

Oral History Interview #1

with

WILLIAM J. RANDALL

Independence, Missouri

November 14, 1989

by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

JOHNSON: Let's start out with the birthplace and the date of your birth, and your parents' names.

RANDALL: I was born in Independence, Missouri, at 1126 North Spring Street, on July 16, 1909. My father was William R. Randall; my mother was Lillie B. Randall.

JOHNSON: What was your father's occupation?

RANDALL: He was a contractor. Well, to back up, he was a brick manufacturer to start with. He had four or five plants in Kansas and most unfortunately all of them failed because in those days he relied on natural gas, and those were shallow gas wells. If the wells would

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run out, he couldn't afford the hauling of coal; so he moved about four or five times, to Iola, Independence, Coffeerville--all in southeast Kansas. Then, he was later a contractor. First, he was a masonry contractor, and finally a general contractor-- Randall Brothers and Hurst.

JOHNSON: So, when you were born the family was living out here?

RANDALL: We lived at 1126 North Spring, for just a short time, and then we moved over on North Union Street, about the seven or eight hundred block north. I lived there until I was about three years old and then moved to 403 West Maple, the corner of Maple and Spring. I was three years old when we went there, and we lived there until about 1933. Then I moved to 201 South Pleasant where I now live. I lived there until I was married, and then after I was married and until I went into the war we had several residences.

JOHNSON: Did you get your education here in Independence?

RANDALL: I went to the public schools of Independence, Missouri, through high school. Then I went to the good old Junior College of Kansas City, which was probably the toughest school in America. Out of 1,500 that

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would enter every fall, 125 would graduate two years later. I was very proud to be among those 125. I went to the University of Missouri; that would have been in about '29. I was sitting in a class of James Harvey Rogers the day of the crash. He later was President Roosevelt's financial adviser. He lost \$22,000 in the cotton futures, and adjourned the class immediately. I stayed ahead there, and worked off of three undergraduate degrees. I worked off an AB in Arts and Science, a BS in business administration, and a BS in education. I combined the three of them. I had to go back one additional year to get the BS in education. I graduated from the University in 1931, and was in the graduate school in '32 and '33. I wrote a thesis for the master's degree, but did not take the oral examination. I had to pull out before that. As I said, I had a BS in education and a BS in business administration, and was short of masters by just the oral exam.

JOHNSON: A masters in education?

RANDALL: A masters in economics and finance.

JOHNSON: You went to the same high school as Harry Truman went to up here, is that right? Before it burned.

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RANDALL: Well, yes, right here at the old high school; right up here, that's correct. I don't know if he went to Ott School or not, but I went to Ott School.

JOHNSON: Well, I think he attended Ott elementary school, but of course he went to the one high school in Independence.

RANDALL: Right here at Maple and Pleasant Street.

JOHNSON: Where Palmer Junior High is?

RANDALL: It's called Palmer now. It was the old Independence High School before there was ever Chrisman.

JOHNSON: I don't suppose you had any of the same teachers did you in high school?

RANDALL: Oh, my goodness, no. I'm just a child compared to Harry Truman.

JOHNSON: Then, in '33 you're short of masters but you quit school to go to work then?

RANDALL: I had to. I had to. The dark days of the Depression were coming on. I had enrolled but I didn't go any further. I didn't go any further, because I had to come back to Kansas City. If you will recall the

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bank holiday of 1933, they didn't even run the street cars back and forth. I actually walked from Independence to Kansas City because everything was closed. Roosevelt didn't go in until March of '33, but anyhow I came home in January. I tried to get a job teaching school because of my teaching degree, but I couldn't get it. So then I decided to become a lawyer. Well, actually just in January when I came back I entered law school. I was telling about the cars on the bank holiday; I had to walk back and forth.

JOHNSON: So when you found there wasn't a teaching job available, you entered law school. Where?

RANDALL: Well, it was the good old Kansas City School of Law. It was at 918 Baltimore, on the east side of Baltimore Street between 9th and 10th.

JOHNSON: Another Truman alma mater.

RANDALL: That's correct. It later became a part of the University of Kansas City, Missouri, as the School of Law. But believe me, in my judgment, I say without any reservation, that the lawyers that came out of that school were better prepared than any lawyer today, because they had the men who came right out of the

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courtroom. They had been in court all day themselves, the teachers. They gave you the nuts and bolts. You might have acquired a lot of legal theories, and a lot of legal, what should I say, philosophy in some of the law schools today, but you don't have the nuts and bolts to go into court. We knew the procedure, we knew the things to do next. We knew the rules of evidence; we knew the rules of pleading; we knew the whole works when we came out of there. In fact, I won a case in October, a trial in which the court sits as a jury. I didn't get the word of passing the bar until September. I handled it myself and won it because of that training.

JOHNSON: Well, what would you consider to be the most important influence on, let's say, your political and personal values at this time?

RANDALL: The word "influence" there, I guess, would mean what caused me to do . . .

JOHNSON: Who and what?

RANDALL: I never really intended to hold public office. I guess you could say the background came about by the fact that some of my so-called ancestors, or predecessors, had been in public office. My grandfather, and I say without any apology or any

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humility, was one of the leaders of this town; he was William M. Randall. He had a brick plant of his own. He could have been mayor many different times and declined it. He was a city alderman. I had an uncle, Uncle Joe Randall, who was a city alderman. All of my family have

been interested in the governmental sector, the public life, but I never really had any ambition except--maybe it was my dear mother, bless her heart. We had a relative, Samuel J. Randall, of Pennsylvania who at one time was Speaker of the House. And she [mother] said, "Oh William, I know you'll never be Speaker, but I hope I'll live to see you go to Congress." Well, she did. She did.

JOHNSON: So she had an interest in national politics, not just local.

RANDALL: Well, because of this alleged relative--I'm not sure he was ever any real relation--but she thought he was.

JOHNSON: Well, what about the Depression and the New Deal? Did they draw your attention to national issues?

RANDALL: Frankly, I was not desperate, but so hard up that I was just trying to get ahead and get a profession. It's a long story why I lost out becoming a teacher.

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There was a split vote in those days with three Democrats and three Republicans [on the local school board]. I think I should back up and say that I actually held a fellowship at the University of Missouri. I actually taught freshman and sophomores at the University when I was working on my masters. Of course, I started out as a grader and all that kind of stuff, but later actually I held classes for freshmen and sophomores, and one of my competitors at that time was the late Bill Gilmore. He quit about the same time and became a competitor again for the one job that was open. He got the job, and I didn't.

JOHNSON: What kind of a job was that?

RANDALL: Teaching some kind of social sciences, or something like that.

JOHNSON: At what level, high school?

RANDALL: High school level.

JOHNSON: And that was a political . . .

RANDALL: Well, it was political in the sense that there were three Democrats and three Republicans. Actually, the defector, the lady who was a defector, was a Mrs. Dickinson for whom Dickinson Road was named down here.

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If I ever get a chance, I think one of the reasons I consented to come out here was the fact that maybe it will kind of spur me along to get a few thoughts jotted down when I read this tape. I'm really going to write some memoirs one of these days. I was asked to send a note to this dear

lady, by the powers that be, a judge of the County Court in those days. I won't mention any names because we're in the Truman Library. He said, "I want you to take a note to Mrs. Dickinson." I didn't know what the note said. But the note said, "Mrs. Dickinson, you're serving your last term. The way you've treated my friend Bill Randall, you're serving your last term." It was her last term. My aunt succeeded her and stayed there for 18 years. It's a very interesting story.

JOHNSON: Well, now, this county judge you're talking about, is that Harry S. Truman?

RANDALL: I'm not going to speculate on that? Go ahead. It was a man sitting very close to Mr. Truman, I'll say that; at his right.

