

Oral History Interview
with
MARY JANE TRUMAN

Miss Truman lived with her brother, Harry S. Truman, until he was married at the age of 35. She remained with her mother until her mother, Martha Ellen Truman died. Miss Truman was a Grand Matron of the Missouri Eastern Star, also a pianist for the First Baptist Church of Grandview, Missouri for approximately 30 years where she was a member.

Grandview, Missouri
January 2, 1976

by Jerald L. Hill and William D. Stilley, William Jewell College

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
December, 1985

NOTICE

This interview was conducted by William D. Stilley and Jerald L. Hill as part of a winterim and independent study project at William Jewell College in March 1976, under the direction of the Political Science Department of William Jewell College.

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HILL: What sort of a brother was the President to you?

TRUMAN: He was one of the finest brothers anybody could have. He was the oldest one of the three of us; he was older than Vivian and then I was the youngest. He rocked me to sleep until I was big enough to not be rocked. And Mamma said I used to come in and say, "Mamma, make

Harry bye-o," instead of asking her, or telling her I was sleepy, it was Harry. It was always Harry.

As long as he lived he always seemed to think

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that I was his special care, and no matter how busy he was he always had time to talk to me either on the phone, or to see me when I went over there for anything I did. He never was--I don't think I ever did see him especially disgusted with me, but maybe once. And that was when they started the Eastern Star chapter here. He had contacted the District Deputy Grand Matron, and she came out with a petition to have the different ones sign, and, of course, it landed in our house first. And she said she wanted me to sign the petition. I said, "Why, no, I'm not going to belong to the Eastern Star."

And Harry said, "Well, you are too." He said, "If you don't sign that, I'll sign it for you." Really he wasn't mad, he was just a little spunky. But he was thoroughly disgusted because he thought he had it all fixed for everybody to sign, and his own sister objected to sign.

HILL: Was he serious as a young man, or did he joke quite a bit?

TRUMAN: Well, I think he was just about average. He

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loved fun and all that, but he had a serious side, too. He was a very good student. You see, he had diphtheria when he was about nine years old, and he had such a severe case that he ended up being paralyzed for about a year. So, that's when he started reading so much. He couldn't do anything else and he couldn't get up without help, and so he'd lie on the floor and put the books down on the floor in front of him and read the book that way. That was where he really started liking to read. He missed a whole year of school, because he was paralyzed for almost a year; and then he finished high school at seventeen, which wasn't too bad.

STILLEY: He took piano lessons. Did he enjoy this at the time he was taking lessons?

TRUMAN: Yes, he loved music. And he liked classical music; he didn't play ragtime. He played a few pieces, but he really liked good music. He and I always took from the same teacher for about five years. Each of us.

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HILL: You continued to play the piano, didn't you, for the church?

TRUMAN: Yes, I played for the church. I played for the church for, oh, I guess thirty years, maybe. Mr. George, the funeral director--I'd go to church and play for funerals--said to me one day, "Miss Mary, I don't know how we'd ever get along without you." He said, "You're always

on hand to play for us." And I did, I played for years. And I enjoyed-not enjoyed playing for the funerals, but I enjoyed playing for anyone that really wanted me to play. But I don't touch the piano anymore.

HILL: I read someplace that President Truman was disqualified from West Point when he applied because of his eyesight. Is that right?

TRUMAN: Well, he wasn't disqualified, he passed the examination, but he couldn't enter on account of his eyes. They wouldn't accept him at that time. I think since, if their vision can be corrected with glasses, they do accept some that wear glasses. But at that time he took the examination, he couldn't

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see anything without his glasses; and so, he passed the examination, but he wasn't acceptable for that reason. But it was good experience for him.

HILL: Did this upset him,, was he pretty disappointed with this?

TRUMAN: Well, I think he was disappointed, but Harry wasn't the sort to show his disappointment. If anything happened he went on and made the best of it. He was that disposition.

HILL: You mentioned he was a good student in school and all this. He enjoyed reading?

TRUMAN: Yes. He very seldom sat down that he didn't have a magazine or a book or something. He always had to read, and read a lot.

HILL: What was his favorite subject that he liked to read?

