

Oral History Interview
with
ROBERT L. SWEENEY

Life-long friend of Harry S. Truman; first black supervisor appointed in the Kansas City postal system, 1948; active in local and Missouri State civic and political affairs.

Independence, Missouri
December 12, 1977

by Carol A. Briley, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
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NOTICE

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BRILEY: Mr. Sweeney, I wonder if you could tell me a little about your background; such things as where you were born, maybe a little bit about your parents or your early schooling?

SWEENEY: I was born in Highland, Doniphan County, Kansas, November 14, 1895. My mother's name was Julia Sweeney. My father's name was Robert Sweeney. My father had a very unusual position. He was a horse and mule buyer.

I went to Highland School. It was one of the best schools in my opinion, and at

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that time it was a mixed school. My first teacher was Miss Allie Rankin. I went through grade school and finished high school in 1912.

My mother was a very ambitious woman. She taught me how to work and save my money. When I was eleven years old, I had a team of horses. So by the time the railroad was to be built in Highland, Kansas, I had a gentleman who worked for me, named Cecil Dillon, and my own team that worked on that railroad. But I owe that thriftiness to my mother.

After finishing high school, I went to St. Joseph, Missouri. I worked for Dr. W. J. McGill, physician and surgeon. I worked in that family for seven years. In fact, I went to World War I from their home and served in the 92nd Division, 317th Sanitary Train, Headquarters Company.

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After the close of the war I came back to visit Dr. and Mrs. McGill. They were very fine white people. They received me as their guest, and I stayed in the guest room. I worked for Dr. McGill until 1921 when I came to Kansas City, Missouri.

After coming to Kansas City, Missouri, I worked at several different jobs until finally in 1923 I went to work for Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Jones, 5701 Mission Drive -- millionaire oil people. That was one of the greatest experiences in my life. I was exposed not only to a fine family, who were cultured and refined, but to an environment of very fine paintings and antiques. They had paintings like "Master McKenzie," by Rayburn; "Lady Fitzgerald," by Hoffner; Gainsborough's "The Cow;" and, the "Tambourine Girl," by Gainsborough. It gave me an opportunity to

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be in a very pleasant and fine environment.

I worked for Mrs. A. R. Jones until I went into the Post Office Department . I went down to the Post Office Department to do extra work during the Christmas rush in September, 1926. While I was there working as a non-certified sub, I saw the mail was getting low. Mr. George Fair was superintendent of the railway mail service where I was working. I told Mr. Fair that if we didn't clean up that terminal that the inspectors would fire me and everybody in the front office.

They gave me an opportunity to clean up the Kansas City, Missouri terminal, notwithstanding the fact that I was a non-certified sub. So after we cleaned up the terminal, he gave me a regular job of doing the janitorial work at what was known as the annex.

During that time, while I was working as

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a temporary sub, I took every examination and got on the role. I passed the examination for a garageman driver. My grade was 101.51. After getting my five points for being a veteran, I was number one on the list.

I was appointed a garageman driver in 1928, and I worked in that capacity until the Postmaster General, Jim Farley, said anyone who could get a recommendation from his supervisor could take a non-competitive examination. I took the non-competitive examination and was appointed as a chauffeur-carrier. I worked as a chauffeur-carrier until December the 8th, 1948. At that time I was called in by "Boss" [Alexander W.] J. Graham, the Postmaster who was a very good friend of Mr. Truman's. He told me to turn in my cap and uniform, and I was appointed the first Negro supervisor in the Kansas City, Missouri

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Post Office.

One very unique thing was that I did not retire like the average Post Office employee. I sent out invitations. An invitation was sent to Mr. Truman. Mr. Truman didn't come, but he sent Mr. Tom Evans to represent him at my retirement.

I retired in the Postmaster's office. Congressman Bolling was there. Randall Jessee was there. Mr. Paul Uhlmann of the Uhlmann Grain Company sent a representative. Some of the finest people in Kansas City, Missouri were at my retirement, including: Lester Milgram, Casey Jones, and Pat Doyle of the *Kansas City Star*.

