

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

JAMES & CLARE STONE

AUGUST 22, 1989

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY ANDREW DUNAR

ORAL HISTORY #1989-4

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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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## ABSTRACT

When James and Clare Stone were in the market to rent a house in 1962, they chose one with a unique characteristic. It was owned by former president and Mrs. Harry S Truman, and situated two doors east of their Independence home. For five years the Stones rented the house that was built for Bess's brother Frank, and his wife, Natalie. During that period the Trumans and the Stones became close friends who exchanged gifts of home baked treats on special occasions, and looked out for each other's well-being. Mr. and Mrs. Stone describe the Trumans as a couple who were obviously very much in love. The Trumans' fondness for their neighbors was extended to their neighbors' families as well. Harry Truman particularly enjoyed visits from the Stones' son, who was a political science major in college in the mid-1960s. The Stones offer a triple perspective of the Trumans as their landlords, neighbors, and friends.

Persons mentioned: Harry S Truman, Bess W. Truman, Elizabeth Sapper, Frank Gates Wallace, Natalie Ott Wallace, May Wallace, George Porterfield Wallace, Mike Westwood, Mark Twain, Samuel Clemens, John Stone, Thomas Hart Benton, J. Vivian Truman, Thomas J. Pendergast, Jim Pendergast, Mary Jane Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, Thomas Washington Daniel, Clifton Truman Daniel, Harrison Gates Daniel, George Porterfield Gates, Helen Berry, D. Frederick Wallace, Christine Meyer Wallace, Ardis Haukenberry, Vietta Garr, Valeria LaMere, Edward Hobby, Michael Stone, Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert H. Humphrey, John F. Kennedy, and E. Clifton Daniel, Jr.

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JAMES AND CLARE STONE**

HSTR INTERVIEW #1989-4

ANDREW DUNAR: We're in the offices of the National Park Service at 223 North Main in Independence, and we are today, which is August 22, 1989, visiting with Mr. James Stone and Mrs. Clare Stone. Let me start out by just asking you a little bit about your own background. How long have you lived in Independence?

JAMES STONE: I was here in 1961, but we actually moved here in 1962. I worked for the Missouri Pacific Railroad, and they transferred me to Kansas City, and we moved to Independence in that move.

DUNAR: I see, okay. Your connection with the Trumans then began . . . ?

CLARE STONE: In '62. When we first came down from Falls City, Nebraska, we lived over by the library and we weren't too happy about the . . .

DUNAR: By the Truman Library, you mean?

C. STONE: Yes, in . . . what were they called over on . . . right by the library?

J. STONE: Duplexes.

C. STONE: Yes, that series of duplexes, like a beehive. We kind of wanted a quieter place. And one Sunday, there was sort of a blind ad in the *Kansas City Star*, and the way it was worded, it was a two-bedroom bungalow, but that's about all it told, except who to contact.

DUNAR: There was no name then of the individual?

C. STONE: No, it was a blind ad. So I called and the lady that was in charge, Mrs. Sapper, was about as lucid as the ad. Finally, I got a little provoked and I

said, "Well, if you can't tell me where the house is, I'm sure I wouldn't be interested because I care a little bit about where we live, the neighborhood." Well, that struck a chord. She said, "Well, I'm sure you'd find the neighborhood acceptable." So then she asked a few questions, and I asked her one. I said, "Are you related to Liz Sapper?" Well, that did it because she was her daughter-in-law. If I knew Liz, why, she would be more open. So then she told us where it was, and it was Frank Wallace's home. Frank and his wife had both died at that time and she was given the rental of the house by Mrs. Truman and May Wallace, who were the present owners of that house.

DUNAR: So they, Mrs. Truman and May Wallace owned it jointly?

C. STONE: Yes, so they became our . . . That's why I say Mrs. Truman was our landlady. [chuckling] So we made arrangements then to go over and see the house. It so happened that the night we were to go, seven o'clock at night, it was pouring down rain, but we decided to go, you know. Mrs. Wallace was in the house because, see, it's right next door to her. Frank and George and Mrs. Truman lived in this . . . at the time, in their family homes.

DUNAR: Right in a row, yes.

C. STONE: So we went over and Mrs. Wallace was there. We hadn't much more than gotten there until there was a sharp rap on the back door. I guess by that time we had gone through the living room and the beautiful dining room and we were close to the kitchen. I must have been closest to the door because I opened it, and Mrs. Truman came in with her hand out, dressed

in blue as she always was, and with ease she said, “I’m Bess Truman and I wanted to welcome you to the neighborhood.” We thought that was really great. [chuckling] It was pouring down rain, and she just came through. And not only that, Margaret and her children were there visiting at that time, so you see how courteous and generous and wonderful she was. She was a wonderful person.

We walked through the house, and they said that . . . We talked about the usual things, and if we rented it, we wouldn’t want that here and we’d rather have our electric stove, rather than the gas, and such things as that and we made our negotiations.

Also, at that time, May’s husband George was critically . . . well, he was dying in the hospital. And that was another thing, between the two of them, they were with him day and night at the hospital. But we moved in a couple weeks later, and I’ll tell you, they . . . of course, May, too, but they were all just wonderful neighbors, gracious to us, just wonderful.

DUNAR: Now, you moved in late in 1962 then, is that right? Do you remember when that was?

J. STONE: In the middle of the year. I think it was either June or July.

DUNAR: Okay, and George died in the spring of 1963, is that right? So he lingered then through the rest of that year and into the early part of 1963?

C. STONE: It seemed to me like he died before we moved in.

J. STONE: He did.

C. STONE: Yes, I think he did.

DUNAR: Oh, did he? I’ll have to check that out.

C. STONE: So you might have to check that.

DUNAR: Yes, we'll check that. I know it's a long time ago, but do you remember the terms of that rental?

C. STONE: Well, I don't remember how much we were to pay, maybe something like \$150 rent. Of course, we had our own furniture. They had to move out a great deal of furniture because we wanted our own.

DUNAR: Do you know where they moved that furniture to?

C. STONE: Out to the garage, that barn. It's really more of a barn.

DUNAR: On that property?

J. STONE: On the Truman property.

DUNAR: On the Truman property, okay.

C. STONE: On the Truman's, the Truman property. See, we all had a common back yard, except for the fence.

J. STONE: See, we had to park in the Truman driveway.

DUNAR: Oh, I see.

J. STONE: So that they would have access in and out easy, I used to drive in and my wife used to drive in and pull up to the garage and then back down to the gate, see? And that way, Mr. Truman would have plenty of room to back down and head out.

DUNAR: So your car was there and Mr. and Mrs. Truman each had a car, right?

C. STONE: Yes.

DUNAR: So that's three and then did Mrs. Wallace?

C. STONE: And May Wallace.

J. STONE: May Wallace had her own garage right next to the barn.

DUNAR: Oh, she had her own garage?

J. STONE: Yes, it's still there.

DUNAR: Okay, so there were four cars then, basically, in that driveway?

C. STONE: Yes, often.

DUNAR: And then after you parked, would you go out to the front or would you walk behind May Wallace's house to yours?

J. STONE: We'd go behind May Wallace's house through our back gate and then into the house.

C. STONE: And Mr. Truman, when we first moved there and for quite a while afterwards, always liked to be in charge of locking the big gate to all three places. He'd wait until he was sure we were in. Oftentimes he'd be out there beside the gate waiting and he'd ask us about . . . oh, like if we'd been on a trip—of course, he called it a holiday—and we'd have our little conversations. We visited back and forth a good deal.

I remember they'd often go for drives. Mrs. Truman drove, and they'd go out to visit his sister Mary in Grandview and so forth. Then when they'd come home—and from grocery shopping, too—he'd get out, and help her out. This was when he was using his cane, in that period, and he'd very carefully, put the garage door down and help her, take her arm and take her up to the house. I did write this little paper. I think it's kind of interesting, just sort of an overview of our meeting them.

DUNAR: Oh, great. Would you like to read it?

C. STONE: Do you want me to read it?

DUNAR: Sure, that would be good, yes.

C. STONE: Okay. Some friend of ours from Falls City was an editor on the paper there and he was always asking me wouldn't I write something for his paper, and I never did but I did write this for ourselves and our son [see appendix, item 1]:

### I'd Have to Call it Love

If I ever wrote about our wonderful neighbors, I'd have to tell about how, upon their return from grocery shopping, visiting sister Mary in Grandview or whatever the occasion, the dignified, aged gentleman stands courteously and lovingly aside while the capable, briskly moving lady comes out of the garage. And then the gentleman, though holding a cane with one hand, precariously, yet, resolutely, closes the garage door and accompanies his lady proudly to the house.

I would have to tell about the times we sat visiting with them on their summer porch, with its rotary ceiling fan, or in their cozy library with its book-lined walls. And in spite of the most interesting bits of history being recounted by the alert, world-renowned gentleman, the thing that overshadows it all is the precious loving glances that the man automatically makes to his lady. The great current of love and understanding, though unseen, was there in full force at all times.

I would have to tell about the night we were making arrangements to rent the house that had been her brother Frank's home. And despite a drenching rain and also despite the fact their daughter Margaret and her children were presently visiting her parents . . .

This is repetitious now . . .

. . . there was a rugged knock at the door—yes, the back door—and upon opening it, there entered this friendly, interesting lady dressed in blue, with her hand out-stretched in greeting to us, perfect strangers, and with friendly ease, said, "I'm Bess Truman and I'm happy to welcome you as our neighbors."

Further, I should tell about one Fourth of July when the gentleman and his lady were about to depart for the patriotic ceremony

around the flagpole at the Truman Library. I went out to snap their picture, and during the process, the lady laughed and said, "Harry, you're supposed to look at the camera." He was looking lovingly at Bess. Incidentally, this turned out to be the last Fourth of July the two of them were able to attend, and the picture is one of few showing both of them grinning.

