ever since I came back from the Islands, that was 1901, recovering in 1903.

FUCHS: You got it in the Philippines?

BUCKLEW: Yes.

FUCHS: Not in Cuba.

BUCKLEW: No, no, in the Philippines.

[13]

All the medicine that I had when I was in the Philippine service was quinine and compound cathartic, that was the extent of our medicine. They had contract doctors, they're not the regular service doctors, and they all didn't keep the records and -- well, there were various little things that I won't go into.

But getting back to the lumber business. I then traveled out of St. Louis for the firm selling lumber wholesale to lumber yards and industries. Then they opened a suboffice in Kansas City handled by the son of the president of the company that I had been working with. I was sales manager in Kansas City and was living there until 1913, when I received an appointment as a special agent to South and Central America, Department of Commerce, on lumber and wood products. So I was there at that time. This was a special project -- I went back to the firm I had been with before.

FUCHS: How did you happen to get that appointment?

BUCKLEW: Well, the Department of Commerce approached the Lumber Manufacturer's Association. And I think it may have been due to just one little thing, you

[14]

can never tell what experience will do for you. There were three men that were selected to come to Washington and talk to the Secretary of Commerce [William C.] Redfield. Having conversation with him and quizzing us on various things he said, "Oh, you were in the Philippines?"

And I said, "Yes."

And he said, "Well, do you speak Spanish?"

I said, "Well, to a certain extent."

And he said, "You're appointed."

FUCHS: Pretty good.

BUCKLEW: Just like that. I had had to use Spanish there, you see; and I was apparently the only one that had any Spanish experience.

FUCHS: Where were you then, in that special appointment, what city were you in?

BUCKLEW: What city?

FUCHS: Where did you go when you took this special mission?

BUCKLEW: There was a briefing in Washington and then to New York and we sailed on...I can't think of the name of the ship now, but first for Brazil. We

[15]

stopped at Baia up on the northern coast, then down to Rio and I had to go up into Santo Tomas. And coming back to Rio, of course, I had to report to the U.S. Consul General in going in there; and then he made the contacts with leaders in that industry, and we would confer. I visited their plants, we could confer and then I would make my report to Washington.

FUCHS: Were you primarily there to study or to advise these people?

BUCKLEW: It was to, not particularly consider the possibility of importing these rare woods, but to learn about their lumber manufacturing business, the uses of hard wood and other types. Also types of different wood in furniture, etc.

FUCHS: In other words so that the United States might benefit from it.

BUCKLEW: Yes, if we could pick up anything from them, or if we could export things to them, work it both ways.

FUCHS: I see.

[16]

BUCKLEW: From there, I went down to Montevideo, Uruguay, and the same process went on. Then over into Buenos Aires, the Argentine, and that process went on.

Having completed that, I took the train across to go to Chile and Peru and came up the west coast. The railroad from Buenos Aires to Mendoza in the Andes was English railroad equipment, and it was quite a long ride. The car we were in had, I hardly know how to describe it, except that they were little rooms with seats on both sides, benches, which opened out and made into beds. When I walked in there were two men in this cabin, one of them a rather pleasant young fellow and the other one just a formal acknowledgement at the introduction. They were both Englishmen. We got our luggage put away. One man was very pleasant, he was going to Ecuador; he represented some paper manufacturing company, and the other man said very, very little.

It came mealtime and we were to go into the diner, we thought this odd man was going along and asked him. He said, "no," he'd go later on, which he did. He was a selfish creature, and he was a

[17]

cold icicle. So, I'd better not go into all the details about that bird.

When we arrived in Mendoza -- there is a narrow-gauge railroad over the Andes, and they only had trains once a week -- but there had been a washout so we had to stay over in a hotel. It was while we were staying over that I had to go to the bank to get change for the Chilean money. I just turned in some of the Brazilian that I had. The money that I carried on me was gold, in a belt, and not a great sum, but then I also had treasury checks that I could sign up to five thousand dollars. At the bank the teller introduced me and they spoke English. This officer said, "Well, I welcome you to the area of some of your cousins."

