

Oral History Interview

With

FRED L. TRUMAN

Son of Vivian Truman and nephew of Harry S. Truman.

Prairie Village, Kansas

March 17, 1983

by Niel Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library

Independence, Missouri

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#### NOTICE

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[1]

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JOHNSON: The first question, Mr. Truman, is to tell me when and where you were born. Of course, we know your parents' names, but you might repeat them as well.

TRUMAN: I was born at 6033 Swope Parkway here in Kansas City where my grandparents Campbells lived. At that time father and mother, John Vivian Truman and Louella Truman, lived

in Belton. They had moved up here from down south a little ways. From Belton they moved to Grandview, and then down to a farm west of Hickman Mills. It had

[2]

a big orchard on it then.

JOHNSON: What was the date of your birth?

TRUMAN: Well, I was born in 1915, May 7th.

JOHNSON: As I recall, your father and mother were married in 1911.

TRUMAN: Yes, 1911, I believe is right, and it was October 27.

JOHNSON: So your father helped manage and operate his father's Grandview farm from 1905 to 1911, when your father, Vivian, got married.

TRUMAN: Yes. My parents then moved into a place on what is called the Duck Road, at Grandview Road and Duck Road. That is where they started housekeeping.

JOHNSON: Their first home?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Is that house still there?

[3]

TRUMAN: I believe it is. I think it is.

JOHNSON: Someone took me out in that area a couple of years ago when I was out interviewing, and I don't recall if the house was still there. We were looking for farm equipment that had been abandoned in that area, and we didn't see any. There wouldn't be any farm equipment that we could salvage, or retrieve?

TRUMAN: Well, you know, there's a walking plow over there in the Agricultural Hall of Fame that belonged to our family.

JOHNSON: So that's a genuine Truman plow then?

TRUMAN: A genuine Truman plow; I plowed with it.

JOHNSON: Well, how far back would that go in the family, do you have any idea?

TRUMAN: I don't really know how old that plow is. It was there when I grew up.

JOHNSON: Where were you using it when you first used it?

[4]

TRUMAN: Out there on the farm.

JOHNSON: And that would have been about what year would you say?

TRUMAN: Oh, around 1930-32, someplace in that area.

JOHNSON: We want to talk about equipment and all of these other things too, but I also want to try to bring up to date our genealogical information. Do you recall the birthdates of your brothers and sisters?

TRUMAN: J.C., that would be John Curtis, and my sister Callie Louise, his twin, who is dead, were born August 20, 1912. Then Martha Ann, I believe, was born on January 31, 1918. I'm not sure about that. Harry was born on September 18, 1923, I believe. Gilbert Vivian was born June 26, 1926.

MRS. TRUMAN: Didn't Martha Ann send you all that stuff one time?

JOHNSON: We may have that. I will check..

[5]

Okay, you said you were born here on Swope Parkway?

TRUMAN: And that house is still there.

MRS. TRUMAN: That was when his grandmother and grandfather lived there.

TRUMAN: Curtis Campbell.

JOHNSON: Was that a city house or was that a farm?

TRUMAN: It was city.

The farm where mother grew up was just off Blue Ridge at about 96th or 98th, someplace in there. Do you know where the Hen House is out there on Blue Ridge? It's about a mile south of the Hen House. It's about a mile north of Ruskin High School. They lived on the west side of what is now Blue Ridge. Some of their family, the Bryants, which is Mamma Campbell's family, lived over on the east side, about a half a quarter north of that. That is where the farms were kind of joining.

[6]

Mamma [grandmother] Campbell's name was Bryant to start with, and her brother then owned a farm across the road there. Papa Campbell owned this one on this side. Then they got into this bank down here on Swope Parkway and Prospect, that isn't there anymore, and moved into town. That's where I was born in that house; it's still there.

JOHNSON: When your parents were first married, that is in 1911, when your father Vivian moved off the farm, they moved into a farm house that was just off of old Grandview Road?

TRUMAN: On the west side of Grandview Road, just north of Duck Lane there. That's about half a quarter south of where Blue Ridge crosses Grandview Road at the present time.

JOHNSON: Not too far from the railroad right-of-way there is it?

TRUMAN: No, it's not, just a little ways.

[7]

JOHNSON: And they lived there a little while and then they...

TRUMAN: I think the next place they moved was over east of town.

JOHNSON: Was that called the "Good" farm?

TRUMAN: No. It was across the road from what we called the "Good" place. I believe it was called the Strode place.

JOHNSON: So they lived there awhile?

TRUMAN: Lived there a year or so and then rented a farm in Amarugia.

JOHNSON: In where?

TRUMAN: I thought that would catch you. At that time he was the only person that lived in Amarugia. It's a couple of miles west and a mile or so south of Harrisonville. They call it the Amarugia Hills now, and people are proud to live down there now, but at that time they weren't.

[8]

JOHNSON: So they lived there awhile.

TRUMAN: And then they moved, I believe, to Belton and then to Grandview, and then to Hickman Mills.

JOHNSON: Did they move back to the farm there, in Grandview?

TRUMAN: No, they lived there in town, lived there by the Clements. That house belonged to the Halls I think, but it was just right next door to the Clements' place. Then they moved to Hickman Mills, on what we called the Cottingham place.

JOHNSON: This is another farm?

TRUMAN: Yes, that's a farm.

JOHNSON: By Hickman Mills?

TRUMAN: Yes, that's now built up in an addition. I went to school down there at Hickman. Then we moved up here on the Grandview Road, just south of where the Southern goes through. It was at

[9]

the top of the hill, on the east side of Grandview Road. That's one that the tornado took out. About 1927 we moved from there over to what we called the Good place, which borders the farm on the east side. We lived there about three years, and then moved to the house north of the old Truman home. I think that was 1930.

JOHNSON: Well, the house that was taken out by the tornado, I think maybe that's the one...

TRUMAN: That Gilbert was born in.

JOHNSON: Oh, he was born in there. That may be the site that we saw, because like I say, as I recall it was just a foundation, or evidence of a foundation.

TRUMAN: Well, there was a cave out in front of it. I don't know whether that's been torn out or not.

JOHNSON: When was that tornado?

TRUMAN: That's the one that went through Ruskin Heights,

[10]

in 1957. That's the one that went through and tore up Ruskin Heights.

