

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

WITH

ARDIS HAUKENBERRY

JUNE 20, 1983

MARCH 2, 1984

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY RON COCKRELL

ORAL HISTORY #1983-1, 1984-1

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4055-4056, 4072-407-3

***REVISED TRANSCRIPT***

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



## **EDITORIAL NOTICE**

These are transcripts of tape-recorded interviews conducted for Harry S Truman National Historic Site. In 1984 the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service released a transcript of these interviews. In 2001 Harry S Truman NHS decided to prepare a revised version of these transcripts for two reasons: first, since the Cockrell interviews early in the park's history, many more oral history interviews have been conducted, and the park wishes for the transcripts to be consistent in appearance; second, a review of the 1984 transcripts revealed significant differences in the editorial method used then in Omaha to the method used subsequently in the park. Readers who compare the two versions of the transcripts will notice that significant material was omitted from the 1984 transcripts, perhaps because it was deemed irrelevant to the purpose of the interview. The park believes that restoring this missing information more accurately reflects the atmosphere of the interviews and adds to the historical usefulness of the transcripts.

These transcripts follow as closely as possible the recorded interview, including the usual starts, stops, and other rough spots in typical conversation. The reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word. Stylistic matters, such as punctuation and capitalization, follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14<sup>th</sup> edition. The transcript includes bracketed notices at the end of one tape and the beginning of the next so that, if desired, the reader can find a section of tape more easily by using this transcript.

Perky Beisel reformatted the 1984 transcripts in summer 2001. Jim Williams revised the transcripts in summer 2003 by listening to the original interview recordings. Grants from Eastern National Park and Monument Association funded the revised edition of these interviews.

## **RESTRICTION**

Researchers may read, quote from, cite, and photocopy these transcripts without permission for purposes of research only. Publication is prohibited, however, without permission from the Superintendent, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

## ABSTRACT

Ardis Ragland Haukenberry was the granddaughter of Joseph Tilford and Ella Truman Noland and the second cousin of Harry S Truman. She grew up at 216 N Delaware, across the street from the Gates-Wallace family after moving in along with her mother and siblings in 1904 following the death of her father. Her memories provide a firsthand glimpse into the ongoing changes of the neighborhood and relationships of the people around her home. Part one of her interview focuses on the Noland-Ragland family's relationship with the Gates-Wallace family. She discusses physical changes to the neighborhood landscape and structures over the years including exterior changes to the house and grounds at 219 N Delaware, the renaming and widening of Van Horn [Truman Road], and her married life. Most of part two is a discussion of her family background and the history of her childhood home. She briefly mentions the Wallace-Truman family relationships, George Porterfield Gates' funeral, and Harry and Bess' parenting of Margaret.

Persons mentioned: Dr. Allen, Mrs. Allen, Noreen Allen, Thomas Hart Benton, Francis Marion Cockrell, Margaret Truman Daniel, Vietta Garr, Sue Gentry, Herbert Howard Haukenberry, Robert Lockwood, Ella Noland, Ethel Noland, Joseph Tilford Noland, Nellie Tilford Noland, Pat O'Brien, Mary Paxton, Matthew Paxton, Bud Porter, The Quinlins, Robert Verner Ragland, Tom Richter, Elizabeth Ann Swift, Mr. Swift, Bess Truman, Harry Truman, Mary Jane Truman, Frank Wallace, Fred Wallace, George Wallace, May Wallace, Mrs. Wallace [Madge], Natalie Wallace, Dr. Watson.

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

### ARDIS HAUKENBERRY

HSTR INTERVIEW #1983-1

[MICHAEL SHAVER: This is the first reel of an interview with Ardis Haukenberry at her home at 216 N. Delaware in Independence, Missouri. The interview was conducted on June 14, 1983, by Ron Cockrell, a historian with the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska. The interview was conducted for the Harry S Truman National Historic Site.]

RON COCKRELL: Good afternoon, Mrs. Haukenberry. Are you prepared to answer all my questions about the Truman house?

ARDIS HAUKENBERRY: Yes, I am. Your name, Cockrell, sounds familiar.

COCKRELL: My great-great-great uncle was Senator Francis [Marion] Cockrell.

HAUKENBERRY: Sure, couldn't think of the name for a minute, but that's right.

COCKRELL: He served in the senate from Missouri for about thirty years.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, that's quite a famous name, and a famous person.

COCKRELL: He was a very good Democrat [laughter], so that helps. Let's see, perhaps a good point to start would be to ask you your earliest recollections of the house.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, really, I was *here* before the Wallaces were *there* [pointing across the street]. My mother was widowed early. My father died as a result of sitting in damp clothes during, or after, the 1903 flood in Kansas City. He worked in the Santa Fe [railroad] offices and he was damp all day long. After the evening, he was kind of

marooned there. He had to stay, and so he got pneumonia which went into tuberculosis. He went to Arizona first and then to different parts of California for help. An aunt went with him. She was sort of a...not a certified nurse, but good help, and she went with him. He died in Indio, California, when I was only five.

COCKRELL: What year would that have been?

HAUKENBERRY: I was born in 1899, so that was 1904, just died the year after the flood. And then my mother, whose parents owned this house at that time, came back here with me and my brother—who just recently died—and my sister was born a month after my father's funeral. So the three of us grew up right here, and the Wallaces at that time lived down the street farther where the Grahams later moved. And now I think it's a...I can't think of the name now, just right off the bat. That's my trouble: names escape me. There was a big old tree that had a branch, a limb that went out straight from the trunk and up, and Bess always played on that limb. [chuckling] She was a regular tomboy anyway. And so, then, Mr. Wallace died, a suicide, and Mrs. Wallace then came with her brood of four. She had three boys and a girl, and lived with the Gateses, her parents.

COCKRELL: Was that immediately following the death of Mr. Wallace?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. And I don't know the date of that, but it was a little after 1904 or 5, I'm sure, because I was here when they came up here.

And then there was the younger boy, youngest boy, Fred Wallace, and I were the same age and played, well, went to the same high school and graduated together. And he was a kind of an astronomer [chuckling], not a scientific one, just, just one. And when Haley's comet came over, he and I crawled out on that top roof, and one of those windows, you know, those dormer windows, we climbed out that and sat out on the edge of the roof and watched Haley's comet. [laughing] That was crazy.

But I think the date of the original house is on that plaque over there [referring to the bicentennial marker in the front yard of 219 N. Delaware], isn't it?

COCKRELL: I think so. I haven't really checked it.

HAUKENBERRY: I don't know. Well I told [Tom] Richter that the one that would have the authentic information for you would be Pat O'Brien [Independence Historic Preservation Officer].

COCKRELL: Pat O'Brien, yes, he's been a big help.

HAUKENBERRY: Has he?

COCKRELL: Yes, yes.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I hope he helped you enough so that you've got what you wanted.

COCKRELL: I'm basically talking to friends and relatives trying to piece together different parts of the story about the house.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, one of the interesting things I think about the house is, I'm

sure that porch on the south was already there when I came. I'm not sure, but it might have been added. But anyway, that's where Mr. and Mrs. Gates always sat.

COCKRELL: On the south porch?

HAUKENBERRY: South porch. Mrs. Wallace came with four children, and they were older people. And I guess the noise and the disturbances and everything bothered them, and so they stayed over there. Anyway, it hasn't been a very happy family.

COCKRELL: Oh. What do you mean by "not very happy"?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, not too congenial, I would say. They just didn't have the same interests in anything. Our people and their people were always friendly, on the friendliest terms, and always exchanging desserts or something. And if anybody got sick, sure as shootin' there'd be something come across from the Wallace-Gates family, and the same here. But we had more illnesses than they did, child diseases and so forth.

But anyway, I know that the back porch was added later. I'm sure of that. But that was a godsend because Bess just almost lived out there.

COCKRELL: Did she?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. She loved that porch. And of course sometimes she was on the front porch, the one that goes around on the north side with the west side. She'd play croquet with Fred and me, but she always

beat us so we didn't care whether she played or not.

COCKRELL: She was always pretty athletic.

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, very. A championship tennis player. She was good. She had so many suitors, one after another. Mrs. Wallace was very much in favor of one special one. She didn't think Harry'd ever amount to a nickel, to anything. Of course he didn't have anything at the time. He didn't have any money and no job, really. Not a big job anyway. So she never did think so. And I've always thought how unfortunate it was that she had to live with them in Washington because it was misery for her, I'm sure.

COCKRELL: She didn't really enjoy that?

HAUKENBERRY: No. And Harry tried his best to get in her graces, but didn't have much luck. But, he sure made it with Bess.