- DUNAR: That's nice.
- C. STONE: Another little interesting sideline about this, I asked for it. I said, "Would you mind if I took your picture?" And Mr. Truman said, "Why ask?" He said, "Nobody asks, they just snap." [laughter] But I treasure that picture.
- DUNAR: That's great. That's real nice. Where was this taken? [see appendix, item 2]
- C. STONE: This was the walk from their back door. See, Mike . . . what was Mike's . . .
- J. STONE: Yes, and see, that's the back end of the house up there.
- DUNAR: Okay, right here, right.
- C. STONE: Yes, this is their summer porch.
- J. STONE: That's the porch.
- DUNAR: Right, I see where it is, yes.
- C. STONE: And, you see, here she was dressed in blue. She most always dressed in soft blue, and she always had on a gold bracelet that had been given to her by her Tuesday bridge club the time they went to Washington.
- DUNAR: That's very nice. Would the park service be able to borrow this and make a copy of it, possibly?
- C. STONE: Yes. Do you want a copy of this?
- DUNAR: Yes, that's very nice. In the notes that you read, another thing that you

mentioned, too, was meeting with them on the back porch. Could you describe what one of those meetings would be like, just sort of in general terms?

J. STONE: Well, when we would go up to the house to talk to them, you know, meet with them, Mr. Truman himself always met us at the door on the porch, because he'd say, "Well, we'll be waiting for you on the porch," if that was where we were going to sit in the summertime. He would take and escort Clare over here. Mrs. Truman would be sitting over here in a chair and escort her over to sit down in a chair, and then he had his chair over on the opposite side of the door and I would sit over there with him. That way, the ladies would talk and Mr. Truman and I would talk. They were always very pleasant and, if at any instant either Mrs. Truman or Clare would stand up, immediately, Mr. Truman would stand up.

I remember one funny little incident that happened up there. In his later years, Mr. Truman wore a hearing aid. One afternoon, we were sitting there talking and all at once he reached up like this and he says, "The battery is dead." He says, "That's all right." He says, "No one ever hears anything good about themselves anyway." So he went in and put a new battery in his hearing aid. [laughter] He always had an instant response to anything that happened. Even in his later years, he was just as sharp as a tack.

C. STONE: That's right.

J. STONE: But as I say, he was one of the most . . . and I've been around a lot in Washington, with the railroad and everything, and he was one of the most

courteous men that I ever knew. His language was always very, very polite, but, of course, I know that you didn't step on him or he would bite back.

[chuckling]

DUNAR: Do you remember the sorts of things that you would talk about when you were sitting on the porch?

J. STONE: Oh, well, we would talk about Washington, D. C., because we only lived about a block and a half from the White House in Washington.

DUNAR: Oh, is that right?

C. STONE: While he was president, and really didn't know it until later.

J. STONE: His daughter Margaret went to school with our niece at George Washington University. I remember one time, well, I guess it was not long after we started going up there, I said something to the effect, "Well," I said, "we didn't live in a sumptuous place like the White House, but we only lived a block and a half away." And he says, "Well, why didn't you come over and visit?" [laughter]

C. STONE: Yes, he really did.

J. STONE: And I said, "Because you wouldn't let me in the damned door." [laughter] And he just laughed, you know. He said, "You don't know." He says, "If I had answered the door, I might have invited you in." [laughter] So, you know, that was the kind of a person he was, and he always had time for everyone, you know. But, he was a very, I would say, learned man, although his formal education, as I understand it, stopped when he finished high school. Up in his study up there, his desk was right here, he sat here, on this side was a stack of books as high as that desk and over here was

another stack. They would bring books down from the library, political science mostly, and as he would read them and finish them, he would put them on the other side. Then they would take this stack back and bring him another stack.

DUNAR: So the stack to the left were the new books that he hadn't looked at yet, and the one to the right were the ones he had finished?

J. STONE: Right. As he read them, he would put them over here. On the left-hand side of his desk, where the bookcase there had autographed copies or original editions of books of different authors, like . . .

C. STONE: Mark Twain, Samuel Clemens.

J. STONE: Mark Twain, see, and some of them had the notes in the margin of corrections, you know, that were just slightly different but not different, really, than what the original was. But when it was edited, it wasn't in the language of the writer, so he wanted to put his . . . what he said in there, actually.

DUNAR: Yes, that's good.

J. STONE: Mr. Truman read constantly, all the time, and our son was a political science major in Columbia, and Mr. Truman knew that. So when John would come up to visit from the university, you know, Mr. Truman would see him out in the back yard and pretty soon the phone would ring. "Tell the boy to come up." And they would sit up there and discuss political science, just for hours at a time, you know. And every time he came up, it was the same thing. So he wanted everybody's point of view, not only the older experienced people but also the students. He wanted everybody's

point of view.

C. STONE: He was sure proud of the library and the research that was done by young people there. Whenever a group was coming in, when he was still going . . . He was still driving up to the library and then being driven up by Mike Westwood. He would always want to be there and talk to and greet any young people that came to the library. Also, like when it would be about time for the paper to be thrown into their yard, he liked to be out there and he'd talk to the paper boy. Also, any tourist—because there were tourists, even back then—that, if they knew where the house was, they stopped and got out and watched. He'd go over and talk to them. Not Mrs. Truman, she was more private, but Mr. Truman never met a stranger. He was always open to a visit.

When Jim was telling about that desk, it made me think of one rainy day I went up to visit and Mr. Truman was at the library. Instead of where I usually sat, for some reason or another, Mrs. Truman directed me to a certain chair. Well, after I was sitting in it, I really was overwhelmed because it was Mr. Truman's chair behind his desk. And it gave me quite a sensation. That was the time that I noticed . . . Speaking about how much they read, both of them, I noticed that his feet had rubbed through the carpet down to the wood under his chair. That was very impressive because it told a lot. They weren't three feet apart from one another as they read. You know, her chair was a needlepoint chair that she sat in and then this little lamp, you've seen the lamp, I think it's still in the house, came right over her head and gave her perfect light here.

DUNAR: So where would she sit in the study?

C. STONE: Well, he sat at his desk.

DUNAR: And his back was to the window, right?

J. STONE: Right.

C. STONE: Yes, and then she was just right around the desk.

DUNAR: On the other side.

J. STONE: Yes, on the other side.

C. STONE: Yes, and they conversed.

J. STONE: Right at the end of that bookcase that I was telling you about, that's where she always sat. Then when we would go up, there was a couple of other chairs in there and I would sit down on this side of his desk where a chair was and I think Clare would sit over next to Mrs. Truman.

C. STONE: I did, uh huh. Let's see, here . . .

DUNAR: Yes, here's a picture of the study.

C. STONE: Oh, here. Okay, I'm trying to get located. This is his desk? All right, then his chair was right here and then she was right here, and there was a chair over here.

MICHAEL SHAVER: And here's the other side of the room.

C. STONE: Yes, this is easier. Okay, this is the chair that . . . let's see, I think I sat in this chair and she sat in that chair.

DUNAR: Okay, so you sat in the chair . . . As we look at the picture here, this is picture 1175, you would sit in the chair on the right and she would sit in the chair on the left. Right? [see appendix, item 3]

C. STONE: Yes. But the lamp isn't there. See, the lamp was right over . . . Oh, there it

is! Yes, there it is. Is it still there?

SHAVER: Yes, it is.

C. STONE: I've only been in the house once since the . . .

SHAVER: Are you saying it was on the other side of that chair, next to the record player, or was it between the two?

C. STONE: I don't remember the record player. This desk looks different. Of course, it was always . . .

SHAVER: Yes, it's cleaned up. [laughter]

C. STONE: Yes, I never saw it . . . Well, I'd have to think about that. But, anyway, they were avid, avid readers.

DUNAR: And then, Mr. Stone, would you have . . . These are the two chairs that Mrs. Stone and Mrs. Truman would sit in. Where was the chair that you would sit in then? Was there another chair in there, do you agree?

J. STONE: Well, yes, when we'd go up there'd be another chair in there.

DUNAR: They'd have one in there?

[Following conversation between M. Shaver and C. Stone occurs simultaneously as A.

Dunar and J. Stone are speaking of icon.]

SHAVER: That's probably more typical.

C. STONE: Yes, yes.

J. STONE: I believe that this here . . .

C. STONE: Is this Mike?

SHAVER: No, that's Thomas Hart Benton.

C. STONE: Oh, my goodness, yes, this is the way . . . Now, this is Mike right here.

SHAVER: Yes.

C. STONE: I remember the lamp, but the chairs, the two chairs were right here. And I can't remember exactly where [unintelligible]. I know that the lamp was right over her shoulder, the little reading lamp.

J. STONE: You know how the Moslems decorated their columns and everything in their churches?

DUNAR: Yes.

J. STONE: Well, this was peeled about that thick off of one of the columns in the mosque at Constantinople.

DUNAR: Oh, is that right?

J. STONE: And it was flattened out. You can see the creases in here. See, they flattened it out like that in about four pieces and it was framed and hung on this wall over here. One time, knowing how he felt about books, you know, and you have to make a little . . . kind of funny when you're talking to him, because he had a sense of humor, and I said, "What's the most valuable thing in here?" And I thought he was going to say these first editions. And he said, "Monetarily," he says, "that is, but to me, the books are."

DUNAR: Right, interesting, interesting, yes.

J. STONE: But he had to be practical, along with everything else when he said anything.

SHAVER: So it was that icon that was the most important thing, the most valuable.