JOHNSON: In regard to the New Deal and Roosevelt, you weren't too concerned with them at this time?

RANDALL: Well, I think there's a metamorphosis, if you want

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to call it that. I guess you could say that maybe on the local level I was inclined to be sort of a liberal. The years when I was in Congress, I was not only a conservative, but a strong conservative. I watched over the Treasury in two different Congresses. You don't earn that without being a strong, strong, strong fiscal conservative. I like to think that I was a liberal so far as human rights were concerned, and so far as certain welfare issues. But I realized, and as more people are realizing today, we wouldn't be in the fix we are in, and we wouldn't be almost going over the cliff on the national debt and the budget.

JOHNSON: You were in World War II in the South Pacific. Was there anything there that might have influenced your political outlook?

RANDALL: Well, not so much. I was a lawyer when I went in, of course; I had been a member of the Bar since '36. I went into the war in '43. I passed up several opportunities to accept a commission. In fact, at one time Mr. Truman was going to almost see that I received a commission. I'd have to go to Omaha and become a Judge Advocate General. I guess I had late lunch with him, or early dinner, in the old coffee shop at the Muehlebach Hotel. He approved it. He was a Senator at

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the time. I was to go ahead and go to Omaha. Hillary Bush went and wound up, I guess, as a lieutenant colonel. I didn't go because I was about to have my only child. That would have been in January. I sweated it out until the first of March, and then went into the service on the first of March. I went all through it. The disappointment of World War II was that I never became an officer. I had five stripes when I left, the next to the highest in enlisted rank. I have since become an officer in the National Guard. I'm now a retired first lieutenant. I passed five officers candidate boards at different levels: Camp Campbell, Kentucky; Fort Ord, California; Hawaii,

New Caledonia, New Hebrides, I guess, and the Philippines. All right, I was finally accepted. I was all ready to go, under the Judge Advocate General. I was going to Ann Arbor, Michigan, ____? _____. I was, I guess, in a non-com meeting; it could have been in Caledonia. It was the day that we received word that Mr. Truman would be the President of the United States. The word was received from Warm Springs that Mr. Roosevelt had died. I think I was making another application. It comes back to me now. I was making another application.

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JOHNSON: You've mentioned Mr. Truman. When did you actually first meet Senator or Judge Truman?

RANDALL: Oh, my goodness; I guess he was a judge. My first vote was in 1932, as far as the vote is concerned. Actually, as far as becoming a sort of a habitue, if you want to call it that, around the court house, with my dear friend E.I. [Eugene] "Buck" Purcell, oh, I won't say I knew him in the sense that I'd go up and use the first name. But it goes back to 1922; that's why I jotted this down.

JOHNSON: That first meeting?

RANDALL: I jotted this down, right here, that the first time I had ever seen the man and brushed shoulders with him was in 1922. That goes back a long time. That's his first race for county judge. We'll get around to some things here in a minute which I'm going to try to spell out in a more orderly way, if I can ever get a chance to write.

I'll get around to the '22 thing in a bit. Let's see, we had a thought we were pursuing. Oh, yes, New Caledonia. Let's go back on that.

I was taking another examination--my application was already in--and I was taking another written examination for officer candidate school. There was a

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big old master sergeant, I'll never forget, about 6'2", '3 or '4; he came in and said, "We have a new President of the United States." He said, "Mr. Roosevelt has passed away in Warm Springs." I got up, stood up--here were about eight or ten of us sitting around there--and I tore up that paper and threw it in the waste basket. He said, "You've lost your mind." I said, "No, I haven't." I said, "I now personally know the President of the United States, and I'm not worried about anything from now on."

All right. They later called me, about another one of the previous ones that I had passed. One time I had a board in Hawaii; it seemed to me like it was general rank. I passed that. They called me when I was in Leyte, and I was going to have to go to Ann Arbor. That's the only thing I ever asked the man [Senator Truman] when I was in the service. I got in touch with Bill Dryden's wife, I think, Mildred Dryden, whose husband I later employed. I said, "For God's sake, get the word; I want to cut this junk out." That's all I ever heard of it. That was the end of

it; I didn't have to go. I finally came on home. That's the only thing I ever asked of Mr. Truman. I guess probably the only favor I ever asked of him in my life. So I got up and tore up the paper and threw it in the

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waste basket. He looked at me and said, "Have you lost your mind?" I said, "No, not really."

All right now we're back to '22.

JOHNSON: Since you've mentioned the Truman connection, let's go back with that, and note whatever contact that you might have had from '22 up to '45.

RANDALL: In 1922 was Mr. Truman's first effort at office. His first effort as county judge was in 1922. It was a very spirited race; it was the most bitter race he was ever in in his life. There was a fellow by the name of George Parent in Oak Grove, and there was someone from Lee's Summit--it was Todd George I believe. E.E. Montgomery was Truman's principle competitor. I have had a feeling all my life that down deep in Mr. Truman's heart he always had an animosity, a measure of animosity not toward me as William J. Randall, but toward the name Randall, because all of the Randalls were for E.E. Montgomery. He came just that near to being beat. I forget what he won by, just a handful of votes.

JOHNSON: Well, were your Randalls Republicans?

RANDALL: No, no, this was in the primary. The nomination is tantamount to election.

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JOHNSON: They never were Republicans?

RANDALL: None of my people have ever been. But the Randalls were so prominent in that race and worked so hard for Mr. Montgomery. One time they had those caravans. I was just a small boy, let's say nine, ten or twelve years old. But I can remember it. I can remember that caravan, because I went with my folks. They came to a cross roads and they actually fought to see which car would go first, which car. But our name was synonymous with E.E. Montgomery. We were always Montgomery people. He was a Blue Springs banker, and he darn near beat Mr. Truman. I've had a feeling all my life that he harbored a grudge--not so much against William J. Randall--as against the name Randall, because they were quite prominent in his near defeat.

JOHNSON: Well, did they support him after that?

RANDALL: Well, of course. Of course, they did. We'll come to it later on. My dear mother was a close and intimate friend of Bess Truman. In fact, she worked with her in the so-called milk distribution, and bread distribution, up at the Memorial Building all during the Depression. In fact, I ran across some letters from her the other day, from Bess Truman, endearing letters to my mother. I was up in the attic. I am

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trying to clear out some things, endearing letters from Bess Truman to my mother.

JOHNSON: That would be good to have. Can we make copies of those?

RANDALL: Well, I'll see if I can lay my hands on them readily.

JOHNSON: You say that Bess Truman and your mother were involved in some distribution of goods?

RANDALL: Milk and bread distribution. They distributed to the poor, poor, poor people during the Depression, right up here at the Memorial Building.

JOHNSON: So they came to the Memorial Building to get these commodities?

RANDALL: That's right, in the basement down there. My mother worked there for two or three years with her.

JOHNSON: I don't think I've heard that before about Bess.

RANDALL: She worked very hard at it.

JOHNSON: For two or three years there you say.

RANDALL: The '22 election--that's really the only time there was opposition or an altercation that the

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Randalls ever had with Mr. Truman; that was in '22. They just kind of went along with him after that. Mr. Montgomery didn't run again.

JOHNSON: Was there anyone in your family, say, your father or uncle, who held any local office?

RANDALL: Yes, I mentioned the alderman. They both had been aldermen; they called them aldermen in those days, in the City of Independence. Both my uncle and my grandfather were aldermen.

JOHNSON: Are you talking about the '20s?

RANDALL: Oh, my goodness, no, way, way back, before I was born.

JOHNSON: In the '20s and '30s, there were no Randalls here in local politics?

RANDALL: No.

