

Oral History Interview
with
JANE TAYLOR LACY

Secretary to Judge Harry S. Truman, 1934-35, and secretary to Senator Truman, 1935-36.

Shawnee Mission, Kansas
October 8, 1992
by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

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Summary Description:

Topics discussed by Ms. Lacy include working for Harry S. Truman in the Kansas City area and in Washington, D.C.

Names mentioned include James A. Taylor, J.P. Morgan, Victor Messall, Mildred Latimer Dryden, Edgar Faris, Catherine Bixler, Rufus Burrus, Tom Pendergast, Fred Canfil, Roberta Barrows, Matthew Connelly, Rose Conway, Margaret Truman, John Griggs, Harry Salisbury and Mrs. Harry S. Truman.

Donor: Jane Taylor Lacy

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JOHNSON: Mrs. Lacy, I want to start out by asking you when and where you were born, and what your parents names are.

LACY: I was born in Kansas City, Missouri and my parents names were James A. Taylor and Anna Berkley Reynolds. She was from California.

JOHNSON: Anna Berkley Reynolds.

LACY: Which they gave me as a middle name. I was born at 808 Linwood in one of the biggest snowstorms they ever had; 16 inches of snow fell, and my father had to walk to get the doctor, who came by horse and buggy.

JOHNSON: What was the date?

LACY: April 6, 1912.

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JOHNSON: All right.

LACY: My mother died when I was six years old, right after a birthday party she had for me. It was that terrible flu or pneumonia epidemic of 1918 that killed so many.

JOHNSON: The Spanish flu.

LACY: So I was raised by my stepmother.

JOHNSON: I see. How about brothers and sisters.

LACY: I have a younger sister, Harriet Taylor Leo who lives in Houston. Her husband was Walter Leo and he was with Armco Steel just like my husband was. He died this spring.

JOHNSON: So, Armco Steel was your husband's employer. What was your father's occupation?

LACY: He was a lawyer.

JOHNSON: In Kansas City?

LACY: In Kansas City, that's right.

JOHNSON: With a firm?

LACY: Well, I guess with a firm, but I think he pretty much had his own business.

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JOHNSON: Did he have a partner now and then maybe?

LACY: I think he did have, but I don't remember.

JOHNSON: Was he acquainted with Rufus Burrus?

LACY: He probably was. He knew a lot of those Independence people. There was a judge somebody over there that he knew quite well.

JOHNSON: Do you recall when your father first became connected, or acquainted with Harry Truman? Or Harry Truman's career.

LACY: I don't really remember when. No, I can't tell you when they started. I don't know. I think maybe they reminisced over the war they were in.

JOHNSON: Oh, was your father in World War I?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: What outfit was he with, do you know?

LACY: Well, in the second World War he was in command of a refugee camp over in Yugoslavia I know that.

JOHNSON: Commandant of a refugee camp in Yugoslavia. In World War I, did he happen to be in the 129th Field

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Artillery?

LACY: I don't think so.

JOHNSON: Did he go to France?

LACY: No. In World War II he was mostly around the Mediterranean, Italy, and around that area as I remember.

JOHNSON: But you're not sure whether he got acquainted with Truman in World War I?

LACY: No, it would have been after that.

JOHNSON: Okay, how about your own education?

LACY: Well, I went to Southwest High School, and then I went to Sweetbrier one year, two years to the University of Missouri, and the last year I went to the Sorbonne in Paris. I was majoring in English and spent a year over there.

JOHNSON: A year at the Sorbonne in France.

LACY: It was a wonderful experience. That gave me a major in French, and then I came home and graduated with the summer school.

JOHNSON: What year was it that you were at the Sorbonne?

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LACY: 1932 and '33. I went over with the Delaware Foreign Study Group sponsored by the Duponts of Delaware. Sixty-five American students. Two-thirds girls and one-third boys. They were chosen mostly from universities on the East Coast and a few from the Midwest.

JOHNSON: So you started out the Depression on a kind of a high note, so to speak.

LACY: I did. I know when I was over there, my father couldn't send me all the money he wanted to.

JOHNSON: Well, it was probably a little cheaper living then.

LACY: It was very cheap, and we got by on a shoestring and had a marvelous time. We worked very, very hard, studied hard, and played hard. One of the most memorable years in my life. I wouldn't take anything for that year. Terrific year.

JOHNSON: You got your degree then from...

LACY: I came back. I got a diploma from the Sorbonne, and I got my BA degree from Missouri, the next summer.

JOHNSON: In English you say.

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LACY: In French, with a minor in English.

JOHNSON: That brings us up to 1933.

LACY: That's right. That's when I met my future husband.

JOHNSON: How did you meet him?

LACY: That was a funny, long story, too. My father was a good friend of Arthur Wagner, and my roommate from Louisville was coming to visit. She's real, real tall and he was real tall. My dad never knew a stranger and he said, "Hi George." I've forgotten how they got acquainted. But he said, "Why don't you come out and meet my daughter tonight." He came out and we had a blind date. I thought he looked like a doctor.

JOHNSON: So that's how you met George Lacy.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And what was his occupation?