And I said, "I don't understand you."

He said, "Well, this is a great country, and we have enormous plantings of vineyards here, and there's an old Bucklew family, been here since the Civil War in your country." He said, "They live about sixty miles out of here."

I said, "Well, I'd like to meet them," but I never did, of course, none of them came in. He was to let me know if any of them came in.

[18]

Then I went on over the Andes, did my work in Chile and went up to Peru. At Peru the ship didn't come into a port. They anchored outside and boats took us in. I have some nice pictures of some of the folks there and some of the cathedrals.

Then going back to the United States, we cut through the Panama Canal, recently opened, and back into the United States.

FUCHS: About when did you get back?

BUCKLEW: We got back in '14 or '15. I was gone about eighteen months.

FUCHS: Then what did you do?

BUCKLEW: I went back with the firm, sales manager. I had been in the National Guard before and was away on leave, in the 3rd Missouri, Company H, in Kansas City. Col. Frank Rumbold was Missouri Adjutant General at that time. I renewed my acquaintance with him and other National Guard members in Kansas City. In 1913 and '14 the British were at war with Germany. We were not in it. I went to South America on a British ship, and we were stopped down off the Bahamas by a naval vessel. It was in the morning, the sun

[19]

coming up in the east; there was a good bright sun, and all we could distinguish was the fire of the cannon, and couldn't even see the flash, but the ship's officers with their glasses could tell. They exchanged signals, and it was a British warship that had stopped us and investigated. When we got to Rio there were about ten or twelve German ships interned at Rio de Janeiro.

But to get on back where we were. We were then organizing, raising troops. "B" Battery of Missouri National Guard in Kansas City was expanding into a regiment. "A" Battery of the Missouri National Guard in St. Louis was expanding into a regiment. They organized an engineering outfit, by Ruby Garrett in Kansas City, and the Government was taking our lumber. I had an easy job; nothing to do.

I had a telephone call from the Adjutant General, Rumbold, stating that St. Louis recruiting was moving slowly, they lacked one battery and wanted me to organize a battery in Kansas City to fill out the regiment.

I talked to the president of the company and he said, "Well, all right. That's all right, and then come back."

[20]

So, I proceeded to organize it. They gave us a good lot of publicity, the *Kansas City Star*. In fact, it was the *Kansas City Star* that called us the "orphan battery," because we were in a St. Louis regiment.

FUCHS: This was the 128th...

BUCKLEW: The 128th Field Artillery.

FUCHS: Became the 128th.

BUCKLEW: Became the 128th United States Field Artillery, 35th Division, yes. It was the 1st Missouri National Guard, and the other Kansas City regiment was the 2nd Missouri, that became the 129th; and then the 130th was a Kansas regiment, they made up the brigade.

FUCHS: Did your battery have a letter or a number designation when you were organizing it?

BUCKLEW: No, I just put an announcement in the paper and got in touch with people that I knew and told them we were organizing the battery to fill out the St. Louis regiment. And we got some good support from Kansas City papers and people and that was it. We assembled at, I think it was 9th and Tracy, on a

[21]

lot there.

FUCHS: Was the Second organizing in that same area?

BUCKLEW: Yes, at the same time.

FUCHS: Did you know Mr. Truman there?

BUCKLEW: I knew that there was a Lieutenant Truman that was all, in the 129th Kansas City regiment.

The recruits were from many places. I had a father and son, the father was a Belgian; later the son was a contractor in Kansas City. I had two Indians, also two Filipinos. How I got the latter, they were from California but they were officer's servants at Leavenworth, Kansas, heard of us and they came down. We were in the Armory this particular evening when they came over and wanted to know if they could enlist and told me that they were serving officers as servants and they'd like to come in the service. And I said, "Sure." So, we took them. There were many, many different types of men, from many places. The originals all volunteers.

