

Oral History Interview
with
MARGARET WEDDLE

Longtime acquaintance of the Truman family in Grandview, Missouri; descendant of Grandview area pioneers; and member of Mary Jane Truman's Sunday School class.

Grandview, Missouri
May 15, 1981
by Niel Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
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NOTICE

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JOHNSON: Mrs. Weddle, I'm going to start with my usual question; would you tell us when and where you were born and what your parents' names were?

WEDDLE: I was born down here on 135th Street where my sister, Jane Meador, now lives. That was February 14, 1905.

George Meador married my sister, and they lived there after the marriage.

JOHNSON: What were your parents' names?

WEDDLE: Alvis G. Shelton and Mary Shelton; she was a Clements.

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JOHNSON: Your mother was a Clements. That makes you a cousin to Hannah Clements Montgomery, I believe.

WEDDLE: Yes, her father and my mother were brother and sister.

JOHNSON: And you live right next door to her I notice here.

WEDDLE: They own this house.

JOHNSON: Let's go back as far as we can with your recollections, or your memories. Of course, the thing that we are mainly interested in is any information, or anecdotes, stories, that you might know that concern the Trumans, particularly Harry S. Truman when he was a farmer and later on, when he was Judge in the county. When did you first meet Harry Truman, do you recall?

WEDDLE: I've known him all of my life, but the first I actually remember about him was after he came home from World War I.

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JOHNSON: The first time you can recollect meeting him was after he came back from the war?

WEDDLE: I know I had seen him and been around him many times, but I don't recall any particular time.

JOHNSON: Before the war you had met him, probably uptown here?

WEDDLE: Or at church.

JOHNSON: Again, where was it that you were born?

WEDDLE: At what is now 907 135th Street. My father was born up on the top of the hill across the railroad tracks.

JOHNSON: From that location down there?

WEDDLE: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was that the family homestead?

WEDDLE: That was my grandfather's home.

JOHNSON: When did your grandfather first settle that

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land, do you know?

WEDDLE: I'm not sure. I know that one of my grandfather's brothers had a land grant August 22, 1845, and I know they were here. The 1845 patent included the land where we're sitting, where this house is standing, right now.

JOHNSON: Oh, this part of Grandview that we're in right now.

WEDDLE: Yes.

JOHNSON: I do have a map, the 1877 map of the county, and it does show a Mary Shelton. Is that the land that you're referring to as purchased by your uncle?

WEDDLE: Let's see; what year did you say?

JOHNSON: This is 1877; it looks like 80 acres.

WEDDLE: That Mary Shelton was my great-grandmother.

JOHNSON: Okay, what were your grandparents' names?

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WEDDLE: My grandparents were Green Shelton, and his wife was Anna; my great-grandfather Shelton was Joseph Shelton and his wife was Mary.

JOHNSON: I see, that's on your father's side. Now, on your mother's side?

WEDDLE: Well, my mother's side was Clements. Ambrose and Hannah Clements were my grandparents. My great-grandmother, my grandmother's mother, Scrivener, lived with them, but grandfather Scrivener died in Kentucky before they came here.

JOHNSON: Do you know where Ambrose was born or where he lived prior to the Civil War?

WEDDLE: He was born in Kentucky.

JOHNSON: Where did he settle, do you know, here in Grandview?

WEDDLE: When they first came to this area, they were in Kansas for awhile and then they came to Grandview.

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JOHNSON: Do you know where that first home was located?

WEDDLE: Yes. You go out here off of High Grove and then you turn and go north a ways. You can see it from High Grove, but the house is down.

JOHNSON: About how far east of here would that be before you turn north?

WEDDLE: I'm not sure; a couple of miles or something like that.

JOHNSON: And then you turn north off of High Grove, and about how far north of High Grove?

WEDDLE: Oh, probably about a half-mile, between a quarter and a half a mile up there. I don't know whether that old Kurzwell house is still there or not; it was right across from it. The Kurzwells lived there.

JOHNSON: Have you heard the story about Martha Young as a child running off to visit Ambrose's baby?

WEDDLE: That was their first child. His name was

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Brack -- Breckenridge Clements. She and one of her sisters ran off to see the new baby. The Youngs lived just up across the road and off of the road a ways then.