JOHNSON: Of course, in '24 he loses the race and then works for the Kansas City Auto Club. Were you acquainted with [Spencer] Salisbury and the Community Savings and Loan?

RANDALL: Oh, my yes. Old "Snake Eyes," we called him. His daughter is George Hare's widow down here on North

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Delaware. We called him Snake Eyes.

JOHNSON: He was a captain, I think, in World War I.

RANDALL: Well, yes, I think he held the rank of captain.

JOHNSON: What was your impression of Salisbury?

RANDALL: Well, Salisbury was unorthodox, unconventional, sort of a renegade, sort of an outlaw, who delighted to have that role. I don't know what your records show, but I have a strong feeling he was never a great cheerleader for Mr. Truman.

JOHNSON: They were on the "outs" with each other.

I notice that you also were a member of many, many organizations; the Methodist Church, the Masons, the VFW, the American Legion, Independence Optimist Club . . .

RANDALL: You've been reading the Congressional Directory; that's just a part of them. Since that Congressional Directory was published I've probably belonged to more. I figured up one time that I paid between \$1100 and \$1200 a year in dues.

JOHNSON: Well, of course, those memberships would come after you . . .

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RANDALL: Oh, all along the way. I guess one time I was one of the few persons that was a life member of the Optimist Club, but was also an honorary member of the Rotary, honorary member of the Kiwanis--still an honorary member of the Kiwanis in Fairmount--honorary member of the Lions at Butler, honorary member of the Rotary at Independence. I belonged to all of the service organizations you could think of, but I'm a life member of the Optimist Club.

JOHNSON: When and how did you become involved in your first political campaign?

RANDALL: I came out of the war totally without any funding. I think I'd saved maybe \$700 or \$800. I just had to have some sort of a job. My dear friend, Alvin Hatten, who is 93 years old now, whom I visited in his home last night--by the way, he's held public office longer than any

other person in this county, on the county level, except Rudy Roper. Rudy Roper down here was the mayor for 25 years. Alvin Hatten held five four-year terms as county collector--twenty years--which is quite a record. I went to see my dear friend Alvin, whom I had served in a vote contest--spent several months of my life in a contest in '42, and went into the Army in '43. He was grateful to me. In fact, I was appointed

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as delinquent tax attorney, as an honor. Went in March 3, into the Army. He appointed me March the 1st, knowing I couldn't serve, just in an honorary capacity. I went to Alvin. I said, "Alvin, I've just got to have something to do." I came home just two nights before Christmas; it was the 23rd of December 1945. Alvin said, "You're going to work right after the first of January." I said, "My goodness, I'm grateful, because I just have to have something to support my wife and daughter."

Well, I did go to work as delinquent tax attorney, not the old job because in the interim the law had abolished the office; it was a part of what was called land trust. I held that job in '46. I think we ought to back up and say that I like to believe, and I say so without any worry of any contradiction, and with a measure of humility, that I was one of Roger T. Sermon's really sort of "first lieutenants" in the sense that I was very close to him. I guess there was a hand-full of about five, even when he was Mayor for those many years. As I was growing up over the years, I was always a part of his office, so to speak. I would see him every morning at 10 o'clock in a little coffee club up at the Woolworth Building.

I went to talk to Rog. I said, "Rog, I'm very

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grateful for what Alvin Hatten's done, but I kind of have a feeling that there's somebody occupying my place." I won't mention the name; I was referring to a young lawyer who had sort of moved in. He said, "Bill, you've got to remember that fellow didn't go to war, and you did. He's just the benchwarmer. He's not even a substitute; that's your place, that's your chair." And I said, "There's going to be four offices open. The election, the primary, is this year. There's going to be a magistrate"--they don't call it justice of the peace any more, they call it magistrate--"and it pays fairly well. There's going to be a state representative. There will be election for magistrate, state representative, state senator and Judge of the County Court of the Eastern District." "Well," I said, "Rog, there's an easy answer there. I'm not worried about any honors; I'm not worried about any stepping stones. I just want to know which one pays the most." "Well," he said, "Judge of the County Court--that pays \$10,000-\$12,000." I said, "Well, I'd sure like to take a shot at that." He said, "You will be the next Eastern Judge." I said, "That's a pretty strong order. There's an incumbent in there." He said, "Don't worry about that; you are the next eastern judge."

Well, I worked hard. I guess you could say I was

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sort of a war hero. I earned all of the battle stars, and I think the bronze star. The papers were very kind. They said, "Sergeant Randall for Eastern Judge. A war hero returns, deserves to be elected." The papers were very kind to me. It was lopsided. The primary was two or three or four to one. There was a very fine, dear old gentleman there as an incumbent, Walter Yost. He hadn't done anything wrong. It was sort of stepping over someone. He was a fine gentleman; it was sort of stepping on someone. I felt about that in the past. But I was so desperately in need of some compensation, that I pretty near had to do it.

JOHNSON: Was your family friends of the Sermon family, in the years previous?

RANDALL: Oh, close, very close. Rog Sermon had two sisters; one was Mrs. Bradley, W.J. Bradley, and the other was Mrs. Schulenberg. They were together almost constantly. They were close, close--in the Mary Paxton Study Class, the Browning Society, the Saturday Club, and all of them. They were very close.

JOHNSON: Had you involved yourself in politics at all before '46?

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RANDALL: Oh, yes, my goodness, yes. Goodness knows, I was secretary of the Young Democratic Club all during the '30s, and I was the president of the Young Democratic Club, local club. I was actually secretary of the statewide Young Democratic Club, and I ran for State president one time, and was defeated. Oh, my goodness, yes, I'd been active for years. That wasn't my first time in Democratic politics.

JOHNSON: Were you acquainted with the Pendergasts, with Jim Pendergast, for instance?

RANDALL: And Tom Pendergast. Well, Jim was a dear friend; that came along later. I had never met Mr. [Tom] Pendergast, and I forget what the occasion was. Well, it was sometime in the late '30s; it would have to be about the time I passed the bar in '36, I guess. I said to myself, "Wait a minute, you have never personally met Tom 'T.J.' Pendergast." So I said to my dear friend E.J. Purcell, "Buck," I called him Buck because we were close, "when you go down to 1908 Main, I would like to go down with you." "Bill, we're going down." It was about three or four days before Christmas. I went in and met that man and contrary to the views of some, I think he was a great man. He had a personality that was magnetic. He had an ability that

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was incredible. When he put out that big hand, just like a ham, just as big as a ham, and shook my hand, I can tell you I just felt some magnetism. I said to Buck after we left, "That is my Christmas present. That is my Christmas present."

JOHNSON: So Buck Purcell is the one who sat to the right of Harry Truman.

RANDALL: I think you've cross-examined me. I'm not as sharp as I used to be, but I used to be a pretty good trial lawyer.

JOHNSON: Do you remember when he originated that phrase, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

RANDALL: I not only remember when he originated it, I was the victim of it. That's another long story in which I deeply resented his making a reference. At that time, I was a sitting Congressman.

JOHNSON: When Purcell brought that up?

RANDALL: Oh, no, no. I'm speaking of Mr. Truman's use of it.

JOHNSON: Okay.

RANDALL: Mr. Truman did not originate it. Buck Purcell

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originated it and Mr. Truman adopted it. It was nothing original with Mr. Truman; it was Buck Purcell's origination. That's correct.

JOHNSON: He's quoted in the papers as saying that, at the beginning of the 1931 term when they were going to have to cut back on county spending.

RANDALL: Buck was one dickens of a good friend, a great guy. I mean I just loved the man. He was, you might say, my first mentor, or my first sponsor, whatever word you want to use, for years, until Rog Sermon came along.

JOHNSON: You were acquainted with Rufus Burrus, I suppose, in those days too.

