

Oral History Interview
with
SUE GENTRY

Reporter, editor, and columnist for the Independence *Examiner*, 1929- ; and long-time friend of the Harry S. Truman family.

Independence, Missouri
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by James R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library

NOTICE

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FUCHS: Sue, why don't you give us a little bit of your background; when and where you were born, and how you happened to come to Independence; and some of your educational accomplishments, perhaps, until the time you started with the newspaper. Then we can go on from there.

GENTRY: Well, I am a native of Independence; lived here all of my life. I first remember hearing about Mr. Truman when I was quite small. He was running for county eastern judge, and one of the neighbors told me, "Tell your father to vote for Truman, he's a good man." He did, and Mr. Truman won, and from that day I was always interested in Harry Truman.

I always read the Independence *Examiner*. I was interested in history, as my parents were, and we

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talked about the town, and Jackson County. I never dreamed, of course, that someday I would be working on the *Examiner*.

I did all of my schooling in Independence and graduated from William Chrisman High School and went to Junior College in Kansas City. During 1928-29 I was working at the Chamber of Commerce, and Colonel [William N.] Southern, who was the editor and founder of the Independence *Examiner* in 1898, would come to the office and talk to me and I would give him news sometimes.

He told me that he was looking for a girl to do items in the *Examiner* office; that he wanted a girl of average intelligence, that he could train to suit himself. Someone recommended me, and I went to see him, and he agreed to try me out for three months. It wasn't until ten years later that I spoke to him about whether he was going to keep me on or not, and he said well, he ought to try me awhile longer.

FUCHS: Now this was in the summer of when?

GENTRY: I went to work for the *Examiner* March 1, 1929.

FUCHS: Oh, then you were still in college?

GENTRY: No, I didn't go anymore, I just went two years . . .

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FUCHS: Two years to Junior College.

GENTRY: . . . to Junior College and decided I would work for awhile. Went to work at the *Examiner* in '29 and stayed with Mr. Southern for 27 years, until the *Examiner* was sold in '51. Then when the *Examiner* was sold in '51, I went along with the paper, and I retired in '73.

FUCHS: But he had hired you on a contingency basis.

GENTRY: He did.

FUCHS: How did that work out.

GENTRY: Well, it worked out pretty good. When the three months were up I loved it. The first day I was there and I saw an item on the front page I had written, I thought, "I'll work here even if they don't pay me." And I really loved it and it seemed like it was natural for me, because I had a good memory. I wasn't smart but I had a good memory and that helped. Mr. Truman was County Judge when I went to work at the *Examiner*. He was Presiding Judge, and he was in and out of the office every day. Colonel Southern had a family connection. Mrs. Truman's brother was married to Mr. Southern's daughter.

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FUCHS: This is William N. Southern.

GENTRY: William Southern, Colonel William Southern. He was a good family friend, and in those days, no one ever ran for office or started a new business or did anything that they didn't come in and consult with Colonel Southern. So Mr. Truman was among those who came in to consult with Mr. Southern and get his support. I never dreamed at that time, or I never presumed, that I would ever be smart enough to write a story about the County Court or anything Mr. Truman was doing. And it never occurred to me that someday I might go to Washington and cover one of his press conferences.

FUCHS: Now, he ran for County Judge the second time, as Presiding, in 1930. Do you recall him coming in to see Colonel Southern at that time?

GENTRY: He was elected Eastern Judge in 1922; was defeated in 1924; and ran for Presiding Judge in 1926.

FUCHS: And then he came back and ran again for a second term in 1930, and you would have started at the *Examiner*, and that is why I say, do you recall him coming in to see Colonel Southern?

GENTRY: Yes, I recall him coming in to see Colonel

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Southern when he was Presiding Judge.

FUCHS: Do you have any recollections of Colonel Southern mentioning, in the pre-1930 election, Mr. Truman?