BILEY: Could you tell me something about your relationship with President Truman? Do you remember when you first met Mr. Truman?

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SWEENEY: My relationship with Mr. Truman came about in this manner. In the early 1920s when Mr. Truman was elected Judge of the Eastern Jackson County Court he was over the homes for Negro boys and girls.

I had an occasion to visit the home for Negro boys. We were invited out there by Major Earl Beck -- a very good friend of Mr. Truman's. I was so impressed with what I saw there -- the condition of the yard and surroundings, and the flowers. I went into a shop where young men were trained to be carpenters. I had an opportunity to see the young men who were learning to raise garden and foodstuffs for the table.

I also went to the girls' home where they were taught domestic relations -- how to sew or how to get a job so they could find gainful employment after they left the home.

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As you know, those children came from some bad home situations -- some of the parents were not able to take care of their children.

I was so impressed with the training in that home that I wrote Mr. Truman a letter. That letter must have been written sometime in the twenties. In that letter I told Mr. Truman that I had an opportunity to visit the boys' home and the training that they were getting was something that I had not seen any other place in the country. I wanted to let him know the fine work that was being done at the Negro boys' and Negro girls' homes. They were training these young people to be useful citizens.

Incidentally, some young men and women got fine backgrounds there. I understand one became a language teacher in New York City, another is a preacher on the west coast,

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and one is an assistant superintendent of schools.

Mr. Truman answered my letter about the home. I hope it is in his files here at the Library. There were some of his records which were lost. He told me this himself, and I don't know if that letter has ever been found.

He told me that it was gratifying to get a letter from a citizen not complaining about the job the county officials were doing, and it was just like a fresh breath of air to get a letter of that kind. That was the way that I came into contact with Mr. Truman, and I have maintained a friendship with him throughout the years.

BRILEY: You mentioned that you were invited to the home by Mr. Earl Beck?

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SWEENEY: Yes, Earl Beck. They called him Major Earl Beck. He was a very good friend of Mr. Truman's.

A club which I belong to -- the Beau Brummell Club -- was invited to come out there and spend a day. We had an opportunity to visit the facilities there.

BRILEY: How was Mr. Beck connected with the home?

SWEENEY: He was superintendent of the home. I believe he was appointed superintendent by Mr. Truman, who was the Judge of the Eastern Jackson County Court.

BRILEY: Did you know Dr. Earl Thomas?

SWEENEY: Dr. Earl Thomas was a teacher at that home. Earl Thomas was originally trained in carpenter work. He taught those young men carpentry and other skills that would make them useful citizens.

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BRILEY: To your knowledge did Mr. Truman ever visit the boys' home?

SWEENEY: I couldn't say positively, but, I believe he visited the home. And I am satisfied of his interests. Thomas Webster told me that Mr. Truman was interested in that home and in some of the boys who were ambitious and that after the boys had left the home and gone on to Howard, Fisk, or other universities that Mr. Truman contributed to their support.

There were quite a number of young men out there and that was a rural community at that time. Some of those boys in the home became acquainted with farmers and worked on the farms and saved their money. Some of those farmers were also interested in those boys and helped them secure a higher education.

BRILEY: You mentioned the name Thomas Webster?

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SWEENEY: Thomas Webster.

BRILEY: Could I ask who he was?

SWEENEY: Thomas Webster is Earl Beck's son-in-law. He married Fern Beck. Thomas Webster is a studious, very fine person. He's highly educated. He was a friend of Mr. Truman's too. Tom Webster told me, no later than yesterday, that Mr. Truman told him that he encouraged those boys to go on to college, and he contributed to their support.

BRILEY: What is the next thing chronologically that you remember about Mr. Truman? Do you remember anything about his senatorial career?

SWEENEY: I was a good friend of Mr. Jimmy Pendergast, a nephew of Mr. Tom Pendergast. Jimmy Pendergast was a very close friend of Mr. Truman's. They both went to World War I together. Mr. Truman was in Battery D,

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and Jimmy Pendergast served in the same battery. I am very closely aligned with the Democratic Party through my good friend Dr. William J. Tompkins, who later became Recorder of Deeds in Washington, D.C.