RANDALL: I'm not only acquainted with him; I'm a cousin of his.

JOHNSON: Is that right?

RANDALL: I guess third or fourth, somewhere along there.

JOHNSON: Did Mr. Burrus encourage you to get interested in politics?

RANDALL: No, our relationship has been sort of at arms length. Politically, Rufus had an ambition to go to

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Congress himself and did run for Congress one time.

JOHNSON: He ran for Congress?

RANDALL: Yes, he ran and got about 4,000 votes.

JOHNSON: In '46 you are elected to the County Court as Eastern Judge, the same spot that Truman had held.

RANDALL: Elected for seven terms. I retired to go to Congress.

JOHNSON: Did you have the same office up here in the Court House that Harry Truman had?

RANDALL: Exactly the same office.

JOHNSON: But not the same furniture, or was it?

RANDALL: No, no, it was modern furniture, but exactly the same corner office.

JOHNSON: Have they restored it pretty much the way it appeared in the early '30s?

RANDALL: I've only been in there once or twice. I think it's a reasonable facsimile, yes. But that was my office.

JOHNSON: You were reelected to six additional two-year terms.

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RANDALL: I was elected seven terms. I was starting a term in January, when Mr. Christopher passed away, so I really served until the end of 1960.

JOHNSON: So the three judges that were administering county business did meet up here at the Independence Court House?

RANDALL: Alternately; one month in Kansas City, and one month out here. We didn't meet every week. Sometimes we would be required to meet every two or three weeks, but we would meet alternately. In other words, if we would meet three or four times a month, it would be one month--for instance, May as I remember was always in Independence, and June in Kansas City; April in Kansas City. But it would start out in January up here, and February over there, March out here, April over there, May out here, and so forth.

JOHNSON: So the procedures that you used, were they very similar to the procedures and rules that were used by the Truman court in the early days?

RANDALL: Almost identical.

JOHNSON: They didn't go to a County Legislature until the 1970s, wasn't it?

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RANDALL: I think I had a small part in defeating the charter in maybe two or three instances. If I may say so, and I'll be glad to put it on the record, it's the sorriest thing that ever happened to this county. It's much, much more expensive, and not one bit better government.

JOHNSON: The legislature idea?

RANDALL: I suspect the expense is probably double, the administrative expense.

JOHNSON: You mentioned Tom Pendergast, and you felt this magnetism. He had some charisma apparently.

RANDALL: No question about it.

JOHNSON: And then, of course, he got into trouble with the IRS.

RANDALL: Well, his greatest weakness was gambling, the horses.

JOHNSON: Yes. You said you were president of the Young Democrats.

RANDALL: I was a long-time secretary; I was secretary oh, probably six or eight years. I later became president, and then I became state secretary, state-wide, and ran

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for president. A fellow from Springfield beat me out, and I became first vice president.

JOHNSON: Jim Pendergast, didn't he take over as . . .

RANDALL: James M. Pendergast, nephew of T.J., a fine gentleman.

JOHNSON: Didn't he become sort of chairman of the county Democrat organization?

RANDALL: Well, there wasn't any official chairman. He took office as the head of the Jackson Democratic Club, at 1908 Main.

JOHNSON: The Jackson Democratic Club--how was that related to the county committee of the Democrats.

RANDALL: It's an unofficial club. There were several clubs. There were three or four clubs, dominant clubs, and this is something your records will help you on, but I doubt if anybody has ever given you this, out here at this library. You had really three dominant private organizations within the framework. There was the officially elected county committee, and there's a good point--I suppose you have a political science major do you, or what is your major?

JOHNSON: I have some political science, but my major was history.

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RANDALL: History, that's a good one. The committee is actually elected at the primary, and they are elected officials just as much as somebody that's elected in November, in our Missouri system of laws. So here's the county committee that's elected; they are the elected officials in the machinery of the county. But in the background, the dominant situation was three political clubs, massive clubs; the Jackson Democratic Club, which as a student you probably figured out was called the Goats. The second, almost as big, was the Shannon Club; it was called the Regular Democratic Club. It was led by Joseph B. Shannon and Pat Shannon [his son], who was a fraternity brother of mine. I was almost a Rabbit. They were called Rabbits; I was almost a Rabbit instead of a Goat. But then the third, and a little less in size, was called the "Welchites"--under Cassimer J. Welch--and they were sometimes called the 15th Street Group, or the Second Ward, but they expanded from the Second Ward over into the Fourth, and into some of the surrounding wards. They were third in size. Those three were the dominant clubs and they were unofficial.

JOHNSON: And they were all lobbying for their own candidates in the primary.

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RANDALL: They were all opponents of each other. I guess you could say that more frequently the Welch faction lined up with Pendergast rather than with the Rabbits. They varied back and forth; some years they'd be with Shannon and some years with Pendergast.

JOHNSON: Did you ever meet with Truman when he was a Senator in Washington?

RANDALL: I not only met with him, my dear friend; I worked diligently for him. Not in Washington, no, but here.

JOHNSON: The '40 campaign for instance?

RANDALL: In '34; let's back up some, let's back up six years. I'm watching my time carefully because I have to get away from here in about a half an hour.

JOHNSON: We'll have to have two sessions.

RANDALL: Well, we'll take another bite at it.

In 1934, I, William J. Randall, made several speeches in behalf of Harry Truman where he could not be. But more than that, I was a real trusted courier to actually deliver money, actually deliver funds, the life blood of his campaign, to the place where it had to be delivered. It was because of my strong friendship with E.I. "Buck" Purcell, who was certainly

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the closest friend that Mr. Truman ever had in office. I would go to Warrensburg, go to Butler; I would go to Harrisonville, of course. I think that maybe once I went as far as Osceola, but the one that stays in my mind most of all was a frantic trip on a Friday night to Nevada, Missouri. That's 90 miles, if you're not familiar with it. I drove like crazy to get there because Buck said to me, "Bill, you've got to be there, you've got to take this envelope; you've got to be there and make a speech for Mr. Truman." Here they were on the Court House square, a big crowd. [John J.] Cochran was there, Cochran of St. Louis was running against him. What was the other fellow from Joplin? Jacob L. "Tuck" Milligan]. It was a three or four-way race. Truman pulled it out of the fire. I got there just in time to appear and make a speech for him. If I do say so, I think we fared fairly well, and kept him from being unrepresented that night. Of course, I made several other trips, to Columbia and different places around.

JOHNSON: I think they were operating out of Sedalia, their headquarters, in '34?

RANDALL: That could have been, I'm not sure. I wasn't on the state level. I was working for Buck Purcell, not

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working for him, but as his helper.

JOHNSON: You were well acquainted with Fred Canfil?

RANDALL: Fred, let's see, what did we call him? "Bull" Canfil, I guess we called him. Fred was not one of my favorites. Oh, yes, I have known him but he was not one of my favorites.

JOHNSON: A gruff kind of person?

RANDALL: Well, may his soul be at peace and rest in heaven; he was a man who was without much intellectual capacity. I'm not saying he was a brick short of a full load, or a short deck, but he was a man who relied on--I don't want to say on bulldozing somebody--but he used his strength to overpower someone rather than try to reason with someone. He didn't have the capacity to do anything like that [to reason with someone].

JOHNSON: It's kind of interesting that Truman stayed with him, or relied on him so much.

RANDALL: Well, this ought to be off the record but--oh, it's all right, I don't care. There's some things in the paper today about loyalty. There's nothing wrong with loyalty; don't misunderstand me. I think loyalty is akin almost to gratitude, and loyalty is a great

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thing. In this morning's paper, Bill Waris showed his loyalty for Virgil Troutwine who helped him be where he was in 1982; gave him a job when the budget was supposed to be short. There may have been something in the background of the war experience that I didn't know about;

maybe that was the cause of the loyalty of Mr. Truman to Canfil, but even if so, I think he elevated him far beyond his capacity.