COCKRELL: Yes, I guess he did.

HAUKENBERRY: I read some of the letters that he wrote while he was in Europe and they were most interesting.

COCKRELL: Yes, they are.

HAUKENBERRY: Some of the people that I run around with said that they thought that was an invasion of privacy to have them printed. Well I can't see that it makes any difference. They're both gone, and it's something that the country wants to know about.

COCKRELL: It's a part of history.

HAUKENBERRY: It's an outstanding romance, I think. I could see nothing wrong

with it. In fact, I spent one whole afternoon at the library reading some of the letters. [At this point in the interview, Tom Richter, ranger-in-charge, came to the door of the Haukenberry home, and entered the front sitting parlor. Greetings are exchanged.]

TOM RICHTER: I got tied up. I was giving a program at the Kiwanis Club.

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, for goodness sake.

RICHTER: They took so long deciding how to get new members that by the time I gave my program it was pretty late.

HAUKENBERRY: What did you talk about? The house?

RICHTER: Just about the house, mainly what we plan to do there. This is a beautiful house here!

COCKRELL: It's nice.

HAUKENBERRY: This one?!

COCKRELL: This one's very nice.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, it's just about the same vintage as theirs, but *far less* elaborate. Theirs has about nineteen rooms and this one has six—there's four right straight in a row. This room, that room, a dining room, a kitchen. And then part of this house was added to it.

COCKRELL: How long ago?

HAUKENBERRY: About 1950, but I don't have any recollection of when they did any of the other [the Truman home]. I know the back porch was the last that they added, but I think there must have been something added on the north side, too. I just can't figure out how or when, but I do

know it's been changed. I don't know whether there were any changes inside or not. I've been all over the house, but then I just wasn't paying any attention to any house at that time!

COCKRELL: Really, the front of the house hasn't really changed all that much then.

HAUKENBERRY: No, it hasn't. No, it's the way it was when I first knew about it. Of course, the Gateses lived there, see, first, then when Bess, I mean Mrs. Wallace came with Bess and the three brothers, why that was a change.

COCKRELL: You say you remember when they moved in. That was right after his death.

HAUKENBERRY: Just about 1906, I would say.

COCKRELL: I think, what, Mr. Wallace died in 1903? Is that...?

RICHTER: I'm not sure.

HAUKENBERRY: I don't remember either. I've read it and read it.

COCKRELL: Yes, I believe it was June of 1903.

HAUKENBERRY: Nineteen what?

COCKRELL: 1903.

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, well, he died then before my father did.

COCKRELL: You said your father died in 1904, right?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh.

COCKRELL: Okay. And you were living in this house then?

HAUKENBERRY: Huh?

COCKRELL: Were you living in this house then when it happened?

HAUKENBERRY: No. No. No, not then. We came back... After the funeral, you see, my mother—they were living in Kansas City. In fact, they eloped to get married, my father and mother. And they were married in '98. I was born in '99. And so she came back in 19, well, in 1904, sometime in 1904. Now I don't have any month now. But anyway she was here at that time with the two children and the other one that was born later.

COCKRELL: And was that this house?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh.

COCKRELL: Okay. Okay.

HAUKENBERRY: This was the Noland house.

COCKRELL: The Noland house.

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Tilford Noland. *T* in the other names means *Truman*, but not in that one. [laughing] I thought that Mr. Wallace died after father, but I could be wrong. I just don't know. Of course, he was older than father. My father was just a young man. He died at thirty.

COCKRELL: That is young.

HAUKENBERRY: So I may be wrong about that date. It's in some of the books that I've read, so I could find it if I needed it.

COCKRELL: Do you remember when the iron fence was put up?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. When the tourists began to swarm. [chuckling]

COCKRELL: Okay, is that a...Do you remember the year for that?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, let's see. When did Harry come back from Washington?

COCKRELL: '53. January of '53 is when he came back.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, of course, it didn't go up then. Not that soon. But about 1955 anyway. And he paid for it.

COCKRELL: He paid for it.

HAUKENBERRY: But the tourists were just swarming and they just wanted everything. And so they decided that they'd have to have some protection because they'd romp over the grounds, you know. [chuckling] Maybe May told you this story. I think it's the funniest that I've heard. There was one woman that came and knocked on May's door, and she said, "Mrs. Wallace, couldn't you go beyond the fence over there and get me some, a cup or something full of dirt out of that yard?" She said, "I'm making a flower bed of dirt from famous places." [laughter] May said, "Well, I'm sorry but I can't. The fence is the dividing line. I can't go over there, but I said my dirt's just the same as theirs, and I'll give you some of it." She took it!

RICHTER: Did she?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, I just, I think that's the funniest thing I know of.

COCKRELL: What people won't go for to get souvenirs.

HAUKENBERRY: I could see picking up leaves or a branch off of a tree or something.

COCKRELL: Or a flower.

HAUKENBERRY: A flower. Press it or something, but I never thought of dirt. May just was flabbergasted. She said, "I've had the funniest [unintelligible word] I've ever heard." I agreed with her.

COCKRELL: Do you remember a booth being built in the back yard for the Secret Service men to use?

HAUKENBERRY: No. I think they just lived in the, what was used to be the barn. And they did have a camper, I guess you'd call it, a mobile home. They had it there themselves.

COCKRELL: Oh, really? Where was that located?

HAUKENBERRY: Down there in the driveway.

COCKRELL: In the driveway?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. Just in the front of the barn.

COCKRELL: You call it a barn. Did it have animals in it at one time?

HAUKENBERRY: I guess it did because it had a carriage.

COCKRELL: A carriage. So they had horses?

HAUKENBERRY: I didn't know it. It must have been earlier than I would know, but I did see the carriage. Of course, then they had turned it into the garage for the cars.

COCKRELL: Do you know when that would have been? Because I know now they have modern garage doors on it.

HAUKENBERRY: It does have?

COCKRELL: Yes, the pull-down kind.

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, yes. Well, no, it must have been in the teens sometime, but I can't place it. I know that the garage was in action when Harry lived in Grandview because he drove back and forth with his car and he put it in there when I was here. Sometimes he'd stay all night over here. He'd come here first and get all freshened up before he went to see his lady love. And sometimes he'd come back over here and stay all night and go home.

He was very fond of his Aunt Ella. I did have a whole package of letters that he had written to her, but they're in the Truman Library, too, somewhere. But they won't ever be published because there's not that kind of news in them. It's just family news. But this romance is something else. I thoroughly agree that it ought to have been published. I couldn't go along with the people that objected, because I think it's something for the whole country to know about.

RICHTER: Right, it tells you more about the man.

HAUKENBERRY: Kind of like Robert and Elizabeth Browning. And that's certainly been read plenty. So anything as famous as that should be in book form. And I think that Mr. Ferrell is a good one to do it. He's a digger if I ever saw one. [laughter]

COCKRELL: He's very dedicated.

HAUKENBERRY: He just goes to the bottom of things, you know. He's given me two or three books, I think three now. And I told him I wanted his

autograph, and he said, “That isn’t important. It’s just me.” Is he still there, or do you know?

COCKRELL: Yes, he’s still in the research room.

RICHTER: Working away.

HAUKENBERRY: [laughing] He’s the one that got me out there for one afternoon, and I read, well, I guess about three hours, I read letters. Harry was so uncertain about whether he’d get to stay in the army or not, or whether he’d get to see active duty. All of that was in the letters that I read. It was just before he did actually go across, but it was interesting. I enjoyed it. And Mr. Ferrell’s daughter was with him that day. I took them both out to Furrs for supper. Every time he sees me, he says, “Well, I’m going to repay you. I’m going to repay you. I’m going to take you to supper.” He says, “I’ll call you.” So that’s one reason I wondered if he was still there.

COCKRELL: He’s still there.

RICHTER: We’ll remind him, I’ll remind him about the...

HAUKENBERRY: [laughter] You don’t need to. I just thought about that. But when we had the wreath laying at the library Sunday, of course he was there, and came along in the hallway and I had my nephew with me that time and I introduced them and they got off onto this dinner business. He said he’d get Liz [Safly] and call me and we’d go to dinner. I can’t get used to calling her Liz. She was Elizabeth as long as I’ve known her. So Liz, I don’t know, may fit her. I

don't know.

COCKRELL: Do you recall anything about the roof on the house? It used to be a slate roof and now it's [asphalt] shingle. Do you know when that was changed?

HAUKENBERRY: No! I thought it was still slate.

RICHTER: That's why I think it was something recent, like either late 50s or early 60s.

