

Oral History Interview

With

MRS. FRANCIS H. MONTGOMERY

Longtime friend and neighbor of the Truman family in Grandview; daughter of Dave Clements, whose hardware store in Grandview was patronized by the Trumans; officer in the Order of Eastern Star.

Grandview, Missouri

December 2, 1980

by Niel Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library

Independence, Missouri

July, 1981

#### NOTICE

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted for the Harry S. Truman Library. A draft of this transcript was edited by the interviewee but only minor emendations were made; therefore, the reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written word.

#### RESTRICTIONS

This oral history transcript may be read, quoted from, cited, and reproduced for purposes of research. It may not be published in full except by permission of the Harry S. Truman Library.

[1]

Oral History Interview

with

MRS. FRANCIS H. MONTGOMERY

Grandview, Missouri

December 2, 1980

by Niel Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

JOHNSON: Mrs. Montgomery, we'll start by getting some of your own background. Could you tell me where you were born, and when, and your parents' names?

MONTGOMERY: Hannah Clements Montgomery, born in 1905, September 23. My parents were Mr. Dave Clements and Lora Clements.

JOHNSON: You were born where?

MONTGOMERY: Grandview, Missouri.

JOHNSON: The next question would be just to get us

[2]

connected with the Truman story. Could you tell me when and where your first meeting with Harry Truman was? You did meet Harry Truman, did you?

MONTGOMERY: I can kind of recall seeing him, you know, maybe in the store or maybe at church, as a young child.

JOHNSON: Your father ran a hardware store here in Grandview. Could you give us a little background of your father and his business, when and where he started?

MONTGOMERY: He was born east of Grandview in September 1873, and he moved into Grandview in 1899. He was a farmer before that time, and after he moved into Grandview he did carpenter work. In 1905 he opened up this store, a hardware store, on Main Street.

JOHNSON: Did he have his living quarters above the store?

MONTGOMERY: No, he didn't. The first store he built was just a little frame building, but it did have

[3]

an upstairs. At first there was a telephone exchange upstairs on the second story, and he had his hardware store on the first floor. He stayed there from December 1905 until the summer of 1911, when he moved into this brick building, just to the east of the little frame building. He was in there in this new building from 1911 until 1957 when he retired. I retired in '59. He was retired for several years and passed away in 1967.

JOHNSON: The address of the store that he moved into in 1911, was that at seven...

MONTGOMERY: 708 Main Street.

JOHNSON: And that building is still up here on Main Street?

MONTGOMERY: The second building, the second store?

JOHNSON: Yes, the brick building. In 1905, that's about the time that the Trumans moved from Kansas City to Grandview and took up farming and then

[4]

Harry Truman was talked into quitting his bank job and coming down to help with the farming in 1906. So in a sense, I guess, they both moved into Grandview about the same time.

MONTGOMERY: Pop started the store about the same time.

JOHNSON: Was his the only hardware store at that time, do you know, in 1905?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, it was. It was the only one.

MR. MONTGOMERY: In 1905 it was pretty near the first store up there.

JOHNSON: Grandview was just starting to develop as a business district in the first few years of this century? Did the Trumans patronize your father's store rather frequently?

MONTGOMERY: I'm just sure that Mr. Truman, or even his father, came there too.

JOHNSON: Did your father ever talk about the Trumans

[5]

as customers of his at the hardware store?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes.

MONTGOMERY: Do you think so?

MR. MONTGOMERY: I've heard him say so.

JOHNSON: Mr. Montgomery, by the way, is here. Do you recall Mr. Clements mentioning the Trumans as customers?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Oh, yes, particularly Vivian, of course. Mr. Vivian was here long after Harry, but I've heard Uncle Dave say that Mr. Harry would come into the store for parts for this or that, many times when he was farming.

JOHNSON: Did he ever make any comments that you can recollect about the way that Truman farmed, or what kind of farmer he was, whether he was progressive or whatever?

MR. MONTGOMERY: I don't recollect about his quality as a workman, but then it's noted that he was

[6]

thorough in what he was doing; his mama always said that.

JOHNSON: You do recall yourself being at the store, Mrs. Montgomery, and seeing the Trumans?

MONTGOMERY: No, I can't. You know there is just something in my mind kind of fuzzy about going into the store one day when he was in there. But you bumped into quite a few when you'd run in there as a kid.

JOHNSON: When was the busiest time for your store? Was it Saturday nights, for the hardware store?

MONTGOMERY: I don't think so. I don't think so because pop's business was farming and carpenter work. I mean there was a lot of hardware bought for buildings and things, nails, I guess, and I'd say more earlier in the morning. He always went to the store early and those men would be going out to work, the carpenters especially. Then during the day when the farmer needed something,

[7]

he was in, or some of the family were in to get the parts.

JOHNSON: Was the store open on Saturday night?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: That was the big night, I suppose, in town wasn't it, in Grandview?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, it was, but I don't think it was for my dad. I think it was mostly the grocery stores; maybe a farmer would come in and get something.

JOHNSON: Was that the one night of the week he was open?

MONTGOMERY: He was. Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: Do you recall what his hours were? His store hours?

MONTGOMERY: He was up there by 7 o'clock everyday.

MR. MONTGOMERY: Or 6 o'clock.

[8]

MONTGOMERY: He was an early riser, and was open until around 6 in the evening.

JOHNSON: Six or 7 to 6, twelve hours, twelve hour days?

MONTGOMERY: Just about, yes. He always came home for dinner.

JOHNSON: He had several people working for him?

MONTGOMERY: No, he didn't. He had one brother that he would fall back on, Uncle George Clements, who would give him a lift when he would need to be away. He did a lot of this when he would put machinery together; one would be out on the farm putting this machinery together.

JOHNSON: If we could have talked to him he perhaps would have recollected what kind of farm implements the Trumans used, you know, the brand names, and so on. Did you ever hear anything about the kind of farm equipment that the Trumans used on the farm?

