

Oral History Interview

with

STERLING E. GODDARD

Longtime acquaintance of the Truman family; mortician in Grandview, 1952 to the present; past President of the Grandview Chamber of Commerce; President, Harry S. Truman Farm Home Foundation, 1980-.

Grandview, Missouri
December 3, 1980

by Niel Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
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JOHNSON: I'd like to start out by asking you something about your own background. Could you tell us where you were born and when and what your parents' names were?

GODDARD: I'm the son of Lincoln H. and Ada B. Goddard. I was born in 1918 at Fort Dodge, Iowa, and moved from there to Auburn, Iowa where my father owned a hardware store. In 1920 he came to Grandview and bought a hardware store, and then in January 1921 my mother and my sister and I came to Grandview to join my dad and my older two brothers who had come earlier with him. I have lived here in Grandview since 1921, and grew up approximately

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a mile south of the old Truman farm home. Of course, I received my education here at the Grandview schools along with J.C., Fred, and Martha Ann Truman.

JOHNSON: Were you a classmate of some of the boys?

GODDARD: No, both J.C. and Fred were ahead of me and Martha Ann was in a class or two behind me, although I think she went only through the 8th grade here and then took her high school education at Hickman Mills, or at Ruskin High School. Of course, Gilbert and Harry were both considerably younger, at least ten years younger than I was.

I've been associated with the George Funeral Home at Grandview here and in Belton since 1952. The George firm buried Grandma Truman and I have buried both Vivian and Louella, and Mary Jane, from our funeral home here in Grandview.

JOHNSON: Was your home on the edge of town in those days?

GODDARD: Yes. Our house was the corner of the city

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limits. Everything east of us and north of us was farmland. Our house sat out on the corner of the city limits.

JOHNSON: Do you recall the first time you met any of the Trumans?

GODDARD: Oh, it had to be back in the early thirties that I met both Vivian and Mrs. Truman, and of course I was going to school with J.C. and Fred. So it had to be back in the late twenties or early thirties.

JOHNSON: One of the questions I've been asking is about who farmed the land there in the 1920s on the Truman farm. Was it Vivian as far as you know?

GODDARD: Vivian ran the farm in the twenties.

JOHNSON: Before he built the house near the present farmhouse, he was living where?

GODDARD: He was living on Grandview Road at approximately 121st Street or 122nd Street.

JOHNSON: Was there a farm up there too?

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GODDARD: He had a small farm home; it was on the farm.

JOHNSON: Did he farm some of the land there as well as the...

GODDARD: All around it; on both the east, north and south, was farmland, around the house there.

JOHNSON: You mentioned you were a caddy?

GODDARD: I was a caddy at the golf course; had to walk by there morning and afternoon going to and from the golf course.

JOHNSON: What club was this?

GODDARD: It was the old Kansas City Automobile Club and later became the South Ridge Country Club. It was the South Ridge Country Club clear up until the time of the war. It closed down during the war. It contains nothing but houses now.

JOHNSON: Harry Truman in the two years he was out of politics, 1925-26, worked for the Kansas City

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Auto Club and the National Trails Association. He helped get memberships in the club and also helped promote the development of the National Trails Highways; he helped mark them. They had a "Madonna of the Trails," I believe it was, that he dedicated at various places on some of these highways that followed the various trails. Were you aware of his role in that period?

GODDARD: No. This was just more or less a golf and country club dining place. I never did, to my knowledge, see him out there at any time.

JOHNSON: When did you first hear about Harry Truman? Can you recall the circumstances?

GODDARD: Well, during the twenties, late twenties, I heard a lot about him because he was beginning to get involved with politics. What with my mother and father both being avid Republicans, why, the name was brought up quite often.

JOHNSON: Well, they were kind of a rarity weren't they around here?

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GODDARD: Yes, they were.

JOHNSON: You say your dad started in the hardware business in 1920?

GODDARD: 1920.

JOHNSON: Now, Clements, you know, was in the hardware business.

GODDARD: Yes, father was in competition with Dave Clements, and he only kept it probably two or three years. Then he sold out because Dave Clements, being more or less a native, offered competition that was just too rough.

JOHNSON: So then what did he do?

GODDARD: He went into the construction business and later developed the Goddard Construction Company.

JOHNSON: But you didn't follow in that line?

GODDARD: Only for four years after I finished high school. I worked for my dad for four years. Then, through an uncle, who wanted one of us boys to go

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into the mortuary business, we got an offer to set up a business in Iowa. So I was the one that decided that was what I wanted to do. Well, after the war came on, I went into the service, and when I came back I was fortunate enough to go into business right here in my hometown.

JOHNSON: And you never went to Iowa to go into business?

GODDARD: Never went to Iowa.

JOHNSON: Did you take over an existing mortuary?

GODDARD: Well, I bought into a partnership--it's a corporation--but I bought a one-third interest of the E.K. George and Sons Funeral Home which had been in business in Belton since 1909 and here in Grandview since 1928. Allen George, who was the older of the two sons, died four years after that. Then his brother and I bought his stock and there's been a 50-50 partnership with Mr. Richard George and me ever since.