LACY: Well, he started to work at the bottom of the pole at Sheffield Steel and worked his way up. Eventually that company became Armco. He died in '66. He was in charge of all the sales in the western half of the United States. He was in sales. We moved around. We

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moved to Little Rock first, and then to Dallas; then they moved us back to Kansas City.

JOHNSON: You got married in...

LACY: In Kansas City.

JOHNSON: In what year?

LACY: In 1937.

JOHNSON: What was the month and day

LACY: March 6, 1937.

JOHNSON: I guess what we'll do now is focus on that period between '33 and '36, because that is when your major involvement with Harry Truman occurred.

LACY: That's right. I went to secretarial school. I went to Miss Huff's at the Plaza.

JOHNSON: Miss Huff's, at the Plaza.

LACY: Yes. It was a little business school. And that's how I came to go to work for Mr. Truman. He was a friend of my dad's and one day he was having lunch with my dad, and he said, "Jim, I'm looking for a secretary." My dad said, "Well, my daughter just finished secretarial school," and Harry said, "Send her

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out." So I went out to Independence the next day and he hired me as his secretary when he was Judge of the County Court.

JOHNSON: So, it was 1933 or '34.

LACY: Probably '34.

JOHNSON: Okay, before the campaign.

LACY: Before the Senatorial campaign, yes. Then, later he asked me to go to Washington, and I was there for two sessions of Congress.

JOHNSON: Did your father support Truman politically?

LACY: I can't say. I don't know for sure about that. I know my mother knew Bess Truman. She used to play bridge with her.

JOHNSON: Oh, your mother did.

LACY: My mother, my stepmother, knew Bess Truman.

JOHNSON: Do you know how they got acquainted?

LACY: Maybe through the men, I don't know. Maybe through the men.

JOHNSON: Where was your family living at that time?

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LACY: Let me think where they were living. They lived so many places in Kansas City, I'd have to think. They might have been living down in this big house on Wornall Road, I'm not sure.

JOHNSON: Was your father involved with the County Court? Did he do some work for the County Court?

LACY: Yes, I think he did. I can't tell you...

JOHNSON: Some legal work?

LACY: Legal work, I think he did.

JOHNSON: So, that's maybe how they got acquainted. We can perhaps find that out.

Do you have any of your father's papers.

LACY: I'm sorry, I don't have very many of those, just what he told me. I'm sorry I didn't ask any more questions before he died.

JOHNSON: There are no letters or diaries that your father kept.

LACY: No, I don't have anything like that. Just pictures of him.

JOHNSON: When you got your job in '34, would it have been

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early '34, in the spring, or whatever?

LACY: In early '34, early winter or something like that. I don't know what month.

JOHNSON: He had an office, of course, in the courthouse, on the Independence Square.

LACY: That's right. We worked over there.

JOHNSON: You worked in that office?

LACY: Yes, in the basement.

JOHNSON: In the basement?

LACY: It seemed to me his office was in the basement.

JOHNSON: Well, he had an office on the first floor. I don't know whether you've been out there since they've restored it.

LACY: Not recently.

JOHNSON: You know, you come in on the east side, the east entrance, and then the first door to your left is the entryway into his office. There's a little anteroom, and then his office. The next room to the west is the court room, with the big counter.

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LACY: As I remember, at first we went down into the basement. He had an office in the basement. We went down some stairs, it seemed to me.

JOHNSON: Do you remember who else was working for him?

LACY: I don't think anybody else was working for him that I knew.

JOHNSON: You were the only secretary that he had, at the courthouse?

LACY: I was the only secretary that he had, that's right.

JOHNSON: In his last year as County Judge, Presiding Judge.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And it was in the basement.

LACY: I think so.

JOHNSON: So you handled all of the correspondence.

LACY: Yes, I took dictation for his letters.

JOHNSON: Appointments?

LACY: Made his appointments, that's right.

JOHNSON: I don't know that I've seen an appointments

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calendar. Some kind of appointments calendar was probably kept wasn't it?

LACY: It could have been, but I have no idea where it is. My main time is when we went to Washington.

JOHNSON: You took shorthand?

LACY: I took, you know, on a stenotype, that little machine.

JOHNSON: Stenotype. So you typed his letters, took dictation, typed correspondence, handled the appointments calendar.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any of the people who had business with Truman at that time?

LACY: No, just some of his old friends I remember.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Rufus Burrus?

LACY: I remember the name, yes. He was a very good friend.

JOHNSON: You don't know if your father was involved with any of the legal work on the roads program...

LACY: Not that I know of.

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JOHNSON: Were you there in that office, through the campaign?

LACY: I don't remember what month the campaign ran, but...

JOHNSON: Did he have another office downtown in Kansas City?

LACY: Not then he didn't, no.

JOHNSON: That was the only office he had. But court sessions would actually alternate, wouldn't they. They'd meet a month out in Independence, at the courthouse there, and then they would meet downtown Kansas City.

LACY: They may have, I don't know that.

JOHNSON: Every month or so there was an alternating schedule.

Did you attend any of those court sessions?

LACY: No, I never went to any of those.

JOHNSON: And he never added another person while you were there?

LACY: Not to my knowledge.