J. STONE: Money value only. But he was a great student of history and he studied everything. He read history books just like political science books, which are a history. And he said one day that "for everything, every decision that is made, there's a precedent in history." And he says, "The same goes for

me. Every decision I ever made, there was a precedent in history.” And he was very serious. When he was talking about history or decisions or anything like that, he was always very serious, you know, there was no levity in it.

DUNAR: Yeah. Were there any particular books that he talked to you about?

J. STONE: Not necessarily, except in the political science field. He was a great student of political science. I don’t ever remember him singling out any particular author or book.

C. STONE: No, I don’t either.

DUNAR: Do you remember him ever talking about any of his contemporaries in Washington? Any other politicians?

J. STONE: Oh, not really, except that generally he would talk about his meetings with them. He always said that they had their say and advice, but he said, “The decision was mine, so any fault would be mine, not theirs.” But he had these meetings, you know, well, like your cabinet meetings, but not only with them but with other officials, like congressional and everything. But he wanted it to be perfectly well understood that every decision made was his and not someone else’s.

DUNAR: Would he ever talk about earlier days before the presidency?

J. STONE: Well, in a general way, wouldn’t he Clare? He’d make a couple remarks about when he used to work in a drugstore up on the square.

C. STONE: Yes.

J. STONE: Of course, that was during Prohibition days and he never named any names, but he says, “Lots of prominent people would come in for a little

shot.” [laughter]

C. STONE: They brought their own glasses. He had learned that as a boy, you see. Then he'd joke sometimes about how many different religions there were in his family, you know, Baptist and Catholic and Episcopalian. Mrs. Truman was very . . . let's see, what do I want to say . . . helpful with her Episcopalian church. She belonged to the guild, and went regularly over to polish the candle holders, candelabra and all that.

DUNAR: Did he partake in religious activities to any extent?

C. STONE: Not too much. He was a Baptist mostly.

DUNAR: But when he made these remarks about all the people of different religions in his family, what was his conclusion there?

C. STONE: Well, I can't remember his words right now.

DUNAR: Was he making a point in saying that?

C. STONE: I think, yes, that . . . Well, I don't remember exactly how he would put it, but we all were entitled to our own religion and that was nice that we had it. And his own brother was married to a Catholic, you know, John. Wasn't his name John? Now, I kind of forget.

DUNAR: Vivian, his brother.

C. STONE: Yes, and then, of course, his in-laws, too, were Catholics, but he never made any derogatory remarks or anything about any religions. We talked about neighborhood things and picnics and their favorite food. Kelsey's was a restaurant here at that time and had been for quite a while, I guess, and all the Independence people loved to eat at Kelsey's. When they would have family picnics, they would bring the food in from Kelsey's, and

particularly their slaw. But Mr. Truman loved angel food cake and Mrs. Truman loved brownies. His first birthday after we lived there, I made him a chocolate angel food cake and took it up. A day or two later, when Mrs. Truman brought the plate back, she said, "Did you get Harry's letter?" I said, "Letter?" And she said, "Yes, he said he was going to write you a letter about that cake." So, in a few days, it came in the mail. Then I have another letter here that I treasure very much and it shows a great deal about Mrs. Truman. By the way, before we knew them personally we called them Harry and Bess. But my goodness, after we knew them, you know, they just . . . I'm sure they wouldn't have minded if we had called them that, but we wouldn't have thought of it because we had so much respect for them.

DUNAR: What did you call them then? Mr. and Mrs. Truman?

C. STONE: Mr. and Mrs. Truman, yes, and Mrs. Truman called me Mrs. Stone. This was written when Mr. Truman . . .

[End #3592; Begin #3593]

C. STONE: . . . these photographs and all. She was still laughing at Mr. Truman because he was watching her, and then he swung his head around.  
[chuckling] [see appendix, item 2]

DUNAR: Yes. Did you see the picture? Isn't that a nice picture?

SHAVER: It's wonderful.

J. STONE: You know, when you're talking about him being buried up there in the grounds of the library. One time, I don't know how the conversation came up, you know, because he was a veteran and I just assumed that he would go back to Arlington or someplace like that to be buried, but he said, "No,"

he said, “I want to be buried up there in the courtyard.” And he says, “Then when I get tired of laying around, I can go in and go to work.” [laughter]

DUNAR: Oh, that’s a great story. [Talk while reel is being changed, then new reel begins.] Could you maybe just repeat what you just said now, because that’s a nice story?

J. STONE: Well, when we were talking about him being buried in the courtyard of the library . . . One day, it came up—I don’t know how—but since he was a veteran, I assumed that he would be buried in Arlington. But he says, “No,” he says, “I’m going to be buried up there right outside of my office window, and,” he said, “When I get tired of lying around I can go in and go to work.

DUNAR: That’s great. Speaking of being a veteran, did he ever talk about his army service?

J. STONE: Very, very little, but he talked about a lot of the people, you know, individually in his unit and he was very protective of those men and all that they did in France. And he was proud of the fact that he had served in the service.

DUNAR: Do you remember any particular stories he told about being in the service?

J. STONE: No, not really. Everything we’d talk about would be like they’d be shelling someplace and it was just general, but he wouldn’t, and I don’t remember him recalling any specific towns or places in France, but that’s what he would be talking about.

C. STONE: He did tell us about his friendship with Tom Pendergast. He talked some about that, especially the funeral. Jim, you tell that part of it.

J. STONE: Well, when Mr. Pendergast died Mr. Truman said that, you know, that all of the political implications and everything that had been talked about, Pendergast helping him and what he had done, he said, "I wanted people to know that I respected what Mr. Pendergast stood for." And he says, "When his funeral was held," he says, "I intentionally arrived late, walked clear to the front of the funeral home and sat down for the funeral because I wanted people to know that I was there and that he was a friend of mine."

C. STONE: That was typical.

J. STONE: See, actually, Mr. Truman and Pendergast's brother were the close friends, rather than Pendergast and Truman.

DUNAR: Actually, Truman was in the military with Jim Pendergast, who was the son of Tom Pendergast's brother, so it was his nephew.

C. STONE: Yes, that's right.

J. STONE: And they were the friends, really. When Mr. Truman decided to run for political office, of course, through his brother, Pendergast's brother, Pendergast helped him.

DUNAR: Right, right.

J. STONE: But he says, "I never played any favorites." He said, "Once I was in office, it was every man for himself." He said, "Nobody bought political favors from me." And that's the way he was with Pendergast, although Jim Pendergast owned practically all the construction and everything in the county of Jackson.

DUNAR: Right. Do you remember any other . . . Well, we want to come back to these letters before we go on. You have a couple of letters that Mr. Truman

sent you. Could you maybe read those and tell us a little bit about the circumstances so we can get these on the record?

C. STONE: Well, yes. Yes, this is when his first birthday came along since we lived as neighbors in 1964. I knew that they both liked . . . Well, he especially liked angel food cake, so I had made him a chocolate angel food [cake] and Mrs. Truman had returned the plate the very next day and asked me if I had received Harry's letter. I was puzzled. I said, "Letter?" And she said, "Yes, he's going to write you a letter." So this is it:

June 2, 1964

Dear Mrs. Stone:

Thank you very much for that delicious cake which you sent me on my birthday. I am especially fond of chocolate cakes and you can be sure that I made good use of that one.

It was one of the best I have eaten in many a day.

Sincerely yours,

Harry Truman

I was very pleased and excited to get that. By the way, we took food back and forth. They were so generous. I might put in here, she was often coming down to share treats. They received things from all over the United States, you know, special treats. She brought us some maple syrup from Vermont, cranberries from Massachusetts, pecans from Georgia, a pheasant that was just beautiful and even had the feathers on it and an apple or something in its mouth from South Dakota, [chuckling] carnations

from Colorado, beautiful red carnations, grapefruit from Florida. Those are just some of the things, and, of course, along with food we had a lot in common that way. She didn't particularly like to cook. She always told me that she'd rather wash the dishes. She'd clean up after . . . She'd prefer the maid did the cooking. They made something called Blarney Stones that were just simply delicious. They were little vanilla cakes, rolled in icing and then walnut bits, delicious.

Anyway, then this other letter that is a great treasure of mine, and I know I read it with tears in my eyes at the time . . . It was in 1972 and Mr. Truman was dying over at the Research Hospital.

Dear Mrs. Stone:

I have been at the hospital so much lately I haven't had time for "manners." At night I am so tired I can't even talk. Your cake was delicious as always and Margaret and May and I surely did enjoy it. I haven't had such really good cake since the last one you brought us. Thank you both so very much.

As ever,

Bess Truman

I'll get your box home one of these days.

It was a hand-written note. Would you be interested in the first time they came down to visit us? We hadn't been there very long, and they had come back in from one of their rides—well, they had been out to see Mary—and we saw them come in. Mr. Truman stood at the end of that walk, at the

back, and Mrs. Truman went darting into the house. Our telephone rang and it was Mrs. Truman. I did get excited when she said, “This is Mrs. Truman, and we wondered if we could come and call on you.” “Oh,” I said, “yes, we’d be happy to have you.” [chuckling] Well, I hung up the phone and I said, “Oh, my goodness, Jim, they’re going to come down to see us. Quick!” So he took down the ironing board and I scooted the iron someplace—it took me two weeks to find it—and put some coffee on and we made that pretty fast. They came in the back door. Of course, they were used to coming in the back door because that had, after all, been her brother’s home. We went in the living room and sat and visited and had some coffee and it was just real exciting. That was our first visit with them, actually, and after that it was back and forth.

