Oral History Interview

With

RUFUS B. BURRUS

Longtime friend and legal counselor to Harry S. Truman; assistant county counselor, 1927-41; member, U.S. Army Reserve, 1927-75; officer in U.S. Army in World War II; attorney in private practice, 1921 to present.

Independence, Missouri
October 22, November 8, & November 20, 1985
by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
December, 1986

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 It may not be published in full except by permission of the Harry S. Truman Library.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
RUFUS B. BURRUS

October 22, 1985
Independence, Missouri
by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

JOHNSON: I'm going to start out, Colonel Burrus, by asking you to give me your full name, where you were born, and when you were born.

BURRUS: My name is Rufus Bell Burrus. I was born April 1, 1900 in Blue Springs, Missouri. My father was Olney Francis Burrus, the son of James M. Burrus, Jr. of eastern Jackson County in Blue Springs. My mother was Sadie Bell, who married my father in 1898. She and he had met at Park College. He was a student and she was a student at Park College at Parkville. My father went to Park College at the instance and suggestion of his grandmother, Harriet Noland. She wanted him to go on to higher education and he said, "Well, I don't know where."

She said, "Well, there's a good school over at

[2]

Parkville, Park College."

He said, "Well, whereabouts is Park College, where is Parkville?"

She said, "That's just north of Kansas City."

And he said, "Well, how do you get there?"

She said, "Why, you can get on the train at the station I think, and the train takes you up to Parkville."

Well, he said he'd see, and he found out the date that it was going to be starting. He got his valise together with his personal items, went down to the station and got on the train and got off at Parkville and walked up the hill, as he said. When he got up there and presented himself to the folks about enrolling they said, "Well, have you got your first enrollment?"

"Oh no, I just came on up. My grandmother said all I had to do was come on up and enroll."

He said, "Well, that's just too bad."

Then he started visiting, as he said, with the other folks that were already there, and had been admitted. In the conversation he learned about one young man that had indicated that he was going to come

[3]

but something had happened in the family so he couldn't come. So he got his name and he went back over to the registrar and he said, "Now, so and so is not coming, and I'm here to take his place."

And they said, "How do you know he's not coming?"

He said, "Well, the young fellows told me he wasn't going to come; he had some other things happen to him in the family."

The registrar said, "Well, all right, we'll put you down; if he doesn't come we'll take you."

So sure enough he didn't come, and that's how my dad got started at Park College.

My mother had come from a family that had lived first down in the Joplin area, and then up in Iowa, and then in Norwich, Kansas. That is where she came from to go to Park College. So that's where he met Sadie Bell.

JOHNSON: She started college the same year?

BURRUS: The same year as my father, that's right.

JOHNSON: Park was a Presbyterian college, as I recall, at the time.

[4]

BURRUS: That's right, and my folks were Presbyterians, all of them.

JOHNSON: On both sides? Your mother's and father's families were Presbyterians?

BURRUS: That's right. My Grandfather Bell had been disabled at the time of the war. He couldn't serve, because he had an injury to his foot.

JOHNSON: What was his first name?

BURRUS: His name was Harvey Bell.

JOHNSON: Where was he living at that time?

BURRUS: He was living in Pennsylvania.

JOHNSON: This was during the Civil War period?

BURRUS: During the Civil War, yes. So, he worked with the railroad there upon the Erie Canal, driving mules and the like of that. Then he finally came out to this area, and he found my grandmother, and her name was Aseneth Benton. She was not any kin to the Bentons in Missouri, but that same name.

[5]

JOHNSON: They came from what area of the East?

BURRUS: She came from Pennsylvania too.

JOHNSON: Oh, they were both northerners?

BURRUS: That's right. So, in time father met mother and married and they lived down at Blue Springs. My father was admitted to practice the law at that time. He went to school a little time. There was a place over in Kansas City that the lawyers got together, and more or less by his own study and also with the help and tutoring of some of the lawyers, he got admitted to the bar. I think that was in 1896.

JOHNSON: Was that the forerunner of the Kansas City School of Law?

BURRUS: That's right. He has always been referred to as an alumnus of the Kansas City School of Law, because those were the folks that met down at 9th and Baltimore. One of them was a man named Adams, who became counsel for the Kansas City Title and Trust Company. My father also went down for a little time to the school at Columbia, but he really spent most of his time in law

[6]

offices and learned by just being there.

In addition to that, when he was in Blue Springs he became the owner of the newspaper called the *Sni-a- Bar Voice*. He was the editor and the owner; he would set type and he solicited ads and wrote articles, and did the various things that you have to do to run a newspaper.

In addition to that he was an agent for an insurance company, life insurance and fire insurance, and he brokered a loan or two. He helped to manage some property that had to be looked after, just as a person would that had a degree behind him, and people knew he knew what he was doing. At the same time he was the principal of the school and he taught a class at the school. Mother was also a teacher in the school in Blue Springs when I was born.

JOHNSON: He's done all this and the law besides?

BURRUS: That's right. All of it. That's a "big town" down there and it wasn't hard to get that done.

JOHNSON: Maybe just a brief question here about your grandparents. Do you know what brought your grandparents out here to Missouri from Pennsylvania?

[7]

BURRUS: My grandparents Bell were down in the Joplin area where there were some mines that they had worked in. Also he had gone up to Iowa because there were some agricultural things up there, and he got in agricultural work there.

JOHNSON: Was he an investor or was he a worker?

BURRUS: A worker. He also rented land and operated that. In addition to that, he began to see that wheat was an item to be sold, and he began dealing in it in a small way there. Then he went

to Kansas because wheat was more of an item there, and he had a mill, an elevator, that he operated there in Kansas.

JOHNSON: Whereabouts in Kansas?

BURRUS: Norwich, Kansas, in Kingman County. So that's where he was, and that's where mother had come from, Kingman County, to go to Park College. When they were in Blue Springs when I was born, L.F. Blackburn was one of the teachers. He later became the county superintendent of schools, with an office here in Independence. Professor Blackburn--everybody knew

[8]

him. He was always elected without any trouble, and he was just a good sort of a fellow to have the schools operate under, and the teachers were good.

JOHNSON: Was he a Presbyterian?

BURRUS: He was a Presbyterian, too, that's right. My mother and father were both Presbyterians as was my grandfather; and my grandmother Noland was Presbyterian also. My father-in-law went to a church in those earlier days that was called the Shake Rag Church, which is today just south of Truman Road, and up on the hill from the road that runs by the ordnance plant.

JOHNSON: At Lake City?

BURRUS: Lake City. It runs south, and up on the hill there is a Presbyterian Church that they called the Shake Rag Church because they had itinerant preachers and whenever the preacher was going to be there, they put a white rag upon a pole and that's when people knew this was going to happen. So, that's how it got its name. That's where my father-in-law became a Presbyterian, Cumberland Presbyterian it was.

[9]

JOHNSON: Is there a church on that site now?

BURRUS: There's a church on that site now; it has a pastor and regular services.

JOHNSON: But it's not the same building?

BURRUS: Not the same building. It's been replaced a time or two I think.

JOHNSON: So your parents met at Park College. This would be in the 1890s I suppose. And they got married, you say, in 1898.

BURRUS: "'98"--I think it was.

JOHNSON: Was that right after they got out of school, do you recall?

BURRUS: It was after he got out of school. He and mother didn't graduate, but they had enough that they could get qualified as teachers. Both of them wanted to be teachers, and that's why they departed from the school up there.

JOHNSON: Did your mother begin teaching as soon as she

[10]

got out of Park College?

BURRUS: That's right. She taught school in Kansas before she came to Missouri.

JOHNSON: So she went back to Kansas and taught school there, and then your father got into law and newspaper work

BURRUS: And also school.

JOHNSON: Teaching out here at Blue Springs?

BURRUS: He had a country school which was south and east of Blue Springs. It was called Tarsney School.

JOHNSON: A one-room country school?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: So they apparently had fallen in love while they were in college, and managed to get back together.

Where did they get married?

BURRUS: In Norwich, Kansas. Grandmother and Grandfather's home.

[11]

JOHNSON: Do you have brothers and sisters?

BURRUS: I had a brother Harvey. He was just about a year younger than I am, and he died a few years ago. I had three sisters; Helen was the oldest one. She was a school teacher, and she passed away last. Before that there was my sister Sybil, she had been a school teacher too.

JOHNSON: She was next to the oldest?

BURRUS: She was next to the oldest. She married Floyd Snyder, who lived here in Independence. She was involved in the abstract business with Snyder. Their operation became the Land Title Company. They sold that to the Kansas City Title Company. She then retired. She had emphysema, and she finally passed away in Arizona.

JOHNSON: But she grew up here and lived in this area.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: And then your youngest sister, what was her name?

BURRUS: She lives here in town now. She and I are the two left in the family. I'm the oldest and she's the youngest.

[12]

JOHNSON: What's her name?

BURRUS: Anna Margaret McConnell. She lives up on North Main Street, within a block of where they had lived for so many years on Liberty Street.

JOHNSON: Your father's name again is...

BURRUS: Olney. Olney Francis.

I would like to go back a little bit more in the family though. Grandfather Burrus was a descendant of William and Rhoda Harris. William and Rhoda Harris are a well-known family. They had 17 children; 15 of them lived. They first were in eastern Jackson County, in Blue Springs, and then in the Lee's Summit area. Her father, that is Rhoda's father, was Jeremiah Burnett. He was a Revolutionary soldier from New York. His family died, and he came here to Missouri to live with his daughter Rhoda Harris. He is buried at Blue Springs, and there's a marker there by the Daughters of the Revolution showing that he was a veteran of the Revolutionary War.

The father of William Harris was Reuben Harris, and he was a Revolutionary soldier, too. He was buried around

[13]

39th and Lee's Summit Road. That gravesite got obliterated as time went on. So, last September we dedicated a monument at Blue Springs in an area next to where William and Rhoda Harris are, and also where Jeremiah is. They are the two grandparents of Revolutionary vintage, and I'm on a direct line from them. My Grandfather Burrus' family comes from one of the first daughters of Rhoda and William Harris.

JOHNSON: Yes, I've heard about the Harrises and the big reunions that they have every year.

BURRUS: That's right. We have had a big reunion the second Sunday in September every year for 75 years. Back then when they were looking for a place to have it, they thought Lee's Summit would be the best place because that's where most of the Harrises lived. There was going to be a park bought by the Lee's Summit folks. So the Harrises joined along with them on the project and got $1,000 to help pay for the property that would be the park area. They provided in the deed that I typed, and my father had written the language for, that in perpetuity the Harris family reunion be held on the

[14]

second Sunday in September beginning that next year. We've always had it that way. That old deed was copied and put out a few days ago when we were there at the occasion.

JOHNSON: They have lived up to that.

BURRUS: That's right. That's how it was done. When the time came to pay the money, they wanted to be sure that they were going to have that done. I said, "Well, I'll tell you how to get that done; put that in the deed." So, he gave me the information written down in longhand, and I typed it on the typewriter for them.

JOHNSON: The Harrises might come up again as we get into your career.

Would you tell us where you grew up and where you went to school?

BURRUS: We lived at Blue Springs for a year, and then we moved to Independence. We lived on South Pendleton here in Independence for a little while, and then my father bought a place at 801 N. Spring Street in Independence, a five-room house, a cottage we called

[15]

it. It's on the east side of the street. I lived there and went to school at the Ott School. From there I went to the Independence High School, and graduated from Independence High School.

JOHNSON: What year?

BURRUS: In 1918. I also began working in my dad's office in 1916. He said, "You get your studies and your lessons set in the morning so you've got the afternoons free and you come to the office." He said, "I can use you here at the office." I did, and the first thing I knew I was learning to run errands, sweep up the floor and wash the windows.

JOHNSON: Where was this located?

BURRUS: It was on the north side of the square, over what was the Knoepker store for many years.

JOHNSON: So he looked at the Courthouse everyday.

BURRUS: That's right. First we were over the east part of the building, for two or three years, and then dad finally got into what had been the office of James M.

[16]

Callahan. Callahan had a law library and my father was able to get that and move from the two rooms he had next to it, to this one that had the library room, a private office, and a reception room. So that's where I began learning about practicing law.

JOHNSON: Were there several other lawyers in that area at that time?

BURRUS: Around the Square, that's right, there were several of them. I got to know them all. I got admitted to the bar in 1921. I went to law school at the Kansas City School of Law. Meanwhile, when I graduated from high school, my mother learned that I would be of draft age and she felt I should do something to get myself prepared so if I was called to duty I would be able to equip myself, as I should. Kansas City had the Kansas City Polytechnic Institute, which was at 11th and Locust Street, so I went over and enrolled in that. They had a company of the student army training corps, called the SATC. I had to enlist in that through the draft board. I had a little trouble getting the draft board to get my papers transferred over there, so I was about a month or six weeks

[17]

without having any of the papers, but they still recognized me and I still did my duty there and I finally was discharged from that in December 1918 after the war was over.

JOHNSON: So it was not a very long tour of duty.

BURRUS: That's right. But by having done that I qualified as a World War I veteran. Later, Mr. Truman would say, "By reason of having been in that student training course, you are a veteran and you can get into my enlisted regiment and go to school and come out and have an examination and get to be a Second Lieutenant in the Artillery."

JOHNSON: We'll have to get into that, but where were you living at the time you graduated from high school?

BURRUS: We lived at 503 North Delaware in Independence. We moved from 801 Spring Street to the Delaware house.

JOHNSON: About when was that move?

BURRUS: In 1917, I think.

JOHNSON: So you moved over into what is now the Truman

[18]

Heritage District.

BURRUS: That's right. The house still stands. It's on the northeast corner of Farmer and Delaware Street, just two blocks down the street from the Trumans at 219. There's no street that runs in between but two numbered blocks.

JOHNSON: Of course, the Trumans were married here in 1919 in June.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did you know Bess before you knew Harry?

BURRUS: I knew her, yes, and I knew her brothers. Frank was the ward leader, a Democrat; he was her older brother. I knew the younger brother, Frederick Wallace. He was in school with me, in high school, and also in grade school.

JOHNSON: So that's how you knew Bess, through her brothers, before you heard of Harry?

BURRUS: That's right. I didn't know her very well because she was older than I was. But I did know her because

[19]

she was a neighbor and we knew the whole family there.

JOHNSON: So her youngest brother was your peer.

BURRUS: He was just a little younger than I.

JOHNSON: When would you say that you were first a friend, either of Bess or of Harry?

BURRUS: I'll get it back a little bit further. My father's parents in about the middle of the 1890s came to Independence, and they finally moved over on Waldo Street, the second house east of the River Boulevard intersection. There on the corner was where Harry Truman and his mother and father and his brother and sister lived. So, my grandparents were next door neighbors, and they knew the Trumans, but I, of course, didn't know them then. I never did get the chance to know Harry except as I just incidentally knew him by his marrying into the family of Wallaces. Then one day in 1921 in the early spring, in front of the Bank of Independence on the northwest corner of the Square, I met Frank and his brother-in-law Harry, whom I didn't yet know. There at the corner, why, Frank motioned to me, "Come here Rufe, I want you to meet my brother-in-law Harry Truman. He's going to be the next

[20]

eastern judge of the Jackson County Court."

I smiled and said, "Mr. Truman I'm surely glad to know you, and you will be the next Judge of the Jackson County Court, because Frank always picks the winners." And he did. He was a good leader, and I carried a precinct book and had one for a couple or three years, since we lived there.

That's how I first knew Harry.

JOHNSON: In 1921. Do you remember the month?

BURRUS: It was in the spring. I don't know, it was in the spring. He was out campaigning, visiting with people, as a prospective candidate, and that's how Frank introduced him to me.

JOHNSON: That was the first time that you saw Harry Truman?

BURRUS: That's right, to know him.

JOHNSON: In the spring of 1921 you're saying. This would be like May or June?

BURRUS: Earlier than that, I would say early spring.

JOHNSON: Maybe April.

[21]

BURRUS: Someplace around there, yes. I was 21 years old, and I worked in my dad's office. I was also going to law school. I was admitted to the bar on April 1st, 1921. I took a bar examination in December, and I passed the examination. They sent me a certificate before the April 1st birthday, but I couldn't accept that because I wasn't 21 years old. So I sent it back to the Court Clerk, and I said, "Would you please hold this and keep it, and then send me one that's dated the first day of April so I can be able to accept it?"

Captain Allen was the clerk, and he wrote me back, and said he would. Sure enough, on the first day of April at 7 o'clock in the morning a special delivery document came to me in one of those wound-up folders, you know, wrapped up. I proceeded with my dad to go up to the courthouse. Dad had alerted the other members of the bar that I was going, and they were present, some twelve or fourteen of them, when I was sworn in a lawyer.

That's how I happened to become a lawyer. Before that, I knew that I was going to be a lawyer because I had passed the examination, but I hadn't had a chance

[22]

to be sworn in. And that's when I knew Harry Truman.

Then I got married in June of 1921.

JOHNSON: So you got married right after your graduation from law school. What was the date?

BURRUS: June 11th.

JOHNSON: And you married whom?

BURRUS: Ila Beets. She came from a family at Atherton. Her father's name was James D. Beets and her mother was Margaret Hifner; her maiden name was Hifner.

JOHNSON: How did you meet her?

BURRUS: I met her in school, high school.

JOHNSON: Here at Independence High School?

BURRUS: She and her brothers and sisters came to the high school, and that's where I got to know her.

JOHNSON: Was she in your class?

BURRUS: She graduated in 1918 when I did.

JOHNSON: Did she take up a career before she married?

[23]

BURRUS: No, she was a piano pupil, and she did work a time or two for some stores up around town.

JOHNSON: Which reminds me. Was Florence Burrus your aunt?

BURRUS: Aunt Florence was father's oldest sister. She also was a music teacher, and I learned from Harry that she gave him his first piano lesson and taught him to play the piano.

JOHNSON: Did you ever talk to your Aunt Florence about Harry?

BURRUS: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: What did she have to say about him?

BURRUS: She always admired him and knew him. I'll give you another incident. When I was counselor to the county court in Kansas City in the 1930s, people that had property were having trouble getting some of the taxes taken care of. My Aunt Florence, much to my surprise,

appeared one day in the county courthouse; at first I didn't see her, because I had my back to the audience. But she was out there and Mr. Truman looked out and said,

[24]

"Rufus, your Aunt Florence is out there; go out and see what she wants."

I said, "Yes sir." I went out, and said, "Aunt Florence, Judge Truman says for me to find out what you want."

She said, "Well, Rufus, I'm kind of half ashamed to tell you, but I had two or three pieces of property with mortgages that I had to take over, and they had taxes on them. I just don't think I ought to have to pay all the penalties, and I want to see if I can't get those taxes taken care of."

I went up and told him, and he said to members of the Court. "You know, Rufus' Aunt Florence was my first music teacher, she taught me to play the piano. I want Rufus to be authorized to go out and talk to Aunt Florence, and come in and tell us what he thinks we ought to do concerning her payment of taxes." And that's how it got done.

JOHNSON: He undoubtedly was the best piano player we've had as President.

BURRUS: That's right. He played our piano at home several times. He'd come to our place and visit with us.

[25]

JOHNSON: After that first meeting in 1921, what would be the second occasion? When did you meet him the next time?

BURRUS: At various gatherings of Democrats. They'd be together and he'd be along and I would see him.

JOHNSON: Now were you involved in that campaign in '21?

BURRUS: Sure, I worked. He carried my precinct. One of my duties was to see that the people who lived in the three blocks or so, that I had the books for, were informed about who the candidates were and I would try to pursuade them to vote.

JOHNSON: You were precinct captain?

BURRUS: No, I was precinct worker. Frank was the captain of the ward.

JOHNSON: Which ward are we talking about?

BURRUS: They called it number one, in the northwest part of Independence.

JOHNSON: You decided to get into local politics right

[26]

after you became a lawyer, I guess.

BURRUS: I was working in my dad's office and that's one of the things that I happened to do with him, too.

JOHNSON: Your dad was a precinct worker?

BURRUS: No, he wasn't a precinct worker, but he was active. He was the city's attorney, had had various attachments to the Democrats particularly.

JOHNSON: How did they become Democrat? They came from Pennsylvania originally, you said.

BURRUS: Well, my father didn't, but my grandmother and grandfather Bell were Republicans from Pennsylvania. But in my father's family, his father had been a member of General Price's rebel forces. He was a southern retired soldier.

JOHNSON: Now what was his name?

BURRUS: His name was James M. Burrus, Jr.

JOHNSON: Was he involved in the Battle of Independence or the Battle of Westport?

[27]

BURRUS: No, he would have been down farther south at that time. After the war he was a commander in the Sons of the Confederacy.

JOHNSON: So he was the one that influenced your father's politics more than the others did?

BURRUS: That's right. We had been Democrat, and the whole family had been Democrats. They were southern folks and maybe that was the reason why.

JOHNSON: Was he a Democrat even when Teddy Roosevelt came in?

BURRUS: I can tell you a story about that too, because my grandfather had a great liking for Theodore Roosevelt, the Rough Rider. My grandfather had ridden horses as a cavalryman when he was in the service. So he knew about Roosevelt and learned that he was a Bull Mooser and all that. So he became enamoured of him, and he joined up with his group, and worked for him to be nominated.

JOHNSON: That would be 1912 when he ran as a Bull Moose.

[28]

BURRUS: That's right. I can't think now who it was that was the candidate for Governor, but anyhow he was Republican. Grandfather had been a Democrat but that didn't keep him from being out and being active. So they nominated him to be the candidate for Lieutenant Governor of the State of Missouri.

JOHNSON: Was that James M. Burrus?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: And he was nominated to be Lieutenant Governor of Missouri?

BURRUS: On the Bull Moose ticket, along with Teddy Roosevelt. Of course, the Roosevelt ticket lost and grandfather lost, but that was how he got to working with him.

JOHNSON: Was that the only time he defected from the Democrat ranks?

BURRUS: He came back into the Democrat fold.

JOHNSON: With Wilson?

BURRUS: That's right.

[29]

JOHNSON: And you probably were a Wilson supporter.

BURRUS: Sure.

JOHNSON: You started out in local politics in the precinct, and you worked for the election of Truman then as Eastern Judge in the election of 1922?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: What kind of promotion, what kind of work, did the precinct people do in those days?

BURRUS: Well, I had to know all the people that lived and moved from one precinct to another because they began to have to be registered. I kept up on that and kept in contact with them, and let them know who the candidates were that we liked for them to be favoring. We would tell them why and sometimes would pass out cards, campaign literature. Occasionally, we would invite them to come to the Democrat precinct activities.

JOHNSON: The Republicans rarely had a chance to win an election. Of course, they had their own primary, or

[30]

caucus. Was it a primary or a caucus in those days?

BURRUS: Well, it was caucuses to start with. But then later it became a primary system. In 1922 it was a primary election.

JOHNSON: The question of who would be elected was really a question of who the Democrats would nominate, wasn't it? Did Harry Truman tell you how he decided to get into politics? He was a businessman; he ran a haberdashery. He was co-owner of a haberdashery when you met him. Did he say, at that time, why he was apparently going to give up business for politics?

BURRUS: Well, as Frank said, the vacancy was for the Eastern Judge, and Eastern Judge was the most important office from the patronage standpoint that we had in the eastern part of the county. The road overseers and the various deputies and the various offices had to be staffed generally through the county judge, who was the elected representative of that whole area out of the eastern district.

JOHNSON: That was everything outside of Kansas City, wasn't it?

[31]

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: What was the impression that you got as far as his motives were concerned?

BURRUS: He wanted to see to it that they had elections, the kind of elections that should be indicative of what the people wanted, and not just push something over on them. He would have to give them the reasons why they should be in favor of him, in favor of the folks that he was supporting.

JOHNSON: Was it Miles Bulger that was one of the people that they were trying to displace?

BURRUS: Bulger had been a previous judge of the county court and he was one that was in disfavor really with Mr. Truman the most. Bulger was not the kind of a man that Mr. Truman would want to have any contact with as a political candidate.

JOHNSON: Did he tell you what Pendergast had to do with his nominations? What did he have to say about that?

BURRUS: I re-read in the book here about Mr. Truman.

[32]

JOHNSON: In the *Memoirs*.

BURRUS: That's right.

I learned from him--and also from Frank Wallace--that Mike Pendergast, the brother of Tom, was allotted to look after eastern Jackson County, which included Independence. He was somewhat of a leader, and Frank knew him and he was a part of his organization. So in time, when Mr. Truman was urged by folks out of the artillery outfit that he was with, and his Masonic folks, and also from people over at Grandview, to run for office, that's when he began to be active. I knew Mr. Truman had been a road overseer in the Grandview area and also had been postmaster there. That wasn't a very large sort of a job, but was one that he had had some activities with before the war.

Then he came back from the war. The folks in the 129th Field Artillery were mostly Democrats, although a few of them were Republicans, such as John Miles, a major. He was Republican; he had been with the Republicans there in the Post Office. Harry Sturgis also was a Republican; he had been one of the lieutenants in the outfit. And Eddie Carrol had been a Republican. They all got along

[33]

very well, but they would have their allegiances to the different groups. Truman then had the Democrats that were his friends and all the ones from the outfit [129th], and the members of the Army Reserve. That's where he got his real support.

JOHNSON: Are you saying that the Battery D people that he served with and the Reserve Officers people that he was acquainted with, were the first ones that got him interested in running for office?

BURRUS: That's right. Jimmy Pendergast was the son of Mike Pendergast, and a nephew of Tom. He was a lieutenant in the 129th Field Artillery, and then later got into the 130th. When Truman went into the haberdashery, why, Jimmy would come by over there and visit with them. He went up to Truman and said that his Uncle Tom, his father's brother, was looking for someone to help to be a Democratic candidate in the eastern part of the county. He wanted to have Harry enter himself into it and to get active. Already many other folks in the outfit had asked him to do it. Well, he also was a Masonic master of the lodge at Grandview; he organized it. So he had so many folks

[34]

that knew him in that fashion, as well as being a Democrat. His father was a Democrat. His father had been a road overseer first and also had been active as a Democrat and so this just came natural to him.

JOHNSON: How about Eddie Jacobson? Do you think he had any influence on Truman's interest in politics? Was he interested at all in politics?

BURRUS: He wasn't interested in politics, except as a Democrat and supporting Truman.

JOHNSON: Jim Pendergast was a veteran and he was part of this group that were friends of Truman's, served with him, and so he was just one of a number of 129th Field Artillery people who talked politics to Truman.

BURRUS: That's right. Edgar Hinde was another one that was one of Truman's friends; he was a Democrat. His family had been Democrats. His father had been the secretary of the school board, and things like that that showed that they were active in affairs. Hinde was in there with him, and Hinde became the Postmaster of Independence. His son became the Postmaster after him.

[35]

JOHNSON: Truman gave his first speech, apparently, his first political speech, at Lee's Summit.

BURRUS: At Lee's Summit.

JOHNSON: Were you there when he gave it?

BURRUS: No, I wasn't there.

JOHNSON: I think some of the Harris people did have something to do with that. Do you recall the first political speech you heard Truman give?

BURRUS: No I don't. We had meetings, just where he was visiting with people and made himself known, in Independence. I was in Raytown a time or two with him. But that was just out to meet the folks that were there. I remember one time we went out to visit with the editor of the newspaper.

JOHNSON: In Raytown?

BURRUS: In Raytown.

JOHNSON: You say that he campaigned in 1922 mostly by going around and meeting with small groups?

[36]

BURRUS: In 1921 and 1922. It was '22 when he was nominated and elected. That was a personal campaign as he went around to all the different areas and people. He'd let them know who he was and why he wanted to be elected.

JOHNSON: Did he go from door to door at all?

BURRUS: Oh yes, he did, sure.

JOHNSON: Oh, he would knock on doors and hand out leaflets?