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JOHNSON: Do you recall who you replaced? He had a secretary before you came I suppose, didn't he?

LACY: I don't know. I don't even know who I replaced. He just didn't have anybody.

JOHNSON: What were your first impressions of Harry Truman? Do you remember when you first met him?

LACY: He was very pleasant. He was nice to get along with, very courteous, very much a gentleman. I liked him. The more I knew him the more I respected him, too.

JOHNSON: So your first impressions were favorable.

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: He was a nice boss was he?

LACY: A very nice boss.

JOHNSON: Did you help take care of some of the correspondence during the campaign, some of the paperwork?

LACY: Yes, I did. I don't remember the campaign too well, but I must have done that too.

JOHNSON: Now, they opened up a headquarters down at

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Sedalia, but you never went...

LACY: No, I never went.

JOHNSON: You never left this office.

LACY: No, I never left this office.

JOHNSON: You stayed here until he went to Washington?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: After he was elected.

LACY: After he was elected he asked me to go to Washington with him, and I did. I didn't know a soul in Washington.

JOHNSON: By the way, just before he went to Washington, you know, they had a dedication of the courthouse downtown, do you remember attending that?

LACY: No, I don't think I did.

JOHNSON: I think that was right around Christmas time. Do you remember going out to Washington the first time?

LACY: I remember going to Washington the first time, yes.

JOHNSON: Was that the end of December in '34, or was that early in January of 1935?

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LACY: It should have been early in January, I think. The first thing I had to do was look for a place to live.

JOHNSON: Where did you find one?

LACY: I don't remember all the places I lived. Mildred and I may have roomed together the first year. She was the first one I met.

JOHNSON: Okay, you're talking about Mildred Dryden, but her maiden name was Lattimer.

LACY: Mildred Lattimer, that is right.

JOHNSON: So, was she the first one you met there in Washington?

LACY: I think she must have been. I met her there in the office.

JOHNSON: Mildred Lattimer, and of course, she married a Dryden. So, we know her as Mildred Dryden.

LACY: Where does she live now, do you know?

JOHNSON: She's probably deceased, though I can't tell you that for sure. I haven't checked her file.

I think the Trumans took an apartment on Connecticut Avenue.

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LACY: I think they did too.

JOHNSON: And you took an apartment close to the Capitol building?

LACY: I don't remember. We got into a house, or someplace, where we could have board and room, you know.

JOHNSON: You and Mildred?

LACY: I guess we did. I don't remember.

JOHNSON: But you were together.

LACY: It seems to me that we were. I wish I had kept a diary then.

JOHNSON: Were you at his swearing-in, when he was sworn in as Senator?

LACY: I could have been, I don't remember that. I know we went over to some occasion.

JOHNSON: So what was your job then?

LACY: Three of us girls were in one office and Vic [Victor Messall] and Bud [Faris] were in the central office, and the central office was over here. He called me when he wanted to give dictation, and I'd go in there

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with my stenotype and take his dictation.

JOHNSON: Okay, let us just quickly kind of visualize the layout here. Apparently his office suite was number 248 in the Senate Office Building. How many rooms were there?

LACY: Well, there may have been a file room, but there was a room for the three girls who typed, Mildred and Catherine [Bixler] and me.

JOHNSON: That's the largest room of the suite?

LACY: That was the largest room. Then there was a middle room where the entrance was and that was where Vic and Bud stayed.

JOHNSON: Okay, this would be Victor Messall and Bud Faris.

LACY: I don't remember; it could have been. Then the Senator's office was over on the other side of the entrance.

JOHNSON: And the Senator's office was just outside where Vic Messall...

LACY: On the far side. One, two, three like that.

JOHNSON: You say there was another room, a file room?

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LACY: There might have been a file room, I'm not sure. There could have been a file room, and we might have had the files in with us. I don't remember that.

JOHNSON: I think Mildred says there was another room that had the files in there.

LACY: Catherine had to handle all of the Vets correspondence. We got so many letter from veterans in those days.

JOHNSON: You mention Catherine Bixler.

LACY: We called her Kitty, yes.

JOHNSON: She is the one that handled all of the...

LACY: All of that veterans stuff, you know; people would write about their common law wife and they'd want to get paid for this or that, and all.

JOHNSON: Well, they had this big bonus issue, the bonus bill.

LACY: Yes, I know.

JOHNSON: To pay off the World War I vets.

LACY: She handled all of the Vets correspondence. Some of

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them were so funny I made copies of them and brought them home. I haven't been able to find those.

JOHNSON: Is that right.

LACY: Yes, I made copies of some of the letters; they were so funny, really amusing.

JOHNSON: If you find them, let us know.

LACY: I will.

JOHNSON: Most of the correspondence, most of the office files from the first term, Truman's first term as Senator, were lost. They were lost in the shuffle in Washington during the war. So, most of what we have from the Senatorial files just go back to 1940-41, for the second term. So any correspondence that deals with the years from '35 up to '40, we certainly are very interested.

LACY: I'm still looking for it.

JOHNSON: All right, you had a desk and...

LACY: Typewriter and drawers, and things.

JOHNSON: And you did stenotype type of dictation?