At that time there weren't too many Negroes aligned with the Democratic Party -- except for William J. Tompkins, Mr. Felix Payne, Dr. D. M. Miller, and Mon Holland. They stood fast with the Democratic Party.

I was aligned with my good friend Dr. William J. Tompkins. That is the way, indirectly, through the political organization that I always supported Mr. Truman -- not only when he was running for United States Senator but later when he was nominated for Vice President. I've supported him throughout his career.

In fact, in 1948 when he came here, we

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had a meeting and raised some money for Mr. Truman. That's when a dollar was a dollar. He needed every bit of money that he possibly could get. Mr. Tom Evans raised money for Mr. Truman, and we turned the money over to him. We sent money to Mr. Truman when he needed money. He needed that money in 1948 because at that time he was a hundred to one shot, but I was always confident that he was going to win.

BRILEY: Could you tell me about some of the ways that you raised money?

SWEENEY: Now this is off-the-record because I was in the Post Office Department and under the Hatch Act. I worked through some other individuals.

I remember the time in 1948 when we invited a lot of people over to Dr. L. V. Miller's

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and Katie Miller's home on Paseo. We had different people to donate some money at that time. We didn't raise a whole lot of money, but whatever money we raised was needed badly, I think that when we sent him that money, he was on his way to campaign in Texas.

The Dixiecrats then were talking about seceding just like in 1860. He told me that he told them from the back end of that Ferdinand Magellan that if they talked about seceding from the United States he would take the charter from their state and turn it back into a territory. He didn't hear anything anymore about them wanting to secede. So I was very much impressed with Mr. Truman because he was a very unusual person.

BRILEY: Did you ever hear Mr. Truman speak?

SWEENEY: Yes, I've heard him speak. I listened,

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whenever he was campaigning. I would always be present if he was speaking locally or listen if he was over the radio or television.

BRILEY: What kind of a speaker did you think that he was?

SWEENEY: To compare him with a speaker like Alben Barkley of Kentucky, or some of those silver-tongued orators like the keynote speaker to the Democratic National Convention when Mr. Roosevelt was running, the Senator from Nebraska, I couldn't compare him with a speaker of that kind. But whatever he said appeared to go over with the people. When he spoke to those farmers in Des Moines, Iowa, it looked like he had a hundred to one chance of being elected. But the people took to him. They had confidence in him, and they voted for him. There was something about him that was unique. I don't know if anybody

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can put a finger on it. He wasn't a silver-tongued orator, but what he said was meaningful. He got his message over to the common man.

Mr. Truman never got above the people. He was a humble man and sincere. People believed in him. The common man believed in him. The working man believed in him.

I remember when Mr. Truman was running for President in '48 I was working at the Post Office Department, and Mr. Dewey's supporters in the Post Office Department came down and picked out the places where they were going to be when a new Postmaster was appointed and the Democrats were kicked out.

A very good friend of Mr. Truman's, Mr. Boss Graham, was the Postmaster at that time. He was a very good friend of mine, too. I remember that we got a list of those

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individuals who were so confident that Mr. Dewey was going to be elected. They didn't fare so very well in the Post Office after 1948. Some of them resigned, and some of them retired because it was a new ball game.

BRILEY: What else do you remember about the 1948 presidential campaign?

SWEENEY: I remember one time when I was very vocal about Mr. Truman. A very good friend of Mr. Truman's and mine, Mr. Hampton Chambers (he was the head of the President Hotel at 14th and Baltimore) said, "Bob, you better be pretty careful. You better not be so vocal about Mr. Truman or about this campaign because you must remember you're still in the Post Office Department and you might lose your job." I said, "Let me tell you something, Mr. Chambers. I know more than one or two ways

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to make a living, and win, lose or draw, I'm going to go for broke for Mr. Truman. It doesn't make any difference, I'm satisfied that he's going to win."

