

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

F. A. “ANDY” KETTERSON

AUGUST 5, 1991

OMAHA, NEBRASKA

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1991-17

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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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ABSTRACT

Andy Ketterson served as the cultural resources management chief in the National Park Service's Midwest Regional Office during the foundation and development of Harry S Truman National Historic Site. Ketterson discusses the issues and decisions made during the year and a half from Bess W. Truman's death to the dedication of the site in 1984.

Persons mentioned: Benedict K. Zobrist, Ernest Alan Connally, John Kawamoto, Bess W. Truman, Harry S Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, Jim Dunning, Edward R. Murrow, Pat O'Brien, James Watt, Ike Skelton, Donald H. Chisholm, Thomas P. Richter, Jerry Schoeber, Alan Wheat, Ardis Haukenberry, Sterling Goddard, Jill York O'Bright, Norman J. Reigle, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, Jim Schack, Al Swift, Sara Olson, Carol Dage, John Hunter, May Wallace, Jack Boucher, Grandma Moses, Winston Churchill, Ronald Mack, and Ron Cockrell.

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F. A. “ANDY” KETTERSON

HSTR INTERVIEW #1991-17

JIM WILLIAMS: This is an oral history interview with Andy Ketterson, the chief of cultural resources management in the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, on August 5, 1991. The interviewer is Jim Williams, a seasonal historian from the National Park Service.

Well, first of all, I'd like to find out a little bit about your park service experience before 1982. Could you run through that?

ANDY KETTERSON: Sure, I'll be glad to. I started with the National Park Service in the summer of 1960 as a student trainee at Colonial National Historical Park, worked at Jamestown and Yorktown, intending to go on to grad school. And that didn't work out for reasons financial. Whoops, I skipped something. Then, after my summer at Jamestown, I was a part-time employee at Kennesaw Mountain Battlefield while I finished up my bachelor's degree. And then, when it became apparent I was not going to go to grad school, I asked to receive a career appointment or an assignment. The program in which I came in gave me career status, and I wound up as a historian at Chickamauga Battlefield, was there for a year, then at Booker T. Washington National Monument for a couple years. From there to Castillo de San Marcos as first-line supervisor of the interpretive programs at Castillo. From there I went to Golden Spike National Historic Site, a developing area—in fact, it was brand new—and was there for two and a half years and saw that park go from a five-acre park to about a fifteen-acre park with a visitor center. We shot a movie,

wrote an historical handbook, wrote the interpretive folder. From there, was a supervisory historian at Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Vanderbilt Mansion for about two and a half years where I supervised the interpretive programs there. And then a five-year stint on the Blue Ridge Parkway as staff historian there, the first historian on board, and developed what we think of now as a cultural resource management program for that park. Then out to Omaha as regional historian in January of '77, and assumed my present job of chief of the new cultural resources management division in 1980.

WILLIAMS: Had you ever been involved with the establishment of a new park, being the first one in the original management team?

KETTERSON: Well, Golden Spike was similar, although when I arrived there it was a new park, already had a superintendent appointed. But we took the place from a non-use area to a fully functioning park. Truman was different, in that I was involved from the . . . even before the park service acquired the place.

We knew through Ben Zobrist, the director of the library, that the Truman home would be coming to the United States, it would be willed to the United States government, and I think we knew that it would probably come to the Truman Library, to the National Archives to administer. And Ben, a very perceptive person, knew that the library was not an historic house administration building and that the National Park Service was. And so he initiated contact with the Midwest Regional Office before I came out, and a few people had been down there from time to time to talk to Ben, drive around the house, think about what would happen if and when the National Park Service was involved. Ernest Alan Connally, at one time head of the National Park Service's office of archaeology and historic preservation, was also involved very early in the process, long before

I became involved. I'm not sure just what the nature of his involvement was, but it related to Ben. So there were people, Dr. Zobrist and Dr. Connally, who were looking ahead to eventual national historic site status for the Truman home.

WILLIAMS: And this was well before Mrs. Truman's death?