Another time, it was a terrible snow and we had decided to not even . . . It was on a Saturday so we didn’t have to go anywhere. There was a knock on the back door and I thought, “Oh, that can’t be anybody,” so I didn’t even go. Yet, I finally did and I saw Mrs. Truman. She went around to the front and knocked, and by that time I had put on a robe and met her. She had something that day for us that might have been . . . I don’t remember what it was—fruit, I suppose. I wanted her to come in but she said, no, that it wasn’t a fit day to be out, really, but she wanted to share those with us. I apologized for, being . . . because they were always dressed impeccably, always, both of them, all day. I apologized and she said, “You know, I think that’s a good idea.” And the next day she called down and said, “Mr. Truman and I are following your example. We’re going to just

be lazy and cozy today.” [laughter] But you see what wonderful neighbors they were? Oh, my goodness.

That’s mostly what I would have to say, except when we did buy a home from a friend after five years . . . May had thought that the house wasn’t for sale, and we bought this house where we are now. When I told Mrs. Truman about it, she was kind of shocked and said, “Why, Mrs. Stone, we would gladly sell you the house you’re in.” She said, “We consider you as family.” She said, “Have you signed anything?” And I said, “Well, not really, but we gave our word.” So she said, “Well, if you change your mind or there’s any way, why, we would love to sell you the home.” Of course, now, as it turns out, we’re glad that we didn’t buy it, but we probably would have back then, stayed. We stayed friends and visited and called one another.

DUNAR: So you visited them at the house then after you moved?

C. STONE: Yes, very much, until she died.

DUNAR: Would she come to your house then and visit you?

C. STONE: No, Mrs. Truman never got over to our house. Of course, she did begin to fail and that was quite a change for her to come. She had to sleep downstairs and that was quite a setback.

The day, one day when I came from school [pause while cassette tape is turned over] I was teaching at the time and when I came home from school I noticed limousines, two or three of them in the drive, and I thought, “Oh, I hope nothing has happened.” Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Truman came down and she said, “That’s the Secret Service. They’re

going to be here now.” I said, “Oh, wonderful!” And she said, “No, not at all. They’re going to be here all the time.” That was certainly the truth. I think what bugged them a lot, here were these handsome young men that just sat, you know. They were in the barn and out in the yard and in the house and, of course. It wasn’t too terribly long afterwards that since Mr. Truman knew someone in Washington that had something to do with their work he had them cleared out, period. They didn’t feel he needed it. Of course, later on those Secret Service men that lived across the street—you know, later they bought that house—they were angels to Mrs. Truman during her sickness. They really, really were wonderful and she appreciated that so much.

J. STONE: After Mr. Truman died, of course, when she would be going to church or to the grocery store or anyplace, they would take her. They were just like a son to her, you know. They’d take her everywhere she wanted to go and protect her.

DUNAR: Yes. Let me just ask you, we’ve talked about what Mr. Truman talked about with you. What did Mrs. Truman talk about with you? What would her topics of conversation be?

C. STONE: Well, she talked a lot, of course, about Marg. Margaret was her dad’s pet mostly, but, of course, the mother and daughter were . . . you know, they loved one another. Margaret called every Sunday, year in and year out. It was interesting about the little boys, each one as they came along. I know Mrs. Truman kind of joked a little bit about . . . I think it was the second . . . Let’s see, there was Clifton and Harry and . . . anyway, one whose middle

name was Washington. She kind of . . . that didn't set just right with her, [chuckling] it didn't sound just right, but she explained that that was part of Mr. Daniel's family. That was a name that came down their line.

DUNAR: Was that Thomas, Thomas Washington?

C. STONE: That's it, Thomas Washington. She could accept the Thomas, but that Washington was kind of a burr. Well, we talked about . . . She belonged to two . . . well, she was an honorary member of the Business and Professional Women's Club that I do belong to and did then and the Mary Paxton study class, but she didn't get to go to that. She was a member with her . . .

DUNAR: She never went or just occasionally?

C. STONE: Well, I wouldn't say she never did. I didn't join that until I quit teaching in 1972. I'm sure she went before that. But after Mr. Truman's fall, she wasn't active, even in her Tuesday bridge club. That was another part of their love. She didn't want to be gone, you know, when he had that fall and broke his glasses.

DUNAR: That was the fall in '64?

C. STONE: I don't remember exactly when it was. It was when we were still . . .

DUNAR: The fall in the bathroom? Yes, right, that was in '64.

C. STONE: Yes, we still lived there. And she curtailed even the Tuesday bridge club, which was part of her life. We'd talk about recipes. Another thing about her, she didn't want any special favors of any kind. When she needed glasses or something, or her eyes examined, she didn't want to be favored. She didn't want an appointment like today or tomorrow, "just whenever

it's my turn." She was very much that way. And Mr. Truman, when he'd be there, when I'd go up and Jim was at work, he'd stay and visit a while, and then he'd say, "Well, I'm going to leave you two so you can gossip."  
[laughter]

DUNAR: You mentioned Mr. Truman's fall. Can you remember, was it immediately apparent, the effect that that had on him?

C. STONE: Well, the fact that it broke his glasses, and yet, that injured his eye that was already the bad eye. I don't remember . . .

DUNAR: He broke a couple of ribs, as I recall, right?

C. STONE: Yes, he did.

DUNAR: And also hurt his eye then, too, as well.

C. STONE: Yes, he hurt his eye, he injured his eye.

DUNAR: Had he used a cane before the fall?

C. STONE: No, I don't think so.

DUNAR: Was that when he started using a cane, do you remember? Was it right after the fall?

C. STONE: Yes. And then, he always went for walks. When he went and walked longer than he should have, there were times when he'd go for the walk that everybody in the neighborhood was, on edge, really, when he'd get back. When he still used to drive, he was very persnickety about his car. He'd come back and forth to the library, and if it happened to sprinkle on that car, he'd drive in the barn. I call it a barn because that really is what it seemed like, and was.

J. STONE: Well, it was a horse barn and had carriages when Mr. Gates was alive.

DUNAR: Yes, and they still called it “the barn,” didn’t they?

C. STONE: Yes, that’s right, and he’d take a cloth and wipe the car all over, just the entire car, and make it nice again.

DUNAR: After the fall, did he stop driving at that point, too?

C. STONE: I think that was the end of his driving.

J. STONE: I think that’s when Mike started driving him all the time.

C. STONE: Yes, and Mike was so faithful.

J. STONE: Before, Mr. Truman would drive and Mike would sit in the passenger seat, but then they reversed.

DUNAR: They switched.

C. STONE: Yes, and Mrs. Truman would go up to the grocery store. It was Kroger’s at that time, shopped, and I’d often meet her up there. Did her own shopping. And, she really did the cooking for them, except their dinner. They were served at dinner, in the dining room. But that kitchen was used just like anybody else would use their kitchen, pretty much. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Yes. Let me just ask either one of you to give me your reactions to a few of the other people that you probably encountered in your friendship with the Trumans. How about Margaret Truman?

C. STONE: Well, we didn’t really know Margaret when she was home. She didn’t come too often, but it was a treasure when she was there for them. We weren’t up there at any time Margaret was.

DUNAR: Did you ever meet Margaret?

C. STONE: We met Margaret; I think it was after his funeral, just one time. Of course, we know May.

DUNAR: Could you say a little bit more about May. You must have known her very well.

C. STONE: Oh, yes. In fact, when I visited with her a couple of weeks ago, I came home real . . . felt real bad because it . . . of course, she told me she was ninety-five or ninety-six, she wasn't too sure which. But she's planning to go to Mary Paxton, and I'm picking her up next month.

DUNAR: Oh, is that right?

C. STONE: She has failed, and this is sad because she is so sharp and so interested in everything. She had fallen. Well, she fell in May in the back of her house—I think it was between the bedroom and the bathroom. She was coming out of the shower, but she wasn't hurt—so she said. Now, this time I went over to see her, she had fallen on the porch, and that's concrete, and couldn't get up. She called and said, "Oh, help! Somebody help!" And, fortunately, they were working on the porch at Frank's house, where we used to live, and one of the boys heard her. She called him a boy; he was probably a man. Anyway, two of them came over and they took her back to her bedroom. She says that she wasn't hurt, but I'm sure she was bruised something terrible. She doesn't want anybody to come and live with her, and she doesn't want to leave her home. She's been very active, in, of course, she still plays bridge.

DUNAR: Does she?

C. STONE: Yes. Her group, call themselves "Widows and Orphans." You've heard of that, haven't you? Well, they are friends of hers, like herself, who have lost their husbands. That's when she began to travel, by the way. Two sets that

she plays bridge with. Speaking of travel, she really didn't travel until after George had died, and then she and Ruby somebody—I kind of forget because she doesn't live in town anymore—they took a number of tours. Then Helen Berry, who is a friend of May's and ours, started driving. They were in their late seventies and early eighties and just tooting all around the country. In fact, our first trip on a tour: we had taken the two of them out to collect their last travel papers and stuff. They were going up to New England. I just made the remark casually, "Gee, I wish we were going." And the travel agent said, "We just got two cancellations. Do you really want to go?" "Absolutely!" So the four of us went on that trip.

DUNAR: Oh, that's great.

C. STONE: That was wonderful. And May, she was carrying her cane then. She went down into . . . well, up on . . . Wait a minute, that was another trip. [chuckling] I was going to tell you about her being up on Pike's Peak. That was later, even. Anyway, on this particular trip we visited . . . well, all the sights that were on the tour. It was a wonderful tour. We even took a ferry across to Martha's Vineyard, and it was beautiful going over, but coming back there was a terrible storm. We were sitting on iron seats that were riveted to the floor, thank heavens!