BURRUS: That's right. Whenever he would meet anybody the first thing he would say, "I'm Harry Truman, I'm going to be a candidate for Eastern Judge," or "I am a candidate."

JOHNSON: What kind of public events would a politician like Harry Truman, one running for local office in those days, want to be sure to attend, where they could get exposure?

BURRUS: That would include Democrat rallies, as they called them. Horseshoe Lake was another place where they had gatherings quite often. That's out here just east of Independence and close to Blue Springs. And then on Highway 50, where the battle of Lone Jack was fought—

[37]

the Lone Jack picnic was another one.

JOHNSON: So these were mainly picnics where they...

BURRUS: Or gatherings.

JOHNSON: How about fairs, did they have a county fair?

BURRUS: They had fairs, yes, and they'd go around to those. You didn't often make a speech, but they had chance to meet people at those county fairs. The Independence Fair was one of them.

JOHNSON: I see. Did you go with him to some of those events?

BURRUS: No, no I didn't go with him.

JOHNSON: We're talking about that campaign in '22. You passed out literature for him?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: And did that sort of thing.

BURRUS: I carried the precinct book and saw to it that the folks were informed, and got them to be ready to vote. I checked off when they did vote, to see that they did vote.

[38]

JOHNSON: What kind of argument did you use to get them to vote for Harry Truman?

BURRUS: I said he's a neighbor up here of ours and he belongs to the Wallace family. His wife was a Wallace and he lived over here as a younger fellow. Independence is his home now. He came from down at Grandview and he was a farmer down there.

JOHNSON: Did you say anything about his virtues at that time, about being an honest type of person?

BURRUS: Yes, and I said he served in the military service, and he was a captain of a battery and he got the respect of his men. They're all of them for him. And they were.

JOHNSON: And he was running against...

BURRUS: Emmett Montgomery. He was a banker from Blue Springs.

JOHNSON: So you apparently were a Goat, so to speak.

BURRUS: With Frank, that's right. He was aligned with Mike Pendergast and what's later called the Goats.

[39]

JOHNSON: So that identifies you with the Pendergast organization I suppose.

BURRUS: I never did join any Pendergast organization, as such.

JOHNSON: So you helped him win that first election.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: And then what was your next association with Harry Truman?

BURRUS: In the next election I was for him too, when he was running in '24. He was nominated again. The Republicans were trying to find somebody to run against him, but nobody was willing to run. They looked around and tried to find somebody. Henry Bundschu used to tell me the story. He was a Republican worker and he was one of John Miles' friends. Of course, Miles was Republican but Miles and Truman were personal friends. Miles supported Mr. Truman individually and covertly without being obvious about it, and Truman also supported Miles when Miles was running for sheriff. This was a personal relationship; it wasn't really political. Anyhow

[40]

that was what happened then.

During the two years that Truman was eastern judge, he was able to get some of the jobs for folks and some of the Rabbits thought they ought to have more than they had gotten. A few of

them got to the point where they made it a feud as far as Truman was concerned. There were only a few of them.

So as time went on when it came time to have the election, the Republicans, with the assistance of Henry Bundschu had wanted to fill the place for that eastern judgeship, because nobody was willing to be nominated, and accept it and work for it.

So finally, Mr. Bundschu knew Henry Rummell who had a harness shop on the north side of the Square and he visited with him and wanted him to run. Rummell said, "Oh, I don't think I want to run; I don't want to have to work at it."

Bundschu said, "Well, we want to put you in. And you can withdraw after we find somebody else to take your place." Well, upon that, he was willing to do it, but he wouldn't pay the docket fee to file it. Bundschu told me, "And I paid the docket fee, $10; he never did

[41]

pay me back." They wanted to have him withdraw later, and he wouldn't withdraw. He stayed and, of course, he was nominated and he was elected.

JOHNSON: They were two Germans too, I guess weren't they? Rummell and Bundschu were both of German background?

BURRUS: Yes. Truman was defeated that time, 1924.

JOHNSON: Yes. You have just read this excerpt from the book by Richard Miller and I understand you are challenging some of the statements and conclusions.

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: We were talking about the *Journal, Kansas City Journal*, which supplies much of the information for these statements and judgments. What do you know about the *Journal* and about the first two years of Truman's service?

BURRUS: The *Journal* became the property of Walter S. Dickey. Dickey owned the W.S. Dickey Clay Pipe Company. They sold pipe to the public for sewers and for street uses and public places, and it was a rather lucrative

[42]

business for him. He wanted to have more say. He was at loggerheads with William Rockhill Nelson of the *Kansas City Star* and Roy Roberts who was one of Nelson's associates Dickey took the *Journal* for the avowed purpose of making attacks upon the *Star*. See, the *Star* supported not only Mr. Truman but they supported, later, Henry McElroy for Western Judge of the County Court.

Dickey began saying things that would be harmful and hurtful that he would print in his newspaper. The stories didn't have any foundation in fact. But he'd have them shaded so that people would think they did. They also wanted to get Mr. Rummell to withdraw and have somebody else take his place. The Rabbits wanted to feed Dickey, and the Rabbits were the ones that wanted Rummell to withdraw so that they could endorse somebody else and not have the campaign where it would be hurtful. Yet they would help defeat Truman, if they could. They did take enough votes, 800 and some odd votes, that caused Truman not to be elected.

Two years after that, Truman became associated with the Community Savings and Loan Association. I helped organize that company. It only had $5,000 to

[43]

start with. We were able, with Truman's help, to sell stock to the people that would make deposits of $25 a month, or some other amounts. He was working with that. At the same time he became associated with the Kansas City Automobile Club. And he got to know a fellow named Elliot that was active in the association from Nevada, Missouri, the Farm and Home Association. That's where he got really the idea about getting active in the building and loan company. So that was where he came in. I was counsel for the building and loan company, and I got to know him and we were quite often together. And a time or two I went with him to a dinner at 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock in the evening, when he was with the Reserve Officers, and we sat around and visited with them. I got to know him in that fashion as well.

JOHNSON: Did you join the Reserve Officers Association in Kansas City?

BURRUS: In 1926 or'27 Mr. Truman wanted me to join him and go to camp at Ft. Riley with him. He said, "You get your boots and riding britches, and spurs, and campaign hat with no insignia, and I'll pick you up

[44]

and take you to Ft. Riley."

JOHNSON: Did you have anything to do with Mr. Truman during the first two years that he was in office?

BURRUS: He needed somebody to give him advice as to what the law was, to help him know what was being done by the county, and how they operated. They had a county counselor but he wasn't friendly to him, so he wanted me to do research and do the things I could.

JOHNSON: So you were giving legal advice.

BURRUS: Just friendly counseling.

JOHNSON: During the first two years he was county judge?

BURRUS: Well, no, when he was the Presiding Judge.

JOHNSON: Oh, after he became Presiding Judge.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did you have anything to do with him in those first two years, in '22-'24?

BURRUS: Just what I said. He would come to me and want

[45]

to know how it was that they got these various officers that were elected, and how you would be able to keep track of the money, and so on. There were something like fourteen or fifteen elective officers that drew warrants against the county funds. Nobody could tell them that you had to have a certain ceiling, on a certain budget, and the result was that they overdrew the treasury to the point that there were millions of dollars in what was called "protested warrants." He said, "That's no way to run a business, or run a government." I explained to him how it was, and why it was that they could do all that. I pointed out to him those things that were hurtful and harmful, noting that nobody could say you had to have just so many deputies and so much money and that's all there was to be had. Instead, they'd overdraw the accounts and have these overdrawn warrants that they were paying interest on.

JOHNSON: So this was one of his main concerns?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Overdrawing the county warrants in those first two years.

[45]

BURRUS: Also he was interested about the roads that they had, because the roads under Bulger's court were what they called "piecrust roads" and they had to be worked on. He wanted to know what could be done by the county on that. I explained to him that there was a county levy, a capital road fund, and that it had to be spent on the roads and it should be operated so as to make the roads useable. They needed to have some real work done on them.

JOHNSON: Did he show an interest in roads even in that first term?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: He didn't wait until he was presiding judge.

BURRUS: No sir.

JOHNSON: And he was interested, as you say, in a balanced budget?

BURRUS: That's right.

He wanted to be sure that the court could have some way to hold the budget down so they wouldn't be overdrawn.

[47]

JOHNSON: Did he ever mention the Pendergasts, or Tom Pendergast in particular, having anything to do with the decisions made by the County Court?

BURRUS: Not at all. Not at all. They didn't have anything to do with his decisions, but they did have something to do with other members of the Court. Truman was able to get quite a few offices for Eastern Jackson County people that were helpful to him.

JOHNSON: Was that one of their main jobs, to take care of patronage, in those days?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: That was a rule of the game, so to speak?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: That's different from the way it is supposed to be today.

BURRUS: Yes, because today they have a charter and there are no Democrats or Republicans under it. It's nonpartisan they say, but that's not really the way they have it now.

[48]

JOHNSON: He mentioned the problem of overdrawn warrants. You mentioned the problem of roads that were breaking up, or of poor quality. Was there any other problem that he mentionedin that early period?

BURRUS: Yes. They had a home for the folks that were indigent and poor; they called it the poor farm. He said, "That's not the poor farm; that's not going to beknown as the poor farm; it's going to be known as the home for the aged, or the old folks home." And that's what they did. They got rid of that name, "poor farm." And he saw to it that they had little more than just custodial care; they had a doctor assigned to help take care of them. He had a regular time to go out to meet them, but he wouldn't be there every day. There was no hospital in connection with it, no nursing care, just a place to take care of them. So he thought that was something that was wrong, that the county had ought to have a hospital in connection with the old folks home.

JOHNSON: We've mentioned something else, patronage and getting jobs for people.

BURRUS: He did. He helped get the workers in the old folks

[49]

home; helped take care of them. He took care of some of the Rabbits with it too.

JOHNSON: How about road overseers?

BURRUS: They parceled them out between Democrats and Republicans.

JOHNSON: As far as you can tell, they simply did it by the rules of the game?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: When did you first become employed by the Court?

BURRUS: In 1926, when Truman was elected Presiding Judge, I worked for him and helped get him nominated and elected. Also I was active in my law practice and had plenty of things to do.

After he was elected in November, about three days later, he called me one day and asked me to meet him at the Teacup Inn. I said, "Yes." The other times I had met him at lunch over at 9th and Baltimore, where we had a delicatessen. They had rye bread and cheese and sandwiches and things of that kind. But the Teacup

[50]

Inn was a sit-down place with white table cloths and chinaware and silverware, glassware - a rather swanky place. I didn't know what would be the reason for going over there, but I didn't question it. I said I'd meet him there.

I went over and he just was a few steps ahead of me, and he saw me and said, "Come on, join us." There was some gentleman with him that I didn't know, a stranger to me. He went over to the table that was set up for him, and he hadn't anymore got set down and I got set down, and the gentleman with him got set down, that he turned to this man with him and said, "Fred, you're going to be my County Counselor. That's a Rabbit job, and you're my kind of Rabbit, and I want you to be the County Counselor."

Well, I afterwards learned that he had been a great friend of Truman's in the National Guard and in other ways, and he said, "Burrus is going to be <u>the</u> Assistant Counselor. That's a Goat job, and he's my kind of a Goat." He said, "I want to tell you that I understand from some of my Republican friends that they haven't been taking care of some of the lawsuits against the

[51]

county and they're going to be coming up in court pretty soon. If you're going to have to take care of them you can't wait until January when I take office to get to work on it." He said, "I want to tell you now so that you can get out and get in contact with these Republican counselors

and find out about these lawsuits so you can get acquainted with them and be able to take care of them."

Well, Mr. Boxley, Fred Boxley, I later learned was with the law firm of Humphrey, Boxley and Reeves, and they were insurance lawyers. Senator Humphrey came from Kansas and was a State senator, and later Judge Reeves became the judge of the Federal Court in Kansas City. So Boxley said, "Rufe"--he called me Rufe because Truman called me Rufe--he said, "Rufe, I can't get along with the Republicans very well; they won't give me anything, I don't think. I just couldn't do any good with them. Can you make any contact with them?"

I said, "I think I can," and I did. I had friendly relations with them and they understood professionally what was going to have to be done and they told me and gave me the files. They showed me the lawsuits, and on several of them we did have to have briefs

[52]

filed in the early part of January. We wouldn't have had time if I had waited too long to get to them. So that's how I first got in with him.

And then after a time Truman visited with me and said, "We want to find some way we can take care of the funds, so we have a budget set up for the various offices. That's going to be a hard job, but we're going to have to see about getting that done. In addition to that, I have in mind a program for bonds for roads so we can have money to build some roads that will be lasting. Then we need to have a new courthouse in Kansas City, and I want to have some bonds for that. I want to have the courthouse in Independence rebuilt, worked over, and also the hospital set up with the home for the aged at Little Blue." He said, "We're going to have bonds for those." And he said, "You know, to get this done, I can't just go out and tell people that we have to have it; we've got to have workers in the precincts and have them alerted to the fact that we need to have it. The workers, both Goats and Rabbits, have to do it, and the Republicans have to do it, and I'm going to help sell it." He said, "Also, I have already talked to

[53]

Mr. Pendergast and let him know what I want to do, and he said, 'Harry, it's your job, you're running it, don't worry about me.'" Truman said, "I'm not worrying about you; I just wanted to let you know so you would know what I've got in mind, before you have any reason to make any question about it. Let me know if you've got any questions about it."

"Why, no," Pendergast said, "I told you that you run this job down here and that's what you're going to do. That's what I want you to do."

And then, Truman got around to the point and place of getting the bonds set up and he pointed out that he wanted to have 6 1/2 million dollars for road bonds. He told Mr. Pendergast that they were going to have two engineers, bipartisan engineers, a Democrat and a Republican, to oversee and see to it that the funds were spent like they should have been and that they had plans and

specifications for getting the best program they could for the roads. And he said, "I don't want to have somebody say that I'm getting direction from somebody else."

"Why," Pendergast said, "I told you you could do

[54]

that." He said, "In the first place I didn't think you could get those bonds carried, but you did; you go ahead and do it," and he did do it. And Mr. Pendergast never said a single word against what Truman did or what he wanted to have done.

He named the two engineers. One was Colonel Edward M. Stayton of Independence, who had been with the 110th Engineers, and had been in the National Guard before that, and Truman knew him. The other was a Republican, N.T. Veatch, commonly known as Tom Veatch in those earlier days. He was from the firm of Black and Veatch. That was a new firm without much background and much experience. Mr. Truman told Mr. Pendergast again that he was going to name them, and Pendergast said, "Why, I know Colonel Stayton and I know that he's a good engineer. That's fine. And I know of Mr. Veatch." He said, "Sure, I've told you that this is your show, you're running it, don't worry about me."

Truman said, "All right." And then told both of them what Mr. Pendergast had said. Stayton already had had a chance to be known by Mr. Pendergast from activities that related to the streetcar company. Stayton said,

[55]

"I want both of us to go down to see Mr. Pendergast to be sure that he doesn't have any reasons to oppose us or anything like that."

So they went down, and had a most friendly visit with him. And Pendergast said, "Yes, I told Harry that was his show and he said that he wanted to have you, and as far as I am concerned, you're going to run it the way he wants to run it. You'll never hear anything from me."

Stayton said, "Well, we're going to have roads and we're going to spend money for roads."

Pendergast said, "That's right, and if anybody who belongs to my group wants to have any roads they'll have to bid for them. If they don't bid for them, they don't get them, that's all there is to that.

They said, "That's right." And that's exactly the way it was.

Mr. Truman had me designated to be the counsel for the road program to acquire the right-of-way and to oversee the contracts and have the contracts properly bid for. They were to go to the bidders which were the lowest bidders, and I was to see to it that they carried out the bids under the direction of Stayton and Veatch.

[56]

It was done that way.

Later I learned that the contest for these bids was rather heated. Several bidders came in and bid for them, and one firm bid for them and had their bond put up and was about ready to go to work. But the bonding company wouldn't let them go through, because the contractor wasn't financially able to do it and they took it over themselves to carry it out because they wouldn't want to have this contractor get in there and run it in the hole. So they took it over. So that's the first thing that shows you how Stayton and Veatch operated. Then, there were two other contractors, I don't remember the names of them, but they got into financial trouble and weren't getting all of their bills and jobs paid for and so the bonding company had to take them over and see it through. Again, this is a demonstration that the roads were built according to the plans and specifications that Stayton and Veatch wrote up and provided for. The contractors did the work according to the way it should be done without getting additional monies left over if sometimes they had changes, which might add, say 10, 12, 20,000 dollars or more. Nothing like that happened at all; they just got exactly what they bid for and

[57]

that's all they got.

JOHNSON: No money under the table as far as you know?

BURRUS: That's right. And the same thing for the courthouse. They wanted a courthouse in Kansas City, and Mr. Truman wanted to put it where it is located now. There was another group that wanted to put it up where the Pickwick Hotel is located. Truman didn't want it there and they challenged what Truman was doing to the point that we weren't able to get all the ground assembled on time. So it caused a little delay, but it finally was done and the architects were the ones that made the plans and specifications and that was let for bid, and it was built as it should have been. In that whole program the architects had to pass upon the validity of the contracts and the way that they were carried out. That never exceeded the amount of the money that was appropriated for each one of them.

JOHNSON: There is a story about two contractors who supposedly were friends of Tom Pendergast, and they met with him down on Main Street one day and they said, "Now we want this job, part of the roads project." Then he brought in

[58]

Harry Truman, and he introduced these two and said that they're demanding part of the work. Then Truman was supposed to have replied, "Well, if they're low bidders, and if they meet specifications, they probably will get the work, but you know we're playing no favors." Do you recall anything about that incident?

BURRUS: I know about it by reading about it, but it never was anything we talked about because Truman always said that Mr. Pendergast wasn't in any way taking any part in it. That would be one of the things which showed that he wouldn't have done it, and didn't do it. I read what this fellow [Richard Miller] writes [in the Sunday supplement to the *Kansas City Star*]. He wasn't there when it happened and he doesn't say that he knows anybody that ever said that they were present when that happened.

JOHNSON: The *Kansas City Journal* seems to be a major source, but you're saying the *Kansas City Journal* is not a reliable source.

BURRUS: They weren't reliable because they were out just to hurt and destroy the *Star* and especially Mr. Truman, and also particularly McElroy. McElroy was vouched

[59]

for by the *Kansas City Star* and also the J.C. Nichols Company, I remember particularly. The *Star* was Democrat and they supported him, the *Star* did.

JOHNSON: He came in in '22 also, didn't he, McElroy? Wasn't he elected in '22?

BURRUS: He was elected a judge of the County Court Western District, served only two years and then he got out and got to be the City Manager of Kansas City. That's where he rode himself high with them.

JOHNSON: If we can back up just a little bit, you said that after Truman lost the election in 1924, you moved into a new kind of association with Truman; that is, you were involved in helping establish this Community Savings and Loan.

BURRUS: That's right. He was the one that sold the stock.

JOHNSON: Were you an officer in that?

BURRUS: I was attorney for them.

JOHNSON: You were attorney for them.

[60]

BURRUS: I was a member of the board, yes.

JOHNSON: So that's when you and Truman got much better acquainted I suppose.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did you have many meetings together?

BURRUS: We'd go out together and see property that he was going to make loans on and they wanted to make loans on.

JOHNSON: So you and he would go out to look at properties?

JOHNSON: That's right, and see some prospective folks that he wanted to get them...

JOHNSON: Were these mostly real estate loans?

BURRUS: Real estate loans, that's right. They were real estate loans.

JOHNSON: Would that just cover this area, or did he...

BURRUS: The Independence area generally.

JOHNSON: Did this expand his circle of acquaintances, so to speak?

[61]

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Get his name better known, or more widely known?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: So it would serve him later on in his political career, along with the National Roads Association?

BURRUS: It did serve him, that's right.

JOHNSON: Did you have anything to do with the roads association?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: Did you ever go out with him when he dedicated some of these Madonnas of the Trail?

BURRUS: No. I took care of things at home; I had plenty of things to do. In the first place, I wanted him to know I wanted to keep my own private practice. I said, that, hopefully, no more than one-third of my time would be devoted to the County Court and I thought I could do it in one-third of the time. But I wanted to be independent and if anybody wanted to relieve me of

[62]

my duties with the county, they could do that, and I would still have a law practice. He said that was a good thing to do, and just go ahead and do it. That's why I did it, and I didn't negotiate

particularly just for that purpose. I could limit myself to the point where I could take care of the things that I wanted to do in the time that was available, personally. I didn't go out on some of these things that we had out of town.

JOHNSON: One of the people that really became kind of publicly known as an enemy of Truman was Spencer Salisbury. What happened there? They apparently were both involved in setting up the Community Savings and Loan.

BURRUS: Salisbury was a battery commander in the 129th Field Artillery, and Truman knew him. Truman had him in his administration when he became Presiding Judge, as one of the purchasing agents, to purchase things for the county. In time he got to learning that Salisbury was not exactly doing the best job he should do in getting the best prices. He called Salisbury in and told him that he wasn't going to have him any longer. Salisbury got uppity, and Truman said, "Well,

[63]

just pick up your papers and leave." He just relieved him of the duty; that's what he did with him. That's how that happened. Salisbury then always carried a vengeance against Truman.

JOHNSON: That happened after Truman was elected Presiding Judge?

BURRUS: That's right. And he had been named as assistant purchasing agent.

JOHNSON: Well, how did they get together in establishing this Community Savings and Loan? That was kind of a joint venture?

BURRUS: That's right. Salisbury helped him to get the money, and Truman was helping to get money to run it. For the day-to-day operation Salisbury was there, and there were a couple of other clerks, and that's where they got along. But finally Salisbury came up with the idea that especially after he was relieved from being county purchasing agent, he was going to take over all of that and he just edged Truman out of it.

JOHNSON: Okay, he kind of forced Truman out of this business,

[64]

out of the Community Savings and Loan.

BURRUS: That's right. Not only out of that but out of the insurance agency that they had.

JOHNSON: Was that doing Truman a favor in that the Depression came soon afterwards?

BURRUS: That's right. He was able to get out of all of that, and he had plenty of other things to do.

JOHNSON: What happened to the Community Savings and Loan after that?

BURRUS: Well, Salisbury was the cause of it having to be liquidated.

JOHNSON: The stock market crash and the Depression--wouldn't you blame it on that?

BURRUS: No, that wasn't all of it.

JOHNSON: That wasn't the key.

BURRUS: Salisbury had done some things that he shouldn't have done with respect to the families that had difficulties with him. He was indicted on Federal offenses,

[65]

which neither Truman nor I had anything to do with. It was just Salisbury, that was all. As far as Salisbury and I are concerned, we never had any difficulties. I knew him and it made me sad though to see things happen, that I know he shouldn't have done. He didn't lean on me and didn't ask me, and I didn't try to tell him anything because he just wasn't going to listen to anybody I knew. He didn't listen to Henry Bundschu. Henry Bundschu had gotten things to the point and place where he could patch up the troubles Salisbury had with a family, about some funds, and also things involving the Federal Government. But Salisbury would have to do certain things, and he said, "I won't do it."

Henry said, "Well, Spence, I'm sorry if you won't. I can't help you anymore." He had to fade out of the picture too.

JOHNSON: Of course, another issue and that's come up again in this new book, was Mr. Truman's debts from the haberdashery. Did he ever talk to you about these? How do you recall that he handled the situation?

BURRUS: Of course, I read in his book which goes into great length, specifically.

[66]

JOHNSON: His *Memoirs*.

BURRUS: That's right.

He and Jacobson had a good business, and they had a good inventory of merchandise that they were stuck with when the crash came in the twenties, and they couldn't sell it, just couldn't move it. So they finally had to dispose of it at a loss. The loss was considerable, and Jacobson finally went into bankruptcy but Truman wouldn't go into bankruptcy. He said, "I want to keep on paying." Truman assured me and I did know that he had been paying. According to his book he said he had been paying, and I knew that there was a note that was floating around that he had signed that had to do with, I think, a lease on the property that was in a bank that had failed. I

knew that his brother, Vivian, bought that note from the bank receivers at the price they would sell it for, because nobody wanted to buy it. It just wasn't salable. And that was how that was all taken care of, and so there wasn't any bankruptcy. There wasn't any threat of bankruptcy, just the mere fact that he wasn't able to pay. He paid quite a lot of various payments according to what he says in his

[67]

Memoirs, and I take that as being more authentic than what some other fellow writes.

JOHNSON: In his book, Richard Miller says that since Truman was a judge on the County Court his salary could not be garnished.

BURRUS: That's true.

JOHNSON: And therefore the creditors couldn't hound him like they hounded Jacobson.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: What kind of weight do you give to that?

BURRUS: I don't give it any, because as Presiding Judge, Truman earned $6,000 a year, $500 a month. He had his family debts and family members to take care of and he had obligations like that. So he did not leave a lot of money, but he did take part of it and did apply part of it, making it unnecessary to be garnished.

JOHNSON: Do you know if he ever had to help with a mortgage on the farm? That farm was mortgaged apparently to pay off claims of his mother's brothers and sisters.

[68]

BURRUS: The farm was in the family name, his mother and his sisters and other folks. There would have been times when they didn't have any profits from crops, and still there would have been interest to pay on the loan that they had against the property, and they couldn't pay it. And they couldn't pay the taxes.

So Vivian made an arrangement for a loan from the school fund. Harry had nothing to do with that; he was in the Senate. It had to be administered by the County Court, and an award on that had to have two signers that were individually said to be worth the amount of the money besides the value of the property itself. And it was worth it. But the interest grew and the mother wasn't able to pay, because there wasn't the income to pay for it. So the result was that they foreclosed that mortgage, the county did, after Truman had been a Senator for several years.

JOHNSON: They foreclosed in 1940.

BURRUS: That's right. So in the process of making the sale, they tried to say Mr. Truman was the one that was the cause of it and hadn't paid it. Truman wasn't; he had nothing to do with it. He wasn't the county judge at the time;

[69]

it was Vivian that made it with the school district.

JOHNSON: So it's your impression that farming was not very profitable in the 1920s, that prices were low?

BURRUS: That's right, that's right. Prices were low, the lowest we ever had to that time. Some of them today are getting close to what it was then.

JOHNSON: Yes, it's getting bad today. As far as you could tell, there was no real income from the farm that went to Harry Truman.

BURRUS: No. No.

JOHNSON: All of his income was from the county court job?

BURRUS: When they foreclosed the mortgage, friends of Vivian's and also Harry's bought the property at the sale, paid off the loan, and finally the mother and her family were able to pay it off and dispose of it. But it wasn't anybody except friends that did it for him, and they knew the value of the land. The land was worth it and finally the time came when you could sell land, and you could get something out of it. Development

[70]

began in that neighborhood in Grandview, where they had the farm, and part of the farm became the Truman Corners shopping center.

JOHNSON: Instead of declaring bankruptcy, he settled with each of his creditors. But that doesn't mean he settled dollar for dollar does it?

BURRUS: Most of it was; some of it wasn't. For instance, the note of whatever was left over was in the hands of a bankrupt bank, and the trustee was wanting to sell it. Vivian bought it, and paid the price the bank wanted for it. I would say that it wasn't Harry that was able to gain from it; it was that the bank wasn't willing to hold it until Truman could pay it all, but he paid most of them.

JOHNSON: Well now after 1930-31, there was kind of deflation; that is, the value of the dollar actually went up, so I suppose it would be true that if you were paying 1920s debts in the 1930s you were paying in more expensive dollars. That would make it even harder, I suppose, to repay debts that had been incurred before 1930?

[71]

BURRUS: That's right. That's right.

JOHNSON: As far as you understand, when did he finally finish payments on his debts?

BURRUS: He tells in his book here that that last note was with Vivian, when Vivian bought it at the sale of that bankrupt bank.