JOHNSON: Did you ever visit the Truman farm in the

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thirties or forties?

GODDARD: No. Well, I did a lot of hunting on the property, because I'd just step across the fence with my rifle and go hunting all down and across Highway 71. The highway was built in 1927, what they call old 71.

JOHNSON: And that split the farm?

GODDARD: That split the farm. We used to go clear to the highway, through the underpass, because there was a kind of cattle underpass there, go underneath that and clear on down through the farm, hunting rabbits.

JOHNSON: Then Blue Ridge Boulevard was also built. Do you recall when that was built?

GODDARD: I don't remember the date.

JOHNSON: That angled through the farm as well, didn't it? So two of the highways that were newly built during his term as presiding judge split up his farm.

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Did you ever see any of the Trumans while you were hunting on their land or did you ever have to ask permission or anything?

GODDARD: No, they didn't care. They were just that kind. If you were local--being a local boy, why, there was no problem.

JOHNSON: This was on the eastern part of the farm?

GODDARD: Yes, I started out going down through the Feland farm here, and as soon as I cut across the corner of the Feland farm, then I'd be on Truman property. Then, I'd go underneath the highway, where you're still on Truman property, clear on across there.

JOHNSON: Was there a slough, a creek, or something there?

GODDARD: Well, there was a draw. It was always filled with junk that they kept piled in there to keep the water from washing. That made a good place for a hideout for rabbits and that's where I'd find them.

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JOHNSON: You say that it was junk from the farm that was piled up down there?

GODDARD: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you think we could dig any of that up now?

GODDARD: Oh, it's possible.

JOHNSON: One of the things we're interested in is any artifacts used on the Truman farm especially in this early period. Are you aware of anything that still exists that perhaps was used on the Truman farm, either as an implement or for other purposes?

GODDARD: Not that I know of, unless it would be that Harry and Gilbert would have it down at Louisburg.

JOHNSON: Of course, that auction way back in 1919 was before your time. They didn't have any subsequent auctions that you can recall out there at the farm?

GODDARD: Not that I can remember.

JOHNSON: Mary Jane and Martha moved into town about

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1940. When they moved, after the foreclosure on the farm, do you know if they brought in a lot of the furniture?

GODDARD: I was gone at that time, because I was in embalming school over at Kansas City, Kansas, and then I went to work for the Gates Funeral Home, 41st and State Line, and lived there for two years, although my folks were living here in Grandview. I'd come back, but they moved in here during the period that I was in school and serving my apprenticeship.

JOHNSON: Did your father ever say anything about the Trumans ever patronizing his hardware store up here?

GODDARD: No. I think they dealt more with Dave, Uncle Dave, because, you see, he was more or less like a part of the family.

JOHNSON: Kind of hard to break into that kind of competition.

GODDARD: You bet it is, especially in a small town.

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JOHNSON: I know they patronized the Clements. Did you ever see Harry Truman here in Grandview?

GODDARD: Oh, yes, many times.

JOHNSON: What were the circumstances?

GODDARD: Oh, he'd just be out visiting. Of course, he also came out to lodge meetings, and...

JOHNSON: Are you a member of the Masonic Lodge?

GODDARD: No. My brother is, but my wife said if I married the lodge I'd have to divorce her.

JOHNSON: So he did visit rather frequently as you recall?

GODDARD: Oh, the same thing, coming out to go see his mother while she was living, and Mary Jane. Then, of course, he was out here at the time, as I remember, when his mother died. The George firm handled his mother's funeral. That was before I was part of it. He was out when Vivian died, but not when Louella died. Of course, he was well up in years and wasn't able to get around much, but

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he did have his chauffeur bring both him and Bess out here.

JOHNSON: That was after he left the Presidency. Do you recall if he ever came out here, or visited much while he was a Senator? That would be between 1935 and '45.

GODDARD: I don't remember any occasions of it. He probably did but I don't remember. Of course, at that time I was working for my dad, and did a lot of that work in Kansas City. He probably came out during the day and I wasn't here.

JOHNSON: That road building program, do you remember much about that, any local reaction to it, how the people here felt about it?

GODDARD: You mean, 71 and Blue Ridge?

JOHNSON: Yes.

GODDARD: Oh everybody was tickled to death because the only road we had was the old Grandview Road clear into 85th and Prospect. Of course, the

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Olson Brothers who were local, both here in Grandview and Belton, had the grading contract, and had a lot of work for a lot of people here in this area. They used a team of mules and slips at that time.

JOHNSON: When Truman visited Independence in the early days, when he lived out here on the farm before he got his Stafford car in '13, he took the train and he apparently had to walk from the farm house to the depot.

GODDARD: The depot up here in Grandview?

JOHNSON: How far would that be?

GODDARD: About a mile.