J. STONE: And spray was coming clear over the boat.

C. STONE: Yes, and water splashing around there. May and Helen, they just took it in their stride. I was thinking, "Oh, I'm glad this chair is riveted down and bolted." A few years later . . . We took more than those two trips, but the last trip that the four of us went together was to Colorado, and that wasn't

very long ago, not more than ten years ago. Anyway, they both had been there in cars and loved it. It seemed like Colorado was a special thing, a special place to them. So we went on this tour. There were about forty of us. But May would tell stories and jokes and so forth on the coach as we rode along. When we got to Pike's Peak, we went up that . . .

J. STONE: Tram.

C. STONE: What do you call it? A little railway? She tooted around up there just the same as any of the rest of us, and everybody just loved her on the coach—both of them, they're very interesting people. Of course, May, it's hard for her to get around and hard for her to hear. Helen can do that, but she can't see. They call each other and keep in touch.

DUNAR: I'm just curious—this is just kind of an aside, I guess—you mentioned that Colorado was kind of special. I'm wondering, because I know that people in the family have gone to Colorado and lived in Colorado for years and years. Do you know who that was?

C. STONE: Well, that's Mrs. Truman's younger brother. What is his name? William? He's dead, but I mean what was his name?

J. STONE: Bill, I think.

C. STONE: I know his wife Christine.

SHAVER: Fred.

DUNAR: Fred, that's right.

C. STONE: Fred, that's right. Christine is his wife. When Mrs. Truman died, we took May out to meet Christine's plane—that's Fred's wife—and at that time she was living in Baltimore, but they had lived in Colorado. I don't know

that it was through the family that they were fond of Colorado or just . . .

DUNAR: Yes, even earlier I know even President Truman's aunt, way back in the 1890s, had gone out to Colorado to Pike's Peak.

C. STONE: Is that right?

DUNAR: I just wondered if May went up there for that reason.

C. STONE: Oh, could be, yes. It could be. And Mrs. Haukenberry, she was interesting, Ardis Haukenberry. A *very* interesting little lady. Did you ever get to interview her?

DUNAR: No, I met her once but I never did get a chance to do that. Could you say a little bit more about her?

C. STONE: Well, she was a little walking history, in a way. There wasn't anything about Independence or Independence people that Ardis didn't know. Of course, she was president of our Mary Paxton study class more than once. She was president, I think, when I joined. The fact is it was in the home that she was living in, where Mr. Truman is supposed to have met Bess.

DUNAR: Right.

C. STONE: And she'd tell about that, of course.

DUNAR: You have mentioned that Mary Paxton study group a number of times. Could you say a little bit more about what you did?

C. STONE: Mary Paxton study class, as far as we're concerned. People call it a club.  
[laughter]

DUNAR: Okay. [laughter]

C. STONE: It's a very . . . well, I don't like to use the word "prestigious," but there's a lot of people in there that would. It was an outgrowth of a group. It was

Mrs. Wallace's mother and her friends that started it. They were young wives and they wanted to do something besides just keep house and have their family and so forth. So they decided, and most all of them had been to college, and they wanted to keep on with their education and so forth. So they'd get together once a . . . I think they did once a week. Yes, I know it was, because we still do once a week—it's every Monday. They would have a mentor who would direct their studies, and they would study such things as world religions, the cradle of civilization, Egypt and King Tut and all of that. That began, oh, goodness, seventy-five or eighty years ago, I'm sure—I should know. Anyway, during that time, it grew, and then somewhere along the line after Mr. Truman came back and the library was built, they were allowed to meet there. And we still do, every Monday from September through May. And our professor is Dr. Seeber [unintelligible] from KU. And he seems to just love to come over here. He could have quit any time, but . . . And, as a matter of fact, this year, I believe, he is retiring from his professorship, but he is still going to be our professor. Art, music, opera: there's hardly anything we haven't had as our subject.

J. STONE: He is a world traveler and actually goes to these places, that it's a personal thing, see, when he talks. It isn't just the book, manuscript. He talks from experience.

DUNAR: Sure, that's great.

C. STONE: He brings us slides. And opera is his hobby, his real hobby. He's been all over the world to uh, [unintelligible], La Scala Opera House. He's heard all famous singers. He taught opera one year to us, that was a star.

[unintelligible] The artist has been the present, more than once. And uh, our membership is probably about, oh, sixty or seventy-five ladies from about town. Of course, now with, uh, women, what do you want to call it, ERA, [unintelligible], we do allow men to join and we have two or three gentlemen actually come and talk with us. It's nice.

[End #3593; Begin #3594]

DUNAR: Another individual, the President's sister, uh, Mary Jane.

C. STONE: We never met Mary.

J. STONE: No, we'd see her over on the porch.

DUNAR: Just saw her coming into the house?

C. STONE: Yes.

DUNAR: How about Mike Westwood? Did you know him?

C. STONE: We knew Mike.

J. STONE: Yeah, we knew him. But I don't know, although he was a personal friend of Truman's, you know, to us he was just someone who took care of things for him. He was a very nice person, but I never did deal with him too much on a personal basis. That would be intruding, in my view, you know. Because I wouldn't ask him anything that I wouldn't ask Mr. Truman himself, so I'd just as soon ask Mr. Truman to start with.

DUNAR: Sure. What about the cook for the Trumans, Vietta Garr?

C. STONE: Vietta Garr, yes. Well, we'd visit with her sometimes. Back in those days, we had our trash cans and so on out in the yard. And fires, and you could burn your trash. Margaret's boys loved that. They called them bonfires, and the trash would be burning. But Vietta, was a real friend to Trumans. There

wasn't any black or white. That was another part, as you know, about Mr. Truman and Mrs. Truman both. They respected people for who they were and not the color of their skin—that was immaterial. They were awfully nice to Vietta, and Vietta was wonderful to them. Then there was Valeria that came later.

DUNAR: Yes, Valeria LaMere.

C. STONE: Yes, and she was so good to Mrs. Truman, very, very caring. When Mrs. Truman would wish she had a hamburger or something, Valeria would stoke up the—of course, we weren't living there at that time. We already had our home—the barbecue thing out back and fix that for her.

DUNAR: Did you get to know some of the Secret Service people, too, when they were there?

C. STONE: No, we never did. The preacher. Do you know about the preacher, the yard man? We knew him.

DUNAR: Oh, yes, Reverend Hobby?

C. STONE: I don't know his real name—Yes, he was as nice as he could be.

DUNAR: What was he like?

C. STONE: Well, he was just friendly to all of us and everybody. He couldn't keep from working in the yards, you know, and fixing up things. Let's see, there were awnings that they had on the windows of both houses. I don't know about Truman's home, but Frank and George . . . and he would be the one that would work on those.

DUNAR: Would he work on the house when you were living there, too?

C. STONE: Yes.

DUNAR: So he worked on all three houses, then?

C. STONE: Yes, he did.

DUNAR: And the yards, too?

C. STONE: Yes.

DUNAR: He did gardening and the yard?

C. STONE: Well, now, we did our own yard.

J. STONE: We did our own, but he would have done it if we hadn't.

C. STONE: Yes, that's right, and he would just be hopping around to help whenever he had an opportunity. He just loved our little grandson; he was so good to little Michael. If Mike would be playing out back, he'd always have to visit with him and watch over him. He was always just very pleasant. When we'd go through to get our car or to bring our groceries back, we'd stop and visit with him.

SHAVER: Did he put up your awnings every spring like he did Mrs. Wallace's?

C. STONE: Yes, he did. He took care of them.

SHAVER: What color were yours, do you remember?

C. STONE: Brown, weren't they?

J. STONE: Gosh, I don't remember now. I'd have to get an old picture and look at it.

C. STONE: Yes, I think they were brown. Our house was brown and May's was green.

SHAVER: Did they put a new roof on that house while you were there?

J. STONE: No.

SHAVER: I remember looking at some older pictures. It had an old wood shingle roof on it.

J. STONE: No, they didn't put a roof on it while we were there.

C. STONE: No, and we still had the cabbage rose carpets. [chuckling] But, oh, the chandelier in the dining room in Frank's house!

J. STONE: It was silver.

C. STONE: Sterling silver and crystal. Oh, that was beautiful! Yes, and down in the basement of the house that we lived in was one of those original—at least I think of them as original automatic washers—Bendix it was called.

J. STONE: It dashed rather than . . .

C. STONE: No, it didn't. It was one of the original ones. It was mounted in the floor some way. And when we moved there, they said, "You can use the Bendix." Well, I didn't want to. [chuckling] I didn't know how. I had my own washing machine. Then, we wanted the electric stove, and, of course, the house was fixed for gas. Well, we negotiated this that evening that I was telling you about, the rainy day/evening, and I said, "Well, what about our electric stove? I have always cooked with electricity." There would have to be some changes made, and they guessed they could do that. It turned out, we had to have it wired, and they paid half and we paid half, which I thought was interesting. I thought it was nice that they did pay their half. We paid once a month, and when we'd give the check to May, usually—if May wasn't there, we'd take it up to Mrs. Truman—and it would be made out to both of them because it was jointly-owned.

DUNAR: Who would endorse it?

C. STONE: Well, we have some where Mrs. Truman . . . I hope we saved those checks.

J. STONE: I think we did, yes.

C. STONE: Yes, most of the time. They had a joint account.

DUNAR: So Mrs. Truman usually endorsed it?

C. STONE: Yes.

DUNAR: Would he ever endorse it?

C. STONE: No.

DUNAR: No? She handled the finances then?

J. STONE: No, he had nothing to do with the homes.

DUNAR: Yes, that was hers.

C. STONE: Yes, because they were hers.

SHAVER: Is there anything you remember about the house when you first saw it, things that we have heard stories about, Miss Natalie Wallace's passion for purple or something? Were there any unusual colors or decorations or arrangements of the house when you first saw it?

C. STONE: No.

SHAVER: Things that needed to be changed later on?