BRILEY: Did Truman have much support in the black community in '48 in Kansas City?

SWEENEY: I'll have to be honest with you. I couldn't say that Mr. Truman had the support of some of the leading Negroes here at that time. You know we have a lot of Johnny-come-latelies now that have gotten on the bandwagon. But at the time I'm talking about, when a push was coming to a shove, a lot of them didn't think that Mr. Truman was going to be elected.

He had one good supporter here in Kansas City, Missouri, Mr. C. A. Franklin, who was editor of the *Kansas City Call* and Lucille

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Bluford. Mr. Franklin sent Lucille Bluford to spend a day with Mr. Truman. He used some of that material in the *Kansas City Call* for the support of Mr. Truman.

Mr. Truman had the support of the regular Democratic Party, of the Negroes like: Dr. William J. Tompkins, Felix Payne, D. M. Miller, J. McKinney Neal, or Lewis W. Clymer (he wasn't a judge

at that time, he was just a lawyer). We had a pretty good group of people that went along with the regular Democratic Party here.

The outlook in 1948 wasn't too bright for Mr. Truman. It looked like Mr. Dewey would win. The money that the Republicans were spending -- they were spending money here in Kansas City, Missouri. But we had a strong Democratic organization. You can say what you will about the Pendergasts and the Shannon forces, and the Cas Welches, but when the

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chips were down, they could get the people together. I stood fast with them at that time and some of the other Negroes who supported them.

BRILEY: You mentioned before your relationship with Jimmy Pendergast and early Kansas City politics. Would you talk about that?

SWEENEY: Jimmy Pendergast belonged to the American Legion, the Conboy Nichols Post. I don't know whether or not Mr. Truman was a member of that post, but I bet that he was. That was a strong post in the American Legion. Jimmy Pendergast was about the same age as Mr. Truman, and we all belonged to the American Legion. Through the Conboy Nichols Post and Wayne Miner Post 149, we worked pretty closely together. We got together whenever there was a political issue. Jimmy Pendergast was a

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nephew of T. J. Pendergast, but a very fine person, and a very good friend of mine. That is the connection, through the American Legion, because that was a very important organization at that time. It cemented the gap between the people who came out of World War I and some of the older people at that time. That's where that togetherness came about, through the American Legion.

Now, I don't know if that answers your question or not.

BRILEY: Did you ever meet Tom Pendergast?

SWEENEY: I have seen him. But I was a very good friend of Joe Shannon. I knew Joe Shannon better than I did T. J. Pendergast, and they were both difficult men to meet.

I remember I wanted to meet Mr. Shannon. I told my wife to get ready to go downtown

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to Mr. Shannon's office. He had his office in the Sharp Building. His desk was just piled full of papers and wasn't well-kept. I wanted to see Mr. Shannon, and so I walked into his office. Mr. Shannon was a powerful political figure at that time, and he said, "How did you get in this office?"

I said, "I walked into this office. The door was open, and I just walked in."

He said, "Sweeney, where are you from?"

I said, "I'm from Highland, Doniphan County, Kansas."

He said, "How long have you been in Kansas City?" I told him how long I'd been in Kansas City. That is the way I met Joe Shannon, and he became a very good friend of mine.

Let me just say this in passing about Mr. Joe Shannon. He was a member of the Missouri state legislature and during the early 1900's,

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maybe a little bit earlier than that, there was a question coming about making Missouri a Jim Crow state. Mr. Joe Shannon, William J. Tompkins, Felix Payne, D. M. Miller, and other forces here kept Missouri from being a Jim Crow state. Kansas City, Missouri, has people from the North, East, South and the West. I think it's one of the greatest cities in the world. It's a democratic city.

You know, we've had less trouble here among the races. Politically we've always gotten along well. Speaking of democratic politics, the State of Missouri was way ahead of the other states because they combined the Negro and the white man together to win political victory. The Negroes worked closely with the Shannon and the Pendergast forces and the Cas Welches. We got together on issues.