JOHNSON: I guess I should ask you your first recollection of visiting the Truman farm, although at the time, I suppose, it was thought of as the Solomon Young farm.

TRUMAN: Well, no, I don't remember it being called that.

JOHNSON: Just called it the Truman farm?

TRUMAN: Well, just Mamma Truman's; that is all we ever called it.

JOHNSON: Mamma Truman's, okay.

TRUMAN: No, I don't remember much about being up there particularly until we started working it, more or less. Well, when we lived there on Grandview Road, that is when I really remember much about it. Of course, we had been up there some before that.

[11]

JOHNSON: What occasions would bring you to the farm when you were living elsewhere?

TRUMAN: Well, I don't really remember most of that.

JOHNSON: Like the mid-twenties?

TRUMAN: Well, we went there for Thanksgiving quite a bit. Of course, Uncle Harry was there. Margaret made the comment that he could not carve the turkey, but he sure unlearned it when he got in the White House.

JOHNSON: Did the family get together there for Christmas?

TRUMAN: No, not at Mamma Truman's. The earliest Christmases we had were down at Papa Campbell's.

JOHNSON: But the Thanksgivings were usually out at what you called Mamma Truman's place?

TRUMAN: Yes. We had Thanksgiving dinner out there quite often. See, her birthday is right close to Thanksgiving, so it was a kind of a combination deal.

[12]

JOHNSON: And you did have turkey?

TRUMAN: Several times, and Uncle Harry carved it--left-handed by the way too.

JOHNSON: Left-handed carver?

TRUMAN: Yes, he was left-handed.

JOHNSON: He was kind of ambidextrous I guess. He did some things right-handed; he wrote right-handed didn't he?

TRUMAN: Well, you know, then they wouldn't accept the fact that a man could write left-handed. That made him odd-ball if he wrote left-handed at that time. Even if he wrote right side up, it just wasn't proper until the last twenty years or so for a man to write left-handed.

JOHNSON: Just forced you to write right-handed. I suppose the teachers trained him to write right-handed, and he had to do it.

TRUMAN: Oh, yes, the only way you could write at

[13]

that time.

JOHNSON: You mentioned the hand plow at the Ag. Hall of Fame.

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: And you can remember working it. When would that have been when you got behind that plow?

TRUMAN: I don't remember specifically, but I know I did use it. Around the age of 18 probably.

JOHNSON: Did you go to high school at Ruskin?

TRUMAN: No, I went up to about the fifth grade at Hickman Mills School on Grandview Road. Then we went to Grandview, and I finished high school at Grandview. Martha Ann finished at Ruskin, but I finished at Grandview.

Talking about working, one thing that happened--Fa [father] bought a little pair of gray mules that were tender mouthed. We were plowing corn about four inches tall, and they wouldn't walk slow enough to keep from covering

[14]

up the corn. So I tightened up the lines a little bit, and they started shooting craps. This should probably be explained. One mule would walk forward while the other backed up and vice versa. I got over towards that rock wall between us and the Feland place, and cut me a sapling about the size of my thumb and six or seven feet long. I tightened up the lines and spoke to them and they started shooting craps, so I cut them across the rear end with that stick. Then I pulled on the bits and they reared straight up. I looked around and my father was standing in that barn door. He never did say anything, but the team plowed corn from then on.

JOHNSON: You were plowing land there on your father's place?

TRUMAN: Well, on the Truman farm. We farmed the whole section.

JOHNSON: Was that 600 acres then, do you recall?

[15]

TRUMAN: Well, there were 160--40 acres across the highway, and 90 and 65 and 80. Then there was that pasture back west across the railroad. It would have made around 600.

JOHNSON: As I understand it, in the 1920s you father was helping to farm his mother's place, the Truman farm?

TRUMAN: We were farming what we called the Cottingham place. There were about three hundred acres of that. Then we moved from there up to Grandview, on Grandview Road, and then started farming that home place.

JOHNSON: When would that have been?

TRUMAN: We moved to Grandview Road probably about 1920.

JOHNSON: And that's when you started farming that 600 acres?

TRUMAN: Yes, the whole place.

[16]

JOHNSON: Well, getting back to the plow again. I guess the mules you were referring to were the ones that also pulled that plow, that hand plow?

TRUMAN: Not that pair of grays, no. The ones I used on that were Pete and Tom. They were a good team of mules. But they used to make me mad. I had to let the hired hand work them to keep them from ruining the pair of mares we had. I had to rebreak them every time we got them back.

JOHNSON: What are some of your recollections of working the Truman land there? We are trying to find out what kinds of equipment were used.

TRUMAN: One thing, while we were there, father traded for a Fordson tractor and a Model T Ford truck. Got them home--I don't know how, but he couldn't drive either one of them. He finally got rid of them. But what we used there were teams altogether, originally.

[17]

JOHNSON: No tractors at all?

TRUMAN: When we first moved up there, no. We used mules basically, and a couple of teams of horses. When we moved up there, he had eight head of mules that pulled the beam out of a

wooden-beamed road plow when they were breaking up the macadam road down there by Hickman. He was road overseer, and he took it back into the county barn down there, and they said, "Oh, that's just a defective one." So they pulled it out of a second one.

JOHNSON: They must have had terrific traction power.

TRUMAN: They pulled pretty good. They'd all pull together.

JOHNSON: So he was working on the roads while his brother was County Judge wasn't he?

TRUMAN: Well, I'm not sure. Because I'm not sure just when the overlap was.

[18]

JOHNSON: These were graders that were pulled by mules to grade the country roads?

TRUMAN: Yes, and then he opened some of the roads with snow. They had a wedge made of wood that they pulled with the mules.

JOHNSON: So the mules had to walk in the heavy snow.

TRUMAN: Well, they'd break it out some for them, but they pulled this wedge that was quite a wedge.

JOHNSON: Sometimes the farmers and townsmen just got their shovels, didn't they, their corn shovels, and shoveled those roads?

TRUMAN: Oh yes. While we were in high school, I had to do that, because High Grove Road just drifted level full. Some of the banks on that are about five or six feet high.

JOHNSON: When did you get your first tractor to use on that farm?

[19]

TRUMAN: That would have been in about '34 or '35.