LACY: Yes.

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JOHNSON: So in one room there, you had the three secretaries. When you came, when you started to work for Senator Truman there was Mildred Lattimer, and Catherine Bixler. You three, plus the two men.

LACY: And that was it.

JOHNSON: Do you remember who was to your left or to your right?

LACY: No, I don't remember. I think Catherine was first and then Mildred and then I was over here. I don't remember exactly.

JOHNSON: So you were at the far desk from the entrance there?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: What were your impressions of Catherine Bixler and Mildred Lattimer?

LACY: I thought they were very pleasant. In one letter I wrote back, I said something about Mildred seemed to be acting strange. I thought maybe she didn't like me. I don't know, at one point; it may have been my imagination.

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JOHNSON: Again, what was the atmosphere, the working atmosphere there?

LACY: It was very pleasant. We got along just fine.

JOHNSON: Who was your immediate supervisor then?

LACY: I guess Vic Messall.

JOHNSON: We do have some papers of Victor Messall's.

LACY: Is he gone now?

JOHNSON: I think so. How about Bud Faris. Do you remember anything...

LACY: He was very pleasant.

JOHNSON: Were both of them easy to work for? I suppose productivity was expected and delivered.

LACY: Yes. On occasion we'd get to go to lunch in the Senator's dining room and eat that famous bean soup. I remember that.

JOHNSON: Oh, the Senate dining room.

LACY: And eat the famous bean soup.

JOHNSON: That was just on occasion?

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LACY: Just once in awhile, yes.

JOHNSON: Where would you ordinarily go for lunch.

LACY: I guess we went out to different places around close. I don't remember, someplace close around there.

JOHNSON: Just a small restaurant? They didn't have fast food then, did they?

LACY: No, they didn't.

JOHNSON: What were your working hours?

LACY: Let's see, I guess maybe 9 to 5 something like that. I'm guessing.

JOHNSON: And an hour lunch?

LACY: Probably.

JOHNSON: How about coffee breaks, did they...

LACY: We didn't have many coffee breaks in those days.

JOHNSON: So, it was straight through from 9 to 12 and maybe what 1 to 5.

LACY: One to five as I remember, yes.

JOHNSON: And five days, Monday through Friday?

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LACY: Yes. I know we had a lot of holidays, like Washington's birthday and Lincoln's birthday and all of that. We always had holidays.

JOHNSON: Did you ever get called in to work on Saturdays?

LACY: I didn't remember that happening too much. I do remember in the second session, I kept saying the work was light and there wasn't much to do that day. Work was light.

JOHNSON: The second session, of Congress, you're talking about?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, when you came in in '35, we had the second New Deal Congress, so to speak. It's called the Second New Deal. Was the workload pretty even and steady, or did you have some rushed times, too.

LACY: Well, we did have some rush times I would say. Sometimes it was much busier than other times. At times it would slack off, and we would not be too busy. A lot depended on the Senator's activities. If he went back to Missouri, of course, there wasn't much to do. And then when he'd come back, it would pile up again.

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JOHNSON: What was Truman's, Senator Truman's regimen. He would come back to Missouri as often as possible?

LACY: Well, with something like a friend's death, or if he had business or something like that.

JOHNSON: And at Christmas time he would come back.

LACY: Yes. Of course, the Senate was out by then. The first year it got out in June, and the second year it got out in August. He came back and opened up his office here.

JOHNSON: When was it he opened up his office here?

LACY: Well, the first year we got out in June, I think, and then we came right back, and he opened up an office. The next year it was August, and he opened up an office again.

JOHNSON: Okay, so in 1935, in June, he opened up an office here, kind of a field office. Where was that?

LACY: In the Federal Building.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the number, or the floor?

LACY: No, I don't remember that.

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JOHNSON: Did you work in that office?

LACY: Yes. See, I'm in that picture there.

JOHNSON: Okay, one of these photographs here. So you had to come out here and work then, after June, when he came out in June of '35.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And who worked with you down at the Kansas City office?

LACY: It was the same group that we had in Washington. I think Catherine came back. I don't know about Mildred. But the ones in the picture are the ones that worked there.

JOHNSON: Okay, we have this 5 x 7 size photograph, and over the door it says, "Western Judge." Would you want to try to name, left to right, the men in the back, and then left to right the women in the front?

LACY: Let's see. At the right is Vic Messall. And I don't know the two on the left.

JOHNSON: One of them isn't Faris?

LACY: It doesn't look like Faris, no. And then Catherine

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Bixler is behind me and I'm at the front desk.

JOHNSON: So Catherine is on the left, and you're on the right.

LACY: That's right. She's right behind me.

JOHNSON: So you think Mildred Lattimer stayed in Washington, and you two came out here.

LACY: I don't know where she went. I don't remember.

JOHNSON: So you're here in the front.

LACY: I was still taking his dictation.

JOHNSON: How about vacations; did you get a paid vacation?

LACY: Oh, yes I got a paid vacation. I don't remember when I took it. I think I took it in the summertime.

JOHNSON: Okay, so you were busy from January to June in the office in Washington; then you came out here in June of '35 and worked in the office in the Federal Building.