JOHNSON: Then he would go into Kansas City and then I suppose he'd take a street car from Kansas City over to Independence.

GODDARD: Yes, there was a streetcar line that ran out on Independence Avenue at that time.

JOHNSON: Did you ever take the train from Grandview into Kansas City?

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GODDARD: Clear into Union Station.

JOHNSON: That was fairly convenient then.

So the road building really did get a lot of support here locally and helped Grandview grow a little bit?

GODDARD: Oh sure. After that was put in, Main Street was extended from 10th Street on out to the highway, which is about nine blocks. Like I said, the development really started then, or it helped get it started.

JOHNSON: Was there much new housing here in the thirties?

GODDARD: Well, there was always some building going on.

JOHNSON: The big boom came when?

GODDARD: Well, probably not until after the war. Not until even after '48. Well, my father started building and got the addition right across the street from here opened up. That was all pastureland, and the only thing built up there was the community hall building on Main Street.

And the

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company which he owned bought all of this property here in '45, right after the war was over. He said that the only way that Kansas City could really grow was to the south. He was on his fifth house when he died. Then my two brothers took over the business.

JOHNSON: This is east of 10th Street. You say it was pasture until '45, '46?

GODDARD: Yes, until '45.

JOHNSON: The southern boundary of the Truman farm, do you recall just about where that was?

GODDARD: It would be 125th Street; that was the south boundary.

JOHNSON: A portion of that, north of that, was sold in, what, 1955-56...

GODDARD: For a shopping center.

JOHNSON: Did your brothers have anything to do with the development of Truman Corners shopping center?

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GODDARD: No. But one of my brothers was a close friend of J.C.; he is the oldest son of Vivian and Louella. He and my older brother Merritt were in the same class together. J.C. and Merritt, and a fellow by the name of Bob Grubb, whose dad owned the ice plant over here in Grandview, and my mother, used to play auction bridge many, many nights. That was back in the thirties.

JOHNSON: That was a leisure time activity?

GODDARD: Yes. Those three boys and my mother would play auction bridge. I wasn't old enough to play. A game of cards wasn't for me. But J.C. spent many, many an evening here playing auction bridge at our house.

JOHNSON: Did you, or your parents, get well acquainted with Mary Jane and her mother, Martha?

GODDARD: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did they visit with them out at the farmhouse?

GODDARD: I don't think there ever was any visiting done

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out at the farm, but there was locally in the neighborhood clubs.

JOHNSON: They moved into town in 1940, and then apparently after Martha Truman died in 1947, Mary Jane moved to a different house.

GODDARD: Yes, over on 13th Street.

JOHNSON: Do you know anything about the background of the house that they moved into here in Grandview?

GODDARD: That house there was built prior to when we came here. The mill was quite an operation, the feed mill; it was quite an operation and that house belonged to the owner of the feed mill.

A fellow by the name of C.V. Hopkins, Carl V. Hopkins, owned the mill, a grain mill, and lived in that house. He was also one of the ministers of the R.L.D.S. Church, and that's the church that we grew up in. So we had many a Sunday dinner there at his house and then in turn he would come to our house on other occasions.

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JOHNSON: They bought that house from him, is that correct, or did they rent?

GODDARD: They owned the home. But now who they bought it from I don't remember because I don't remember when Carl Hopkins died.

JOHNSON: Do you recall when President Truman was here for a week or more, during March 1947, when his mother was very ill? He spent quite a bit of time here at the house as well as at the Muehlebach. He signed the Truman Doctrine at the Muehlebach while he was out here. Do you recall...

GODDARD: No, I was in the service from January of '42 until November of '45. Then, when we came back here to Grandview, we went down to visit my wife's parents at Urich, Missouri, which is 45 miles southeast of here. The night we got down there her dad had a heart attack and died at 2 the next morning. So we stayed there for three years and more or less ran the farm. I didn't come back up here until October of '48, when we moved back to this house here.

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JOHNSON: Do you recall any of President Truman's visits to Grandview while he was still President?

GODDARD: Unfortunately, I don't recall any of them.

JOHNSON: Well, of course, one of the visits was the dedication of the First Baptist Church.

GODDARD: Yes, that's true.

JOHNSON: Do you remember that?

GODDARD: Yes, I remember the Secret Service bringing him out here.

JOHNSON: Did you get acquainted with Martha Truman?

GODDARD: Just met her on a few occasions.

JOHNSON: What was your impression?

GODDARD: She was just what you'd call a grand old lady, the kind that you just loved to sit and talk to.

JOHNSON: Among the things that people say was that she did have strong opinions.

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GODDARD: Oh, you bet.

JOHNSON: Mr. Truman came back in January of 1953. He hoped at that point, or perhaps a little earlier, to build a library out here on the farmland. Of course, that didn't work out. Did you see him when he came out for visits to the farm in 1953-54? Or did you hear anything about his visits here?

GODDARD: Yes, there was a lot of talk about it at that time, but I didn't actually come in contact with him about it because I was then a junior member of the firm. Probably, Allen George did.