TRUMAN: History.

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HILL: Was that mainly what he read? Did he read fiction and this kind . . .

TRUMAN: Oh, he read everything; but he really liked good reading. He was a good student, even after he was out of school.

HILL: How long did you and President Truman live together before he was married?

TRUMAN: Well, let's see, he didn't marry until he was thirty-five and he was home all that time, except going places where he needed to go and all that. But he was home with Mamma and me at the time when he went into the First World War; and then he was married after he came home from the First World War.

HILL: And you lived out at the farm home?

TRUMAN: Yes.

HILL: Is the farm house still standing now?

TRUMAN: Yes. But that's not the original farm house. The old house burned. It was a pre.-Civil War house,

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and a much nicer house than this one was. It burned sometime in the 1890's and my grandmother came to Independence and lived with us. We were living in Independence then. So the house was built, and they didn't have the telephones and things that they do today, and she couldn't have it looked alter like she wanted. She wanted it rebuilt just like the old house was, but they didn't build it that way. It was a nice old pre-Civil War house, and was partially finished when the war came. Then my grandfather bought the farm and the home place, and he had it finished after the Civil War. It was really a nice old pre.-Civil War house. But this one was just kind of thrown together. It wasn't the same kind of a house that the old house was.

HILL: How long have you lived in this house here?

TRUMAN: Let me see, I don't know exactly. I was thinking the other day when it was I moved over here. It was in the 1950's but I don't remember. I was Worthy Grand Matron in 1951 of the State, and

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I moved after I was Worthy Grand Matron, and I think it was either 1952 or '53 that I moved over here. This house used to be over on the schoolhouse yard, and it was moved over here; and then I bought it after they moved it over here.

HILL: Your brother, Vivian, did he stay at the farm house then, or did he leave at that time, too?

TRUMAN: Well, no, he built the house there north of the old house. That was my brother Vivian's house. He lived out here on what we used to call the "Good place," and was living on the Good place when Harry was in France, in the war. I ran the farm during the war.

HILL: Did you have any trouble running the farm?

TRUMAN: Oh, I had my troubles, but I think everybody felt sorry for me, so they all pitched in to help me. The neighbors were awfully nice, of course. Of course all the men of a certain age went to the war, and those that were left were either older men or too young to be very much help, you

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know; it was hard to get. I did have a man and his wife that lived in a house on the farm. They were there all the time and then we had to hire other help to help them. Of course, we had quite a large crop of wheat and oats and corn; and then we had over two hundred acres in pasture, in pastured cattle. So, the original farm at that time was 600 acres. Then of course the road cut it all to pieces. Seventy-one went through and left, I believe 160 or 200 acres east of the highway, and then the part between the highway and Grandview Road, and then there was another 100 or something over between Grandview Road and the Frisco Railroad, over in there. There are a hundred acres west of the Frisco Railroad, and we kept that in pasture, kept cattle on that pasture. Wasn't good--oh, I guess it could have been farmed, but we never did farm it.

HILL: How long after President Truman came back from World War I did he get married?

TRUMAN: He came home in March and was married in June.

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HILL: And then he moved to Independence from the farm?

TRUMAN: Yes, he went to Independence, and we had a sale then, and sold off all the farm machinery and the stock and everything. He wanted me to go ahead and I told him I wouldn't do it unless he'd stay and help me, because it wouldn't be the same as it was during the war, and it wouldn't have been. I'd never got the help that I did while he was gone; that was part of it.

STILLEY: According to the Hickman Mills School Board minutes, they say that a Harry S. Truman was appointed to the Board July 7, 1916, and that there was a Mr. Hornbuckle that was a member of the Board, was that your brother?

TRUMAN: Yes. Harry Truman, that was my brother.

STILLEY: He did serve on the Board?

TRUMAN: Yes, he served on it; and Roy Hornbuckle married a cousin of ours. So, he was a cousin by marriage, Roy Hornbuckle was. He was an awfully fine fellow. They had a big farm out east of

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Hickman Mills, and he and his brother, Bothel, farmed over there. He had a nice farm.

HILL: But Harry did serve on that school board?

TRUMAN: Yes, he served on the school board.