There was a log house there that Uncle Brack was born in, and then they built a newer house later. The house that Martha Young lived in set way back up off the road, oh, maybe a half a quarter or something like that.

JOHNSON: So, we're talking about a quarter of a mile?

WEDDLE: Something like that. On the other side of the road. On the west side.

JOHNSON: Do you know if that happened to be where they were living when the Red Legs came?. There's a story about the Red Legs coming in 1861 during the war and killing a lot of hogs.

WEDDLE: I don't remember that particular time. My grandfather was in the Army and he sent my grandmother and her three children, that she had at that time, back to Kentucky. They were in

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Kentucky during the war.

JOHNSON: I'm trying to pin down just where the Youngs were living when the Red Legs came and killed a lot of their hogs and forced the Youngs to fix breakfast for them.

WEDDLE: Of course, because of Order Number 11, a lot of things happened.

JOHNSON: Which came a little bit later.

WEDDLE: A little later on, yes.

I don't remember the particulars. I've heard them tell about it. My younger brother is in California, but he used to go up and visit my Uncle John Shelton. Uncle John was eleven years old when the Civil War started, and he remembered a lot of things about the war. But I couldn't remember them now. David would probably remember a lot more about what Uncle John told him than I do.

JOHNSON: Do you remember hearing stories about the

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Youngs, or the Trumans, that we haven't mentioned so far?

WEDDLE: Not particularly.

JOHNSON: Did you know Martha Young rather well?

WEDDLE: Oh, yes, I knew her.

JOHNSON: When do you recall first meeting Mr. Truman's mother, Martha?

WEDDLE: Oh, ever since I can remember, because we went to the same church.

JOHNSON: That's the Grandview Baptist?

WEDDLE: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you recall what the circumstances were when you first met Harry Truman; where and when and...

WEDDLE: No, because I've just known them ever since I can remember.

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JOHNSON: You say after World War I you recall seeing him?

WEDDLE: Then I remember quite a little bit about him.

JOHNSON: So what was the occasion of the first time you remember seeing him?

WEDDLE: One thing I particularly have always remembered is the big town celebration they had right after they all got home from the service. It was a whole day affair, and I remember him very distinctly that day.

JOHNSON: Do you remember talking to him? Did you talk to him?

WEDDLE: I don't think I talked to him that day; he was too busy.

JOHNSON: Were there quite a few veterans that were being honored at that ceremony?

WEDDLE: I expect there were some. I don't remember who they were.

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JOHNSON: Where was this?

WEDDLE: Right up here in town.

JOHNSON: On Main Street.

WEDDLE: On a vacant lot there.

JOHNSON: Did they have a parade with it?

WEDDLE: I can't remember that.

JOHNSON: But you remember Harry Truman was one of those that was being honored?

WEDDLE: Yes, he particularly, I think.

JOHNSON: After that, what do you recall among your first recollections of Harry Truman? What were some other circumstances, other events or occasions?

WEDDLE: Well, I don't remember just how long he way out here on the farm, but then he went to Independence. About the only time I would see him when he came out on weekends. He'd come out on

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Sundays and spend the day with his mother and he'd come to church with Miss Mary.

JOHNSON: Do you recall when he married Bess Wallace? Do you remember anything about that?

WEDDLE: No, I never did meet her. My mother knew her, but I never did.

JOHNSON: Did you visit the Trumans at the farm then during the twenties and the thirties?

WEDDLE: Quite often I'd be down to Miss Mary's.

JOHNSON: When she was living in the farm house?

WEDDLE: When she and her mother were there. She was my Sunday School teacher a long time, and she was our young people's director. I was involved with her a great deal through the church.

JOHNSON: I see, so you and your sister started together in the first grade?

WEDDLE: Yes, and finished together.

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JOHNSON: You mentioned visiting Mary Jane and her mother, Martha. Do you remember them ever talking about Harry; any comments that his mother or his sister made?

WEDDLE: Oh, Miss Mary talked quite often about him, but I don't recall anything especially.

JOHNSON: Do you remember his mother, or any comments that she made while he was Judge, or Senator or later as President, that haven't been recorded?

WEDDLE: I doubt it. I knew she said some things but I don't just offhand recall. She was pretty witty. I got a big kick out of Mrs. Truman; I thought a lot of her.

JOHNSON: I'm trying to get any quotations that I can, but I know it's hard to remember, of course, what was said.