KETTERSON: Well before Mrs. Truman's death. I'm not sure, it may have been before Mr. Truman's death. I'm not altogether certain. He died, what, '72?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

KETTERSON: And I'm not sure just when this sort of thing started, but I would suspect it was probably earlier, because I became . . . My first trip down with John Kawamoto, who was the associate regional director for planning and resource preservation, was in 1978, and some groundwork had been laid prior to that. So I would suspect probably prior to Mr. Truman's death as well.

WILLIAMS: Did Mrs. Truman know that the park service was scoping out the place?

KETTERSON: I have no idea.

WILLIAMS: You never met with her?

KETTERSON: No, I never met Mrs. Truman. In fact, I've never met Margaret either.

WILLIAMS: So you would just go down and visit with Ben Zobrist?

KETTERSON: Yeah, right. We did that once or twice prior to Mrs. Truman's death. We weren't vultures circling in the sky waiting for this thing to fall into our hands, but we were aware that at some point we would most likely be involved. Plus, there was a . . . what is it, national register district, or is it the national historic landmark district? I've forgotten which.

WILLIAMS: Historic landmark district. That was declared in '71.

KETTERSON: In '71, so we had an interest for the integrity of the district as well. But as everybody knows, the Truman home was the heart and the reason for the district.

WILLIAMS: So the park service wasn't taken totally off guard when Mrs. Truman died and the

will was read that she was giving the house to the federal government?

KETTERSON: Right, the house was being given to the federal government, but it went to the library. So even though it's one big federal government, there were some jurisdictional questions involved.

There was also the question of title. Under Missouri law, title passes to the . . . whatever you call the . . . whoever gets the stuff in the will, title passes upon death. With the feds it's a little different, and it took a while to straighten that out. There wasn't any great difficulty, certainly no acrimony, it was just a matter of getting the legal aspects of it correct.

WILLIAMS: How did you get involved as the first park service person, I guess, and leader of the project, it seems?

KETTERSON: Well, because I was the regional historian . . . Actually, I was the division chief by then, wasn't I? It was logical that the cultural resources division, wherein resided the historians and historical architects, etcetera, get involved, so it was just a natural sort of thing.

WILLIAMS: Who was the regional director at this time?

KETTERSON: Jim Dunning.

WILLIAMS: What was his attitude toward bringing this park into the region?

KETTERSON: Very positive. Everyone was extremely positive. There was no question about this being a worthy and suitable addition to the National Park System.

WILLIAMS: What were your instructions when it became known that the house would be turned over to the park service?

KETTERSON: "Go down there and take care of it, boy." [chuckling] Oh, I don't recall getting any specific instructions. We knew there were a number of details that needed to take place. We had to establish security, had to do such mundane things as get the water and the gas and the telephone switched over.

There was a lot of interest by the press in this. The Trumans, as you probably know from your involvement down there, were very private people. Once he ceased being president, they did not want to be in the limelight. And so, except for the . . . was it Edward R. Murrow interview of Margaret, I don't think the press had ever been inside the house. So there was a great deal of curiosity, and I felt the best way to deal with this was to call the TV stations, call some radio stations, got some calls myself, and allow newspaper, TV, radio people in the house. Now, I believe the will stated—I was just checking a note there—that the second floor was to remain closed, and so I explained the ground rules to the people, the press people who came in, that this was a provision of the will, and so I told them that we would . . . they could film, whatever, on the first floor, but to be consistent with the provisions of the will, that they just wouldn't go upstairs. And that didn't seem to cause anybody any concern at all. They recognized the privacy of the Truman family, and so there wasn't any problem.

WILLIAMS: Is this the instance when this article in the *Examiner* appeared?

KETTERSON: I would suspect it was.

WILLIAMS: It's December 21, 1982 [see appendix, item 1].

KETTERSON: Yeah, we could check the log. I think that was the date in there.

WILLIAMS: There was an article in the *Times* on the same day.

KETTERSON: Yeah, and I think this may have been the same day that the TV stations were in and stuff like that. I felt that it would be a very positive public relations gesture to satisfy a lot of curiosity, while at the same time being faithful to the provisions of the will. Plus, had I said, "Oh no, no, no, you can't come in," then there would have been . . . you know, just constant calls, "Why not?" And I ran through the "Why not?" very early, and I couldn't think of any reason why not. And I could think of a lot of reasons why.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember your first visit to the home? Walking in the door for the first time?