JOHNSON: Were there rumors going around at the time that a library might be built?

GODDARD: Yes.

JOHNSON: What were the reactions as far as you could tell?

GODDARD: Well, everybody was always hoping that that would come about because it would really put Grandview on the map. Just the same thing with

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restoring the old farm home now; we know when we get that done, why, it will put Grandview on the map more than it has been.

JOHNSON: Well, since you didn't get the library, you ought to be able to at least get the farm here.

GODDARD: Well, we have the money allocated for the purchase of it. Now, all we have to do is to raise the funds to restore it and make a museum and park out of it.

JOHNSON: By the way, did your father ever turn Democrat?

GODDARD: No, nor my mother either. They were just as died-in-the-wool Republicans as Harry Truman was a Democrat.

JOHNSON: What did they think about Truman's politics, do you know?

GODDARD: They always thought he did a real good job even though he was a Democrat.

JOHNSON: In spite of being Republicans.

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GODDARD: In spite of them being Republicans. They thought he was just a down to earth man that did what he thought was best for the people. And they always had a good opinion of him.

JOHNSON: Even though he was supporting New Deal policies, they were still willing to perhaps vote for him, and perhaps give him mild support?

GODDARD: They would give him moral support, but not voting support. My mother wasn't as radical as my dad, but my dad was just as radical a Republican as you would ever find.

JOHNSON: Got that in Iowa and the east from his forebears, I suppose. Now, I won't take you that far back, because I know how far back that goes.

GODDARD: Well, now that you talk about that, there are both Republicans and Democrats in the Goddard family going back. I found out that so and so was Republican and another one was a Democrat, and so on.

JOHNSON: There has been a mixture, even in different

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parts of the country. Have you heard any stories or anecdotes about Solomon Young, or about Harry Truman himself, anything that perhaps is not in print?

GODDARD: No, I don't think so. I can't recall anything.

JOHNSON: Of course, the Solomon Young name was pretty well known here. I notice that

there is even a story that he and a couple of other local citizens were together and one said something like, "Isn't this a grand view?"

GODDARD: Yes, he was talking to Anderson down here at the grocery store, and that's where the name came.

JOHNSON: You think that is really a true story?

GODDARD: From all I've been able to find out.

JOHNSON: Mr. Goddard is now looking at this photograph of the threshing machine, L.C. Hall's threshing machine, on the Truman farm.

GODDARD: When Mr. Hall would get the steam engine

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fired up down at his house, which was down at 132nd and Grandview Road, as soon as he could get a full head of steam, why, he would blow the whistle. Well, we knew that he was heading somewhere. So two or three of us kids would always make a run for Grandview Road to see which way he was going. And we would always hop on it. It had a big metal platform on the back of it; you'd step up on a step and up on this metal platform on the back of it. He'd let us kids ride on the back. Of course, it had those big slanting cleats on the wheels and whenever he'd go down Grandview Road, like he was going to the Truman farm, why, you could just see these tracks all the way, cut right into the blacktop. But he would always give us kids a ride on that, and I would imagine if he was going to the Truman farm we would ride that far.

JOHNSON: Well, do you recall this outfit threshing on the Truman farm?

GODDARD: Well, I remember him threshing. Like I said,

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many times he threshed all around this area, and we'd go watch because that was always quite a sight, to get to sit there and watch that.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea whereabouts on the farm this might have been? It doesn't appear to be up in the barnyard. Where would they have made their straw pile? Do you recall a straw pile out on the Truman farm?

GODDARD: With those telephone lines and power lines, that would have to have been pretty close to Grandview Road. The area there at 121st, where the old Vivian Truman home was, the biggest part of the time that was in wheat or oats. So it was probably right along Grandview Road. There's many a time I've seen a haystack along on Grandview Road there, between 119th and the Kansas City Southern Railroad tracks.

JOHNSON: So you think this is evidence--okay, we've got these...

GODDARD: You've got the power lines.

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JOHNSON: Yes. And the only road that would have passed the Truman farm that had power lines, at least back in the twenties, before Blue Ridge Boulevard and 71, would have been Grandview Road?

GODDARD: Right.

JOHNSON: Which went directly north, didn't it, out of Grandview?

GODDARD: Yes. Right straight north out of Grandview and on the west side of the old Truman farm home.

JOHNSON: In fact, the farm home was set back about 500 feet or so, wasn't it?

GODDARD: Oh, more than that, from Grandview Road, it's probably pretty close to a half mile.

JOHNSON: So this would have been on the western side of the farm, north of the farmhouse and west?

GODDARD: North and west of the farm home. It would have to be with those power lines, because there weren't any cross lines running this way anywhere along there.

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JOHNSON: Which means also then that the Truman farm had electricity rather early? Do you have any idea when they got electricity out there on that farm?

GODDARD: No, I don't because every place here in town had it in 1920-21 when we came here. So I'm sure they must have had it there too. I know the Felands had it at their farm home, and that was about half way between here and the Truman farm home. They had electricity.