GENTRY: No, I really don't. Colonel Southern was a Democrat and always supported Democrats; that is unless they did something that was against his principles and then he might write something about the Democrats, and the Republicans would come in and throw both arms around him; but the Colonel couldn't stand that, so the next day he would say something about the Republicans.

We had stories--I've looked over the files--and while I hadn't written any of those about the County Court, I read them all. I remember Judge Truman, his campaign for good roads throughout Jackson County and Missouri, and the remodeling of the Courthouse on the Square. He had trouble with strikes and he was able to handle those situations and handle all that building. And I remember his interest in history, particularly, in preserving the central core of the old courthouse to be sure it was incorporated in the new courthouse and how he--the dedication came about the time that he was running for the Senate.

FUCHS: '34?

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GENTRY: Well, he was thinking about campaigning; there was a lot of talk. The courthouse was dedicated in '33, September '33, and I believe he was elected in '34. So, the campaign talk was going on; and there was some talk, I know, once of him running for Governor, but it ended up by him running for the Senate.

FUCHS: He was supposed to have had the new congressional district in mind, too, at that time. Do you recall anything about that aborted governorship candidacy, where he was being boosted for Governor?

GENTRY: No, I really don't. You know, I've read it again and been reminded of it, but really as far as anything real personal about that, I really don't.

FUCHS: Do you recall the first story you ever wrote featuring Senator Truman, or President Truman, or whatever he was, about whatever it was?

GENTRY: Well, I think I really was more concerned with Mrs. Truman at that time, because . . .

FUCHS: When he was County Judge?

GENTRY: Yes. When he was County Judge, Mrs. Truman was secretary of the Needlework Guild, a women's organization that collected new good clothing,

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bedding, and underclothing for needy people, and she came in and gave her report every year and I would take it, and if I were busy she would wait. I became real well acquainted with her, and when they went to Washington I remember when Margaret christened the *Missouri*, that Mrs. Truman wrote me a letter and told me all about it, and I had a story about that; and I still have the letter. But the most stories that I have written about Mr. Truman was after he was President because I was City Editor of the *Examiner* at that time, and directing the coverage, and we put out a special edition at the time he was elected President. He would come to the *Examiner* office and take his walks and so that was my connection. But my closest connection with Mr. Truman came after he came home, after he had finished his Presidency and had come home.

FUCHS: Well, to go back to when he was a Judge. Did you write any stories about road projects, or that sort of thing? You weren't in that phase of the operation?

GENTRY: No. I wasn't in that class; I started the *Examiner* as the girl to do items.

FUCHS: As the what, girl to do items?

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GENTRY: I started as a reporter to do items.

FUCHS: I see.

GENTRY: So I was satisfied to do items, but I moved along. I kept moving along until the war came along and James Allen Southern, who was Colonel Southern's nephew, went to a job in a defense plant; they didn't have anybody else, so they made me City Editor.

FUCHS: Oh, he was City Editor?

GENTRY: Yes.

FUCHS: Did Colonel Southern have any sons?

GENTRY: No, he had two daughters. And then this was Judge Southern's son.

FUCHS: Judge Southern, what was his first name?

GENTRY: Judge Allen C. Southern. This is James Allen Southern, who was Colonel Southern's nephew, and he was a journalism school graduate. He had the desk book that gave all the rules, and I learned all the rules real fast. I was really doing items and then I just kept going from there.

FUCHS: How large was the reportorial staff of the *Examiner* when you started there?

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GENTRY: Oh, probably about four or five reporters. Colonel Southern's son-in-law, Edward Carnes, was on the staff then, and that is John Carnes' grandfather.

FUCHS: Oh, he's dead now?

GENTRY: Yes.

FUCHS: Well, this Needlework Guild, did this name imply they did work on it, or just collected?

GENTRY: Well, it was a national organization and I think in the olden days, the women probably had made things themselves, but at the time that I remember, they would buy sheets and pillow cases and underwear, and warm clothing for needy people.

FUCHS: They bought it rather than collected it?

GENTRY: Yes, in that day. I think, originally, when it started out, they made them.

FUCHS: I see.