COCKRELL: And I also know that the house was not always white.

HAUKENBERRY: Wasn't it?

COCKRELL: No, it was gray until April 1945. They painted it white. Do you remember when it was gray?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, it was a light gray if it was, but I don't think that I really knew that it was any different. I didn't know that. So that goes back a ways I guess. But the same painter painted their house that painted this one.

COCRELL: Oh, really?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh.

COCKRELL: One single man? Only one person?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh.

COCKRELL: Okay.

HAUKENBERRY: Mr. [Robert] Sanders.

RICHTER: Is he still around?

HAUKENBERRY: No, he's retired, sadly.

RICHTER: Where does he live now?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, he still lives here, but they're going to travel. He just quit. His son, his son-in-law who lives in Blue Springs, I think it is—it could be Lee's Summit, but I think it's Blue Springs—is carrying on. But I'm not having him do it this time. I've got to get the house painted before next year, because I've got to shine. [chuckling]

COCKRELL: That's right. The centennial.

HAUKENBERRY: Have to be ready for that. But I have a couple of young men that are out of work and they're doing painting, and so I'm going to have them do it.

RICHTER: Good.

HAUKENBERRY: You know that brick house up on Maple that's being restored.

RICHTER: Uh huh.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, the son of that couple. He has a son of his own. He's kind of young, according to me, and then he has a pal who's been doing painting, a lot of painting. So they're going to work together as soon as the weather straightens out so they can. They both worked the iron [unintelligible] and both got laid off, you know. And he cuts the grass, when it needs it, because it does now. Yes it does. He did it just once so far, but they're very good workmen. And they're sure fixing that old house up there. I think what he's doing now is going to be a great improvement, taking off that style of paint and making the cracks show. I don't know what you call it,

but it has a name. Well, we're not getting very far with the house, are we?

COCKRELL: [To Richter] Do you have any questions?

RICHTER: Did you talk about the fire?

COCKRELL: The fire. No!

RICHTER: Did you ever hear any stories about a fire up in the attic a long time ago?

HAUKENBERRY: No.

RICHTER: Because there is, up in the attic, there is some remains of that—some of the ceiling is sort of burnt.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, for goodness sake!

RICHTER: And we just wondered how long ago a fire took place.

HAUKENBERRY: I have no idea. I can't imagine.

COCKRELL: You never heard anybody say anything about a fire?

HAUKENBERRY: No. Never heard the fire engine or anything!

RICHTER: We think it might have gone clear back to the Gates period, way back, a long time ago.

HAUKENBERRY: It may have been. I just never knew anything about it myself. Did May [Wallace]?

COCKRELL: No, she didn't.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, then, it was before [unintelligible] or she would have known it. She's right close to it, you know, and I'm across the street, the street between us, but she's in the same ground.

COCKRELL: Do you know anything about the lamppost out there on the lawn?

HAUKENBERRY: It hasn't been there too long.

COCKRELL: Really?

HAUKENBERRY: No. You mean the gas...?

COCKRELL: Yeah. Did Mr. Truman have that put up?

HAUKENBERRY: Nooooo. Well, he must have. He was there anyway, but whether he had it done or Mrs. Wallace did, I don't know. But I imagine she did. Because, well, I don't think he had too much authority when she was living there.

COCKRELL: So it wasn't put in after he retired?

HAUKENBERRY: It wasn't?

COCKRELL: It was put in before.

HAUKENBERRY: Was it?

COCKRELL: I don't know. [chuckling]

HAUKENBERRY: I don't think so. I think it was put in a little after the fence.

COCKRELL: After the fence?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. I remember watching the men work with it, but I can't pinpoint the dates, year. But I think that's true. Well, there was a time when so many people put in gas lamps in the front. May Wallace put hers in about the same time that he did, or that they did. She had one. They just thought that was a little safety precaution.

But honest to goodness, I never saw the like of tourists

now. And I didn't believe it would continue like this, but big buses, trailers, campers...

RICHTER: Mr. Truman is still very popular.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, don't tell me! I hear it all the time! [laughing]

RICHTER: Probably wishing he was back.

HAUKENBERRY: I do, too. Good land, I sure do, and most of them do, too. They say, "He was a fine one; wish we had him yet." But there was a time when he wasn't that popular.

RICHTER: I know.

HAUKENBERRY: When we went to Washington for the D.A.R. conference one year—well I went twice—but this one year was when he was very unpopular for some reason. Oh, they just didn't think he was going to amount to anything. And, so, we didn't any of us say that we were from Independence. We were from Kansas City!

COCKRELL: Oh. Do you know what was done with the house when the Trumans were in Washington? Was there anybody staying in there?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, yes. Vietta was there most of the time. Vietta was the colored help. She started with my grandmother. She worked for her quite a while. And then when they needed help, why, we didn't need it so much, and so Vietta went to them. And she's the one that went to Washington with her. She was there all the time. She had a little home of her own on the east side of town, but she stayed

there. And I don't think there was anybody else that stayed in the house. Well, Mrs. Wallace, if she was home at the time, why, there wouldn't have been anybody else. With Bess and Harry and Mrs. Wallace all in Washington, it would have had to be one of the sons and they were all three married at the time. Fred was the last one to go and he married and went to Denver. And George was May's husband, and Frank married Natalie Wallace, and they lived in the house next door to May. The Gateses gave ground to all three of them, but Fred didn't take his. He took the money.

RICHTER: Oh, I was wondering why he didn't...

HAUKENBERRY: No, he wasn't going to live here so he didn't want a house. But May and George had that first one, and Natalie and Frank next door. They still, May has difficulty with her income tax every year because she and Bess own the second house, Natalie's house, and they have to pay on that every year. Figure out how much, how much improvements have been done and so on. My brother used to make out her income tax, but he's gone now, so we had to get another man to do it this time.

COCKRELL: If Fred Wallace had decided to remain, would he have built a house also back there?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes.

COCKRELL: Would it have been behind the two other houses that are built?

HAUKENBERRY: It'd be right in a line on Truman Road, I guess, because that would

be where they'd sell off the ground. They had quite an area there.

COCKRELL: Was it all here on this side of the street, or did they have land on the other side of Truman Road?

HAUKENBERRY: No, nothing over there. I don't even know how much ground they had, but I know it was extensive, and they always had a dog. Oh, what kind of a dog was it? It was a great big, long-legged dog, tan colored.

COCKRELL: German shepherd?

HAUKENBERRY: They called it "Gypsy." Now it was a gypsy. Killed my kitten one day. I wept buckets. Crazy old dog. But Bess used to go walking with it. Didn't have it chained or a lead, leather or anything. She just walked and the dog walked, too.

[end #4055; begin #4056]

[SHAVER: This is the second reel of an interview with Ardis Haukenberry at her home at 216 N. Delaware on June 14, 1983. She is interviewed by Ron Cockrell, historian with the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, and by Tom Richter, chief ranger of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site in Independence, Missouri.]

RICHTER: The colored glass is sort of unusual, you know, in the house. Do you remember any other houses in Independence having that?

HAUKENBERRY: Lots of them.

RICHTER: Really? So it was just common.

HAUKENBERRY: I have some. Sue Gentry has some, and the Bingham-Waggoner house has some. Vaile Mansion has some. Oh, it's a lot of it. It was just the rage.

RICHTER: Just the style then?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. Some of them, there are pictures—oh, and the Jenningses have some beautiful ones down on Waldo—is it Waldo?—yes, Waldo and Delaware. On the corner, well, it has a plaque in front. I never got one in front of mine. When they put them all up, why, they wanted to. They wanted to mark this house because of the connection with Harry and the Nolands. And I told Dr. Zobrist, I said, I said no, I just didn't want one because of the way the tourists run around here. I said they'd come and ring the doorbell or knock on the door. No matter what I was doing, I'd have to be there. I said, "I just don't want that interference." I said, "The Trumans have a fence. They can't get in. I don't have a fence; I just have a wall." They could get up, so I just didn't want it. I wouldn't mind it now. I think it would be all right to show that there was some connection here now.

I am the very last of the eight people who lived here: my grandparents, my two aunts, mother, and three kids—and they're all gone but me. Sometimes it gives me the dickens. I just don't like it, but I guess there's a reason for it. I wish God would tell me what it was; I'd get it done!

Well, Mr. Cockrell is not making any progress.

COCKRELL: I think we've covered most of the main points about the house.