JOHNSON: This has not been dated, this photograph. It just says "early 1900s." Is there any way that we could come closer to a date? They were using horses there, of course, and steam engines, but they were using horses on that farm way up into the...

GODDARD: Oh, clear up into the forties.

JOHNSON: You never saw a tractor working that farm?

GODDARD: No, all I remember was horses. The same

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thing with the Felands here; they used nothing but mules.

JOHNSON: The Fordson tractor never became that popular around here that early?

GODDARD: Very, very few. In fact, even during the time that I was big enough to remember, everybody still came to town in horse and buggy.

JOHNSON: Well, they had electricity long before they had mechanization, so to speak. Seems kind of strange. A lot of farms had tractors before they had electricity, you know, in other parts of the country. How long do you think that steam engine was used for threshing?

GODDARD: You'd have to ask Miss Ruby on that, Miss Ruby Hall; she'll be able to tell you.

JOHNSON: Even if they had electricity out there, they probably just used it for lighting.

GODDARD: Probably so.

JOHNSON: Did they have a windmill out there at one time?

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GODDARD: Probably did; I can't remember. I remember the place up at 121st just had a pump; a hand pump was all.

JOHNSON: Was the pump just outside the back door?

GODDARD: Yes, at the farm home.

JOHNSON: We've been trying to trace down some of the brands and types of farm equipment. Mr. Truman mentioned riding an Emerson gangplow. I know they had this custom threshing machine, and we've seen a picture of him on a cultivator. But have you ever heard anything about the kinds of implements that were used out there, the brand names?

GODDARD: Probably McCormick Deering.

JOHNSON: Binders?

GODDARD: Binders, and of course they even make other machines besides...

JOHNSON: Grain drills. It's going to be hard to track that down. You know his mother, Martha, said he

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got all his commonsense on the farm. She said he got his commonsense on the farm, not in town. He could plow the straightest furrow, and plant the straightest row of corn. Did you ever notice the cornrows out there being straighter than...

GODDARD: Not any straighter than any place else.

JOHNSON: You did hunt in there?

GODDARD: Yes.

JOHNSON: Of course, he wasn't plowing then.

GODDARD: The field that sticks out in my mind more than any other was this probably-40 acres just north of us. Of course, that was farmed by the Felands who were longtime neighbors of the Truman family. There were three Feland brothers. There was John, who was the only one that married, and then there was Joe and Tom. Each one of them farmed his part of the ground. This part here, what was pasture right across the street between Jones and 10th and down to Thirteenth, that's where they

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mostly kept the mules. But they farmed corn every year, every year; didn't know what crop rotation was. It ended up that they had a barn just on the other side of Jones from us here, which at that time was just across the fence. There wasn't any road there. After they'd shuck the corn, why they'd bring it up here. It got to be where it was nothing but little nubbins, because they didn't spend money for any fertilizer and it was just corn every year, every year, and finally the ground just wore out and wouldn't produce anything. The Trumans were a little different. That's the reason I said they kind of rotated their crops to the extent that they got good results. They would plant either wheat or oats and corn, and then like I said, rotate their crops around.

JOHNSON: Was there anything like contour plowing out there?

GODDARD: No, it wasn't necessary. There wasn't that much wash to bother with it.

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JOHNSON: Of course, he had the reputation of being rather scientific in farming, and also keeping good records--a businessman you might say. He had purebred stock and vaccinated stock. Is that the reputation that you know?

GODDARD: Yes, they always had good stock and good farm animals, and they took care of them.

JOHNSON: The part of the farm that you used to hunt on--was that almost always corn or was that rotated too?

GODDARD: Well, that part over there at that time was in pasture. That's where he raised stock.

JOHNSON: Is there still a ravine there as far as you know?

GODDARD: A lot of that has been developed. About where the underpass is, over there at the bank, is about where we started. Of course, the ravine started way up here at 10th and Jones and carried on down through there, across and underneath the highway. That would be about right across from

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the bank where the underpass is now.

JOHNSON: In other words, if there had been any junk there, it's not likely that it would be around there now.

GODDARD: Covered up with blacktop.

JOHNSON: That would be hard to excavate.

GODDARD: Sure would.

JOHNSON: But it does remind me of when the barn burned out here in the late fifties. Do you recall when that happened?

GODDARD: Yes. We didn't go down to it because we could pretty well tell what it was.

JOHNSON: Do you know if anything was salvaged?

GODDARD: I don't think so. I think everything was burned.

JOHNSON: The renter out there said they bulldozed over that foundation where the barn was. Do you

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think that maybe there are things that were buried under there that could be retrieved through some excavation?

GODDARD: Well, I don't see why not. Maybe you could go in there with a metal detector and locate some stuff.

JOHNSON: Nobody has ever used a metal detector out there on the farm as far as you know?

GODDARD: As far as I know they haven't.