JOHNSON: Were you ever a patron, or a customer at the store--at the haberdashery?

BURRUS: No. I stopped by there, I guess but never...

JOHNSON: Never bought anything there? No souvenirs that we could have?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: So then in the '26 election you helped get him reelected as Presiding Judge.

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was your campaigning any different from 1922 when it was on the precinct level? Were you more involved in the '26 campaign than you had been in '22?

[72]

BURRUS: No. I was surprised though when he called me in and had me made assistant county counselor. I had no idea that he was going to do that. I didn't do it for any other purpose, than that it just was the ordinary thing to do. He knew that I was able and he learned what I knew about the county government in 1922 when he was there. And I kept track of things as we went along, because I'd have matters that came up before the County Court.

JOHNSON: You had a general practice in your legal work?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: You were named Assistant County Counsellor in 1927.

BURRUS: I was what they called <u>the</u> assistant, because there was only a counselor and one assistant for two years, and I was the assistant. Then later they commenced to have others put in as assistants. They were just assistants, not <u>the</u> assistant.

JOHNSON: Did you later become chief counselor?

BURRUS: No, no.

[73]

JOHNSON: Did you sit in the County Court room during the sessions?

BURRUS: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: You had a chair and a desk over on the west side?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: So you got in on those sessions then?

BURRUS: And before the sessions, he would discuss and see what agreements and contracts were proper and right and whether or not the action that was going to be taken was legal. I would give him advice on whether it was legal for them to do what they wanted to do.

JOHNSON: They had an agenda, I suppose, for each meeting, and then they opened up for questions from the people that were there?

BURRUS: Well, it wasn't called an agenda. They just said that they were going to open up court, and if people wanted to come in that were there, why, they would listen to them. In the meantime, they had various vouchers that had already been seen, and Truman had learned that these

[74]

associate judges had seen them and passed them over, and all he had to do was put his name on them. That made it official for them to have warrants, and then they would have the warrants issued and he would sign the warrants. And he had to sign the county ledgers or the county records about what was done each day that the clerk put into the record.

JOHNSON: The clerk did keep the minutes of these sessions?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Where are these minutes?

BURRUS: They're in the county courthouse. I guess they're still there.

JOHNSON: Was a lot of what went on not predictable? Are you saying that they weren't sure what kind of questions were going to come up, and they would refer to you frequently then for a legal opinion?

BURRUS: That's right. The folks in the audience that had something that they wanted to take up before the county court were told to come on up. They would then tell

[75]

the Court what they wanted to have done or want them to do.

JOHNSON: Beforehand?

BURRUS: You might have known it beforehand, but they were up there making it public what they wanted to have done. The other two judges, or all three of them, would either agree, or else they would take it under advisement and discuss and see what should be done. Especially if you had to have some actions or contracts made, why, we'd have to see to it that the contracts were properly documented and properly advertised, and weren't just spontaneously given to somebody.

JOHNSON: Now somewhere there's a statement that supposedly Truman made, that he was the one that had to do most of the responsible work, that the other two would even play craps behind the table. Is that just a rumor, or is there any fact to that?

BURRUS: I never saw them shooting craps. They may have, but I never did see it. I don't know anything about it except what I've been reading later about it.

[76]

The Clerk, being authorized by the vote of the three judges, made the minutes, and he wrote the record up and it was circulated to the other two judges and Truman for signature.

JOHNSON: The usual business involved warrants apparently, and signing these warrants. What kind of incidents, or episodes, might come up?

BURRUS: On the road contracts, the vouchers made by the contractors had to be submitted to the engineers to be approved. The engineers had to audit them to see to it that the quantities were proper, and the price was proper, that the work was approved, and it was within the amount of the contract. Well, that was more or less bookkeeping. Finally Stayton and Veatch had the responsibility of seeing to it that they were proper and put their endorsement on them. Truman, as Presiding Judge, and the other two judges of the Court could then approve and write warrants for what they were entitled to have.

In addition to that, it was necessary to get the right-of-way for widening a lot of roads, because

[77]

some of them were too narrow. Some of them had to go through virgin land. It was my job to see to it that the engineers got the descriptions of the land that had to be taken for the right-of-way for widening. Then the county had to negotiate with the landowners. After negotiation, they could arrive at what they thought was reasonable, and if it was they would submit it to me and I'd look at it too. We'd then talk with the Court and they'd know what was being done. Sometimes we had to go with eminent domain proceedings to acquire the right-of-way. I had to prepare the

documents for acquisition and filing and so on, and to have documents published in the papers like they should be, to see if there were claims. If claims were made, why they had opportunities to have hearings. Finally, I had to get the thing resolved, to get the widening that they needed to have, and to get the new roads that they needed to have.

JOHNSON: The point is made sometimes that the Trumans were not paid for the right-of-way through their farm. I suppose this is that Blue Ridge Boulevard Extension.

BURRUS: No, they were not paid.

[78]

JOHNSON: Were farmers in general not paid for right-of-way?

BURRUS: That's right. Most of them were wanting the roads because it was something that was of benefit to them. They could be paid in kind, which increased the value, or paid in cash if there were actual damages.

JOHNSON: Well, who would you pay then for the right-of-way? What kind of businesses or individuals?

BURRUS: Well, for instance, if you had a business property and you had been up close to where the business was located, and they diminished your ability to have their right-of-way, the rights to use your land, they would pay them whatever would be the difference. But generally that was only done in cases where the advice of engineers and also of realtors was that the property had suffered damages. Occasionally, we had some lawsuits to handle.

In addition to that, the State Highway Commission was in charge of the state highways, and they wanted the county to furnish additional right-of-way for them. Mr. Truman said, "If I'm going to furnish you the right-of-way, I want that to be done under my counselor's direction." He wanted to know that the work needed to

[79]

be done and that we paid only what was proper for us to pay. That was my job. There was Highway 24, Highway 40, Highway 50, and Highway 71--those were the state highways. I maintained all those actions for them under the name of the State Highway Department. The State Highway Department named me to represent them but I was being compensated by the county for it. We did that. Mr. Truman would say that what we need to do with these people is not to give them the least dollar, but give them the best dollar that we could. We don't want to take something away from them.

We only had to try five cases, involving all these various roads. And on all five of them I won no-damage verdicts, except for one that resulted in an award of $500. In that case, a fellow had a barn on 50 Highway and we didn't think his barn was hurt like he said it was. But the jury allowed him $500.

JOHNSON: So you were able to get by without paying very much for the right-of-ways?

BURRUS: That's right, because they were benefited. Some cases were held over though for a long time. When I came back home from duty in World War II, some of those

[80]

cases were still on the docket.

JOHNSON: Did this become full-time work?

BURRUS: No, that was only part-time.

JOHNSON: You're still doing your general law practice in addition to this.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: How many hours a day would you be working on that?

BURRUS: Oh, it would be different by the day, but it didn't have to be more than one-third of my whole time.

JOHNSON: You had some long days I would suppose.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: A lot of people were unemployed or underemployed, but maybe you were "over-employed."

BURRUS: Well, I was gone five years, you know, and I came back home and I noticed that some of these lawsuits were still here. And they said, "Yes, why don't you take them over?" One of them, in particular, involved Number 7 and 40 Highway. There was a man named Speas,

[81]

the Speas Vinegar Company, that had the land. He didn't want them to take the site distances off of his corner. He didn't want that to happen, and he opposed it and litigated, and said we didn't have the right to take it. So I filed the suit, and finally it went to the appellate court and I won it, although R.R. Brewster's firm was on the other side. It was not hostile by the way, but just had to go through that process. Finally, it did, and they said that we should have it.

Well, there was another one that nobody took over; the thing was left to lay there, and hadn't been finished. When I came back they wanted me to finish that one. I said, "All right!" and I got hold of Mr. Speas and the venegar people and I told them what I was representing. I said, "Let's see if we can settle this. Could I come down and see you?" "I wish you would." And so I went

down to see him and we talked it over and agreed on a few hundred dollars, and we paid it and got rid of it. So that's just how we got some of them taken care of. We didn't really take his land, because they didn't need it. They changed the right-of-way because of

[82]

other things that happened. But I did represent the county to that extent through the Highway Commission.

JOHNSON: We mentioned a little bit about your military career, but I think we need to pick up on that. You said that you were classed as a veteran because of your involvement with the training corps.

BURRUS: I attended the troop school that Truman had and I had to also make up lessons, or correspondence lessons, necessary to complete requirements for second lieutenant and first lieutenant.

JOHNSON: What did Truman have to do with this?

BURRUS: He was commander of the 443rd Regiment that I belonged to, as an enlisted man.

JOHNSON: An Army Reserve unit.

BURRUS: It was in the Reserve, yes.

JOHNSON: When did you join up with that?

BURRUS: That was in 1927, I think it was.

JOHNSON: Okay, when you became Assistant Counselor you got

[83]

into the military and there you had another connection with Harry Truman.

BURRUS: That's right. And so I did the work, and got commissioned as a second lieutenant. Then I had to do further work to qualify myself as a first lieutenant, and I did that.

JOHNSON: Where did you do this training?

BURRUS: Well, we had meetings where the 110th engineers met over on Main Street, about 35th and Main.

JOHNSON: Was this an armory?

BURRUS: An armory, yes. We had a building right next to it, that we had our activities in.

JOHNSON: Was this just in the summer?

BURRUS: No, it was in the fall and winter; in the summer time we went to Ft. Riley.

JOHNSON: Was that two weeks?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: During the rest of the year how often were your meetings?

[84]

BURRUS: We would meet once a week.

JOHNSON: What night of the week?

BURRUS: It was Monday nights mostly.

JOHNSON: You would go down to the armory and you'd work on whatever you needed to do to qualify. First you were a second lieutenant and then you were promoted to first?

BURRUS: Yes. I was first lieutenant when I was called to duty in 1941. I was still a first lieutenant because I hadn't gotten all my correspondence lessons done to qualify me for a captaincy.

They notified me with a letter in April that I was called to duty, and I said, "All right." But I again knew that I was going to have to get this done, so I started to get a good many of my lessons finished.

Well, I was called to duty and went down to Jefferson Barracks, in St. Louis. At the headquarters down there was an officer from Kansas City, and I went to him and said, "I've got to find these lessons and they don't seem to be in print. Can you find them so I can

[85]

get them and get my lessons done so that I can get qualified?"

He said, "Sure we can," and they did. I used those when I was down there and I got qualified for captain after I had already been transferred to Ft. Leonard Wood. At Ft. Leonard Wood I was first assigned to be adjutant of the 6th Division Artillery; that called for a first lieutenantcy. After I got my work done, they gave me a captaincy and then they said, "You're entitled to a battery now." They tied me to Battery C, 51st Field Artillery, which I commanded until I was transferred from there to Boston, to the first service command.

JOHNSON: When did you take command of this battery?

BURRUS: In 1942.

JOHNSON: After Pearl Harbor.

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: After Pearl Harbor you became captain and commander of this battery and that lasted how long?

BURRUS: Until sometime in the fall when I was sent to Boston. I was sent to Boston with the purpose of

[86]

being sent overseas, but they changed the plan and they kept me there for a time. But I did go overseas, and I got there I think in 1943. I spent altogether over seas 27 months--13 months in Africa and 14 months in Italy.

JOHNSON: What outfits were you with then?

BURRUS: I was with what they called the Service Commands in North Africa, which were furnishing all the things that they had to have, rations and...

JOHNSON: Was this with the 35th Division?

BURRUS: No, just the headquarters of the whole regiment. We were the housekeeping outfit that was in charge of it.

JOHNSON: But you were attached to various commands.

BURRUS: We had the area command, and that was under a general. Each one of the services was under that, but I was an artilleryman so they transferred me to the Quartermaster Corps.

JOHNSON: In North Africa you mean?

[87]

BURRUS: In North Africa. When I got over to Italy, I was transferred and assigned to the Transportation Corps, to ports and harbors.

JOHNSON: To back up a bit. When did you first go to Ft. Riley for a summer session?

BURRUS: That was as a civilian with Truman in 1926 or '27, I forget which.

JOHNSON: You went out there as a civilian with Harry Truman?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: And what was the reason for that?

BURRUS: Well, he wanted me to get qualified so I could become an officer, and that was what he was doing. He was to get me started into the classes. That's how I met John Snyder, Harry Vaughan, and...

JOHNSON: How about Edward McKim?

BURRUS: Eddie McKim. Truman picked Ed McKim up on the day he took me out as a civilian to Ft. Riley. He was a lieutenant, first lieutenant. He was from Kansas City.

[88]

JOHNSON: He was from Kansas City at the time. He moved up to Omaha later I guess.

BURRUS: Right.

JOHNSON: So, he picked you up and then he picked up McKim, then you went out to Ft. Riley. You spent two weeks out there kind of following the drills?

BURRUS: Right.

JOHNSON: Was Truman an instructor in artillery methods?

BURRUS: He was the commander of the unit but they had also instructors, Regular Army instructors, a couple of them, and also the other officers would act as instructors.

JOHNSON: What outfit was this again?

BURRUS: I think they called the 443rd. It was a regiment.

JOHNSON: He was in command of that?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did they still have the horses and horse-drawn caissons?

[89]

BURRUS: That's right, that's right.

JOHNSON: You had to know how to handle horses then, too.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Was that new to you?

BURRUS: It was. I learned to ride and in draft with a colonel who was from Nebraska. His associate was with him too; he was a colonel and the other one was a lieutenant colonel. The lieutenant colonel was Dwight Griswold. He became the Governor of Nebraska, and later Mr. Truman named him to be in command of the mission to Turkey and Greece. And he did that because he was a good officer and he was doing a good job, and he was a Republican and didn't have all the things that would slop over, with people saying Truman was favoring Democrats. But he was good. The other colonel was a newspaperman up there in northwestern Nebraska, and I got to know his nephew who was a lawyer. He became the counsel and later head of the Government agency that had to do with price control, I believe it was.

JOHNSON: OPA, Office of Price Administration?

[90]

BURRUS: No, it was under the price control. I don't remember what it was, but he was in charge of that.

JOHNSON: Were you at Ft. Riley almost every summer after that?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did they go to Wisconsin, just once?

BURRUS: They went up to Camp Ripley, in 1933 I think it was.

JOHNSON: Were you up there for that too then?

BURRUS: That's right, two weeks up there.

JOHNSON: But the rest of the time it was...

BURRUS: Ft. Riley. One time, I think we were at Leavenworth.

JOHNSON: When you look back on that training what do you think you got out of it, your training in the Reserves?

BURRUS: First thing, I think I learned a lot of things that had to do with how you get along with people, that

[91]

was one thing. The next thing I learned was how to take care of myself and keep myself in good physical condition, which I prided myself in doing then, and I still do because I have to be able to do things today at my age that most folks don't do.

JOHNSON: Was it just general training or did you specialize?

BURRUS: Well, at Riley you had to do all those things that had to do with battery commanders--selection of positions, conduct of fire, the ability to see that you have your men at proper places, see that they put out the wires that you had for telephone and all that. One summer I said I wanted to get away from the telephones at home and the office; I went out there and was put in charge of land telephone wires and establishing phone services.

JOHNSON: Communications.

BURRUS: That's right. It took us a whole day to get the wires and stuff picked up again and to get rid of it.

JOHNSON: As well as driving or riding horses, and firing being able to plot your fire.

[92]

BURRUS: That's right. Being able to conduct the fire in accordance with the instructions that you were given; to have a bracket forward and back and laterally and then when you get the brackets down to the lowest equivalent, then you fire for affect.

JOHNSON: Was there talk about tactics that were changing? You know, the Maginot line was a failure in Europe in the late thirties. Was there much talk about Blitzkrieg tactics? Did they realize the role the tanks would play?

BURRUS: Not until I got called to duty in 1941 did I learn about that. I remember on one occasion that they had us assembled for the purpose of giving instruction about the conduct of the fire of anti-aircraft. You were supposed to set up a battery that you could fire from a distance away and control the fire without being presently with the guns. That was explained to us in great detail and so we used it. The next day we were assembled again and they said, "Forget everything you've learned over here the other day; you never saw it or heard it." They said, "That was secret, you're not supposed to know anything about it." Then I got overseas and then I began to see what was going on over there, and I knew what to

[93]

expect from the batteries that were protecting our installations where we were in North Africa and in Italy.

JOHNSON: How long were you in Boston when they transferred you there?

BURRUS: I went there just before Armistice Day in November 1942 and I got out of there in January following, and went over to North Africa.

JOHNSON: Where did you land in North Africa? Was it Oran, Casablanca, or...

BURRUS: At Oran. Then up finally to Latour and...

JOHNSON: Did you ever see General Patton?

BURRUS: No, but I remember an instance with him. He was there with his outfit and they had guns and trucks and vehicles, and these were needed for forward use. So the theatre commander took all of them away from Patton, because they had some more coming that was going to be delivered to him, and the commander had us take charge of giving materiel to those going to the front. We had

[94]

to get those from Patton, and somebody said, "Well, we won't take Patton's away from him." But Patton said, "Yes, you take mine too, take them all, take them all." And they did; they took his equipment and he was without a vehicle for two or three days before they finally got some of them issued out to them. That's how I knew about Patton.

JOHNSON: I suppose now we could get back to Truman's run for the Senate. First, is there anything more about his years as Presiding Judge that you think that we should mention? We talked about roads and right-of-way, about a new home for the indigent...

BURRUS: I'll give a little story about that because I say that's one of the things that signifies that Truman had compassion for people. Those poor folks that were in the home out there didn't have a hospital. And he wanted $500,000 used to establish a hospital, and they did. That was the nucleus of what today is the Truman Medical Center East. They also have what they call Bess Truman's wing or some such thing.

JOHNSON: That's off of south Noland Road, isn't it?

[95]

BURRUS: Out there at Little Blue, that's right. As I say, in those days we didn't have Medicare, and you didn't have Social Security. That's what finally was developed, but before they could do that he established what was like Medicare himself for folks that had to be taken care of, and was needing it. Those that needed the care got it.

JOHNSON: Where do you think he got this compassion or sense of compassion?

BURRUS: He was naturally that way. It was just a natural trait with him. That came from his mother and his father and his brothers and his sisters, the family.

JOHNSON: Do you think the Baptist...

BURRUS: The Masonic Lodge was another place that he got it.

JOHNSON: The Masonic Lodge. Did he impress you as a fairly committed or active Baptist Church member?

BURRUS: He kept his membership always at Grandview, but while he lived there on Delaware Street he would go over to the Baptist Church there on...

[96]

JOHNSON: Oh, the First Baptist.

BURRUS: Yes, there on the end of Pleasant Street and Truman Road. He wasn't a regular member, but he would go in. Also that minister was one that officiated at his last funeral service. He was the one that was on the platform and officiated for Truman; also he had the chief of chaplains, and he had the Masonic chaplain.

JOHNSON: Were you there when they dedicated the courthouses and Truman gave speeches?

BURRUS: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: What was your first impressions of him as a speechmaker?

BURRUS: I really had been with him when we would more or less informally talk about things, but I don't remember any particular things about his speeches.

JOHNSON: Of course, you were in the courthouse when he would talk to the public there. And that was more or less informal too.

BURRUS: There wasn't any formal speech that he would make.

[97]

JOHNSON: What seemed to come across to his audiences when he spoke?

BURRUS: It would be that he knew what he was speaking about, and that he was sincere in what he was trying to impress upon them. He wanted to help people come to a viewpoint that he thought would be good for them, and show them why they should arrive at that viewpoint.

JOHNSON: Would you say that he did his homework well, that he had the facts?

BURRUS: He had the background and the facts, and all that sort of thing; there wasn't any question about it.

JOHNSON: So they didn't just judge him by his oratorical abilities; they were judging by content more than style, I suppose.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: He went to law school for two years at the Kansas City School of Law.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: And you were acquainted with him at that time.

[98]

Did you ever help him with his homework?

BURRUS: Well, I'll tell you this. You know he used the library at the courthouse in Independence for his work that he had to do for the school. People would see a light up there and the folks knew that he was up there and they'd come in the courthouse and bother him, and he couldn't get his work done. They would just harass him to the point he couldn't get the homework done. I said to him one day, "Here's a key to our office; come across the street and use our library over there, my dad's and mine. Nobody will know you're over there and you can get the same books and you can work on it and get it done over there." And he did. Then it got to the place where he couldn't go over there without people coming over and bothering him. While he was going to school, the work that he needed to have researched he did there in my own library, where we have the *Missouri Reports* and the *Court of Appeals Reports* and the statutes and the digests and things.

JOHNSON: So that's another way in which you got better acquainted with him.

[99]

BURRUS: That's right. And another thing, he learned that I had my petition into the Masonic Lodge, McDonald Lodge 324. My next door neighbor was the master of the Lodge; he and I were in school together. He was just a year ahead of me. We also were in the Army in 1918 together.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

BURRUS: Caldwell, Thomas Caldwell. I got my first and second degrees and was up to get my third degree. I was sitting there and I heard the voice of Truman, who I didn't know was going to be there. And I said, "Oh, oh, I expect he'll confer that third degree for me." So sure enough, he had claimed the privilege of conferring the third degree on me and he came in and did that for me and conferred that third degree on me.

JOHNSON: Where did that happen?

BURRUS: The McDonald Lodge in Independence.

JOHNSON: In Independence here. So, you became a Mason, became a fellow officer in the Reserve...

[100]

BURRUS: And then after that I made my petition to the Scottish Rite, and became a Scottish Rite Mason. I got a petition to be a Shriner, and he was active in all of those too.

JOHNSON: What year was it that you joined the Masons?

BURRUS: I think it was 1927.

JOHNSON: So a lot of things are happening right around then.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: I suppose you did visit the Trumans in their home at 219?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you recall your first visit inside the house?

BURRUS: It was in the 1930s, I think, that I was there first. I went there because the nurse who was taking care of Margaret was going to be the nurse to take care of Mrs. Burrus with our son. So I went by to see her and let her know what was going on and all of that. Mrs. Truman knew what was going on, and Harry knew that we were going to have this good lady.

[101]

JOHNSON: What was her name, the nurse?

BURRUS: We called her KiKi, Edna Kilnoman.

JOHNSON: Was Margaret sick at this point?

BURRUS: She took care of Margaret as a child and also when she was ill a few times.

JOHNSON: A nursemaid.

BURRUS: That's right. My son was born in February.

JOHNSON: Of what year?

BURRUS: Of 1933, I believe it was.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

BURRUS: Rufus II. Just have the one son. One child.

JOHNSON: One child and how many grandchildren?

BURRUS: Three grandsons. The oldest one is 22 now; he's in school in New York at Columbia University. The middle one--he's 21 now--he is in the Parsons School of Art and Design. He went last year to a school in Paris for them; he's back now.

[102]

JOHNSON: What's his name?

BURRUS: His name is Daniel Madison.

JOHNSON: How about your oldest grandson?

BURRUS: James Monroe. After my grandfather.

JOHNSON: How about the youngest?

BURRUS: His name is David Andrew. He's a junior in school this year, high school.

JOHNSON: Were you ever invited over to the Trumans for dinner?

BURRUS: Well, I think a time or two for lunch. We'd sit in the kitchen at the breakfast table, and many times I'd come in in the morning and he would say, "Sit down and I'll give you rolls and coffee." I'd say, "All right," and I did.

JOHNSON: Does the kitchen look the same now as it did the first time you remember seeing it?

BURRUS: I haven't seen it lately, since they've been doing things to it.

[103]

JOHNSON: Haven't you toured that house?

BURRUS: No, I haven't gone there since she died.

JOHNSON: Is that right?

BURRUS: The reason I don't want to is because I just feel like it won't quite be the way I want to see it.

JOHNSON: It's a very plain kitchen.

BURRUS: Just plain.

JOHNSON: And a very nice dining room.

BURRUS: That's right. When I'd go there to see him during the time that he was here as President, on Saturday he'd be there. He first was up here, and I'd come up here to the Library and see him. But then it got to the place where he didn't come to the Library, and was at home and I went on Saturdays to see him, 11 o'clock in the morning. I'd come to the back door, generally, through the back door from the back yard, and come through the kitchen, through the breakfast room, and over to the north room where he and Bess would be. We'd visit there. And then, after he was gone, I went back because Bess

[104]

was there and I'd be with her.

JOHNSON: In 1934 he ran for the Senate. Did you have any advice for him, or did he ever ask you for advice on whether or not to run for the Senate?

BURRUS: Later on he did. When I was on military duty at Ft. Leonard Wood, and other places, he would write me letters about what was the activity down there. What did I know about what the carpenters were doing, what the contractors were doing. He said to just take a look around, and write me a letter. And I did. To that extent I'd give him advice. He'd ask me to go look for him.

JOHNSON: Is this after he became chairman of the Truman Committee investigating the defense program?

BURRUS: Some of it was and some of it was before that time too. I always remember that one time he wrote me a letter and said that there was a captain that was the son of a friend of his in Kansas City, a doctor by the name of Wallace Graham. He said his father knows he's out there at the 6th Division and he's

[105]

taking care of the sick, lame and lazy, and it happens to be a colored regiment. He said they don't think that he's been given the opportunities to act in his best capacity. He's a good surgeon, and he ought to be in a hospital. So look around and see what you can about what is happening down there.

So I went over and got acquainted with Wallace. He was looking after those folks over there, taking care of them like a doctor would do. I didn't tell him what I was doing down there except just let him know that I came from Independence, and knew Senator Truman. He smiled about

that. I said, "Heck, I knew your father too; he was active in the Reserve over in Kansas City that I was with."

"That's fine."

Well, I wrote back and also went to the Post Commander. The Post surgeon was in charge of the hospital, Vandenboget was his name. I said, "Now, you've got a captain over there that's a good surgeon and he ought to be over with you." He said, "I know him; he's going to come over here in a little while. We're going to have some folks transferred away. I have him over there because I need him over there,

[106]

but he will be coming over here." And sure enough he did. He just turned out to be one of the best surgeons under Vandeboget. Vandeboget finally was sent to the Philippines and he was on the death march over there.

JOHNSON: Was this at Leonard Wood now?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Where Wallace Graham was a surgeon working with a Black outfit.

BURRUS: That's right. They were just new recruits.

Another thing that happened involved the colonel of the regiment that I was with; it was Battery C of the 51st, and Alexander Quintard was his name. He came from Sewanee, Tennessee; he was a Regular Army officer. He was a lean sort of a fellow and he smoked a pipe and he was a good battalion commander. I was battery commander of C Battery for him. In time he was called to go away, and was sent to the Philippines. I helped him get his things together and get on the train, and bid him goodbye. I never heard about him for some little time after that. Then I learned that he had been

[107]

on the death march. I happened to run across Mike Quinn in Kansas City, who was the Quartermaster Depot commander over there, and he had been in that death march. One day I had lunch with him and I said, "Mike, did you ever know Alexander Quintard, Colonel Alexander?"

"Did you know him?"

"Well, where did you know him?"

I said, "Well, he was my battalion commander in the 6th Division, and I helped put him on the train and sent him overseas."

"Yes," he said, "he and I were bunk mates." He said he stood that ordeal better than anybody else because the matter of dirt and filth and things didn't hurt him because he was impervious to all of that. He said, "He did well with that."

And I said, "Well, what happened?"

And he said, "He went back to Sewanee, Tennessee."

Well, I wrote to him and never did get any answer back from him. Whether he was there or not I never did find out, but that was what happened to Quintard. That's how you happen to remember people.

Another one of our officers was over in Kansas

[108]

City in the Reserve. He was a lieutenant colonel and he wanted to be a star general. He was an artillery officer. He transferred from the artillery to the infantry, and he got to be an eagle colonel. He then was transferred and went over to the Philippines, and he was in command of a group of natives over there, about a thousand. They went out on one occasion, on a foray to make contact with the enemy, and they just absolutely disappeared. Nobody saw them or heard from them, didn't know what happened to them. It was nearly a year after that that finally it came through the Red Cross that he was over there in that fight and lived. He finally was able to get back to the States after the surrender.