JOHNSON: What kind of a tractor was it?

TRUMAN: It was a Farmall, a steel-wheel Farmall. It had a wide front tread, not the narrow wheels. Basically, we used it to plow with. We got a combine, and we used it to pull a combine, also.

JOHNSON: You got a combine about the same time?

TRUMAN: Yes, maybe a year later after that we got that. I don't remember.

JOHNSON: Until then you were pulling binders?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: And shocking oats. I remember doing that too; that's work..

TRUMAN: Well, I taught the kid brother, Harry, to load. Taught him by throwing him up a few bundles and then throwing him the rest of the shock. So one of the boys from high school wanted to come out, and thought he'd cover him up, but he didn't.

[20]

JOHNSON: He couldn't keep ahead of him?

TRUMAN: Couldn't keep up with him. And that's another thing. You know, father loaded with a short-handled fork, loaded bundles. When he went to Amarugia he told everybody he was from Kansas City. So one of the boys down there thought they'd go out and cover him up. He didn't say anything until he got it up to where the guy was really pitching. He had this team that he didn't have to drive except to turn around at the ends. So when he got it up to where the fellow was reaching just about as high as he could, he started telling him to "Bring them on up." The guy wouldn't ever go out after him again.

JOHNSON: He wasn't the slicker he thought he was.

TRUMAN: No. Father didn't handle but about half of the things that came up. He'd just kick them in the center, and layed up the edge, and tie them into the center and go.

[21]

JOHNSON: Do you remember if any of that equipment had been used on the farm prior to 1919 when they had the big sale?

TRUMAN: I don't really know about that. We had an old John Deere gang plow, two 12-inch bottoms. We had a 14-inch sulkey that was newer than that.

JOHNSON: Sulkey plow. Was that a John Deere too?

TRUMAN: No, I don't remember what it was.

JOHNSON: Now your Uncle Harry talked about riding an Emerson two-bottom plow.

TRUMAN: I never saw that one, That must have been the one they sold.

JOHNSON: It would be nice to have one.

TRUMAN: But the one we had, the one that I rode, was a John Deere, I am sure.

JOHNSON: We have a photograph of your Uncle Harry riding a horse-drawn cultivator.

[22]

TRUMAN: Yes. I think I've seen it.

JOHNSON: Was that cultivator still on the farm, as far as you know? You mentioned the hand plow. Was that the only piece of equipment that you know of that would have been on the farm when your Uncle Harry was helping to run it?

TRUMAN: I don't know that.

JOHNSON: You're not sure about that, but it probably did go back.

TRUMAN: They say it did, but I can't confirm it.

JOHNSON: Is that the only piece of equipment that you know of that probably was used on the farm prior to 1919?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Are there any items, any other items from the farm house or the equipment that might have been out in the barn, or in the shed, that might exist now that nobody knows about?

[23]

TRUMAN: Well, I've got a shotgun upstairs. In fact, I have two of them that were. One belonged to Uncle Harrison and the other, I think, to Papa Truman.

JOHNSON: This is Uncle Harrison, you say?

TRUMAN: Mamma Truman's brother.

JOHNSON: Is "Papa Truman" then John Anderson Truman, your father's dad?

TRUMAN: Yes. Both of the guns are muzzle loaders. Then I've got a kind of a staple puller device that he worked up. It's up there someplace.

JOHNSON: Was the staple puller used for fence posts?

TRUMAN: Yes, used for fencing.

JOHNSON: If they had to pull the old fence out of the posts or build new fence.

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: A homemade apparatus?

[24]

TRUMAN: Kind of, yes. You know, they talk about this knife that this blacksmith made Uncle Harry out of a file?

JOHNSON: That's probably in the records, but I can't recall that offhand.

TRUMAN: I think I've probably got that knife. It's still got the marks of the file on it. I think I've got it. It's out there in the garage.

JOHNSON: Have you thought about bringing some of that over some day for us to look at?

TRUMAN: Turn the thing off, and we'll go get it.

JOHNSON: Okay. Will you describe what you have?

TRUMAN: This is a fencing tool to drive staples or pull them out. And on the other end it appears to be a nail puller.

JOHNSON: What's the history on that as far as you know?

TRUMAN: I think that father's father made this.

[25]

JOHNSON: John Anderson Truman?

TRUMAN: John Anderson Truman made that. Now this trisquare, I don't know what the history of it particularly is, but it is part of the family.

JOHNSON: And that was used on the farm?

TRUMAN: Yes, it was used there I am sure. It's what they call a trisquare, so you can set any angle you need to. Set the angle that you need, and then you can duplicate your angle when you're cutting your materials.

JOHNSON: And then it folds into the handle.

We also have a little can here that says something about gunpowder, with a cork on the top.

TRUMAN: It's still got a little gunpowder in it.

JOHNSON: I think we're going to pour that out.

TRUMAN: I think I would. It's been well used. That's apparent by the fact that it's got a cork in it to stop it up.

[26]

JOHNSON: Was this used with those shotguns?

TRUMAN: I think it was, yes. I think it was. One of the shotguns belonged to Uncle Harrison. He had a horse that he called "Mr. Anderson," I believe it was. But the horse fell on the shotgun and broke the stock, and apparently at the same time broke one of the hammers because one of the hammers is different from the other. The shotgun that belonged to John Anderson Truman has one hammer missing.

JOHNSON: What did they use the shotguns for primarily out there on the farm?

TRUMAN: Well, they tell the story that Uncle Harrison had a bunch of dogs over there that caught Jack rabbits over there in that pasture. I don't know whether that is true or not. But they hunted with them. Yes, they hunted with them.

JOHNSON: Did they use rifles for hunting, too?

TRUMAN: I don't know of any rifles in the family.

[27]

JOHNSON: And then you have this knife.

TRUMAN: Well, that knife--Mamma Truman used it for a long time. It has a corncob handle. I was using it last summer and decided that I'd better do something before the corncob slipped off of it, so I put some black tape around the corncob and handle. I don't know for sure where it came from, but after reading one of these books I assume that this is the one that that blacksmith made Uncle Harry when he was a timekeeper on the railroad.

JOHNSON: And it was made from a file?

TRUMAN: It is made from a file, and you can still see the file marks on it here. You can still see some evidence of the teeth of the file,

JOHNSON: Do you think that corncob handle was originally on it?