During that early era, the Ku Klux Klan

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was very much in evidence. Kansas even elected [Ben S.] Paulen as Governor, and the Ku Klux Klan supported him. But Shannon and Pendergast were strong Catholics. They capitalized on that and eventually the Negroes came into their fold.

That's the reason we had such a solid political organization here in the State of Missouri. You could always depend upon Missouri being in the Democratic ranks -- notwithstanding the fact that St. Louis had a lot of Republicans at that time -- because we would come out with such a strong vote here in Kansas City and Jackson County. We would overshadow with the rural vote the strong Republican vote in St. Louis.

Another thing, because of the closeness in the Shannon, Pendergast, and Welch organizations, Kansas City, Missouri Negroes were

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out in front of St. Louis because at that time we had General Hospital #2 and Wheatley Hospital here. That was very important for the Negroes of America because when Negro doctors finished Howard University and Meharry Medical College in Nashville and wanted to get their internship, there weren't very many places where they could go. But we had facilities here in Kansas City, Missouri.

You have to give credit to Mr. Truman. He was aligned with the Pendergast organization and the Shannon forces, and we were way out front of some of the other cities. Even today Martin Luther King Hospital is a spin-off of what happened in some of the earlier days. We have one of the finest hospital facilities in America in the Martin Luther King Hospital.

BRILEY: Can you think of any other distinctions

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that Kansas City had as far as the black community at this time?

SWEENEY: I think the atmosphere here in Kansas City may have been a little bit different than in some of the other cities. We had such strong Negro leaders here like Dr. William J. Tompkins, who later became Recorder of Deeds in Washington, D.C. We had a unique situation here in Kansas City. I've always said that when the Supreme Architect of the universe was looking for a garden spot of America, he looked all around the various states. He wanted someplace in the heart of America. He happened to spy a little piece of ground here in Kansas City and Jackson County and bowed down and kissed its soil. It's made Kansas City a very unique place, a very fine place to live. It's one of the finest cities. I think the relationship between the ethnic

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groups here has been just a little bit different than it has been in some of the other places in America.

BRILEY: Earlier you mentioned the Ku Klux Klan. Do you remember anything about the power of the Klan in this area in the 1920s?

SWEENEY: I'm going back a little bit earlier than that. I was working for Dr. W. J. McGill in St. Joseph, Missouri, before I came to Kansas City. He was a fine physician and surgeon. Some white people came to Dr. McGill and told him that they wanted him to get rid of his Negro chauffeur. They told him that I was riding around in the car when I had it full of some white nurses. Dr. McGill said, "If he were in my car with some white nurses, they couldn't be with any finer gentleman." And then he said, "I have never asked any of you, not one of you, for your patronage. Anytime that you don't

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want to use my services, you don't need to call me. I'm not going to get rid of my black chauffeur." That's what he called me, his black chauffeur.

When I was in St. Joseph, Missouri, I was a Republican. When I came to Kansas City I changed to the Democratic Party. I did this because of the Klan situation. The Klan worked on the inside to try to tear down the position of a Catholic, or a Jew, or a Negro. That's one of their fundamentals. They're against the Negro, and the Catholic, and the Jew. I think that's the way it reads in their preamble.

Some people had accused Mr. Truman of being a Klansman. Something came out in the paper at that time.

We've got a powerful paper here, the *Kansas City Star*, and it was never friendly to Mr. Truman's political organization. We should have

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something commendable about Mr. Truman in the files of the *Kansas City Star*, but I don't think they said anything friendly. To find something friendly, you'll have to go to some paper like the *Kansas City Call*, or some other papers that supported him.

Let me say this in passing, even some of the big people here in Kansas City, Missouri, that are getting on his bandwagon now, didn't look with favor upon Mr. Truman at that time. I think that's an undeniable fact. You know you just hate to see these Johnny-come-latelies.

I saw in the paper not long ago where Mr. Truman was listed as one of America's greatest Presidents. I think that is the reason that -- what is the Director's name here?

BRILEY: Dr. [Benedict K.] Zobrist.