JOHNSON: Was this a guerilla action against the Japanese?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Was Truman still attending the summer training camps?

BURRUS: He did as a Senator a time or two, but he didn't do it too many times. He just couldn't get around to

[109]

get it all done. Also, he didn't think he ought to be doing that when he had some other officers that had ought to be in charge. That's what he did really after he came to be a Senator.

JOHNSON: Did Truman ever say that Pendergast had anything to do with influencing his decision to run for the Senate in 1934?

BURRUS: No. He knew if he was nominated, Democrat organizations would all support him.

JOHNSON: Of course, he was already known for supporting the New Deal at this point.

BURRUS: Yes, that's right. I went with him when he was campaigning for reelection to the Senate, after his first term.

JOHNSON: Did you have any involvement in that first campaign that he ran for the Senate, in 1934, the hot summer?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: You were not involved in that particular campaign?

[110]

BURRUS: No. I say not involved. I think I did go down to Sedalia and help run the office down there once in a while, but not really involved with it.

JOHNSON: Did you know Fred Canfil pretty well?

BURRUS: Yes. I knew him as well as anybody knows Fred.

JOHNSON: Is that right? What do you remember about Fred Canfil?

BURRUS: Well, we knew him first out at Ft. Riley. He was a cavalryman, and he was a loudmouth sort of a fellow, sort of officious, and he latched on towards Truman. Truman paid a little attention to him. Then when Truman got to be Senator, he needed somebody to be sort of a "hatchetman" for him. Canfil's the kind of fellow you'd sic off on to them and he'd get it done. He wouldn't do it the most kindly sort of way, and the way that would be nonoffensive, but he would get the job done. So that is what he did with Canfil.

JOHNSON: I guess Canfil was sort of a chauffeur for him; he drove him around in that campaign of 1934.

BURRUS: He drove around with him, that's right.

[111]

JOHNSON: And he became marshal of the Federal Building.

BURRUS: United States Marshal of the Kansas City District. That's when Truman was over as President and he had an occasion to be with Marshal Stalin; he referred to Canfil as a marshal, and that made Stalin perk up because marshal to him was way up above a general. But then Truman had a great lot of fun kidding Canfil about being marshal.

JOHNSON: Did you ever visit Truman in Washington when he was Senator? Did you ever go out and visit him in his office while he was Senator?

BURRUS: I did. Right after he got in his office, I went there to Washington and went to his office. He had a stack of photographs that he opened up and he said, "This just came in." He said, "I'll give you one off the top," and he did; he autographed it and I've got it on the wall now.

JOHNSON: One of his campaign portraits?

BURRUS: It was one after his campaign. When he autographed it he said, "I made a mistake on that; I should have

[112]

put the date on," but he never did put the date on it.

JOHNSON: But you weren't there for his swearing-in?

BURRUS: No. I sent him a boutonniere that I wanted him to wear.

JOHNSON: Did you have some correspondence with him while he was Senator?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you have those letters at home?

BURRUS: I think I have them at home or in the office.

JOHNSON: Are you thinking about giving them to the Library?

BURRUS: Yes. There are quite a few of them in there that I just didn't want to part with because he made some remarks about some people that I didn't think it would be necessary to broadcast yet.

JOHNSON: One of the reasons we're so interested in correspondence during that first term is that we don't have very much here in the Library. The last that we know of the files that he had in that first term, they were

[113]

apparently in an attic in a building in Washington during the war and then disappeared. Whatever correspondence we can get, especially for that first term as Senator, it will help our collections a good deal.

Did you ever talk to him about policies, about New Deal policies or about more local kinds of issues, that you felt he should give support to or take positions on?

BURRUS: Well, no I didn't do that because I didn't have any reason to. He never had me give any advice about those kinds of things. I do remember on one occasion that I was going back to

Washington on the train, and I got on at the Independence station. I was going to get off at St. Louis and go on to Washington, be there the next day; it was on a weekend. At the Independence station I ran across a gentleman that I knew that was with the Kansas City Railroad Company. His name was William Deramus. He said, "Where are you going?"

I said, "I'm going out to St. Louis and then go on to Washington."

He said, "You're going to Washington?"

I said, "Yes."

[114]

He said, "Well, I'm going to Washington too." It was snowing and raining and thawing and freezing on the wires, and he said, "I don't know whether this train is going to get out there on time. If we don't get there in time to make that connection we aren't going to get to Washington until a day late." It won't do me any good to get there a day late. As we traveled on he said, "I'm giving up hopes of getting there, so when I get to St. Louis I'm going to come on back." He said, "You're actually going to see Mr. Truman aren't you?"

I said, "Yes, I think I probably will." I was going with the RFC at that time, on some things that they had to have done. He said, "Will you take a message to him?"

I said, "Sure. Do you want to write it out?"

He said, "No, I'm going to tell it to you. I was going down to tell him that us railroads are in hard times because we haven't had any pay for two or three years for the Federal freight, monies that were due us, and it just cripples us for cash." And he said, "I would like to have him have his folks down there pay us on account, and then audit it as long as they want

[115]

to, but just pay us on account, so we can get some cash." He said, "We need that." It was the Kansas City Southern Railroad.

When I got to Washington I was in to see him and I said, "I've got a message here for you." I told him about Mr. Deramus, and he knew him because he had been the one that negotiated for the railroad to go through some of their lands out there. At that time he was just low down on the ladder, but now he was head of the Kansas City Southern Railroad. I said, "He told me that he would like you to have your folks pay some money on account on the railroad charges that his company has, and other ones will do the same way." He said, "You mean they haven't been paid?"

I said, "He said they are a couple, three years behind."

"Oh," he said. He got on the telephone and got hold of John Snyder, and said, "John, I wish you'd look into the matter that the railroad companies have charges owed them, and they haven't been paid for quite a long time. Give them some money on account; they're needing it." He was in the Oval Office when I gave that to him.

[116]

Snyder evidently said, "Sure," and that was the way I left it. Truman took my word for it and he gave Snyder instructions.

I was only gone a few days, and I came back home. I called up my friend, and said, "I delivered the message."

He said, "Well, hell yes, I know you did." He said, "I got a check here the next day or so on account. They said we've got some more coming, and other folks have got it coming. You sure hit the jackpot for us."

I said, "Well, I'm glad I did."

JOHNSON: You were a highly placed lobbyist there. Remember when that happened?

BURRUS: It was sometime in the latter part of '45 that that happened. A little later than that, because I hadn't been attorney for the RFC until a little after that.

JOHNSON: You became an attorney for RFC? When did that happen?

BURRUS: It was sometime about 1946 or '47.

JOHNSON: That meant you had to live in Washington?

[117]

BURRUS: Oh no. I had what they called Agency Counsel which took care of the Kansas City agency, and that comprised all of the eastern counties of Missouri and all of the State of Kansas.

JOHNSON: This episode you just mentioned, was that your first visit to the White House after Mr. Truman became President?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: You probably remember your first visit.

BURRUS: I'll tell you that in a moment, too. But anyhow I got that job done for this fellow. When I went with the RFC, I went back to Truman and told him about the folks that were over at the RFC that I didn't think were doing as good a job as they should.

He said, "I know about that, and they are going to be removed." He said, "We're going to change directors over there; don't worry about it. It's going to happen." So that's how that happened.

When I came back from overseas in 1945, I came back from Italy.

[118]

JOHNSON: You were in Italy, north of Rome, around Rome?

BURRUS: Not from Rome but from Masserta, in May of 1945, after the end of the war over there. The other folks had been taking leave and going places and I kept on staying. I thought I'd get a chance to get back home. I wanted to get back and not have to stay over there.

Well, as things happened, I was able to leave but I had to sign and tell them that I wouldn't ask to be retained or sent someplace else and not back to Italy. I said, "All right, I'll do that."

I did. And I got back to the United States; landed in Boston from overseas, on the 30th day of May. That was Memorial Day, and the flags were all half mast, bands were playing, and the faces were long. I stopped at New York and had to take care of 250 soldiers that I had charge of; had to get rid of them, and get my own orders to go on. I finally got to Washington on the afternoon of the 30th. It was too late to try to do anything then, and I was tired too, so I got my hotel room. The next morning I got up early, got on the telephone, called over, and got hold of Harry Vaughan on the phone at the White House. I said,

[119]

"Harry, I want to come over and see the Chief." I always called him the "Chief," because he had been a colonel to me, and then he got to be commander in chief.

"Why, come on over."

I said, "Well, I don't know how you get in this place."

"You go to the gate and I'll tell them over there that you're coming and to bring you in."

I was in uniform, and I went over and went to the gate, and the guard said, "Is your name Burrus?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "There's a captain over here that's looking for you."

He gave a signal. The fellow came up; the captain saluted and said, "General Vaughan says that I am to bring you over to the Oval Room at the White House."

I said, "Fine, thank you."

So he went over to the Oval Room. Truman had been out in the garden where he had occasion to give to Steve Early an award for having been the Press Secretary for Roosevelt, and also for him. Early had announced his

[120]

retirement, and they had quite a ceremony outside. Vaughan said, "Let's don't go out there. They'll come in here pretty soon."

So I stood around in the Oval Room and on the desk there he had a bottle of vermouth, and he had a bottle of gin and a bottle of scotch and a bottle of bourbon, and some mixes and so forth. I kind of smiled and he said, "Yes, they're going to have a little celebration here."

Truman came in those double doors, looked up and said, "Why, I thought you were still over in Italy."

I said, "Mr. President, I learned in the Army that you got time off for good behavior, just like you did being in jail. I guess I was entitled to get off and I'm over here."

He said, "Well, fine, fine, fine." And we got to visiting a little while and I told him I was on my way home. He said, "That's good." Then he said, "What about what you want to do next?"

I said, "Well, I had to tell them over there that I wouldn't ask to be relieved, to be transferred, that I would agree to go back."

[121]

He said, "I guess I can take care of that," and kind of smiled.

He turned to Vaughan and said, "See that Burrus' separation from the service is expedited."

Vaughan said, "Yes sir."

JOHNSON: That's going to the top.

BURRUS: Well, he was the one that asked it, you know. I said that was what I wanted to do. And sure enough. he did.

JOHNSON: By the way, did you get in on the celebration?

BURRUS: They passed the drinks around, and I'll tell you about that too.

When we were at Ft. Riley, in earlier years, I helped get the drinks fixed up for him when he was entertaining folks. We had glasses that had been issued to all of us. We only had a few of them,

and we had to go around and collect them when we were going to have 20 or 30 people, in order to use the liquor and the fruit juice.

JOHNSON: In the officers' club?

[122]

BURRUS: No, this was in the barracks.

So I had to help get the glasses together and put them in the sink. Truman also helped get some more in the sink, and I went back to get some more, In the meantime, Truman had started washing out some of these glasses. We had the alcohol in a tin can, like what came out of a drugstore, and he was pouring the alcohol into the glasses. I didn't know that that was what he was putting into the glasses. I thought it was still that solution I put in there to get the crust, the alkalai, off the glass. He said, "What are you doing?"

I said, "I'm washing the glasses."

"Washing?" he said, "That's got alcohol in it, that's got alcohol."

I had taken only two of them. So he told that story on me. "Don't let Burrus pour the drinks, because he'll pour them all down the sink."

JOHNSON: Who was there with you then?

BURRUS: Well, I don't know who all was there.

JOHNSON: There was a bunch there in the Oval Office?

[123]

BURRUS: In the Oval Office.

JOHNSON: Celebrating a little bit after the ceremony.

BURRUS: They included friends that knew Steve Early. I remember him being particularly there.

JOHNSON: Was Clifford there? Clark Clifford?

RURRUS: I never saw Clark there; I didn't know him then.

JOHNSON: Eddie McKim was Administrative Assistant.

BURRUS: He wasn't there.

JOHNSON: So was Vaughan the only one that you knew besides the President, at that time?

BURRUS: I think it was. I think that's the only one that I knew then.

JOHNSON: After this reminiscing there in the Oval office, then you left to come back to home here in Independence.

BURRUS: To Independence, that's right. But while I was in the White House I did a favor for Harry Vaughan.

He said, "Just a minute and I'll give you a letter."

[124]

He gave it to me and said, "You go over to the Adjutant General's office. He's a major general." Vaughan said it hasn't been announced yet, but he's going to be the new Adjutant General. You go over and you salute him, and tell him that you are glad to salute him as the new Adjutant General. But don't say it in the presence of anybody else, because it's supposed to be secret, up to now not to be generally known."

I said, "All right." So I went in--this general was an affable sort of a fellow--and I said, "I have a letter here, and I want to congratulate you on being the new Adjutant General."

"What?"

I said, "Yes, I want to."

"Why, who told you that?"

I said, "Well, Harry Vaughan told me, and he told me not to tell anybody else."

He said, "Well, that's all right." He said, "Nobody knows that besides President Truman, Harry Vaughan and you and I." He sure enough was announced to be the Adjutant General. And that's how I got started.

[125]

JOHNSON: After that then you came back out here to Independence?

BURRUS: That's right. And then I went back to Washington; I had to get cleared over there, and I got everything all done.

JOHNSON: Truman came back to Independence the first time as President, I think, in June.

BURRUS: Yes, I didn't come back at the time.

JOHNSON: You weren't here when he came back here the first time?

BURRUS: Not the first time, no.

JOHNSON: You had to go back to Washington to finish up the red tape.

BURRUS: Yes, and also Mrs. Burrus had some cousins in Annapolis. They had a summer house too, and we stayed there for a few days. We had our son with us, too, so we stayed there with them for a little while.

JOHNSON: You had been gone for how long?

[126]

BURRUS: Been overseas for 27 months; thirteen months in Africa and fourteen months in Italy.

JOHNSON: That must have been some experience, to come back to the United States after 27 months over there.

BURRUS: It was.

JOHNSON: Your son and wife were probably getting a little impatient to get you back here.

BURRUS: Well, they were glad to know that I was coming. I kept writing, and my wife kept thinking I was going to be getting home pretty soon. She'd tell my mother about it, and mother said, "Let's be still. Let's be still, it will happen all right, it will come." When I called her on the telephone that morning, she kind of broke down. I told her I'd be home pretty quick.

JOHNSON: What was your second visit to the White House? When would that have been?

BURRUS: Later on I stopped there a time or two to visit with him.

[127]

JOHNSON: In the oval office?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you ever visit the living quarters of the White House?

BURRUS: He was over at Blair House.

JOHNSON: He didn't move to Blair House until after the election in '48.

BURRUS: That's right, but I was back there for that too. I'll tell you about what happened then. I was going to go back to Washington on another occasion to attend the Reserve Officers national

meeting. Meanwhile, I was the president of the Missouri Bar, and I went up to northwestern Missouri, driving around to different places to meet members of the Bar. I had my son along with me. On the radio I heard that Truman's plane was coming in and that he was going to get off at the airport. I said to my son, "We're going to go by there and see Mr. Truman when he comes in." So we drove down to the airport. He hadn't come in yet, but pretty soon the plane came in. He came off, saw me, and said, "Well Rufe."

[128]

I introduced him to my son. "Good to see you, good to see you."

I said, "Yes sir, Mr. President." Again, I've always said, "Mr. President," just as he was President to everybody else. I said, "By the way, I am going to go back to Washington next Sunday by train, and be there for purposes of the Reserve officers meeting in Washington."

"Well, well," he said, "fine, that's good." He said, "I'll be seeing you back there then."

I said, "Well, just a second. When you go back on the plane, if you have room for someone to deadhead, I'd like to ride back."

He said, "Why sure. Put Burrus on the manifest. Put Burrus on the manifest."

Well, they got my name and my telephone number. So I went on home, and expected to fly back on Monday. On Sunday Mrs. Burrus wasn't feeling very well, so she didn't go to church. I took my son and went to church and I came back home and got there a little before 12. When I got home she said, "Mr. Truman's aide called and said he wants you to be at the airport at 1:15." I said,

[129]

"My!" I had to get things together and call my brother to have him take care of some things.

We got over to the airport all right and Truman was there. But he hadn't gotten his crew together. He said, "I haven't found all my crew around here yet. He said, "I guess we'll have to go off and leave some of them because I can't find some of them." He had his brother-in-law Fred Wallace along with him. He said, "We'll be leaving here in a little while." We did get in the plane, and when we got in he said, "We're going to stop at St. Louis and pick John Snyder up." He said, "You know, the Korean trouble seems to be coming to a head and I'm going to go back and see about that. That's why I'm going back today instead of tomorrow." He said, "I'm going to wait until John Snyder is with us, then I'm going to tell you what's happened so you'll get it one time for the two of you."

I said, "That's good." So I sat down. Sure enough, we got down to St. Louis and Snyder got in, and sat down, and Truman told him and me why we had to be ready to go back so unexpectedly. He said that there would be a meeting of the United Nations, and

[130]

that there was going to be a U.N. action on account of Korea. South Korea has been invaded by North Korea.

JOHNSON: So he was already thinking of the U.N. being involved.

BURRUS: It was, it was.

He said that they were going to meet that afternoon and they were going to have a resolution passed, and they did. Again it was not what he had determined to be; it was what they, the U.N., had determined to be, a police action against North Korea. He also asked me to come with him and stay overnight with him.

JOHNSON: Stay where?

BURRUS: At the Blair House. Fred Wallace too. The next morning I went downstairs about 6 o'clock. I knew that they were stirring around downstairs, and I went down. He was sitting at his desk and he had a big yellow pad of paper. He said, "Maybe you would read these remarks that I'm going to make to the joint session of the House and Senate."

I looked at it and I read it, and as I remember

[131]

it I don't think there was hardly a word or two that was changed when it became published. He then said, "Today I was going to have you take a swim with me."

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I'm going to give you a rain check on it, because I've got to take care of some folks here. We're going to get that done first." He said, "You come back again later." And I did. I went back a few days later and we went swimming.

This particular time though, he wanted me to stay overnight again, but I said, "No, I've got to go out to the hotel. I'm going to have to meet people and I'd better go down there and be where I can be available." I think it was Thursday of that week that they had the meeting of the Reserve officers. He was present and made the address.

Anyhow, sometime later I had the swim. We were out walking through the area before we went to the swim. He came by the hotel, 6 o'clock in the morning, and I was out ready for him. We went walking around. He had some Secret Service folks with him, and he had me be over to his side where I could talk with him and he could talk with me. These Secret Service men

[132]

discretely stayed back a little. Anyhow, we went along and he finally said, "We're going to get this police action going." He said that was going to be happening.

Well, one of his agents came up and said, "Averell Harriman is on the telephone for you." "Oh," he said, "I don't want it on the street here; I don't want it here. You tell him I'm going to cut my walk short and to transfer the call over to the swimming pool."

So he cut it short a little bit and we went across into the area of the swimming pool. I heard him on his end of the line. He said, "Averell, close station and march order. I've got more important things for you to do here." Well, that's artilleryman's words," close station, march order." He evidently got a yes from him because he said, "We'll be seeing you."

Later I ran across Harriman and I related to him what I heard. "Why," he said, "that's exactly what he said." He remembered it exactly, just like I did.

JOHNSON: He brought Harriman in to help on that problem with South Korea?

[133]

BURRUS: That's right, that's right.

Also, John Snyder couldn't go to the White House with us immediately, because he had to make contact with some folks that he was going to get together with the next day for a Congressional hearing. He had to have that rescheduled, because of a change in plan. He said, "We're going to have to put that off, we're going to have to change our plan from reduction of taxes to maybe increasing them." That was because of the Korean war. So that was John Snyder's relation to Truman, and what he had to anticipate.

JOHNSON: Truman was in favor of "pay-as-you-go."

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: But he didn't get as much tax increase as he thought was necessary to do that, so they had to borrow.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: But he balanced the budget something like three times out of seven or eight, which is still a record since the 1920s.

[134]

I don't think we've exhausted the subject, but we've probably exhausted you. You had another comment here before we take a break.

BURRUS: Back in 1924 the Republicans drafted Rummell, as I told you, and Bundschu paid his filing fee. He told them he didn't have to run, that they would get somebody to take his place. Well, the Rabbits had learned about that and they went around trying to get him to withdraw, but he wouldn't withdraw. He stayed in. Anyhow that's what happened.

In addition to that, the reason why Truman lost the election was not only the fact that the Rabbits ran out on him, but it was the fact that the Coolidge landslide had taken place that same time. So that was something that frosted the top of the cake.

JOHNSON: Yes, even here in a Democrat bastion, they went for a Republican candidate. That was a rare occurrence, wasn't it?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: I guess the incumbent had an advantage there.

[135]

Coolidge was known. Did you ever hear William Jennings Bryan give a speech?

BURRUS: I heard him here in Independence, at a Chatauqua Event. The Chatauqua tent was on a lot south of the Presbyterian Church. Bryan made his speech in that place.

JOHNSON: What year was that? Do you recall?

BURRUS: It was about 1912 or '13.

JOHNSON: Oh, back before the war, when he was in his prime.

BURRUS: That's right. He made a beautiful speech; he was a real orator and he did a good job. There was a big tent there; it must have been 80 or 100 feet long and 30 or 40 feet wide.

JOHNSON: He lived up to your expectations then?

BURRUS: He did, he did.

[136]

Second Oral History Interview with Rufus B. Burrus, November 8, 1985, Independence, Missouri. By Niel M. Johnson, Harry S Truman Library.

JOHNSON: In the first interview we had gotten into the Presidential period. But I do want to back up and ask some questions from an earlier period again, based on some of the statements that were published in articles in the Sunday supplement of the *Kansas City Star*, an article by Richard Miller, on the Judgeship period of Truman's career. I will start with a trivial question. There is mention of a cousin "Snapper." Do you know who this person is?

BURRUS: That was General Ralph Truman. He was a major general, and 35th Division commander.

JOHNSON: In answer to this question you might refer to a letter that you wrote to the *Kansas City Star* in June 1984. There was a statement in an article by Richard Miller, published May 6, 1984, stating that Judge Truman appointed two justices of the peace while the other judges were out of the courtroom. I know that you have responded to that in writing. Does that spell out pretty well your answer to that question?

[137]

BURRUS: Yes sir. Mr. Truman couldn't do anything by himself because it was required that they had to have at least two of the three judges for a quorum. The Eastern Judge and the Western Judge would be the other two. So one of them wouldn't be enough. The Clerk of the Court was very careful. Eddie Becker was his name; he was deputy court clerk and each time he had an item to be put in the journal of the court, or the minutes of the court, he wanted something definitive of at least two of the judges who had to approve it. He was very meticulous about that and careful and he never, as I ever knew, ever let anything go through that wasn't with the consent of at least two of them. When Mr. Truman was Presiding Judge and one of the other judges was gone, he had the right to cast his vote, but he'd have to have the record show that the other one either was present and didn't vote, or present and did vote, whatever it was. So he just couldn't have done it by himself, that's all. He never wanted to do anything by himself.

JOHNSON: Mr. Miller refers to Truman as one of the "triumvirate" under Boss Pendergast. Have you ever heard

[139]

that term used before, along with McElroy and Lazia?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: Miller does credit Truman with honest administration of the bond issues. He mentions that "although Truman saved the bond money from Pendergast theft, the boss used

Eastern Judge [Robert] Barr to siphon the regular revenues." Were there problems here in connection with Judge Barr? I think Mr. Truman may have been critical, in some of his memos to himself, of Judge Barr.

BURRUS: Have you ever seen those notes that this fellow refers to that Truman wrote?

JOHNSON: Yes, some of them. Mr. Miller also says that "Truman's private admission that he permitted incompetent hacks to collect paychecks and purchase goods at excessive prices is in stark contrast to every public statement that he ever made on the topic."

In general terms, would it appear likely that Mr. Truman did have to accept a certain amount of, let's say, incorrect conduct, in order to get bigger things done; in other words, to accept a lesser evil in order to

[140]

prevent a greater evil?

BURRUS: I don't think so. I expect that maybe someplace along the line, maybe either the Eastern or the Western Judge had some particular person that they wanted to have something done for and if the two agreed upon it, they could outvote Mr. Truman, the Presiding Judge. But if anything like that occurred, we wouldn't call it theft, or illegal or anything of that kind. It would be what they had the right to do.

Also, you see, in later times, Barr joined with Spencer Salisbury, Arthur Mesker, and some others that were critical of Truman. As a matter of fact, they didn't support Mr. Truman for the Senate, but they supported another fellow for that office openly.

JOHNSON: Was it [Tuck] Milligan?

BURRUS: Milligan.

JOHNSON: So there was a little friction or possibly even a little bad blood eventually between the two? Between Barr and Truman?

BURRUS: That's right. One of the persons that I'm sure

[141]

influenced Barr and Salisbury and Mesker was Senator Bennett Clark, especially in regard to some monies that were being used to refinance homes and houses and the like. They worked through him and they were trying to repay him I'm sure, even though it had to be something that would be not in accordance with what Mr. Truman would have done, or wanted to do. That would be the only reason I can think of that that would ever happen, if it did ever happen. But it wasn't something that Truman had to do with except that they probably did things on the outside

that Truman disagreed with. They were giving their allegiance not to Truman for his nomination but to the other gentleman.

JOHNSON: There's mention, too, about this incident in 1930 when a man appeared at Margaret's school, apparently with the intent to kidnap her. Was that your interpretation, that this might have been an attempt, or probably was an attempt, to kidnap Margaret Truman?

BURRUS: Of course Margaret had been in my sister's class too. At that particular time, the teacher lived across the street from where my father did. Kelley was her name. Madelyn was her first name. She knew the

[142]

family and she knew what might happen. That's what alerted her to find out what was the reason they would send for Margaret. She delayed it, and having done so whoever was there finally left without letting anything more happen. She just explained that to the police officers, and nothing more is known about it.

JOHNSON: They never identified the person apparently that showed up at the school.

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: And that was at Bryant School?

BURRUS: Bryant School, yes. My sister was on the staff out there too. Helen was her name.

JOHNSON: Was she unmarried?

BURRUS: Oh yes, she never married. She passed away a few years ago. She was the principal of the school at that time, after she had been a teacher at Bryant School.

JOHNSON: There is also mention of an incident involving Sheriff [Thomas] Bash where he came upon an apparent assassination,

[143]

and he ended up in a gunfight that killed two criminals and captured a third one, [Charles] Gargotta. Then a statement is made that after what seemed to be a very heroic action by the sheriff, Truman cut Bash's budget and he was silent about the crime. He apparently did not publicly congratulate Sheriff Bash. What's your reaction to that?

BURRUS: If anything in his budget was cut, there was some good reason for it, to keep the budget of the sheriff within the confines of the money that would be available and apportioned to him. That would be the only reason Truman would do that. He wouldn't do it for any personal reason such as this author would attribute to him.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Truman ever saying anything about Sheriff Bash or indicating his attitude toward Sheriff Bash? He was a judge before he was a sheriff wasn't he?

BURRUS: Yes, he was a county judge. He was a Rabbit Democrat, the other faction. But he never had any public encounter with him, that I ever knew about, or treated him ignominiously. After all, Bash was another

[144]

public officer and Truman wouldn't have done that either privately or publicly.

JOHNSON: Did he ever tell you privately whether he liked or disliked Mr. Bash?

BURRUS: No. Another thing is that Bash was a confidant of Dr. Johnson who had been an active Democrat in Kansas City. And his brother, they called him "Tiny" [Clark] Johnson, was the court sheriff of the county. So anything that ever happened would have been picked up by Johnson, who was always present when the court was in session. He would be the one who might report such things.

I remember one incident that relates to this. There was a gentleman that had been a contractor who had done some county road work during the time of the "piecrust" roads. He wanted to get a contract on some roads, and he kept insisting on it to Truman. Truman wouldn't encourage him. He told him that he wouldn't give a bid that would be approved, but if he did he would have to do the work that was provided for under the instructions of Stayton and Veatch.