TRUMAN: No, I think that it probably originally had a wooden handle because of the rivets here.

[28]

JOHNSON: Yes, I see what you mean.

TRUMAN: And Mamma Truman, I think, put the corncob on it.

JOHNSON: Now what use would this have had around the farm?

TRUMAN: Oh, just general cutting. Just general brush cutting, chopping corn--use it in place of a corn knife or anything else.

JOHNSON: They didn't have any sorghum cane?

TRUMAN: No, not that I know of.

We moved from what we called the "Good place" in 1930. We had stayed there three years, so we would have moved from the place on Grandview Road in about 1927. It was around 1920, I guess, when we moved there on Grandview Road. So, it was in the twenties that we farmed that place.

JOHNSON: What were your first chores, or first jobs, on the farm?

[29]

TRUMAN: Oh, milk, go get the cattle, and so forth.

JOHNSON: There is a story that they didn't like milking.

TRUMAN: Of course, when we lived down at Hickman, I used to ride and take my father's lunch out to him when he was on the road sometimes. I was on that old horse that they called "Bob Speck." Fa bought him from Mr. Bob Speck,

JOHNSON: We're trying to identify buildings, outbuildings for instance. Do you know of any aerial views, or photographs of the farm, or photographs that would show the outbuildings as well as the house?

TRUMAN: I don't know that I've got any pictures of that barn. There was a barn and a granary over there.

JOHNSON: You don't have the locations sketched out?

TRUMAN: I'll make a little sketch here of the locations.

[30]

JOHNSON: Okay.

TRUMAN: We'll put the house here, and there would be a garage here. The outhouse would be here; there would be a chicken house over in here, and the barn then would sit here. The granary would sit about here, and this hay barn--what we called the hay barn--would be sitting over like this. [See Appendices for sketches and photos.]

JOHNSON: That's at an angle north of the large barn.

TRUMAN: North of the big barn. There was a chicken house here for awhile, and then a garage on the front of that, and then our house sat in here. Then later we took this down and built a hen house out here.

JOHNSON: This is a hen house here?

TRUMAN: Yes, out there. And then we put the milk barn down here where the boys milked.

JOHNSON: Okay, the milk barn here.

TRUMAN: And this would be Mamma Truman's here.

[31]

JOHNSON: And this was...

TRUMAN: Well, it's a garage and hen house, and we tore down the hen house and moved it out here and down here.

JOHNSON: Oh, I see, you moved that hen house up here.

TRUMAN: Part of it there and part of it here.

JOHNSON: You had a garage here for awhile?

TRUMAN: Well, that garage is still there. Then this milk barn down here, and this hen house, these are part of this original hen house see.

JOHNSON: So that went over here.

TRUMAN: Yes. We milked in the hay barn until Harry and Gilbert started to sell milk.

JOHNSON: This was the large barn that burned?

TRUMAN: Yes, that's the barn that burned. And this is what we called the "hay barn" over here. [See interviewer's note at the end of the transcript text on the fate of the two barns.]

JOHNSON: Was that there as long as you can recall?

[32]

TRUMAN: Yes, that was there a long time.

JOHNSON: This large barn was built way back. It was supposed to have been built from timbers from the Hickman's Mill.

TRUMAN: From the mill at Hickman Mills.

JOHNSON: And it had all that walnut in it.

TRUMAN: Had walnut, two-foot wide boards.

JOHNSON: Did anyone ever salvage any lumber from that barn?

TRUMAN: Well, not much.

JOHNSON: Even a little bit goes a long way when there isn't anything else.

TRUMAN: I've got a walking stick from it, if I can find it.

JOHNSON: Do you think that if they got a metal detector out there that they would come up with something like remnants of harness or...

[33]

TRUMAN: No.

JOHNSON: What do you think may be under there?

TRUMAN: No, the only thing that you would find would be a bunch of square nails.

Now, let's go to the barn.

JOHNSON: Okay, I want this note here if I can have it too.

TRUMAN: Sure.

JOHNSON: This hen house was moved later?

TRUMAN: It was moved around the corner there--well, right over here a little ways.

JOHNSON: And this was the granary?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: And that had oats?

TRUMAN: Well, it was just two bins, one on each side, and a drive-through in the middle.

[34]

JOHNSON: Okay, did you have wheat?

TRUMAN: Basically corn. It was fixed so it would hold wheat and oats, some of the time.

JOHNSON: Basically corn, but sometimes oats and sometimes wheat?

TRUMAN: It was originally to hold corn, because you know it was slatted.

JOHNSON: It was kind of a crib?

TRUMAN: It was solid sheeting on the outside, but the cribs inside were slatted. They were horizontal slats spaced a few inches apart.

JOHNSON: Oh, I see. You might just call it a granary and corn crib?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: This is the inside of the barn?

TRUMAN: Well, I was doodling, but there were, I think, nine stalls on this side.

[35]

JOHNSON: That would be the west side.

TRUMAN: Nine stalls on this side.

JOHNSON: Okay, nine on the east side.

TRUMAN: There would be seven in here. There would be five on this side.

JOHNSON: And these were all horse stalls?

TRUMAN: Yes. This would be the crib.

JOHNSON: The crib; now that would be for corn?

TRUMAN: And this is a crib. When we were farming it, we used this part of it to hang our harness; this for corn; and this one we used for whatever, I don't know, this, that, and the other. I

was trying to figure out, but I think nine stalls are about right, because old Pete and Tom used to stand here.

JOHNSON: Right in the middle there.

TRUMAN: Yes. Then this alley here is the drive-through.

[36]

The feed alley's here, and then the entrance to them is like this.

JOHNSON: Okay now, the mangers...

TRUMAN: The mangers were here.

JOHNSON: Okay, so they were facing what you call the alley.

TRUMAN: Yes, they were facing the feed alley, and then the feed box was on each side of the manger like that. We had hay in here. And then there was an opening. The ladder was right here to the loft.

JOHNSON: That's the same layout as you have there?

TRUMAN: Yes, and this shows the doors here. This is a cistern here.

JOHNSON: That would be at the north...

TRUMAN: Northeast corner, and a trough sitting here. It was for watering the horses and mules, whatever.