JOHNSON: Would that be a big project to search for metal there where the barn was?

GODDARD: You could probably dig up a horseshoe or two.

JOHNSON: Or even dig up some charred timbers perhaps. You know the story is that the barn was made from timbers of the first Hickman Mill.

GODDARD: Yes; those big timbers that ran through there were enormous ones, and all solid walnut.

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JOHNSON: Were you ever in the barn?

GODDARD: Yes; I've been in the barn.

JOHNSON: And I guess they were pegged, rather than nailed?

GODDARD: Everything was pegged.

JOHNSON: That's sure a shame. What was the story about the fire, how it started?

GODDARD: From all indications there were kids in there smoking and they threw a cigarette butt down.

JOHNSON: Did you know the Arringtons or the Slaughters?

GODDARD: Yes, knew both families.

JOHNSON: They were neighbors of the Trumans. Did you ever hear anything about the Trumans as farmers through any of their neighbors?

GODDARD: No; about the only thing you ever heard that Harry could plow a straighter furrow than anybody. That was about the only story that ever was told about him.

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JOHNSON: And everybody seemed to agree with that?

GODDARD: Yes.

JOHNSON: After the Trumans lost the farm house in 1940, a group of friends of Harry Truman bought it back for the mortgage price, plus interest, and so the Trumans were able to get it back. I guess it's still in the hands of Trumans isn't it? How large an acreage are we talking about?

GODDARD: Well, in the farm home we're talking about the acreage is five point something. That was owned by Harry, the President, and then Harry in turn sold it to Gilbert and Harry A.

JOHNSON: Harry A. is the nephew of President Truman?

GODDARD: Yes. Harry A. and Gilbert, the two youngest sons of Vivian, bought that five point some tenths acres from Harry. The other seven point some tenths acres--there was a little less than thirteen acres total--was owned by Vivian and Louella. Now it is owned by the five children. The Truman

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Farm Home Foundation has already made the contract to purchase the five point acres and the old house from Harry and Gilbert. Then just as soon as we can get a meeting with them, we're going to take an option on the other seven acres.

JOHNSON: So it will be about thirteen acres?

GODDARD: Thirteen acres. What is left of the old farm will be thirteen acres that will be made into a park and museum.

JOHNSON: Do you recall when the farm was farmed by people other than the Trumans? Apparently tenants moved into the farmhouse itself many years back. Do you have any idea when tenants moved into that house?

GODDARD: Even when Vivian and Louella Truman were still living there on Blue Ridge and I guess even when Mary Jane and Grandma Truman were living in the house, the only farming that was actually done was dairy farming, which was done by Gilbert and Harry. They pastured most everything. I don't know whether

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they farmed the land there before the Ford Tractor Company built in that area on the north side of the Kansas City Southern tracks, whether they actually farmed that themselves, or whether they leased it, or rented it out on a share basis. I don't know.

JOHNSON: When Mary Jane and Martha moved out in 1940, moved into town, do you know who moved into the house after that?

GODDARD: No, I don't remember who moved in there. Of course the Williams family have lived there better than 25 years. He just died here a week or so ago. But they never did do any farming. I can't remember back before the Williams had it; I don't remember who lived there.

JOHNSON: Some of the Trumans were actually doing the farming, nephews of the President?

GODDARD: Yes, Harry and Gilbert.

JOHNSON: And then a large part of it was sold for the Truman Corners shopping center around 1956. Did

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that sort of end the farming operation?

GODDARD: That ended the farming operation, except for that tract over on the north side of the railroad, and that evidently was probably leased by somebody, because a crop was put in there every year.

JOHNSON: So in a sense the farmhouse was just a house for rent from 1956 on. When did the people in Grandview begin to be interested or concerned about the future of the farmhouse?

GODDARD: It was about the first part of 1977 that the first interest was shown by the Chamber of Commerce in trying to save it and get it put on the National Register. Of course, you have much of that information out at the Library. The Rev. Bob Johnson from the Grandview Assembly of God Church was president of the Chamber for two years, '77 and '78, and it was while he was president that they really got involved in it and tried to raise enough money to purchase it. But they just didn't have the right organization for them to do it. So then it was

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started again this year, with the hiring of Tyson Whiteside, and with his guidance and know-how, his being a former member of the Department of the Interior, we got this job done.

JOHNSON: A couple of people have told me that when Truman Corners was built that they put in a plaque. Is there still a plaque out there?

GODDARD: There is still a plaque there on the mall.

JOHNSON: Has there been much tourism out there? Are there any figures anywhere that would give us an idea?

GODDARD: I don't think so because there's just a sign along the highway down there that says, "Historical Marker, Truman Farm." People drive up and say, "Is this all there is?" You say, "Well, you can drive up and go around the house, and that's it." So there hasn't been anything to really draw them off the highway--just to drive up there and read that plaque. It's not much of an incentive.

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JOHNSON: No brochure or handout for instance, or leaflet, to give a history of it for them? Has there been thought about preparing something?