GENTRY: Mrs. Truman, of course, was the secretary of that and that's when I first got acquainted with her.

FUCHS: What do you recall about the judgeship days, when Mr. Truman was forwarding the road project and the

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eleemosynary projects and so forth? Anything occur to you that you heard, or Colonel Southern remarked about--such as Pendergast?

GENTRY: No, but he [Truman] was held in great esteem by hundreds of people, and as you know, Independence and Jackson County has always been a Democratic stronghold--that is in the old days. You don't know what anybody is now.

FUCHS: Of course, those were the days of Pendergast and the, what, the Shannon Rabbits, and the Pendergast Goats?

GENTRY: Yes, I remember the rivalry between the Goats and the Rabbits, but I never really could figure it out. I don't know. My father was always a Democrat and of course, I was, too; but I never did know the difference really between the Shannonites and the Pendergast people.

FUCHS: You just considered yourself a Democrat.

GENTRY: That's right.

FUCHS: Just voted a straight ticket?

GENTRY: When I became City Editor, Colonel Southern said to me, "Now, you know when you're editing the paper you've got to be open-minded, and you mustn't take

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sides on anything." So, I remember one time we had a real hot city campaign and the Democrats and Republicans had a rival for Mayor against Mayor [Roger] Sermon, and some man who was new in town said, "I think Miss Gentry is a Republican." He said, "She gives the Democrats a story on this side of the front page one day and the Republicans a story on the other side the next day, and both the same length, and they never did used to do that. So I think she's a Republican." I told this to one of my Democrat friends, and I said, "Well, that's the greatest compliment I've ever had" (as an editor).

FUCHS: How does the City Editor decide the space that will be allotted to a story? I mean the position on the front page and so forth. Also, the prominence and headlines and so forth?

GENTRY: I gave the assignments, and wrote the heads, and went downstairs and helped make up the paper, that I wanted this on the front page and this someplace else. Of course, the space

that we get is guided by the advertising, because if the advertising doesn't pay, why the paper doesn't run. So sometimes we would lose; sometimes we would have more copy than we could use, because the ads came first.

FUCHS: Well, was Colonel Southern active in politics in

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any way other than just his support being solicited, of course?

GENTRY: He never ran for office. He never believed that a newspaperman had any business accepting a public office, because then he said he couldn't be fair in his news reporting; he would be bound to be biased. He always said that, and when he told me that I must be open-minded, that went for all of the reporters but Colonel Southern.

I remember one time, Bud Porter, who was the reporter for the Kansas City *Star*, asked me about a story, and I said, "Well, didn't you see the story Colonel Southern had yesterday?"

And he said, "Yes, but I can't write a story like Colonel Southern." Colonel Southern editorialized in his stories, but nobody else could do that. But it was his paper.

FUCHS: Yes. What were his antecedents as far as his family and . . .

GENTRY: Well, his father [John Nelson Southern] had been a confederate soldier and was injured in battle. They came from Morristown, Tennessee and he was injured in a battle and was a cripple for life. The

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family came to Jackson County and the elder Southern was a lawyer, but he wasn't able to practice, at first, because he refused to take the oath to the Government. And he couldn't teach school, so he started a newspaper.

FUCHS: But not the *Examiner*.

GENTRY: Not the *Examiner*; it was the *Sentinel*.

FUCHS: In Independence?

GENTRY: In Independence.

FUCHS: About what year?

GENTRY: Right after the Civil War [in 1868]. So his son, Colonel Southern, was a Confederate and he was a Democrat. He was born in Tennessee, and in his writings he tells a

story about his mother being on a mattress in the house and the bullets in the war going through the house and he was being born on a mattress. So, he really went through the Civil War.

FUCHS: What year did Colonel Southern die?

GENTRY: He died in 1956. I think he was 91.

FUCHS: Lived a long life. When did he take over the paper?

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GENTRY: He started the newspaper in '98 and he started it because a judge of the County Court was running a newspaper and he was doing it for political gain and . . .