JOHNSON: He was chauffeuring pretty much during the '34 campaign, but then he was made Marshall of the Federal judicial district here.

RANDALL: That's right. Now, let's go up to the 1940 campaign.

JOHNSON: With [Lloyd C.] Stark and Truman.

RANDALL: I was philosophically and ideologically, totally at odds with Stark. I just thought that he was not an evil person necessarily, but almost. I forget how I got off on the foot that way, I guess in Jefferson City. I just regard him as a man who was a sort of an imposter at being Governor, but he was Governor anyhow.

You talk about driving Mr. Truman. His driver in 1940 was a man by the name of Hunter Allen. I don't know if in any of your research you've ever found that

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or not, but Hunter Allen was his driver. And Hunter Allen was his driver on the County Court too. Hunter Allen was my precinct captain.

JOHNSON: He drove Truman in the '40 campaign?

RANDALL: That is correct. He was my precinct captain during the '30s, up until well, I guess you could say maybe '38 along there somewhere. After I passed the bar, I became the precinct captain. Hunter went on someplace else. Here's the point I'm trying to make. Hunter Allen became ill. I had done what I could to help Mr. Truman; as I say, I was active in the Young Democratic Clubs and went around to different places. I always said a kind word for him; tried to boost him because that was a tough race. A lot tougher. I think I'm safe in saying in the '34 race, the vote was so fragmented that by the time you got through with Milligan, and Cochran was the third one in there, that Mr. Truman slipped through because of the fragmentation of the vote. In 1940 he was head-on with Stark, bang, bang, bang. That was rough. He almost was defeated. I don't know what the vote was.

JOHNSON: Didn't Stark try to hang this Pendergast label on Truman?

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RANDALL: No question about it, he succeeded in doing it.

JOHNSON: But didn't Stark himself get the endorsement of Pendergast in 1936 when he ran for Governor?

RANDALL: Yes, he did. But apparently that didn't militate so much against Stark.

JOHNSON: In 1940, like you say, Truman was head-to-head with Stark.

RANDALL: That's correct.

JOHNSON: Were you campaigning for Truman then?

RANDALL: I certainly was; of course, I was.

JOHNSON: Giving speeches?

RANDALL: No. I was pretty busy. I was just a young lawyer, and I was trying to make a living. I was married in '39, and I was pretty busy. I didn't have the time; I wasn't holding any kind of a political job.

JOHNSON: Was this your own law practice, or were you with a firm?

RANDALL: No, it was my own. I later had a firm, Randall and Glasgow, just the two of us, but didn't form that until I came out of the Army. I was just a sole

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practitioner trying to get along. I can't say that I made any speeches in his behalf, maybe locally among clubs or something like that, but here's the point I'm trying to come to. I don't know whether it was the middle of August or the latter part of August, but Hunter Allen became ill, became sick, and he couldn't drive him. Purcell wasn't on the Court at that time; I forget when Buck passed away. Hunter Allen became ill, and Rog Sermon, and someone else--I don't know who it was, asked me if I would quit doing what I was doing and drive Mr. Truman, which I did in the month of September. It was not the entire month, maybe the last of August, just before Labor Day until around the third week in September.

JOHNSON: Were you driving Truman's car? Was this his own car?

RANDALL: I don't think I can even recall the make of the car. It was not a large car. No, it wasn't. I've even forgotten if it was a rented car or not. He was always strong for Chrysler products. I believe it was a Chrysler.

JOHNSON: The dealer, would he have made one available for party use?

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RANDALL: No, that came much later; that's another story. Oh, my God, that's when he came home the first time, and that was a fiasco. When he came home the first time after he was President, the dealers made the cars available. Oh, that's a separate chapter. We haven't got time to go into this.

JOHNSON: Okay, let's get back to '40. In September, you're driving him for three or four weeks.

RANDALL: I can't be exact. It wasn't a month, I know that. Most of our trips were in central Missouri, I wasn't out day after day; we'd come back and then go out again, and come back and go out again. Oh, I know we went to Jefferson City and went north of the river once or twice. I think he was looking for a permanent driver, and maybe Hunter Allen got well. That's been so long ago. That's 40 years ago.

JOHNSON: Yes.

RANDALL: I think maybe Hunter Allen recovered or something; I don't know what his problem was. But the one that I want to get on the record while I can, and one that I would certainly write about if I ever get into my memoirs, was when we came into Columbia one night. There was a meeting there, and it was very late. It

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was very late, and he thought we shouldn't come back to Independence. In those days we didn't have I-70, and you had a pretty hard way to go. Instead of two hours, it probably would be four or five hours. He said, "Let's stay all night. We'll scout around, try to find a place to stay." We finally stayed over at the old Pierce Pennant. It's where the highway divided in those days; it's the old Sinclair Hotel, the Pierce Pennant. There was only one room.

JOHNSON: What town are we talking about?

RANDALL: Columbia, out in west Columbia.

JOHNSON: All right.

RANDALL: The Pierce Pennant, and there was one room. I gave up the room to Mr. Truman. I don't know; I slept in the lobby or some place. And he got through the night. All right, during that same interval, during that same time, I had a little old bag. It didn't amount to anything; I never carried a suitcase, because I knew we'd come back. We'd go out. I never was in eastern Missouri with him; we never went down in the Bootheel, or far north; it was just back and forth, back and forth. He didn't have a clean shirt. We wore about

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the same size. This is in the book. It doesn't have my name on it; it was all encomiums and accolades and everything. It's the black book; you have one out here. (House Document No. 93-131 (93rd Congress, 1st Session), Memorial Services in the Congress of the United States and Tributes in Eulogy of Harry S. Truman, Late President of the United States (USGPO: 1973). I expect I have a hundred entries in there. I think it's in that little book. He didn't have a clean shirt on two or three occasions, and I would take my clean shirt off and give him my shirt. So,

with that as a background, some of the things that I tried to do for the man, it was a little difficult to understand why he not only opposed me once going to Congress, but why he opposed me three times.

JOHNSON: Of course, he did win that election and I guess you did . . .

RANDALL: I did everything I could for him.

JOHNSON: I suppose he talked politics to you, while you were driving.

RANDALL: Well, he was worried; he was exceedingly worried. I was worried. I didn't know whether he was going to make it or not. This Stark was one mean hombre, and effective. He had sort of a state organization back of

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him. You could say that Mr. Truman in 1940 was an incumbent, and I guess the franking privilege had helped him some, and I guess he'd had a pretty good record.

JOHNSON: Some of the St. Louis people came to his rescue too.

RANDALL: You're probably right, but I was worried. I wasn't sure he was going to make it. That's his low water mark in 1940; there's no question about that. Stark had a lot of state employees and he had pretty much his home country over there north, extreme northeast Missouri, and Little Dixie down in there. As I look back on that, Mr. Truman had only the Masonic Lodge, which was strong for him, and some labor support. I guess he had the majority of labor, and mainly the Masonic Lodge, and his incumbency. But you've got to remember by 1940 the Pendergast organization was gone. He didn't have anything to rely on in Kansas City. In 1938 when the vote fraud started, that was the end of the Pendergast regime.

RANDALL: Well, how about farmers, the fact that he had been a dirt farmer?

RANDALL: I'm not sure. I guess you'd have to analyze that

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vote to find out, but he just didn't have the endorsements. On paper it looked bad. God forgive me for making a [chopping hand] motion like he does.

JOHNSON: How about [Robert] Hannegan? I think Hannegan was very important to him in St. Louis.