LACY: I may have taken my vacation then; I don't remember.

JOHNSON: What kind of business would they handle here?

LACY: Well, Senatorial business. I don't remember.

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JOHNSON: Just maintaining contacts with his constituents?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Tom Pendergast?

LACY: Yes, very well. He [Senator Truman] used to get letters from Tom Pendergast, I know that. I will say that he would dictate letters to me and he would always say, "I will vote the way my convictions are, not the way I'm asked to vote." He said that many times.

JOHNSON: You remember that in the correspondence?

LACY: I remember that in the correspondence, very definitely.

JOHNSON: In that year and a half you were with Senator Truman?

LACY: Yes. He always said, "I will vote my conscience, not the way people ask me to vote."

JOHNSON: We have a few items of correspondence between Truman and Pendergast, but again, you know, that early part of his Senatorial career, we just don't have much. So, if you come across anything, let us know.

LACY: I'm looking for some of that stuff. I think I've got

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some more stuff.

JOHNSON: Did Pendergast come into Truman's office out here in Kansas City?

LACY: He may have; I can't remember. There was another burly guy that was a good friend of his. I can't think of his name.

JOHNSON: Fred Canfil.

LACY: Fred Canfil, that's right.

JOHNSON: Do you remember him?

LACY: Yes, I remember him very well.

JOHNSON: What were your impressions of him?

LACY: I thought he was a big burly guy, but I didn't know too much about him.

JOHNSON: Kind of gruff?

LACY: Kind of brusque.

JOHNSON: Brusque. Yes, that fits the stories that we hear.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: You got to talk to Fred Canfil?

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LACY: I'm sure I did.

JOHNSON: In some ways he seems to be a kind of a mysterious fellow.

LACY: I think so. He was.

JOHNSON: Did you feel that he was kind of holding something back?

LACY: Yes, I really did.

JOHNSON: You did?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: He became Marshal of the Federal Courthouse, down here later on. They called him Marshal Canfil.

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: In the 1934 campaign chauffeured Truman around the state. Did you have any involvement in that campaign?

LACY: I don't remember that, I don't remember going out and campaigning for him or anything like that, no.

JOHNSON: So you just kind of held the fort over at the Courthouse?

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LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: When would he have gone back to Washington in '35, that first year he was Senator?

LACY: Probably right after Christmas.

JOHNSON: Okay, so Congress was not meeting, you're saying, after the recession in June?

LACY: Well, after the first of the year they met.

JOHNSON: Okay, all of the legislation had to be done then during the winter and spring, didn't it. From January up to June.

LACY: They weren't as lackadaisical in Congress then as they are now.

JOHNSON: The session in 1935 has been called the "second hundred days." They enacted the Social Security bill. Do you remember?

LACY: I do. After I left Truman, before I got married, I was working for the Social Security office here for awhile. After I got married, they wouldn't take married women, so I had to quit there. But I remember going down and showing people how to take 1/2 of 1 percent out of their checks.

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JOHNSON: Just one-half of one-percent.

LACY: One half of one percent. And I had to help them figure it.

JOHNSON: There was a Social Security bill, a Rural Electrification Administration, a Wagner bill for labor. There was the Public Utilities Holding Company Act. Do you recall getting a lot of correspondence, either visits from lobbyists or mail from lobbyists?

LACY: I don't remember. We may have gotten that, but I don't recall it.

JOHNSON: Okay, you didn't specialize in any particular kind of correspondence like Catherine did?

LACY: No. I just handled his personal stuff.

JOHNSON: You say she just handled veterans.

LACY: No, I just handled his personal stuff.

JOHNSON: Truman's personal?

LACY: Well, most of his personal letters and also his business letters.

JOHNSON: Okay, so family members and friends, his correspondence with them, you're the one that typed those up.

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LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: And some of his political, but not mainly. I see. How was he to take dictation from? Was he easy to take dictation from?

LACY: Very nice, very nice, and I prided myself in being an excellent speller. One time he caught me up on a letter, on a word, and I've never forgotten that since. He caught me up on the word Albuquerque. I misspelled it, and I've never forgotten since.

JOHNSON: He knew how to spell Albuquerque?

LACY: Absolutely. He could spell anything.

JOHNSON: Yes, but, you know, there were a few words that he had trouble with.

LACY: Well, that wasn't one of them.

JOHNSON: There were a few words that he just had a hard time spelling correctly. From your point of view, though, was he a great speller, or a fine speller?

LACY: He wasn't a great speller, but everything I took seemed to be correct, and if it wasn't, I would correct it.

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JOHNSON: How would he pace himself? Would he speak slowly and distinctly to make it easier for you?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Roberta Barrows at all?

LACY: No.

JOHNSON: She was a secretary to the appointments secretary, Matt Connelly. Well, she was in the White House, and you were, of course, in the Senate Office Building.

LACY: And there was a Rose somebody who was his secretary later on.

JOHNSON: Oh yes. Rose Conway?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you meet Rose Conway?

LACY: Oh, yes, I met her, and her niece was a good friend of my son. They grew up and went to school together.

JOHNSON: I see.

Did you go back to Washington for the 1936 session of Congress?