[9]

MONTGOMERY: I know pop had John Deere, and McCormick, and just whatever it was that they had at that time.

JOHNSON: We know that he used an Emerson plow, but the other equipment we're not very certain about.

MONTGOMERY: I wouldn't know about that Emerson plow.

JOHNSON: Do you recall any stories, or any incidents, that involved the Trumans while they were on the farm?

MONTGOMERY: No, I really don't.

JOHNSON: They didn't seem to stand out from other farmers at the time; was that your impression?

MONTGOMERY: Well, I'd imagine they're all about the same. There weren't just too many farmers around. It was a farm country at that time, too, but I think they were all about the same.

JOHNSON: The Trumans owned something like 600 acres of land. Was that typical for farmers around

[10]

Grandview to have large farms like that?

MONTGOMERY: Oh, I'd say that was considerably larger.

JOHNSON: Those were prosperous years, too. Sometimes called the golden age of farming, that period from 1900 up to the end of World War I. Did you get the impression that farmers were doing well in those days, that they were spending money and that perhaps your father was rather prosperous because the farmers were doing well in those first ten years when he owned the hardware store? Was that your impression? Did he ever talk about how business was, whether it was up or down, or good or bad?

MONTGOMERY: I can just recall, you know, as a youngster, the ones that owned the farms around here. I don't think they did badly. Of course, pop was always going out, going up and down the country roads trying to see how things looked on the farms. That's where he made his living, off of those farmers.

[11]

MR. MONTGOMERY: One can confuse the word "prosperous" in today's sense and at that time. Prosperity then wasn't three or four cars in every drive, and all that sort of thing. They made a good living, perhaps, and that was satisfactory.

JOHNSON: They didn't worry about getting the biggest and latest equipment. Or was it maybe the same then as it is now? The farmers, I think, like to have new equipment especially if their neighbors have something new. Of course, that helps the hardware business, I suppose, to some extent.

MR. MONTGOMERY: That stuff wasn't available you know; headers and combines didn't come in until...

MONTGOMERY: They just had mowers.

MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: And binders.

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: But no combines around in those days?

[12]

MR. MONTGOMERY: Oh, no.

MONTGOMERY: This is something connected with the church. You asked about the different ones, if they were prosperous. I know there were several around the neighborhood, out on the farms, and they really just about kept up our church. I mean it was the farmers that did. My dad didn't belong to a church, but he had customers that did and relatives that did, and they were really the ones that were the backbone of the church at that time.

JOHNSON: There was a Baptist Church right across from the Truman home, called the Blue Ridge Baptist.

MONTGOMERY: Blue Ridge Baptist.

JOHNSON: Do you recall that building?

MONTGOMERY: No, that was before my time.

JOHNSON: I think it was moved into town.

MONTGOMERY: Into town. It was moved to the corner

[13]

of Main Street and Grandview Road.

JOHNSON: And it's apparently been demolished.

MONTGOMERY: They brought the one up to Grandview, and they used that until they built this other church.

JOHNSON: The one that preceded the present one?

MONTGOMERY: And then that was demolished.

JOHNSON: Of course, the one that replaced it was dedicated in 1950.

Do you remember anything about the Truman family's involvement in the Farm Bureau?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Oh, that was Vivian.

JOHNSON: Vivian was very active?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes. If the Bureau is the same thing that I'm thinking of.

JOHNSON: Harry Truman was an early member also of the Farm Bureau. He joined in 1913.

[14]

MR. MONTGOMERY: Well, I don't know about that.

JOHNSON: And Masons and Masonry. Of course, he got started early as a Mason.

MONTGOMERY: Somebody else can tell you, but I think he joined at Belton, the Belton Masonic Lodge. Yes, I think that's the way it worked.

JOHNSON: Did you know Mrs. Martha Truman, Harry's mother, very well?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, just real well.

JOHNSON: Do you recall anything about Mrs. Truman that perhaps we haven't read in the newspapers yet?

MONTGOMERY: She was just a mighty interesting lady, that's all; just an interesting person, sharp and...

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear her talk about her background? About her father Solomon, for instance, or her education in Lexington at the seminary

[15]

there?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear her refer to herself as a "Lightfoot Baptist?"

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Because she liked to dance.

MONTGOMERY: Well, she expressed herself. It was all right; I like that kind of people.

JOHNSON: She didn't hem and haw?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: And beat around the bush?

MONTGOMERY: No, not in the least.

JOHNSON: What did she have strong opinions about? Do you recall, especially?

MONTGOMERY: Especially about her family. I know she would speak of Vivian's children; they were good

[16]

children. They were lovely. They have grown up to be lovely people and they were just lovely children.

JOHNSON: I suppose she enjoyed the family. Did she talk about world events or politics? Did she ever make comments that you can recall about political things? How about Harry's role as President? Did you ever hear her refer to how he was doing as President?

MONTGOMERY: No. I don't recall that. She certainly backed her family.

JOHNSON: How did you get acquainted with Mrs. Truman?

MONTGOMERY: Well, I can recall Mr. Vivian Truman lived next door to us.

JOHNSON: Here in town?

MONTGOMERY: In town, right. The big house up here on the corner was our home, and they lived to the west. When J.C. and Fred were just little

[17]

boys; and that was during the World War, First World War, because Mr. Harry Truman sent the little boys little Army suits. I can remember those little Army suits.

JOHNSON: Harry Truman did this?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, he sent these little boys these little Army suits.

JOHNSON: Okay, these are his nephews.

MONTGOMERY: Those are the nephews, J.C. and Fred. I might find you a picture.

JOHNSON: He sent them Army suits?

MONTGOMERY: That was while he was in the service.

JOHNSON: When he was here at Doniphan or when he was over in France?

MONTGOMERY: Well, I don't know which that would have been, you know.