C. STONE: Another woman, a nurse, had rented it first, and she had left town. That was when . . . She was the first tenant and we were the second. No, the rugs were from there and the dining room table and chairs were from them, but they took them out. The furniture, they stored that.

J. STONE: We had our furniture. See, we had a home up in Nebraska, and when we moved down here we brought our furniture with us. That's what we moved in that house.

C. STONE: The kitchen, the little kitchen chairs and table, now we left them. I don't know how come we did, you know. They were light-green enamel and ladder-back chairs with the rolling . . .

SHAVER: Do you recall anything unusual about the kitchen configuration? Was it small or anything like that?

C. STONE: Yes!

J. STONE: It was small.

C. STONE: And our refrigerator had to be out on the back porch. There was a little bitty back porch. [chuckling]

J. STONE: That's how small it was, yes.

C. STONE: And that was my part about when the Secret Service men came, I said, "Oh, gosh!" Because I was teaching, and I'd get our breakfast early, and I wouldn't always be completely dressed, and I'd go out to the refrigerator, of course, and get the milk and stuff. And I thought, "I'm going to have to put up curtains or drapes or something out here on the back porch," which I did. [chuckling]

J. STONE: See, the stove and stuff were on the . . . well, it would be on the east side of the room, okay? And then there was cabinets over that, and then the sink was on the west side, and you looked out the window there. Well, you were looking right straight at the back of May's house and also the Truman home at the same time. And then you had almost the length of this settee here was all the room that you had left in the kitchen.

C. STONE: Yes, that's right.

J. STONE: It was just about like this, really, about two-thirds of this.

SHAVER: We had heard the story that Mr. Frank Wallace had built a smaller kitchen for his wife because Miss Natalie was a short lady.

C. STONE: She must have been, because I'm short and I would have to just bend over.

I just hated to do dishes because it was so low down. [laughter] Yes, and I'm trying to think, I think the tile was turquoise in the kitchen, if I remember correctly. But it was partly tiled, and some of the tiles were gone.

SHAVER: Do you remember anything about the things growing in the backyard?

C. STONE: Bushes.

J. STONE: Oh, yes, the lilacs.

SHAVER: Bushes? Was it an overgrown backyard or was it neatly manicured? How do you recall it?

C. STONE: There were lots of bushes. We had to trim those bushes a lot.

J. STONE: Yes.

C. STONE: What were the flowering . . . azalea. They were pink, a beautiful pink flowering bush way in the back. Some were in May's yard and some were in ours. Let's see, then what I loved were the rosebushes, little tiny pink roses. I asked May about those not long ago, and she thinks they're still there, but I couldn't see them—right by the fence between her house and ours.

J. STONE: And then the lilac bushes were on the east side of the yard, our yard, near the fence there.

DUNAR: And you took care of all of these, right, or did Reverend Hobby?

J. STONE: No, we took care of them. When we moved there we took care of everything.

SHAVER: Was the fence overgrown with honeysuckle and other sorts of . . .

C. STONE: Quite a bit.

J. STONE: Yes, mostly to the back there.

SHAVER: Somebody told us that Mr. Frank Wallace had kind of enjoyed hiding back there, because it was overgrown, and catch the sun back there.

C. STONE: Probably so. See, we didn't know him or Natalie either one. They were both gone.

SHAVER: It's been tidied up quite a bit since you folks have been there, the backyard has.

C. STONE: Yes, it really has. I think those rosebushes that I'm speaking of were gone. I couldn't see. There was something there, but it certainly didn't look like it used to. Little teeny pink roses, just beautiful. I liked them.

J. STONE: And then, what is it, lily of the valley or something?

C. STONE: Oh, yes.

J. STONE: All the way along the north side of the house there, where that drive is now . . . See, when you come out through that gate there at the back end, from there on it was just lily of the valley, just thick.

DUNAR: Up next to the street, or the sidewalk?

J. STONE: No, it came up almost to the front porch, not quite, but almost. But we mowed it around there so we kept everything cut back. But we didn't use that gate at all, so we just left all the flowering plants in there solid.

C. STONE: Speaking of lily of the valley, you know that enters into all of these families. Mrs. W.L.C. Palmer was a friend of mine, too, and she belonged to the BPW, Business and Professional Women's Club, and Mary Paxton, and I would take her to our club meetings, BPW Club. Anyway, this one day I went out to get the mail, and here was a huge box of flowering lily of

the valley—it was Valentine’s Day—and the darlinest little old-fashioned heart, said, “To the ladies on Quality Hill . . .” Let’s see, “Ethel, Bess, May, and Clare.” I thought, “Whee!” [laughter] So I distributed them, took pieces, you know, took the basket and let them all take out. But that was quite a little surprise.

DUNAR: Yes, I’ll bet it was.

C. STONE: I have that little heart, too. I always thought sometime I’d frame it, kind of a treasure. Mrs. Palmer was a very interesting person, too, and she certainly was proud of Mr. Truman and Mrs. Truman both, spoke highly of them.

DUNAR: Sure. What did she have to say about them when they were . . .

C. STONE: Well, she just recalled about when they were in school. She was one of their English teachers—I think it was Bess, her English teacher—and they kept close. She visited.

DUNAR: He expressed his admiration for her a number of times, so she must have taught him as well.

C. STONE: She taught him, too. Yes, she did, she taught both of them. She lived to be in her nineties also.

SHAVER: Did she ever tell you the story about how her and her husband met and got married?

C. STONE: Who? Mrs. Palmer?

SHAVER: Yes, ma’am.

C. STONE: No.

SHAVER: Well, that was an interesting story. I thought you might have heard it. They went off to a teachers’ meeting in Washington, D.C. He was the principal

of the school and she was a teacher.

C. STONE: Yes, English.

SHAVER: And they fell in love with each other, and she had to give up her job, and then she married him. So I wondered, as one schoolteacher to another, if she had ever shared that.

C. STONE: [chuckling] No, she never did.

DUNAR: Did the Trumans ever express their views about all the tourists that were coming by the house? Did they ever say anything about that?

C. STONE: Well, no, he enjoyed it. You know, he showed that he really enjoyed it.

J. STONE: He would go out to the gate and talk to them.

C. STONE: When Mr. Johnson had his surgery, I happened to be up there when they called to say that he was doing fine. They didn't get too excited about that. Then, when Mr., . . . oh, the one I liked . . .

J. STONE: Kennedy?

C. STONE: Well, no. When he was coming, Mr. Truman invited us to come up if we'd like, but we didn't.

J. STONE: Eisenhower?

C. STONE: No, we wanted him to be president. He wasn't a Republican, he was a Democrat from Minnesota.

SHAVER: Humphrey.

C. STONE: Humphrey, yes! They were very excited when Mr. Humphrey came to visit. They enjoyed that. And Mrs. Truman, too.

DUNAR: Did you meet Mr. Humphrey then?

C. STONE: No, we didn't go up, but like I say, she told us to come but we didn't.

SHAVER: Let's take a break for a moment.

[End #3594; Begin #3595]

C. STONE: We went down and visited May first, and then we went up to go through the house. And it was very moving to me to look and see his coat and his cane and his hat there, and to go into the parlor—not the parlor, but the living room, and the kitchen. But anyway, the reason I brought this up, the people that were with us were also on that tour that time. I think, what is it, limited to twelve?

SHAVER: Eight.

C. STONE: Eight?

SHAVER: That's all that would fit in the kitchen. [laughter]

C. STONE: Well, we were in the kitchen at the time, and these people were from Connecticut and different places, and they just couldn't believe that really they had sat there in this common, ordinary place. [chuckling] Well, they really had.

J. STONE: And everything in there, like the table and everything, was old-fashioned, see. It wasn't any different for us, just an old wooden table, and the stove was the same, you know. And the way the walls were painted, they would look at that, you know. They [unintelligible] about that.

DUNAR: Well, the kitchen especially, I think, is really rather striking because it's just . . .

C. STONE: Oh, it is, but I think it broadens their understanding of the Trumans very impressively, just to see where they . . .

DUNAR: How they were really simple, and nothing pretentious about it.

C. STONE: Yes, that's right.

J. STONE: Do they still have some of the vegetables and things in the basement that Mrs. Truman canned herself?

DUNAR: No, I think that they . . . Well, a lot of things they have taken out now and they have stored in this Geo Space Storage.

C. STONE: Oh, really?

DUNAR: Yes, so a lot of things they have down there. I'm not sure what they done.

J. STONE: But she used to can vegetables and things every year.

DUNAR: Were there any things that Mrs. Truman had canned?

C. STONE: I have a jar of tomatoes that she gave me. I never opened them because I thought . . .

SHAVER: Didn't she do canning?

J. STONE: Oh, yes, every year.

C. STONE: Well, with her cook.

J. STONE: Yes, but then Mrs. Truman herself was involved in it.

C. STONE: Yes, and I have a pint of . . . a glass, you know, of tomatoes, and I'd be glad to give it to anybody.

SHAVER: I believe that that was one thing, that we had one gal working for nearly two months cataloguing all her canning jars.

C. STONE: Is that right? Well, you probably have enough. [laughter]

SHAVER: And we wondered did she even do any canning or did she just collect these?

C. STONE: Oh, I have proof with the tomatoes.

SHAVER: What were the types of things that she canned? Did she share them with

you?

C. STONE: Well, the tomatoes and . . .

J. STONE: Beans and peas.

C. STONE: No, she didn't bring us any peas.

J. STONE: Well, beans I know that I saw. But that thing was full of canning stuff downstairs.

C. STONE: She would be the first to tell you that she didn't cook. She didn't like to cook, but she did cook. She'd get their breakfast and their lunch.

DUNAR: Well, the canning, she and Vietta would do that together?