[37]

JOHNSON: This is a cistern. The trough, was that kind of a water tank?

TRUMAN: No, just a water trough. Just a wooden trough about so deep and so wide and eight feet long. And then we had one of those regular cistern pumps in it and a pipe out to here.

JOHNSON: You never had a windmill?

TRUMAN: No.

JOHNSON: So it was a pump, electric pump?

TRUMAN: No, an old hand pump. You had these little buckets shaped like this on a chain; they would come up and dump water over into a bucket.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, I never used one of those.

TRUMAN: Well, the pump was shaped like this, and the cogwheel here. These ride over it and you got just a bucket here. A pipe ran out here to that, but it had a little can here that it dumped into as it came over.

[38]

JOHNSON: Did other farms have windmills around there?

TRUMAN: Not right close.

JOHNSON: Just not enough wind?

TRUMAN: Well, there was enough wind; we just never had one. I don't think there's any very close to there.

JOHNSON: That cistern is filled in?

TRUMAN: Yes. It fell in.

JOHNSON: It fell in, and then it was filled in I guess. Okay, in the loft you had the hay.

TRUMAN: Yes. Now here are the doors on it. Now there is a door over here. See, there's a door here, and a little door here into the alley--that's a rolling door--and this is a swinging door. This is a rolling door here.

JOHNSON: That just slid sideways?

[39]

TRUMAN: Yes, slid clear back to here, and then there was a door into the alley and a door into the...

JOHNSON: Okay, another rolling door?

TRUMAN: Yes, that's a rolling door, and then there is a rolling door right here.

JOHNSON: Okay, that would be on the...

TRUMAN: This is the east side. And this is where my team stayed.

JOHNSON: I see.. And this is a rolling door here.

TRUMAN: There were a couple of windows along here, just openings. And there were a couple of windows here.

JOHNSON: A couple down here.

TRUMAN: Yes, I think there were a couple of windows there, about four windows on the side.

JOHNSON: And these were probably the four pane...

TRUMAN: No, they were just openings, with board slide

[40]

closings. There was a board closure deal on them, that would slide back out of the way.

JOHNSON: This would be about the same on each side as far as windows are concerned.

TRUMAN: Yes, it would be about the same on each side as far as the doors and windows are concerned. The same doors on this end too.

JOHNSON: Okay, this is the end that we have pictures of.

TRUMAN: Probably, yes. I think that's it.

JOHNSON: Let me see if I don't have pictures of that. This is an article in 1979, in the Kansas City *Times*. This is the south side?

TRUMAN: Yes. And the north side would be similar to it, just an opposite end, but this, the way this picture's taken, it's out of proportion somehow. That's not that barn. That's not that barn, confound it! That's not that barn, is it? The barn

[41]

had been altered, so that may explain it.

JOHNSON: The article claims this is J. Vivian Truman's farm in Grandview. Built in 1868 by his grandfather, Solomon Young.

Do you remember loading hay or bringing hay into the barn?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: They did it the usual way with fork and ropes?

TRUMAN: Yes, either way. But I don't know where this picture came from. It doesn't look right at all.

Well, okay, here's this loft [points to his drawing]. I assume it would be about 60 x 90. There is the opening here and here and here that were over those feed alleys, so you brought the hay down through there and took it down and fed the stock.

JOHNSON: How about the center here?

TRUMAN: Well, this is just to indicate where the

[42]

center was.

JOHNSON: But these two lines here.

TRUMAN: Now as I recall, there is a straight piece here. Let me show you something else here. See this section. As I recall that section is like that, and that's the reason that doesn't look right. In other words, there is a straight piece inside that runs back a ways here. See, this is a vertical wall here for a ways.

JOHNSON: Okay, a vertical wall that went down both sides of the center section.

TRUMAN: As I recall it. Over the drive-through the floor was higher, and then it dropped down about two feet on each side, so that the side floors were lower than the center.

JOHNSON: Okay, the raised part was over the drive-through.

TRUMAN: That would be about ten feet wide. The

[43]

best I can remember, it would be about like this, about 60 x 90 feet.

JOHNSON: Did they have stones or bricks in the foundation for that barn?

TRUMAN: There was some someplace in it; I'm not sure.

JOHNSON: In other words, if we did a little excavating, we might be able to find the cornerposts?

TRUMAN: I've heard them say there was a basement there, but I never saw it. I don't know anything about it.

JOHNSON: You indicate a lot of stalls here, horse stalls.

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Now, did you have anyplace for milking cows?

TRUMAN: No, we used that hay barn when we milked the cows.

JOHNSON: This barn over here that was at an angle?

[44]

TRUMAN: Yes, we milked in this corner of that hay barn. That's where we milked after we moved back there. When we lived over on Grandview Road we had a little milk barn there that we milked in.

JOHNSON: I guess there were milk cows on the farm when he was there?

TRUMAN: Oh yes, one of the calves ran over him and broke his leg you know.

JOHNSON: Oh, that's right, yes.

TRUMAN: They had all kinds of cattle.

JOHNSON: But they milked mainly for their own use?

TRUMAN: Yes, I'm sure they did.

JOHNSON: What happened to that hay barn?

TRUMAN: I don't know. I don't remember, I haven't looked for a long time.

JOHNSON: You didn't have any sheep?

[45]

TRUMAN: Not very often.

JOHNSON: I had to take care of some sheep when I was a kid.

TRUMAN: We had some when we were over there on that Good place. Had one old ewe that wouldn't own either one of her lambs, and father knocked her down with a two by four. She got up and owned both of them.

JOHNSON: You had a few steers?

TRUMAN: No, just general cattle. Father traded cattle and mules and horses. He'd trade for anything he could haul or drag home.

JOHNSON: With all those stalls he had room to.

TRUMAN: When we were over there on that other place east of us, we had, I think, eighteen head of horses and mules in the field one day. Maybe more than that.

JOHNSON: I was told that during World War I somebody

[46]

out there penned them up at least temporarily on the Truman place. They were being sold to the Army.

TRUMAN: I don't know about that; it could be.

JOHNSON: Well, I appreciate having these drawings. Are there any other buildings, out-buildings, that you can think about that might not be on this drawing here?

TRUMAN: There was another foundation out there. I don't know what that was.

JOHNSON: North of the house?