WEDDLE: I remember one time I was out there and Miss Mary and a cousin of mine, Ellis Wyatt, were

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going together some, and she said something or other about him, just in fun. I can't remember what it was, but I got a big bang out of it.

JOHNSON: They seemed to have good humor between them?

WEDDLE: Yes.

JOHNSON: They laughed about things and they'd tell jokes more or less?

WEDDLE: Well, I don't especially remember just telling jokes, but Mrs. Truman would just say things in a witty way.

JOHNSON: Did she keep a straight face, or did she kind of crack a smile when she said these things?

WEDDLE: Oh, sometimes she would and sometimes she wouldn't.

JOHNSON: Might leave you guessing sometimes as to how serious she was?

WEDDLE: I never took her too seriously. She was just all right as far as I was concerned.

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JOHNSON: Did she ever talk about her attitude toward Yankees? Did she ever say anything that reflected on her experiences in the Civil War?

WEDDLE: Oh, yes, she did. I don't recall any one special thing.

JOHNSON: You say that Mr. Truman came out to visit his mother and sister on the farm during the twenties and thirties. Were you ever out there when he came to visit?

WEDDLE: No. No, I never was there. He would generally come on Sundays.

JOHNSON: So how would you see them then?

WEDDLE: He would come to church with Miss Mary; he'd come out there and come to church.

JOHNSON: You got a chance to talk to him then?

WEDDLE: No, not much more than to just speak to him.

JOHNSON: Which schools did you go to, and when did

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you graduate?

WEDDLE: I went all twelve years here at Grandview; I graduated from high school in 1924.

JOHNSON: That was only three or four years after the high school had been established?

WEDDLE: Well, it was just two years in the regular high school building that we had. The first two years I was in high school we had classes in a little house in Grandview.

JOHNSON: What happened to that building, the old high school building?

WEDDLE: It was a house, and I think what's left of it is still there and it's been built onto. It's across the street from Regna Vanatta.

JOHNSON: How about the second building?

WEDDLE: It's just about a block from here; I think they call it a junior high now.

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JOHNSON: Oh, is that the same building?

WEDDLE: That's the same one I went to. They had grade school and high school both there. It's used now, I think, for junior high school.

JOHNSON: Did you go on with your education?

WEDDLE: I was at home five years then because my mother was pretty well crippled up and I was needed at home. Then I went to Warrensburg to school and was down there for four years and got my degree.

JOHNSON: Bachelor's degree in education?

WEDDLE: B.S. in education. In '33 I graduated.

JOHNSON: Right in the depths of the depression.

WEDDLE: You betcha!

JOHNSON: In the twenties, were you still living where you were born?

WEDDLE: I lived there until after I graduated from

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college and was married.

JOHNSON: So the old homestead is where you lived up until the time you got married?

WEDDLE: That was home until then.

JOHNSON: And the farm house is still standing.

WEDDLE: The house is still there. My father built it and they moved into it when they were married. We all grew up there.

JOHNSON: When were they married?

WEDDLE: 1903. They moved into it in December of 1903.

JOHNSON: While they were still farmers; your father operated the farm?

WEDDLE: He was always a farmer.

JOHNSON: So while they were farming land right here on the south edge of Grandview, the Trumans were farming land just to the north of Grandview.

Did your father get well-acquainted with

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Harry and Vivian?

WEDDLE: Oh, yes, he knew them, all of them.

JOHNSON: And I suppose the father, John Anderson Truman?

WEDDLE: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember him ever saying anything about the Trumans?

WEDDLE: No, only just incidents and remarks, and they were all good.

JOHNSON: When did your father die?

WEDDLE: He died in 1930.

JOHNSON: Do you remember anything he ever said about Martha Truman?

WEDDLE: No. Only he always admired her.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any comments he might have made about Harry as a farmer? Do you recall any

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comments about Harry Truman being an average farmer or exceptional, different in any way?

WEDDLE: No, my father wasn't much of a hand to comment on people. If he had anything to say it was all good.

JOHNSON: You know, Harry Truman does have a reputation as a rather progressive farmer. Used the latest methods, kept books.

WEDDLE: Well, I think he would. He has a couple of nephews that are mighty good farmers, too. I read in his book -- he was discussing farming some way -- and I can't quote him exactly, but he made some remarks that he wasn't as good a farmer as his two nephews.