SWEENEY: I think that is the reason Dr. Zobrist

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pointed out to me that I could see in Mr. Truman, in the early days, something that other people couldn't see in him.

BRILEY: Were there many blacks with the Post Office Department when you were first employed there?

SWEENEY: No, there weren't many blacks with the Post Office.

Boss Graham was appointed Postmaster. I know he had to have a recommendation, and Mr. Truman or Mr. Shannon, I believe, had Mr. Graham appointed.

At that time there were very few Negro clerks in the Post Office Department. I think there were only two, Mr. Ben F. Muldrew and another young man, who is a lawyer in Wichita, Kansas. There were two Negro clerks under William G. Morton before Boss Graham was

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appointed, just two Negro clerks in the Post Office.

Here's the way that the change came about. There was a scarcity of employees in the Post Office Department. In order to work up the mail they had to call in the carriers from some of the other offices. They called the Negro carriers (you know, they've always been carriers) to come down to the GPO and work mail. Some of those white people kicked to Boss Graham. They didn't want to work with the Negro clerks. So Mr. Graham called them all together and said, "Any of

you that don't want to work and are not satisfied with the facilities that we have here can resign." He said that and stood fast on it, and nobody handed in their resignation. I believe that happened in the late thirties.

When Mr. Truman had me appointed as the

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first Negro supervisor December the 8th, 1948, that was an unheard of thing. They stood fast in that because the President of the United States was behind me and the Congressmen. So that's when the change came about.

BRILEY: Were you the first black supervisor in the country?

SWEENEY: I was the first black supervisor in the Kansas City, Missouri Post Office. There were black supervisors in other places. But I was the first black supervisor here, and this was unheard of. That's why I'm so grateful to Mr. Truman.

BRILEY: Would you like to discuss some other aspects of your work at the Post Office?

SWEENEY: Yes. I went to the Post Office in September of 1926. A very good friend of

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mine named Prentice Hoffman gave me an application to work during the Christmas rush. When the mail was slowing down in January or February, I suggested to Mr. Pair that I clean up the Kansas City, Missouri terminal.

That is the way I got in the Post Office Department. I took every examination that came up: mail handler, garageman driver, clerk carrier -- all of them. When I got my foot in the door of the Post Office I never left. I just made myself a job until I could get on the regular certified list.

I'm grateful to Mr. Jim Parley because he allowed those with satisfactory work to take a non-competitive examination. I was appointed as a chauffeur-carrier. My work there as a chauffeur-carrier was a very interesting experience because I delivered mail in the district in which I had worked when I was a

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chauffeur. I was on route 354, and then on route 382. I delivered mail to those very wealthy white people whom I had known when I was a chauffeur.

It was a very interesting experience because I even delivered mail to the lady for whom I used to work, Mrs. A. R. Jones. She was a gracious, cultured and refined lady. I would bring her mail, and we would stop and perhaps would have coffee in the breakfast room.

I knew a lot of people on the route whom I had known before I went into the Post Office Department. I remember one time when I delivered the mail on West 59th Street. I was at Mr.

Lerner's house, he owned the Lerner dress shop here. I was there talking to some little lady in the kitchen. I jumped in my car and backed out very rapidly and ran into

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Mr. Robert E. Sterling's automobile. I went in and woke him up and told him that I'd backed into his car. He wrote a letter to the Postmaster, Mr. Graham and told him that I had come in and told him about it and he had ample money to fix it up and for them not to say one word to me about it. But, you see, I knew those people. I used to be a chauffeur, and the peculiar thing about a group of wealthy white people is that when one person knows the other person's chauffeur it makes a different situation. I enjoyed my work in the Post Office because I delivered mail to some very fine people.

BRILEY: After Truman decided not to run in '52 did you have contact with him?

SWEENEY: I had contact with Mr. Truman when he came back to Kansas City. I was always welcome

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here at the Truman Library, and I knew Miss Rose Conway. A lot of people knew that I was close to Mr. Truman. They would come from out of town, and they would get in touch with me to come to the Truman Library. I brought a lot of Negro visitors out here from time to time.