TRUMAN: Yes, north of the house.

JOHNSON: Do you know anything about that garage? The story that I get is that it was the old Post Office.

TRUMAN: Yes, that's true.

JOHNSON: It's got that wallpaper still in there.

On this drawing of the barn...

[47]

TRUMAN: This is the section through it, see, the roof peaks out at each end, and then the track runs along here.

JOHNSON: It did have a metal track. All right, this would be the ridge pole. The track was used for bringing in hay?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: You hauled just loose hay that was taken off the hay rack and brought up by rope?

TRUMAN: You had a fork.

JOHNSON: You had a hay horse back here to pull it?

TRUMAN: From back here.

JOHNSON: Did you run the hay horse?

TRUMAN: Quite a bit. Old Pete, if you shut the barn door and just turned him loose, he'd come back. The one we used originally was a horse we called Pete. I drove him for a long time with the hay fork.

[48]

JOHNSON: Did you ever use a tractor later?

TRUMAN: No.

JOHNSON: Always used a horse?

TRUMAN: Always used a horse.

JOHNSON: Didn't use a team of horses either?

TRUMAN: Well, once in a great while we would use a team of mules, but generally just one.

JOHNSON: Did you have neighbors help you hay?

TRUMAN: No, just basically us. Of course, when they got to baling it, then they had somebody else.

JOHNSON: How long did you work on the farm there?

TRUMAN: I went until '42 I think it was.

JOHNSON: After you graduated from high school in Grandview you continued to work on the farm?

TRUMAN: When I wasn't in college, yes, or school someplace.

[49]

JOHNSON: You went to college after high school?

TRUMAN: Yes, in 1932 I went down to Warrensburg (Central Missouri State College).

JOHNSON: For how long?

TRUMAN: Oh, about three or four years. I flunked out of West Point, and then went back to Warrensburg.

JOHNSON: You did go to West Point?

TRUMAN: Yes.

[50]

JOHNSON: Where did you go after Warrensburg?

TRUMAN: Went to Washington, D.C. and attended George Washington University a couple of years.

JOHNSON: Did you get a degree then?

TRUMAN: No, I got the degree from Missouri University.

JOHNSON: At Columbia?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: What was your major?

TRUMAN: Engineering, electrical engineering.

JOHNSON: After you got your degree in electrical engineering what did you do?

TRUMAN: Went to Barbarton, Ohio, and worked for Babcock and Wilcox as a draftsman.

JOHNSON: How many years were you there?

TRUMAN: About six months, and then I went to TVA.

JOHNSON: In Tennessee?

TRUMAN: Yes, and then went into the Army in '42.

JOHNSON: You enlisted?

TRUMAN: No, I was drafted. I got out in '46 and was in three years and a half.

JOHNSON: What part of the Army?

TRUMAN: Corps of Engineers. In the Signal Corps originally, but then I went to OCS for the Engineers.

[51]

JOHNSON: What was your rank then when you finished?

TRUMAN: Second lieutenant.

JOHNSON: Where did you serve?

TRUMAN: Oh, just around the country, here, there and yonder.

JOHNSON: Were you involved in any of this construction, military construction, that the Truman Committee was so concerned about?

TRUMAN: No. They were too busy shipping me around.

Okay, here's the floor plan on that house. This would be the parlor. This is the living room or sitting room. There is a door here and there is a door here with a step here. A deep closet here, and a closet here. Now, I don't remember about any closet in this room. The piano was in there.

JOHNSON: Oh, this is the upright?

TRUMAN: Yes. It was in there. And some chairs, but

[52]

I don't remember much about them.

JOHNSON: Chairs, and a sofa?

TRUMAN: I'm not sure of that.

JOHNSON: Chairs over here?

TRUMAN: I don't know where they were. And then the stove was in this room.

JOHNSON: A wood stove?

TRUMAN: Well, wood and coal combination. I think there was a closet in there. In the hall there was an umbrella deal, you know, that sat there.

JOHNSON: Kind of like a hall tree?

TRUMAN: Hall tree and so forth, you know.

JOHNSON: Whatever happened to that?

TRUMAN: I think Martha Ann's got it.

JOHNSON: Your sister?

[53]

TRUMAN: Yes. That sat there. This is a stairway up here, to a landing here, and then back up there.

Now then, this roll top desk sat over here.

JOHNSON: Do you know where that is?

TRUMAN: One of J.C.'s children has it.

This is one of those crooked stairs into the basement. The basement was under this room here. The dining room table sat here. Then the kitchen out here. The kitchen that's out there now was built probably in the twenties, I think.

JOHNSON: The kitchen that's there now.

TRUMAN: The kitchen that's there now. The kitchen that was there originally, that I remember first, was about like this, about half that size. It sat up on rock piers and board blocks at the corners.

JOHNSON: Was there ever a fire in that kitchen?

[54]

TRUMAN: Not this one. The fire was from the house before.

JOHNSON: In the kitchen--could you sketch a larger picture of that?

TRUMAN: Cabinets are over on this side.

JOHNSON: On the north side are cabinets.

TRUMAN: Yes. I don't remember how the stove sat in there.

JOHNSON: Was the kitchen stove a coal or a wood stove?

TRUMAN: It was a wood stove, I think.

JOHNSON: With a reservoir at the side?

TRUMAN: Yes, I think so.

JOHNSON: We've got some recollections of that.

TRUMAN: I think that's what it was.

JOHNSON: Did they pump rain water into the kitchen at all?

[55]

TRUMAN: No.

JOHNSON: There was no cistern?

TRUMAN: The well was out here.

JOHNSON: All their water came from this well?

TRUMAN: Yes, they pumped it out here, with a regular pump. I think it sat just a little off center off there, off to the side of the walk.

JOHNSON: As you came into the kitchen, what would be the first thing you would probably see? I guess we're talking about the kitchen now after 1930. You wouldn't remember the original I suppose?

TRUMAN: Yes. The original was just about the same only smaller.

JOHNSON: Arrangement was about the same?

TRUMAN: About the same, only smaller. The cabinets on the north side, as I recall.

[56]

JOHNSON: Then the stove presumably would have been right there next to the chimney wouldn't it?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Then the table would have been over here?