KETTERSON: Well, yeah, I remember that. There was a certain sense of awe because, you know, this guy had been President of the United States. I think, as president and the years following the presidency, he best represented certainly the modern presidents, the ones who lived, but what I think an American officeholder should be, one of the people and not an imperial ruler, that I think we've elevated the office and those who sit therein much too high. I think this elevation has caused some of the above-the-law sorts of attitudes that I perceive. Mr. Truman knew very well that he was a citizen of the United States, that he was not an uncrowned king, and I liked that. So it was with that sense of here was a really great American's house that I saw, and seeing the cane and the hat and the raincoat, going upstairs, seeing the clothes hanging in the closet in the dry cleaning bags in which they'd come back, seeing electrical systems that were a horror, [chuckling] that I wondered why the house didn't burn down.

One of the things we did very, very early was to get the . . . I guess it was the fire department, whoever the inspector is, to come through. And I think as he went through the house he unplugged things. And one of the first things that we did when we finally did things was a rewiring of the house. We were greatly concerned about electrical fire.

WILLIAMS: I'm looking at a memo from November 5, 1982. Apparently you made telephone calls that day to a number of people [see appendix, item 2].

KETTERSON: Using my own words against me. [chuckling] Let me see what I've said. Or go ahead and ask your questions.

WILLIAMS: It looks like Pat O'Brien, for one.

KETTERSON: Yeah, Pat was with the city, and Pat was a great help when I was down there.

WILLIAMS: He's now with the park service.

KETTERSON: He's with the park service out in Denver, yeah. I haven't talked to him in a long time.

WILLIAMS: But it looks like you were trying to find out the organizations that might be interested?

KETTERSON: Right. One of the things that we thought about, because in 1982 we were poor—as compared with things today, you know—just how we could operate the house, and we were thinking about a visitor center, visitor information post, or something. Because we knew that what we did not want was any kind of a visitor facility on the grounds. We didn't want to impact the neighborhood in any way. I think we toyed briefly with the idea of maybe a parking lot across Truman Road or something, and I think we decided we really didn't want to be involved with that. We wanted the place to remain as it was when we got it, as a part of a neighborhood.

WILLIAMS: And at this time it still was not in park service possession?

KETTERSON: No. Not in November, no.

WILLIAMS: Could you explain the slowness on the part of the secretary of the interior?

KETTERSON: Okay, I think that's a bum rap. Mrs. Truman died in what, October?

WILLIAMS: October 18th.

KETTERSON: And I think I was down there . . . well, I forget what the . . . the first time after she died.

WILLIAMS: This says November 10th.

KETTERSON: November 10th. Okay, so this must have been even before I went down there, because I had met Pat in some of the earlier visits. And, let's see, the proclamation was . . . the secretary's proclamation is what, December 5th?

WILLIAMS: December 8th.

KETTERSON: December 8th. So . . .

WILLIAMS: Six or seven weeks after.

KETTERSON: Six or seven weeks. That is lightning speed. Sometimes we screw around for years. I've heard James Watt bashed time and again over "Why were you so slow?"

WILLIAMS: I have, too.

KETTERSON: Yeah. First, what's the rush? The house was in federal ownership; it was being protected. I'm not sure just when this tripartite agreement was signed involving us, the library, and the estate. You may have that there. The estate was very concerned about the costs they were incurring with their guards, and we were deeply sympathetic, but we couldn't get federal protection officers in there until we had some legal authority to get in there.

But anyway, to get back to the so-called slowness of the secretary of the interior, the story I got, and let's put "anecdotal" all over this one because I don't know that it's true, but it makes sense: no one had suggested to Mr. Watt there was any need. I don't think it had ever been brought to his attention. And he, according to the story I heard, was watching the news, and maybe it was Dan Rather who was . . . I don't think that's in those notes. It may be. I may have skipped over it.

WILLIAMS: I saw something about that.

KETTERSON: Okay, Dan Rather or somebody was just giving him a bad time on national TV because he had not proclaimed the Truman home a national historic site. He didn't know that there was any problem there. Let's see what I wrote at the time. Okay . . .

WILLIAMS: Watt heard CBS.