JOHNSON: Yes, he was modest, I believe.

WEDDLE: Yes, the family was modest; they weren't much to brag about anything.

JOHNSON: Do you recall anything about Harry Truman while he was Judge, Judge of the Eastern District,

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and then Presiding Judge of the County?

WEDDLE: No, at that age, I wasn't interested. Didn't pay any attention to it. I wasn't a very good politician.

JOHNSON: He was, of course, most famous for his role in getting the roads paved.

WEDDLE: I know that.

JOHNSON: In 1924 you graduated from high school; you stayed home five years; and in 1929 you started at Warrensburg, graduating in '33. Then what happened?

WEDDLE: I was home a year. My major was home economics and a lot of the home economics departments had been closed in the schools during the depression, and I didn't get a job. Then the next year I taught one year, and then I got married.

JOHNSON: So you were out a year and then you taught a year and then you got married.

WEDDLE: Yes, I was married in July of '35.

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JOHNSON: Who was it you married?

WEDDLE: Leonard Weddle.

JOHNSON: Where did he come from?

WEDDLE: Well, he spent most of his childhood around Camdenton, Missouri. When his mother and father were first married they lived down near Bolivar, Missouri. I think maybe his oldest brother was born there, and then the rest of them were born around Camdenton. It really is the little place they called Roach, just right there close to Camdenton. It's all under the lake now. Where his father's farm was is part of the lake.

JOHNSON: Which lake is that?

WEDDLE: Maybe I'll think of it.

JOHNSON: How did you meet your husband?

WEDDLE: Well, he came to Grandview to stay all night with some friends on his way to Nebraska. But then he just stayed here and started working here.

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JOHNSON: He never got to Nebraska?

WEDDLE: Never did get to Nebraska.

JOHNSON: They're probably still wondering what happened to him.

WEDDLE: His brother finally found out he wasn't coming, I think. His brother was a builder and Leonard was just out of the service and he felt he could work with him. He got up here and got to working with carpenters, and decided to stay here.

After we were married, we moved down around Bolivar. I was gone from here about 30 years. It's been ten or so years since I've been back at Grandview.

JOHNSON: How many children do you have?

WEDDLE: A son and two daughters.

JOHNSON: What is your son's name?

WEDDLE: Douglas Weddle, and he lives in Lees Summit.

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JOHNSON: And your daughters' names?

WEDDLE: Carol is the oldest one, and she's single. She lives out on 140th Terrace, and teaches at Smith Hale School. The other daughter is married and they're in Nevada now. Her name is Schnitker.

JOHNSON: So your acquaintance with the Trumans is from 1905, when you were born, up to 1935.

WEDDLE: And, of course, Miss Mary was still living when I came back.

JOHNSON: Were you a good friend of Mary Jane's before you left in 1935?

WEDDLE: Yes. Yes, and I visited with her after I came back. And I also thought a lot of Mrs. Vivian Truman, and I used to go with the Montgomery's occasionally to visit her.

JOHNSON: How was it you became close friends of Mary Jane?

WEDDLE: Through the church, primarily.

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JOHNSON: Through her being your Sunday School teacher?

WEDDLE: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any way that Harry Truman was involved with the church other than to bring Mary?

WEDDLE: Well, when they dedicated the new building he was here for the dedication.

JOHNSON: Were you here for that?

WEDDLE: Yes. I was here too.

JOHNSON: Did you get a chance to say anything to him?

WEDDLE: Not that day.

JOHNSON: You said you were out on the farm to visit periodically. Do you remember anything about the crops that they grew out there?

WEDDLE: No; I wasn't interested in anything like that at that time.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea where any of that farm

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equipment ended up that was used out there on the farm?

WEDDLE: I wouldn't have the least idea. I don't even remember what happened to ours.

JOHNSON: Between 1935 and when you came back here, did you come back periodically for visits?

WEDDLE: Yes, I came about once or twice a year.

JOHNSON: Did you visit with Mary Jane when you'd come back?

WEDDLE: Once in awhile I would.

JOHNSON: Do you remember some of those visits?

WEDDLE: Not anything specially.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Truman neighbors, such as the Slaughters?