HILL: As a young man growing up, was he interested in politics? Did he discuss politics very much?

TRUMAN: Well, not a whole lot. But he was always interested. My father enjoyed politics, too, and he and Harry used to discuss politics quite a bit. But Harry wasn't particularly interested in it until after he came home from the war, and then he became interested.

HILL: Did he ever show ambition at any time to be President of the United States?

TRUMAN: No, he didn't want to be. And he was really drafted. He was Senator, and he really wanted to remain Senator. That was really the truth. A lot of people don't believe that, but it's true. He came home, I know, when they were going to Chicago

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for the nomination; and he had dinner with Mamma and me and Mamma said, "Now, Harry, I don't want you,"--they were adopting him for Vice President--and she said, "Harry, I don't want you to be Vice President. You stay in the Senate." She was quite a politician herself. She said, "You'll do a lot more good in the Senate."

He said, "I know it Mamma. And I got a nomination here in my pocket for Mr. Byrnes from South Carolina,"--or North Carolina, which was it?--South, I think. So then after he got to Chicago, they began wanting him to run for the Vice President and he said, "no" he didn't want to. So, the Chairman of the Democratic Party--what was his name? I've forgotten his name. Anyway, he told Harry that Mr. Roosevelt was on the phone and wanted to talk to him. So, of course, Harry had to answer the phone if the President called him. So, he said, "Harry, you're not going to let me down are you?"

And Harry said, "Well, when the President himself asked me," he said, "you have to say 'yes'." So, he accepted the nomination and that's the way it went.

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HILL: What made him decide first to get into politics and run for the County Judge post? Do you know?

TRUMAN: Well, when he came home from France and didn't stay on the farm, jobs weren't too easy to get. So, they wanted him to run for Eastern Judge and he decided that he would. He was elected, but the Eastern Judge is only for two years, and so when the two years was up--and the only time he was ever defeated when he ran for office was when he ran for Eastern Judge the second time. He was defeated that year, and then he went to work with the Kansas City--I believe the highway department. Then when the year came around to elect county judges again, why they wanted him to run for Presiding Judge and he did. He was elected twice to that. He served ten years. Well, it was like the third time, because he served each time four years, and he had served about two when he was elected to the Senate. He was in the Senate about ten years, and he said that he wanted to stay there, because he felt like he could accomplish more than being Vice President,

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Of course, he didn't know he was going to be catapulted on into the Presidency right away. But he was, and it was not an easy thing because he hadn't been in long enough to really know what some of it was all about. And Mr. Roosevelt was sick during the whole time after they were elected. So, Harry, you might say, went in as President practically blind as to what was what, only what he knew by reading, and working in the senate and all. It was pretty rough going for awhile, but I guess he didn't do too bad.

HILL: President Truman was known for his honesty and his straightforward, out in the open approach. Is there any member of the family that you think that he got this from?

TRUMAN: Why, it was from his mother and his father and his grandfather. I went down to the Bank of Belton one time and Mr. Blair, Mr. Frank Blair, the father of the cashier down there now, introduced me to Mr.---names have a way of leaving me--well, anyway, he said, "I want you to meet old Sol Young's granddaughter."

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And he immediately spoke up and he said, "Well, you know what I know about Solomon Young was that his word was as good as his bond." And the nicest compliment I ever had, Mr. Blair spoke up and said, "His granddaughter's very much like him." I thought that was about the nicest compliment I ever had.

But, anyway, I guess my grandfather was one of the first depositors in the Bank of Belton when it was started back in the 1880's. I don't remember just when, 1884 or something like that. And so there's been somebody of our family, and I had my account at the Bank of Belton, and had it ever since. Well, there wasn't a bank here when we moved back out here from Independence, that's is 1905; and, so, it was seven years before we had a bank here at Grandview and that was before the other bank was at Belton. There are two there now.

HILL: You mentioned that your brother was thrust into the Presidency pretty quickly after becoming Vice President. What do you remember about when he

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first learned that he had become President?