GODDARD: Well, that has been given a lot of thought now. Of course, that will go hand-in-hand with working both from here, this end, and from the Truman Library to get people who come there to come out here and get people out here to go out there to the Library.

JOHNSON: Why is it that it wasn't until '77 that this organized effort was first started?

GODDARD: Well, with the fast development of commercial property, and that was zoned for commercial property, we felt if we didn't do something about it it was going to be gobbled up by commercial interests.

JOHNSON: When was it zoned as commercial?

GODDARD: I don't remember the exact date, but I would say probably around in the middle seventies.

JOHNSON: I see. So there was a probability of some

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kind of commercial development going up either right next to it or actually replacing it?

GODDARD: They turned it over to the J.C. Nichols Company to sell as commercial property.

JOHNSON: The Trumans had decided to sell the remainder?

GODDARD: The remainder of it. Harry told me that they were approached by a big restaurant operation and they wanted to buy the house and five acres and build a restaurant on the back end and use the front end as a lounge. Well, you know how that set with Harry Truman, and he wouldn't even consider it. They wanted to dispense liquor and cocktails and what have you.

JOHNSON: Do you recall coming across any record of President Truman's feelings about the farm house, especially after he came back from the White House?

GODDARD: I haven't talked to anybody that he conferred with about it.

JOHNSON: I have come across somewhere a statement in

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which he showed a very strong affection for the old farm house, and he certainly implied, if not made it explicit, that it should remain in the family and not be torn down.

GODDARD: Well, I think that's the reason why he sold that five acres off to Harry and Gilbert. They were his two youngest nephews, and would probably do more about keeping it than maybe the other members of the family would.

JOHNSON: The Chamber of Commerce was the organization that got involved there in 1977 to try and purchase, at least, the five or six acres?

GODDARD: Get the five acres and the old home; that's what we were interested in.

JOHNSON: And this was a year and a half or two years in process, without much money being received to do that?

GODDARD: Yes, it was started in '77 and kind of fell by the wayside in '78. They returned what money

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had been pledged and mailed in. Some of it had been pledged; others had actually received checks, and the money was returned to the donors. It was not until then when I guess C.J. McGill, through the J.C. Nichols Company, put up another big "for sale" sign on the front, around the first of January of this year. That is when the Chamber became involved again. In our first meeting, the members showed enough interest to go ahead and pursue it. Between the first meeting and the second meeting there were quite a few phone calls made. I didn't attend the first meeting, but I was called and asked if I could come to the second meeting and if I would consider being president of the Board that was formed in the second meeting.

JOHNSON: You were a member of the Chamber at the time?

GODDARD: Past president of the Chamber of Commerce, past president and adviser to the Chamber.

JOHNSON: When was the foundation formed?

GODDARD: In January of this year.

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JOHNSON: Then you got a charter for a not-for-profit organization?

GODDARD: Chartered organization as the Harry S. Truman Farm Home Foundation.

JOHNSON: And you're president. Are there other officers?

GODDARD: Yes. John Robert Holbrook, who is the manager of Pitman Manufacturing Company, and the 1979 president of the Chamber of Commerce, is the vice-president. Bill Carpenter, who was president of the Commerce Bank of Grandview, was the first treasurer. About August of this year, he was transferred to St. Joseph, so in his place John J. Strode was elected treasurer. He was elected to the Board and also treasurer. And Vince Harrison, who has been a longtime member and one of the active workers on it, back in 1977, and who is executive manager of the Chamber, is our secretary. We also have eleven other Board members.

We are going to have a meeting tonight. One

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of our Board members, of course, is Dr. Zobrist from the Truman Library. Rufus Burrus, the Trumans' attorney, is also a member of our Board. We are going to have a meeting tonight and we hope that we can add at least somewhere in the neighborhood of ten more honorary members to the Board, strictly for fundraising.

JOHNSON: What is the funding situation?

GODDARD: Well, at the present time we have some money in our checking account and a little bit in a savings account, but so far we haven't made any concerted effort in soliciting funds for the restoration. That will be probably a big kickoff that will be made right after the first of the year.

JOHNSON: You've received a grant?

GODDARD: We've received a grant of \$378,250 from the Department of the Interior through the Land and Water Conservation Department of the State of Missouri.

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JOHNSON: And that's to be used for...

GODDARD: That's to be used for the purchase of the property and the home.

JOHNSON: So that is locked up, so to speak?

GODDARD: That's locked up.

JOHNSON: The property now is in the hands of the Foundation?

GODDARD: No; the property will be titled to the Jackson County Legislature, the county. Any property that the Government buys like this has to be bought through a Government agency. Grandview didn't want to take it on, so we went to the county, and the county agreed to be our sponsor. The check was brought by Cecil Andrus, Secretary of the Department of Interior, who presented it to Governor Teasdale, Joe Teasdale. Teasdale, of course, took it back to Jefferson City and I guess it probably was turned over to the Land and Water Conservation Department. They in turn write

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a check to the Jackson County Legislature, or Jackson County, and Jackson County will write the check to Harry and Gilbert Truman when the deed is transferred.