WEDDLE: Well, Ruth Slaughter is Mrs. Barry. She lived here in Grandview, she and her husband. She

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was my high school teacher one year. I've heard my father talk about Mr. Slaughter because they were in the bank together.

JOHNSON: Was your husband a farmer?

WEDDLE: He did start farming because building slacked up during the depression, and so then he farmed some for a few years.

JOHNSON: How would you characterize Harry Truman, as you knew him? What seemed to be the characteristics that stood out? What kind of a person did he seem to be?

WEDDLE: Well, I think honesty was an outstanding characteristic, and he sure wasn't afraid of work. And he believed in doing what he did well.

JOHNSON: Do you have any aunts or uncles that were acquainted with the Trumans?

WEDDLE: Oh, they all were. But they're all gone. You see, they just were all in the same community and

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they all grew up together and they'd go to social events and things like that, church things together, and visit back and forth.

JOHNSON: Were you in school with any of the Trumans?

WEDDLE: I never was with them in school here because when I was in high school they were in grade school. However, Mr. Vivian's oldest son, J.C., was at Warrensburg in school at the time I was, because I had been out of school five years.

JOHNSON: He was a classmate of yours?

WEDDLE: No, he wasn't in my class. I think I was a junior when he came.

JOHNSON: Were you acquainted with him at that time?

WEDDLE: Yes, there were about seven of us from here down there in school, and they'd take turns about. Our folks would come and bring us home and take us back on weekends. We'd all ride in the same car.

JOHNSON: Would that mean that Vivian was chauffeur sometimes?

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WEDDLE: Well, I don't remember that for sure, or if J.C. drove his car. I can't remember about that, but I know we'd ride a lot together.

JOHNSON: You say you were a close friend of Mary Jane's. How would you characterize her?

WEDDLE: Well, she had her strong convictions and lived on them and she was always kind and pleasant with everyone, always agreeable.

JOHNSON: Would you say she was different from her mother in a sense, in style so to speak?

WEDDLE: Well, she was, I think, a little more reserved type.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Vivian very well? Were you very well-acquainted with Vivian?

WEDDLE: I wasn't around him as much as I was Miss Mary because they didn't go to our church. But my father dealt with him quite a little bit. He would buy corn from my father, and they'd do

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business like that.

JOHNSON: You had brothers and sisters?

WEDDLE: Well, my bother, Joe [Joseph], knew Mr. Vivian real well because he was with J.C. Jones Lumber Company and he worked here in Grandview awhile, and then he was in the office over at Lee's Summit for a number of years until he retired.

JOHNSON: How about other brothers and sisters?

WEDDLE: My other brother is in California.

JOHNSON: What is his name?

WEDDLE: His name is David Shelton.

JOHNSON: Do you have just the two brothers?

WEDDLE: Yes. We had a brother that died when he was 18.

JOHNSON: Any sisters?

WEDDLE: I have two sisters, Jane Meador, and then a

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younger sister. There were six of us altogether, but I have two sisters and two brothers living.

JOHNSON: Do you know of anything that might have been used on the Truman farm? We're interested in any artifacts that we might be able to find that were used on the farm, particularly in the old days.

WEDDLE: I just can't pinpoint anything.

JOHNSON: Are there any other incidents you can remember involving the Trumans?

WEDDLE: I don't remember Mr. John Truman, because he died when I wasn't too old, but I can remember them talking about an incident involving an operation. He was in such a condition that

they didn't think he could stand to be moved into town to the hospital, so the surgeon came out to the home and did the surgery.

JOHNSON: The surgeon went out to the farm house?

WEDDLE: And Miss Mary stood and held a kerosene lamp

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while they did the surgery on her father.

JOHNSON: Well, that's something I haven't heard before.

WEDDLE: I just thought, oh, that took more courage than I'd have ever had.

JOHNSON: They probably used some chloroform to put him out.

WEDDLE: And just think, to hold that lamp all that time.

JOHNSON: Do you recall what kind of operation that was, or what they were trying to remove?

WEDDLE: It was abdominal of some sort, but I just can't remember. It seemed like whatever it was, it had to be done right away.

JOHNSON: I think Harry Truman, his son, said that he had been sick and then he went back to work, and he tried to move a big rock on one of the roads out here, and this is what caused that final problem.