RICHTER: Do you remember if there were any trees, you know, that used to

be in the grounds that have fallen down over the years?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, in their yard? Yes. The trees used to be just so full and so pretty and every year there's something goes. They're that soft maple, brittle, that just break off in storms. Oh, they were so pretty. I remember when the monarch butterflies were taking off for wherever they go—south, I think—but they'd come and land on this side of all those trees when the sun was going down. Such a sight you never saw. My grandmother and I sat on the front porch and just watched the butterflies. Just droves of them. You can't imagine what a showing it was—all brown. It was pretty.

There even were trees in the parkway at one time, and they're all gone, but some are still in the yard. It was a line of trees just like Maple Avenue was at one time, all along, clear from Union to the square, there were trees. And now you can't get any shade anywhere.

COCKRELL: Do you remember when Truman Road was widened?

HAUKENBERRY: [laughter] Sure do! You never saw the like of dust in your life. Everybody just hated it, and there were trees that had to suffer. They had to go, you know. Everybody was so sick about the trees [unintelligible], but it was a mess. The road has had so many names. Started out as Blue Avenue, no, let's see, there was another name for it before that. What do they call in hog raising when they butcher the hogs? Well, anyway it was something in connection

with farming, hog something or other [Tanyard Road]. Then it became Blue Avenue, because everything here is Blue Township, Blue River, everything of the sort. It is blue. I can see why they named it blue. When you get up high and look off, it's always blue. So then let's see it was Van Horn, and I guess the last one was Truman. I don't think there was one in between there. Mr. Van Horn was the one who the school was named for out...He had a big house out there which was taken down when the school was built.

COCKRELL: Do you remember when Van Horn Road became Truman Road? Was that when Mr. Truman was in the White House?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, or was it afterwards? It wouldn't have been before he was president, I can tell you that much! Let's see. No, I think they were in Washington when all that took place, so it was one of those years in between there. That's as close as I can come to it.

COCKRELL: Okay. Do you recall when the road was widened into four lanes? Do you remember the time period for that?

HAUKENBERRY: The same time.

COCKRELL: Oh, the same time?

HAUKENBERRY: All of it was done at the same time, thank goodness, because if we had to go through it twice...Everything was covered with dust.

COCKRELL: So they paved it then, when it was gravel before?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, yes. Gravel or dirt. I know it was mighty good sledding

because it was so full of hills. We used to just go to Union and slide clear to River. Oh, boy, that was good!

COCKRELL: [To Richter] Can you think of any other points that we haven't covered? The interior of the house maybe. [To Haukenberry] Were you inside the house a lot?

HAUKENBERRY: When I was a child, yes.

COCKRELL: When you were a child?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh.

RICHTER: One thing I'm interested in, in the room with the piano there's a real old mirror up on one of the walls. And I just wonder if that goes back to the Gateses. It looks old enough.

HAUKENBERRY: I imagine it did.

RICHTER: Also, as you come in the front door to the left are two mirrors that have gold around the edges and they look sort of old also.

HAUKENBERRY: They probably belong to the same vintage. Because when the Gateses were gone, there was nobody else that they would have given anything to. They'd leave it in the house.

RICHTER: That's what is real interesting to me. The different generations are all still there.

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, very much like here. There are things here that come from way back. In fact, I have the pictures of my mother and three grandmothers—one, two, three. They're all framed in little round frames in the living room there. There are just things like that. My

Aunt Ethel was a painter, or did some watercolors, and we have a lot of her pictures. And this little picture up here, this round one, my grandmother got it as a prize for something she did. Whether she sent in enough information about a product or what, I don't know, but that came from that. It's stayed up there. I didn't make too many changes in the house when I inherited it.

I think that's a pretty picture of Bess up there. I don't know if any of you have seen that or not. That one, kind of greenish. Take it down and look at it. And so [unintelligible] when you look at it from a distance. But a friend of my Aunt Ethel who was stationed in Korea came here to see Aunt Ethel and we went down to the Trumans. I don't know how he got Bess to say yes, but he asked if he might take her picture and she let him. [The picture shows Bess Truman standing in her back yard, circa early 1970s].

RICHTER: Did the Trumans have much of a flower garden in the back?

HAUKENBERRY: A good many flowers, but just perennials. They'd never make a garden, but they had beautiful roses, tulips, and peonies, and all the bushes, goodness gracious, all over the place.

COCKRELL: Didn't they at one time have a rose garden area with white trellises [pergola] right off the back porch out there? I think there's still, the foundation is still there.

HAUKENBERRY: I think probably there was a trestle, trellis, near the basement door outside, and had a climbing rose on it, because I remember. I

remember that.

COCKRELL: Yes, I think I've seen pictures of it. It's gone now. Do you know when it was taken down?

HAUKENBERRY: It probably just rotted and they let it go. I don't know. [pause]

COCKRELL: Well, I think that about does. . .

HAUKENBERRY: Some of those tulips, somebody sent them to Bess from Holland [unintelligible], but the tulips were just special. They always took good care of them. I don't even know who planted them. They did have a colored man who did the yard work and sometimes some of the housework, and he may have planted them for them because I don't think any of them would get out and do it. There was a big bed of lilies of the valley on the north side of the house. Bess just loved those, but as she got older, she couldn't bend and pick 'em. So every year I'd take her a bunch of my lilies of the valley. I have three beds of them—oh, they just spread so.

COCKRELL: They must like the Independence soil.

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. I went over one Sunday afternoon and took a bunch of them and we were having a good visit and all of a sudden here came three men to see her. One was Bud Porter, and the artist...[unintelligible] just this year. They just opened his home.

RICHTER: Benton?

HAUKENBERRY: Huh?

RICHTER: Thomas Hart Benton.

HAUKENBERRY: Benton! Why would I forget that one? But anyway they came in—and somebody else was with them—and they'd been on a fishing jaunt, you know, one of those river trips down in the Ozarks. They were just were so much fun to listen to telling about their escapades. Things that happened to them. I had watched Thomas Hart Benton paint that mural out at the library.

RICHTER: Oh, really?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, when we belonged to the, I belonged to the Saturday, the Mary Paxton Study Class that meets out there, and has met there, well, Harry gave permission first because Aunt Ethel asked him to, and we've been meeting there every year since then. And so we met in the auditorium, and most of us would go out through the front door instead of the back door when we left so we could watch him paint. A little bit of a guy up on that board.

COCKRELL: Scaffolding?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. He and Harry had so much fun arguing about this and that.

COCKRELL: About political matters, or how Benton should paint?

HAUKENBERRY: Just about what he was doing.

COCKRELL: Oh, okay.

HAUKENBERRY: Whether that looked like anybody or not. That sort of thing. They had a good time.

RICHTER: How tall was the president? Was the president a very tall man?

HAUKENBERRY: Not too tall, no. Just average.

RICHTER: I know that Benton was quite short.

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, yes, very short. Well, Harry was taller than he, but not what I call a tall man. He looked tall, the way he strutted, I mean, the way he walked, you know, swinging his cane. I think that's a fine statue at the courthouse except I don't like the way his clothes were wrinkled. I guess they got wrinkled as he walked.

RICHTER: Did he ever—tourists were coming by—did he ever go outside to talk to them through the fence?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, sure. Through the fence or outside the fence, either way. The amazing thing was how he remembered. Mothers would come with their children, you know, and he'd speak to them, "Well, how are you today, Jimmy?" And years afterwards, if he'd see Jimmy, he'd know. I think that was wonderful. He never forgot. And he didn't change his mind overnight like some people I know. [President Ronald] Reagan says one thing one minute and the next something else. And they've really played around with that withholding tax. I guess that's gone by the board now, hasn't it?

RICHTER: I don't know. I never did find out if they've decided.

COCKRELL: It's a mess. [laughter]

RICHTER: When you first moved here, was this more like, was Independence grown up this far, or was it still just sort of the country?

HAUKENBERRY: This was country.

RICHTER: Was it?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. We had a board fence along the alley, and we had a fence in front of the house, too. My grandmother had that wall put up later. But it just looked just like farmland really. Looking across to that, why, it was all trees and bushes, it was really suburban, I guess.

COCKRELL: Was there a board fence along the alley over there [219 North Delaware]?

HAUKENBERRY: Not over there. On our side.

COCKRELL: Wasn't there also a Methodist church on this...?

HAUKENBERRY: On this corner.

COCKRELL: On that corner, okay.

HAUKENBERRY: Every time I think about it I get sicker and sicker.

COCKRELL: Why? Why's that?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, it was such a beautiful little church. Just small, and Dr. Watson gave the ground for it. It was Watson Memorial Methodist Church. And all of a sudden one of the members of the church said they should join with the Southern Methodist-type church up on Spring. Well, many of them were just sick about it. They didn't go to anywhere for a while. They were supposed to go way out on 39th Street, and it's too far from here. Some of them lived close here, and some of them had been baptized there, married there, and buried from there, and so forth, and then here they had to get out and go somewhere else. Then the Latter Day Saints bought the

church, took it down, and built this building that's there.