JOHNSON: Probably while he was down in Oklahoma.

[18]

MONTGOMERY: I went with Mrs. Vivian Truman down to Grandma Truman's, down to Mrs. Martha Truman's, and that is to me the first time I can recall seeing Mrs. Truman. Then I would see her at Mr. Vivian Truman's when they lived next door.

JOHNSON: You say the first time you recall seeing her was during the First World War? Do you remember the occasion for seeing her; what the circumstances were?

MONTGOMERY: No. When I went with Mrs. Vivian Truman and with the boys down to Mrs. Martha and Miss Mary's home; why, I can recall she took us up into where Mr. Harry Truman had his room.

JOHNSON: This is the farm house?

MONTGOMERY: This is the farm house. There were two stairways down there. Did you know that?

JOHNSON: I've been inside once. Is there one on each side of the living room part?

MONTGOMERY: I don't know where that one in the back

[19]

goes up, but anyway...

JOHNSON: Two stairways.

MONTGOMERY: Two stairways, and Mr. Harry had the one at the back of the house.

JOHNSON: Okay, toward the kitchen.

MONTGOMERY: Toward the kitchen. And she took us up; Mrs. Martha Truman took us up to Mr. Harry's room, and she gave each one of us a jews' harp. She gave one to the two little boys and to me. And it breaks my heart that my jews' harp got away from me. Now that's about the first time can remember Mrs. Truman just real well.

JOHNSON: Did they have those little Army uniforms at that time, the kids?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: They were wearing them?

MONTGOMERY: No, they weren't wearing them. I don't

[20]

know how it happened, but once they had them on and I went over and took a picture of them. I think I can find that.

JOHNSON: So you were in the house, the farm house, around 1917 or '18, is that right?

MONTGOMERY: It must have been.

JOHNSON: And you say that Harry Truman's bedroom was above the kitchen; or was it just in that back area?

MONTGOMERY: It was the back stairway. And there was a box up there, Harry's hope chest; this is getting bad.

JOHNSON: It's getting good.

MONTGOMERY: I can remember that and I remember those jews' harps. You know what jews' harps are?

JOHNSON: Yes, you kind of pluck them; hold them in your mouth.

[21]

MONTGOMERY: Pluck them, yes, but I can't find mine anymore.

JOHNSON: I suppose Mrs. Truman was rather proud of Harry at the time, even though he might have been in the Yankee uniform?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. Well, at that time he was living in Independence, wasn't he?

JOHNSON: He was living on the farm when he joined up in 1917. He didn't move to Independence until he got married in 1919. The farm was left in the care of Martha and Mary Jane during World War I. Do you recall if they had any problems trying to run that farm with Harry gone, during the war?

MONTGOMERY: I don't know.

JOHNSON: Did Vivian help them farm the land during the war?

MONTGOMERY: When the Vivian Trumans left this house next door to us, they moved down to that old

[22]

Jeffreys' place at Hickman.

JOHNSON: At Hickman, was this out in the country?

MONTGOMERY: It is right there on 110th, Do you know where the Order Number 11 monument is down there?

JOHNSON: No.

MONTGOMERY: Well, there's a little plaque down there, right in old Hickman.

MR. MONTGOMERY: Where from the church?

MONTGOMERY: To the east and across the street; to the east I would say maybe a half a block. And then the old Jeffreys' house was on that land right there east of Hickman.

JOHNSON: So that's where Vivian Truman was living?

MONTGOMERY: That's where he moved.

JOHNSON: About when would that have been?

MONTGOMERY: I'm sure J.C. was born in 1912--he'll

[23]

appreciate all this won't he? Have you met J.C.?

JOHNSON: I haven't met him, but I've met Fred.

MR. MONTGOMERY: Well, they're good kids.

MONTGOMERY: They're good boys; they're just good.

JOHNSON: So Vivian's were living in town then during the First World War, is that right?

JOHNSON: Did he help his mother and sister?

MONTGOMERY: If I can recall--now you'd have to let the family tell you that--but I'm sure that was the reason they were living here in town. That was a vacant house for them to live in, and that was just no distance at all from here down to the farm.

JOHNSON: Did he have another farm, do you recall?

MONTGOMERY: I don't know about that.

[24]

JOHNSON: Do you recall anything else about the Trumans in that early period? For instance, when Harry Truman came back from Europe he apparently spent a few weeks or a couple of months here in Grandview; then he got married. Did you attend the wedding?

MONTGOMERY: No. They had a celebration after the First World War, oh, a big one like all the other towns had, and Mr. Harry Truman was here for that celebration along with the boys that had returned. They were all here in Grandview.

JOHNSON: That was...

MONTGOMERY: In the summer. It was during the summer.

JOHNSON: Probably the summer of 1919. They had a parade or something up here in Grandview?

MONTGOMERY: Just a big celebration. I can't remember too much; only I do recall that Mr. Harry Truman was there. And I think it would have been on account of the connection we had with Mr. and

[25]

Mrs. Vivian Truman.

JOHNSON: So there was a celebration for the boys that were returning up here, and Mr. Truman was a part of that. Those were Battery D people? Do you know if anyone from Grandview was in Battery D, or were they all Kansas City people?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Your father wasn't in uniform?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Did you have any uncles that would have been in World War I?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. John Meador was in; yes he was. Then I had another cousin that lived in Tulsa. I guess those two are the only ones. I guess their parents were a little too old.

JOHNSON: Did your father ever talk about Harry Truman's father? You said they were probably pretty well acquainted. Did he ever talk about

[26]

John Anderson Truman? Do you recall?

MONTGOMERY: I don't recall, but I'm sure Mr. John Truman was in the store off and on.

JOHNSON: Do you know in those days if the farmers paid cash, or did they charge?

MONTGOMERY: Oh, I think everything was just charge, and then they settled up when their crops came in.

