

Oral History Interview
with
RUBY JANE HALL

A long-time friend and neighbor of the Truman family in Grandview, Missouri.

Grandview, Missouri
December 6, 1980 by Niel Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
May, 1983

NOTICE

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JOHNSON: Miss Hall, I would like to start by asking you for a little bit of your own background. Could you tell me where and when you were born and your parents' names?

HALL: Yes, I was born on my father's farm, which is now Floral Hills Cemetery, and I was just three months old when we moved to Grandview. However, my father had a business here several years before that.

JOHNSON: And your parents' names were?

HALL: L. C. Hall and Martha Elizabeth Hall. They are both now deceased.

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JOHNSON: When was it you were born?

HALL: November 8, 1908.

JOHNSON: Your family moved from the farm to Grandview in what year?

HALL: It would have been in 1909.

JOHNSON: I see. So you were born on the farm.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: And that farm was located where, in relation to the Truman farm in Grandview?

HALL: Well, the Truman farm was off of Grandview Road and Blue Ridge Extension and our farm was located at Gregory and Blue Ridge Extension.

JOHNSON: Your father's farm was how far away from the Truman farm?

HALL: I would say about five to eight miles.

JOHNSON: Five to eight miles, in which direction?

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HALL: Northeast.

JOHNSON: Northeast. Is that toward Hickman Mills or beyond Hickman Mills?

HALL: It's on the other side of Hickman Mills; it's closer to Raytown. The address was Raytown.

JOHNSON: You moved into Grandview about the time that Harry Truman started farming, it appears. He moved out here in the spring of 1906 and you moved into Grandview just about that time.

HALL: Well, my father had his business here a couple of years or so before, but we moved here in 1909.

JOHNSON: So he was in business about the time that Harry Truman started farming over here.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: So they probably got acquainted rather early.

HALL: Very early.

JOHNSON: Do you recall your father saying anything

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about when he first became acquainted with Harry Truman?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea of how they came first to be acquainted, what the circumstances were that got them acquainted the first time, or the first few times?

HALL: I have no idea except my father being in business, and I would assume that through the business they became acquainted.

JOHNSON: What kind of business is it your father had here?

HALL: Milling, coal, sand, etc. He also had a string of threshing machines as well as the sawmills.

JOHNSON: What kind of mills?

HALL: Sawmills, feed mills, and coal and sand, and then the threshing business.

JOHNSON: He must have had several people working for

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him too then.

HALL: Well, I had four brothers; however, they were young. He did have others working for him.

JOHNSON: So your four brothers worked with your father?

HALL: Off and on, yes.

JOHNSON: Plus hired help when necessary?

HALL: Yes. Took a lot of help manning those threshing machines.

JOHNSON: How about the sisters, you have...

HALL: I have four sisters.

JOHNSON: And how many of those are still living?

HALL: Just one.

JOHNSON: They were kept busy no doubt, too. Did the sisters have anything to do with the business in those days?

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HALL: No; maybe my older sister could have helped with the bookwork, but that I really couldn't tell you.

JOHNSON: This is a point that we ought to bring up. Did your father have some business records?

HALL: Yes; I have some of the books. I guess it's books where people had purchased different items from him, and maybe didn't pay it all, and things like that. I have really never gone through them all, but I do have several books of them.

JOHNSON: There might be some bills for the Trumans in there do you think?

HALL: I doubt that.

JOHNSON: So the Trumans paid up on their bills?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: So your family is very well-acquainted with the Trumans it appears.

HALL: Yes.

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JOHNSON: When your family moved to town, where did you live?

HALL: We lived at High Grove Road and Eighth Street.

JOHNSON: Three blocks west of 1111 High Grove Road?

HALL: Approximately.

JOHNSON: The Truman farm was a rather sizeable farm, about 600 acres. Was that unusually large for those days, do you recall, or was it more or less typical?

HALL: I really don't know. I would say that most farmers in this area had a number of acres.

JOHNSON: Did you ever visit the Truman farm? Let's go way back. Before Harry Truman left the farm in 1917, did you ever have an occasion to visit the Trumans?

HALL: I'm sure so.

JOHNSON: You mean at the farm home?

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HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea when you first met the Trumans?

HALL: No, I really don't.

JOHNSON: Do you recall if Harry Truman was working out there, was farming the land, when you first visited the farm? Do you have any recollections?

HALL: I don't know.

JOHNSON: In other words, when you say you went out there, you were invited out there for meals? This would be what, the 1920s, do you think, or the thirties?

HALL: Probably even before the 1920s and thereafter.

JOHNSON: When Harry Truman came back home from the war he apparently spent a few weeks here at the farm.

HALL: Yes.

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JOHNSON: He got married and decided to live in Independence, and after that it would be occasional visits. Then they sold their farm implements and stock in 1919. Do you recall anything about the Truman farm sale back in 1919?