KETTERSON: Yeah, CBS. I think it was Dan Rather. [reading] “Couldn’t get past . . .” But anyway, I think he did the proclamation the next day, you know. I didn’t hear anything that he or anyone else in the administration resisted this idea. I think Truman is admired in both parties. Let me see, [reading] “CBS News, first time he heard it . . .” I wonder what “RB” . . . It made a lot of sense to me at the time I wrote it. “Couldn’t get past ULIT [?] and OMB.” I’m not sure what that means. But I think that’s a bum rap. I think Mr. Skelton was one of the bashers, and I believe he is of the other political persuasion. Plus, Skelton was a friend of the Trumans, I believe, and I can’t remember if the house was still in his district at that time or he’d been drawn out.

WILLIAMS: I’m thinking he would have been drawn out.

KETTERSON: But he was still very much interested. And so there may have been an opportunity to shoot a political arrow or two.

WILLIAMS: So you think it was just a matter that no one had ever suggested it to Watt?

KETTERSON: Yeah. Well, like I say, it happened very, very quickly. You know, six weeks? That’s no time at all. So I think that’s a phony-baloney issue.

WILLIAMS: Well, back to your first visits there in November. What were some of the issues that . . . You’ve mentioned a few that you were concerned about, and I notice there’s a lot on the guard service.

KETTERSON: Right. This relates to the estate, because when we got there the estate was bearing the burden, the financial burden of providing guards. And I think it was a very positive thing for them to have done. It would have been easy not to have any guards, but I think it showed a sense of value, you know, that there was something valuable there. And we were all trying to get this property under our administration, with us bearing the cost of protection. It was the right thing to do, and so . . . But we had to get this agreement signed, and I’ve forgotten just what

the details of that agreement are, but that was an important issue. And we got guards on there as quickly as we could. Initially it was federal protective officers, and GSA and the Federal Protective Service just came through like champions on that one. Their response was very fast and very positive. And having those guards there was more expensive than the guard service, but we could get them there until a contract guard service could be acquired or could be contracted.

WILLIAMS: It looks like it took a while to get that finally signed, September of '83.

KETTERSON: Let's see. Okay, we're talking about something a little different. I've forgotten just what the details are, but it was something that allowed us to get guards in there, and I'm sure we got guards in there. Hand me that . . . Oh, here it is. . . . in there much earlier than that. I think we had federal protective officers in there before the end of December. I think that's true. Is there any . . . ?

WILLIAMS: There were several details.

KETTERSON: Yeah, there were a lot of different scenarios that we threw together for managing it. Even though we knew that it might be coming to us, I guess Mrs. Truman's death still took us by surprise, you know. As I recall, it was not a long, lingering illness, but at least we had been thinking about things.

WILLIAMS: Who did you deal with in the estate?

KETTERSON: Oh, what's his name? Don Chisholm. He was the attorney for the executor, and he was the one that we talked to.

WILLIAMS: How cooperative was he?

KETTERSON: Oh, very, very cooperative. He was the one who placed the keys in my palm [chuckling] whichever day in December it was. And I was wondering whether we were going to be able to get guards in there, or if I was going to be spending Christmas in the Truman home by myself.

WILLIAMS: I think there's a bill in here somewhere from the estate for the guards. Would you consider that a reasonable thing for the park service to reimburse?

KETTERSON: I don't remember what that was all about. I don't think it was unreasonable. But this was a legal thing as to when it was ours and when it was theirs. I don't know that right or wrong enter into that.

WILLIAMS: Was it ever a possibility that the house tours would be given by someone other than the park service?

KETTERSON: Well, one of the things that we discussed was a mixture of park service people and docents. Somewhere there is a note where a woman with experience in one of the historic houses in Kansas City offered to set up a docent program. Once we got a superintendent on site and things like that, it was decided to go a different direction. Again, I would not characterize either course as being right or wrong.

WILLIAMS: How much of your time did you spend on the Truman site those first few months?

KETTERSON: Most of it. Probably until Tom Richter came. When did Tom come? He was there what, in January or February?

WILLIAMS: It was January.

KETTERSON: Yeah. But even then I was down there, you know, from time to time. But with Tom on site, he could field the questions, could be the park service presence, and stuff like that. And as far as I know, he did a good job.

WILLIAMS: How did that come about? How did you decide to go that way with Tom being detailed there?