RANDALL: Hannegan was later Postmaster General. He appointed him Postmaster General. I'll tell you, old Barney [Bernard] Dickmann helped him. Did you ever see old Barney, old "pigeon breast" Barney, just like a pigeon sticking out. Barney Dickmann helped out.

JOHNSON: Yes, toward the end they switched over there and helped him out.

RANDALL: That could have been what helped him. He didn't have too much inside of Kansas City.

JOHNSON: By this time the Pendergast label had become a burden, I suppose.

RANDALL: It wasn't too good.

JOHNSON: After he was re-elected to the Senate, did you ever go to Washington to visit him in his office there?

RANDALL: Well, not in the Senate. No, I had my hands full. I was trying to make a living practicing law and just

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trying to keep the wolf away from the door. I was there, of course, at his Inauguration in 1949; in fact practically all of Independence went up there.

JOHNSON: So then, of course, comes the war, and your military service. Then in '46 you're elected to . . .

RANDALL: The County Court.

JOHNSON: The County Court.

RANDALL: Of course, I had a lot of other appointive offices. If you'd check the Congressional Directory which I know you have, I was very proud of a little job I had down here at Sugar Creek. I was City Counselor for the City of Sugar Creek.

JOHNSON: Was that your first public office?

RANDALL: Oh, my goodness no. I was actually elected City Attorney of the City of Independence, Missouri, and I can't give the year on that. But that would be way back there in about '38 I guess.

JOHNSON: Oh, that was before the war that you were City Attorney.

RANDALL: Oh, yes, after I passed the Bar. In other words, you had two offices; you had the City Counselor, which

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was appointive, and then under the ordinance you had the City Attorney. The City Attorney was in effect the city prosecutor. I guess I must have had two terms on that. I added up one time that I held office for 38 years at city, local, county and national levels.

JOHNSON: Was that elective, the office of City Attorney?

RANDALL: That was elective.

JOHNSON: So that was your first elective office.

RANDALL: I think I was elected two terms; I would have to dig it out.

JOHNSON: That would be '38 through . . .

RANDALL: And '40 I guess.

JOHNSON: And did you conduct your own private practice along the way.

RANDALL: Oh sure. I don't know; I think it paid \$50 or \$100 per month, something like that.

JOHNSON: But the City Attorney nowadays is appointed by the Council isn't he?

RANDALL: That's correct, but I was not prohibited from being City Counselor of the City of Sugar Creek.

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Again, I'm trying to be not showing any ego, but I literally ran that town, because Rudy Roper had taken over as a new Mayor and he knew nothing at all. I had to actually, you might say, not only be his advisor but be his caretaker.

JOHNSON: Now, looking at . . .

RANDALL: Wait a minute, you missed another thing. I can't recall when; I'd have to go back and see, but I served as acting municipal judge as well, when I was City Attorney. I sat on the bench frequently because of the absence of the elected municipal judge. I actually served as acting municipal judge again and again and again.

I ought to put this on the record. I was very different from some of the judges. The Police Department wasn't very enamored with me. They used to think "No use to arrest anybody, Randall's going to turn them loose." I would say always as Judge, "Except for the grace of God, there stands I." I did have compassion and I guess you could say mercy for some of the poor devils standing there, and the police would say, "No use to arrest anybody, Randall is going to turn them loose."

JOHNSON: Was that your liberal streak?

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RANDALL: I guess so.

JOHNSON: I notice in the Library's White House Central Files, there isn't much correspondence between you and President Truman. But I did find a letter that you wrote to President Truman on April 30, 1947, in which you urged the President to intervene on behalf of Private Thomas Flynn, Jr. at the request of his parents.

RANDALL: This was '47. In '47 I was on the County Court at that time.

JOHNSON: Yes, and the case concerned a group of soldiers who were convicted of raping a German woman.

RANDALL: Oh, yes, yes. Yes.

JOHNSON: There were long prison terms, and you were under pressure to help get him pardoned, or at least a reduced sentence. Eventually there was a petition, a public petition, to pardon him and so on.

RANDALL: As I recall that fellow was later killed on a motorcycle out here. It was over here on Kentucky [Avenue]; I think he hit a car and was killed. Well, yes, he was charged with rape or something.

JOHNSON: Yes, he and three other soldiers.

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RANDALL: There was no question there was no rape there. That was the most rigged up deal. That was totally unfair.

JOHNSON: I didn't see what came out of that, but they apparently did reduce the sentence.

RANDALL: Well, I'm sure they did. That boy was as innocent as he could be. He had nothing to do with the rape of the woman.

JOHNSON: Even in '48 this thing was still going on, and Dexter Perry who was . . .

RANDALL: Dexter Perry, a great guy. What do you show on Dexter?

JOHNSON: He noted that you and Maynard Sands of the Veterans Information Center gave the President a petition with a couple thousand names on it, the morning Truman left Independence. This again was regarding the case of Private Flynn.

RANDALL: On Flynn, on the Flynn case?

JOHNSON: Yes. This was June of 1948. This possibly was during that trip to California that first cross country whistle stop tour, in June of '48.

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RANDALL: It could have been.

JOHNSON: But it was in June of '48 that you presented the President with a petition.

RANDALL: You gentlemen have combed the record with a fine-tooth comb. I haven't thought of the Flynn case in 25 years. But I was strongly involved. I was deeply involved in it, and I was strongly for the man's innocence because I was convinced the whole thing was a frame-up. And dear old Maynard Sands, bless his heart, and Dexter Perry too. All of us were trying to help the fellow.

JOHNSON: At this time, in '47 and '48 or even up to '53 when Truman left office, when you met Truman was it generally here in Independence? Or did you ever meet with the President in the Oval Office at the White House?

RANDALL: I've been in the Oval Office several times as a member of Congress, in the Kennedy and Johnson, and even the Nixon days, but I was never in the Oval Office with Mr. Truman.

JOHNSON: So, you never met him in the White House while he was President?

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RANDALL: No.

JOHNSON: But you met him out here in Independence on several occasions.

RANDALL: That's correct.

JOHNSON: And apparently this was one of them.

RANDALL: Let's put it this way. In 1946 while I was running for office, and before I took office, I was one of the founders, one of the six founders, of the so-called Independence Junior Chamber of Commerce. We took on the, what should I say, ungrateful job of meeting Mr. Truman at the airport and bringing him out, his entourage so to speak, all of us. We'd go around and get cars; we'd go around and solicit cars from the car dealers and we would get the young people to drive the cars. We did that about twice.

JOHNSON: You mean motorcades?

RANDALL: Motorcade--it was from the old downtown airport, the old Municipal Airport downtown. We did that about twice, and we learned our lesson. You'll have to correct my

obscurity and profanity. I'll have to choose a word there, "rascals" I'll say, those bastards of the press, who would crowd in those cars. They had their

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own expense account; they could have hired a cab. They overrode those cars with all that huge photographic equipment and treated us like we were dirt under their feet. We did that about twice or three times. I said, "Wait just a minute." As chairman of that committee and one of the six founders, I said, "This is a lot of junk. We can get about two or three cars to go down for Mr. Truman, instead of about fifteen or twenty. Let those guys get out here the best way they can, or walk." A most ungrateful bunch I've ever seen. They were raucous, ungentlemanly; had no etiquette, no gentlemanly conduct, nothing.

JOHNSON: They thought this was owed to them.

RANDALL: They thought we owed everything to them. I finally said to my committee, and Honey [James E.] Latimer was on at the time; I said, "Let me tell you something, Honey. Let's cut this stuff out. Let's take a couple or three cars." George Wallace, may his soul be at peace and at rest--that's May Wallace's husband isn't it. Let's see, George Wallace was Bess Truman's brother. Yes, Bess Truman's brother.