TRUMAN: Well, I know that it was quite a shock. It happened so quickly, you know; and I had an office in the state of Eastern Star. I was Grand Esther, I believe it was that year. I had been down to Nevada and I came home and they wanted me to come and go on another one of the visits with the Grand Matron. And my mother was down at my brother 'Vivian's, so I called her and asked her if she minded if I went back for another meeting and then I'd come and get her the next day, and she said, "all right." So I went on getting things ready and was going to leave that evening to go back down near Nevada, and the word came that Mr. Roosevelt had died. Of course, that just ended everything. So then I went down and got Mamma and brought her home.

Of course, the reporters began calling, and coming and everything. It was quite a frustrating evening, but anyway we lived through it. Vivian came up and stayed with Mamma and me until, things kind of calmed down; and it was pretty much like that the rest of the time.

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HILL: You heard the news over the radio, then, that Roosevelt had died?

TRUMAN: Yes, and Mamma and Vivian and Louella had heard it down there. I didn't have the radio on, so they called me to tell me; and then that kind of changed plans in getting things together again. Of course, I couldn't go anywhere after that.

HILL: Then, I was reading a story, didn't President Truman call his mother later that night? Is that correct?

TRUMAN: Yes, I think so.

HILL: You mentioned that after your brother became President, you had reporters and everything around the house. How did it change your life, your brother being President?

TRUMAN: Well., I don't know. We tried to go on pretty much the same, but it's impossible. You dust can't be the same. People, I don't know what.-they seem to think you ought to change, whether you do or not. It's pretty hard just to keep

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your feet on the ground and be yourself. But we managed pretty good, I think.

HILL: Did the reporters bother you quite a bit?

TRUMAN: Well., some of them, but most of them were very nice. We really did have a nice group. Especially when Mamma was ill the last time, they were so considerate and nice. The Star was especially considerate and they got to the point where as Mamma got worse, why, they appointed one reporter and he'd just call maybe once or twice a day and didn't make a nuisance of himself. Really, most of the time, I must say that we were pretty fortunate with the reporters and all. You know you have to do your part, too; you can't be cranky with them, it just makes them worse if you are. As much as you can cooperate, the better off you are.

STILLEY: Just where were you living when your brother became President?

TRUMAN: We were living over there west of the railroad. It's across from the schoolhouse. It's

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a little two-story house, and Mamma and I were living there and we both liked it just fine. It was a nice location and we had nice neighbors; and Mamma was coming downstairs and she missed

the bottom step and fell and broke her hip. So then we had to take her to the hospital and she was there about six weeks, I guess. And while she was in the hospital I moved over to this house just west of the railroad, a little yellow cottage that sits up on a kind of a high terrace there; and it was a nice little place. I moved while she was still in the hospital. That was two moves in less than three months. Anyway, I got it all ready for her, and so we lived there until Mamma passed away, and then I stayed on until about--let's see, she died in 1947 I think--I stayed on until about 1955 or '56. We liked it over there. It was really a nicer house than this one is, nicely furnished and all, but I didn't like to live there by the railroad after Mamma was gone. I didn't like to live there by myself. Of course, the Secret Service men were on duty the whole time she was living, so we didn't need to be

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afraid, but after she was gone it was pretty lonely.

HILL: The Secret Service were there from the time he became President?

TRUMAN: Yes. Yes, they were there from--well, in the first place I believe just Mr. Rogers was on duty. And then they decided--people began to find out where Mamma lived, and then she got some threats. They threatened to burn her in her bed, you know, and several things like that. So finally that's why they put up that fence, Government fence, so that they couldn't get in. And Mamma was the sort that was friendly with everybody, and she'd go to the door and ask just anyone in you know, could be neighbors or somebody that was all right. So then they put on--after Mamma fell, they put on--we had three men on duty in eight hour shifts. They were so good to Mamma. They'd come in and help me lift her; I couldn't lift her by myself. And one of the men that was on duty would come in and help me with Mamma. Then they were on

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duty until Harry went out of office. They left in January after he was out of office.

I have a card from Mr. Rogers I got just day before yesterday, Christmas. I get a card from him nearly every year. He was the oldest one of the three. I hear from one of the younger men once in a great while, but I haven't heard from Mr. Bennett for a long time. Mr. Dixon, who was in charge of the Secret Service here in Kansas City, told me I had made some sort of a record and I said, "Well, what kind of a record did I make?"