KETTERSON: Well, I didn't decide. I was quite pleased when it was decided, and my boss, John Kawamoto, the regional director, and Jerry Schober all worked this out. I was aware that they were doing it. But we needed somebody there all the time,

and it was very logical, and Jerry was quite generous in detailing Tom over there. I think he even paid his salary, so . . .

WILLIAMS: So, once Tom Richter was there, your involvement dropped some?

KETTERSON: Oh, I was there much less. I was down there for some interpretive planning and certainly for the preservation aspects of it. And what else? But you can see, sometimes these gaps in my notes . . . I mean, I didn't write notes. Sometimes it meant there was a gap in time. And I had people from the division down there looking at things. I can't remember what was contracted when, but I know we were doing a lot of work down there, especially the last few months before it opened.

WILLIAMS: I found it interesting that there's a note to you from Dr. Zobrist about the period after the *S*. And then the first draft of a bill in the Senate included the period. I'm wondering when that was removed. Do you know?

KETTERSON: I think it was a case of . . . If we're taking votes and counting, I'm a "period after the *S*" man myself. Somebody on some congressman's staff came across this little bit of trivia that the *S* didn't really stand for anything, and I still don't know who this worthy was, but it went into the bill that way. And then I think a little later—and you can clear this up with Ron—somebody asked Mrs. Daniel, you know, whether the period should be there or not, and her response was it didn't make a whole lot of difference. But anyway, it got in there, and I think it's wrong. Plus, it's confusing. I grew up in the South during a period when there were a lot of kids whose names were just initials, C.W., D.L., so on down the line. Most people always had periods after their names. I think it was a small thing. On the library, I believe that it says "Harry S-period-Truman Library." I think it was . . .

WILLIAMS: Most everything does have a period.

KETTERSON: Yeah. I think this was a bit of historical trivia that somebody latched onto, and held onto it with great tenacity, and caused it to appear in the law. I agree that the *S* should have the period after it, just for consistency. By us not using the period and the library using the period, it calls attention to something of no significance, and will sometimes divert people from pursuing meaningful things in relation to Truman and get all hung-up over this stuff. It's nothing.

WILLIAMS: It still causes headaches for our stationery suppliers and others.

KETTERSON: Oh, I'm sure it's . . .

WILLIAMS: Everybody wants to put in the period.

KETTERSON: Yeah, well, maybe somebody ought to whisper in . . . who is the congressman now? Alan Wheat? . . . whisper in his ear to just do an amendment on a totally unrelated bill and say, you know, whatever the law is is changed with the addition of the period following the letter *S* in the first line of the third paragraph, or whatever, however some of those things are done.

WILLIAMS: I need to put on another tape.

KETTERSON: Okay.

[End #4354; Begin #4356]

WILLIAMS: Back to the Trumans.

KETTERSON: Back to the Trumans.

WILLIAMS: Did you make it a point to become known to May Wallace and Ardis Haukenberry?

KETTERSON: I never met either one of them.

WILLIAMS: So you weren't cultivating good neighborly relations?

KETTERSON: I wasn't there that much. Early on when I was down there very often, there wasn't . . . You know, those things were under control. You know, they really

were. There wasn't any need at this point. We were trying to, certainly when I was there, just get the house protected and things like that.

WILLIAMS: Did you detect any local opposition to federal involvement?

KETTERSON: There was bound to have been. In Independence there's always somebody against something. [chuckling] I personally did not encounter anything negative. I think there probably was some, but I think maybe some of that was put to rest—and this is speculation on my part—when it became clear that we were not going to come in there and do a lot of development and things like that, that we wanted the neighborhood to stay, to have as little impact from the national historic site presence as possible. And I think that's been pretty successful. But I'm sure in Independence, where if you . . . I think that's a town extremely well named, that there is a great deal of independent thinking out there.

WILLIAMS: What was the attitude of the city, the mayor and the council?