COCKRELL: So that wasn't too long ago then?

HAUKENBERRY: No, no. That's been recent. About, oh, maybe eight years ago.

RICHTER: Oh, that recent?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, very recent. And right across the alley was the preacher's house. Randall [?], of course, and he always had children, so we kids always had to look out the windows to see if there were any children this time, anybody to play with. And on Fourth of July we always had firecrackers and snakes and everything else that goes with Fourth of July, and those poor kids just couldn't have anything like that. All they could do was sing songs. We felt so sorry for them. They weren't allowed to have the fireworks.

RICHTER: How long has this house across the street been here, across from the alley?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, let's see, it was built while I was in high school. I guess I was a sophomore—about 1914. But it's been occupied by so many different people. Now it belongs to Mrs. Allen and she has renters there.

COCKRELL: Do you remember who first built it and lived there?

HAUKENBERRY: I think Mr. Swift.

COCKRELL: Swift. Do you remember his first name?

HAUKENBERRY: I don't remember that. He and his wife had just one daughter, and she was born so small, they said she could fit in a teacup. I never

saw that procedure. She was a real little gal, Elizabeth Ann Swift. I remember her name. Then the Spencers came after that, and the Quinlins came after that, and then the, I think then the Allens got involved at that time. They had people that, one lived upstairs and downstairs, two places, same as it is now.

COCKRELL: So the Allens converted it into two, into a duplex when they bought it?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I don't think they had to do much rearranging because it was a two-story place and they could just make it into two stories.

COCKRELL: Did they live there themselves?

HAUKENBERRY: No.

COCKRELL: They didn't. They just rented it out?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. They live right around the corner facing Maple, or they did. Dr. Allen is gone, been gone a long time, and Noreen continued to live there with her mother. Her mother lived with her. And Noreen had four daughters, so they filled the house. Well, she has just two now, no, just one gone. She has three daughters. They're scattered: one in Milwaukee, one in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and the other one in Redding, California, and she's mayor of Redding. So I guess we're in style; we have a woman mayor, too.

COCKRELL: All from Delaware Street.

HAUKENBERRY: I think there are three of them in the country.

[RICHTER and COCKRELL discuss the mayors of Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska.]

HAUKENBERRY: One in Nebraska and one where?

COCKRELL: Lincoln, Nebraska, had a woman mayor, but as of two months ago she'd left office and there's a man now.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, the Chicago mayor left office [unintelligible].

COCKRELL: I don't think she wanted to, though.

HAUKENBERRY: I wasn't quite ready for our woman mayor in Independence. I thought, oh dear. I'm not a woman's libber. But anyway, she's made a good one.

RICHTER: She has!

HAUKENBERRY: She's just done fine.

RICHTER: She's really impressed me.

HAUKENBERRY: And she has opinions, and expresses them, and I don't forget when she gave the talk on Ridgway, when he got the award. She sure had done her research on that. She had everything down pat. She's real good, and she's pretty, attractive, and friendly. I like her, even if she is Latter Day Saints.

COCKRELL: You can't hold that against her.

HAUKENBERRY: I have lots of friends in the church. The only thing I object to is their greediness, the whole set up. They're buying up everything they can buy up in town.

RICHTER: That's what I hear.

HAUKENBERRY: And they've taken down three houses on Maple Avenue, and it's just a bare lot now, a great big lot. And then they buy houses and

let them deteriorate and don't pay any taxes on them.

COCKRELL: Strange. What do you think they're up to?

HAUKENBERRY: They want Independence, because they were driven out once, way back when before my time, but I knew all about it, on account of polygamy. Independence, the old Independence, didn't want that kind of people living here. And so they all got together and drove them out. And now they want to come back. This is their heaven. But there's some fine people in the church. [unintelligible] Hazel Graham and her husband are just about as fine people as I know. She used to be a Baptist.

Well, I think we've settled everything except what you came for!

COCKRELL: No, no. We've covered a lot of ground.

HAUKENBERRY: We've covered the ground all right!

COCKRELL: And parts of the house!

RICHTER: Do you remember when they put in their furnace? They used to have a coal furnace in the home.

HAUKENBERRY: I suspect about the same time they did here.

RICHTER: When was that?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, it took a long time for us, but maybe not for them. We had a base burner to begin with and a hole cut into the ceiling for the upstairs bedroom so they'd get some heat, too. Then finally, they did do away with the coal furnace. We've had it at least twenty

years, I guess, we've had gas furnace. I had to have a new one put in when I moved back here.

That's something we haven't covered. I didn't live here all those years, but I grew up and graduated from Independence High School and I went to Kansas City to teachers college. And Mother used Father's insurance money to buy an old farmhouse out in Fairland Heights, in between here and Kansas City. After I taught a year—I taught sixteen years—and after I had taught a year and had some money, why, we began to fix up the little old farmhouse that was on the ground, and I lived there until I was married, and that was in 19—I taught twenty years, sixteen years, I started in '20—36, yeah, that's right. And then I went to Denver to summer school two summers, and then my husband-to-be came out the second summer and brought the rings, and we went to Denver city hall to get married. And then I lived with him in his house which was in Fairland Heights also until...Mother came and lived with us over there and then when she died, I was still there, and my husband died in '56 and I stayed on there until about eleven years ago. And then my last relative here died [Miss Ethel Noland] and willed the house to me, so I sold my bungalow and came in here. I'm here for the rest of the time unless the Latter Day Saints buy the house.

COCKRELL: You won't let them do that, will you?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I won't let them, but I know they have ways of getting

things. When they had their conference here two years ago, three men were walking along in front out here and I was in the front yard picking dandelions, I expect. I was out there, anyway, and I had just come home from church. That's why I was in front. I was coming home. And I heard one of them say, "We get to this and that and that and that," and he says, "Well, now before too long these houses will be taken down and all...."

END OF INTERVIEW

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

### ARDIS HAUKENBERRY

HSTR INTERVIEW #1984-1

RON COCKRELL: I bought that when I first got into graduate school and I got a lot of good use out of it.

ARDIS HAUKENBERRY: Where did you go to graduate school?

COCKRELL: I started out at the University of Washington at Seattle, then I got my degree from Creighton University in Omaha. Where would you like to sit? A certain chair?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I, do you want to sit over here in the straight chair?

COCKRELL: Well, this is fine, or do you want to sit there?

HAUKENBERRY: No, I don't want sit there. I'll sit in this chair. But that's pretty comfortable. That's where most of the men sit. Our pastor generally sits here. He's short, and just leans back.

COCKRELL: I wanted to start by showing you two pictures, and I was hoping maybe you might know. The first one is the little boy and we think it's somewhere in the house across the street [219 N. Delaware].  
[see appendix, item 1]

HAUKENBERRY: I think that's Freddy, Fred [Wallace].

COCKRELL: Oh, okay. That's what Margaret Truman Daniel said. She kind of thought maybe it was Fred.

HAUKENBERRY: I think it is.

COCKRELL: We're not really sure what room that would be in.

HAUKENBERRY: No, I wouldn't know about that. I don't know much about the rooms. Yes, I'm really sure that's Fred. He was the youngest of the brothers. Bess was the oldest, and then Frank, George, and Fred.

COCKRELL: Okay. This was taken in the back yard over there, but we don't know who the two men are in the picture [see appendix, item 2].

HAUKENBERRY: [laughing]

COCKRELL: We have no idea. We don't know if they're family members or friends.

HAUKENBERRY: I think they must be friends just clowning, but I can't tell who they are. I'm sorry.

COCKRELL: That's fine. You got one of them. That's helpful. I'm going to show this to May Wallace and see if she would know.

HAUKENBERRY: She may know. Fred and I are the same age. We graduated together from high school.

COCKRELL: What year was that?

HAUKENBERRY: 1918. And we used to play croquet on the side, on the lawn over there. Sometimes Bess would play with us, but she always beat us so we didn't care!

COCKRELL: They had a croquet court set up on the lawn, then?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, we set it up. Fred had to. He put it up.

COCKRELL: How about the background of this house here [216 N. Delaware, the Noland house]? Do you know when it was built?

HAUKENBERRY: This one? Well, I wish I could get the copy that's been made of it,

the history of it, but Pat O'Brien [Independence Historic Preservation Officer] said he was going to bring it to me and he never has.

COCKRELL: He hasn't? Oh.