JOHNSON: Were you acquainted with any of the other farm neighbors such as the Arringtons, the Slaughters, the Halls? And did you ever hear any stories from them about the Trumans, especially concerning the farm period?

MONTGOMERY: No.

[27]

JOHNSON: Do you recall them having a farm sale in 1919, selling off their equipment and livestock?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Do you recall if they rented or leased the farm land during the twenties and thirties? How did they farm that land?

MONTGOMERY: I don't know whether it was Mr. Vivian's, or whether it was rented out to other people.

JOHNSON: But Vivian may have farmed it?

MONTGOMERY: Some of it.

JOHNSON: Did he have another farm?

MONTGOMERY: Not that I know of.

JOHNSON: Later, in about 1930, '31, he built that house out near the old farm house, and moved into that. Is that correct?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Before he moved into that where was he living?

MONTGOMERY: A little house down on Grandview Road, the other side of the cemetery--the other side of

[28]

the railroad track even. But the house is gone. It was directly the other side of the railroad track, over on the east side.

MR. MONTGOMERY: North of Grandview, but on the east side of Grandview Road, just beyond the underpass down to the railroad. And that's the land where that Ford factory is now.

JOHNSON: Oh, there is a factory there now?

MR. MONTGOMERY: A warehouse; Ford tractor parts is on that land.

MONTGOMERY: They lived there when Harry and Gilbert were born, in that little house on Grandview Road. The first time I knew Mr. and Mrs. Vivian Truman was when they moved in next door to us. My parents knew them.

JOHNSON: Was that right after they were married?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: That was just before the war started then

[29]

perhaps, about 1916, '17.

MONTGOMERY: Yes. I guess during the war they lived there.

JOHNSON: Do you recall what would be perhaps the next occasion when you met Mrs. Martha Truman, Harry's mother, after that?

MONTGOMERY: I've been in their home, when they lived out on the farm, with different club meetings. Then, after they moved into Grandview, why, every once in awhile I'd drop in to see Mrs. Martha Truman.

JOHNSON: Those furnishings out on the farm--do you have any idea what might have happened to the furniture? Do you think some of that was moved in perhaps to Grandview?

MONTGOMERY: I imagine so.

JOHNSON: Was anything different or unusual about the interior of the old farm house when they were living out there?

[30]

MONTGOMERY: I don't recall. When I was with Mrs. Vivian Truman and the two boys, I really don't recall any more than this upstairs room which was Mr. Harry Truman's and she gave us these jews' harps, which belonged to Mr. Harrison Young, her brother.

JOHNSON: But they've disappeared you say.

MONTGOMERY: Well, mine has. There was a box of them there, and she just reached in there and she gave the three of us a jews' harp.

JOHNSON: That was a favorite little instrument.

MONTGOMERY: I have no idea whether the boys still have theirs, but I expect theirs is like mine, just got away from them.

JOHNSON: You mentioned club meetings, that you attended club meetings out at the farm house. Did I hear you say that?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. I remember being out there for this

[31]

federated club that I belong to, Grandview Federated Club.

JOHNSON: When did you join this group?

MONTGOMERY: About 1937, and I stayed as a member until ' 42 .

JOHNSON: When was that formed, do you know?

MONTGOMERY: I don't know, but it was several years before I joined it.

JOHNSON: Was this where you got better acquainted? Was Mary Jane a member?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, she was a member of this federated club.

JOHNSON: Was Martha?

MONTGOMERY: No, she wasn't. I remember being there at one meeting down there. That's about the only time I remember. It was a small enough club at that time that you could meet in the homes.

[32]

JOHNSON: This would be in the late thirties?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: Between 1937 and 1940, because in 1940 they moved into Grandview. So during those first three years you do recall meeting with the Federated Club at the Truman farm house?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, a monthly meeting.

JOHNSON: Did Martha Truman take part in that at all?

MONTGOMERY: Well, just her being around. Just entered into things; she wasn't backward in those things.

JOHNSON: Did she fix refreshments for you?

MONTGOMERY: I imagine Miss Mary Truman did that.

JOHNSON: One historian who has written about the Trumans on the farm says that Harry learned not just social skills, but political skills, to some extent, while he was a farmer, and that being a farmer out here presumably expanded

[33]

his personality. He says it made him less withdrawn and much more gregarious and much more sociable and popular--presumably because of those things that he got involved with while he was a farmer here and the way he got along with neighboring farmers. They had to work together quite a bit on threshing and other things. Do you have any opinion as to how this kind of experience of being a farmer from 1906 to 1917 might have influenced his character or his personality?

MONTGOMERY: You know, I'm just not quite old enough. I'm plain old, but...

MR. MONTGOMERY: Most of that would be kind of inbred; that's from his forebears.

JOHNSON: You think that's more genetic than environmental then?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Sure. Sure. Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, that could be true. He was on the school board at one time.

[34]

MONTGOMERY: I don't know that.

JOHNSON: We do have some information about leisure time activities of the Trumans, but what would you say were some of the favorite leisure time activities back then? I guess we're trying to go back around the First World War period. What kind of things were usually done in the leisure time of the younger people?

MONTGOMERY: I was still a kid. I don't know when this was. We would go down to their grove. There's a grove from Grandview Road into the Truman house, trees on both sides. It was

nice. I don't know whether that was the community; it must have been the community, or the church. The people would go down there for picnics, and I think they did that for several years.

JOHNSON: They had picnics there in that grove?

MONTGOMERY: In that grove. I can just remember being there, and I don't remember any details.

[35]

Now did John Meador tell you anything about that?

JOHNSON: I don't think we got into that.

MONTGOMERY: Well, he was old enough to remember.

JOHNSON: The Trumans then would have been involved, or at least it would have been on their property.

MONTGOMERY: Yes, they were just good citizens, that's all. They were just good farm people, and everybody was friendly.