HALL: Not the sale.

JOHNSON: Do you know of anyone that might have gotten, or bought objects or items from that sale?

HALL: No, sir. There are not many people here in Grandview who were here at that time.

JOHNSON: You don't know of any objects or of anything that might have come off of the Truman farm? I'm thinking now of things that possibly could be used in a museum exhibit or display. Do you know of any objects that are directly related to the Truman farm, any old implements or anything?

HALL: At this point in time, no. I know my older brother and Harry were very close. Of course,

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as I said before, they are all gone, but if Stanley had anything that Harry had given him, why, his two boys would have it. One of these days I'll see them, and if I can find out, I'll be glad to let you know.

JOHNSON: Maybe we should get the names of your brothers and sisters on the record. Would you give us the names of your brothers and your sisters?

HALL: Yes. Miss Ella Hall my oldest sister, Mrs. Lena Eeffer, Mr. Stanley Hall, Mr. Cecil Hall, Mr. William Hall, Mr. Hobart Hall, Mrs. Esther M. Grube, Mrs. Madge See. Esther is the only one that is alive today.

JOHNSON: Her husband's name is William C. Grube?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: What about Harry Truman's reputation as a farmer? What kind of a farmer was he according to the stories or any information that you have received?

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HALL: I couldn't really give a good answer to that question except that I do know that he was on the farm. As far as his farming ability I know nothing about it.

JOHNSON: His mother claimed, you know, that he plowed the straightest furrow.

HALL: Well, I don't doubt that.

JOHNSON: And planted the straightest row of corn.

HALL: Well, if Grandma Truman said so, it's right.

JOHNSON: She also said he got his commonsense on the farm, he didn't get it in town. Do you think life on the farm has a way of teaching commonsense to a person?

HALL: I really think so. After all, when you're on the farm and if you're plowing or planting, you of course are paying attention to what you're doing. I think farming is very healthy for a person.

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JOHNSON: Your father depended heavily on farmers for his business, didn't he?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: And he found them to be dependable customers?

HALL: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: You do have some knowledge of the Trumans doing business here especially, I suppose, with your father. I'm trying to get a sense of small-town life, as well as farm life, at the

time the Trumans were on the farm. I suppose Saturday night was the big night for farm families to come into town?

HALL: Well, that is tradition, but I don't know that that ever really applied to Grandview. I think we were always too close to Kansas City to really be a typical farm community.

JOHNSON: So there may not have been the liveliness on Saturday night here that there would have been

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in towns that were farther removed from the large city?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: In other words, again looking back to the time when Harry Truman was on the farm from 1906 to 1917, would it be likely that many Saturday nights, instead of coming into Grandview, he might take the train into Kansas City?

HALL: I would assume so.

JOHNSON: Then, the automobile became available in the 1920s. What do you recall about Saturday nights when you were very young, say a teenager, here in Grandview? Was there much business on Saturday nights?

HALL: There was a lot of business on Saturday nights, mostly grocery shopping and that sort of thing. Then maybe you would go to the movie here if you wanted to.

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JOHNSON: There was a theater here?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea when that movie theater came in?

HALL: No, but it was quite a long time ago.

JOHNSON: I wonder if it would have been here before Harry Truman left in 1917?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: We have no record that I know of of him attending movies here in Grandview.

HALL: I wouldn't say that he did, probably because he was very musically inclined and he would probably go into the city. I know he and my older brother Stanley used to go to Kansas City. I think they probably drove a horse and buggy.

JOHNSON: Mr. Truman got a Stafford car back in 1913. Your oldest brother, Stanley, you say did go into

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the city with Harry Truman?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any stories or information that Stanley has passed down to you, anything about Harry Truman?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Would you say that he remained a rather close friend of Harry Truman's through all those years?

HALL: Yes, however Harry moved to Independence after he was married and my brother Stanley was married and moved from the area.

JOHNSON: You haven't seen any letters?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Do you have any knowledge of Harry Truman's involvement in the Farm Bureau? He joined very early after it was formed.

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HALL: No.

JOHNSON: He was road overseer at one time, but again you were very young, and maybe you've just heard stories I suppose.

HALL: Remember something was said that Harry was road overseer.

JOHNSON: Well, of course, Presiding Judge was a rather important position too.

HALL: Oh, yes. I have one of the big buttons that he had when he was first running for Presiding Judge.

JOHNSON: Is that right?

HALL: Yes. Somewhere.

JOHNSON: Do you know anything about him having been an investor in an oil company before World War I?

HALL: No.

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JOHNSON: Any leisure time activities of the Trumans?

HALL: Well, I would say mostly church and the Masonic Order.

JOHNSON: They were very active in the Masonic Order and he did help install officers for the Eastern Star?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: You were an active member of the Eastern Star?

HALL: Yes, indeed.