HAUKENBERRY: Anyway, the part of it I can remember, the back two rooms they say were built just after the Civil War. That's the kitchen and dining room. You see, there are four rooms right in a row here. And this front part was built by Mr. Slack whose daughter was to be married, and he gave it to her. And I don't know the years. That's my trouble, but there is a story about the house. Sue Gentry has a copy of it if you want to contact her and get it. I'd like to have it back! She borrowed it to use it and she never has brought it back, so I can't really tell.

The little bedroom back there on that side of the hall was built much later when my Aunt Nellie [Ellen "Nellie" Tilford Noland] had a broken hip. She slipped on just a little bit of a piece of ice and broke her hip. At the time she'd been living upstairs in a bedroom up there and when she broke her hip, why, they had to do something pretty fast. So they moved one of the beds downstairs and had it cut down to size for in there, because that's smaller. And so she stayed there.

And then, they didn't, hadn't had a bathroom before that either, so that went on upstairs. You see, this is a real old house.

You had the outdoor facilities.

COCKRELL: I see. You said it was built by Mr. Slack. Was that a local person?

HAUKENBERRY: He owned all of this block right here, and he had a great big house. I saw my first bathtub over there and it was tin.

COCKRELL: Oh. Well where was his big house? Was it . . .

HAUKENBERRY: It was in the middle of that part of the block [immediately north of 216 N. Delaware].

COCKRELL: What happened to his house?

HAUKENBERRY: Huh?

COCKRELL: What happened to his house?

HAUKENBERRY: I don't really know, but it was sold and it was taken down. It was so big that I don't think anybody would have bought it to live in, but the Slacks lived there as long as I was a child here and I knew all of them. There were three boys and two girls.

COCKRELL: What did he do?

HAUKENBERRY: He was a grocery man in town. For a long time, his sign was on the brick wall up there just down Lexington beyond the alley, you know, that goes between that new building that's on Osage: "A. T. Slack, Groceries."

COCKRELL: So he was quite a prominent citizen?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, he was. He was quite prominent.

COCKRELL: Were he and Mr. Gates pretty good friends since they lived across the street from one another?

HAUKENBERRY: I don't think they ever visited, but they were jovial. When they met they talked a lot, but they didn't visit back and forth. But the women in the family all visited. It was just a neighborhood place at that time. And anybody got sick, everybody rallied around and brought in something to eat, you know, custards or jello or something. It was nice.

My grandmother, my grandparents really, owned this house about 1894.

COCKRELL: That's when they bought it?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. I think that's correct. If you get that story, why, you'll find out. I'm not meaning to exaggerate, but that's what I remember. And then my mother was widowed when I was five. My father died in Indio, California, where he had gone to recover from tuberculosis, which that didn't happen in those days. But he caught pneumonia in the 1903 flood. He was in the office of the Santa Fe [Railroad] down in the West Bottoms [Kansas City, Missouri]. He sat with his pants legs, you know, damp all day and into the night and it went into pneumonia. So he died quite young—thirty.

COCKRELL: What year was that when he died?

HAUKENBERRY: When was I born? [chuckling] Wait a minute. He died in 1903. No, 1904. Excuse me, 1903 was the flood and it was the next year that he died. I was born in 1899.

COCKRELL: You and your mother came here then?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, mother and more! I had a brother who was three years younger than I, and I also had a sister that was born a month after the funeral. So mother had three of us. There were originally eight people in here, in this house.

COCKRELL: Who were all of the eight people?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, my grandparents, the Nolands; and the two aunts, both schoolteachers in Kansas City [Ethel and Nellie Noland]; and then the five of us, four of us. That makes eight, doesn't it? And every one of them gone.

COCKRELL: When did your grandparents pass away?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I've got it written down some place. I've got it in the Bible anyway if you can get that big thing out of there. I don't remember all of those things any more; there are too many!

COCKRELL: Oh my, that's a big Bible!

HAUKENBERRY: That's a beautiful [unintelligible] for a Bible. Let's see. That's something else. It's over somewhere in here. There. Marriages and everything. Let's move that completely . . . my brother's stuff. He died the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, and I'm the administrator and I've got to keep records. Now let's see, which one do you want? That goes way back, farther than you need.

COCKRELL: A lot of Trumans on there.

HAUKENBERRY: It's all Truman. It's the Truman Bible. There was another one, and that's at the library but isn't displayed any more.

COCKRELL: [reading] Margaret Ellen Truman . . .

HAUKENBERRY: That's the one.

COCKRELL: . . . born May 6, 1849. Married Joseph Tilford Noland December 18, 1870. They were married for quite a while.

HAUKENBERRY: They celebrated their fiftieth.

COCKRELL: In 1920 then, their fiftieth?

HAUKENBERRY: I guess it was. [Phone rings] Excuse me. [Mrs. Haukenberry leaves the room and can be heard in the distance for several minutes discussing an event from the night before, as well as other topics. What follows are names and dates the interviewer copied from the Truman Bible].

Joseph Tilford Noland, died January 30, 1923

Margaret Ellen [Ella] Truman Noland, died October 1, 1948

Mary Ethel Noland, died August 10, 1971

Ellen [Nellie] Tilford Noland, died August 8, 1958

Helen Ardis Ragland, born August 4, 1899

Herbert Howard Haukenberry, died May 7, 1956

HAUKENBERRY: [returning to the room] Well that was kind of funny thanking me for coming to a supper last night.

COCKRELL: Oh.

HAUKENBERRY: And I had a good time.

COCKRELL: Good!

HAUKENBERRY: Are you finding what you need?

COCKRELL: Yes, yes. There's quite a bit of nice, nice dates in here. Okay, Nellie is Ellen Tilford Noland. Is that Cousin Nellie that everybody talks about?

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. Her name was really Ellen [unintelligible] and she was named for her mother, my grandmother.

COCKRELL: And she died in 1958.

HAUKENBERRY: Uh huh. Herb and I came in just after a, on that same day, from a vacation. We worked for the AT&T. And whenever he was off with his vacation we went someplace. And we got home just that same night.

COCKRELL: Can I put this back on the shelf there for you?

HAUKENBERRY: Have you gotten all you want?

COCKRELL: Yes. Yes, thank you.

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, it's pretty heavy.

COCKRELL: Yes, it is.

HAUKENBERRY: Are you writing all of this up in something?

COCKRELL: Yes. When I talked to you last summer, I asked you mostly about the house and changes in the house. Well that turned into a 450-page document, and now what I'm doing is something that, it's more about the family and the neighborhood here and all the different people. Yeah, this will be another report. It's kind of nice to know about the personalities of the people. It'll help the park service.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, that's fine. MARK

COCKRELL: Okay, you said that you and your mother, brother, and sister all came to live here, when?

HAUKENBERRY: While my father was gone, gone for his health. He went with an aunt, on my father's side. They went first to Arizona and that didn't help. So they went on. She was a nurse, by the way. A practical nurse. They went to California, in Endio. That's where he died. While he was gone, we were here.

COCKRELL: What was your father's name?

HAUKENBERRY: Robert Verner Ragland. Not Vernon, but Verner.

COCKRELL: That's kind of an unusual name. Was that a family name?

HAUKENBERRY: Not as far as we know. I don't know where they got it.

COCKRELL: Did Joseph T. and Ella Noland just have three children?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, they had several, but the boys died.

COCKRELL: The ones who survived were Ethel, Nellie, and Ruth?

HAUKENBERRY: That's right.

COCKRELL: Who was the oldest?

HAUKENBERRY: Mother was the oldest, then Aunt Nellie, and then Aunt Ethel. She [Ethel] was the genealogist of the family. Of course I helped her some, too, and I worked with her. After she was gone, I was it. I've been working on it off and on as I have time. Those are some mighty good lines in there.

COCKRELL: You lived first in this house in 1903, right after your father left.

When did you leave here? How long did you live here?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, it's been home always. I wasn't here all the time. I went to summer school in Denver. At the end of the second year Herb came and I was married in Denver and that was in 1936. When we came home, the hottest day in August, we scoured the living room floor where he had been living. He had bought it from his parents. We'd gone together for about twelve years before we ever got married because he had his mother and father, and I had my mother. We couldn't combine the two families.

Finally, both of his parents were gone and mother was still living, but she lived alone in a house that we had lived in for a while, a farmhouse between here and Kansas City, what they call the Fairland Heights development. After we were married, I moved over to live with him on Overton here in Kansas City.

He died in... did you get his name down?

COCKRELL: Herbert Howard Haukenberry. Died May 7, 1956.