LACY: Yes.

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JOHNSON: Did you go back and forth with the Truman family?

LACY: No, I didn't go with the family. I went on my own.

JOHNSON: So you're back at work in Washington, in January of '36.

LACY: I got a new place to live that year, and I found a real nice place. It was a long ways from the office, but the woman had run a tea room -- she was a wonderful cook.

JOHNSON: Did Bess Truman come down to his office while you were working there in Washington?

LACY: I don't think she did. Margaret did occasionally, but I don't think Bess ever did. I used to think she [Margaret] was kind of spoiled.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that you were taken on a picnic.

LACY: Yes. This was a one-time thing. He [Senator Truman] took the whole office out in the country to one of these farms on a picnic.

JOHNSON: And that is what you have snapshots of, there?

LACY: Yes.

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JOHNSON: And this was in 1936?

LACY: I don't remember which summer it was; I wish I did, but I don't.

JOHNSON: So you're not sure if this is '35 or '36.

LACY: I just marked the page with that.

JOHNSON: I'm looking at this album right now. Well, here it's cherry blossom time, the spring of '35 on this preceding page.

LACY: It could have been the summer of '35. Maybe it was the summer of '35 because Congress was in session to August that year. That was the year that Congress was in session until August.

JOHNSON: You mean until August in '35?

LACY: August in '35. They were in session until August and I thought they would never get done, because I was so anxious to get home.

JOHNSON: I thought that you said your office here was set up in June of '35.

LACY: Well, that was the first year. I'm talking about the second year.

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JOHNSON: You're talking about '36 then, 1936.

LACY: Yes, 1936.

JOHNSON: Okay, so this is probably 1936.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: There are one, two, three, four, six, seven snapshots on this page. Okay, this is on the left hand side of the page, those snapshots. I see Senator Truman, Mrs. Ruby...

LACY: She could have been the hostess where we were, I don't know.

JOHNSON: What was the name of that place again?

LACY: Tumbling Hills Farm or something.

JOHNSON: Yes, Tumbling Run, it says here. In Winchester Valley, Virginia.

LACY: It could have been that. Anyway there was a place there to swim, and Margaret and I loved to swim so we went swimming.

JOHNSON: Mrs. Ruby, Vic -- that'd be Vic Messall, Mildred Lattimer, Catherine Bixler, Betty -
- you don't know

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who...

LACY: No, I can't place her.

JOHNSON: Bob and Bill?

LACY: Who? Bob and Bill?

JOHNSON: You don't know them. And then Mrs. Truman on the far right.

All right, below that snapshot's another one here that shows another group, a John Griggs, Kitty...

LACY: I think John Griggs was a friend of somebody else who was there.

JOHNSON: How about Kitty?

LACY: Kitty Bixler.

JOHNSON: Was that Catherine? They called her Kitty?

LACY: Yes, Kitty.

JOHNSON: Oh. Betty -- you don't know Betty Stewart -- do you know who that might have been?

LACY: No. It could have been some friends, I don't know.

JOHNSON: And there's Senator Truman. Bud, that'd be Bud Faris, and Vic Messall. In the foreground are

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Margaret, and you and Millie, and Harry Salisbury.

LACY: Harry Salisbury.

JOHNSON: Do you remember him?

LACY: It rings a bell but I can't tell you who it is. You know when I was there they had a thing called the Little Congress. Members were the people that worked for Congress. We'd go and meet and have a little Congress on our own. And sometimes they would "pass" legislation. I don't know whether they really worked on it or not, but we'd go to those meetings, I do know that.

JOHNSON: Where were they?

LACY: Oh, someplace in the Capital, I can't remember where.

JOHNSON: And it was called the Little Congress.

LACY: It was called the Little Congress.

JOHNSON: And you were involved with that.

LACY: I just went to the meetings; I really wasn't involved.

JOHNSON: Now, here's another snapshot. It says, "The great Hitler."

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LACY: Somebody, I guess we called that. Don't ask me why we called him that.

JOHNSON: Okay. Here's another snapshot. Kitty, Betty, Stuart, Bud, Senator Truman, Margaret in the foreground again, Mrs. Truman, Mildred, Harry -- well that is Harry Salisbury again isn't it -- and Vic.

LACY: Let me see Harry Salisbury's picture.

JOHNSON: Well, it's kind of hard to see, but he's here in the right foreground in this snapshot here.

LACY: No, I don't know who he is. The name sounds familiar. There's one on the next page too.

JOHNSON: Yes. Then this other snapshot on the lower right hand side of this page shows Harry -- I suppose that's Salisbury again, looks like a very young fellow. John, Margaret, Betty, Mildred, the Senator on the right, and Billy and Kitty back there as well on the right.

LACY: Maybe they were boyfriends of the girls, I don't know.

JOHNSON: There was a lake there apparently.

LACY: Evidently, yes.

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JOHNSON: John, Marg -- this is on the next page, the top left-hand corner, a snapshot that's captioned "John, Marg" -- I guess he called her Margie, not Marg or Margie.

LACY: Yes, the Senator called Margaret, "Margie."