I later kept in touch with many of them over the years. When we got back from World War I

[22]

we had our own group, like Truman had with his battery, met every year. I could not attend every year from out here.

FUCHS: What battery was that, sir?

BUCKLEW: That was E Battery.

FUCHS: E Battery, of the 128th?

BUCKLEW: The 128th, yes. There are others living but they are scattered. I hear from several at intervals.

We were ordered to Ft. Sill before the Kansas City outfit was sent down, and the balance of our regiment hadn't been sent down yet. When we arrived at Camp Doniphan, there was a company of engineers and there was some quartermaster troops, they were still building the mess halls; and our Battery had the place pretty well to ourselves.

The senior first lieutenant I had was a graduate of Annapolis. His name was Alvin Sawyer, but he had been released (as a lieutenant in the Navy), because of stomach ulcers or something of that kind. He wanted to get in, so we got him commissioned as the senior lieutenant. Then I had

[23]

a reporter, McMurry, for the *Kansas City Journal*, as a lieutenant. There were four of them. And another one, a second lieutenant, Mars, whose father had a large hotel there in Kansas City. He had been a stable sergeant in the Missouri National Guard at different times. There were 22 lieutenants who served in my battery. The first sergeant was from New Jersey, had been in the National Guard there for about three or four years. Aside from that none had been in the service, so we had quite a thing. But it was an advantage, because we were away from everybody else.

FUCHS: How close was your regiment billeted to the 129th Field Artillery regiment?

BUCKLEW: They were still in Kansas City. And so were the infantry.

FUCHS: After they came down, how close were you?

BUCKLEW: After they came down, why, of course, we were all consolidated. The artillery unit adjoining my 128th was Truman's 129th.

Then as it built up, we had 4.7 United States Army field guns. It was the only regiment that had

[24]

that caliber. They were to be motorized, and I sent a detail up to the Holt Manufacturing Company in Wisconsin to get the experience with the tractors.

FUCHS: What kind of guns did Mr. Truman's regiment have there?

BUCKLEW: Well, I believe regular U.S. Army 3" guns. But there were only enough of those 4.7s for one regiment in the United States Army. So, we trained with them; went out to shoot at Signal Mountain and all that training. Ordered to go overseas, fixed up the equipment, sent a detail with them to Norfolk to go over ahead of us, and when we arrived, there wasn't a single shell for those 4.7 guns. Talk about snafu. Then they issued us French 75s, horse-drawn, and that's what we had.

FUCHS: When did you first come in touch with Mr. Truman at Camp Doniphan?

BUCKLEW: Well, I don't remember just what it was. On numerous occasions, I'll say, they had officer's assembly, and training, and a group meeting, so it was at some of those.

[25]

FUCHS: Any incidents that stand out in your memory that would relate to Mr. Truman?

BUCKLEW: Why, my recollection is that it was in connection with the transfer of some men from his battery to mine, a different regiment. The battery strength was something over 200, but we had organized and come down quickly, and we only had about 165. But the others were back still recruiting. When they came they had full strength, and there were some that were transferred to my battery. I remember some of them that didn't want to come, they had their friends in there. But that was ironed out all right and they all became good friends.

FUCHS: Did you have occasion to talk to him about that?

BUCKLEW: Well, nothing more than -- just a small incident in the handling of the troops is all. There was one young fellow that just felt so bad about it, because he didn't want to leave Truman and he wanted to get back there again, but I couldn't do it, because this all came through from up above.

FUCHS: Do you remember the man's name?

[26]

BUCKLEW: Clements, Robert Clements. But they all fitted in very well with these fellows. Also in addition to that transfer then, there were some recruits sent up from Texas that joined the battery, and there was one of them that knew a family whose father had served in my Spanish war Philippine outfit.

Well, now back where we were.

FUCHS: We were trying to follow through with your memories of Mr. Truman. What was your next recollection of him at Camp Doniphan?

BUCKLEW: Yes. Well, this young Clements, in the opening of the Argonne, was wounded and died, the opening day of the Argonne. He at that time was working as a courier, a messenger.