FUCHS: The *Examiner*?

GENTRY: No, not the *Examiner*; this was the *Sentinel*.

FUCHS: Oh, he took over from Colonel Southern's father? [John N. Southern resigned as editor of the *Sentinel* in 1879.]

GENTRY: I don't know whether he took over from him, but, anyway, at that time, Judge Chrisman, George Chrisman, was running the *Sentinel* and he also was a County Court judge. This was the cause of Colonel Southern's lifelong aversion to a newspaperman having a part in politics, because he said he was using the paper for his political gain; and Colonel Southern left the paper. He was working on the paper, I believe, and he started this other paper because of that.

FUCHS: His father had died by then?

GENTRY: No, I don't believe he had. He didn't die until in the 1920's, I believe, his father. [John N. Southern died on May 20, 1920, at the age of 82.]

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FUCHS: Was he still interested in the *Sentinel*?

GENTRY: No. No, he was practicing law by then, and he was the attorney for the Temple Lot people down here, you know, when they won that suit. They took it to the Supreme Court and they got that Temple Lot grounds.

FUCHS: Some of these things I realize are already in print, but to get it in one place in this context is good. I just feel we ought to have a little more about Colonel Southern. How long did the *Sentinel* and the *Examiner* run concurrently?

GENTRY: The *Sentinel* was never anything but a weekly, I believe. The *Examiner* started out in '98 as a weekly, and in 1905 it became a daily.

FUCHS: There were the two. There was the *Sentinel* . . .

GENTRY: And the *Sentinel* lost ground from then on.

FUCHS: When did it go defunct?

GENTRY: Well, finally the Wolf's down in Blue Springs had it, and then they went out of business. You know, they had that weekly paper down there, and it's gone.

FUCHS: I see. Did the *Examiner* ever publish on Sunday?

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GENTRY: No, never. It was six days a week and still is six days a week, except that they do the Saturday morning paper on Friday night now.

FUCHS: But the Colonel never ran for office. Did he participate in politics?

GENTRY: Never. He was always behind the scenes. He was the power behind that scenes. Nobody ran for office that they didn't come in and talk to him about it. Colonel Southern and Mr. Rucker, who was his partner, sold the paper in 1951 [to Stauffer Publications] and Colonel Southern was invited to continue to write his column "Solomon Wise," and he did so for awhile. He would come in the office and I could see he just didn't have much to say, because people then were coming in to see the new editor. It just wasn't long before he told somebody, "You know, I never should have sold the *Examiner*." But you see, he was nearly 90, I believe, when they sold the paper, or in his late eighties, and it just sort of killed him off when nobody came and asked his advice about anything anymore. He just didn't feel important.

FUCHS: Yes, apparently. What was his relationship with the Sermons?

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GENTRY: Well, he and Rog Sermon were good friends, and he always stood by Sermon on anything that he did. Sermon, Roger Sermon, was a good mayor. He operated the city on a businesslike basis and got that light plant started down there, and it paid off and did a lot of things for the city. I remember one year at Christmas time they gave all the customers their light bill free as a Christmas gift. Another thing. You see, Mayor Sermon was, as I say, a good businessman. He had this light plant operating on a very sound basis, and after his death, and when Bob [Robert P., Jr.] Weatherford became mayor, this light plant fund was in such good shape that that money was used to help buy land for the Truman Library. So that's the story, you know.

FUCHS: Weatherford succeeded Sermon and then was there a William Sermon that succeeded Weatherford, or was there another mayor?

GENTRY: It was William Sermon.

FUCHS: By that time Colonel Southern was dead, I guess.

GENTRY: Roger Sermon died in 1950, and Colonel Southern didn't die until 1956.

FUCHS: Well, Weatherford was mayor when I came out here and I forget when Mayor William Sermon came in.

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GENTRY: William Sermon? Let's see. I guess I don't know either, but Curry was elected in 1960, so it must have been '58.

FUCHS: Who was elected in '60?

GENTRY: L. F. P. Curry.