TRUMAN: That thing doesn't look right. Actually, the original kitchen just about centered on this room. The original kitchen just about centered on this room, and the chimney was in the center of the kitchen on the east end of the house.

JOHNSON: Centered on the dining room here?

TRUMAN: Yes, a stove sat here in the dining room, and the dining room and living room stoves fed to a chimney.

JOHNSON: What kind of a stove was that, do you recall, in the dining room?

TRUMAN: It was one of these box stoves.

[57]

JOHNSON: Cast iron? Or did it have the metal envelope around it?

TRUMAN: No, not originally.

JOHNSON: A squarish cast iron?

TRUMAN: Yes, kind of a box stove, they called them. I've got one downstairs.

JOHNSON: I suppose there's no way of knowing what happened to these stoves.

TRUMAN: Oh no.

JOHNSON: Are there any other things in here that you can locate that might still exist?

TRUMAN: No, not down here. This stairway went up here to the second floor, and it's one of those crooked stairways. And all along the stairway against the wall there was a bunch of cabinets. They opened out into the dining room. There's a door here that opens onto the back porch. Well, it was an open porch, I believe,

[58]

but when we had this original kitchen, it didn't come out to this corner, as I recall. I'm not sure.

On the front porch there was a swing. I don't know where it was for sure. Then, upstairs--this is Mamma Truman's bedroom here to the north, and Aunt Mary's to the south, over here. The entrance doors were here. You had this landing and then walked back and Mamma Truman's bedroom was here and I'm not just sure where the dresser was, but it must have been right in here, because she used to set the lamp on it and make all kinds of animals on the wall, on this wall.

JOHNSON: Animals, wall?

TRUMAN: Yes. You know, with your hands, shadows from the lamp at night.

JOHNSON: Oh, I see. This was a little hallway out here between the two bedrooms.

TRUMAN: Yes, a pretty good sized hallway. This was

[59]

just the railing around the stairwell.

JOHNSON: We're still upstairs. Do you remember any other furniture in there?

TRUMAN: No, I don't. There was a chair or two in there and a few things like that, but that's all.

JOHNSON: And her bed was right here.

TRUMAN: I think there was a chair and a dresser in each one of them. This is the upstairs over the dining room, and the stairway came up here from downstairs.

JOHNSON: And opened right into this big room here.

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was this squared off here?

TRUMAN: No, no it's not.

JOHNSON: There's a set-back there.

[60]

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: What was this room used for?

TRUMAN: Well, I think Uncle Harry slept up there, and the boys slept up there when they were at home, but when I was there it wasn't used for anything but storage.

JOHNSON: According to an interview with Mrs. Hannah Clements Montgomery, this was the room that your Uncle Harry had used as a bedroom while he was on the farm.

TRUMAN: Yes. That's right.

JOHNSON: In other words, he had this very large room here?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: He had his uncle there; your dad was there for a number of years. Where did they put everybody?

TRUMAN: There.

[61]

JOHNSON: Probably just sort of like a...

TRUMAN: Dormitory. I think so.

JOHNSON: But no partitions; it was always open as far as you know?

TRUMAN: As far as I know. By the way, I've got Uncle Harrison's fishing rod downstairs.

JOHNSON: You have his fishing rod, too, and you've got his shotgun. What else do you have of Harrison's?

TRUMAN: I've got a cigar bottle.

JOHNSON: A cigar bottle?

TRUMAN: If I can think where that is I'll show it to you.

JOHNSON: Well, that sounds like a collector's item.

TRUMAN: Yes, I think it is.

JOHNSON: Okay, you say there was just storage or something over the kitchen?

[62]

TRUMAN: Nothing over the kitchen that I know of, just attic.

JOHNSON: We talked about the stoves. We've talked about the hall tree. Any particular chairs or tables that stand out in your mind?

TRUMAN: Yes. The daughter of Harry's hired hand has one of the bed and dresser sets.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

TRUMAN: I don't know, but it's their hired hand. See, when Aunt Mary got that new bedroom suite she gave the old one to this daughter of Harry's hired hand. By the way, I think Martha Ann has Aunt Mary's bed and dresser. I am not sure who has which of the two bedroom sets.

JOHNSON: Where does your sister live?

TRUMAN: Oskaloosa, Kansas.

JOHNSON: Do you remember any colors, like the wallpaper patterns, or prevailing colors inside the house?

[63]

TRUMAN: No.

JOHNSON: There was wallpaper?

TRUMAN: Yes, it was papered. I think it was all papered except the kitchen. I think the kitchen was painted, but it was kind of an ivory, I think, or something like that. The colors just don't register with me too much.

JOHNSON: The piano, the upright, whereabouts is that?

TRUMAN: I don't have any idea.

JOHNSON: We have an upright that Harry Truman is supposed to have practiced on when he was young, but I'm not sure that that's the one that came out of the house.

TRUMAN: I don't know. I don't know where that piano went, where it is. You see, Aunt Mary kept that piano, I think, until Uncle Harry sent her that spinet that they've got down there at the Library, that all the companies went together and made for him.

[64]

JOHNSON: That's the one that was made from wood from many different countries?

TRUMAN: Well, different companies anyway.

JOHNSON: I think the newspaper people gave him that one.

TRUMAN: I don't know, but Aunt Mary had it a long time. I think that the piano that was at the house is the one that that replaced. Perhaps you could find out the switch there.

JOHNSON: It would be nice to have that.

TRUMAN: I don't remember when that was given to Aunt Mary. I don't know what happened to her piano at that time.

JOHNSON: Also out at the farm there are some columns that are made of stone.

TRUMAN: The cornerposts?

JOHNSON: Is that what they were for, to support gates?

[65]

TRUMAN: Yes, those out along Grandview Road?

JOHNSON: They're still there. They are still standing, sort of stand by themselves.

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do they mark where the main gates were?

TRUMAN: Yes, that's right,

JOHNSON: That's about all that's left of the fences and some of the outbuildings, isn't it?

TRUMAN: Well, let's see, the rock fence isn't even there anymore is it, on the south side?

JOHNSON: I didn't notice any out there.

TRUMAN: Well, the road running right through there, I think, is right on the line.

JOHNSON: Well, if there is anything else that you can recollect about the farm that we haven't covered...

[66]

TRUMAN: There should be a couple of those posts there at the corners of the yard.