I'll never forget one thing. There were some people who came here from Virginia. One of them was a relative of the Thorntons, and he recalled at that time that Mr. Truman had eliminated segregation in the Armed Forces. A lot of people don't know it, but Mr. Truman's almost the father of the civil rights law because Mr. Roosevelt died before he could implement the civil rights law. Mr. Truman is the one that implemented the civil rights law as far as the Negroes are concerned here in America. He eliminated segregation in the

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Armed Forces, and did other things here that were notable and very vital to the Negro. In my opinion, when history is recorded, he will go down as a very fair and staunch man as far as the Negro is concerned.

BRILEY: Would you like to talk about some of the community projects that you've been involved in?

SWEENEY: I've always been involved with the American Legion. I was very much interested in the soldiers and so I became involved in the Legion. In that way, I came in contact with some of the leaders of Kansas City, Missouri. Even when I was in the Post Office I was invited to be a Director of the Douglas State Bank. I was a Director of the Twin City Federal Savings and Loan Association. We built a building there at 3308 East Linwood.

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I have been a department vice-commander of .American Legion, and I've been a department vice-commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I have been involved in political activities here. I remember back when Governor [Warren] Hearnes came here in 1959. He wasn't known very well among the Negroes. I supported Governor Hearnes, and I introduced him to the Negroes of Kansas City, Missouri. He was successful in his two campaigns for Governor, and he appointed me as a colonel on his staff.

I am presently vice-chairman of the Urban Renewal Redevelopment operation. I'm associated with Mr. L. P. Cookingham who is a past City Manager. Mr. Joe Bruening used to be on the board, I've served with him. I'm now serving with Mr. Griffin, Mr. Cookingham,

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Mr. Carl J. DiCapo, and Attorney James M. Reed. I don't think I've left out anybody. There are five of us on that board.

I've kept active. I'm very active with my church. I belong to Allen-Chapel Church. I'm a trustee of that church. The preacher, whom we had for several years, had let our church get in pretty bad financial condition. I was assigned the task of fundraising and I was able to raise about 18 thousand dollars. We have paid off the note on Allen-Chapel Church. So I have been involved. I have never lost my touch with the community, notwithstanding the fact that I have retired from the Post Office. I don't think a person ever quits. You just don't retire and sit down. You must keep active.

One of the greatest things I think you can do is to be of service to your community

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and help those people who can't help themselves. I think that's one of the greatest satisfactions that I get out of life.

There's a little girl in Minneapolis who stayed with us from the time she was seven years old to about seventeen. She stayed in and out of our home. Now she's working for the regional YMCA in Minneapolis. I'm very proud of her progress. If she calls upon me for some money, I'm going to send it to her. In fact, nobody knows this, but I bought her a 1971 used Chevrolet because she comes from a family of thirteen, and she hasn't had a chance. She's never seen her father.

I get pleasure out of helping people who can't help themselves. That's one reason that my involvement with Urban Renewal has been important to me. The Public Law of 1971 hasn't always been applied when Negroes have

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been displaced from their property. Mr. Mayor [Ilus] Davis appointed me on the Urban Renewal Commission and it doesn't make any difference, white, black, green, whoever it is, I'm going to see that they get everything that the public law calls for as long as I'm down there as a commissioner in Urban Renewal. There is a satisfaction in helping people who can't help themselves.

I think Mr. Truman was like that. I think if there was anyone who personified loyalty, it was Mr. Truman. I believe he was loyal to his friends, and he never forgot his friends. I think when history is written his loyalty will be recorded.

When Mr. Pendergast died, Truman caught a bomber and came here. I was delivering mail, and I was at 57th and Main talking to Sister Gabriel. (You get acquainted with

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the sisters when you deliver mail and see them everyday.) I told her at that time that I thought loyalty was one of the finest things that ever blossomed in the human breast. I think it will go down in history that Harry S. Truman was one of the most loyal individuals who ever lived.

BRILEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Sweeney.

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