HAUKENBERRY: Fifty-six. We were married in '36. I had more marriage than I thought I had, '36 to '56. That's not too bad. I was thinking it was about ten [years]. Anyway, after that, mother moved in with me and we lived out there.

She was working and my brother didn't finish high school.

He

went to the city and worked in the building that she was in. They

came back, I guess, permanently here the time that Aunt Ethel died. She was the last. Did you find that?

COCKRELL: Mary Ethel died August 10, 1971.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I've been back since then. But, in the meantime, I was here almost everyday. I was here while she was sick anyway helping her.

COCKRELL: What do you remember about the Gates family, George and Elizabeth Gates?

HAUKENBERRY: George Porterfield Gates. He was in partnership with Mr. Waggoner down at the Waggoner-Gates Mill. It was his house, he had it built. I don't remember the years, but it was around when this one was, although this one wasn't as fancy. Mrs. Gates was a patrician, really, but she and my grandmother made it just fine. My grandmother was a patrician, too. She always had a black ribbon around her neck and a pin or a bow in her hair. She always changed her clothes in the afternoon, to dress up.

COCKRELL: To dress for dinner?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. She was an excellent cook. I remember a big rolling pin that is still in the kitchen. She'd roll out a strawberry cake; she made the best strawberry shortcake there was.

COCKRELL: Did the Gates have a lot of servants or did Mrs. Gates do her own cooking?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, as far as I know, she did. I don't think they had servants until quite recently.

I don't know the [dates of the] deaths of those people, the Gates'.

COCKRELL: Mr. Gates died in 1918, and Elizabeth Gates died in 1924.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I sure didn't know. I was here at that time.

COCKRELL: They both also had their funerals in their house. Was that a tradition around here?

HAUKENBERRY: That was the way it was in those days. My father's casket sat over there [west side of living room]. There was a fireplace here on this side, the same as on the other side, and a hole in the wall there. His casket was right in front of it. People came in and they waited.

COCKRELL: Was there a formal service held?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. He was the first one buried on the lot in Woodlawn Cemetery, in the Noland lot in Woodlawn. Now its full.

COCKRELL: Yes, it is. There are a lot of people there, a lot of history.

HAUKENBERRY: The lot was for twelve graves and they're all there.

COCKRELL: What was your grandfather's occupation?

HAUKENBERRY: He was in the real estate business. He brought his desk home when he retired and part of it is in that built-cabinet in there [hallway by the stairs] and they used all the wood. A good cabinet man came. There's a hall seat in the hall and has most of it in it. There's some in the bed that I told you they had to cut down for the room down

here. He took out parts of the bed, and it is in that bench, too.

COCKRELL: What do you remember about Madge Gates Wallace?

HAUKENBERRY: [Laughter]. You really want to know?!

COCKRELL: Yes, I do!

HAUKENBERRY: Well, to me, she was a rather strange person. I never did get to know her too well. Anyway, Fred was the youngest as I told you, and she always used to stand at the front door and watch him as far as she could see him every morning as he started off to school no matter if it was high school, college, whatever. She was a doting mother.

Bess was such a popular young woman. She had more beaux! Mrs. Wallace was just keen for one of them that had more money than the rest of them and more prospects than the others. For some time, we all thought she's going to prevail and he'll be it, but it didn't happen that way.

COCKRELL: Do you remember that young man's name?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I'm not real sure which one it was, but I think it was Matthew Paxton. There was a Bolger, too, who was pretty close. His picture was in that watermelon scene. You've seen that, there in the backyard. He was one of them. Either one of them would have been all right with her. But she didn't have her way. I've always thought it was too bad that she had to live with them in Washington because she never could accept Harry.

COCKRELL: She didn't get along with him very well?

HAUKENBERRY: No. No. She was just sick about the marriage.

COCKRELL: Why was that? Why didn't she like Harry?

HAUKENBERRY: She didn't think he was going to get any where, make any money. And she wanted money. She wanted her daughter to be well cared for and I think that was the stumbling block. As it happened, Harry did much better than either one of the other ones! You never can tell! Of course , none of us ever thought he would go as far as he did.

COCKRELL: Do you remember that Madge Wallace was sick a lot? She had sciatica, or rheumatism. Was she ill a lot?

HAUKENBERRY: Not that I know of.

COCKRELL: Some of the stories say that Bess and Harry came back to live across the street because Mrs. Wallace was ill.

HAUKENBERRY: Well, that may be. I just don't know. I didn't know that she was so ill. I knew that she wasn't out much.

COCKRELL: Did she like to stay at home?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. She did go, though, to visit them in Washington several times. That's another thing, Mrs. Gates and Mrs. Wallace both always, when they came home from Washington, they brought my grandmother linen handkerchiefs. They're in a box this long and I don't know what I'll ever do with them, people don't use handkerchiefs much anymore.

COCKRELL: Do you know the circumstances behind the death of Madge Wallace's husband?

HAUKENBERRY: I don't think it was liquor. I just don't know. If I can make a guess, I think he found out that he was married to the wrong woman.

COCKRELL: He was unhappy with his wife?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. She was so dictatorial, wanted her own way.

COCKRELL: Even after four children he finally realized that she was the wrong one?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. He just took a gun to his head. For a long time after Harry became so prominent that was kept as a real secret. Nobody knew that until I think it was Mr. [Merl] Miller that wrote the book and dug it out.

COCKRELL: What was the feeling then when it was finally revealed?

HAUKENBERRY: There hasn't been anything said about it. They did try to keep it hidden.

COCKRELL: How about within your family? Was it known that David Wallace had killed himself?

HAUKENBERRY: Not at the time, no. It was quite a while afterwards that I knew, but they lived further down Delaware at that time. That's where Bess climbed out on the limb over the sidewalk. After Mr. Wallace's death, Mrs. Wallace came back with her four children and lived with her parents. But, they lived separately. The Gates lived on the south side of the house and sat out on that little porch there on the

south. The Wallaces were on the north side.

COCKRELL: Was it because of the age difference between the children and the grandparents? They didn't want to bother one another?

HAUKENBERRY: They didn't want the children to bother the grandparents, yes. Playing around and yelling and so forth. Even when Fred was just a teenager, they played robbers over there and they jailed some of the guys they didn't like. Put them in jails in the basement and all of that. That would have bothered Mrs. Gates, and mister, too, I suppose, but he was at work most of the time. I never got acquainted with him. I just thought he was a mighty nice looking man.

COCKRELL: The marriage of Harry Truman and Bess Wallace in 1919, you weren't there, were you?

HAUKENBERRY: No, I wasn't. I couldn't come because I was teaching in Kansas City and had only begun the year before so I couldn't get away. My aunts were there. I forgot one thing; when he was elected senator, my grandmother had a party for him in our dining room before the dining room was cut down some. Mrs. Wallace and Mrs. Gates [sic] were both present. Of course Bess was here and Harry and all of us. It was Quite a party. We thought at that time, "Oh, my, he's made it to the Senate. That's wonderful!" We didn't expect him to go any farther!

COCKRELL: He surprised people!

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. It didn't surprise him though. He thought he was going to make it all the way.

COCKRELL: Did he ever say that, when he was in the Senate that he wanted to go farther?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, no. He was happy in the Senate. He liked what he was doing and he was satisfied about that. It was just circumstances which pushed him ahead. He had made a success though with little businesses. What he was looking out for were people who were scrounging and making so much off of the government. He did that so well that Roosevelt wanted him for a vice president.

COCKRELL: What was the feeling in the family then?

HAUKENBERRY: Delighted. Delighted, but amazed, I would say. When he came home after being elected [nominated], they all went wild.

COCKRELL: Do you remember that pretty well?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, sure. They had a parade all over town. They were worked up about it. Cars and cars.

COCKRELL: When did the house across the street first begin to be a place where tourists liked to come and see? Was that when he was Senator or was it later?

HAUKENBERRY: No, it was later, after he became president. And they still come, they still come. I visit with so many of them, from every state in the Union unless its Rhode Island. Some of them get to be real friends. I had Christmas cards from six of them. One of them is a

man about your age that teaches in North Dakota. I got acquainted with him about five years ago and I hear from him every Christmas.

COCKRELL: That's nice!

HAUKENBERRY: He's planning to be back for the dedication of the house. I hope he gets a ticket and gets in. He'd be so disappointed if he didn't!

COCKRELL: Mr. Truman's campaigns to win election, did he bring politics into his own home, or did he operate his campaigns from his home or from his office?

HAUKENBERRY: I'd say it was from his office. I don't think he'd bring it into his home.

COCKRELL: Was that because Madge Wallace didn't like politics?