JOHNSON: When did you become a member of the Eastern Star?

HALL: I really don't know the exact date.

JOHNSON: You say you can't recall exactly the first time you met Mr. Truman, but do you recall him being involved in installations of the Eastern Star officers?

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HALL: Oh, many times.

JOHNSON: Do you know how far back that goes when he was first involved in...

HALL: In Eastern Star? Oh, he helped start the chapter here. It was in 1913 that the Grandview chapter was started. Harry was the first Worthy Patron.

JOHNSON: What is the Worthy Patron's job?

HALL: It is next to the highest officer.

JOHNSON: So he's expected to be involved in all the installations?

HALL: He was always invited to do so.

JOHNSON: And as far as you know he was there for almost every year then, for installations?

HALL: For a good many years. He used to come back from Washington to help in the installation of both the Eastern Star, and the Masonic Order.

JOHNSON: Do you have photographs of any of these

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ceremonies, or any of those group pictures?

HALL: I doubt I have any that far back. In the early days very few pictures were taken, if any.

JOHNSON: I've seen two. We were loaned a couple of pictures; one was an installation in 1944, and the other was taken either in 1950 or '51.

HALL: I probably have some of the earliest pictures taken.

JOHNSON: Your oldest sister Ella apparently operated the Post Office for the year or so that Harry Truman was acting as Postmaster:

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: But she did the work while he was named Postmaster and she got the pay for it?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: That goes back to about 1914. Did she ever say anything about her work in the Post Office

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while Mr. Truman was the Postmaster?

HALL: No. She liked the work.

JOHNSON: Did she ever tell you any stories or anecdotes about Harry Truman, or the Trumans?

HALL: No. (I was very fond of Mr. Harry.)

JOHNSON: Well, most people were.

HALL: There used to be box suppers to raise money the Eastern Star.

JOHNSON: These were box suppers and there was bidding?

HALL: Yes, they would have an auctioneer.

JOHNSON: And Harry would bid on yours?

HALL: Oh yes, because I'd sneak around and tell him which one was mine.

JOHNSON: So that would mean he might have to pay quite a price for it.

HALL: Well, sometimes as much as \$4.

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JOHNSON: How far back does that go?

HALL: Oh, that was in the early days.

JOHNSON: You mean this was while he was still living on the farm that you had these box suppers?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: That would have been prior to April of 1917 when he went into the Army.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, I've heard about this sort of thing in country schools too.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Where did these festivities, so to speak, take place?

HALL: Most of them took place up in the old Gray Building.

JOHNSON: The Dyer Brothers Store?

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HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: And it was above that store that the box suppers were held?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: And this was the Eastern Star?

HALL: Yes, the Eastern Star and sometimes the Royal Neighbors.

JOHNSON: How were they connected?

HALL: They are two separate organizations.

JOHNSON: Was Harry Truman involved with Royal Neighbors?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: So, there was a Masonic Order here; there was an Eastern Star; there were Royal Neighbors and Woodmen of the World.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: And these were the lodges here in this area?

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HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were your brothers members of the Masons?

HALL: Yes, and my father.

JOHNSON: So that was another way for them to be well-acquainted with Harry Truman?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember anything about, or hearing anything about, Harry's grandmother, Harriet Young?

Or Harrison, his uncle?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON : Do you remember any stories about Harry Truman's father from any of the neighbors?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Did your father ever say anything about what kind of a person he was, his personality?

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HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Do you recall the circumstances when you first met Martha Truman?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: But you visited her out at the farm?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: A number of times?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Does the farm house look the same now as it did then? Have there been any changes?

HALL: It was a very pretty place. It has not had much care in the later years.

JOHNSON: Do you know what happened to the furniture that they had out at the farm home?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: When they moved from the farm about 1940

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where did they move to?

HALL: They moved into a house located in the 1000 block on High Grove Road, then later moved to the house where they lived when Mr. Harry was President.

JOHNSON: That is the house that has a little dormer at the end of the gable?

HALL: Yes. Right back of that used to be my father's gristmill. Part of the mill is still standing.

JOHNSON: Here's what is getting to be a famous photograph of your father's threshing machine.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: On the Truman farm.

HALL: This was the one that was on the Truman farm.

JOHNSON: It was published in an article in the *Prairie Farmer* back in 1945, but it hasn't been published elsewhere except perhaps in the Jackson County

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Historical Society's newsletter, that I know about. Do you have any idea when that picture was taken? There's no date given on the caption. Do you have any idea?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea who the photographer would have been? Was there a professional photographer here in Grandview in those early days?

HALL: No. There was no professional photographer in Grandview. It was probably just one who was passing through and stopped as they were threshing.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any straw stacks out there on the Truman farm? Would you be able to say where they might have been located on the Truman farm, that scene?

HALL: I would say it was probably a little southeast of the present house.