He said, "This is the first time in the history of the Secret Service that I think the same three men were on duty the whole time that the President was in office." And sure enough, we never changed men. They'd come one at a time, but I mean after they were on duty, they were still on duty when Harry went out of office. Mr. Dixon said that didn't often happen; and they changed every month or two over at Independence. There was always something wrong over there. Of course, there was more people to get into things and do things.

HILL: Did the people in the community talk to you quite a bit about your brother being President and this kind of stuff?

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TRUMAN: No. I think everybody just kind of took it for granted and went ahead. I must say we had no difficulty with any of the neighbors. They were just as nice as they could be. I think all of them are proud of the fact that they knew Harry and they had known him--really, I was born down here on the farm, and then when I was about a year old why we moved to Independence so Harry and Vivian could go to school there. Then we stayed there until we moved back out to Grandview about 1905.

HILL: What changes did you notice in your brother between the time before he was President and while he was President and then after he came back home?

TRUMAN: I never noticed any particular change.

HILL: He stayed just about the same?

TRUMAN: Stayed just about the same. And I felt just as free to call him anytime of the day or night, and anytime that he could be of any assistance to

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me he was. I don't know, it just never seemed any different as far as we were concerned in the family.

HILL: How many times did you visit your brother while he was in the White House?

TRUMAN: I don't remember exactly how many, but Mamma and I--Harry, you know, was sworn-in in April, I think it was; and he wanted Mamma to come for his birthday on the 8th of May; so we went to Washington for his birthday.

HILL: Was he living at the White House at that time?

TRUMAN: Yes, he was living in the White House.

HILL: What was a visit to the White House like?

TRUMAN: Well, I don't know, It was really kind of an experience, of course, and different from anything you would ordinarily have. But at that time, you know, they weren't changing everything all the time, and it was pretty much as it had been for years and years; and Harry and Bess wanted it that way. The Lincoln Room, they

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restored. The furniture had been stored up in the attic. So they had it brought down, and the Lincoln bed, oh, my goodness, I think it must have been nearly as long as from here to the window. It was quite a large bed, a beautiful walnut bed, rather a plain bed, but beautifully

carved, too. So they restored that room as nearly.---and it wasn't Lincoln's bedroom where they had this furniture, it was the room where he signed the Proclamation. There was a fireplace in there and one of the most beautiful dressers. It was quite old; I don't know whether it was originally with this big bed or not, but it was really an antique, and a beautiful one. Then they had another little hexagon--shaped table there, and some chairs and things, and it was a whole lot like a sitting room, excepting for the bed in there. The room that I had was where Queen Wilhelmina was supposed to have stayed when she was here. They had that room for Mamma, but it had a big four-poster bed and it was all of that high. You had to go up two steps to get into the bed, and Mamma said she couldn't sit on

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the bed. So I fell heir to that one, and then she went in the room next to it in the maid's bed, where she could get in and out.

HILL: Were you able to see your brother quite a bit while you were there at the White House?

TRUMAN: Yes. Yes we were always with him at mealtime, and then I could run over to his office any time I wanted to. That part was quite interesting, too. I was there for the news conferences, and they met in this big oval, room, and they were lined up, maybe as far as from here to that wall in front of the President, and then just thick clear around that wall.; and that was interesting. They'd just flash those questions just like that, and then when they thought they'd had enough, one of the reporters would say, "Thank you, Mr. President," and away they would go just like they were shot out of a gun, to get to their papers first. It was really funny and interesting to see.

HILL: Did the President ever, like if he was about to make a decision, or an announcement of contro-

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versial policy or historic decision, did he ever inform your mother or you ahead of time, or did you...

TRUMAN: No. I think maybe he might have mentioned something to us a time or two, but he didn't call us special. Unless there was something special he wanted.

HILL: After he came back to Independence, you saw him quite a bit then, your mother and you?