Well, Truman had occasion to want to open a quarry

[145]

at Blue Springs. Those in charge of the roads wanted to open up a crusher, so they could have rock that could be sold from out there to use on the roads, without having to haul it from Independence or Kansas City. Well, that decision was made, and the same gentleman wanted to make a bid on that contract. He did; he bid it really low. Mr. Truman told Bill Spann, who was a deputy with Stayton and Veatch, and me, "Now, I want you to have a contract and specifications that are proper and right, that he can be held to. I know he isn't going to do what he's supposed to do and he's going to want to have extra money when he shouldn't have it." He said, "Now, I want you to make it so that can't happen." So I helped Spann, and we made the specifications and we had it written out plain and good. It was submitted to him. He signed the bid and the contract to do the job. Well, when he got his first claim in for money upon that job, he certified for solid rock when at best it was only loose rock, and he put loose rock in the record when it wasn't anything except earth or dirt.

Well, when they checked the claim they refused to honor it and sent it back to him, and told him why.

[146]

The gentleman came into the county court one morning early, in Independence. The two judges were there, and Truman was writing his name on various vouchers that had to be ready to be acted on. And he came in and snarled about his not getting paid. He had given evidence as having had something to drink and he wasn't very gracious or circumspect with what he said. Truman said to him--his name was John Pryor--"Now, John, you've stuck your nose in here and I've heard all I want to hear. It's done. Now you get out, and that's all that will happen to you." And he snarled back something to Truman and Truman said, "Tiny, kindly show the gentleman out." Tiny was the sheriff's deputy; he was a big 6'4" or 6'5" fellow and weighed 200 and some odd pounds. He came up behind him, and grabbed his collar with the left hand and his belt with the other hand and pushed him out the door, literally pushed him out. That's how Mr. Truman disposed of him; he said, "Show the gentleman out," and that's what he did.

Afterwards Pryor knew he wasn't going to be able to get what he wanted, so he turned it over to his superintendent. His superintendent was a gentleman,

[147]

And they got together with him and allowed them only what they should have. Pryor never did get over being shoved out of the courtroom; and he never came back
either.

JOHNSON: That kind of fits in with the stories we have about how he handled those contracts.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Mr. Miller also implies that Truman was critical of Judge [James] Page for the wrong reasons. He says that Truman tried to sabotage Page's crusade against criminals within the Pendergast machine, although Page himself was a Pendergast appointee. I guess his main charge here is that Truman was publicly silent again, according to Miller; that is, Truman did not come out publicly and support this so-called crusade of Judge Page. Do you recall anything about this "crusade" against some of the Pendergast people?

BURRUS: No, I never did.

JOHNSON: Did you know Judge Page very well? Do you recall anything about his personality?

[148]

BURRUS: Yes, I knew him.

JOHNSON: What kind of a person was he?

BURRUS: Well, he was sort of a narrow-minded fellow. He was not one you could get along with, with ease. So I never did try to do anything with him, just did the things that had to be done. I would pass along messages with the things that had to be delivered to him.

Mr. Truman had the right as Presiding Judge, and with the help of other folks on the board of the county that apportioned the money out and made the budget, to budget each county officer. It was up to them to decide how many deputies they might have, but the law also prescribed the dollar amount that could be budgeted for each class of employees, and they couldn't exceed that class for that particular person.

JOHNSON: Apparently it is correct that Mr. Truman would not speak out criticizing Pendergast when something shady was revealed in the press. Do you think there's much substance to this charge that Harry Truman did not criticize Pendergast perhaps when he should have, at

[149]

least not in public, and if he didn't say anything negative about Boss Pendergast in public, can you account for the reasons why he was silent?

BURRUS: I don't think there was any reason for Mr. Truman to make any remarks about what had happened so far as Pendergast was concerned. As far as Truman was concerned, that was something that did not involve the court, so he didn't have any reason to make any statements about it.

Mr. Truman set out in his *Memoirs* the things he did as county judge and the relationship with Mr. Pendergast and with other folks, for some 20 odd pages. After all, Mr. Truman wrote the *Memoirs* and he's more capable of saying what happened during his administration. Mr. Miller never talked with me, he never talked with anybody that I know of that had anything to do with Mr. Truman. He just seems to be grabbing something out of a newspaper once in a while, which is out of context probably, without any real support.

JOHNSON: I suppose you did meet Tom Pendergast on occasion. Do you have some recollections of his demeanor, what

[150]

kind of person he seemed to be?

BURRUS: I recollect that I had two occasions to see him personally. One of them was when somebody that was working for the county--not the person himself but one of the members of the family--said, "I wish that you would go to Mr. Pendergast and tell him that you know about so and so who is a Democrat and has always been loyal to Mr. Pendergast's faction."

I said, "Well, I'll be glad to do that if you think it will do any good at all."

One morning I went down to 1908 Main Street and told him. He said, "You tell so and so they don't have to make any apologies to me about that. I know that that fellow was all right and that he never did anything wrong. So you go back and tell them that you delivered the message, and that's how it is."

And I did see him one other time. I think that was outside of his office where he had been in some public place, but I didn't have any words with him. So that's my contact with him.

JOHNSON: So you met him only once in his own office.

[151]

BURRUS: That's right. That's the only time.

JOHNSON: Do you remember anybody else that was there at that time? There were just the two of you?

BURRUS: I went by myself. As a matter of fact, I knew that the time he got there was sometime after 7 or 8 o'clock, and they always said if you want to see him, see him at that time of the morning, because he's got time to see the folks he wants to. If you go later, sometimes he's not there. He did get to his office early, so I was told.

JOHNSON: So you got there kind of early. About what year would that have been do you think?

BURRUS: Oh, I would say that it was probably in the '30s, early '30s, I think.

JOHNSON: Also there's a comment that Truman "gerrymandered" the Fourth District in 1933 to guarantee him an easy if he would have run for Congress in '34. There was a redistricting in that year wasn't there?

BURRUS: Yes. The district increased in population, as

[152]

had Kansas City. This Fourth District was made up of part of Kansas City and part out-state, not only Jackson County but some of the adjoining counties. I wouldn't call it gerrymandering, because after all, that had to be done with the legislature of the state and also with the help of the Federal folks that had to do with the congressional districts. If Mr. Truman had anything to do with that I didn't know it. He may have, because I do know that he at one time said that he would probably fix it up so he could be retired as a legislator from the district. He then says like the gentleman that ran from Texas and became Vice President, John Garner, said, "You get in a position that you don't have to get out and campaign because you've got yourself in a good Democrat area and you could go in and do what you want to do. That would be one that I would like to have, so that I wouldn't have to go out and campaign."

JOHNSON: "Gerrymandering" implies that there are areas identifiable as pro-Truman or at least, I guess, pro-Goat faction.

[153]

BURRUS: Pro-Democrats.

JOHNSON: Although the whole area is Democrat.

BURRUS: Well, no, it wasn't either, because there were some Republicans in the area.

JOHNSON: Okay, so this would have meant putting Republicans in another district possibly, is that the idea? Did you have anything to do at all with that redistricting?

BURRUS: No, I didn't have anything to do with it. I knew about it but I didn't have anything to do with it.

JOHNSON: They added another district, is that right?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: They added another district, and then had to redraw the lines of existing districts.

BURRUS: That's because the state population had increased and, therefore, they were entitled to one more district to represent the population.

JOHNSON: That was quite an election, the city election in 1934. There were two or three murders and some

[154]

intimidation of voters. There apparently was a faction, more or less called the "uplifters," at least that's the term used in the article. They were the group that was trying to reform or clean up city politics back in '34, and Mr. Miller claims that Harry Truman did not support the "uplifters," so-called. Do you remember that term being used, "uplifters?"

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: Or Truman taking any sides in that city election in 1934?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: Johnnie Lazia was murdered wasn't he in that election?

BURRUS: That was something that was clear out of anything that Truman would have any knowledge about, or have anything to do with or have any way to guard against, or be in favor of it or anything else about it. It's just something he would happen to know about when we read it in the paper.

[155]

JOHNSON: Do you remember Harry Truman ever saying anything about that election, that 1934 election which was rather violent?

BURRUS: No. He always abhorred violence but I never heard him say anything that I can remember or had any reason to mention it particularly.

JOHNSON: Now we will go on to some of the questions that come out of your own correspondence; this is the correspondence between 1939 and 1945 that we have in our files. In May 1939 you refer to what you call a "mess" in the county organization. You said, "There is no cooperation in cleaning up the payroll that we should have." This is in a letter to Mr. Truman that you wrote in May 1939. You said, "[Lester] Byam is doing his best to see things go right but he is getting little or no help from the other two judges." And then you almost plead with Mr. Truman to come home to save something "out of the wreck." I suppose this is right in the aftermath of the conviction of Mr. Pendergast, Boss Pendergast.

BURRUS: That's right. Byam was a judge and he had also

[156]

been a county road man under Truman. He was one of Mr. Truman's friends, and so that's what I had mentioned about him.

JOHNSON: Was he one of the more able judges, the most able judge as far as you were concerned, back there in '39?

BURRUS: That's right. That's after Truman was out of office.

JOHNSON: Yes, and after the conviction of Pendergast, which threw the organization into disarray, I suppose. Did Jim Pendergast take over the organization after Tom Pendergast was convicted?

BURRUS: I think it fell to him to do it, and he's probably the one that did it. I never had any reason to be in contact with him, to see what he was doing. But I think that's what generally the folks considered him to be, the one who took over from his Uncle Tom.

JOHNSON: How about Byam? Did he remain in office?

BURRUS: Byam stayed along with us too.

[157]

JOHNSON: Was he a supporter of Truman throughout those years?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Do you recall if Senator Truman was ever able to come back to help get the organization back in shape, or did he take a hands-off kind of attitude?

BURRUS: I think he didn't take any part in it because after all he was busy as a Senator and had plenty to do there. That didn't give him the opportunity to come back here and get into the politics of the factions.

JOHNSON: In spite of your request, he stayed in Washington as far as you recall?

BURRUS: That's right. I just.. wanted him to know about it--just give information to him.

JOHNSON: In 1940, when we have another campaign for nomination and election for the Senate, you apparently were involved in plotting strategy for that campaign.

[158]

This is in April 1940 that you wrote a letter to Mr. Truman, and you refer to the unpopularity of "Lloyd Crow"--apparently that is Lloyd Stark; you referred to a rumor that Truman would withdraw and the "Rabbits and the 15th Street boys will be for [Maurice] Milligan." That was one of the rumors about what might happen. The 15th Street boys...

BURRUS: That's Cass Welch's faction. Casimer Welch. He was a justice of the peace and he was a leader in that particular area. He had an office on 15th and I think he lived within that district. At least he had this residence within that district. He may not have lived there all the time.

JOHNSON: This was the pro-Milligan faction?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Were they still referred to as the Rabbits?

BURRUS: They were the Rabbits.

JOHNSON: They still have those two names, the Rabbits and Goats?

[159]

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: You said that Truman should start "counter-propaganda," and then you mention that Bennett Clark encouraged Milligan to enter the race to humble Stark. Quoting from your letter, you said, "After he has seen how little support Stark had, he will either call off Milligan or give you this whole-hearted support. Clark will appease Milligan by getting him onto the Attorney General's staff in Washington."

There was a three-man race going on. There were Milligan, Stark and Truman, and the fact that Milligan and Stark were both in the race did split the opposition to some extent, and did help Truman get nominated. Isn't that the way you see it?

BURRUS: I expect it had some effect on it.

JOHNSON: What do you recall about your part in that 1940 senatorial campaign?

BURRUS: When Mr. Truman came back from the Senate to get into the campaign, I met him with some other folks from up here in Northwest Missouri. It was in

[160]

the summertime in June, when they had a recess. He had his clothes in a suitcase, and he said, "If you folks could take time to get some shirts out of my bag here and see to it we get them laundered, so I can get them within a little while. I would like to have some fresh shirts when I get back." He said, "I've got a suit of clothes I've been wearing, and these need to be pressed and I've got one in that bag that needs to be pressed. If you can find some way that you can do that." He said, "I hope all of you've got money to pay for all of that and also to pay for my lunches and meals and for the gasoline, because I'm just plain out of funds." That's the way he put it, and he was.

All of us did see to it that all those things happened for him, and we made it comfortable for him. He made stops at different places that had been arranged. This fellow Kitchen wrote a letter. Someone had found his name in the files here.

JOHNSON: What's the name?

BURRUS: [William] Kitchen. He was a Democrat and a worker

[161]

for the Democrats, and also a friend of Truman's. He arranged for a lot of these stops way up in Northwest Missouri, for Truman to stop and have visits with the people. Some of them were Postmasters and some of them were in stores and little places along the road. That's what Kitchen had done. I was along with him when that happened. I spent a couple of days, and finally got back. Truman got his clothes taken care of and his laundry taken care of, which was a help to him too. These were personal things for him, that's all.

JOHNSON: But you also apparently gave at least one speech, if not more campaign speeches, for Truman.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Do you have those speeches?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: Were they extemporaneous?

BURRUS: Extemporaneous, that's right.

JOHNSON: Do you know generally what you would have said?

[162]

BURRUS: I asked him one time, "When are you going to say something for yourself?"

He said, "I'm not going to."

I said, "Well, when are you going to let us do it?"

"Not in my presence, you're not going to." He said, "We're talking about what the Democrat Party has stood for, and what Mr. Roosevelt has stood for, and the Democrat program is the thing that we want to stand on."

So when I had an opportunity I did the same thing. There was a Catholic priest up here in Northwest Missouri. Father Wogan was his name. They had a picnic that had been set up by him at various times, and he had all of the various candidates to come in and they'd make a speech.

Well, so I was there I was there in the interest of Mr. Truman and Wogan knew me and he knew what I was there for. He said, "Come on, I'll give you the best place on the program." He said, "You don't have to make any ante for Mr. Truman; you're doing this, and I'm asking you to do it." So that's how I happened to make that speech. Father Wogan asked me to do that, and I did it.

[163]

JOHNSON: Was this in Cameron? Or was this in Agency? Apparently you were in both places. Do you remember where this was, this picnic?

BURRUS: Cameron, I think it was.

JOHNSON: You mention a picnic at Cameron in one of your letters in August 1940.

BURRUS: That's right. They were all close together. Cameron and Agency, both places are in the same general area.

JOHNSON: Right, because you also mention attending a picnic at Agency, Missouri and making remarks on behalf of Truman. Is that where this Father Wogan...

BURRUS: I think he had jurisdiction over both of them. When we got to the other place, again he put me on the podium.

JOHNSON: So you gave speeches both in Cameron and at Agency as you recall?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: You were followed by a couple of other individuals—

[164]

William Kemp who spoke for Governor Clark, and by Dave Thompson on behalf of Milligan. Did you have any connections with those people at all?

BURRUS: I knew Thompson and Milligan. They were lawyers and Democrats. But they were being supported against Mr. Truman. And Stark was too.

JOHNSON: Bennett Clark apparently was riding the fence through most of the campaign and then sided with Truman at the last minute. Isn't that the way it went?

BURRUS: I don't think it was at the last minute; I think it was really after the defeat of Milligan and the other folks that he was supporting. Clark really was a friendly person, so far as Truman was concerned personally, but for some reason he had this idea about putting Milligan in.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea why he promoted, or put Milligan into the race? Do you think it was designed to help Truman by splitting the opposition?

BURRUS: I don't think so. It may have been. I don't think it was.

[165]

JOHNSON: But that's kind of the way it worked.

BURRUS: That's what really happened with it, yes. That's right.

I do know that Mr. Truman had the support of some Democrats that went up through that part of the country. The State chairman and county chairman, Jim Aylward, was among those out campaigning for Truman in Northeastern Missouri. They would stop at the newspapers and enlist their help in favor of Mr. Truman. They would listen to what they had to say, and then meet people and get some publicity for him. They did a pretty good job with it.

Even in the area where Stark lived he lost the election. In later times I was told by Jim Aylward that Senator Clark said to him, "Would you please tell me how it was that you had the folks on your side in the area there where Stark lived and you were able to carry the election against him in that area?" He proceeded to tell the story that they met a newspaperman who was influential in the area and they told him why they were there and wanted to know if he could help the Truman campaign. The newspaperman said, "Well,

[166]

I don't know, but maybe you could help me, and if I get some help maybe I can help you." He said this in a smiling sort of way. Aylward asked him what he wanted. He said, "You know the Governor?" Aylward said that he knew the Governor. "Well, could you use your influence with the Governor to appoint my nephew to be a probate judge up here? There's a vacancy, and I'd like him to have him. If you could get him appointed, I might be able to help."

So they got on the telephone in his presence, got hold of the Governor, and the Governor said, "What's his name?" They told him. He said, "Yes, I'll appoint him." And he did appoint him. So Jim Aylward told Clark how it happened that that turned the tide in favor of Truman, with this fellow and his newspaper doing it.

JOHNSON: You mention in this letter that you saw a Mr. Dryden?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember his first name?

BURRUS: L.T. Dryden; he was a lawyer here in Independence.

[167]

JOHNSON: You said you saw him on a Sunday morning and he had spoken for Truman at Holt in Clay County, at the carnival and you had spoken for Truman at Weston on Monday evening. You said both at Agency and in Weston, Congressman Dick Duncan introduced you to the people that were supportive of Truman. This information indicates you gave speeches for Truman at Cameron, at Agency, and Weston. Were there any other towns where you gave talks in favor of Truman?

BURRUS: There may have been. I didn't make long talks. I would just say that I represented him and that I wanted the folks to be in favor of him. I would note the things that Mr. Roosevelt had done and that Mr. Truman approved and helped him have those things done. I would say that Truman had helped make the Roosevelt administration one that was worthy of all the Democrats.

JOHNSON: So when you spoke up for Mr. Truman you emphasized the New Deal program, and how Truman helped it along?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Was there much emphasis in those days on what a

[168]

Senator could do for his folks back home in his state, or was there more emphasis on national politics and the national interest?

BURRUS: So far as Mr. Truman was concerned, he would not stress what he particularly did, except to say that he supported the things that Mr. Roosevelt was in favor of, and helped get over his programs.

JOHNSON: How about projects in Missouri? Would you ever emphasize anything that was done, let's say on Federal projects that were done in Missouri, as a result perhaps of the influence of the Senator? That would be kind of a pork-barrel or log-rolling sort of appeal, but did they ever resort to that approach?

BURRUS: Mr. Truman never did; and I say he wouldn't permit those, when he was President, to do anything like that either.

JOHNSON: Were there any particular projects here in Missouri that you think were directly attributable to Senator Truman's influence?

BURRUS: No, I don't. I don't remember anything like that.

[169]

JOHNSON: How about Ft. Leonard Wood? How far back does that go?

BURRUS: I believe it was made a training camp in 1940. I was down there as an officer of the Sixth Division in 1941, in April.

JOHNSON: Do you know if Senator Truman had anything to do with that being set up here in Missouri, that camp, Leonard Wood?

BURRUS: I don't know whether he did or not, but I do know that when I was there I received some letters from him in which he asked me to check on what buildings were being built and how they were being built, and roads, and all that to see if I could see any evidence of any discrepancies. He wanted to know if the contractors had done what they were supposed to have done, and to get him back my summary about it.

JOHNSON: What kind of information did you give him?

BURRUS: I said that I could find out nothing except that they were doing the job, but that they did it rather loosely because they had to do it in a hurry. I

[170]

suggested that he might have somebody go down there to see how the monies were spent, because I never had a chance to do that. But it appeared the job was being done fairly well, and that the post was one that we would be glad to have and use in that particular area.

JOHNSON: Apparently he did get reports about some gouging, some incorrect conduct so to speak, being done on some of the contracts at Ft. Leonard Wood. I think that was entered into the record in the Senate as one of the reasons for a need for a special committee to investigate the defense program.

BURRUS: I just reported to him what I had heard and learned about, without telling it as a fact. I was an officer on the post and I just did it in a casual sort of way without attracting any attention to it.

JOHNSON: He apparently got letters from a number of people regarding Ft. Leonard Wood, and many of them were critical about the way it was being constructed and the amount of monies spent.

BURRUS: There had been nothing there but great forests and trees and things of that kind. It

[171]

didn't have any roads, and the new ones they built were not properly paved. Those using the roads had their tires all eaten up on the rocks, and they couldn't get any stamps to get tires which were rationed at that time. That disabled a lot of folks who had to drive those roads.

JOHNSON: Did you meet Governor Stark? Do you have some opinions or impressions of him?

BURRUS: No. I've never met him. I knew what he had done and what had happened to him, and knew that he successfully endeavored to have Mr. Pendergast endorse him when he wanted to run for Governor. Truman supported him in that race. Stark also wanted to be head of the American Legion, and Mr. Truman helped him get that office too.

JOHNSON: Truman didn't appreciate Stark running against him in 1940. Do you recall any conversation you had with Truman about Stark? Do you remember his comments, any comments?

[172]

BURRUS: Well, smilingly he would say, "Lloyd Crow Stark" and emphasize the "Crow," because he was always crowing about himself. "Crow" was his middle name.

JOHNSON: They made him eat crow I suppose after that campaign didn't they?

What happened to Stark after that campaign? Did he just sort of disappear from politics?

BURRUS: He got defeated. I was at the state Democrat convention when he was wanting a prominent place, and the Democrats weren't going to give it to him. After all, he was the Governor and Stark thought that he ought to have it. Well, they just left him sitting on the platform, without anything going on, and anybody who wanted to see him could walk up to him. But he never walked out to anybody. A few people did walk up to speak to him. In time the

Democrats in control more or less concluded that that wouldn't be a good thing for the Democrats to just completely ignore him and humiliate him. So they finally came up and did put him in some place that would not give any promise about anything, but still not put him in a position of being an ungrateful sort of person that he really

[173]

was.

That's how he happened to stay there. But it was nearly the whole doggone afternoon that he sat there like that. I remember that because I thought he ought to pick himself up when he saw all this happening, and walk off and leave them, rather than be humiliated. But he just sat there, until they finally found a place for him.

JOHNSON: Who do you recall as being perhaps the most important director of the strategy in the 1940 campaign? Wasn't Messall involved in that campaign as one of the organizers?

BURRUS: Yes, and also John Snyder from St. Louis. He became Mr. Truman's friend way back in the '20s. He was a bank examiner and had charge of some broken banks there. He had helped Mr. Truman get some funds channeled into the campaign.

JOHNSON: And Mr. Vaughan. Did you know Harry Vaughan very well?

BURRUS: Yes, knew him, way back when I first was taken by Truman to Ft. Riley, with Snyder and Vaughan.

[174]

JOHNSON: What were your first impressions of Harry Vaughan when you met him at camp?

BURRUS: He was a schoolteacher who taught calisthenics. He did that in camp too. Well, I learned that he was a man who knew his way about both the artillery and the Army, and that Mr. Truman approved of him along with John Snyder.

JOHNSON: The public image of Harry Vaughan was that he was kind of a carouser and he was always a clown and so on. But the facts seem to be somewhat different than that. Apparently he did not drink, or drank very little. As far as his personal habits are concerned, did he seem to be a pretty straight-down-the-middle sort of person to you?

BURRUS: He taught Sunday School. He was active in his church, and active in civic affairs. Mr. Truman knew that. He was always a gentleman. I never knew anyone that if they really told the truth about it ever had any reason to make any remarks about him that would be uncomplimentary. He was always in favor of Mr.

[175]

Truman, that was one thing. He was just really one of Mr. Truman's best rooters, but there wasn't anything that Vaughan ever did that was intended to reflect against Truman.

JOHNSON: Was he a good story teller? Was that one of the reasons he became an aide in the White House?

BURRUS: Yes. We called him the king's jester, because he would make remarks to help the President get over a serious condition that we might be in. He would help folks become more willing to get together in one way or another.

JOHNSON: He was a person who usually did not take things all that seriously?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: And he played a pretty good game of poker?

BURRUS: He did, I guess. I never played with him. I never played poker with him at any time, because I didn't know how in the first place. I didn't want to get into that.

[176]

Some other things about Vaughan. He had been very active at Westminster College in Fulton, and they were looking for somebody to make an address there. The college administrators wanted Vaughan to see if he could find somebody, and so he went to Mr. Truman. Judge [Ernest] Tipton was another one who was active there. He had been a football coach and football referee, Tipton had, and he got to be a judge later. They concluded that they ought to have, if they could, Prime Minister Churchill to make the address at the school. So they prevailed upon Mr. Truman to get word to the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister, so they said, answered back, that he would come and make an address at Westminster, provided President Truman accompanied him there and also presented him to the people. Mr. Truman said that he would be glad to and he did do it. So that's how that happened, and Vaughan was one of the folks that helped promote it, along with Judge Tipton.

JOHNSON: Yes, I know that his involvement in the "Iron Curtain" speech must have been one of the red letter

[177]

days in the career of Harry Vaughan.

BURRUS: That's right. And it showed that he had the confidence of the people in this school too; that's another thing about it. That's a great institution. It was great and still is.

JOHNSON: Before getting back to the Presidency, I have another question or two about the period of 1940-41, in regard to the local organization. When you went into the Army you kind of got away from that too, I suppose, away from local politics?

BURRUS: I didn't have time, or the chance to do it.

JOHNSON: In January 1941, you wrote a letter to Senator Truman...

BURRUS: That was before I was called to duty in April.

JOHNSON: You mentioned the question of who should give Les advice, Les being Lester...

BURRUS: Byam.

JOHNSON: Okay, that is Byam. And you said that Roger

[178]

was willing and able to do so, but Les seemed to be "amenable to Jim," that is Jim Pendergast no doubt. You said Jim had different views, and the question was whether Les would get and follow the advice of Roger, or would he get and follow the advice of Jim. Does "Roger" refer to Roger Sermon?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: I guess, again, you thought maybe Truman could crack the whip there or something.

BURRUS: Or make a choice between them, so we'd know.

JOHNSON: Do you recall just who Byam followed, whose advice he eventually did follow? Was it Pendergast or Sermon?

BURRUS: I think he followed Jim's advice more than he did anybody else, because Sermon was more interested in elevating himself than anything else.

JOHNSON: Was Roger Sermon pretty important in local politics at that time?

BURRUS: Yes. He had been in the Rabbit faction to start

[179]

with, but when Truman got into it he switched over to Truman's leadership and so that's how that happened. But in time Roger wanted to make himself the top man, and not take second place.

JOHNSON: He wanted to take over the organization after Boss Pendergast...

BURRUS: In Eastern Jackson County, not from Pendergast, but take over from the folks that happened to be leaders here in Eastern Jackson County. Independence was the predominant place for the leaders of Eastern Jackson County.

JOHNSON: Did he ever become a judge in the County Court?

BURRUS: No. He just was Mayor.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the year he became Mayor?

BURRUS: No, he was still Mayor though, after I came back from overseas in 1945. He lived across the street from me and I never had any particularly close relationship with him when he was Mayor and his faction, because I was with Truman's folks. I didn't always think that

[180]

Roger Sermon was doing things that Truman would want to have done, so I would just stay clear of him. When I came back after being gone for five years, he lived across the street and he never came across the street to say hello to me, or say he was glad to see me, or greet me in any other way. Of course, I didn't mind, except that it was a little bit unusual for a fellow to get the cold shoulder. That's what he did, and therefore I had no reason to do anything to favor Roger Sermon.

Roger Sermon ran for Governor too, you know. He was defeated, and he thought that he didn't get as much support from Mr. Truman as he should have had. Mr. Truman told him, "Well, you didn't take the support that I told you to go get. I told you to go out to the county organizations to get them to be for you, but you went out to the city organizations and they're always in conflict with the county. And they didn't have enough votes, and you got the short end of the stick because of it, that's all."

JOHNSON: That was when Mr. Truman was President?