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JOHNSON: The one on Blue Ridge?

HALL: Well, no, it would have been off of Blue Ridge, because they used to have wheat or oat fields there.

JOHNSON: There are telephone lines there, so it must have been close to a road, wasn't it?

HALL: I would say these trees are the trees that were up there in front of the house, so it would have to be south and east.

JOHNSON: You think those are the maples?

HALL: I would say so.

JOHNSON: This Grandview Road skirted the western side of the Truman farm?

HALL: The road split it in two parts. They owned some land west of old Grandview Road.

JOHNSON: Grandview Road was the main road from Grandview into the city?

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HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Your father or brothers have never talked about this photograph to you, or have they?

HALL: Not that I remember.

JOHNSON: Do you have this in your collection, this photograph?

HALL: It could be in some of our pictures.

JOHNSON: I've seen the one that you have...

HALL: Up at the mill.

JOHNSON: That is probably the same thresher and the same steam engine, but it was on a different farm.

HALL: He had two or three threshing machines, so I do not know which this one is.

JOHNSON: He had two or three different threshing machines?

HALL: Yes.

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JOHNSON: Well, it sounds like he had a lot of work to do there in the summer times.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Pulling that around the countryside. I lived on a farm in the thirties, and we also had a custom thresher like this.

HALL: I used to love to watch for them moving from place to place because then I could ride on the engine and blow the whistle.

JOHNSON: Oh, you did, on that steam engine?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: I was told that they also let some of the kids jump on the platform at the rear end of the threshing machine as they rode down the road.

HALL: Yes.

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JOHNSON: There wasn't that much traffic on the country roads, I don't suppose.

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Do you recall if the farm up there had electricity in the very early days? Do you have any idea when they got electricity out there?

HALL: Not in the early days. I do not know when electricity was installed in the house.

JOHNSON: They were using kerosene lamps?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did they also use the mantle type, the Alladin type lamp?

HALL: I do not remember if they had Alladin type lamps.

JOHNSON: So if they got electricity it wouldn't have been perhaps until the 1920s?

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HALL: I suppose so.

JOHNSON: Of course, they had telephones all that time?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you have any information about Harry Truman's trips to Independence? He went there to visit his Noland cousins rather frequently it seems, and until he got his car he apparently took the train from Grandview into Kansas City and then the streetcar over to Independence.

HALL: I really don't. I couldn't say whether he visited in Independence, or how often.

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear anything about his car, his Stafford car?

HALL: Well, yes, I've heard about it.

JOHNSON: There are a couple of photographs that show the car. Have you seen any photographs of the car other than those that have been published? Is there anyone who might have taken a snapshot

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of the Truman car, or of the Trumans, other than those that you know about because they've been published?

HALL: I don't remember seeing photographs of the car.

JOHNSON: You remember Harry Truman being in World War I, I suppose.

HALL: I sure do. I had a brother in World War I.

JOHNSON: Was he in Battery D?

HALL: No. He figured the data for the setting of the heavy artillery; he was located in Paris most of the time.

JOHNSON: Did he ever get to meet Harry Truman over there?

HALL: I do not know.

JOHNSON: Do you recall Harry Truman visiting out here in the twenties and thirties?

HALL: Yes.

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JOHNSON: He would come out on weekends?

HALL: He would come out at least once a week, or oftener, to see his mother and sister.

JOHNSON: Did you ever see Bess Truman with him?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: She would come with him then?

HALL: Yes, some.

JOHNSON: Do you remember getting a chance to talk to him while he was out here visiting those times?

HALL: While he was living over in Independence prior to going to Washington?

JOHNSON: Yes.

HALL: No; I do not remember.

JOHNSON: When he was Presiding Judge he helped get this road system built, paved about 220 miles of road. Do you recall some of the work that went

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on when they were doing that road work around here?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Did you ever hear any stories about the road-building program and Harry Truman's connection with it?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: In 1934 he was elected to the Senate. Do you recall his visits out here after he became Senator?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: You've mentioned that he came out to help install Eastern Star officers. Were there other occasions when he would come back out? What kind of occasions would bring him out for other visits?

HALL: Well, possibly holidays, and he kept a good eye on his mother and sister, always.

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JOHNSON: You were very well acquainted with Mary Jane, I suppose.

HALL: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any stories, or anecdotes, that she had to say about her brother?

HALL: No; I really don't.

JOHNSON: How about Harry Truman's politics? He went in supporting the New Deal almost 100 percent. Did the townspeople and the farmers go along with his policies as Senator?

HALL: So far as I know they did. I never heard anyone complain.

JOHNSON: You didn't hear any of the farmers complain about his liberalism, his New Deal politics?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: And I suppose farmers were benefiting from AAA and other New Deal programs. Your father

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was still in business now in the thirties?

HALL: Yes. He was still in business in the thirties.