JOHNSON: Yes. Betty, Mildred and the Senator. And there's Catherine here by a home that's got a stone pillar. So these are the ones that have Senator Truman in them.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: We would like to copy these for the Truman Library. Okay, so you went back to Washington in January of '36. Were you still doing the same work?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Mildred Dryden, in her interview, says she was Truman's personal secretary, and Vic Messall was what we would now call his administrative assistant. Does that seem accurate to you, that description?

LACY: Well, she wasn't the personal secretary when I was there, because I was.

JOHNSON: You were.

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LACY: She may have been after I left.

JOHNSON: What are your recollections of Margaret Truman?

LACY: She seemed spoiled to us. Of course, the Senator idolized her.

JOHNSON: What do you remember about Bess?

LACY: I thought Bess was a lovely person, very charming, very sweet. My folks would come back once in a while and see me, and they would have lunch with the Trumans and they would usually include me.

JOHNSON: So you got a chance to visit with Bess, especially at this picnic I suppose.

LACY: yes.

JOHNSON: I notice that Senator Truman was wearing a tie and a shirt.

LACY: And brown and white shoes.

JOHNSON: Was he ever very casual in the way he dressed?

LACY: Not too much, no. He was pretty proper most of the time.

JOHNSON: Almost always had a suit and a tie?

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LACY: Nearly always.

JOHNSON: And, of course, he used to get involved in some pretty important legislation. Do you remember any of the bills in particular that created a lot of mail?

LACY: Some of these letters I wrote on his stationery. Of course, I put stamps on them.

JOHNSON: Oh, you're talking about this letter here?

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: It's got an address for you too. It says, "Jane Taylor, 1612 Webster Street, N.W., Washington, D.C."

LACY: That's where I lived the second year.

JOHNSON: This is 1936, May of 1936. This says May 9, so this must be the letter that...

LACY: If you need another letter, I can find you one that was written on Senate stationery.

JOHNSON: This must be May 9th, 1936.

LACY: Could be.

JOHNSON: In one of these letters you mention encountering Senator [William] Borah?

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LACY: Senator Borah, yes, on the subway. I also saw J.P. Morgan. I used to see a lot of the big names around Washington.

JOHNSON: Do you remember Truman ever commenting about these big money people like J.P. Morgan and the big bankers, the Wall Street brokers and so on? Did he ever express any feelings...

LACY: No, I don't remember hearing him say much.

JOHNSON: But, of course, he was a New Deal liberal.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: Were you very much interested in political policies, at the time?

LACY: Not too much in those days. I was only about 22 or 23.

JOHNSON: Did you consider yourself a Democrat?

LACY: Well, I was raised a Republican. I don't remember what I was when I went to Washington. I guess I was.

JOHNSON: You were a bureaucrat, maybe.

LACY: A bureaucrat, that's right.

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JOHNSON: Well, in '36, apparently from one of these letters you were able to leave in June, come back home in June for a vacation, a wedding, someone's wedding, a friend's wedding.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And then did you go back to work...

LACY: In the Federal Court House Building.

JOHNSON: Oh. Okay, there in the summer of '36.

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: And how long did you work there?

LACY: I worked there all fall, I think, because we didn't go back until the first of the year and that's where I quit because we got married the following March.

JOHNSON: March of '37.

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember exactly when you quit as a secretary for Senator Truman?

LACY: I remember quitting sometime that fall, I guess.

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JOHNSON: Did Tom Pendergast ever come into his office down there while you were there?

LACY: He may have.

JOHNSON: In the Kansas City office?

LACY: I don't remember; he could have.

JOHNSON: Did you ever go to the Pendergast headquarters on Main Street?

LACY: No, I never did.

JOHNSON: According to this document, you were working for Senator Truman from January 3, 1935 to June 30, 1936.

LACY: Maybe that's when I quit then.

JOHNSON: The end of June.

LACY: Maybe I did. I do know when we got married they sent us a perfectly beautiful sterling water pitcher which I still have. When each of the boys were born they sent them beautiful sterling silver cups. They still have them.

JOHNSON: Is that right?

LACY: Yes.

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JOHNSON: And that was in March of '37?

LACY: In '37, yes.

JOHNSON: Where did you get married?

LACY: At the Country Club Methodist Church, at 57th and Wornall, where I grew up.

JOHNSON: Did the Trumans attend your wedding, any of the Trumans?

LACY: They were invited, I know, but I don't remember whether they attended or not.

JOHNSON: This photo was taken in Truman's office in Washington. Do you remember all of those photographs that hung in his office?

LACY: I remember a lot of photographs, yes. I do remember that, yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the photograph of Tom Pendergast that he had there?

LACY: Yes, I remember that too.

JOHNSON: Was it still there when you left?

LACY: It could have been, I don't remember.

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JOHNSON: These are a couple of photographs from our collections at the Truman Library.

LACY: How did you get those?

JOHNSON: Well, this was from AP, Associated Press. Well, I appreciate having the snapshots in your album to copy for the Truman Library.

LACY: When I went out to the Truman museum I bought another book on Truman that I have and then I bought this McCullough book [David McCullough, *Truman*] which I'm going to read. I'm going to hear McCullough himself next week, at a dinner at UMKC, and that will be interesting.