JOHNSON: The Jackson County government carries the title?

GODDARD: The title will be in the hands of the Jackson County government.

JOHNSON: The private foundation then does the restoration work?

GODDARD: Yes. We have an agreement with the county, that we will do all the restoration and all the maintenance. The county will not be responsible for any financial interest in any restoration or the upkeep of it.

JOHNSON: Well, that garage out there on the farm has wallpaper on the inside walls. It's torn some. Do you have any idea where that came from?

GODDARD: Maybe in your talking with the old-timers,

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with John Meador and Pansy Perkins, this could be confirmed. I've always been told that at one time it was up here in Grandview and was moved. I know it was moved from Grandview out to the farm; but at one time that served as the Post Office.

JOHNSON: What is now the garage out there was once the Post Office up here in Grandview? That I guess helps explain the wallpaper.

GODDARD: Now, you didn't talk to anybody about that?

JOHNSON: I did ask the question of several people and they didn't know.

GODDARD: Harry, young Harry, told me that that was moved from Grandview. He didn't know when, but he knew that at one time that had been up here. I had always been told, and heard it, that at one time it served as the Post Office here at Grandview.

JOHNSON: You know, he bought a Stafford car about 1913 and I'm wondering if this was moved out there just

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to shelter his car. Do you have any idea whether it went out about the time he got his car?

GODDARD: Well, I don't know, because in 1921 the Post Office was a brick building. I guess the Post Office at that time was the first door east of Clements' Hardware Store, and then next door to that was my dad's hardware store. I think the only building that separated the two hardware stores was the Post Office.

JOHNSON: That Post Office you're talking about up there; that wasn't this building here?

GODDARD: Oh no. That was a brick building that was part of the Main Street, between Seventh and Eighth.

JOHNSON: In other words, that was moved out there presumably before 1921? It could well have been moved out at the time he got his car. Where else would he have stored his car? He didn't sell that car until he went to camp in the Army in 1917, so he had it for four years.

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Have you seen any pictures of the old farm, showing the house in the early days?

GODDARD: No. Have you talked to Roger Smith here in Grandview?

JOHNSON: No.

GODDARD: Roger Smith's first wife was Eunice Jones, and the Jones go back to the time that Harry lived out on the farm. I think that the mother was an Idol; her grandmother was an Idol. And Josephine Humble was an aunt of Eunice Smith, and she was the Postmistress here for years. Josephine's son and John J. were very, very close friends. I guess he died here recently; he lived up in Montana. Anyway, I think probably that Roger Smith, through what he's inherited from the Jones family, has more pictures of old Grandview than anybody else. He lives probably one or two doors south of Hannah Montgomery. He was the original editor of what became the *Grandview Advocate* it used to be called the *Grandview-Jackson County Times*, and he was the editor of it.

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JOHNSON: I've wondered about the Grandview newspaper. We don't get it, unless it's given to us. Do you know if there are back files?

GODDARD: He has a lot of them, but how far back he has I don't know. It kind of runs in my mind that at one time there was a fire and quite a few of the old files were lost in the fire. I'm not positive of that. Jim Turnbaugh, who is the editor of the *Grandview Advocate*, is on the Board of the Foundation and he has always been one interested in the restoration of the home as much as anybody. That is the reason he was made a member of the Board, besides being the publicity we would get as a result of having him on there. But anything that he has you would be more than welcome to have copies of.

JOHNSON: Now that might be worth checking into. The Grandview paper had a little item on the sale of the livestock and farm equipment in 1919. Unfortunately it wasn't broken down and identified in any detail. I suppose that was the only place

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where that kind of thing was publicized, in the local paper. I assume that the Missouri Historical

Society has a project to microfilm all the old editions of state newspapers. Of course, maybe after 1900 still isn't old.

GODDARD: Yes.

JOHNSON: But that's something I'm interested in to see if there weren't local items, news items and social items, that would refer to the Truman farm--people visiting out there, say.

GODDARD: The trouble is, it's just like being in genealogy; the ones that you should talk to are gone.

JOHNSON: Yes, it's a little late, too late to reach some of them unfortunately.

Well, I think unless there is anything else that you can think of that perhaps we didn't mention, that we should get on tape, we'll conclude.

GODDARD: I don't think of anything else right now

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Niel, but if in working with the Foundation, if anything in talking with others comes up, I'll pack it up and send it to you. I'm a great one to sit and reminisce with different ones, especially to talk to some of the old-timers, because I get a lot of them who come into the funeral home on visitation. After they've been there, they want to visit for a while and you bring up something like this, and we might be able to bring out something.

JOHNSON: Yes. In fact, if you get statements, or comments, you can put them in typing, or writing somehow, and we can make an appendix perhaps to the oral history interview. That would be one way to do it.

Well, thanks a lot.

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