JOHNSON: Now there is one that, as I recall, is behind the garage, to the east of the garage.

TRUMAN: Are there two of them?

JOHNSON: Yes.

TRUMAN: Well, that's the end of the chicken yard, and the garden was from there down to the barn lot.

JOHNSON: Okay, you had a garden,

TRUMAN: A big garden in there, with a few fruit trees, on the north side of it more or less.

The fence for this chicken yard went from here up like this; it was an "L" shaped chicken yard. These posts are out a little further; they are out behind the chicken house. The back of the chicken house lined up like this.

JOHNSON: Okay, I see, so that chicken house should be

[67]

right about here actually. And then this fence came down here then?

TRUMAN: Came back here ...

JOHNSON: Oh, came all the way back out here, north of the house?

TRUMAN: Yes, north of the house, to this post that was sitting over there.

JOHNSON: And then it came back this way?

TRUMAN: Yes, but the post was on this corner. The post was there.

JOHNSON: And then it came back this way?

TRUMAN: Came back down here, yes.

JOHNSON: North of the house?

TRUMAN: Yes, north of the house, there was quite a little distance here.

JOHNSON: I see.

[68]

TRUMAN: Probably twenty or thirty feet out here. It's not in proportion.

JOHNSON: But this is all fence. And so the garden was inside the fence?

TRUMAN: Yes, the garden was fenced. And in the barn lot, the barn would be back further, because the barn sat here. There was a lot in front of the barn, but this went right straight on down here, see.

JOHNSON: Oh, the fence came up to the corner of the barn?

TRUMAN: The barn would sit there. The granary would sit here like this, and the fence would come up like this. Then the garden would be in here like this. The chicken yard would be like this; the house would sit in here about like this, and the yard fence would come on over here. Then the toilet was sitting in here, and the garage sat about like this.

[69]

JOHNSON: So this is the driveway?

TRUMAN: The hitching post was right here.

JOHNSON: You had a hitching post there?

TRUMAN: Yes. I pulled that post.

JOHNSON: What happened to that post?

TRUMAN: It was a hedge post. It had a ring on it. The chicken house sat in here, with a couple of posts here. Then there were a couple of posts here. There's an old foundation in here, and there are some seedling peach trees in that.

JOHNSON: Is that part of that original house, the foundation?

TRUMAN: I don't know what that was.

JOHNSON: The story is that they built this house on the original foundation.

TRUMAN: Wait a minute, there was a smokehouse out here too. That's long gone.

[70]

JOHNSON: That went in the thirties maybe?

TRUMAN: I don't know what happened to that, but there was a smokehouse there.

JOHNSON: They smoked hams out there?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: How about the field just south of the house?

TRUMAN: Well, corn, wheat, and oats were grown there.

JOHNSON: You rotated?

TRUMAN: Somewhat, yes.

JOHNSON: Did you have clover?

TRUMAN: No, we didn't have much clover. We had some timothy hay over here...

JOHNSON: Some timothy over on the north side?

TRUMAN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did they usually plant oats and then let the

[71]

clover come up later after they had harvested the oats?

TRUMAN: We didn't do that very much. We didn't plant clover very much. We had some alfalfa for awhile, too; tried to get some alfalfa going.

JOHNSON: When your Uncle Harry was farming there, do you have any idea what the main crops would have been?

TRUMAN: The main crop would have been corn.

JOHNSON: Corn, but some wheat too.

TRUMAN: I think so.

JOHNSON: And oats.

TRUMAN: I imagine so.

JOHNSON: But no soybeans back in those days?

TRUMAN: Well, I don't think they did raise much soybeans then.

[72]

JOHNSON: Can you remember planting soybeans in the thirties, for instance?

TRUMAN: No. Well, we did put some soybeans out once in awhile but we never did have much luck with them.

JOHNSON: Would that have come later, around World War II?

TRUMAN: Well, close to it, yes.

JOHNSON: Thank you. We appreciate your assistance.

[73]

## INDEX

Agricultural Hall of Fame, 3  
Amarugia, Missouri, 7, 20

Babcock and Wilcox, 50  
Belton, Missouri, 1, 8  
Blue Ridge Boulevard, 5  
Bryant family, 5-6

Campbell, Curtis, 1, 5, 6, 11  
Campbell, Grandmother, 5-6  
Central Missouri State College, 49  
Clements' farm, 8  
Cottingham farm, 15  
Curtis, Callie Louise, 4

Duck Road, Grandview, Missouri, 2

Farmall tractor, 19

George Washington University, 49  
Grandview, Missouri, 1, 8, 10, 13, 15  
Grandview Road, Grandview, Missouri, 2, 8-9, 13, 15, 28

Harrisonville, Missouri, 7  
Hen House, Kansas City, Missouri, 5  
Hickman Mills, Missouri, 1, 8, 29, 32  
Hickman Mills School, 13  
High Grove Road, Grandview, Missouri, 18

John Deere Tractor, 21

Kansas City, Missouri, 20  
Kansas City *Times*, 40

Prospect Street, Kansas City, Missouri, 6

Ruskin Heights, Kansas City, Missouri, 9-10  
Ruskin High School, Kansas City, Missouri, 5, 13

Speck, Bob, 29  
Swope Parkway, Kansas City, Missouri, 1, 5, 6

Tennessee Valley Authority, 50

Truman, Fred L.:

background of, 1, 48-49

discusses family farm of Harry S. Truman, 14-16, 17-47, 51

Truman, Mrs. Fred (Audrey), 4, 5

[74]

Truman, Gilbert Vivian, 4, 9, 31

Truman, Harry, 19

Truman, Harry S., 4, 11, 12, 21, 27, 31, 71

and the family of, 14-16, 17-47, 51

hand plow of, 3-4, 13

Truman, John Anderson , 23, 25, 26

Truman, John Curtis, 4, 53

Truman, John Vivian, 1, 2, 6, 13, 20, 23, 41

Truman, Louella, 1, 2

Truman, Margaret, 11

Truman, Martha, 10, 11

Truman, Martha Ann, 4, 13, 52-53

University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, 49

Warrensburg, Missouri, 49

Washington, D.C., 49

West Point, 49

Young, Harrison, 23, 26

Young, Solomon, 10, 41