C. STONE: I guess so, because she wouldn't have done it by herself. People would bring them the tomatoes, I suppose, and she wouldn't let anything go to waste. That was probably what they canned.

DUNAR: Did they ever have a vegetable garden in the back?

C. STONE: No.

J. STONE: No, there never was a garden there that I know of.

DUNAR: So it would be things that people had given?

C. STONE: Yes.

SHAVER: What about the roses? Do you remember her rose garden? Did she tend the rose garden?

C. STONE: No, I don't think so. That was more the preacher than anybody else. All those roses weren't there then.

SHAVER: That's another thing that we've never really been very straight on, that she did have some interest in roses, but we're thinking her arthritis was so bad that she didn't play with them or work with them as much as she wanted

to.

C. STONE: She didn't. And the summer porch—well, and inside, too—always had fresh flowers that were given to them; but they were around at all times.

DUNAR: Did she ever go out in the yard, or did she just pretty much stay in the house?

C. STONE: She read. They were readers.

J. STONE: Yes, in the wintertime they'd sit in the study and she would do sewing, you know, and read—of course, he would always read. And then in the summertime when it was nice and not blowing rain or something, then they would always be out on the back porch, every evening, every afternoon and evening.

C. STONE: Yes, and that fan that they had—it's still there, I guess, now on the porch—that was given to them or they bought it somehow at a bargain from the old Emery Byrd Store down in Kansas City long ago. That's where that came from. It wasn't brand-new or anything, but somehow they had gotten that.

DUNAR: Was the study cold in the winter?

C. STONE: No.

DUNAR: One of the security guards who used to read there in the last few years said it was very cold in the winter. They must have had it warm then.  
[chuckling]

C. STONE: Well, it might have been, you know.

J. STONE: Yes, the younger generation is a little more tender than we were. [laughter]  
But no, that house wasn't cold.

C. STONE: It was hot, though, and they didn't have any air conditioning to speak of. I

think later on they had a window air conditioner put in. I don't know whether the Trumans . . . maybe Mrs. Truman did.

DUNAR: I think that was it, because he didn't believe in it, did he?

C. STONE: No.

DUNAR: Did he ever make any remarks about it?

C. STONE: No.

J. STONE: Not that I know of. He just had his regular routine in later years that he followed, you know. They would, of course, eat breakfast, and then in the early part of it, he'd take a little walk, you know. Then, even in the later days, he would walk around the yard and in the driveway and stuff. Then he would read, they'd have lunch, and then in the afternoon he always took a nap, about an hour or so, wasn't it?

C. STONE: Yes, that's right.

J. STONE: Every afternoon he'd go upstairs, take his nap, and then he'd come back down, and then he would sit out on that back porch and talk, you know. He read out there, also, you know.

DUNAR: Yes, and then what time would they usually go to bed?

C. STONE: They didn't have dinner until seven or eight o'clock at night. That was a holdover from Washington. And, of course, too, when they came back here, Mrs. Truman would just as soon have stayed in Washington. Do you know that? Where her friends were. Of course, she had friends here, too, but they were in Washington for quite a while. But Mr. Truman, they were coming back here, back home.

DUNAR: And so it was more his decision than her decision?

C. STONE: Well, yes. That's the way we understood it, because she said so herself. Let's see, she would tell about driving Margaret to school when he was a senator. They lived quite a ways from George Washington University. And that was in gas rationing, it was just the beginning of gas rationing, and she had it fixed in such a way that she could use her gas until she got to a certain point, and then she'd coast. [chuckling] That was part of taking Margaret to school, to save gas. Too bad they lost some of that.

J. STONE: Of course, driving and stuff worked different in those days, not what you remember now. [laughter] And then they didn't have the traffic that they have now.

DUNAR: Right.

J. STONE: You could jaywalk all you wanted to and nobody run over you.

DUNAR: Right. [chuckling]

SHAVER: Is there anything he would tease her about?

J. STONE: I don't recall anything personal.

C. STONE: No, outside of . . . you know, like he would say, "Well, I'll leave you to gossip." That was in kind of a joking way, because they didn't . . . No, I can't say . . . no.

DUNAR: How about the other way around? Would she tease him about anything?

C. STONE: No. In my opinion, it was respect, and like I mentioned in that paper, love. It was just always there. They were so understanding and caring about each other, both of them, one for the other. I think Mr. Truman practically idolized Mrs. Truman, I guess is about the best you could say.

DUNAR: Do you have to leave?

C. STONE: [chuckling] I think you've heard enough, haven't you?

SHAVER: Do you have a few more minutes?

DUNAR: Are you getting tired or . . . ?

C. STONE: No.

DUNAR: Okay, maybe we could take just a few more minutes of your time, if you don't mind. Would that be okay?

C. STONE: I know you were interested in getting those bits of history. Do you want Jim to tell a little bit about when he talked about the bomb?

DUNAR: Yes, very much.

C. STONE: Be awfully careful now.

[long pause to change tapes]

J. STONE: Well, of course, Mr. Truman didn't talk too much about the war and the people that he associated with, you know, foreign leaders or anything like that, too much. But I remember one day we were all sitting up there on that back porch and I asked Mr. Truman, I said, "Was there any particular thing that determined the use of the atomic bomb in Japan?" And he said, yes, that they estimated the number of people, Japanese people who would die, if the bomb was dropped, and also how many Japanese people would be killed in the case of an invasion. And it was determined, in the minds of all the people involved in Washington, the army, the navy, and the Marines and everyone else, that less people would die if the bomb was dropped, Japanese people. And he says, "Then you have to also remember that practically an equal number of Allied servicemen would be killed in the invasion because of the Japanese philosophy of death." He said, "That was

the big determining factor in the dropping of the bomb in Japan.”

DUNAR: It would cost fewer lives, actually?

J. STONE: Well, just the lives of the people who would be killed in the bomb itself. But a greater number of Japanese would be killed in an invasion, plus all the Allied soldiers and sailors and Marines who would be killed going in.

SHAVER: When he said this, did you notice or could you recall any change in his demeanor? Or did he seem like he recited this somewhat automatically, or did he give some thought as he was talking to it? Because there’s a lot of people who asked him about that. You know, how did he discuss it with you?

C. STONE: He wasn’t defensive.

J. STONE: He wasn’t defensive at all. Everything was positive, but he was sad about it, you see. He knew that that was his decision, and he made it, and it was made on practical facts, see. But you still have a personal feeling, and you carry it with you the rest of your life when you do something like that.

SHAVER: You can be logical in explaining that. I’m expecting he said that, but I wonder what kind of feeling he had or what kind of tone he had when he was telling you that. And that’s interesting that you detected that.

J. STONE: Well, it was kind of a sad, soft tone that he used when he was telling about it, you know. And he was very thoughtful in every word he said, you know. He wanted to be sure that nobody misunderstood anything that he did. That was him all the time. Not only in the atomic era, but all the time he was like that.

DUNAR: Did you ever bring up anything in talking with him that he just didn’t want

to talk about?

J. STONE: I don't recall.

C. STONE: I don't think we ever . . . We would try not to ask him anything that would be impertinent.

J. STONE: We kept off of the subjects that were his business. In other words, government business, conduct, and stuff like that. That was his business, not ours. And unlike an interviewer or somebody like that who was digging for facts, we didn't do that. He was our friend.

DUNAR: Sure, of course, but you did talk about politics with him sometimes?

J. STONE: Oh, we did, but in a general way.

DUNAR: Okay, I thought maybe something just came up at some point, maybe that he . . .

J. STONE: Well, only in a political science way. You know, like when we were talking and he said there was a precedent for every decision that he made or anyone else made, there is a precedent in history for it. He said the person that does it might not know it, but if he took the time to dig back into history, he would find out that the same thing had been done before, maybe a little different way and things like that, but it was the same.

DUNAR: Did he feel that some leaders maybe were ill-informed about history and would have been better leaders if they knew more about it? Did he talk about that at all?

J. STONE: Not really. There were some leaders of other countries that he didn't respect, but he was very careful that he didn't say anything about them.

DUNAR: He didn't talk about personalities or individuals?

J. STONE: No, he didn't make it up. He would just say, "Well, I didn't agree with their decision." That's the way he'd put it, you know.

DUNAR: Would he ever talk about specific examples of decisions that he made, that there were precedents, and when he cited the precedents?

J. STONE: Well, that came up when we were talking about the atomic bomb, see? He said, "Remember that the atomic bomb is just another issue of an earlier bomb," or bombs that were planted in the fields and stuff like that in early history. He said, "You just have to kind of evaluate what is going to be done now and what was done then."

DUNAR: So then he saw the atomic bomb as an extension of the development of conventional weapons?

J. STONE: Right.

DUNAR: And not necessarily as something that was dramatically new?

J. STONE: No, I think that maybe in a way, although he never expressed it himself, I think in a way he didn't like to think of what could eventually happen from the beginning of the bomb.

DUNAR: Did he have any reaction in the sixties, of course, when we had the arms race with the Soviet Union? Did he ever comment on that in terms of any regrets he might have had about perhaps that beginning an arms race or anything of that sort?

J. STONE: No, he didn't. In other words, he didn't say anything about it. I don't know what his opinion was because he didn't express it.

DUNAR: When your son talked to him about politics and so forth, when he called him over, what sort of things did they talk about? The same kind of things?

J. STONE: Well, I don't know because I never questioned my son. Whatever my son and Mr. Truman talked about, that was between the two of them.

C. STONE: But I do remember they didn't always agree, and we would say, "John, you shouldn't have said that to Mr. Truman." [laughter] He loaned him a book to read, a book that was kind of presumptuous.

DUNAR: Oh, did he? Oh, really?