FUCHS: Well, Weatherford was still mayor in '57 and if Southern died in '56, he never saw William Sermon as mayor.

GENTRY: That's right, because Weatherford was mayor when we dedicated the Library. And I think it was '58 when Bill Sermon was elected.

FUCHS: What is the background of Roger Sermon? Was he Independence born?

GENTRY: He was an Independence native, about a fourth or fifth generation Jackson Countian. One of his ancestors, a Todd, was a member of the City Council, I believe. Rog Sermon, of course, grew up in Independence, and was in the war with Mr. Truman, not in the same battery, but in the war with Mr. Truman. Then he came home and was elected mayor in '24, and served, as you know, almost 25 years.

FUCHS: The traditional story about Mr. Truman running in '22 you have read and heard about, I'm sure. What

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is your understanding of the true story on how he got into politics?

GENTRY: Well, all I know really is what I have read.

FUCHS: You don't have any other information from talking to any of the veterans, or the people who were involved at the time?

GENTRY: I always believed the story Mr. Truman told about how he first met Tom Pendergast's nephew, because he was in the service with him, and that he introduced him to Tom Pendergast. That's the story that I have always heard, and I think it's probably right.

FUCHS: What were Colonel Southern's views of Pendergast? Do you recall any anecdotes or recollect anything about that?

GENTRY: I really don't. If I would read Colonel Southern's column I would recall something I'm sure. The Colonel, he was fearless. He didn't mind saying what he thought about someone, such as Tom Pendergast. Also I remember the day that Mr. Truman came in the office, after he was made the Vice-Presidential candidate, and talked to Mr. Southern, and Mr. Southern said, "Harry, I can't support you. I can't go along with Roosevelt for a fourth term,

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so I can't support you." And Mr. Truman said, "Very well, that's your privilege," and he forgave the Colonel. But some, like George Wallace, never did forgive the Colonel.

FUCHS: Well, did Colonel Southern take a stand against a third term?

GENTRY: I don't believe he did as vehemently as he did to that fourth term.

FUCHS: Which is rather strange, don't you think?

GENTRY: I can't remember. I'm sure that he probably had some misgivings about it. But I know about the fourth term, he said, "We've had it; now we can't have that anymore." He told Harry Truman, his good friend and connected by family, that he could not support him. And I remember Mr. Truman didn't hold any hard feelings; if he did he didn't show them. And when he became President, he had the first press conference, the only press conference we ever had in Independence, up at the Memorial Building. I remember we were all in there sitting down, and Mr. Truman was at this little table and Charlie Ross was there, and everybody was there, and the President looked around and he said, "Where's Colonel Southern, is he here?"

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And we said, "Well, he's coming."

And he said, "Well, we'll wait a few minutes."

And so pretty soon the Colonel strolled in and took a seat in the back row. So some of the big city newspapermen said to me later, "Well, can you imagine that, holding up the press conference for the hometown editor?" But that went clear back to the time he ran for office the first time, how he always depended on the Colonel to support him, and he still had this high regard for Mr. Southern.

FUCHS: Well, let's see, in '48 then, certainly the Colonel supported him.

GENTRY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And then after he became president, you know, he said the country was in good hands, because Harry Truman was an honorable man.

FUCHS: I was just rather surprised. It seemed to me that the third term was the one which people really opposed and then the fourth, of course, came up during the war, and there was the slogan, "Don't change horses in mid-stream." There seemed to be less opposition, as I recall it, to the fourth than the third.

GENTRY: It may be that I just am not really remembering that, but I know all through those years, the later

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years, Colonel Southern did have some things to say about Mr. Roosevelt.

FUCHS: He may have had good reason for not opposing him for a third term, other than constitutional grounds, and then said we have had enough.

GENTRY: Well, being a Democrat, the Colonel had a hard time with [Wendell] Willkie. I think he would have had a hard time supporting a Republican.

FUCHS: But did he come back and support Dewey in '44?