[181]

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Before he became Mayor, what role did he have in county politics?

BURRUS: He was a City Councilman and was active in city affairs.

JOHNSON: Had they been friends--Truman and Sermon?

BURRUS: Personal friends, because they had been in the Army together, He was a captain of a battery and Truman was another captain of another battery in the 129th Field Artillery.

JOHNSON: After he lost the race for Governor, did he kind of drop out of politics?

BURRUS: Well, he did not drop out, but he didn't have the clout that he had had before.

JOHNSON: He didn't take a Federal job?

BURRUS: He wanted to, but didn't get one.

JOHNSON: Now we get up to the Presidency of President

[182]

Harry Truman again. I think one of the last episodes that was mentioned in the previous interview was your visit with Harry Truman in the White House. Your first visit was around memorial Day 1945. We did discuss a little bit the connections and the relationships that you had with Truman while he was President but we had just gotten into it. How would you characterize your relationship with Mr. Truman while he was President? Let's begin with the period after your first visit to the White House.

BURRUS: I had some leave time that I had accumulated and I didn't go back really to practice law until the fall of 1945 because I was back with Mrs. Burrus and my son. We also had folks in the Washington area--Annapolis, Maryland--who had a place on the bay that was very comfortable for us. That's where we spent most of the summer.

When I came back, of course, I had a law practice to pick up on. I began to do that. I also had represented the County Court in a lot of matters that I had to forego and leave at the time I left. When I came back home, a lot of those things were still hanging over, especially some that had to do with the State

[183]

Highway Department. So I got back on those cases; they asked me to help with some of the cases that I had worked on before I left, and which were still on the docket and had to be disposed of. Along with that, I got in touch with Vivian; he was head of the real activities for Harry in this general area. He was head of the FHA (Federal Housing administration) too in this area.

In one episode involving Vivian and me, there was a gentleman who had been chairman of the local Democrat party committee and he wanted to be named as a judge to the Federal Court. But he had been doing some things that came to Vivian's attention and mine, that if he had been appointed by Truman, and these came to light, it would have stained the reputation of Mr. Truman. I helped put a stop to that, and another lawyer from Kansas was appointed judge.

JOHNSON: Who was the one that was appointed?

BURRUS: Delmas Hill; his nickname was "Buxx" Hill. He has been here at the Library quite often; he was a friend of Truman's for a long time.

I also came to be appointed as counsel for the

[184]

Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

JOHNSON: For this area, or district?

BURRUS: This district, that's right.

We had funds that had to be loaned. Some people incurred losses by reason of floods on the Missouri River and the Kaw River, and all the borrowers had to do was to show they had a loss and that they were eligible to get loans. My job was to see that those things were legally taken care of. Also, as best we could, we were to turn those down that we didn't think were eligible--if we had any discretion about it. We did a good job in loaning out the money. We never had a single failure of a title, and the only foreclosures, I think, were two or three, where the borrowers were a man and a wife who got a divorce and they couldn't get things split up, and the RFC had to dispose of it. I believe, too, there was a case where somebody died and they had to do the same thing. But

[185]

the RFC never lost any money from any of them.

JOHNSON: What year did you become counsel for the RFC?

BURRUS: About '46. I was in six or seven years. When Eisenhower came in, I got out.

JOHNSON: Were you deputy counsel for the County Court as well?

BURRUS: Oh, no. I represented the State Highway Department; I didn't represent the County Court at all.

JOHNSON: You were assistant counselor for the County Court in 1927 to...

BURRUS: 1941 when I went to duty.

JOHNSON: Did you take that position again when you came back?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: So you were carrying on a private practice, and you're also counsel to the RFC from about 1946 to '53. Did you visit Washington again, visit the White House?

[186]

BURRUS: I visited Washington two or three times, yes.

JOHNSON: You visited Mr. Truman in the White House?

BURRUS: No, he was in Blair House.

JOHNSON: Did you go over to the oval office?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you recall your experience there in Blair House and the Oval Office? This is after the first visit in May of '45.

BURRUS: One time I went back was when Mr. Truman came in by airplane in June 1950 and my son and I met him at the airport. I have described that, where he had to go back to Washington early because of the invasion of South Korea.

I also told you about the other trip where I met Mr. Deramus, head of the Kansas City Southern Railroad, and passed on a message from him to President Truman.

JOHNSON: Did any other people try to use your association for particular advantage? You were not a lobbyist, were you?

[187]

BURRUS: If anybody wanted me to, they never came to me about it, because they knew that I wouldn't do it anyhow.

JOHNSON: You mentioned staying overnight at the Blair House in 1950. What room did you use?

BURRUS: One of the upstairs bedrooms. Fred Wallace, the President's brother-in-law, was with us on the plane and he also was there. They sent supper up to us upstairs on the third floor.

JOHNSON: Third floor bedroom.

BURRUS: I guess it was third, an upper floor. I don't know which room it was.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the White House piano there in the study? Did you get into the study there at the Blair House?

BURRUS: I don't remember the piano.

As I mentioned earlier, I was in Washington for a Reserve Officers convention.

JOHNSON: What hotel were you staying in, do you remember,

[188]

after that first night in Blair House?

BURRUS: The Mayflower. I was there when Truman made his address to the Reserve Officers about the Korean affair. That was also the visit where I overheard him talking to Averell Harriman on the phone, when I was in the swimming pool.

JOHNSON: Did Harriman have a photographic memory? Were you impressed with his memory?

BURRUS: He did. He remembered it with exactness.

JOHNSON: Is that where your swimming habit started or did it start before that? I understand that you take a swim almost daily, even now.

BURRUS: I do today. Not quite that often, though.

JOHNSON: There aren't too many people who got to swim in the White House swimming pool, however. Do you remember Ted Sanders? He helped organize the campaign in Cameron back in '34, and he was a close friend of Fred Canfil.

[189]

BURRUS: I remember Fred Canfil, but I don't remember Ted Sanders.

JOHNSON: There is one thing that comes to mind in that connection. We have Ted Sanders' recollection in talking to Mr. Truman and Fred Canfil, just the three of them, in Kansas City before the 1944 convention in which Truman said he was going to be nominated for the Vice Presidency. He said Robert Hannegan told him that. That came as a surprise to me, in that most of the information we have suggests that Truman went to Chicago without any plan or hope of becoming Vice President. Did he ever talk to you about how he came to be nominated?

BURRUS: Yes. He said that he had agreed to nominate somebody else, Jimmy Byrnes, but he learned after he had made his commitment to do that, that Mr. Roosevelt decided he wanted to have him as the Vice President. He said he agreed to nominate Jimmy Byrnes because he had great respect for him. Later on, of course, when he was Secretary

[190]

of State, Byrnes overstepped his bounds and President Truman removed him.

JOHNSON: Did he ever talk to you about Henry Wallace?

BURRUS: No. Except that he did say that Mr. Roosevelt had decreed that he didn't want Mr. Wallace as Vice Presidential nominee for a second term.

JOHNSON: Any other incidents in Washington that you can remember?

BURRUS: I remember him once telling me, "I'm going to make an address on the radio this evening. You and Mrs. Burrus are here. Why don't you come over and listen to it? It won't be televised, just be on radio."

I said, "Fine."

So I said I'd bring her and I did, and we went over and came into the room where he had everything all set up. He was making an address really to the Russians in which he wanted them to know the fact that he wanted them to have peace with us, and that we would

[191]

also keep our troops in balance with theirs. He made his address and after he got finished, and was cut off, he said, "Well, I made that. You might just as well talk to the wind; they won't do anything with it and won't pay any attention to it, but I want it to be on the record that I made this address, made this attempt to have them to conciliate themselves with our views." So that was that.

JOHNSON: When was that?

BURRUS: I'm not sure. I believe it was after the Korean war started. Mrs. Burrus and I were the only two persons besides the people doing the work.

JOHNSON: Was that sort of like a Fireside Chat?

BURRUS: Well, it wasn't in the Oval Office. It was in a special part that they had.

JOHNSON: Was it in the living quarters, in the study?

BURRUS: It was in one of the White House offices. It was one of those side rooms off of there.

JOHNSON: Did you ever get into the living quarters of the

[192]

White House?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: I notice that you were very much involved with the Reserve Officers Association.

BURRUS: I was commander of the Kansas City chapter; we met at Richards Gebaur [Air Force Base]. I was a delegate to the national conference, representing Missouri I knew a lot of the folks there, and we had people we wanted to have put in the various office. I could have some of my friends here in Missouri do what they wanted to have done and get things done, that were helpful to Mr. Truman.

JOHNSON: Truman addressed them in June 1950 in Washington which we've talked about. Do you recall him ever giving any other address or speech to the ROA?

BURRUS: No, I don't.

JOHNSON: You mentioned meeting out at Richards Gebaur.

BURRUS: The Reserve officers did. That's the Kansas City chapter that Mr. Truman organized in 1922. In 1926

[193]

and '27 when I got in with Mr. Truman in the military, that's where I met with them and got to be a member of that Reserve officers unit. Later on they made me commander of the Kansas City chapter. On one occasion, after Mr. Truman had left the Presidency, we had the Judge Advocate Generals of the various areas of the nation meeting out there. We had quite a few folks present. Besides Mr. Truman, we had as a guest, Tom Clark, the United States Supreme Court justice.

So they sat at the head table, and I was there in the group. There must have been six or seven hundred in the audience. Mr. Truman sat up there and some of those folks were coming up with their programs and wanting Mr. Truman to autograph them, and they also wanted Clark to autograph them. Well, Mr. Truman saw that wasn't right, and I did too. I said, "I want to make an announcement about stopping it." He said, "Just leave it to me; let me do it." He got up and said, "Now, I want to have dinner this evening; I don't want to be interrupted. Justice Clark and I want to dine leisurely. So if you'll just be good enough to get your programs together and give them

[194]

to Colonel Burrus and Colonel Vaughan, they'll assemble them and then I'll take them to my office and I'll sign them and send them back to you. You put your addresses on there so I'll know where to send them." Sure enough, that stopped it. Then I began to get them; there must have been five or six hundred of them. We had to have some special envelopes made for them. Well, he sent it to them all, and that's how he did it. Tom Clark was there too, and both of them made some remarks to the officers.

JOHNSON: Did Mr. Truman ever talk to you about Tom Clark, or tell you his impressions of Tom Clark?

BURRUS: It was always the most friendly relations you could have. When this fellow Merle Miller quoted Truman as saying the Clark appointment was the biggest mistake. he ever made, that just wasn't true.

JOHNSON: We've been trying to figure that out too.

BURRUS: Merle Miller doesn't have anything except what he said Mr. Truman told him, and Mr. Truman, being dead, wasn't able to deny them. I prepared some things

[195]

for a file and wanted Mr. Clark to let me publish them. "Well," he said, "let's don't do that." He said, "The more you pick up something that's got stinking dirty stuff on it, the more stink you get on you." I said, "All right," and we didn't do it.

JOHNSON: There is a theory about that. You know, after Mr. Truman left office he was charged by Attorney General Brownell, of the Eisenhower administration, of allowing a Communist, Harry Dexter White, to be hired by the Federal Government. Harry Dexter White was accused of being Communist, and they accused Truman of knowing about it and still hiring him. White had died in the meantime.

Well, our Library has a file of papers of the Solicitor General, Philip Perlman, that indicate that Mr. Truman wanted Mr. Clark, who now was a member of the Supreme Court, to comment about his role in hiring Harry Dexter White when he was Attorney General. Apparently because he was on the Supreme Court at this point, Justice Clark felt that he should not comment about the Harry Dexter White case, or the controversy, even though he had been the one who recommended or approved

[196]

his hiring. Apparently, Clark's refusal to get involved bothered Mr. Truman because he was under all of this pressure of having to defend the hiring of White. It also appeared, to Truman, to be a political thing in which the new administration was trying to tarnish his reputation. Justice Clark would not comment about it, and this irritated Mr. Truman, it seems. Have you ever heard anything about that theory?

BURRUS: As far as I was ever able to observe, Mr. Truman had no intentions for anything except the kindliest and friendliest relations with Tom Clark and Tom Clark with him. And the wives had the same kind of relationship.

JOHNSON: Yes, of course, the Miller you're talking about is the one that wrote *Plain Speaking*. Did Merle Miller ever talk to you?

BURRUS: He quoted me, but he never talked to me.

JOHNSON: He quoted you without talking to you?

BURRUS: I guess I had given an interview to somebody,

[197]

and that fell into his hands in some fashion, he referred to me as "Luther Burrus" in his work. That again demonstrates that he didn't understand something on the tapes. When I saw it in print I got a copy of it, and I didn't like it and I knew he was going to be out at the Mall writing autographs. I made a point of going out to see him. I went out and got in line, and I had my name written down and I said, "I just want to tell you you made a hell of a mistake when you quoted me as being 'Luther' Burrus. I'm Rufus Burrus, but you never saw me and never talked to me until I am talking with you now. You just got hold of some documents or some tapes that you have used, and you haven't quoted me correctly about them either, but I want you to put your name on this thing."

He said, "Well, I'm going to publish some corrections."

I said, "Don't worry about that; you just do as you please about that. Don't bother me about that. I just want you to sign this and date it today." He did, and I said, "I'd like to have a chance to have more of a visit with you. What about tomorrow? Can I see you?"

[198]

"Oh, no, I'll have to be leaving early in the morning."

I said, "That's all right; if you don't have any time, that's okay."

And that's when I left him. But that's the only time I ever had a chance to see him, and I didn't talk with him except then. He had those tapes that several of us had given out for Mr. Truman's use, and he got hold of them, somehow, and how I don't know.

JOHNSON: Who had those tapes?

BURRUS: I think it was this fellow, [David] Susskind.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, David Susskind.

BURRUS: I think those were the ones that he had gotten.

JOHNSON: Oh, I see. Were you interviewed by David Susskind?

BURRUS: I was interviewed by someone representing him. It wasn't Susskind himself.

JOHNSON: They were being done for a TV series, *Decision:*

[199]

The Conflicts of Harry S. Truman. Did you appear in any of those segments? Did they quote you in the finished version?

BURRUS: No, I don't think they did. But I might have been on radio. I happened to be in San Francisco and someone had the radio on and said to me, "We heard you on the radio this morning." What it was I don't know. It could have been that one, I suppose.

JOHNSON: Was this just a tape recording or were they doing a movie?

BURRUS: No, it was a tape recording.

JOHNSON: It is well known that Miller's account of Truman's meeting with MacArthur at Wake Island in October 1950 is at odds with the *Memoirs* and with other documents as to what happened. Did you ever talk to Mr. Truman about MacArthur?

BURRUS: Yes. He said MacArthur was giving out information and having interviews which were not in accordance with the policies from Washington. He had General Marshall and other folks look into it. Marshall said the President

[200]

should have fired MacArthur two years ago. Truman believed that every effort should be made not to make a martyr out of MacArthur.

JOHNSON: Did you ever see or meet General Marshall?

BURRUS: No, I never had occasion to.

JOHNSON: Many sources have quoted President Truman as praising him as one of the greatest Americans ever, greatest military leader we've had.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did you ever meet Eisenhower?

BURRUS: I was in the presence of General Eisenhower when he was here at the Library. After Mr. Truman left the Presidency he never had a line from Eisenhower directly, never had anything at all directly to do with him. In Kansas City there was a People to People program and after Eisenhower left office he was designated to head that program. Joyce Hall of the Hallmark Corporation was behind that move.

Well, Joyce Hall and Charlie Stevenson wanted Mr.

[201]

Truman to meet with General Eisenhower before he became the People to People head. So they came out here to the Library to see Mr. Truman. I happened to come in as they were leaving. Charlie Stevenson saw me and said, "Rufe, I want to see you in the next day or two."

I said, "That's fine." He didn't say what. A couple of days later he said, "I want you to meet me over at Joyce Hall's office."

I said, "Where's that?"

He said, "That's up in the big building there, at the Hallmark Card place."

"Oh," I said, "all right; I'll find it."

So I went over and met them. Hall said, "You know, we're going to have General Eisenhower to be the head of the People to People program, and that means we need all of us to get together." He said, "Former Presidents like Mr. Truman and the General ought to have an arrangement to speak with each other."

I said, "Yes, that's right. You remember so far as Mr. Truman is concerned, he was never afforded any opportunity to have any discussion with the General.

[202]

The General knew where Truman was, and Mr. Truman tried to speak to him two or three times when he was in Kansas City. But each time he was advised that he had his time all taken up and wouldn't be able to see him to talk with him, to make an appointment for him. Well, he came to the conclusion after a couple of times that he just wasn't going to make any more effort to do it."

I was asked, "What do you suggest?" To the idea of a breakfast for them, or a dinner for them, I said "Mr. Truman won't do that I'm sure." I said, "I suggest that the General come and call on Mr. Truman, which he should do at the Library. He's going to be here in the city, I understand from you."

Mr. Hall said, "Yes, we'll see."

They never did tell me what was finally decided, but we began hearing through Senator [Harry] Darby from Kansas that the General was going to be here and that he was going to come calling on Mr. Truman. He got word to Tom Evans on that, and Tom Evans called me and said, "Tell Mr. Truman." I replied, "All right." So that's how we learned about it, in that fashion.

[203]

JOHNSON: You got that thing started.

BURRUS: Yes. So when I talked to Mr. Truman about it, he said, "Now you be here tomorrow morning, when this is coming off. You put your uniform on too."

I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Be here at 8 o'clock because we'll have a lot of newspaper people and other folks setting up, and I want you to help me keep them back because I'm going to wait for Mr. Eisenhower to come here to my office. He's calling on me. My office is back behind that front door and that's where he's going to come see me. That's where I'm going to be."

I said, "All right."

He said, "They want me, I expect, to come out to the car and meet him and I'm not coming to the car and meet him. I want you to tell them that."

Well, when I got here that morning, there was a lot of folks around and they were putting up the wires and getting things all strung up. Among them was Roy Roberts of all folks, because he never got up before noon ordinarily and he was there then. He said, "Well, now we ought to have everything arranged so that when the General comes, Mr. Truman comes out to the car and meets him."

[204]

I said, "No sir, Mr. Roberts, we're not going to do that. Mr. Truman doesn't want to do that. The General is calling on him. His part of the Library is over here at this spot and that's where he's going to meet him; that's where he's going to call on him. That's it." He kept on. And I said, "And further than that, Mr. Roberts, I won't have any more conversation with you. I want you to stay back with all the rest of your lackey boys and don't come barging in here about that." I knew him well enough that you couldn't offend him. So he finally moved out. As time went on we began to hear on the radio that the plane had landed and Eisenhower was on his way. Finally, he came up and Truman said for me to go out to the car and meet the General and escort him in.

I went out to the car. He had a hat that was in his hand, and I said, "I'll take care of your hat, sir."

He said, "Well, don't lose it."

I said, "That's a very good hat. I can feel and tell that, and let me assure you I'll personally see that you get your hat back all right. I know what it

[205]

means to take care of hats." I said, "Mr. Truman's waiting. We didn't know you were coming for sure until we heard it on the radio in the last little while that you were on the way." He looked at me kind of strange. I said, "That's right."

Well, I took him in the door; then I stepped back, and Truman stepped toward the door and the General came through. Mr. Truman greeted him in a very friendly sort of a way. After having a few words with him, he turned and said, "I want you to know my friend Colonel Burrus." It just happened that some newspaper fellow was present and he saw Mr. Truman saying that to the General, and so the General turned to me and we shook hands right in the presence of Truman.

That's the first time the two were pictured together in the Library. That's in the file here too. So that's what was happening.

I left him there in his office. Truman had said, "I want to have some time with him. And when he gets ready to leave that's all right, I'll probably get up and go with him."

Well, he did. In time they started out toward

[206]

the museum. [Philip] Brooks was Library Director at the time and he went along. Mr. Truman started to show the General some of the things. They came to the Oval Room. Mr. Truman's portrait was on the left side, and the General's was on the right side of the entry. The General looked up, and Mr. Truman said, "You might recognize that portrait." He said, "That's the one that was given to us by Harry Darby. It's been reported that Harry paid $5,000 for it and it's a good portrait." The General said, "But you got it on the preferred side."

Truman said, "Yes sir, General, and I had it put there."

Well, the General got red in the face when Mr. Truman told him that. I didn't realize that when the General got into the White House he took all of the things that had anything to do with Truman and the Democrats, and put them into storage. That was what Truman was demonstrating to him, sort of rubbing his nose into it.

JOHNSON: You say he called that "preferred position,"

[207]

where Eisenhower's portrait was?

BURRUS: That was changed back, and Mr. Truman's portrait is there now. But that time it was the other way around, you see.

JOHNSON: Do you think that embarrassed Eisenhower, to be treated that nicely?

BURRUS: That's right.

Then when Mr. Truman took him out, he pointed to a copy of General Eisenhower's memoirs that had been autographed by the General to Mr. Truman. He had it opened to where it would show the inscription. Mr. Truman said, "There is somebody's handwriting over there that you might recognize." The General went over and looked at it and read it, including the laudatory comments it included about President Truman. He got red in the face again. Well, that's what happened there.

In some places of the museum, Mr. Truman asked me to stay with the General and represent him. The General singled me out two or three times and explained

[208]

to me how glad he was that he came to see the Library and how glad he was to meet Mr. Truman, and how good it was to be with him. He told me he wished he had seen the Library earlier. He said he would have made some changes in his own Library, because he liked the arrangement better here.

JOHNSON: So they started patching their differences up then?

BURRUS: That's right. From then on the relationship warmed up.

Soon after that occasion, the Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn died. The funeral was in Texas. Mr. Truman, the General, and President Kennedy met at his funeral--along with Vice President Johnson.

Mr. Truman said to me, "You know, having met as we did at the Library before that, it made it less awkward to meet at the funeral service." He said, "I'm glad we had a chance to do that." He said that the General also expressed his pleasure at the chance to meet at the Library.

JOHNSON: That's quite a picture, you know, two former

[209]

Presidents, an existing President and a future President all there together.

One of the things that really bothered Mr. Truman was when General Eisenhower refused to compliment General Marshall on this trip to Wisconsin in 1952 in order to placate McCarthyites, McCarthy supporters. Did he ever talk to you about McCarthy or say anything about his opinions of Joe McCarthy?

BURRUS: He just was a fellow that didn't know really what he was doing, and he just went off on a tangent against everybody else. Mr. Truman said not to pay any attention to him, just let him go.

JOHNSON: Did he ever say anything about that episode where Eisenhower did delete this reference, this complimentary reference to Marshall?

BURRUS: No. He did say that he was glad that he had a chance to renew his acquaintance and relationship with the General.

Later on there was an occasion where Joyce Hall hosted a dinner over there at Hallmark, and I was invited to take Mr. Truman. Both he and Mrs. Truman were there, along

[210]

with Mrs. Burrus and me. I went as his aide. They had a very beautiful dinner set up for us and the Eisenhowers. Mrs. Eisenhower had had a tooth extracted and she had been in some pain beforehand, but she was there to participate in it. Mrs. Truman and all of us got on just fine. It was a rare opportunity for Mrs. Truman and Mrs. Eisenhower to socialize.

[211]

Third Oral History Interview with Rufus B. Burrus, Independence, Missouri, November 20, 1985. By Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library.

JOHNSON: Do you know anything about the papers that Truman accumulated during his first term as Senator; the fate of those papers? Do you have any idea what happened to them?

BURRUS: I have no idea. Nothing. I never saw them, and I presume that as Senator he would have had files. I know this much about it. After he was elected Senator, I happened to go back to Washington and I came in to visit with him at his office. He had a bundle of photographs of himself. He opened up one of them and he said, "This is one of the first ones that I've had to take out," and he said, "I want to autograph this to you." And he did. It's on my wall now. But he didn't put any date on it. Soon after that he said, "You know, I learned something when I gave you that one; I ought to put the date on there." He said, "I learned from then on to put the date on things so that the person knows when it happened." I said, "Well, that's hanging up on my wall, or will be upon the wall." He said, "That's all right; you know when

[212]

you got it." I said, "Yes, I remember you telling me when I was here in your office that it was one of the first bundles of pictures that you took out, and you gave one to me."

JOHNSON: Historians sure appreciate it too, when they see dates on photos and letters. Again, perhaps that is part of his sense of history that you should date letters and documents.

BURRUS: Just a second before you get along here any further. You know, he was a friend of a former Congressman from St. Joseph--Richard Duncan. He finally became a Federal judge. He ran for election and got defeated. He wrote letters to Truman in which he wanted to come and visit with him about some judgeship or some other kind of "ship," he called it. Truman said, "Come on;" and he did. Senator Truman later sent his name in for the judgeship between St.

Louis and Kansas City; it was called the roving Federal District Judge seat. They didn't get anything done with it; it just kept laying there, and Truman kept needling the Attorney General. Anyhow, he was the one that had to pass on it, and he

[213]

didn't get it done. Well, President Roosevelt was wanting to get some things done after a time through Truman. When Truman got word about that, he decided that politics is a two-way street. He got word back to Roosevelt about this nomination that was being held up. In the meantime, Truman's nominee was acting as a judge without having any express confirmation; he was waiting to be confirmed. Finally, Mr. Roosevelt got his name in and he was confirmed. I recall this because I was asked by the Bar Association to make an address to them about the judge after he died. I researched it and made the speech. I found out that Francis Biddle, in his memoirs, made a statement and had some letters from Roosevelt to him about Duncan.

JOHNSON: Yes, I've heard the name.

BURRUS: I'll give you the gist of it, but you can get it exactly, because I've got a copy of it that's in my file. Biddle received the letter from Mr. Roosevelt in which the President said that some little time had gone on, and Duncan had not been confirmed. Roosevelt told Biddle that Mr. Duncan seemed to be well-qualified

[214]

and that all the lawyers in the district supported him. And he said that it didn't take a Harvard Law School graduate to be a United States District Judge. It took someone with good common sense. He noted too that the Senator was pressing him on the issue. He requested Biddle to review his files and do something about it. Biddle did, and Duncan was confirmed as a judge.

What I'm getting around to is that here is an example of Senator Truman using his weight to get something done on an appointment through the President.

Mr. Duncan did make a good judge; everybody acknowledged that. He had good common sense and he looked at the law objectively. He followed the spirit of the law as well. This event was what brought Truman to the attention of Mr. Roosevelt more forcefully than anything else, that I can determine.

So when it came time for Mr. Roosevelt to find somebody to replace Wallace, Senator Truman came to his mind I'm sure. Here was a man who stood steadfast with his appointees and his friends, and he had the

[215]

backing of the people there generally. He would be one that, if he was a Vice President, would stay within the terms of the position, do what he ought to do, be steadfast and not vacillate. I speculate that is what came to Roosevelt's mind.

Henry Wallace wasn't that kind of a fellow. He just would do whatever seemed to be in his best interest.

Also on the matter of Jimmy Byrnes, Mr. Truman told me he became a little too big for his britches. He said that he called him in and told him that the President made foreign policy; that the Secretary of State only carried out the foreign policy that the President made. He said that the President is the one who makes statements about foreign policy, and not the Secretary of State, unless the President told the Secretary of State to do it. In other words, he was critical of what Byrnes was doing. Byrnes promised Mr. Truman that he wouldn't do anything like that anymore, but when he did do it, Truman said the only thing I could do with him was just to have him hand in his resignation, and get him out. And he did.

[216]

JOHNSON: He also parted company with Henry Wallace, who was Secretary of Commerce and then made a speech on foreign policy, in spite of the fact that he was Secretary of Commerce.

BURRUS: Yes. Now here's something that recently was in the newspaper's 40 years ago column.

JOHNSON: I see the item. It says that Wallace called President Truman a small opportunistic man and compared [J. Edgar] Hoover with the Nazi gestapo chief Heinrich Himmler. It says the comments were made in a 42-volume diary and sealed on the 10th anniversary of Mr. Wallace's death.