C. STONE: Our son gave him a book for Mr. Truman to read. You know, sitting here I'm remembering that they used to . . . They didn't like to fly, and they would take the train back to Washington to visit Margaret, like at Christmas time. This one time, I don't know if it was their first trip back or what, but it was an eventful one because anybody that's ridden on the Pennsylvania Railroad over their own track, you know what they were talking about. [laughter] And Mrs. Truman told that Mr. Truman actually pushed the train bodily for the last half of the trip. [laughter] He felt they needed his help. But he still wouldn't fly. I don't know that they ever did fly.

SHAVER: Well, it's funny. In the study, I just got through working with them, there's this stack of train schedules, that thick of train schedules, and there were like two airplane schedules.

C. STONE: Okay. Now, one of them, I think, didn't fly. Would it have been Mrs. Truman? I don't know.

J. STONE: He might have been forced into it in his government work.

DUNAR: Yes, I know he did some flying.

J. STONE: But I wouldn't say he liked it.

DUNAR: Right.

J. STONE: But I do remember one time—you were talking about Mr. Truman and our son—John was up there and we went over to the house. Let's see, that's when John and his wife lived in the Wallace house. And I asked Virginia where John was and she said, "Well, he's up talking to Mr. Truman." And I said, "Well, I'll walk up there." So I walked up there, and they were on the back porch talking. When I got next to the back porch, it was a little bit heated, you know, the discussion. Of course, Mr. Truman would invoke that.

C. STONE: He liked that.

DUNAR: Sure.

J. STONE: He wanted to dig into everything, see. Of course, I went up there and just talked to him a couple minutes, you know, and then John told Mr. Truman, "Well, excuse me now. I'll be back later. But," he says, "I understand my mother is down at the house, too." So, when we left and started down the walkway, you know, I said, "You cannot argue with Mr. Truman like that. Remember, he was president." He says, "Daddy, he started it." [laughter]

C. STONE: Well, we've chatted enough, I guess.

SHAVER: We have a few more minutes of tape. I'll [use] it if I can. Did she ever give you any recipes? Did you guys exchange [recipes]?

C. STONE: Yes, I have some recipes. I have the recipe for those cakes I was telling you about. Let's see, what else? Oh, bran rolls that were their favorites. And then Mrs. Truman also was an honorary member of the Business and Professional Women's Club, and while she was first lady we put out a

cookbook. It's quite a treasure. It was back in . . . oh, the fifties someplace. I wasn't a member at that time, we still lived in Nebraska, but I have one of the originals. Then we had reprints very recently, and they're all sold-out. Anyway, it's dedicated to her. It's called *The First Lady Cookbook*. Do you have a copy of that?

SHAVER: Maybe not that particular one. There may be one in the house. That's one of my little projects is I keep tripping into recipe books. I've kind of gotten into the recipe craze here.

C. STONE: Well, I'd be glad to loan you this if you wanted to look through it. It's dedicated to her, and her picture is in the front, and she has signed that. Her "Ozark Pudding" recipe is in there. Then every member of her Tuesday bridge club, they were gourmet eaters, those folks. Also, Mrs. May Wallace's "Widows and Orphans," they also used to be gourmets. Now I think all they do is have tea or coffee. But anyway, in this book there's recipes handwritten by these people. Of course, it's all printed now, but they were recipes that were favorites among those ladies. And I didn't realize that my copy was kind of valuable until a friend of mine was plowing through an antique store up in North Kansas City, and there was one there for sale for \$25. [chuckling] So I started treasuring my old one. I also have one of the reprints.

SHAVER: In his later years, did she somewhat get protective about him when folks would come and visit?

C. STONE: Yes, very much so, she certainly was. And like I said, she really withdrew from her pleasures, you know, like where she had previously gone out of

the house to play cards and so forth. She quit that to be home and help Harry.

SHAVER: I read once upon a time that she had put a time limit on how long people could visit with him, and she kind of had to remind him of that on occasions.

C. STONE: Yes, I can believe that. Oh, he hated to go to doctors or be doctored, but he did appreciate the chiropractor. A chiropractor, he said, helped him more.

DUNAR: Do you know who that was? Do you remember what his name was?

C. STONE: Someone here in Independence helped him more than most any doctors. Then, when he was in the hospital with his bladder or whatever it was, where he had all kinds of different tests, he said he came home sicker than when he went, that he just didn't think he'd ever get over that stuff they had him swallow. [chuckling] He told us that.

SHAVER: In the later years when you came to visit her, how did she change? What would be a typical visit maybe in the late seventies and early eighties?

C. STONE: Well, she was in her chair, first just in a chair and then in her wheelchair, and it was difficult. She was still herself, and I don't mean to say that, but it was difficult for her to . . . well, to be confined in a chair, for one thing. But she was still gracious and liked to . . . She was interested in . . . When I would be in there, she would always want to know about Jim, and John, and Michael.

SHAVER: Of course, she told you about her grandkids, too, I imagine.

C. STONE: Oh, yes, I should say so. She talked about those three boys a lot. She was real proud of some of the things that they did in their schooling and so

forth. She was proud of Margaret, and always spoke well of her husband, Clifton Daniel. Of course, as the boys grew up, when they'd come home with that long hair, especially Clifton, that was something else. The boys, as they got a little older, they stayed down at May's most of the time.

DUNAR: Oh, is that right?

C. STONE: Yes.

DUNAR: And Margaret would stay . . . ?

C. STONE: Margaret would stay up home, yes.

J. STONE: They could stay out at May's and be a little rowdier than they could up there. [chuckling]

DUNAR: That's why, yes.

SHAVER: Well, it seemed like each one of them went through that rowdy stage. I mean, you could see in the pictures where each one of them kind of went through the long hair stage, and then they'd get it cut short again.

C. STONE: Yes, that's right.

SHAVER: It was kind of funny to watch that in pictures.

C. STONE: And I guess Margaret, according to May, said, "Well, you have to give a little." She had to put up with that to keep in communication with her sons. [chuckling] She had her hands full with those three, my goodness.

DUNAR: Yes. Do you remember the last time that you saw President Truman?

J. STONE: Well, I can't offhand recall.

C. STONE: I can't either.

J. STONE: But I remember it was up on that back porch, though.

C. STONE: Yes. Really, it was his walks, at the end of my memory, it was. When he'd

be out walking and he shouldn't be, we felt kind of obliged to keep track, and be sure he didn't fall. But he did all right. He always came back.

DUNAR: Did you ever go with him on any of his walks?

J. STONE: No.

C. STONE: Jim worked.

J. STONE: Of course, I worked and I wasn't home that much. Practically on the weekends was about the only time I was home. Because, see, I traveled over about seven or eight states with the railroad and I wasn't home that much.

DUNAR: Right. Well, I think we've taken plenty of your time, and we sure appreciate you sharing all of this. It was very interesting.

C. STONE: I enjoyed going over our memories. We certainly did love those two people. We very much appreciated how caring they were about us. They didn't need to be, because, after all, she was our landlady. But she was also our friend. We feel very privileged to have had their friendship.

DUNAR: Well, thank you very much. We certainly appreciate it. Would you prefer that we make Xerox copies of those now, or can we just get it all back to you at one time?

C. STONE: It's okay, if you'll just take good care of it and get it all together there, why, it's fine. We'll trust you. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Okay, we'll take very good care of it.

C. STONE: Yes, these are real treasures.

DUNAR: Yes, that really is.

C. STONE: It's probably best if you make copies.

DUNAR: Yes, we'll get copies and get everything back to you.

C. STONE: Ok.

END OF INTERVIEW

## **APPENDIX**

1. Poem, "I'd have to call it love" written by Clare Stone
2. Photograph of Harry S and Bess W Truman taken by Clare Stone
3. HABS Photo MO-1175

I'd Have to Call It "LOVE"

If I ever wrote about our wonderful neighbors I'd have to tell about how upon their return from grocery shopping, visiting sister Mary in Grandview, or whatever the occasion, the dignified, aged gentleman stands courteously and lovingly aside while the capable, briskly moving lady comes out of the garage and then the gentleman, though holding a cane with one hand, precariously yet resolutely closes the garage door and accompanies his lady proudly to the house!

I would have to tell about the times we've sat visiting with them on their summer porch with its rotary ceiling fan, or in their cozy library with its book-lined walls and in spite of the most interesting bits of history being recounted by the alert, world-renowned gentleman the thing that overshadows it all is the precious, loving glances that the man automatically makes to his lady. The great current of love and understanding, though unseen, was there in full force at all times!

I would have to tell about how the night we were making arrangements to rent the house that had been her brother Frank's home and despite a drenching rain and also despite the fact that their daughter Margaret and her children were presently visiting her parents, there was a rugged knock at the back door (yes, the back door) and upon our opening it, there entered this friendly, interested lady dressed in blue, with her hand out-stretched in greeting to us (perfect strangers) and with friendly ease said, "I'm Bess Truman and I'm happy to welcome you as our neighbors."

Further, I should tell about one 4th of July when the gentleman and his lady were about to depart for the patriotic ceremony around the flag pole at the Truman Library. I went out to snap their picture and during the process the lady laughed and said, "Harry, you're supposed to look at the camera".... he was looking lovingly at his Bess! (Incidentally, this turned out to be the last 4th of July the two of them were able to attend; and, the picture is one of the few showing both of them grinning!)

*Clare M. Stone*

(Jim and Clare Stone had the privilege of being neighbors to Mr. & Mrs. Truman and Mrs. May Wallace for five years during the 1960's.)

Item 1



Item 2

Photograph of Harry S and Bess W Truman in the backyard of the Truman Home.

Source: Clare Stone



Item 3

Truman Home Study, March 1983

HABS Photo No. MO-1175-71