JOHNSON: That's right.

RANDALL: I'll never forget one time we were driving like

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hell, and we were stopped by the police. George Wallace was driving, and the police said, "Do you realize that you're violating the law?" These are the very words; I was sitting in the car with him. He said, "Officer, what you do not understand is that out here we are the law." The guy kind of looked at him. George said, "Out here we are the law, and get out of the way please." Then he drove on away. I think he had some kind of a CIA card, or something of the kind; I don't know what. He said, "We are the law," and drove on away. That's the funniest thing I've ever heard. Good old George.

JOHNSON: C. Jasper Bell added his name to this petition on this Flynn case.

RANDALL: He did?

JOHNSON: What was your acquaintance with C. Jasper Bell?

RANDALL: He went to Congress in 1934, the time Mr. Truman first went to the Senate, and I've often thought, "Oh, my goodness, my goodness, look at the long tenure that man has had." I think he was there eight or ten years. I never realized I would be there eighteen years. But he was a nice fellow; a very good guy. He worked to help the Philippines get their independence and so

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forth. He was on the Interior Committee. He was a great lawyer, and he was a darn good circuit judge. I think he was low key in Congress, just as I've been accused of being low key, or sort of a back-seater or something, but it's all right.

JOHNSON: This is still the Flynn case. In February 1949 you called Harry Vaughan's secretary in reference to Flynn, and Vaughan suggested you arrange an interview with Judge Advocate General, General Tom Green, for assistance. I never found out whether you followed up on this or whether this occurred or not. Did you talk to General Green?

RANDALL: The Flynn case is not one of the things that stands out as a highlight. You mentioned Maynard Sands a minute ago, who was a dear friend. Let's see, Maynard preceded me by about two commanders, he was later commander of the VFW. I became commander. There was Wicky; and there was one other in there and I became commander in '49 and '50 of the VFW. I probably got into the Flynn case because of Maynard maybe, I don't know. I just felt an injustice had been done there, a gross injustice.

JOHNSON: Mentioning the VFW and the American Legion, there was also an American Veterans Committee. I think

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Richard Bolling for instance, was active in that.

RANDALL: AVC they called it.

JOHNSON: The American Veterans Committee. . .

RANDALL: A very liberal organization, exceedingly liberal.

JOHNSON: How did the American Legion view the Veterans Committee? What was their view, opinion, of the American Veterans Committee?

RANDALL: I'm not certain. My dear wife, may her soul be at peace, one time said, "Bill, I can't understand why you are so strong for the VFW and have neglected your Legion membership." She said, "Those people are gentlemen." She said, "Those VFW fellows are roughnecks." I said, "Let me tell you something, honey. There's some members of the Legion who served overseas, but the only real veterans are the ones that fought in combat, and most all of the VFW were in combat." I said, "These Legion fellows could stay at home and enjoy anything they can, as long as they joined the Army." I said, "That's the difference." She said, "Well they're such gentlemen." I said, "They may be, but my heart is with the VFW."

JOHNSON: So that was the veterans organization that you

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were most active with, and concerned about?

RANDALL: I've held a lot of offices in the Legion. I was chairman of the House Committee, the Home Committee and trustee, and I'm still a member of the Legion today. I have no brief against the Legion, I just felt that they were not really combat veterans. Many of them were not. Many of them are, now; don't misunderstand me. Many of them have got as good a record, or better record than I have, but there's so many of them in there that were home soldiers so to speak.

JOHNSON: In December 1949, President Truman accepted your request to participate in the dedication of the Andrew Jackson statue at the Court House.

RANDALL: Oh, yes, that was a very beautiful thing. It was the greatest thrill I ever had.

I've got about fifteen minutes, and I want to digress a minute. That was a great, great weekend; there's no question about it. I was just a sort of a cub, you might say, in office; I had just been in office a year. The town just went bananas that morning about 5 or 6 o'clock. That's not a very good expression to use. They were elated, hilarious, when the word was finally sent along about daylight. We were up all night long that day in 1948. I was on the

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Court of course, and we just went crazy, just wild--and then to have then the honor, the privilege to participate in that.

The little horse was out on the east side then. These goofies that have screwed up the town now--I'll have to edit this a little bit--have put it on the west side. It should be on the east side, where it originally was. Now they've got the Truman statue out there, of course, with his cane that they lose. I'll try to put a little levity into this as we go along, but that's where it was. I guess one of the greatest thrills of my life was to walk out there with Mr. Truman, and Roger Sermon and the other two members of the Court. I still have one of those programs if you don't have one, those gold-colored programs. You ought to have it for your archives. I introduced Mr. Truman, and it was a great thrill.

I was going to tell you, and my time is running out here. One of the best pleasures, one of the best evenings, social evenings, that I ever enjoyed in my life was probably the finest Christmas party that's ever been held in this area. Charley Burke, who writes for the Examiner, alluded to it here a few months ago, or last year at Christmas time. The greatest Christmas party of all time, as far as I'm concerned, was held in

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the Blevins Davis home. They've built the Mansion apartments around it now. It was the old J.F. Swinney mansion. Blevins Davis bought that when he inherited all his money from

Margaret Hill. He put on a party for Mr. Truman, beautiful. There was probably three or four hundred guests. They built a canopy out there; the Secret Service was all over the place. I was judge of the County Court. I went out with the Mayor; the Mayor and myself went out. Champagne flowed. I'll never forget. Dear old Rog, bless his soul, got so tight he had to go up and take a little nap before he could go home.

I had to drive him. But the snow came and the snow came, and finally it was about two feet deep. I was the only one that had the power or the authority to get out the equipment. I called the county garage; made them all get out of bed and come out there. They took graders, and took high loaders, and cleaned it all out so they could get out of there that night. Two feet of snow. The invited list of Blevins Davis was, really, I don't like to use the word "out of this world," but certainly it was out of this country. You'd walk up and say hello to somebody and say, "I'm sorry I haven't met you." Well, he'd say, "Of course you haven't; I just flew in from Honolulu this afternoon." I'd go up to

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somebody else, and they'd say, "I just came in from Istanbul;" I'd see somebody else, who would say, "I just came in from Berlin, or Vienna." He had people invited from all over the world that night.

JOHNSON: What was the date of that?

RANDALL: In '48, Christmas week 1948, right after that election. The greatest Christmas party of all time, I'll tell you.

JOHNSON: Did that get very much into the papers, the newspapers?

RANDALL: The Examiner carried it a little bit. The Examiner ran a rehash of it just a while back, and I was quoted on it about having to get out all the equipment, because it snowed and snowed and snowed and snowed. Nobody could get out of there when it was over.

JOHNSON: Was the Examiner the only one that covered that, because it seems to me we have looked for information on that and it has been hard to find.

RANDALL: Yes; and I'm glad to put that on the record. I can truthfully say it's the most thrilling party that I've ever been privileged to attend, rubbing shoulders

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with the President of the United States, and dignitaries from foreign countries, ambassadors. I don't think there was any other head of state there.

JOHNSON: After that '48 election, he had a lot to celebrate.

RANDALL: That's right, Christmas week. Well, I guess you could say, I feel today maybe, that I was sort of a guilty party in the period following the November election in '48, in November and December, maybe in January, well just going overboard, so to speak, in naming everything after Mr. Truman. Truman Road--to this day I call it Van Horn Road; the fine old Van Horn family who took provisions over the trails. They were top-notch. For them to change that from Van Horn to Truman, but I participated in that. There was Spring Branch Road which had not so much a glorious history as Van Horn. Everything was named after Mr. Truman, and he didn't want it. I know this much about it. I know that down in his own heart he didn't either ask for it or want it. He said, "I want to be honored after I'm gone." He said, "I don't want things named for me while I live."