TRUMAN: Yes, I used to see him quite often. And I could go over anytime I wanted to when he was in the office. After he wasn't so well, I didn't go as often, because I didn't think it was the thing to do. But I was always made to feel that I was welcome. I was in the hospital when he was sick last, and if it hadn't been for Dr. Graham--it had been several weeks since I had seen him because I had been in the hospital about four weeks when they brought Harry in; and so Dr. Graham came one morning and he said, "Miss Mary, I'm going to take you in the wheelchair to see your brother, I

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think he may be feeling pretty good this morning and I think you should see him." So I had quite a little visit with him. He couldn't talk to me, he had one of those things in his nose to help him breathe, but he knew I was there, and you could tell by the way he would squeeze my hand, and shook hands with him. Then Dr. Graham came after me the second time, and both times he assured me that he knew I was there. Then he died while I was still in the hospital. And I was there, I guess, for a week or ten days after he'd been gone. I couldn't go to the funeral.

HILL: One of his goals after he came back was, of course, to build his library so that people could study history there. Was he pretty pleased with the way all that turned out?

TRUMAN: Yes, I think he was, and he was--oh, he held any number of meetings with the children that came there, school children. He'd go into the auditorium and talk to them and let them ask him any questions they wanted to ask; and he would answer every one

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of them that was possible, of course. He did that as long as he was equal to it physically, but he had to give it up towards the last; he couldn't do it. But the school children still come over there.

HILL: If you were going to sum up your brother and what he accomplished as President, how would you do that?

TRUMAN: I don't know.

HILL: Do you feel he had a successful Presidency?

TRUMAN: Well, yes. And I feel this way, I think that Harry did what he believed was right. Very likely he made some mistakes. Who wouldn't in a position like that? But I know that he was conscientious and wanted to do the right thing, not especially for himself but for the country, and I think that that's the way he served. I think he did it in everything he went into. In the Masonic Lodge and everything, he always tried his best to do what he thought was the right thing to do; and I think he lived that way.

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HILL: What were some of the activities you've been involved in? We've talked about your brother, let's talk about you a little bit.

TRUMAN: There's nothing to talk about me.

HILL: You've been pretty active in the Eastern Star?

TRUMAN: Yes, I've been active in the Eastern Star, and I was active in the church. Nobody would believe it now, because I never get there. I taught a Sunday School class, oh, for years, I

guess all of thirty years, and I played the piano long before they had the pipe organ. I was there every time they opened the doors, I think; but you'd never know it now. I don't think people would even know me if I walked in the door. I enjoyed doing it.

And I worked with the Young People's Union, it was the BYPU then when I worked with it. We had an active young people's association and I taught a class of boys for quite a while, boys about sixteen, eighteen. Then I had a class of girls for, oh, I don't know how many years.

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Pansy Perkins was one of the girls in my class, and Sue Fran her sister, and, oh, I don't know just who all is left. I believe Hannah was in the class, Hannah Montgomery. We had a nice class of girls, about, well, they were in high school, maybe sophomores until they finished high school. When Sue and Pansy graduated from high school, you know, it was just a small affair. I think there were just three girls in the graduating class and it was Sue and Pansy and Edith Lockwood. And they called on Mr. Majors who was cashier of the bank, they called us, and let's see who was the third one, I can't think who--anyway, they called us to be the judges of their essays. And we wanted--well, Pansy had won some sort of honor and so had Sue, and the two girls--that was real funny. Sue and Pansy were so anxious for Edith to get the prize on the essay. We did our best, but we had to give it to Sue. She won it in spite of everything. Well, it was just a difference, of course, in their ability and how they could write, you know. But they were so anxious, I'll never forget those two

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girls, those two Perkins girls wanting Edith to have an honor too. They were nice girls. There was a nice bunch of girls at that time, and I had such a nice class.

STILLEY: Your brother Vivian, was he pretty much the same family characteristics of forthrightness and . . .

TRUMAN: Yes, he was just as down to earth as he could be. When he told you anything, that's the way it was. There was no doubt about it. He has four boys, and every one of them comes by to see me at least once a week, and sometimes more often. I just don't know what I'd do without Vivian's children. And he had one daughter, but she lives over in Oskaloosa, Kansas, so she doesn't come as often. But she calls me on the phone every once in a while. She studied law and her husband is a lawyer, and they have an office together over at Oskaloosa.