I am pretty sure that it was Truman's battery that had the same trouble I had. Following (that is the morning of the opening of the Argonne), the Germans had blown up a bridge (it was quite a stream), and we had to ford this or go around. And he was having trouble getting in, it was rocky and hard to get across.

There were other occasions but I can't point

[27]

out the particular ones, except that that's borne out by the fact that we have kept in touch over the years after coming out of the service. It wasn't just a passing acquaintance, we've kept in touch all through the years.

FUCHS: Wasn't there an incident, that someone mentioned to me, about a court martial Mr. Truman was involved in?

BUCKLEW: I do not recall a court martial but recall an investigation.

FUCHS: About an explosion, claiming an artillery shell had been placed in a stove?

BUCKLEW: Yes it was prior to noon mess, in one of those large potbellied stoves, in the mess hall. Several men injured. That was at Camp Doniphan, Oklahoma, prior to our departure.

FUCHS: Someone mentioned Truman was involved in the case.

BUCKLEW: My understanding was a Board of Inquiry was appointed and Truman appointed a member of the Board. Shortly after that a sergeant was taken away. No one could say where or why. His record showed he had

[28]

served in the Austrian Army. It was rumored he was involved in the explosion.

FUCHS: We were told an officer was tried. That Truman defended him, and that the officer, who was exonerated, was a nephew of Tom Pendergast.

BUCKLEW: There were four Pendergasts in the Brigade. It is routine in the service for daily appointments as "In charge of quarters." That happened to be Pendergast that day. He as others would be questioned, by the Board. There are distorted rumors about various matters in service as out, without substance and twisted pro and con.

FUCHS: Do you mean the Truman-Pendergast incident was all rumor?

BUCKLEW: No. Probably used to influence public opinion. No crime was committed by Pendergast.

FUCHS: Are there any other incidents that you recall involving Mr. Truman while he was still in the military -- overseas, or at Doniphan?

BUCKLEW: We kept in touch with each other, and also Harry Vaughan, who was a lieutenant in the outfit.

[29]

It happened that Vaughan, learning I was going to Miami for my son's wedding, wired me to return by way of Washington and have lunch with him and the "Boss."

FUCHS: What year was your son married?

BUCKLEW: 1948. Truman was then President. I had met him on various occasions when he would come out here previous to that, as he was chairman of a Senate committee investigating war contracts.

So, I went to Washington, about 11 o'clock the guard took me in to General Vaughan's office, and true to his loveable character and greeting -- why, you could hear him in the next block when he talked -- he took me down the hall and introduced me to the Naval Aide (an admiral whose name I don't recall). As we walked into the Admiral's office he said, "Jack," or, "Jim, I want you to meet the fellow that helped the Boss and me win the war."

We had a pleasant visit, and a little before twelve went to the presidential office. In the large anteroom there were some eight or ten secretaries working. Standing at the closed door to

[30]

Truman's office were two men, one Attorney General [Thomas C.] Clark, the other one was [Samuel I.] Rosenman, who wrote the speeches. Soon we were joined by two others.

At 12 o'clock the doors opened, two men went out, and we walked in, walking across the room to Truman's desk. He got up and came around, shook hands, then, "Fellows, we have a Republican with us today, we'll give him hell."

Of course, that started a very pleasant luncheon hour. As we stood then by the side of his desk, on which was a decanter of water and some glasses -- he was next to the desk, I was standing next to him, Attorney General Clark was on my right -- Truman reached down into the cabinet and took out a bottle of scotch and a bottle of bourbon; put them on the desk, picked up an empty glass and a bottle of scotch, turned to me and said, "Help yourself."

I said, "I'd be honored if you'd pour me a drink." He did. I said, "When," he set the scotch down, picked up the bottle of bourbon and turned to Attorney General Clark and told him to help himself. And Clark said, "After you, Mr. President."