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WEDDLE: I didn't remember that part of it -- but Miss Mary holding that lamp.

JOHNSON: She told you about that, did she?

WEDDLE: I heard her tell it, and I wasn't too old. The thought just came to me that that took a lot of bravery, because I don't believe I could have done that if it had been my father.

JOHNSON: In fact, that raises a question. When did electricity come to the farm?

WEDDLE: I don't know when they got it. They may have had it down there before we did down here, but my father tried and tried to get them to put it in while we were all in school, and they just wouldn't pull it up to us. When I was in high school he was still trying to get them to put it in, and they wanted a pretty good sum. They just felt like it would cost more than they could take at that time.

JOHNSON: How long did it take them?

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WEDDLE: It must have been in the late twenties or early thirties, I guess.

JOHNSON: Before you went to Warrensburg did you have it?

WEDDLE: I believe we did have it before then. Anyway, my aunt owned this tract in here, this 80 -- across this street and over to 13th Street, and then her north quarter was on High Grove and 135th to the south. This aunt was Jennie E. Wyatt. The Irving and Pitts Company of Kansas City bought it, and then they pulled the wires from these houses up here and on down, and hooked him up. Then when they did that they finally hooked my father on.

JOHNSON: Are you saying these houses across the street from us were built in the twenties?

WEDDLE: They must have been built around the late twenties and early thirties. They plotted it and sold it off.

JOHNSON: And you say you don't know when they got

[35]
electricity at the Truman farm?

WEDDLE: No, I don't. They probably got it sooner because I think they must have come from Kansas City to start with.

JOHNSON: That was called the rock road that went north?

WEDDLE: The old Grandview Road.

JOHNSON: You remember traveling that old road into Kansas City?

WEDDLE: That's the way we went to Kansas City.

JOHNSON: Did you ever go into town with Mary Jane?

WEDDLE: I remember one time I went with her. The Southern Baptist Convention met in Kansas City and she was going in and she took me with her. Her car was going to need some working on and Mr. Harry was going to take it and see about getting it fixed while we were there. She stayed over night with a friend of hers and I

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went out and stayed with an aunt of mine at night. Then we'd meet at the convention hall during the day. I remember the last night of the convention. William Jennings Bryan gave the address, and Mr. Harry wanted to hear that and he went with us that night. He just sat there and chuckled all the time that man talked.

JOHNSON: Well, that's very interesting. This was an occasion when you remembered being with Harry Truman. You were sitting together?

WEDDLE: Yes, that evening.

JOHNSON: Where was this convention, do you remember?

WEDDLE: It was one of those halls downtown. What would it have been then?

JOHNSON: Where Bartle Hall is now maybe?

WEDDLE: It would have been in the old convention hall, I guess, I'm not sure.

JOHNSON: They had several thousand people there?

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WEDDLE: All of the 17 southern states were included in the Southern Baptist Convention.

JOHNSON: William Jennings Bryan died in 1924.

WEDDLE: That convention was before '24 I'm sure.

JOHNSON: Did you save a program or anything from that?

WEDDLE: I was growing up. I just don't remember whether I was completely out of high school or not.

JOHNSON: This had to be before the Scopes trial, because he died shortly after the Scopes trial.

WEDDLE: I don't remember. It was when they were having so much to do about evolution, and his address was against the theory of evolution.

JOHNSON: That was the subject of his message?

WEDDLE: Yes, and Bryan was against it you know.

JOHNSON: Do you recall his voice, how it sounded?

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WEDDLE: No, I don't recall that, but I never heard anybody use as many adjectives and adverbs in my life.

JOHNSON: Powerful rhetoric, is that it?

WEDDLE: Sure was, and I'll tell you, he made it [evolution] sound ridiculous.

JOHNSON: And Harry Truman was sitting right next to you?

WEDDLE: No, I think he was sitting next to Miss Mary.

JOHNSON: And you say that he chuckled?

WEDDLE: Oh, he got a big bang out of it.

JOHNSON: Out of the way William Jennings Bryan was speaking; delivering the speech?

WEDDLE: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you recall him saying anything about his reactions during or after that speech?

WEDDLE: No, I really don't.

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JOHNSON: Did he drive you to the convention in the car?

WEDDLE: No. I think we met him down at the convention hall. He had Miss Mary's car, and he drove us home after the address. They brought me home, and then I think maybe Mr. Harry stayed all night at his mother's house.