I've always felt guilty in joining to change the name of the great Van Horn family to Truman Road.

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JOHNSON: You'd have an even harder time if you tried to change it back.

RANDALL: Oh, it's impossible; it could never be done. It's as the French say, "fait accompli," it's all over.

Now, one more thing. I've got about five or ten minutes. The same thing can be said about the Truman Reservoir so to speak. There was the honored old family that had been down there forever, the Keysinger family--Keysinger Bluff Reservoir--pioneers that settled the country down there. I say this advisedly and deliberately with forethought, I will never forgive Stuart Symington for what he did on that. He was in a desperate election in--1964, or maybe even '68. He goes over on the Senate side and introduces a resolution to change that from Keysinger to Truman without saying one word to any of us on the House side. He left us out here in left field, and what are we going to do? Are we going to slap the dear old gentleman in the face, or are we meekly going along? That s.o.b. never said one word to any of us. You talk about anybody being mad; Dick Bolling was viciously mad at him. We all were. We went down one time to the Metropolitan Club after that, and Dick Bolling said, "Bring me a whole pitcher of martinis." Symington said, "I'd like a pitcher too." Those guys called each

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other every name you could think of over that, and they should have because that rascal went out and introduced that bill without saying one word, because he was desperate. He had to have something to build himself up.

JOHNSON: While you were Eastern Judge and Truman was President, did he ever try to influence local Court politics that you can recall?

RANDALL: No way. No way. That was a far cry from the time I was a member of the Congress and he tried almost to tell me what to do and run the office, and I couldn't accept it.

JOHNSON: So there was no . . .

RANDALL: No effort at all. No effort at all. None. Without any reservation I say that.

JOHNSON: Do you know if Truman was well-acquainted with your Presiding Judge, for instance, Harry Gambrel?

RANDALL: Well, no. The answer is no, and he had a very low esteem of Mr. Gambrel too. Harry Gambrel was a Republican, and was elected for four years. Judge [Fred] Klaber and myself were the two Democrats. I guess you could say maybe he countenanced him in the sense that

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he respected the fact he had been elected by the people, but he had a rather low esteem for him.

JOHNSON: And Fred Klaber?

RANDALL: Fred Klaber was a great guy. He was a Rabbit; he was of the Shannon faction-- great fellow, a top-drawer gentleman.

JOHNSON: Okay. Well, we . . .

RANDALL: We haven't gotten down to the nitty gritty yet. The nitty gritty is when he used to pull in that office and tell me what to do and I'd have to tell him no.

JOHNSON: That was after he left the Presidency.

RANDALL: Oh, yes . . .

JOHNSON: During the Presidency you say there was really not that much communication between you and him.

RANDALL: That's right. I was trying to do my job and he was doing his.

JOHNSON: Well, you know, at that unveiling, we were talking about, that statue, he said, in effect, that being administrator of Jackson County was not that much different from being President of the United States except this was on a much bigger scale, being President.

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RANDALL: I think maybe he had a fair analysis there. When you keep calling it an administrative court, it was more than an administrative court. We actually ran the county and that's administration, but we had some judicial duties. We had quasi-judicial duties in land use, in zoning, which required the rules of evidence, and you almost had to be a lawyer to follow them. We also adjudicated the insane as long as they were innocent insane. We had to decide

whether they were sane or insane; those were judicial duties. We had two or three real judicial duties and that's why I guess we were called judges.

The zoning, of course, is strictly judicial law, because on appeal we'd have to make those stand up on the rules of evidence.

JOHNSON: So you're saying that this . . .

RANDALL: Well, I'm simply following on your thought there, in which you said that he had stated that it was not that much different.

JOHNSON: Well, the scale; he mentioned the scale being much greater.

RANDALL: After Mr. Gambrel left, he was succeeded by I guess it was [Harry M.] Fleming.

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JOHNSON: A Democrat?

RANDALL: Yes, I wore out three presiding judges. When I say "wore out" I survived them. I survived Mr. Gambrel; I survived Mr. Fleming, I survived Judge [Ray G.] Cowan who was later circuit judge and came back. I was serving with my fourth presiding judge, who was Judge [John J.] Kopp. I just served a month and then I resigned to go to Washington.

JOHNSON: They still had four-year terms as presiding judge, and the district judges had two-year terms?

RANDALL: I've never had anything but two-year terms in my life.

JOHNSON: You had to run every two years.

RANDALL: I wouldn't know what a four-year office was. I never had one.

JOHNSON: Well, what Democrat organizations did you count on to help you then in these primaries?

RANDALL: Well, the Pendergast organization at first; and I was a Goat. But later there was [Roger] Sermon. Sermon had his own faction out here; it was closely aligned with Pendergast. In other words, I guess if you had had to say whether Mr. Sermon was a Goat or a

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Rabbit, you would have to say he was more oriented toward the Goats than he was the Rabbits. But he had his own separate organization, a very fine organization.

JOHNSON: I see. So it was the Sermon support that was essential to winning this Eastern Judgeship?

RANDALL: No question about it. But, I mean, it's just like everything else; in other words, after a certain incumbency you sort of become your own man.

This is something that I guess I've repeated so many times, I can put it on the record. Roger Sermon built this town up for 27 long years. Bill Sermon tore it down in four years.

JOHNSON: What was he, a brother or cousin?

RANDALL: A brother.

JOHNSON: A brother, and he was so different.

RANDALL: And he almost went to the penitentiary. Rog Sermon was an honorable man, an honest man; his word was as good as his bond. Totally honest man. He thought that every penny spent out of the public funds was coming out of his own pocket; that's the kind of man he was.

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Bill Sermon disliked me. I think I'll put this in my memoirs sometime. It took me a long time to figure out why he didn't support me. You might say that I had to stand by the Sermons. Oh, no, no. I stood on my own those last years, on my own, without his enthusiastic support--because of my incumbency, because of the jobs I had. I had made the appointments. I had an organization of probably 300 appointees or 400 jobs, maybe 500. I had my own man. It took me, I guess, even after his death to find out he never did like me. They're all gone now, so what I'm saying is relying on a man who's deceased, Hayden Childs, who told me. I said, "Hayden, tell me why it was that Bill Sermon didn't like me?" He said, "Well, he thought you were kind of stupid. He thought you were kind of a dimwit." I said, "Oh?" I said, "I've got a pretty good IQ. I'd like to think I've won more law suits than I've lost. I'd like to think I'm a little above the average in a lot of things. Why was it?" He said, "Well, he thought you're such a dumb son of a bitch; you didn't know that when you took office you were supposed to pay him 10 to 20 percent of your salary every month." I said, "Well, if I had known I wouldn't have done it." I never did; I never gave him a penny. He said, "You were supposed to come down and contribute. Anybody

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that he backed for office was supposed to contribute 20 percent, at least 10 percent of your salary, every month."

JOHNSON: He was elected because of his name Sermon, not because of the record?

RANDALL: Yes, maybe so. I have no reservation telling you I could have been the boss of eastern Jackson County. I had the jobs and he didn't. I stepped aside because my dear wife said,

"Bill, I don't want you in a position of political leadership. It's all right to hold office if you want to, but I want you to get out of that. One of these days you're going to be so old they're going to start lifting you up on the bench and lifting you off. Get out of that."

JOHNSON: Well, who were the powers behind the throne then for the Western District.

RANDALL: Well, it was a consortium, I guess you'd say. Jim Pendergast had a remnant there, and there was Pat Shannon who succeeded his father; and Louis McGee with one arm off succeeded Cass Welch. It was the remnants of the old organization.

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