JOHNSON: In milling?

HALL: No, not in the milling. He had sold that. He still had the threshing machines.

JOHNSON: When did he sell his milling business?

HALL: Oh, I don't really remember.

JOHNSON: Was it in the thirties, early thirties?

HALL: It was probably in the very early thirties or late twenties.

JOHNSON: It was about 1903 or '04 that he started his milling business and got out around 1930, but then kept on with custom threshing during the depression?

HALL: Yes, he did.

JOHNSON: But he was still very much dependent upon

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the farmers' trade. Do you recall business conditions in the 1920s here in Grandview as compared to before World War I? Did it seem to be better, or worse? How was it for business around here in Grandview in the 1920s?

HALL: Well, I think about the same as it was for business everywhere; it was general. They had their good years, and they had their thin years.

JOHNSON: Harry Truman tried a career as a small business retailer, a haberdasher, and was forced out of business by the recession in 1921. Do you recall other businessmen being hurt by that recession?

HALL: No, I really don't; not here in Grandview, but I suppose they were the same as everywhere.

JOHNSON: There wasn't any great turnover in businesses as far as you can recall in the early twenties?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: You were here in Grandview schools?

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HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were some of Vivian's sons classmates?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Which one of Vivian's sons are you best acquainted with?

HALL: Well, I know them all, but J.C. perhaps.

JOHNSON: I've been told that there were picnics, church picnics in particular, in that maple grove.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember attending them?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: This is the Baptist Church up here?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were there pictures taken of any of those picnics?

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HALL: I don't really know.

JOHNSON: You haven't seen any pictures of picnics out there at the Truman home?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: What else might have occurred out there on the Truman farm that we should get on the record? You were out there for these picnics. You also were invited out for some Sunday dinners?

HALL: I don't know whether it was Sunday, but in the evening for dinner.

JOHNSON: And then there were Eastern Star club meetings out there in the house that you attended?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Who was operating the farm out there in the twenties and thirties?

HALL: I guess Mr. Vivian.

JOHNSON: And then they had this problem with the

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mortgage. Did you ever hear any stories about the problem with the farm mortgage?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: When did you go to Washington?

HALL: 1936. May the 25th.

JOHNSON: In what job?

HALL: I worked in the Treasury Department, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

JOHNSON: How long did you work in Washington?

HALL: Six years. I came home in June of '42.

JOHNSON: You didn't go back to work in Washington?

HALL: No, I transferred home.

JOHNSON: Did you meet Senator Truman while you were in Washington?

HALL: Yes.

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JOHNSON: You went over to his office a few times.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: And what would you talk about?

HALL: Oh, just everything -- family, Grandview, everything.

JOHNSON: Do you recall anything that he might have said in those conversations, any theme?

HALL: No, I really don't. Normally, we talked about everybody here in Grandview.

JOHNSON: Did you talk about your father's threshing for him and that sort of thing?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: He didn't talk politics with you?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Your father remained a Republican then through all those years?

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HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: But that didn't bother Harry Truman, Senator Truman?

HALL: Oh, no, it didn't bother him, because he knew we were for him. Friends are friends you know.

JOHNSON: But weren't Republicans rarities in this area? Were there that many Republicans?

HALL: Well, we had a good many. My older sister, from the first day that women could vote, she never missed a time working in the polls.

JOHNSON: Was she Republican?

HALL: Oh, sure. You know, it's just like your religion. You don't dislike someone because they're not Baptists. If they're Methodists, that's all right; that's their belief. You like people for being people.

JOHNSON: For their character and personality. But

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you say that your father did speak well of Harry Truman as a Senator?

HALL: My gracious, yes.

JOHNSON: What did you see in Harry Truman that stood out especially?

HALL: Well, I don't know, but I would assume it was his honesty, integrity, and his love and concern of people.

JOHNSON: Some people have tried to identify him with Pendergast. Did that ever bother any of the people out here?

HALL: No. You have a right to your friends.

JOHNSON: It didn't bother your father, that you recall?

HALL: Not that I ever heard him speak of it.

JOHNSON: He always felt that in spite of getting Pendergast's support that Harry Truman either as Presiding Judge, or as Senator, could always be trusted to be honest?

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HALL: Certainly.

JOHNSON: But was your father impressed with the road-building program, for instance?

HALL: I never heard any criticism from him. I never heard him criticize him in any way.

JOHNSON: What did the people out here think about the road-building program? Were they pulling for it?

HALL: Certainly, it helped Grandview.

JOHNSON: How did it help Grandview?

HALL: It gave a very fine road between Grandview, Raytown and Independence.

JOHNSON: Which road?

HALL: Blue Ridge, the Extension.

JOHNSON: So that helped connect Grandview with Independence.

HALL: We had a rock road, what they called "rock

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road," but of course it was not as satisfactory as the present type roads.