GENTRY: No, I just think we sort of laid low. I remember that day when Mr. Truman came in the office and walked out, and he had told him.

FUCHS: What do you recall of the opposition to President Truman locally? There certainly must have been some powerful Republicans.

GENTRY: There weren't. Of course, there was some opposition to him, naturally, but you know, to say you knew the President made the Republicans forget.

FUCHS: Let's start with, say, Truman for Senator. Who were the ones who seemed to be leading the opposition in this town?

GENTRY: Well, I can't remember like I used to. But there

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was Arthur McKim, and Harry Sturges, and Harvey Roney who were good Republican leaders, and they carried on. Harry Sturges, of course, was an American Legion friend, and they all had been friends of Mr. Truman's. But the Republicans, well, they never got anyplace in city government, as you know, here in Independence all those years. Roger Sermon bucked them all those years. The only way the Republicans got in is when they joined with some renegade

Democrats and formed the Good Government League. That's the only way the Republicans got in.

FUCHS: Used the right title. What about Spencer Salisbury? Did you ever meet him?

GENTRY: Yes, I hate to say, you know; I hate to get into this.

FUCHS: Well, if there is something you want to say and if you want to close it until after you're gone, whatever you want, if it's worth preserving . . .

GENTRY: He never was a very loveable character. You know, when the name was mentioned, I thought "Well, there's a shady deal," and I think everybody thought so. I remember when William Bradford [Huie], who was a writer, came to Independence and he came up to

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the *Examiner* office. Someone had sent him out from the [Kansas City] *Star*; he was a very debonair man and had a charming face, with a charming smile, and he said, "I'm here to do a story about you guess who."

I said, "Well, I suppose Mr. Truman."

He said, "Now, I don't want any of that Pollyanna stuff about Truman. I know all that. " He said, "I want some dirt."

I said, "Sir, if I knew any dirt about Mr. Truman I would certainly not tell you."

And he said, "I can believe that." So then we got into conversation. He told me, "I'm known as a rat," and he told me some stories that he had done down South--he was from Alabama--about "Kissin' Jim," who was the Governor down there.

FUCHS: Folsom.

GENTRY: Yes. He told me how the Governor had some relationship with some girl, and he followed her around and he wrote this story, you know. He said, "I'm a rat," and he wanted a lot of dirty stuff.

Well, I wouldn't tell him anything about Mr. Truman, I mean anything detrimental--well, I didn't know anything detrimental about Mr. Truman. Even Judge Bundschu, you know, always had a little party

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and invited people down, and he had people who were friends of Mr. Truman's. Well, anyway, he [William Bradford Huie] finally got hold of Spencer Salisbury, and he told him a whole lot of

stuff about the family and about, you know, the mortgage on the farm and all that sort of thing. Then he came out with this sensational article, you remember in *Cosmopolitan*.

FUCHS: Vaguely.

GENTRY: Oh, I still have that.

FUCHS: I'll have to look that up.

GENTRY: All right. And he talked about Mrs. Truman (Harry Truman's mother), called her "Old Miz Truman" you know, and all that sort of thing. And then I remember the letter that Rufus Burrus wrote. He brought it in to me and I made an article on the front page of the paper, and gave it double head.

FUCHS: This was Burrus' refutation of Huie's article in *Cosmopolitan*, right? He wrote about the article?

GENTRY: Yes. He wrote about the article. You know Rufus Burrus?

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FUCHS: Very well.

GENTRY: So that made a good story, I thought.

FUCHS: Well, Spencer Salisbury, of course, had kind of a reputation such as you describe. The one thing that I've heard alluded to that brought him to the breaking point was his involvement in a little bank scandal when Mr. Truman was Senator; I think he just said the investigation was needed and he forwarded it. Of course, it wasn't really a big deal, I believe it was some kind of a ...

GENTRY: They were in this building and loan together.

FUCHS: Community Savings and Loan, I believe it was called.

GENTRY: And then there was the Citizen's Bank, too, over there, and they were involved in that. But, see, they had been good friends all through the war.