JOHNSON: Okay, but you rode back to Grandview then with them, and he drove the car.

WEDDLE: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was his wife, Bess, with him?

WEDDLE: No.

JOHNSON: Margaret Truman was born in 1924. Do you recall if she...

WEDDLE: I remember when she was small Mr. Harry would bring her out here with him, and she'd come to Sunday School with her Aunt Mary, and she was a cute little blonde girl.

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JOHNSON: Do you recall if Margaret had been born yet when you were at that convention?

WEDDLE: No, I don't remember about that at all.

JOHNSON: Just trying to pin down a date.

I was not aware that Harry Truman had listened to or heard William Jennings Bryan in the early twenties. He always was a great admirer of William Jennings Bryan, and he heard him at the 1900 Democratic Convention here in Kansas City and was very impressed. But he apparently did get to hear him at least once more.

WEDDLE: Well, he was living in Independence at this time.

JOHNSON: Do you recall if he was a haberdasher at the time?

WEDDLE: I can't remember if he was there or if he was County Judge. I don't remember which it was. But it was in that period.

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JOHNSON: Well, we could probably pin that down one way or another; that would have made the newspapers certainly, that William Jennings Bryan was here.

Now that you recall that little story, are there any other incidents when you were with Harry Truman and Mary Jane?

WEDDLE: No, I don't recall any other time.

JOHNSON: I guess he was kept busy pretty much in Independence, so the only times he would come out here...

WEDDLE: Would be on Sunday to visit his mother. Of course, he'd come out here for the Masonic Lodge meetings and the Eastern Star, but I never was involved in any of that, so I don't recall any of that.

JOHNSON: He ran for the Senate that year before you were married, in 1934. Do you recall anything about the politics of his running for the Senate in the mid-thirties? Did he ever get down to

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where you moved, to Bolivar?

WEDDLE: Yes. Now, what year was that? We had been there; I don't know how long we'd been living there...

JOHNSON: Several years?

WEDDLE: Two or three, something like that, and they unveiled a monument to Bolivar.

JOHNSON: The South American liberator, Bolivar?

WEDDLE: Yes, and he unveiled the monument and gave the address that day.

JOHNSON: Were you there for that?

WEDDLE: No, because I had two little girls and it was just too hot to go and drag them around. My husband went, along with some of his family.

JOHNSON: Did they get a chance to talk to Harry Truman at all?

WEDDLE: No, I don't think so. But Leonard knew who

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he was. He lived here around Grandview enough that he knew the Trumans.

JOHNSON: Do you ever remember him campaigning in that area, in 1940?

WEDDLE: No.

JOHNSON: That was when he was running for a second term as Senator.

WEDDLE: But I never went to any of those political rallies anyway.

JOHNSON: What was his reputation as a Senator, do you recall? Were people voting for him around Bolivar?

WEDDLE: I think so, as far as I recall. Of course, down in that area there are quite a few Republicans too.

JOHNSON: Really.

WEDDLE: I taught at Wheatland twelve years, but I kept my mouth shut.

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JOHNSON: When did you start teaching down there?

WEDDLE: We left Bolivar and went to Wheatland, and I taught in Wheatland twelve years. I went to Wheatland in the fall of '49.

JOHNSON: You taught home economics?

WEDDLE: I taught home economics and kept study halls.

JOHNSON: Sounds like a job.

WEDDLE: Taught biology part of the time, and taught general science part of the time.

JOHNSON: You were versatile. Did you do some cramming, so to speak, before you started teaching those things?

WEDDLE: I majored in home economics in college and I had to take so much biological science, which was required for the home economics major. I just made that my minor. I was in one of those schools where you had to teach different subjects. They

[45]

didn't have enough teachers who had enough credits to teach the biological science, so I got approved on it a time or two. Then I had to go back to school and get a few more credits, because I didn't like to teach general science. I liked biology.

JOHNSON: Do you recall when Harry Truman became President, April 12th, 1945? What were your reactions?

WEDDLE: I was very well pleased. Glad to see him elected.

JOHNSON: You were confident he was going to be a good President?

WEDDLE: I was confident of it, and I still think he's one of the best we've had, for a long time anyway.

JOHNSON: Did you ever correspond with him?