JOHNSON: So it meant an extension, just extending Blue Ridge so that it came into Grandview?

HALL: Yes, to Holmes Street.

JOHNSON: Made it easy for Mr. Truman to get from Independence to Grandview, as well as vice versa.

HALL: And, of course, the courthouse was there, making it easier for those in this area to get to the courthouse. And there were many trading points there.

JOHNSON: Did the downtown businesses notice the effects of this? Did it hurt them at all?

HALL: I don't think so.

JOHNSON: Did downtown Grandview change very much that you could tell, say, from the very early years that you remember up until the late thirties?

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Did it seem to remain pretty much the same?

HALL: Pretty much the same.

JOHNSON: There was not much new building on Main Street?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Did Hickman Mills have a business district?

HALL: A small one. They had a store there. In the early days the name was Hickmans Mill.

JOHNSON: So Grandview would have been more of a trading center, say, than Hickman Mills?

HALL: I would say so.

JOHNSON: So you did visit Senator Truman a number of times there in Washington?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Unfortunately we have very few of the records of that first legislative term as Senator. The last we heard was that they were stored in an attic

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or a building in Washington during World War II and disappeared, and we don't know what happened to them.

HALL: They aren't there in the archives anymore?

JOHNSON: We have just a few items. We have most of his records from his second term as Senator, until '44.

Do you recall people from Grandview corresponding with Senator Truman those first four years, and might there be correspondence or letters that they received from Senator Truman that they might have in their family scrapbooks?

HALL: He was always very considerate of my older sister, Ella. On many occasions, holidays, or anything of importance she always heard from him.

JOHNSON: Ella did?

HALL: Yes, even as Senator and all the years he was in the White House.

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JOHNSON: Those letters that she received from Mr. Truman, do you know where...

HALL: I will try to locate them.

JOHNSON: Would you have many of those?

HALL: I don't know. I was going through my desk here a few months ago and I thought, "Well, I'm the youngest of my family, and probably the last." I don't know that my nieces and nephews would care for things like that, so I started throwing a lot of things away. It's possible I threw them away.

JOHNSON: I'd be interested in seeing what you have that would have any connection with Mr. Truman, either as Senator or in any other role.

So you came back in 1942, and were working for what agency?

HALL : I came back with Farm Credit Administration. I transferred over to it, from the Department of the Interior, Secretary's Office of Personnel,

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rather than go with the National Park Service to Chicago, because after all, this was my home and I wanted to get back home.

JOHNSON: Senator Truman was kept very busy in the early years of the forties with this Truman Committee. Do you recall if that committee ever visited out here in the Kansas City area?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: Do you recall the reactions here when he was named Vice President, became Vice President, at the Chicago convention in '44?

HALL: The reactions were very favorable because after all he was a hometown boy.

JOHNSON: Sure. Did it come as quite a surprise that he was named Vice President by President Roosevelt? He was Roosevelt's choice.

HALL: Yes, he was his choice. It was a surprise, and it was a very happy one.

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JOHNSON: He was Vice President for only 81 days, and then suddenly President Roosevelt died. That came as a great shock no doubt, even though he was showing the effects of age, and the wear and tear. What kind of reaction was it here locally when suddenly here's Mr. Truman, President of the United States, in April of 1945?

HALL: We had mixed feelings; President Roosevelt's death was a shock to the Nation. We were in sorrow, but we had very happy feelings that our "Home Town Boy" was now President of these United States, and that in 1948 he was elected President. I had an invitation to the Inaugural.

JOHNSON: When he became President in April of 1945 local people felt he was qualified and competent to be leader of the country and actually of the free world?

HALL: I'm sure so. I'm sure so.

JOHNSON: He had proven himself over the years so

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far as they were concerned, among his friends and neighbors here?

HALL: They were very confident that he was very, very capable, and would and did make one of the best Presidents the United States has ever had.

JOHNSON: So they apparently were very satisfied with his record as Senator as far as you can tell?

HALL: He had a history. His record from the time he was judge in the county and on up was enough proof for everybody that he would be a very fine leader.

JOHNSON: Did you ever get any letters from Mr. Truman when he was President?

HALL: Oh, yes. More after he was President probably than when he was Senator.

JOHNSON: But most of it to your oldest sister, to Ella.

HALL: Yes.

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JOHNSON: How about the letters you received?

HALL: They were on various things, congratulations probably.

JOHNSON: Do you still have those?

HALL: I don't know if I have those; I hope I have them somewhere. I wouldn't say for sure. I know I have the invitation to the Inaugural.

JOHNSON: Before we get to the Inaugural, is there anything that comes to your mind during his first term as President that stands out? How about the illness of his mother, when he came back out here in March of '47? Did you see him when he came back to visit?

HALL: Yes. When he would come, Grandma Truman or Mary Jane would call me and tell me that he was there and if I wanted to see him come up, and so I would. And I took many pictures. That's where I got many of these pictures.