HAUKENBERRY: I don't think that made any difference. After he got to be senator, she thought a little bit more of him, but she never did accept him as Bess's husband.

COCKRELL: Even after Margaret was born?

HAUKENBERRY: No!

COCKRELL: Was it just in private that they disagreed?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, I don't think too many people knew that they didn't see [eye-to-eye] together, but I kind of watch people and I knew it.

COCKRELL: Did he ever talk about his mother-in-law?

HAUKENBERRY: Not at all. I forget what he called her.

COCKRELL: Would it have been just Mrs. Wallace?

HAUKENBERRY: No. He had a special name. [Pause]. I guess he called her by her first name, Madge. Madge, yes, I believe that's right.

COCKRELL: When Mr. Truman was a judge, when he first began his political career, how would you describe his homelife? Would he do chores around the house like cutting grass or hauling out the ashes? Would he work around the house?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes. He did a lift of stuff like that. Of course having been a farmer it wasn't foreign to him.

COCKRELL: Would he do some of the maintenance work around the house like painting?

HAUKENBERRY: No. He never did any painting. They had a good painter who painted this house, too. My grandmother had a colored woman who worked for her while she wasn't too well. After my grandmother got well enough they let her go, the Trumans took her. And so, Vietta [Garr] was the cook and everything for them. It was really interesting to me that at Bess's funeral, all the help they had ever had through the years was invited to the funeral, a private funeral.

COCKRELL: Was that according to Mrs. Truman's wishes?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, sure. They were all lined up there at the little church. It was really interesting to see. They had a yardman, a preacher in Kansas City, Kansas [Rev. Edward Hobby]. He was the best guy. He did all the trimming of the bushes and things like that. He always

swept all of the porches and got everything ship shape. Mr. Hobby.

COCKRELL: Yes, I know the name. Did Mr. Truman's family mix with his in-laws over here, the Gates? [Mrs. Haukenberry shakes her head in the negative]. No mixing at all?

HAUKENBERRY: So different! Harry's mother was so down to earth. Absolutely. She didn't care what she wore, anything! She just was a fine woman, a farmer's wife, and dressed the part. She went to Washington at least once I know. You've heard the story that she wasn't going to sleep in the Lincoln bed. She was a Southerner if anybody was. She wasn't going to have anything to do with any of those n[...s]!

But Mary Jane [the President's sister] and Bess never did hit it off either. I don't know why about that, but they didn't. They just weren't congenial and didn't have the same interests. Bess loved to play cards. She loved to ride. She was an excellent horsewoman and almost always had a horse, a great big barn down there. There was plenty of room. She also loved to play tennis. She was a champion tennis player. Mary Jane, well, she was in Eastern Star. Things like that. That didn't appeal to Bess at all. They were just different characters.

Harry was very loyal to his family. He always went out there everytime he came home from Washington and wrote to Mary Jane and his mother. There was a very nice relationship

there.

COCKRELL: Did Bess get along with Mr. Truman's mother?

HAUKENBERRY: More or less, but again there wasn't much in common except of course Harry and so they didn't hobnob too much. She went with Harry to see his mother. When he'd ask her to, she'd go.

COCKRELL: When there were family gatherings, would it mostly be there in Grandview? [Pause]. I guess it would depend on the families if it were the Truman family it would be in Grandview and if it was the Wallace family it would be across the street. Right?

HAUKENBERRY: That's right. It was different. Harry almost always stopped over here to see his Aunt Ella on special days like Thanksgiving and Christmas. He'd come in if just for a while to see her and the rest of us. We were always so happy to see him. He had a special ring on that doorbell. He turned it three times. All three of us kids would just come running because we had a piano that sat over here [south wall of living room] and he'd always sit down at the piano and play for us. We just loved to hear him play.

COCKRELL: Was he one of the favorites in the family?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, sure. One time Mary Jane came with him and she sat down in the dining room there with us and played jacks on the floor! She didn't come too often. Once in a while she'd be in with him and come over.

COCKRELL: How would you characterize Harry and Bess Truman as parents for

Margaret?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, they were doting parents. I think Harry, probably more than Bess, just thought that Margaret was the nicest thing that ever happened. Bess, of course, was fond of her, but she didn't gloat over her or anything like that. Bess was never so outgoing like Harry. She was a personal person and retiring, but people she loved, she loved. She had so many loyal friends. Did you see the special from *The Examiner*? [Truman Centennial edition].

COCKRELL: Yes, I did.

HAUKENBERRY: Then you read some of those and how they admired and loved her.

COCKRELL: Was Bess the disciplinarian with Margaret?

HAUKENBERRY: I would say she was. She really had the bringing up with Margaret because Harry was busy most of the time.

COCKRELL: Wasn't Margaret a flowergirl in someone's wedding here?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, for Jodie's [Ragland] wedding.

COCKRELL: What are your memories about the White House period when the Trumans were in the White House? What was life like here in Independence?

HAUKENBERRY: It just went on. There wasn't much change.

COCKRELL: Was there perhaps more excitement?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, a good deal. That's why we're in such a dither now. They made this heritage district so big and some of it is so neglected that it looks almost like shantytown on Lexington. Then they cut it

down and everybody got mad about that. Our church suffered because we wanted to build, but we're going to build.

COCKRELL: The First Baptist Church is going to build?

HAUKENBERRY: Yes, I'll show you the picture of what it's going to be. It is going to match what's there already. This is the original building, 1894, and we're growing so. We get new members every week and we have to have two services every Sunday. That's hard on our preacher.

COCKRELL: This would double the size of the building?

HAUKENBERRY: Oh, yes! We're going to have the ground— breaking the twenty— fifth of March.

COCKRELL: Don't you think that by building another wing onto the church that it might affect the neighborhood?

HAUKENBERRY: That isn't really what it's about; it's the fact that we're going to tear down so many houses, but I guess they do think this will change the looks of Independence because it won't be old. The church is there to build; we're not buying any land. We just took down that one little old house and it belonged to us. I don't know what the ruckus is all about. When they cut the area down and limited it to Delaware out to the Truman Library, some of the people even in the district got those black trash bags and cut up strips and tied black ribbons around the trees!

COCKRELL: You didn't have one on your house, did you?

HAUKENBERRY: I sure did not! I wasn't in sympathy with them. I couldn't see if they were still in the district why they did it. They're circulating a petition now. They have to get over three thousand names, and if they get it, there will be another election.

COCKRELL: I have just one or two more questions. When Harry and Bess came back here to retire in 1953, did they try to assume the life they had led before they went to Washington, to live a normal life?

HAUKENBERRY: Very much. Bess did the cooking, mended the clothes, everything that a woman was doing. She had a bridge club and played regularly. I played with them a couple of times. Once I got the prize. She gave me a box of towelettes with her card in it. I still have it. That's for posterity! They both were charter members of the Jackson County Historical Society and carried that right along. Bess belonged to one of the clubs I belong to now, the Saturday Club. They took part in things like that. She was such a good church member over there at Trinity. They all just loved her, she was so loyal. Father Hart, who was the pastor when I moved back here, came to see her about every week. He was the nicest fellow.

COCKRELL: Did the Trumans do much entertaining over there?

HAUKENBERRY: Well, generally dinners or lunches, things like that.

COCKRELL: For very many people or just close friends?

HAUKENBERRY: Just for good friends. Bess was invited out a good deal and so was Harry—at the Salisburys and Minors. They just lived a normal life.

Harry did his walking every day. He tried his best to ditch the Secret Service people. He didn't want them tagging along. I guess he finally decided that it was good that somebody was watching out for him.

COCKRELL: Did Bess not like the Secret Service, more than Harry?

HAUKENBERRY: She liked them. There was one they were just crazy about. Mr. [Robert] Lockwood. He was a nice fellow.

COCKRELL: We've had a controversy among people in the Park Service, imagining Harry and Bess sitting down at their dining room table and eating their meals as compared to sitting at the kitchen table and having their meals. Do you know which one they preferred? Would they eat in the dining room—such a big room with that big table?

HAUKENBERRY: I don't know where they would have eaten. Maybe May Wallace could tell you that. I never ate a meal with them. They were informal. They might have alternated. Maybe having breakfast in the kitchen and then dinner in the dining room. That would be my guess.

COCKRELL: We've had people tell us that since there were only two of them living there that they wouldn't eat very often in the dining room.

HAUKENBERRY: I believe that would be true, too.

COCKRELL: Yes, it's a bit more intimate in the kitchen as compared to the dining room. Less formal. [At this point, the tape ends and the

interview concludes].

[End #4073]