FUCHS: Did you know Spencer Salisbury personally? I believe I asked you that before.

GENTRY: Yes, I remember him. He had been in the office and I remember him. Of course, now his sister, Mrs. Mary Bostian is a good friend of mine, Mrs. Kenneth Bostian; and then there's Mary Pearl Hare, his daughter, who is a good friend of mine.

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FUCHS: Mrs. Kenneth Bostian was his sister?

GENTRY: His sister, yes.

FUCHS: That was the Bostian that had, what was it, the Chevrolet Agency?

GENTRY: Yes.

FUCHS: Was Bostian a veteran? How did he relate to Truman in any way?

GENTRY: Well, he was in the regiment, not in the same battery, but they all went to war together.

FUCHS: In the regiment.

GENTRY: And American Legion. Of course, President Truman was always a member of the American Legion, but he was never a commander. They said it was because he held a political office. He couldn't be a commander. Somebody asked me and I remember looking it up, or finding out, because he had never been commander of the Tirey J. Ford Post of the American Legion.

FUCHS: He never joined the VFW did he?

GENTRY: I don't believe he did; I think the American Legion was the only thing he belonged to. The VFW may have given him an honorary, because everybody

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gave him an honorary membership when he became elected. I remember that in June 1945, when he was President, the first time he came home as President, he had this big meeting down in the auditorium, and I remember everybody gave him an honorary membership in something.

FUCHS: I was sort of wondering why he never affiliated with the VFW, but I think probably World War I veterans felt they ought to go with one or the other rather than . . .

GENTRY: Well, the American Legion was founded first, wasn't it?

FUCHS: Yes.

GENTRY: In Paris, right at the time.

FUCHS: Yes, he was more or less a charter member, I guess, or he was in it very early.

GENTRY: And was on that committee that dedicated the Memorial Building, as you know.

FUCHS: Do you recall any personal association with other battery members of his? People who actually served in his battery, do you recall having . . .

GENTRY: You see, they were mostly Kansas City people.

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That was a Kansas City battery, and this old Battery C and all these boys here, see, like Kenneth Bostian, who was a lieutenant in one of them; and Mayor Sermon, Roger Sermon, was a lieutenant in another one, and Spencer Salisbury in another one. And then Truman was in another battery.

FUCHS: Battery D. Well, he took over Battery D when he got to France.

GENTRY: Yes, and you see, of course, this was old Battery C here, the original one. Most people in his battery were Kansas City people, isn't that right?

FUCHS: Yes, that's true. A lot of people have written and said . . .

GENTRY: His battery grew and grew and grew, I understand, after he became President.

FUCHS: Everybody served with President Truman. Sort of like, "I served with Patton," or "I served with Eisenhower." Well, one story is that his political career had a lot of impetus from his battery members in '22, getting together; and of course, others say that it started in Independence where certain people felt he was a good candidate.

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GENTRY: Like Pendergast was one of them.

FUCHS: Oh, yes, certainly, Mike.

GENTRY: You see, when he got into politics, he had a lot of support in Kansas City because he knew all those boys; and he had a lot of support out in the Grandview area because that's where his family had been; and then, of course, he had a lot of relatives here in Independence, and Mrs. Truman had a lot of relatives in Independence. So he kind of had it made when he ran.

FUCHS: Pretty good base.

GENTRY: Judge Bundschu told me the story about when [Henry] Rummell (a Republican) ran and defeated Mr. Truman. He said, "You know, a bunch of us got together and filed Rummell," and he paid the five dollars, Henry Bundschu did. Maybe you've heard him tell this story; he paid five dollars for a filing fee, and he said, "You know, Rummell never did pay me back."

FUCHS: Did you ever meet Rummell?

GENTRY: Rummell? Oh yes. Yes, he was a neighbor of mine, a nice old gentleman. I did a story about him when he was in his eighties and we had a good time

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talking about that.

FUCHS: Well, maybe we'll get into him a little more in the next interview. Thank you.