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JOHNSON: You've got pictures there?

HALL: That I took of President Truman when he was President, and with his mother and Mary Jane together.

JOHNSON: These are in an album that you have here?

HALL: No.

JOHNSON: We'd be very interested in seeing them.

HALL: I'll see if I can find them sometime.

JOHNSON: You had been visiting with Martha and Mary Jane in the meantime, I suppose.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Keeping in close touch with them. What did Martha have to say about her son, Harry? We've heard things such as when he made his first visit home as President, and as he was leaving she said, "Be good, but be game," and "Behave yourself," and that sort of thing.

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HALL: Sounds just like her.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any other sayings that you might attribute to Martha Truman?

HALL: No, I really don't, but she was a great person.

JOHNSON: How would you describe her?

HALL: She had a very outgoing personality, very frank and straight forward. Well, of course, I think they all do; I think President Truman did, Mary Jane did, and Grandma Truman, above all.

JOHNSON: Would you say that she was more interested in politics maybe than other members of the family?

HALL: Well, no, I don't think so. Mr. Vivian, I'm sure, worked very hard with and for President Truman.

JOHNSON: Did he help do some campaigning for him?

HALL: Well, I would say he probably did. I really

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don't know, but I would say he did because that would be Mr. Vivian.

JOHNSON: It's said that Martha Truman had a subscription for the *Congressional Record*, and she actually read it. That would be somewhat unusual, I think, for most Americans. Do you recall seeing any *Congressional Records* over in her home, or her commenting about anything that she might have read on politics?

HALL: Oh, I expect so. I don't remember what was said. She and I used to discuss many things.

JOHNSON: Would she touch on politics?

HALL: Just in general.

JOHNSON: When she became very ill in March of '47, he came out, and was in the house for several days over here. Did you visit them when she was ill and he was staying in the house?

HALL: Yes. So did my sister; she was there more than I was.

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JOHNSON: Ella?

HALL: Yes. She used to go up and help Mary a lot. The two of them always worked together very closely.

JOHNSON: Is there anything in particular that stands out during one of these visits back that he made as President to Grandview, any particular incidents, episodes that stand out in your recollection?

HALL: He came out for the dedication of our new church building.

JOHNSON: You had a good seat there, did you?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: I think he read a responsive reading and also gave a talk. He was well-received I suppose.

HALL: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: Did you know the Arringtons and the Slaughters who were neighbors of the Trumans?

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HALL: Yes, Ruth Slaughter, one of the Slaughter daughters, was my French teacher in high school.

JOHNSON: What were the occasions on which you would have met Mr. Truman after he left the Presidency?

HALL: When he would visit Mary Jane (who lived next door to us) sometimes at her house, here in our home, and sometimes across the fence. Also at the dedication of the Library and at other functions. Since I was in Personnel at GSA (General Services Administration), and all Presidential Libraries were in the National Archives and Records Service, a part of GSA, I worked very closely with the Library and made many trips to it through the years.

JOHNSON: Did he ever say anything to you about building the Library here in Grandview? That apparently was an early idea.

HALL: It was an idea, I remember.

JOHNSON: What kind of reaction did the local people

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have to that?

HALL: I think they would have liked it.

JOHNSON: Were there rumors going around that the Library would be built out here in Grandview?

HALL: There was speculation.

JOHNSON: How about the preservation of the farm here? Would you say there has been local support for buying up the remainder of the land, preserving the farm house?

HALL: I don't know about the support; I'm sure there has been.

JOHNSON: As you know, we are particularly interested about the Trumans and their life here in Grandview and around Grandview. I'm also interested in the sort of setting or environment that they had here in Grandview. Some of this information may be secondhand, since the original source is not available. Is there anything else about the

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Trumans and life around Grandview here that we haven't touched upon that might be worth putting into the record? Can you think of anything that might have involved the Trumans that we haven't touched upon so far?

HALL: I don't believe so.

JOHNSON: After your father sold out, he retired here to town, I understand. When did your father die?

HALL: In 1939.

JOHNSON: And when did your oldest sister, Ella, die?

HALL: Eight years ago.

JOHNSON: Well, again, if you find in your records, your own, or records of other members of your family that would relate to the Trumans in any way, we'd sure appreciate knowing about them. Some of these things we could xerox if you didn't want to give us the original.

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HALL: I would want to keep anything that I have; I would really want to keep it.

JOHNSON: Photographs, as well. We could make copy negatives.

HALL: If I still have the negatives of those pictures I took, you could take the negatives and have pictures made off of them.

JOHNSON: Well, when you find out one way or the other we would be interested in seeing what you have.

HALL: I will let you know.

JOHNSON: We're always looking especially for photographs that we don't have of the Trumans, particularly in the Grandview area. We would appreciate anything you want to tell us about what might be available in terms of records and papers and photographs.