Well, I was terribly embarrassed and I looked

[31]

at Mr. Truman, and his face was red and he was mad. And he said, "I can't be myself around here." Everybody was silent. And my heart went out to him and I've been sorry for those people

ever since. It just illustrated the type of person that he was, he was caged up and couldn't be himself, be a frank individual with friends.

Oh, the conversation continued on then. We went down to lunch. Truman said, "Bucklew, I just this morning talked to a Republican Senator from Wisconsin, and he tells me I should fire Henry Wallace, because of the speech that Wallace made in London yesterday. What do you think?"

I said, "Well, I wouldn't attempt to pass an opinion on him, I'm not familiar with just what it was," and that ended that.

We continued on with the luncheon, which by the way, when we walked in there was this beautiful chinaware on the table, and it was a wonderful thing to view. And the waiters proceeded to take that away and put in the other usable dinnerware.

FUCHS: What room was the luncheon in, do you recall?

BUCKLEW: I don't know what room it was.

[32]

FUCHS: Any other thing happen on that?

BUCKLEW: Then following the luncheon as we walked out, Truman said -- mentioned who it was, I don't remember, who had installed a bowling alley and -- "Would you like to look at it?"

And I said, "Well, I've got to get a plane and be on my way."

And he said, "Well, I want to relax a little, too." So, I left him there.

FUCHS: You were in Kansas City from after World War I until 1933 when you came out here, or did you live other places?

BUCKLEW: When I came out of the service our mills were working again and the president of the company, C. J. Carter, had, during the war, developed a special flooring that he called "blocks on end," because the block flooring was set up so they'd be on end. And they were attached to strips of 1 x 4, with grooves, the blocks were forced onto this so that we had a strip of lumber about two and a half inches thick, about three and a half inches wide, of these blocks that were up on end. And

[33]

with that type of wood, yellow pine, why that made a hard floor that would stand a good deal of hard work, trucking and such as that.

That was then being manufactured at a mill in Arkansas, and that floor then being keyed in as it were, they didn't treat it with oil or asphalt, just keyed in, dove-tailed together, made a very smooth, hard-lasting floor, ideal for trucking.

So, as we talked this over there in Kansas City we concluded that Pittsburgh, Detroit, or Cleveland would be the place for me to go to introduce this special flooring, "blocks on end," that was the name.

So, I selected Cleveland, I didn't want Pittsburgh because it was a smoky old place. I then went over to open an office in Detroit, later; and I had to travel all through the East from Mississippi to the Atlantic, and the Gulf to Canada. So, I got into many different plants and that was where we sold large quantities of this floor for trucking areas. The first big sale was about two hundred thousand square feet for Buick up at Flint.

[34]

We put that floor into a machine shop in manual training school in Columbus, Ohio. And it had happened that when the physical director of the university was visiting this friend of his, walked on the floor, he said, "That would be ideal for a gym," it was springy the way we installed it, it wasn't nailed down. He called me up and asked about it and the result was that we made a deal.

FUCHS: Then when did you leave Kansas City after the war, what year would that have been?

BUCKLEW: In 1920.

FUCHS: What year did you go to Cleveland?

BUCKLEW: I went to Cleveland in 1920, and then between Cleveland and Detroit offices until 1933. The depression was on and I had made a deal with the company, rather than to continue as an employee salesman, I had an agency for the East. I established suboffices in Buffalo, and in Miami, various places. We were losing money. They were not doing any building, not spending money. Industry was not expanding. My wife had always wanted to come to California. I was able to make

[35]

a deal with my associates, turn that over to them, and take what I had and come out here in 1933 just to make a living and not try to get rich anymore.

FUCHS: Well, I was sort of wondering if you had been in Kansas City, you know, after the war when Mr. Truman had his haberdashery, and if you remembered anything of that?

BUCKLEW: No, I wasn't back in Kansas City then.

FUCHS: When he was running for County Judge, you don't recall that?