WEDDLE: No, not while he was President.

JOHNSON: Did you ever see him again after you left in 1935?

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WEDDLE: I saw him the day of the church dedication. I guess that's about the only time I ever saw him after he was president, because I wasn't here when he'd be here.

JOHNSON: Of course, he was ailing when you moved back to Grandview.

Okay, anything else that just might come to mind as we've been kind of...

WEDDLE: No, I don't think of anything else. If in rolling it around in my mind I happen to think of anything later on I can let you know.

JOHNSON: You can always add to the transcript too. Once you get a copy of the interview and if you think of something that you had forgotten at the time, and it is relevant, go ahead and just write it in. It will be included in the transcript.

WEDDLE: My brother, Joe, might tell you things that I don't remember.

JOHNSON: Where is it he lives?

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WEDDLE: He lives in Lee's Summit, and he was there in the J.C. Jones office a long time, the lumber office. I've heard him speak several times of Mr. Vivian Truman, of him being over there on business, and he'd stop in and talk with him awhile.

JOHNSON: Is he an older brother or younger?

WEDDLE: He's three years younger than I am.

JOHNSON: I see. And he farmed here on the...

WEDDLE: Oh no, he didn't farm. He didn't like it.

JOHNSON: So after he got out of high school he went into business then?

WEDDLE: He went to work with a carpenter and worked with a carpenter awhile, and then he went to work up here at the J.C. Jones Lumber Company as a truck driver. He worked there for awhile and Mr. Jones moved him down to Wellington, Missouri, to manage the yard down there. Then he closed that yard and

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he moved Joe to Lee's Summit, and had him in the office. His job was, if somebody would come in there with their blueprint, he did all the figuring on what they'd need and see that the lumber was all sawed the way it should be and that it was put on the truck and loaded and delivered.

JOHNSON: Well., if something does come to mind, like I say, that we didn't get down in our interview now, just add it to the copy of the transcript when you get it and we'll appreciate it.

WEDDLE: Okay, I sure will.

JOHNSON: Thank you for the information. It was an interesting conversation.

WEDDLE: I don't feel like you got too much out of me.

JOHNSON: Before we close, there is another little anecdote that I will ask Mrs. Weddle to put on tape. It's about your Uncle Brack [Breckenridge Clements].

WEDDLE: My Uncle Brack. He was old then and he was

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a bachelor and he was careless about taking care of himself. He was working out in the cemetery and he was hot and sweaty, and he went up to get a drink at Mrs. Truman's. It was about noon time and she invited him in to eat dinner. When he was telling my mother about it afterwards, he said, "Mrs. Truman had some company," but he didn't know who it was. And my mother said, "Well, Brack, you shouldn't have gone in and eaten dinner in your dirty clothes when she had company." Later she apologized to Mrs. Truman for it, and Mrs. Truman said, "Forget it." She said, "Brack can eat at my table anytime." It didn't bother her.

JOHNSON: You never did find out who the company was?

WEDDLE: No, I never did know who it was. Mrs. Truman told mother, but I don't remember.

After Mr. Harry was President, the old neighbors and the old friends were still neighbors and friends.

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JOHNSON: That's the way I've heard it too.

WEDDLE: It never made any difference.

JOHNSON: Did you get to see Mrs. Truman, Harry's mother, before she died in 1947, after you had moved away in 1935?

WEDDLE: I saw her not right at the time; I think it was a year or two before she died. I went by to see her and Miss Mary when they were living here in Grandview.

JOHNSON: Do you remember anything about her condition at that time? Was she still the same person that you recalled? She hadn't changed?

WEDDLE: She was still the same person I had always known.

JOHNSON: Do you remember her talking about Harry being in the White House, of being President at that time? Or any comments that she made about Harry as President?

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WEDDLE: Well, I think at that particular time Margaret was taking music lessons and she was talking about her music and she was real proud of Margaret. I think she had heard her at some of her concerts.

JOHNSON: Did Martha play the piano, by the way? I know Mary Jane, of course, was a pianist.

WEDDLE: I don't know; Mrs. Truman may have, but I don't ever recall that I ever saw her do it.

JOHNSON: They had a piano in the household?

WEDDLE: Oh, yes. Miss Mary played the piano at the church for years, from the time I left here and afterwards.

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