JOHNSON: Now between that first visit to the farm house back there during World War I and then when your club met out there in the late thirties, do you recall any other occasion when you might have visited them out there on the farm? You did mention being out there at the church picnics.

MONTGOMERY: Well somebody else would have to straighten you out on that, whether it was church, or whether

[36]

it was community.

JOHNSON: But it was a fairly popular place for picnics?

MONTGOMERY: I can recall going once, but I'm sure they had it more than once.

JOHNSON: Those were maples that were planted there by Solomon Young.

MONTGOMERY: I think they were. I imagine they were soft maples.

MR. MONTGOMERY: A row of soft maples, yes.

JOHNSON: And a fir tree or two. He planted those apparently when he built the original farm house back in 1867. That house burned in 1893. Solomon Young had died just shortly before

that, and the Solomon Young records went up in flames. That's one of the reasons that it has been hard to track information about the Youngs, although there has been a recent genealogy on the Young family that has been published which focuses on Solomon

[37]

Young, and these researchers discovered who his father was and traced back a little farther than that. Did you ever hear any stories about Solomon Young?

MONTGOMERY: Just that he had a lot of land.

MR. MONTGOMERY: He was a Kentucky man wasn't he?

JOHNSON: Yes.

MONTGOMERY: I can remember one of pop's sisters, when they went to the school on Raytown and High Grove Road. I remember Aunt Linnie telling us that Mr. Solomon Young would bring these cattle in from Oklahoma or Texas, longhorns, and they would see them and, you know, kid-like, they were scared of them, afraid of them. I know he owned that land across there.

JOHNSON: Then in the thirties there was still a mortgaged debt on the land, and it was foreclosed on. Did you ever hear anything about that?

[38]

MONTGOMERY: No. I don't know anything about that.

JOHNSON: But that was not untypical apparently; that is farmers were losing their farms. You probably recall foreclosures in those years.

MONTGOMERY: I don't know. Not to brag on my kinfolks, but they were all able to save their places. I mean there wasn't...

JOHNSON: Then the hardware business kept going?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: But there was hard times for it, wasn't there?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, there was hard times. I can recall that there was just hard times, but anyway they were able to hold on to them.

JOHNSON: I imagine sales, hardware sales, were way down in the middle thirties.

MONTGOMERY: Necessities was about what they bought.

[39]

JOHNSON: Did he own that building, rent it, or lease the building?

MONTGOMERY: He owned the land and the building both.

JOHNSON: Your father did?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Of course that no doubt helped him save his business.

MONTGOMERY: That's right.

JOHNSON: Were the Trumans customers of the store in the thirties?

MONTGOMERY: I'm sure they were.

JOHNSON: Do you recall when Harry Truman was Presiding Judge before he went to the Senate? The kind of reputation he had in this area? Do you recall anything about the road building program that he became identified with?

MONTGOMERY: That was one of the big issues.

[40]

JOHNSON: That found favor with the people around here?

MONTGOMERY: As far as I know. You wouldn't expect some of these good Democrats not to be. They were just loyal to him now. My dad was loyal to Mr. Truman and Mr. Truman was loyal to my dad. I mean...

MR. MONTGOMERY: He was such a good administrator. I remember then talking about the bond issue that brought Jackson County out of the mud.

MONTGOMERY: That's the way they expressed that.

MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes, it was a lot of money for those days but I don't remember, myself, much criticism of it.

JOHNSON: You were born in this area here, Mr. Montgomery?

MR. MONTGOMERY: No, I was born down in the hills in Lawrence County.

JOHNSON: When did you move up here to Grandview?

[41]

MR. MONTGOMERY: '36.

JOHNSON: You were married in...

MONTGOMERY: 1935.

MR. MONTGOMERY: I grew up in Independence, and moved from there to Grandview.

JOHNSON: You grew up in Independence?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes, on Ash Avenue; the intercity it was in those days.

JOHNSON: You say you were born in another county?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Lawrence County. We moved to Kansas City and then we moved to Independence.

JOHNSON: When did you move to Independence?

MR. MONTGOMERY: 1916.

JOHNSON: Did you know the Wallace family?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes, Ben Wallace. I knew Ben; I didn't know Mrs. Truman, Bess. I didn't know her.

[42]

JOHNSON: Well, when Harry Truman started "courting"--I guess they called it that in those days--when he started courting Bess Wallace, he had pretty easy access to Independence. I guess he'd walk or ride down from the farm house to the railroad station here. Was there a direct track to Independence?

MR. MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: He had to go through Kansas City, and then over to Independence?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes. But at that time they had streetcars going out there.

JOHNSON: From Kansas City?

MR. MONTGOMERY: From Kansas City, yes.

JOHNSON: Then he bought a Stafford car and was able to drive himself to Independence. About 1913 he bought the Stafford and apparently didn't sell it until he got down to the Army camp in Oklahoma.

[43]

Have you ever heard anything about this car?

MR. MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: After Mary Jane and Martha moved to town, did you get better acquainted with them or did you visit them more than you had earlier?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. I used to drop in on Mrs. Martha Truman every once in awhile. That was when Miss Mary was working at the Post Office in Kansas City, and, oh, I'd just drop in. There were quite a few of us from the church that would drop in to see her, and she always was still that little interesting, spicy person.

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear her referring to Harry in Washington and how he was doing as Senator in Washington?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Then he became Vice President and President, and she is quoted as saying right after he became

[44]

President, "Now Harry, be good but be game."

MONTGOMERY: Yes, that sounds like her.

JOHNSON: She was rather game herself, I suppose,

What kind of reactions were there here in Grandview when Harry Truman became Vice President, and then, of course, especially when he became President in April of '45?

MONTGOMERY: That was quite a highlight. I imagine there were a lot of good Republicans that turned, you know, that voted for him, I'm sure.

MR. MONTGOMERY: There weren't all that many Republicans around here.

MONTGOMERY: No, that's right.