HILL: You say Vivian and Harry were quite a bit alike, then?

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TRUMAN: Well, in some ways and some ways they were just as different as can be. I don't know just how to describe them. Vivian was a little more retiring, and he was a little harder to get acquainted with than Harry; but as Mamma always said, "He was all wool and a yard wide;"

he was there when you needed him. But there was no pretense about Vivian, he was just what he was. Also Harry, but there was just a difference in their disposition; nothing too bad either way.

HILL: The Trumans had a pretty close family, didn't they?

TRUMAN: Yes. Yes, from the time we were little, Harry and Vivian and I just, I don't know, we were just friendly and liked to do things together. And the boys, either one of them, would take me anywhere I needed to go. I know maybe there'd be something I wanted to go to downtown and Harry would take me. And I'd find out he was going to take Bess, and I'd say, "Well., Harry, maybe Bess wouldn't want me."

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He said, "Well, if she doesn't, she can stay home." That was the attitude he took.

STILLEY: Do you remember your Aunt Mattie Truman?

TRUMAN: Aunt Mattie?

STILLEY: Yes.

TRUMAN: Yes, vaguely. She died when she was about 35, and I think I was about eight or nine years old when she died.

STILLEY: Was she a schoolteacher?

TRUMAN: She was a schoolteacher. She taught down here at the Hickman School. That is the grade school. They didn't have any high school then.

STILLEY: I can't remember all of your uncle's names on the Truman side. Were they pretty much the same family disposition?

TRUMAN: My Uncle Will--there was just my father and Uncle Will Truman; and Uncle Will lived in Texas so we just saw him occasionally. He was older

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than Papa. And then Uncle Harrison, Mamma's brother, and she also had a brother Will, and he, Uncle Will on the Young side, also lived in Texas, Uncle Harrison lived with my grandmother and he was an old bachelor. He was awfully good to us children. Then when we moved back out to the farm, why he wanted to do some things that he hadn't been doing because he was home closer to Grandma, so Mamma and our family took over the care of Grandma. But when Uncle Harrison got ill, why, we brought him out home and we took care of him, and he passed away at our house. Harry was named for him, but his name was Harry, not Harrison. But Uncle Harrison was always so full of fun, and he was always so good to us children. We thought the world of Uncle Harrison.

STZLLEY: Were there any particular stories or ,jokes that your brother Harry would like to tell you that were kind of funny, that you pretty much remember?

TRUMAN: I don't remember any especially. Harry had

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a good sense of humor though and he enjoyed fun. He and I played duets together and did a lot of things together. Whenever he was home, he always went with me to Eastern Star. He was the first Worthy Patron of the chapter here, and he was the first Master of the Lodge here.

STILLEY: Did he really enjoy farming or could he really have farmed and not gone into politics?

TRUMAN: Yes, he did a good job. He farmed the farm about ten years, I guess, all of that. And he was very particular that every row had to be straight, and he always sowed the grain so you could see any way you looked, the corn would go kitty cornered or straight. We had an awfully pretty field of corn, and the same way with the wheat. It bothered him considerably if he skipped a place. Yes, he was a pretty good farmer, and I think if the World War hadn't come up, I doubt if he ever would have got married. I think he would have just stayed home with Mamma and me. Maybe he wouldn't have gotten to be President then.

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HILL: In recent years there has been quite a bit of renewed interest in President Truman's popularity

TRUMAN: But he had the equivalent of some of it, because he was an excellent student, anything he went into he studied it thoroughly. So I think he was far better equipped for the office than he was given credit for. It took them years to find out. When they found out how he did serve, and things he advocated and all, I think they were surprised; and then we had had so many awful things happen since, I think they think he was pretty decent.

HILL: I think that will be all. We want to thank you very much, Miss Truman.

TRUMAN: I hope I haven't talked you to pieces.

HILL: No, it has been very enjoyable.

TRUMAN: Please leave out anything that sounds silly.

HILL: Oh, no, its very interesting. We have come to appreciate your brother very much.

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TRUMAN: Thank you. It was nice of you to come. I hope I haven't disappointed you.

HILL: No, not at all.

TRUMAN: And I hope that you can get something worthwhile out of it.

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