JOHNSON: After you got married, where did you live?

LACY: Lived out here in Kansas City, right off Wornall Road, beyond Gregory.

JOHNSON: Did you have any contacts with the Trumans after you got married?

LACY: Not much, no. Not until he was elected President, and then I wrote him a letter of congratulations.

JOHNSON: Yes, I noticed your father, James A. Taylor, had

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written him. Well, you have an original of the letter that Harry Truman sent to your father.

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: "Dear Jim." This is May 3, 1945. It says, "I appreciated very much your note of April 13th. You are right, a lot has happened since that first campaign. I hope you will be pleasantly situated and have a happy and successful life from now on. We must have that war talk whenever the opportunity presents itself." They were going to talk about World War I, I suppose.

LACY: Yes.

JOHNSON: We have the carbon of that letter in our collections at the Library, as I mentioned. Yes, I want to leave this copy of your father's letter that went to President Truman.

Also, there's a letter July 9, 1945 to your father. "Dear Jim, Your note of July 2nd did not reach me before I left for Bolivar. It was here when I returned to Washington. I'm sorry I didn't get to see you. I hope everything is going well with you." Your father had written to Harry Truman on

July 2nd, 1948 saying, "Dear Harry, Would it be possible to have a ten or fifteen minutes interview with you while you are in

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Bolivar? If so, would you please have Connelly wire me."

LACY: Where?

JOHNSON: At Bolivar, Missouri. That is when he dedicated that statue. "Wire me at 232 West 52nd," your father adds. I notice he's using Kansas City Club letterhead.

LACY: I think they both belonged to a group down there. He says in here that it was the 1111 Club.

JOHNSON: Yes.

LACY: It was kind of a jesters group -- it was a group that met up there all the time, business men.

JOHNSON: A "jesters group?".

LACY: I don't know if Harry was a Jester or not?

JOHNSON: He was part of the Harpie Club out in Independence. I guess that was something similar. Here's another letter, March 12, 1949, from your father. He said, "Dear Harry," he must have thought he was a very close friend.

LACY: They were close friends. They were on a first-name basis.

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JOHNSON: And he is just trying to endorse a friend, a veteran, for a job. Did you get a lot of that when you were there?

LACY: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: Letters from people looking for jobs.

LACY: Particularly the veterans.

JOHNSON: Did Truman often accommodate them? Did he do his best to accommodate them?

LACY: Well, I don't remember exactly. I remember he turned most of them over to Catherine. I don't remember; she had kind of a stock reply for them.

JOHNSON: Do you remember meeting the Trumans after '37?

LACY: I don't think I did.

JOHNSON: You didn't see them out at the Library after he came back?

LACY: I've seen Margaret several times, a time or two when they had a Truman concert out in Independence and Margaret was there. I remember seeing her there, but I didn't get to talk to her. I doubt if she'd remember me.

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JOHNSON: Did your parents visit the Trumans? Do you remember if they visited the Trumans after they came back from the White House?

LACY: Not that I know of. No, I don't think so.

JOHNSON: Did your father ever go out and visit them when Truman was a Senator, or as President, in the Oval Office?

LACY: No, not that I know of. I really don't know.

JOHNSON: Was your father a Republican?

LACY: Well, he was a little of both. He was raised one way, and he voted another way.

JOHNSON: Well, he must have helped Truman in the '34 campaign.

LACY: I think he did.

JOHNSON: Supported Truman.

LACY: Yes, because he liked him.

JOHNSON: Okay, how about 1940; do you remember if he supported Truman when he ran again?

LACY: I was living in Texas then, so I don't remember.

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JOHNSON: When did you move to Texas?

LACY: Well, first we moved to Little Rock and then moved to Texas about 1940.

JOHNSON: I see. And you lived there how long?

LACY: In Dallas, we lived there for two years, and Bill was born there. We moved to San Antonio and lived there for about eight years, and we came back in '48.

JOHNSON: Do you know if your father had any involvement in later campaigns?

LACY: I don't know whether he did or not.

JOHNSON: When did your father die?

LACY: Oh, goodness, he was 88 and he died in 1973, or something like that. He was born in 1885, so 88 years from that would make it what.

JOHNSON: In 1885, that's one year after Truman was born. That's the year that Bess was born. You said that you were raised by a stepmother?

LACY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And what was her name?

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LACY: Her name was Roylynn Geer. She was named for Uncle Roy and Uncle Lynn. They were married two years after my mother died, and they travelled an awful lot. They did lots of traveling all over the world, and I do know that.

JOHNSON: There is a short letter here from Bess Truman to Mrs. Lacy. This is May 14, 1945, and it's on White House stationery. It says, "Dear Jane, It was a real pleasure to hear from you. We often think of the time when you were with the President and I'm sorry that you could not have been here at this time. It was good to see your mother and Harriet and to have news of your family and know that you like San Antonio. Thank you for writing, and warm regards from the President in which all of us join. Sincerely yours, Bess W. Truman."

This was in response to a letter that you wrote to congratulate him on becoming President. And Harriet was who?

LACY: My younger sister. I'll ask her if she can remember.

JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you for your time and the information.

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