JOHNSON: They were kind of scarce I suppose.

MONTGOMERY: Looks like there were plenty of them this time, doesn't it?

JOHNSON: Did you clip the newspapers? Do you have any clippings that would have anything about

[45]

the Trumans?

MONTGOMERY: No, I didn't. I think you're going to see Sue Fred.

JOHNSON: Yes, I'm going to check with her.

MONTGOMERY: And she's the one that seems to have the clippings and pictures.

JOHNSON: You do have some photographs you showed me earlier of your father's hardware store and of Main Street here in Grandview.

MONTGOMERY: That's another thing. I've been intending to call Regna [Vanatta] and ask her if she provided the pictures that they have up at the City Hall in the rotunda there.

JOHNSON: You're a member of the Eastern Star?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: When did you become a member of that?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Fifty years ago.

[46]

MONTGOMERY: I got a fifty year pin. It was 1925, the fall of 1925 that I joined.

JOHNSON: And at that time you were living...

MONTGOMERY: Here in Grandview.

JOHNSON: Was Mary Jane Truman a member?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: So this allowed you to get better acquainted with Mary Jane?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. Then the year that I was Matron in '42, Martha Ann Truman, Vivian's daughter, came into the Eastern Star. Miss Mary Truman gave her the Worthy Matron's lecture, and her Uncle Harry gave her the Worthy Patron's lecture.

JOHNSON: Do you recall seeing President Truman here in Grandview after he became President?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, when Grandma Truman was sick, he was here. I guess he was in Kansas City.

[47]

JOHNSON: He stayed in the house for several days.

MONTGOMERY: Here. I expect so. They would go by on the High Grove out by the house, back to wherever he was staying, and the limousine was taking him back, oh, just day after day on that.

JOHNSON: Were you over at the house at this time?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: The Secret Service men were there, almost all the time do you think?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. The three Secret Service men they sent here were mighty lovely men. I was in the Post Office then, and they were in and out of the Post Office right along, those three men were. They undoubtedly were handpicked, because they were lovely men.

JOHNSON: And then he came back to help dedicate the new church. Were you there at that time?

[48]

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: He got quite a reception, I suppose. What kind of a crowd was it?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Overflowed.

MONTGOMERY: Overflowed. Now, I've got some pictures of that, but you'll find those up at Sue Fred's. She's got all of that.

JOHNSON: I suppose he got quite a reception didn't he?

MONTGOMERY: Yes,

JOHNSON: Did you ever meet him to shake his hand? Did you get personally acquainted with Harry Truman?

MONTGOMERY: I had two nice occasions. I'd have to look up exactly what year I was with some friends back in Washington, D.C., and Miss Mary Truman made arrangements for us to meet Mr. Truman in his office.

JOHNSON: In the White House? This was in the East

[49]

Wing, in the Oval Office?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: So you did get to go into the Oval Office with friends of yours?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, friends.

JOHNSON: Who was with you, do you recall?

MONTGOMERY: Miss Pansy Perkins and Pauline Sims and Elsie Perkins.

JOHNSON: So you were on the appointment calendar, so to speak, and got to go in and see your old neighbor. Do you recall anything about the conversation?

MONTGOMERY: I know my dad sent a check with me so that--I should have thought this out before you came. I didn't think we'd get into all of this. Didn't know what we'd get into.

JOHNSON: We got into the White House.

[50]

MONTGOMERY: He sent a check so that Mr. Truman could endorse it and pay me. You know, endorse this check, and I think that's lost too.

JOHNSON: Do you recall what the conversation was when you were there in the Oval Office? How long did you get to talk to him?

MONTGOMERY: Oh, we weren't there over ten minutes at the most. Five minutes, maybe.

JOHNSON: He probably asked you about how things were back here in Grandview?

MONTGOMERY: Yes, asked about dad and things.

JOHNSON: Well, I have here a pencil, a mechanical pencil, very nice one. It says, "From Harry S. Truman, the White House, Washington, D.C." Now, when did you get that?

MONTGOMERY: When we made that visit.

JOHNSON: Oh, he gave that to you.

MONTGOMERY: He gave each one of us a pencil.

[51]

JOHNSON: In the Oval Office. Do you know if that is what he gave to most of his visitors?

MONTGOMERY: As far as I know. He gave each one of us one.

JOHNSON: That's the first time I've seen one.

MONTGOMERY: Really?

JOHNSON: That would be kind of nice to have for our museum collection.

MONTGOMERY: Are you sure that there's no more than that around?

JOHNSON: Well, there may be; I just haven't seen any like that in our collection. It's got a little photograph of President Truman at the top of the pencil. Yes, that's nice. Any other mementos of the visit?

MONTGOMERY: No, that was all.

And Miss Rose Conway. She was such a nice little person.

[52]

JOHNSON: Is she the one that escorted you into the Oval Office, or do you remember...

MONTGOMERY: I don't recall.

JOHNSON: Matt Connelly was the appointments secretary. Do you recall coming through his office, or through Rose Conway's office to get to the Oval Office? Did Mr. Truman comment about his life there in the White House at all?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Do you remember seeing the rose garden from the windows of the Oval Office?

MONTGOMERY: I doubt it.

JOHNSON: You probably weren't looking for roses were you?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Do you recall the date?

MONTGOMERY: It was in the fall...

[53]

JOHNSON: Was it shortly after he became President, or was this some years after he was in office?

MONTGOMERY: Let me see if I can find that. September 17, 1952. And 9:15 was the time Miss Conway arranged for us to see the President in his office.

JOHNSON: Did you write anything else?

MONTGOMERY: No, that's all I've got, and he gave us a pencil; I've got that down. Then the tour of the White House; I can't remember too much about that.

JOHNSON: Oh, you had a tour?

MONTGOMERY: Well, I've got that down here, so I guess we did. Then we left there and...