HALL: As far as actual records, I don't think that I would have anything that would be of any

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interest. But those pictures, you might like to see them because they are pictures taken locally by me.

JOHNSON: In that photograph that I took here earlier, you were standing next to your father's roll top desk, the one that he used when he was in the milling business.

HALL: That's right.

JOHNSON: That was over in the office?

HALL: He kept his office in the home.

JOHNSON: And that was three, four blocks west of here.

HALL: About three blocks west of here.

JOHNSON: What was the address?

HALL: It would now be approximately 801 High Grove Road, but at that time we did not have addresses.

JOHNSON: Could you tell us about the invitation you

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received to attend the Inaugural in 1949, and the visit you made there? You might tell us about the events you attended, the people you met including any hometown people, and whether you were able to meet the Trumans. Also you might give us generally your impressions.

HALL: I received an invitation and then I went to Washington by plane and attended the Inaugural and the ball. I also attended an event where the President received personal visitors. It was held at the National Archives Building.

JOHNSON: Did you fly to Washington by yourself?

HALL: Yes sir.

JOHNSON: And you were at the Archives Building. Was there a receiving line there?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: But you did get to stop and talk to the President and Mrs. Truman?

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HALL: Yes, I got to shake hands with the president and he made inquiry as to the family.

JOHNSON: Now did you see him again after that at all?

HALL: No, I didn't see him after that, except at a distance.

JOHNSON: But you did attend some of the other events then, is that right?

HALL: Yes sir.

JOHNSON: Can you remember what kind of events those would be?

HALL: The Inaugural ball and the Inaugural parade.

JOHNSON: Where did they have the Inaugural ball, do you recall?

HALL: It has been quite a long time, but if I recall correctly, it was in the Armory.

JOHNSON: Right. Then you got a pretty good place at the parade did you?

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HALL: Yes sir. I had a very good seat at the parade.

JOHNSON: Could you see the viewing stand?

HALL: I was ten feet or so away from the reviewing stand. I was in the very first section on the east of the reviewing stand.

JOHNSON: So you could see the whole thing.

HALL: Yes sir, very well.

JOHNSON: And did you have your camera to get any pictures?

HALL: Yes, I had my camera.

JOHNSON: Could you hear the ceremony, the oath ceremony?

HALL: Yes, I could hear the oath of office very well. The Inaugural was on the Capitol steps. After the Inaugural we immediately moved to our parade seats, which were close to the reviewing stand near the White House.

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JOHNSON: I see. That's way up Pennsylvania Avenue.

HALL: Yes, because the parade goes up Pennsylvania Avenue. I had reserved seats there.

JOHNSON: Anything else that you can remember about that event?

HALL: No sir, nothing else except it was pretty cold.

JOHNSON: Yes, I guess so. So then you came home after the parade?

HALL: I was staying with friends.

JOHNSON: These were friends that you had met in Washington, or were these people from back home here?

HALL: Well, they were friends from Missouri, but living in Washington.

JOHNSON: Did you meet any people from Independence or Grandview that you were able to talk to while you were out there?

HALL: No, only the Secret Service people that were there from Grandview.

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JOHNSON: You know they took that Gutenberg Bible from Independence for the Inauguration - the big Gutenberg Bible.

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: I suppose you saw that then, too, while the oath-taking was going on?

HALL: That's right.

JOHNSON: That was quite a ceremony, especially as compared to 1944, you know, which was very much limited. In fact, they just limited that to invited guests.

HALL: That's right.

JOHNSON: You were there in Washington in '44 as well weren't you?

HALL: No. I came home in '42.

JOHNSON: So this was the only one that you attended.

HALL: That's right.

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JOHNSON: Well, okay, I appreciate the information.

HALL: I was in Washington on business soon after he was President and I visited him there in the White House.

JOHNSON: Do you recall how many visits you made with President Truman while he was in the White House?

HALL: Yes, that was the only one.

JOHNSON: I don't know if we got the date on that or not; you don't recall?

HALL: No I do not. I was back there for some training, and that's how come I went over. I called him and told him that while I was there I would like to see him and he said, "Okay, you come at a certain time." He said, "I'll tell the guards to let you in." Then, of course, after I went in and talked with him a little while, I told him the other Personnel Officers of the Public Buildings Service in each region in the United States were there with me, but they couldn't come in, because the

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guard said they had not been cleared.

The President said, "Well, we'll just have them come in." He called the guard and told him to let them in. They were waiting at the West gate.

JOHNSON: You say the visit referred to personnel business?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: I see. So you were able to go right to the top, so to speak?

HALL: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, we may even have that in our appointments calendar here.

HALL: Possibly so.

JOHNSON: And I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to us.

HALL: My pleasure. It's a subject that I've always been very interested in.

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JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

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