BUCKLEW: No, I wasn't there then, because I left to establish the offices around 1920 in the East, and then it was from there that I left. I came back to Kansas City for a couple of days, just to visit with the outfit, and then my wife and I came on to the coast.

FUCHS: I believe you saw Mr. Truman out here in 1944, for a few minutes in L.A.? I guess he was here on...

BUCKLEW: In L.A., and then I joined the train here, went on to San Diego with him.

[36]

FUCHS: Do you recall any incidents, any conversations, anything that...

BUCKLEW: There was this hearing and it had adjourned, just like a courtroom -- and there was someone else with him, we went to lunch. We got up to go out and he'd invited me to lunch. He said, "Oh, come have lunch on me." So I did, and when he got through, why, we got up and started to go out. The waiter come over and said, "Who's going to pay for this?"

"Oh!" His mind was on something else, you know. I wouldn't have minded paying for it if I had thought about it, but I didn't think anything more about it than he did. So, it was just not thinking about things that should come first.

FUCHS: All right, so who paid for it?

BUCKLEW: Oh, he paid for it. He signed the slip. Well, I suppose he was used to doing that, that's what was done, because he didn't carry money around. That was all done and it was recorded and expenses were taken care of.

FUCHS: Do you recall seeing him on other occasions,

[36]

maybe when you attended reunions of your battery in Kansas City?

BUCKLEW: I went east a year ago last November, that was in '69, and my battery met in Kansas City and his battery was also meeting that day; and I went out to the Library and then from the Library over to the house, and both he and Bess were there. We had a nice little visit and he was as alert as ever, mentally, but he was using a cane, that was all, otherwise he was himself.

FUCHS: You did keep in touch with him over the years, even when he was in the White House?

BUCKLEW: Yes, I have the correspondence with him. I would send him some avocados and stuff like that.

FUCHS: Yeah.

BUCKLEW: Sometimes he would answer and sometimes she would answer.

FUCHS: Very good. Well, unless you can think of something else, that's all I have. Any other incidents that you recall; conversations?

[38]

BUCKLEW: I don't think of anything at the moment.

FUCHS: Well, thank you very much Mr. Bucklew, we appreciate it.

BUCKLEW: I feel quite honored in being invited to do this with you.

FUCHS: Very good, sir.

BUCKLEW: But I was very glad to be able to point out my sympathy for a man in the position that he was in, particularly, so hard on him, being frank and sincere, to be treated by some as he was treated.

FUCHS: Very good, sir, thank you.

[39]

INDEX

Aquinaldo, Emilio, 11
Argonne, Battle of, 26-27
Army Cavalry, 8-11

Bucklew, L. L.:
 Department of Commerce, appointment to, 13-14
 Truman, Harry S., first recollection of, 24-25

Camp Doniphan, 22, 26-28
Clark, Thomas C., 30-31
Clements, Robert, 25-26

Dewey, Admiral George, 11

Fort Sheridan, Illinois, 6
Fort Snelling, Minnesota, 6-7

Garrett, Ruby, 19

Holbrook, Willard A., 8

Mendoza, Chile, 17-18
Minnesota Infantry, 14th Division, National Guard, Volunteer regiment, 4-6
Missouri National Guard, Battery A, expanding of, 19
Missouri National Guard, Battery B, organization of, 19

128th United States Field Artillery Regiment, 35th Division:
 formation of, 20-21
 and 129th Field Artillery Regiment, consolidation of, 23-24
129th Field Artillery Regiment, guns issued, 24

Philippine Islands, insurrection in, 10-12

Redfield, William C., 14

Rosenman, Samuel I., 30

Rumbold, Colonel Frank, 18-19

Sawyer, Alvin, 22

Spanish-American War, training for, 2-7

38th United States Volunteer Infantry, 7-9

Truman, Harry S., 30-32, 35-37

 court martial investigation, involvement in, 27-28

 and White House visit by L.L. Bucklew, 29-31

Vaughn, Harry, 28-30

United States Cavalry, B Troop, 3rd Division, 2-4