JOHNSON: And who took you on that tour do you recall?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: Mary Jane wasn't there at the time?

MONTGOMERY: No.

[54]

JOHNSON: Do you recall anybody other than the three that you've mentioned here from Grandview that did get to visit President Truman in the Oval Office?

MONTGOMERY: I don't know of anybody. I guess we were in the Oval Office, if that was his office.

JOHNSON: His working office.

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did it look like the one we have in the museum?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: I hope it does; it's supposed to.

MONTGOMERY: Then another time after the Library was built, Mrs. Vivian Truman had an aunt here, an aunt that had come to visit her: She called me and she said, "You and Francis have said anytime I need to go someplace, to call you." Of course those children took care of her, but if it wasn't

[55]

too handy, why she was to call us. And she did the same thing for me too. She called and asked if I would take her and her aunt down to the Library, the Truman Library. I said, "Oh, gee, yes." Well, at that time Miss Conway was there then. We went into Mr. Truman's office and had a nice little visit with him, and then we got a tour of the Library back in the stacks where hardly anybody gets to go.

JOHNSON: Did your father get a chance to visit President Truman in the White House?

MONTGOMERY: No.

JOHNSON: But they were pretty good friends?

MONTGOMERY: They were just good friends. Just like those people were back then--well, they just respected each other for what they were.

JOHNSON: For the inauguration of 1949 people from Independence, quite a number, went there and they took this Gutenberg Bible to take the oath on.

[56]

Did you go to the inaugural in '49?

MONTGOMERY: I think pop had an announcement of that.

JOHNSON: You were looking for what?

MONTGOMERY: The invitation to the inaugural. There was one for pop. I think a lot of their friends around here got them; I'm sure they did. My mother was gone by that time and there was just my dad.

JOHNSON: Your mother, was she well acquainted with Martha and Mary Jane?

MONTGOMERY: Well, she was with Miss Mary Jane. But Mrs. Martha Truman didn't get out much.

JOHNSON: She lived over here with Mary Jane, you say?

MONTGOMERY: Well, at that time they lived down on the farm. When Mr. Vivian Truman lived next door to us, I can recall Mrs. Martha Truman coming up to visit, but that's it.

[57]

JOHNSON: She broke her hip shortly after she moved to Grandview in 1940. Do you recall that episode?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

I was thinking of a cute little incident with Mrs. Martha Truman. She was several years older, maybe five or six years older than my dad's oldest brother, Mr. Brack Clements. The Youngs knew that there was a new little baby down at the Clements, and it was down there close to the farm. My grandparents were living on some rented land, I guess, down close to where the Youngs lived. So Mrs. Martha Truman, Martha Young then, and her sister, they just go across the pasture and go down to see this Clements baby. And Mrs. Truman was always saying, he was "the prettiest little fellow, the clearest skin." That's how she remembered Brack as a baby.

JOHNSON: That's when Martha was very young then.

MONTGOMERY: She was a child, oh, maybe five or six or seven, someplace in there.

[58]

JOHNSON: John Meador told me about that.

We're talking about prior to the Civil War or just about the time the Civil War started, before they moved off that farm into Kansas City. In other words, this would have been the place where the Red Legs visited the Youngs, and killed a lot of hogs. You've heard of that incident, the Red Legs? That would have been the farm, do you think, that they were living on at the time they were visited by these Red Legs?

MONTGOMERY: I don't know that.

JOHNSON: But it was right near your Uncle Brack? How do you spell that name?

MR. MONTGOMERY: Breckenridge was his name.

JOHNSON: Breckenridge; and they called him Brack. So they were neighbors at that time?

MONTGOMERY: The Youngs, yes. Of Ambrose and Hannah Clements. Brack was their son.

JOHNSON: And they were homesteaders more or less.

[59]

MONTGOMERY: I think they just rented. My grandparents were just on rented ground.

JOHNSON: Where was that? Could you pin that down? The location?

MONTGOMERY: No. I don't know; maybe John would. Did John tell you that?

JOHNSON: Well, I might be able to get it out of what he told me.

MR. MONTGOMERY: Was that before they built the house down here?

MONTGOMERY: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: Was it southeast of Grandview, or east?

MONTGOMERY: No. It would be more to the northeast.

Well, this all happened, of course, before the Civil War. Because of Order Number 11, my grandmother took these three little boys back to Kentucky.

JOHNSON: I see.

[60]

MONTGOMERY: And that was '63.

JOHNSON: Solomon Young signed a loyalty oath as did Anderson Shipp Truman; they all signed loyalty oaths. Of course, the Trumans had moved over to Platte County, so they were outside the limits of Order Number 11. But the Youngs, who were visited by these Red Legs, eventually moved into Kansas City for protection, in order to comply with Order Number 11. I've been wondering where they were living when they were visited. This would have been about 1861. That probably was that same place, next to your uncle's place then.

MONTGOMERY: Grandparents' place.

JOHNSON: And that was east and a little north of Grandview?

MONTGOMERY: That's what I always understood. Now when my grandmother left her home out here at Grandview to get on the boat to go to Kentucky, she stayed all night with the Youngs in Kansas City.

[61]

Like you said, they went in there for protection. Mrs. Martha Truman, and a sister or two, or some of the family, maybe Mrs. Young, I don't know, but I know Mrs. Martha Truman and some of that family went with my grandmother and these three little boys down to the river.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea where they were living there in Kansas City at that time?

MONTGOMERY: I took it it was out around Westport, but I might be wrong there.

JOHNSON: Okay, so they had moved there from that farm out here?

MONTGOMERY: They must have, and that is '63. I mean that's one date we've got. Mrs. Solomon young and her family were then living in the City.

JOHNSON: Right.

Well, maybe we can pin down the location out there of that farm..

[62]

MONTGOMERY: John should kind of pinpoint it. I think he could pinpoint that.

JOHNSON: Do you know how many miles that would be?