Since we're back in that period again, back in the years of the Truman administration, I might just again mention some letters that you had written to President Truman at that time. I notice for instance in 1946, in a letter to Truman, you noted Truman's support for James Blair, as a Democrat representative from the Columbia-Jefferson City area, or district. You also mention Roger Slaughter's criticism of Truman. I believe James Blair was elected, wasn't he?

[217]

BURRUS: He was elected Governor.

JOHNSON: He was elected Governor?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Do you know what the reason was for the friction between Roger Slaughter and Harry Truman?

BURRUS: Yes, Roger Slaughter was a young fellow that lived up the street, just a block and a half from where Harry Truman did on Waldo. He was an only child; he was educated at the university back there and he had a big ego. He was critical of Senator Truman's support of the

Fair Labor Standards law, in the 1930s. He made the statement, publicly, that Mr. Truman either never read it or he never understood it, or else he wouldn't have been so foolish as to be in favor of it. Truman said that Roger had a right to his opinion, but from there on he would have to go by himself. That's where he parted company with Roger.

Because of that, Mr. Truman got one of the lawyers there in Grandview to run against Slaughter for the nomination, and Slaughter was defeated.

[218]

JOHNSON: This would have been for Congress

BURRUS: Yes, but he wasn't elected. It went to a Republican somehow. I remember it.

JOHNSON: I guess they remained on the outs from then on?

BURRUS: That's right. Slaughter was just a haughty sort of a fellow and Truman had to treat him that way.

JOHNSON: He thought Truman was too much a friend of big labor, of labor unions?

BURRUS: Slaughter said that he was too much for labor.

JOHNSON: Did Slaughter represent more the corporate business interests?

BURRUS: He was what you would call a "silk stocking" type of lawyer.

JOHNSON: He did practice law here?

BURRUS: Yes, in Kansas City.

JOHNSON: In January of 1947, you recommended your former commanding officer Colonel Edward Barrett for the

[219]

Governorship of Trieste. I'm wondering if Barrett got that job. What happened to that request?

BURRUS: He got transferred away from there to the Pacific, so he never got a chance to be Governor of Trieste.

JOHNSON: In October of '47 you mention that Forrest Smith might be the candidate for Governor, but you recommended Roe Bartle, instead, as a candidate. Do you remember Truman's reaction to that, or his reaction to Roe Bartle?

BURRUS: Well, he was favorable as far as Roe was concerned, but he wanted somebody that would be more out state and Roe wasn't known too well out state. That's the reason why he thought the other candidate would be better.

JOHNSON: Forrest Smith?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: And he was elected wasn't he as Governor?

BURRUS: That's right.

Bartle never did run. He ran for Mayor and that

[220]

was his career.

JOHNSON: They were friends as far as you know?

BURRUS: They were friends. They remained friends up to the time when Truman went out of office, even after that. He and Bartle got together sometimes.

JOHNSON: Also I notice in May of '48 you visited President Truman. That would have been only a few weeks before he made that first trip West in June, to give that commencement address out in California. He made whistlestops along the way; it was sort of a fore runner of that fall campaign, the whistlestop campaign Do you remember him saying anything about running again in '48, about his methods or tactics, or any thing about the '48 campaign that early in the year?

BURRUS: No, I don't remember it if he did. I always knew though, when it came time for campaigning, he'd be out on the campaign trail.

JOHNSON: Do you recall the reason you were in Washington at that time?

[221]

BURRUS: Well, I don't recall.

JOHNSON: Around July of '48 you wrote this open letter to Floyd Gibson that was in the newspapers. I'm not clear about the details of that. Apparently Gibson had been a supporter of Milligan in the previous campaigns. Do you recall what Gibson was running for in that campaign?

BURRUS: He was running for Congress.

JOHNSON: Congressman in '48. He was trying to kind of tie himself to the coattails of President Truman, I would gather, and you took exception to that…

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did Gibson ever go anywhere politically?

BURRUS: Yes. He was a senator in the state legislature of Missouri. And he was named to be United States District Judge in Kansas City, the Kansas City Division. After that he was elevated to the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals; that's where he finally retired after the years went by. He was appointed before Truman became President.

[222]

When he was in the state legislature, Gibson supported Senator Clark and his folks against Truman when Truman ran for the nomination. So Truman just didn't have any more need to look for him for anything. Anyhow, Gibson did get an appointment as a Federal judge. When it came time to have him installed in Kansas City, Truman was invited to be there, and he came very near not going. I said, "Well, you've been invited and they want you to come. I'll be willing to take you over. You can go with me and you can just do as you please about what you want to say. Just let it be known that you're there, and you don't have to applaud anything." Well, he did go, but he and Gibson never had anything together at all.

JOHNSON: Also, I see in December of '48 you noted the filing of a decree to incorporate the Jackson County Truman Club. You said that Truman might want to object to the use of his name. Did that go through? Was the Jackson County Truman Club ever established?

BURRUS: I'm not too sure whether it was or not; I don't think so.

[223]

JOHNSON: I notice in 1949 that among other things you noted that the Army Reserve seemed to be kind of weak and needed more money, more appropriations. I guess President Truman sort of agreed with you. I would imagine the situation didn't change probably very much, at least until the Korean war, because of lower appropriations for defense in those days?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Were you president of the ROA at that time?

BURRUS: The Kansas City chapter of the ROA, not the national.

JOHNSON: Then there was that Boyle dinner, honoring William Boyle in October '49. Were you there at that dinner?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Any special recollections?

BURRUS: Well, there was a lot of good Democrats there. Boyle was a good Democrat, and he was one of Truman's

[224]

friends back in Washington. They were very helpful to each other.

JOHNSON: So it was just a good old-fashioned kind of Democrat rally?

BURRUS: I think one of his brothers had been one of the aides to Mr. Truman in the White House at one time, too.

JOHNSON: In 1949 you were also elected as president of the Missouri Bar Association. How long did you serve in that?

BURRUS: One year. I had come up as a vice president, and then from there was president. Here's the way that happened. When I came back from the service in 1945, I learned about the activities of the Missouri Bar and how they were doing things. I went down to Jefferson City. On the way back I stopped at Sedalia, because one of the Board of Governors of the Missouri Bar and the secretary was a Republican, Don Lamb, the son of a judge. Ordinarily he would be in line to go up the next step from secretary to the vice presidency,

[225]

and then on to the presidency. So I stopped to visit with him. He was glad to see me and said, "Get back to practice law now for awhile." So that's what I did.

Sometime later the Bar Association met in Kansas City. I was on the board by reason of being in the district out here, the Independence area, which was separate from the Kansas City area. I was going to be present at the affair in the afternoon, when the election came up. I happened to see Don on the street around noontime, and I said, "I'm going to nominate you this afternoon to be vice president," and smiled to him. He said, "Well, you think you are, but I'm not going to run. You go ahead and do what you want to, but when you get there I'll be there too."

So I arose for the purpose of making a nominating speech; I didn't make it too long. He replied that he had told me to go ahead and do it, but he wasn't going to accept. He said he didn't want to be vice president because that would lead to the presidency and he didn't feel he could give the job the time it required. He said he wasn't going to do it, but then added, "But I'm going to nominate the Colonel." And he did. They

[226]

made me vice president, instead of him. Sure enough, the next year I was elevated to the office of presidency, which wouldn't ordinarily have happened that way except that Donald wouldn't accept the vice presidency.

JOHNSON: Was that a fulltime job? In other words, how did it affect your law practice?

BURRUS: It took a lot of time because we had to attend the various meetings of all of the 116 counties of the association and the State Bar, and all of that. I traveled as the vice president quite often with the president and we would go together. They were going separately, and I said to the president, "There's no reason for the two of us to drive our car around separately. Let me pick you up so we can get together." He said, "All right."

JOHNSON: Share the work.

BURRUS: That's right. I was in effect doing what the president was doing by going along with him, but I wanted to find out who the active members were in the local associations that would help the Bar at

[227]

the state level. That was one way I could keep track of, and know, and become acquainted with those in their various places of business. I would see them in their offices, in their own surroundings. That's how I finally got to be the president of the Missouri Bar.

JOHNSON: This put you on the national scene too.

BURRUS: That's right.

They had the custom that the retiring president was made a member of the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association. So I fell into that too. I was also a member of the group up there called the President's organization, representing the various States. And later I was named as the representative of the Kansas City Bar on the American Bar. Altogether, I served twenty years in the house of delegates of the American Bar Association.

JOHNSON: Are there any particular recollections of that year that you were president of the Missouri Bar? I've read something about how you emphasized the need to enlarge the membership or to get more lawyers involved in the activities of the association.

[228]

BURRUS: Every lawyer that practiced in the state had to be a member of the Missouri Bar. It wasn't a question of whether you wanted to, for when you registered you did become automatically a member of the Missouri Bar. You voted in the district in which you lived. You might have your office in another place but it was generally required that you do it from your place of residence. Jackson and various other neighboring counties were District 3.

I attended annual meetings of the American Bar. There was always one meeting of the year that was in Washington, and the other time it would be in different places, such as New York, San Francisco, Atlanta and other places.

JOHNSON: A good deal of traveling for you, no doubt.

BURRUS: They never even paid expenses for me as president. I paid my own expenses to go to state and national meetings. After I was out, the policy changed so the next president received expenses. Anyhow, I enjoyed it.

JOHNSON: I notice that in 1951 you wrote a scathing letter

[229]

to William Huie who wrote an article on Truman in the *Cosmopolitan* magazine. You charged him with half-truths and certain falsehoods. It was kind of interesting to note Truman's reply to your letter. He agreed, of course, with you, but he said, "I don't let these things bother me, for the simple reason I know that I'm trying to do the right thing, and eventually the facts will come out." I suppose that was kind of a typical response of Truman to some of these critics?

BURRUS: That's right. He said, in a little more pointed language, "The more you handle a turd, the more stink you get." In other words, he just ignored it. He said, "That's the best way."

JOHNSON: Let the record speak for itself. Was that his approach?

BURRUS: That's right. That's the reason I hesitated to try to answer this fellow here, because it just gives dignity to something that doesn't really deserve any.

JOHNSON: You feel that the record will speak for itself?

[230]

BURRUS: Especially if people would read Mr. Truman's *Memoirs*. He wrote, and he had documents to sustain what he said. He had helpers that got the facts out for him, and helped him put it together so it could be published. And it was published.

JOHNSON: I guess we're finally up here to the post-Presidential period. But maybe I should ask you this, you were home here on that last day that President Truman served in office, January 20, 1953. Were you down here to meet him when he arrived at the depot, along with the rest of them?

BURRUS: That's right. And I saw him the next day or two a couple of times.

JOHNSON: After he returned home he referred to himself as "Mr. Citizen." I would imagine that you and President Truman visited together a good deal during those years.

BURRUS: Yes. He had his office downtown in the Federal Reserve Bank Building, if you remember. Occasionally I'd stop out there to see him at the bank building,

[231]

and sometimes, if he was going down to the Club, we'd walk down the street together to the Club.

JOHNSON: The Kansas City Club?

BURRUS: The Kansas City Club. Sometimes I'd go to lunch with him, and he'd have somebody else he was going to be with. I'd take care of myself, but we'd walk down together.

I remember one time that we were walking down the street, and we met a state Supreme Court justice named Hyde. He was being mentioned as a member, or prospective member, of the United States Supreme Court. We had a Republican President [Eisenhower] at the time. Mr. Truman knew Mr. Hyde and he said, "Judge Hyde, if they had any sense, political sense, or any other good common sense, they'd nominate you because you'd make a good judge and you're the kind of a fellow that gives them the law as it should be. You've got a good background as a Republican, too, and that's what they should do with you." Then he said, "But they're not good enough and smart enough to do it I'm afraid; they won't do it." And they didn't do it. But he wanted him

[232]

to know that he would have enjoyed seeing being there. Judge Hyde smiled and said, "It'll happen sometime, but I'm not in any hurry about it. I'm not worrying about it." He stayed on the bench down there until he retired.

JOHNSON: I guess there were a number of Republicans in that Kansas City Club, weren't there, that he learned to be friendly with?

BURRUS: We called it the 1122 Club; it was on the eleventh floor of the Kansas City Club Building. He had good Democrat friends there too. They had a dining room there and they had a place where they played poker. That's where I met the men who later built the Library here for him.

JOHNSON: Massman?

BURRUS: [Henry] Massman and [Salvador] Patti.

I'll tell you the story. Mr. Truman asked me to meet him at lunch over there. I said, "Yes, I'll be there. I suppose the Club?" "Yes." "1122 Club?" "That's right." I said, "Twelve o'clock?" "Oh yes, oh yes." About fifteen minutes later I had a telephone

[233]

call from Tom Evans. Tom said, "Rufe, did the Boss ask you to go to lunch today?" I said, "Yes." "Did he tell you what he wanted? "No." "Well, he wants to start the Library next Monday." And he said, "We can't let him do it." I said, "We can't let him do it?" He said, "Yes." And I said, "Why include me? You might say it, but you don't have to include me." "Oh," he said, "we don't have any plans and specifications; we don't have any contract; we haven't got any bids. He just wants to shake hands with two friends and let them build the Library for him, at cost."

I said, "Well, if he wants to do it, why should you object?" "Well," he said, "it's trust money that they're spending." I said, "Well, they trusted him; they didn't trust you or me." He said, "Well, he shouldn't do that and we shouldn't let him." I said, "you be there at noon today; you tell him, don't tell me."

Mr. Truman introduced me to Mr. Massman and Mr.Patti. I said, "I know them both." He said, "They're ready to build the Library for me for $1." I said,

[234]

"Chief, let's shake hands on that; you can't get it any cheaper." "Well, I've got to give them a little cost," he said, "but you go and make it legal."

JOHNSON: Cost plus $1.

BURRUS: I knew what he meant, and I went to their lawyers whom I knew. We dictated a letter that was only about twelve or fourteen lines at the time, telling what he was going to do--give $100,000 to them to start with, and maybe some more. Later, a new letter was put into the file that was more formal than that first one. That first one I can't find anyplace, but I've found the other one. It was bought in the name of the Truman Library Corporation. That was a not-for-profit corporation that could save some taxes for the builder. They got the job done, for $1,750,000, including the furnishings and things that had to be done to get the building finished.

JOHNSON: So you had something to do with the legal work there. You were the one that took Truman's informal agreement with Massman and Patti and put it into writing.

[235]

BURRUS: Just shaking hands; that's all there was. Then we had this Clerk of the Works, and he was the fellow that ordered the materials and handled the workers, and to whom the money was furnished. We had a right to check but we knew they were doing a good job and Mr. Truman was out here every day seeing everything. He got acquainted with those workmen. They weren't working for Mr. Massman or Mr. Patti; they were working for Harry Truman.

So instead of getting an eight-hour day from them he got what was equivalent to twelve hours from the most expert, competent, and capable artisans.

JOHNSON: Were you what would be called the family lawyer, for the Truman family?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: They did use lawyers for other things too, I guess, like the contract on his book, his *Memoirs*, Sam Rosenman helped him in that.

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Then there was the Arthur Mag firm, I believe.

[236]

BURRUS: Mag's firm, yes. Truman had made a will back in Washington that Rosenman had made. After he came back here, they sent it to Mag's firm. He was a friend of Truman's, and he had other folks in there besides that to work with him. I knew him too and I knew Mr. Mag. We got along all the way. When it came time, though, that Mr. Truman wanted to have a codicil to the will, he told me he wanted me to prepare it. He wrote it out, and I prepared a codicil for him. I said, "This must be put along with your will, and I would hope that you go to the same witnesses, if you had any witnesses that were local, so you won't have two groups of witnesses, one for the will and the other for the codicil." Well, he had already made one codicil, I understood. I took the new codicil over to Mr. Mag. I said, "Now, Mr. Truman's going to be over here and execute this, and we have these same witnesses." So that's what happened there.

JOHNSON: Was that a final will, so to speak?

BURRUS: Final codicil, yes. That's the one where he wanted to leave some money to some of his folks. He left

[237]

one nephew, John, out because he was in the priesthood. He didn't say so, but I know he had in the back of his mind that his nephew couldn't have money and that it would go to the Catholic hierarchy, instead. After a time, though, John withdrew from the priesthood, and everybody in the family wanted to have him included. So he finally got the same recognition as the others did.

JOHNSON: I suppose he took a vow of poverty while he was in the priesthood.

BURRUS: That's right, and Truman knew that.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

BURRUS: John Truman. He was Vivian's oldest grandson, J.C. Truman's son. J.C. lives here in town; he's the oldest son of Vivian.

JOHNSON: You had a business relationship with him, with Truman, being the family lawyer, but was it still a pretty informal and rather personal kind of relationship?

BURRUS: That's right.

[238]

JOHNSON: I notice that he sent you some money because you weren't billing him. Didn't you start billing him at some point?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: Never did?

BURRUS: No. I came out here one morning and he said, "I want you to look after my sister Mary. She's got some things that need to be taken care of, some leases and other things. I don't want to have to do it myself; you see about doing it for her." I said, "All right." So I went out to see Miss Mary and told her Harry asked me to come out and do what she needed done. I knew her well. So we sat down and from there on she came to me.

One day Mr. Truman said, "You haven't sent me a bill for Miss Mary." I said, "No, I'm not going to send you a bill for Miss Mary, either her or you." He then sent me a check for $1,000 and I brought it back to him. I told him I wouldn't take it. I left it with him. A few days later he sent me another one. That check I never cashed. Every once in a while somebody

[239]

would say, "You haven't cashed Mr. Truman's check." I'd say, "No, I told him I wasn't going to cash it. I sent one of them back and he keeps sending it to me, so I just quit returning it. I'm just going to put this one in the file," and I've still got it in my file now.

JOHNSON: Is that right? The second check?

BURRUS: That last check, that's right. I never did cash it. I took care of Miss Mary's will. We got that taken care of. It looked like earlier that she wouldn't have too much of an estate, because her land out there at Grandview didn't have then the value that it finally turned out to be. Her estate finally turned out to be a million dollars.

JOHNSON: Was that mostly the land that was bought by Truman Corners Shopping Center?

BURRUS: She got some money out of that, the Truman Corners part, but she had some land on Blue Ridge Boulevard that gained in value. They just got the estate of hers

[240]

closed up now, and sold the last piece of land that she had. More than a million dollars finally came out of all of that.

JOHNSON: It's a fact, of course, that there was no pension for former Presidents when Truman left office.

BURRUS: Not for a long time, that's right.

JOHNSON: It was 1958, or about five years before Congress passed a law. So he had to raise his own money, so to speak, and I suppose use whatever savings he had. The book contract on his *Memoirs* must have been his largest single source.

BURRUS: But that cost him money to have that published, because he had to have people working on it. He said he hardly broke even on that. So he told me.

JOHNSON: I think the total contract came to about $600,000, which was a lot of money in those days.

The sale of land, farm land, for the Truman Corners Shopping Center--would that have been the other major source of income?

[241]

BURRUS: He got some of it, Mary got some of it, and Vivian got some of it. That's right. Mr. Truman also had some land across the road, and he disposed of that too before he died.

JOHNSON: Was that about 600 acres total for all the Trumans?

BURRUS: That's right. As a matter of fact, it came from the Youngs; it was called the Solomon Young farm, and they had 5,000 acres altogether in the original part.

JOHNSON: You mean back around the Civil War period?

BURRUS: Well, after the Civil War too. I don't know exactly the period.

JOHNSON: Apparently he also owned land at one time which was right next to Cave Spring Park. Did you handle the legal details on the sale of the farm land for the shopping center?

BURRUS: Oh yes, I took care of that. As a matter of fact, they had a contract to buy. Included in the contract as a provision that it must be concluded at a certain time and on a certain day. We hoped that they wouldn't

[242]

conclude the sale, because when it got to be known that that was up and for sale, other folks came up and wanted to buy. They would give us a better price for it. We thought maybe the buyer would stub his toe and wouldn't come in and complete the deal, but they did--just an hour and a half or two hours before the deadline. So we had to go through with that contract.

JOHNSON: He loved that farm, I think, from what I have read.

BURRUS: He did, and the house. That's the reason that the boys held out, the house, and finally sold it to the state. The Federal Government furnished some of the money for it. That's now a historical site.

JOHNSON: Also, wasn't it his idea to build the Library down there originally?

BURRUS: He talked about that, yes. But he concluded that it was out of the way for researchers and visitors to get there. Secondly, it would be more convenient for him if they had the Library here where it would be only a few blocks from his home on Delaware. It

[243]

also would be where he had his boyhood, where his wife had lived, and where he had been all these years. He concluded it ought to be here. He even considered at one time having it down at Columbia, Missouri, but he decided that was not the place for it.

Also the City of Independence had a park that was a part of this land, and above it was higher ground, with some houses on it, and he said that would be a better place for it. Well, the city raised $100,000 and negotiated and bought those houses, and that became the eastern part of the Truman Library land.

JOHNSON: I suppose you were involved with those transactions.

BURRUS: That's right. He wanted the Government, after the Library was built, to take it over. We would give it to them, but in order to do it, you had to have an Act of Congress, authorizing it. There was a lawyer that had been on his staff in Washington, and he came here several times, and he's the one that negotiated and got the thing started. It got through Congress and Congress made the transaction that authorized the

[244]

Federal Government to take it over. I had the deeds all ready. I had prepared the deeds to make the transfer, and was informed the papers had been sent to the United States District Attorney for him to handle the legal aspect. I got hold of him and asked him what he wanted me to do. He said we would have to have a guaranteed title policy. I said, "You mean, when we give you something we've got to guarantee a good title to it? We're just giving it to you." "Yes," he said. "Now," I said, "that isn't real. You don't want to examine a title, you don't know whether the title is good or bad, you don't want to have to do it, and you want somebody else to do it for you. But if you want one you can pay for it. We'll go ahead and get one." He said, "Well, we'll pay for it."

So I made application to a title company, and the title company said, "Yes, we'll approve it, if you give us an opinion that the title's good." I said, "I sure will." I had examined the titles to the various tracts and I knew what they were. Upon my opinion they guaranteed the title to the United States Government and that still stands here since the time it was done.

[245]

The Government paid the cost of the title policy.

JOHNSON: There were a number of fundraising projects, including the auction here in Independence. Do you remember that auction that they had to help raise money to build the Library?

BURRUS: I don't remember that particularly, no.

JOHNSON: Did you go to the 1956 Democrat Convention with Truman, or were you in Chicago for that event?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: Did you involve yourself at all with any of his political activities from 1956 through 1960 when he went out to speak for Kennedy after a little controversy occurred? Did you involve yourself at all with any of this?

BURRUS: That was all taken care of by the National Committee of the Democrat party, and the candidates' folks. They are the ones that made contact directly with him about where he would go and what would happen to him. I didn't have any part in that.

[246]

JOHNSON: Did he ever talk to you about any of the Democrat candidates? Do you remember any comments that he made to you about Stevenson and about Harriman or Kennedy perhaps?

BURRUS: He was a little bit hurt because Stevenson wouldn't make his mind up about what he was going to do. He kept holding back. Mr. Truman said he tried to impress on him that if he was going to be the candidate, he had to get out there and get it done. He couldn't just lay back and let the thing drag along.

JOHNSON: In 1960 he got embroiled in a controversy because he said that the Kennedys were rigging the convention.

BURRUS: Yes. Really he never relished the idea of Kennedy being a candidate. It wasn't because of the Kennedy boys, but it was their pop as he said. He said, "It wasn't the Pope, it was the pop." He said that he distrusted the old gentleman. Things had happened that he said he had known about it, and he just didn't want to have anything to do with him. Finally, John Kennedy disassociated himself from his father to the

[247]

point that it was evident that he was going to be his own man and that his father wasn't going to have control over him. He came out here as you remember. I was here when he came out.

JOHNSON: At that press conference?

BURRUS: That's right. Mr. Truman met him back in his suite there, got him by the arm, and said, "I want you to get up there and make this speech you need to make." He kind of shook his arm. And he said that from then on Mr. Kennedy got into it. Kennedy needed to be assured that Truman was really going to push him, and he did push him in the campaign.

JOHNSON: You were back there in the office?

BURRUS: Well, I would be there a little while. He talked with him by himself; nobody intruded themselves in there. But I would be available.

JOHNSON: Also at that conference were "Scoop" (Henry), Jackson and Stuart Symington.

BURRUS: That's right.

[248]

JOHNSON: Were you acquainted with Symington?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Truman had supported Symington earlier for the nomination in 1960. Did he ever talk to you about Symington or Harriman and why he admired them so much?

BURRUS: Well, Symington was a local person and he made a good Senator. Truman thought that he had the ability, and he displayed that when he was Senator. Of course, Harriman, to him, was one of the best Democrats. He felt that Harriman was a loyal Democrat, but that he looked beyond the party to the broader picture. And he had the ability to understand and make himself understood with foreign governments.

JOHNSON: Took the broad view.

BURRUS: That's right, with the British, and with the Russians and all the rest of them. He was a roving envoy for the United States Government, not just for the President who happened to be sitting at the time. Truman noted that on the political side he got to be a Governor, and that was a big thing for him to do that.

[249]

He had to get out and campaign for that; he was able to do it, and did do it.

JOHNSON: You're on the Board of Truman Library's Institute [for National and International Affairs]. You're one of the charter members, I suppose.

BURRUS: I was one of the first members. I had done the legal work that had to be done to get it together. They just keep carrying me on as the registered agent for the Institute.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the early meetings of the Truman Institute's Board?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Among those attending were Charles Brannan, Dean Acheson, Chief Justice Earl Warren, and others. You got acquainted with all these people through your connections with the Board.

BURRUS: Yes.

I ought to remember Warren. I was going to take him to dinner before they had to leave on the plane. Some of them said they were going to go over to meet

[250]

at the hotel, and we should go to the hotel. I said, "No, gentlemen, don't go to the hotel; in case you want to get a drink, let's go next door where there's a private place, at the Kansas City Club. Come on over as my guest."

So I took them over. There were some drinks to go around, and I said, "Now, some of you are going to have to leave on a plane here pretty quickly, and you can't get your dinner too soon. You can sit down at a table up here, and you can talk, and nobody is going to bother you. People will treat you with all the courtesies you're entitled to. Let's go over there." So we sat down at that table, and placed orders. Then I took Mr. Warren to the airport because he had to go earlier than the rest of them did. I came back, and some of them stayed there until after 10 o'clock. They had the most delightful time. John Snyder was there with them.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any of the others that were there?

BURRUS: Dean Acheson, I remember.

JOHNSON: In the same vein, let's say you had a group of

[251]

Truman's friends meeting around a table, informally, and with Harry Truman there.

I was just wondering what kind of a conversationalist Harry Truman was. Was he one who would initiate conversation, or would he kind of pick up on something that somebody else started? Did he project himself, or did he kind of hold back?

BURRUS: He didn't try to dominate things. He would listen to see what they were doing, and follow along. It was just like what he did in the Board meetings. He didn't initiate anything on the Board; he never did when he was a member of the Board.

JOHNSON: So he would wait for somebody else maybe to initiate, and then he'd kind of pick up on it?

BURRUS: That's right. He knew what they had on the agenda, what they were going to do, and what they proposed to do. So he had his mind made up about it; he didn't initiate it.

JOHNSON: How did he view the purpose of the Library as you understood it? What did he think was perhaps

[252]

the most important purpose?

BURRUS: It was for the purpose of having his letters and documents and all those things preserved and catalogued, so folks could come and see them. These were the original materials for history, and that's what they needed to have. He said that other Presidents had scattered their papers all over the place and some of them were destroyed. He said he wanted his papers here.

Then the other thing was to attract people to come see things like those Arabic swords and daggers, and costly gifts which he wouldn't accept for himself. He said that they were given to him because he was President of the United States, and they belonged to all of the people. Of course, that's the reason why exhibits have been set up here.

JOHNSON: Apparently he did not want too, much focus on him personally in the exhibits of the Library.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear him talk about his view of the museum, what kind of focus it should have?

[253]

BURRUS: The thing that he wanted and which was done was to have an exhibit about the six jobs of the Presidency. He wanted people to know that's what he said the office of the Presidency was.

JOHNSON: Did you go around with him through the museum several times?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did he point to particular items as of particular interest to him, do you remember?

BURRUS: Yes. I would be with him when he would take people through, and hear what he had to say about it. First he would come into the big foyer there, where they have the big mural painting, "Independence and the Opening of the West." He would mention his sitting with the artist and concluding what they would do. They finally thought it would be good to commemorate the three big trails that start here, and depict the indigenous individuals that lived here. He wanted people to see that and he did point it out to them.

Also on exhibit in the main lobby area were some

[254]

autographs of people like Mrs. Roosevelt and Eisenhower and other people. These autographs were in books that were opened up so people could see them. Then there were the daggers with the emeralds and other gems on the scabbards--the "hardware" he called it. I remember, too, there were gifts from Israel and the Jewish folks, such as a clay lamp that had a place for a wick and oil. That was one thing he would point out to them.

JOHNSON: He really liked that?

BURRUS: He liked everything.

Also, there was a big vase that had been put back together. He'd point out how that had been broken. Then, there was that mask--that helmet--that had been used in earlier times.

JOHNSON: You mean the Greek helmet?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: How about your visits to the home? Did you visit in the Truman home occasionally? How often would you visit the family there, would you say?

[255]

BURRUS: While he was still coming to the Library, if it was evening time and he was going someplace, I would take him. I'd go to the house and pick him up. I'd drive in the back yard, and we'd come out the back door and get into the car. We would come back out through the alley. When we returned, I'd take him the back way again. I'd come in through the house and meet him, and he generally was always ready for me. I had the hour and the time to be there, and he'd be ready. I'd come in the back door; wouldn't knock. I'd just come on in and say, "This is Rufus; I'm coming on in." "Come on. Come on," he'd say. I'd come through that back door into the kitchen and the pantry and the...

JOHNSON: Was that the entrance underneath the porch there?

BURRUS: It's above.

JOHNSON: Was it through the porch?

BURRUS: It's up on the porch.

JOHNSON: Okay, you came through the porch, the rear porch, into the kitchen.

[256]

BURRUS: That's right. Sometimes, in the summertime, he'd be over there in the porch to the east. Most of the time, though, he'd be over on the north side, in the little den, in his chair, and Mrs. Truman would be over in her chair.

JOHNSON: You mean the study?

BURRUS: The study.

JOHNSON: You'd go into the study once in a while to see him?

BURRUS: That's right. When he was here at the Library, I'd meet him here on Saturdays, every morning generally, because nobody would be here in the morning at 10 o'clock or so. I'd come down 10 or 10:30 and see what was going on with him, and sometimes visit about what happened, and what had come in the mail. A couple of times some things came in the mail and he had to have something done about it right away. I took them to my office and he signed them and we got them off. I thought he was lonesome in the Library. Nobody was there with him, and I just didn't think that that was the way that he would like it. The mail would come in and he'd go through

[257]

the mail and pick out what he wanted. When he quit coming down to the Library I then made it a point to go to the house on Saturday.

JOHNSON: And help him with the mail?

BURRUS: No, I wouldn't help with the mail, because that would be taken care of. But sometimes he would talk to me about people, and some of the events and things that he'd like to know about. We would talk about them.

After a time, Bob Adams was detailed by the Army, through the Reserve unit that he was in and in connection with the hospital, to be available to the Trumans. Bob would go with me there quite often. He'd come along with me, and visit with him.

JOHNSON: That was after July 1966 when he quit coming down?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did you know Gene Bailey, one of his secretaries?

BURRUS: I knew him, but he died.

JOHNSON: Committed suicide apparently.

[258]

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: What kind of a person was Bailey?

BURRUS: He was a retiring sort of a fellow; I didn't really get to know him.

JOHNSON: The Trumans had a cook at the house, I guess, a fulltime cook.

BURRUS: Yes. Vietta Garr.

JOHNSON: Yes, Vietta Garr. Would she usually be in the kitchen then when you came through the kitchen?

BURRUS: Sometimes she'd be in the kitchen, and sometimes she wasn't.

JOHNSON: One of the things that strikes visitors to the home, I think, is the simplicity of the kitchen, which seems to have been set up like in the 1930s. It wasn't changed. That is kind of interesting and perhaps a little bit unusual that they never did attempt apparently to modernize the rest of the house.

BURRUS: That's right.

[259]

JOHNSON: Is the way it is now the way it's been for many, many years?

BURRUS: They've changed it since the time that she died.

JOHNSON: Oh, they have?

BURRUS: They've done lots to it. That's right. I haven't been in it, but I know they've done a lot of things to it because the plumbing, they've replaced that, and the wiring, they've replaced it...

JOHNSON: So, you haven't been in it?

BURRUS: I have not gone in it since she died. I just can't make myself do it. Some one of these days I will, but I just haven't got myself to that point.

JOHNSON: They've tried to keep it the way it was.

BURRUS: I think that they may have. On one occasion they had some storms here, and the roof leaked. It leaked through the attic, and from the attic into the second floor, and from the second floor down to the ceiling of the first floor. The snow backed up into the shingles and that's what caused it.

[260]

Well, when that happened, I had known that they had an insurance policy--Joe McGee's company made it. I got word to them that we had some damage there, and he said, "Rufe, you just go out there and whatever you want to have done, you do it, and send the bill over and we'll pay all of it." I said, "All right." I told Mrs. Truman that the insurance company said they were ready to have all of the ceiling taken care of. I said, "We don't know for sure whether that plaster's going to be loose up there or not." She said, "Rufus I don't want anything touched." She said, "I don't want to be bothered. I don't want to have anything done. If it falls down, then we can do something with it, but if it doesn't fall down we're not going to do anything." I said, "All right, if you don't want to." And she never did. That was her request that we not do it. I got that word to Joe McGee [Joseph J. McGee, Jr.]. I told Joe that he could tell his insurance company that Mrs. Truman just didn't want to have anything done to it. I said, "It doesn't discolor very much, and she would rather have it that way than to be disturbed."

JOHNSON: What about the roof?

[261]

BURRUS: They did take care of the roof. They did have the roof taken care of on the outside, but nothing was done on the inside.

JOHNSON: Did you ever get up on the second floor?

BURRUS: Yes, several times.

JOHNSON: How did that house strike you? Was it typical Victorian? Was there any other house like it that you can think of in town?

BURRUS: Well, the only one that would be somewhat like it would be farther down on Delaware Street; that was the Woodson house. But that was a brick house, and this was a frame house. I've been in that one.

JOHNSON: Did you have anything to do with the Heritage District, getting the Heritage District established?

BURRUS: No. That was done by other folks.

JOHNSON: Did the Trumans ever come over to visit you?

BURRUS: Yes, they came to our house several times. Especially when we came back from trips to Ft. Riley.

[262]

John Snyder would be with us too. We'd always stop at our house, and Mr. Truman would sit on the piano bench and play the piano with Mrs. Burrus.

JOHNSON: This was back in the thirties, you're talking about?

BURRUS: The thirties, primarily.

JOHNSON: Did he ever visit your house after he left the Presidency?

BURRUS: When my mother died, why, both Bess and Harry came to the house to pay their respects. Of course, they went to the funeral service. When my father died, again they did the same thing. They'd come by, just drive by, and stop a minute and visit with us.

JOHNSON: Did you ever attend any social events with them after he left the Presidency?

BURRUS: Well, I have mentioned the time that Joyce Hall had an occasion to have General and Mrs. Eisenhower and the Trumans over there. Mrs. Burrus and I were there at that event. A couple of times we'd go someplace together and I'd take them together and bring them back. He often would say, "Rufe, put your uniform on when we go over to

[263]

this next one." He would say, "You can get me in and get me out without having to shake hands with seven or eight hundred people. You can make a reconnaissance about how to get in and get back without having to go through the crowd." And I'd say, "All right."

So when I'd take him someplace, I'd say, "With uniform or without uniform." He'd tell me. Then he'd say, "Well, it will be a black tie." I'd say, "Yes, okay." I would come up with my black tie on, and I knew he was going to wear his. So one day he said, "Where are the ribbons for your jacket?" I said, "I don't have any ribbons for my jacket." He said, "Well, you're entitled to them. Your jacket, that's dress, that's part of your dress--get some." I said, "Yes, sir." So I proceeded to get ribbons for my jacket; had to put them on a thing that I could take off and on. One time after I got them, I came to meet him to take him. He was upstairs when I got there, but after he came down and saw me, he said, "Oh, you've got your ribbons on have you?" "Yes sir." "Well, just a minute." He went back upstairs, and he put them on his jacket.

JOHNSON: The Fourth of July ceremonies started here very early didn't they?

[264]

BURRUS: After the dedication in July 1957. He said, "Now the next July the Fourth we want to have an observance on the steps out here." That's when we started it.

JOHNSON: He was the speaker for the first few?

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did he speak without notes? Do you know of any record of what he said at these Fourth of July speeches?

BURRUS: I don't know of any record, but he did prepare some of them I know.

JOHNSON: He didn't just speak off-the-cuff?

BURRUS: Sometimes he did, but most usually he had prepared notes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the gist of those speeches?

BURRUS: It was an occasion about the birth of our nation, celebrating it as a birthday, as he put it.

JOHNSON: I suppose they had pretty good crowds?

BURRUS: Pretty good crowds, that's right.

JOHNSON: Of course, it's one of the annual events around here.

[265]

BURRUS: And we still have them. The crowds are not as big as I would like to have them.

JOHNSON: Well, of course, he was quite an attraction himself.

Mrs. Truman and Margaret attended the Trinity Episcopal Church. Do you recall him ever going over there to attend church with them?

BURRUS: He did sometimes, yes. I never took him there, but I know he did go.

JOHNSON: The First Baptist is right down the street.

BURRUS: He'd just walk out the back way and down to the Baptist Church and make himself a place, and nobody would bother him, and he'd come on back home.

JOHNSON: I think Mr. Truman has been quoted as saying that he didn't go to church very often, mainly because he always ended up the attraction.

BURRUS: Here's another item here that I cut out about that too. This was on November 16, 1945. It's in the 40 years ago column.

[266]

JOHNSON: That controversy about him playing poker and drinking some bourbon. He seems to have limited himself to two or three shot glasses of bourbon per day. Was that what you observed?

BURRUS: He wouldn't have that much though. In the evening time he might have a drink or two. Here's another one that follows up.

JOHNSON: At these poker games, would there be much drinking?

BURRUS: That was over at the Kansas City Club. I don't think they did much drinking over there either.

JOHNSON: This other Baptist leader, according to this article, was warning Baptists not to make a tempest out of a teapot.

BURRUS: When he proposed that Mark Clark be named as envoy to the Vatican, some of the Baptists raised a big furor about it. Truman said that they didn't understand that the Ambassador was there to hear things, to discover things, and get information. He said that he didn't go there to represent him or anybody

[267]

else, but just for the purpose of finding out all the things he can of value to us. One fellow someplace along the line said that he was going to have Mr. Truman excommunicated from his Baptist Church. Mr. Truman smiled and said, "He's not much of a Baptist." He said, "A real Baptist would know he couldn't do that, because he has to be a member of my church congregation. He doesn't belong to my church and nobody can ever excommunicate anybody from any church unless they are members of the same church." He said, "I won't pay any attention to him." He just ignored the fellow. Really, Mark Clark disappointed him because he didn't stay like he should have stayed. He said he just wouldn't take the heat.

JOHNSON: Get out of the kitchen.

BURRUS: That's right.

JOHNSON: In these Saturday morning get-togethers that you were mentioning, you said that he might talk to you about certain people or events.

BURRUS: Yes, he would ask me about some people that I knew

[268]

or he knew, or take messages to him of people that wanted to be remembered to him. He in turn would ask about them.

JOHNSON: President Nixon came out here in 1969, apparently to try to patch up differences with Harry Truman. I suppose you were here for that event, when he brought the piano.

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did Mr. Truman ever talk to you about President Nixon or comment to you about Nixon?

BURRUS: No.

JOHNSON: I guess his thoughts about Nixon are pretty well-known.

BURRUS: He said that it was the office of the Presidency that Nixon represented; it wasn't the man, it was the office. Mr. Truman said that as President, he represented the office and not himself as an individual. "Therefore," he said, "I respect him because he is the office," and that is as much as he would ever say

[269]

about him.

JOHNSON: President Johnson was a close friend.

BURRUS: He came here too, yes.

JOHNSON: Were you here when the President came out for the Medicare ceremony?

BURRUS: Yes. He had a hard time getting Mr. Truman to be willing to take that too.

JOHNSON: Is that right?

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: We don't know where that card is, by the way. Do you have any idea what happened to these Medicare cards, numbers one and two?

BURRUS: I don't know.

JOHNSON: Why do you think he was reluctant to accept it?

BURRUS: Well, he told me that they wanted him to accept those cards for Medicare, but he said, "I don't think I need to do that." I said, "Need?" "Well,"

[270]

he said, "that's for people who need to have someone help them take care of hospitalization." I replied, "No, Mr. President, everybody is entitled to it; it's a matter of right. It isn't a matter of need. If you don't take it, how do you expect other people to do it?" I said, "You've always been in favor of having people being able to have care taken for them when they were in need and that's one way it can be done. So, if you don't take number one and number two, and let it be known that you do it, other people will just say the same thing that you do and think they have to be poor in order to have it. That isn't what the facts are about it. I hope that you change your mind, Mr. President." I'd always generally called him "Chief," but this time it was "Mr. President."

A few days later he said, "Well, I called them and told them to come on out; let's take care of it." He did. And he made a very nice affair out of it.

JOHNSON: He said a few things off-the-

[271]

cuff didn't he?

BURRUS: Yes. I don't remember anything he said off-the-cuff, but anyhow he was very gracious about the acceptance of it.

JOHNSON: Did Medicare help take care of his medical expenses later?

BURRUS: Yes, sure.

JOHNSON: Even though he probably had a lot of insurance coverage.

BURRUS: Anyhow, the hospital took care of his hospitalization, with the help of Blue Cross and Blue Shield I believe, along with his Medicare.

JOHNSON: Blue Cross and Blue Shield was the other plan he had?

BURRUS: [Robert] Adams was particularly helpful in regard to hospitalization. They never did send any charges to him at all, that I knew about.

JOHNSON: Of course, the big issue of the mid-sixties was the Vietnam war, and Johnson's involvement as President, as Commander and Chief. Did Mr. Truman ever talk to you about the Vietnam war and President Johnson's policies?

[272]

BURRUS: Only a time or two. He said, "He's taking it in little bites. He either ought to go all out, or else he shouldn't meddle with it." That's the way he put it. He said, "He's trying just to take it in bites, and you can't do it that way."

JOHNSON: We did have seven hundred thousand troops there at one point, didn't we?

BURRUS: He always said that the President of the United States is the one that's the Commander in Chief and he also makes foreign policy. Nobody else should second-guess him about that, especially a former President like he was. He said he shouldn't and wouldn't because he did not have access to the information that the President had concerning whether he should do this or that or the other. He said he was not ever going to do it. And he never did do it.

JOHNSON: Did he feel it was up to Congress to decide whether to support the President or not?

BURRUS: Congress could do it, but he wouldn't make any statement to them about foreign affairs, even to the

[273]

Congress. Oh, occasionally, when Eisenhower was President, some of his folks would want Mr. Truman to make some remarks about something or else. There was an exception when Senator Darby would make known that he would appreciate Mr. Truman making some remark about some particular thing. If Mr. Truman was in favor of it, he would do it. If he wasn't in favor of it, he wouldn't. Also, occasionally things would come from former Secretary Acheson and friends out East, and Acheson would relay that they would like to have him say something. Because they asked him to do it, he would--but only if he approved the same thing. He would not make a derogatory statement.

JOHNSON: Getting back to Truman's relationship with Eisenhower, I notice Mr. Truman didn't go to the dedication of the Eisenhower Library.

BURRUS: That's right. I was going to take him and he intended to go, but the death of his cousin, General Ralph Truman, precluded him from going out to that.

JOHNSON: He really did intend to be there?

[274]

BURRUS: Yes, he intended to go there with us. We intended to take him; I'll put it that way.

JOHNSON: Do you recall when Truman went to the Hoover Library for the dedication there? Did you go out?

BURRUS: I didn't go with him to that.

JOHNSON: I happened to be there for that one, by the way; that was the second time I saw Mr. Truman.

BURRUS: I went up there later on another occasion, Bob Adams and I. We took a plane.

JOHNSON: Did you see Mr. Hoover? Did you ever meet Herbert Hoover?

BURRUS: Oh yes, I saw Herbert Hoover here several times.

JOHNSON: Of course, he was here at the dedication.

BURRUS: At the dedication, and he was here a couple of other times.

JOHNSON: You got to talk to him personally then?

BURRUS: Yes. I say personally; we just said a few words

[275]

with each other, that was all. But I got to know him.

JOHNSON: He undoubtedly liked President Truman. President Truman had called on him for his services.

BURRUS: That's right. Well, one morning I came into Mr. Truman's office and he said, "You ought to look at this letter." It was one from Mr. Hoover. He said, "Before you look at that one, see the copy I have written to the President." The copy he gave me was not exactly the same as the one he sent Hoover, because he had changed the way it was arranged on the page, and sent him the other one. It was not a copy, but it had the same words in it. He said, "I didn't have anybody here to make a copy for me, to type it, and I didn't want to do it." His letter to Mr. Hoover was that he was glad to know he was back in circulation, evidently getting back in good health, and such things as that. You have the copy of the letter here, too, I know.

JOHNSON: Probably so.

[276]

BURRUS: The letter that came to him from Hoover was that he thanked him because the boys had told him about his making inquiry about him, and he was glad to know that he was concerned about him. He appreciated all of that. But he said that this gave him an opportunity to say something to Mr. Truman that he had longed to say and should have said long ago. In essence, he said that as a young man he had made enough of the worldly goods that he could have his family taken care of, and supported. So he gave himself to the cause of Government. He said that when he finished with being President, he was cast into oblivion, until President Truman came along and gave him something to do, for which he had been everlastingly grateful.

That was when President Truman asked him to come and be head of the Hoover Commission, about reorganizing the Government.

Well, that was Mr. Truman's way of telling me about that.

JOHNSON: Were you here for the presentation of the piano by President Nixon?

[277]

BURRUS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were you back there when they first met, when Mr. Nixon and Mr. Truman met? I guess they went into the office first.

BURRUS: I don't remember if I was.

JOHNSON: Any special recollections of President Johnson when he was back here? He was back here several times, a half dozen times I think.

BURRUS: Yes. When he was here to sign the Medicare bill and the Trumans and the other folks were on the platform, I saw him outside there and he was just waiting until everything was ready. So I stopped and said, "We're getting things all fixed up." He said, "That's all right; we'll get to it, we'll get to it."

Again I saw him in the eastern part of the state where the Congressman from that district had died, and they had his funeral. Johnson came from Washington. I took Mr. and Mrs. Truman in the car. They had a long service there for him. There was one thing he said to me; he said, "For goodness sake, tell

[278]

the Masonic folks to cut their services down; don't let them get so long." There were three different ones that participated in it. Well, anyhow that's what happened then.

JOHNSON: Any other thing that comes to mind about your recollections of Truman that we haven't brought up that we should wind up with?

BURRUS: We can wind it up now.

JOHNSON: If you think there is something more that ought to be on the record, feel free to do that. I appreciate very much your helping us out with this.

BURRUS: Well, I'm glad to get it done, because after all, I've just put it off longer than I really should have.

Index

Acheson, Dean, 249-250, 273
Adams, Robert, 257, 271, 274
American Bar Association, 227-228
Aylward, James, 165-166
Bailey, Eugene, 257-258
Bartle, H. Roe, 219-220
Barr, Robert, 139, 140-141
Barrett, Edward, 218-219
Bash, Thomas, 142-14
Beets, Ila, 22
Becker, Eddie, 138
Bell, Harvey, 4, 7, 26
Benton, Aseneth, 4
Biddle, Francis, 213-214
Blackburn, L. F., 7
Blair, James, 216
Boyle, William, 223-224
Boxley, Fred, 50-51
Brannan, Charles, 249
Brooks, Philip, 206
Bryan, William Jennings, 135
Bulger, Miles, 31, 46
Bundschu, Henry, 39-40, 65, 134
Burnett, Jeremiah, 12-13
Burrus, Florence, 23-24
Burrus, Harvey, 11
Burrus, Helen, 11, 142
Burrus, James M. Jr ., 1, 9-10, 12, 26-28
Burrus, Olney F., 1, 12
Burrus, Rufus B. 1, 14-17
Burrus, Rufus II, 101
Burrus, Sadie Bell, 1, 3, 9-10
Burrus, Sybil, 11
Byam, Lester, 155-157, 177-178
Byrnes, James, 189-190, 215
Caldwell, Thomas, 99
Callahan, James M., 15-16
Canfil, Fred, 110-111, 188-189
Carrol, Ed, 32
Clark, Bennett, 141, 159, 164-166
Clark, Mark, 266
Clark, Tom, 193-195
Churchill, Winston, 176
Clifford, Clark, 123

Community Savings and Loan Association, 42-43, 59-60, 62-64
Darby, Harry, 202, 273
DeRamus, William, 113-114
Dickey, Walter S., 41-42
Dryden, L.T., 166
Duncan, Richard, 167, 212-213
Early, Steve, 119-123
Eisenhower, Dwight David, 200-210 , 262, 273
Evans, Tom, 202, 233
Fort Leonard Wood, 85, 106, 169-171
Fort Riley, 83, 88-93
443rd Regiment, 82-88
Garr, Vietta, 258
"Gerrymandering", 151-153
Gibson, Floyd, 221-222
Graham, Wallace, 104-106
Griswold, Dwight, 89
"Goats", 38-39, 50-52
Hall, Joyce, 200-201,209, 262
Hannegan, Robert, 189
Harriman, Averell W., 132, 188, 247-249
Harris Family Reunions, 13-14
Harris, Rhoda, 12-13
Harris, Rueben, 12
Harris, William, 12-13
Harry S. Truman Library and Museum
    July 4 Celebrations at Library, 263-265
    Construction of, 232-235
    Location, 242-243
    Gift to U.S. Government, 243-245
    Purpose, 251-253
    Personal tour, 253-254
Harry S. Truman Library Institute for National and International Affairs, 249
Hill, Delmas, 183
Hinde, Edgar, 34
Hoover, Herbert, 274-276
Hoover, J. Edgar, 216
Huie, William, 229
Hyde, Judge, 231
Jackson, Henry "Scoop", 247
Jacobson, Edward, 34, 66-67
Johnson, Clark, 144
Johnson, Lyndon B., 208, 269, 271-272, 277
Kansas City Automobile Club, 43
Kansas City Club, 231-232, 250
Kansas City Journal, 41-42, 58

Kansas City Star, 42, 58, 59, 137
Kansas City School of Law, 5, 16, 97-98
Kansas City Southern Railroad, 113-115
Kelley, Madelyn, 141-142
Kennedy, John F., 208, 246-247
Kitchen, William, 160-161
Kilnoman, Edna, 101
Korea , 128-130, 132, 186
Lamb, Don, 224-226
Lazia, Johnnie, 139, 154
MacArthur, Douglas, 199-200
Mag, Arthur, 235-237
Marshall, George, 199, 209
Masons, 95, 99-100, 277-278
Massman, Henry, 232
McCarthy, Joe, 209
McConnell, Anna Margaret (nee Burrus), 12-13
McElroy, Henry, 42, 58, 59, 139
McGee, Joseph, Jr., 260
McKim, Edward, 87
Medicare Ceremony, 269-271
Mesker, Arthur, 140
Messall, Victor, 173
Miles, John, 32, 39
Miller, Richard L., 41, 137
Miller, Merle, 194, 196-199
Milligan, Maurice, 158-159, 164
Milligan, Tuck, 140, 158
Missouri Bar Association, 127, 224-228
Montgomery, Emmett, 38
Nelson, William Rockhill, 42
Nichols, J.C., 59
Nixon, Richard M., 268, 276-277
Noland, Harriet, 1
Page, James, 147-148
Park College, 1-3, 7, 9, 10,
Patti, Salvadore, 232
Patton, George, 93-94,
Pendergast, James, 33-34, 156, 178
Pendergast, Mike, 32-33
Pendergast, Tom, 31-33, 38, 47, 53-57, 109, 138, 148-151, 155-156, 171
Perlman, Phillip, 195
Pryor, John, 145-147
Quinn, Mike, 107
Quintard, Alexander, 106–107
“Rabbits”, 40, 42, 49-50, 52, 134, 143, 158

Rayburn, Sam, 208,
Reconstruction Finance Corporation, 114, 116-117, 184-185
Reserve Officers Association, 43, 131, 188, 192-194, 223
Roberts, Roy, 42, 203-204
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 213-215
Roosevelt, Theodore, 27-28
Rosenman, Samuel, 235-236
Rummell, Henry, 40, 42, 134
Salisbury, Spencer, 62-65, 140-141
Sanders, Ted, 188
Sermon, Roger, 178-181
Slaughter, Roger, 216-218
Shake Rag Church, 8,
Smith, Forest, 219
Sni-a-Bar Voice, 6
Snyder, Floyd, 11
Snyder, John W., 87, 115-116, 129, 133, 173-174, 250, 262
Spann, Bill, 145
Stark, Lloyd, 158-159, 165 171-173
Stayton, Edward, 54, 56, 76, 144-145
Stevenson, Adlai, 246
Stevenson, Charles, 200-201
Sturgis, Harry, 32
Susskind, David, 198-199
Symington, Stuart, 247-248
Tipton, Ernest, 176
Truman, Bess (nee Wallace), 18, 100, 103-104, 210, 259-262, 265
Truman Committee, 104
Truman, Harry S.:
- Battery 3, 33
- Churches, 265-67
- Eastern Judge, 20, 29, 31-33, 36, 40, 42-44, 48
- Family Farm, 67-69, 239-241
- 443rd Regiment, 82, 88
- Haberdashery, 65-67
- Legal Will, 235-237
- *Memoirs* contract, 235, 240
- 129th Field Artillery, 32
- Presiding Judge, Jackson County 23-24, 44, 49, 67, 94,142-149,151
  - Bond Issues, 52
  - County Counselor, 50
  - Court House, 52, 57-58
  - Home for the Aged, 48-49, 52, 94-95
  - Hospital, 52
  - Patronage, 47, 48, 49
  - Procedure of court business, 73-82

"protested warrants", 45, 52
Road Building, 46, 48-49, 52, 55-57, 61, 76-79, 80-81
Right of way issues, 55, 76-79
Rufus as Escort, 262-263
U.S. Senate, 104, 159, 165, 169-70, 173, 211-215
Truman Home – Independence, 18, 100, 103-104, 258-261
Truman, Margaret, 100-101, 141-142, 265
Truman, John, 237
Truman, J. Vivian, 66, 68-69, 183, 241
Truman, Mary Jane, 238-241
Truman, Ralph, 137, 273
Truman Medical Center East, 94-95
Vietnam, U.S. involvement in,
Vaughn, Harry, 87, 118, 123, 173-177
Veatch, N. T., 54, 56, 76, 144-145
Vietnam War, 271-272
Wallace, Frank, 18-20, 25, 32, 38
Wallace, Frederick, 18, 129-130
Wallace, Henry, 190, 215-216
Warren, Earl, 249-250
White, Harry Dexter, 195
Wogan, Father, 162
Welch, Casimer, 158
Westminster College, 176
Young, Solomon, 241