MONTGOMERY: Oh, it wouldn't be over two miles out there. You know, the way this stuff is all built up, you're lost.

JOHNSON: Yes. The farm home used to be, what, a mile from Grandview, and now you can hardly distinguish it from the town.

MONTGOMERY: Yes, it's right there.

JOHNSON: We were talking about these early forebears, especially, the Clements that were acquainted with the Solomon Youngs going way back. This episode of course is rather interesting. Do you recall the Clements becoming friends again with the Youngs after the war, after the Civil War? Did they for instance visit the Youngs at that original farm house out here?

MONTGOMERY: I don't know.

[63]

JOHNSON: Were you named after your grandmother Hannah?

MONTGOMERY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you ever talk to your Uncle Brack about the Trumans, or the Youngs?

MONTGOMERY: No. I know he was a bachelor and he would go down to see Mrs. Martha Truman quite often. They would reminisce about this and that and just enjoyed each other's company; just old settlers, that sort of thing.

JOHNSON: She had seen him when he was just a little baby?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. She said, "His skin was beautiful." Well, until his dying day that skin was beautiful.

JOHNSON: Well, is there anything else you can think of that we may have missed in regard to either the Trumans or the Youngs?

MONTGOMERY: I really didn't think I'd do this.

[64]

JOHNSON: But things came to mind you didn't think probably you'd remember.

MONTGOMERY: You just don't, you know. Sometimes you have to stop and think them out.

JOHNSON: After Mr. Truman left the Presidency, did he come down to Grandview very often?

MONTGOMERY: I think he was out at Mr. Vivian Truman's quite a bit. I'm sure he was, just from what Mrs. Truman would tell us. We were real close with Mr. Vivian Truman and his family, and we've always continued to be.

MR. MONTGOMERY: And Mary, when she lived over here.

MONTGOMERY: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: Do you know the whereabouts of anything that might have come off the Truman farm?

MONTGOMERY: Not a thing.

MR. MONTGOMERY: Have you been down to see the boys

[65]

at Louisburg, Harry and Gilbert?

JOHNSON: No. I've met Fred, but I haven't met the others.

Well, I certainly appreciate your talking to us. It looks like we're just about at the end of our tape, so I think that we've timed this rather well.

[66]

## INDEX

Battery D, 129th Field Artillery, 35th Division, 25  
Belton, Missouri, 14  
Belton Masonic lodge, 14  
Blue Ridge Baptist Church, 12-13

Camp Doniphan, 17  
Civil war, 58, 59, 62  
Clements, Ambrose, 58  
Clements, Breckenridge, 57, 58, 63  
Clements, Dave, 1, 2-3, 4, 10, 39, 50, 55-56  
    hardware store of, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-8  
    and Truman, Harry S., 4-5  
    and Truman, Vivian, 5  
Clements, George, 8  
Clements, Hannah, 58, 63  
Clements, Lora, 1  
Connelly, Matthew J., 52  
Conway, Rose A., 51, 53, 55

Eastern Star, 45-46

Farm Bureau Federation, American, 13  
France, 17  
Fred, Sue, 45, 48

Grandview, Missouri, 1, 2, 3, 24, 28, 32, 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 54, 57, 59, 60, 62, 64  
Grandview Federated Club, 31-32  
Grandview Road, 28, 29, 34

High Grove Road, 37, 47

Independence, Missouri, 21, 41, 42, 55

Jackson County, Missouri, 40

Kansas City, Missouri, 3, 41, 42, 43, 58, 60, 61  
Kentucky, 37, 59, 60

Lexington, Missouri, 14  
Louisburg, Kansas, 65

Meader, John, 25, 35, 58  
Montgomery, Mrs. Francis H.:  
    background of, 1  
    Eastern Star, and, 45-46

[67]

Montgomery, Mrs. Francis H.: (continued)  
    and the Grandview Federated Club, 31-32  
    and hardware, 38-39  
    and Truman, Harry S., 2, 48-58

Oklahoma, 17, 37, 42  
Order No. 11, 59, 60

Perkins, Elsie, 49  
Perkins, Pansy, 49  
Platte County, Missouri, 60

Raytown Road, 37  
Red Legs, 58, 60

Secret Service, U.S., 47  
Sims, Pauline, 49  
Stafford car, 42

Texas, 37  
Truman, Anderson Shipp, 60  
Truman, Fred, 16-17, 18, 19-20, 23, 65  
Truman, Gilbert, 65  
Truman, Harry (nephew of Harry S. Truman), 65  
Truman, Harry S., 2, 3-4, 13-14, 16-17, 18-19, 24, 30, 32-34, 43-44, 48, 63, 64  
    and Clements, Dave, 4-5  
    and Grandview, Missouri, 46-48  
    and Montgomery, Mrs. Francis H., 48-55  
    and Truman, Martha, 46-47  
    as a road builder, 39-40  
Truman, Mrs. Harry S., 41-42  
Truman, J.C., 16-17, 18, 19-20, 22, 23  
Truman, John Anderson, 26  
Truman, Martha, 14-16, 18-19, 21, 23, 29, 31, 32, 43, 46-47, 56-57, 61, 63  
Truman, Martha Ann, 46  
Truman, Mary Jane, 21, 23, 31, 32, 43, 46, 48, 54, 56, 64  
Truman, Vivian, 5, 13, 15, 16, 21, 22, 27, 28, 30, 46, 56, 64

Truman, Mrs, Vivian, 18, 54  
Tulsa, Oklahoma, 25

Vanatta, Regna, 45

Wallace, Ben, 41

[68]

Washington, D.C., 48  
Westport, Kansas City, Missouri, 61  
World War I, 21, 23, 24, 34

Young, Harrison, 30  
Young, Solomon, 14, 36-37, 60, 62, 63  
Young, Mrs. Solomon, 61  
Young family, 58, 60-61