KETTERSON: Again I had very little contact. It was mainly through Pat O'Brien early. I think overall there was no question that they thought this was a good idea, but I think there was some difference of view in means of achieving it. I think the city has demonstrated through the shuttle system and through the making available the fire station of their support. I think anytime you've got a new situation going there are going to be divergent views, and there will be disagreement, people will change positions and this sort of thing. But I think if we look at the overall involvement and contribution of the city, nobody can question their support. We got also very good support from the fire department there. You know, they were in, going through the house. I think probably had or have a plan of, should there be a fire, how they will approach it and things like this. So my sense is in a city that has as many divergent views as Independence that the support was there. You know, it was up and down. There was money cut. If you do it as a line, it

was like this. But when you look at where we are today and how much difficulty we would have had, say, with the headquarters and visitor center, visitor access to the site, I think the city's participation has been very positive.

WILLIAMS: Did the state of Missouri have any input?

KETTERSON: Not that I recollect. I don't know that there was any need, really.

WILLIAMS: They have the birthplace. I just wondered if there was any attempt to link the two sites.

KETTERSON: Certainly not when I was there, but again I harken back to . . . you know, we were just trying to get the place protected, you know.

WILLIAMS: I noticed in your notes you mentioned talking to Sterling Goddard from the Farm Home Foundation, or at least somebody gave you that name.

KETTERSON: I think that's probably it. I don't recall actually ever talking to somebody down there.

WILLIAMS: There wasn't an attempt to link the two sites?

KETTERSON: Oh, the one out at—

WILLIAMS: In Grandview.

KETTERSON: Oh, maybe not at that time, but certainly with Jill O'Bright . . . Or was she York then? I think she was O'Bright by then. Anyway, with Jill's having done the national historic landmark study, and I know she and I went out there a couple of times, we were quite interested in their doing well. But again, we had our own fish to fry. I think, even after Norm got there, in fact, after Norm got there our involvement and our intensity with the house increased and we were just totally focused on getting that place open. And I think . . . well, I know Jill's landmark study was after that, but not much after. The first year and a half we were focused on the house itself. I think Ron was doing his studies then.

WILLIAMS: Well, it's funny you should mention that because here's the task directive for the historic structure report, May 12, '83 [see appendix note]. Was that a top priority to get these studies done before it opened?

KETTERSON: Oh, yeah, we very much wanted to get those done.

WILLIAMS: Is that typical of other parks, or is this a new report?

KETTERSON: A historic structure report? No, no, historic structure reports are the basic document for treating, taking care, documenting a historic house. But what we did there was we got those things done very early. That's when they should be done, but sometimes events and priorities prevent that from happening. But we had the very strong support of my boss, of the regional director, that we would get these things done, that we would do this one as we should do all of them. This was an opportunity to do it right, and I think we did.

WILLIAMS: Do you think that was the general attitude about setting up this park: it's an opportunity to do things right from the beginning?

KETTERSON: I think so. I was determined, as much as I could influence things, that we would do things right, that we would limit the number of people that would go through the house. What's the tour size, twelve?

WILLIAMS: Eight.

KETTERSON: Eight? Okay, well, I've forgotten what the number was. But I've seen too many historic houses where it was a meat processing operation, it wasn't an interpretive opportunity. And so I saw this as an opportunity to do two things. And I think everybody involved with it saw it, too, but I like to think that I influenced that. That once somebody got into the house, that they would have a good experience and that they would not be a part of a mob. And secondly, that we would be good stewards—I think is a good way to put it—good stewards of the resource. I don't think that it is everybody's birthright to tromp through that house. To

conserve the scenery and all that stuff, and to provide for public enjoyment, and to manage it, you know, to leave it unimpaired for future generations. I'm a firm believer in that. Sometimes people think there is a dichotomous charge. How can you have use and preservation at the same time? Very simply, by not wearing it out, by balancing how you approach it. If you're going to pass it on to the future, then you've got to take care of it today.

And at Truman, Norm Reigle—I haven't really mentioned Norm's name much—was a very strong supporter of this. I think everybody involved recognized that this was an opportunity. The house was such a gift because it was so complete. Granted, I think Mrs. Daniel had given most of her mother's clothes to the Salvation Army and something happened to Mr. Truman's chair. And the library, you know, archives and stuff. But even with all that happening, you know, we've got a house there that looked like people lived in it. So I think everybody recognized the opportunity for what it was and, you know, did their best.

WILLIAMS: So that's how you would respond to the visitor who still comes in today and says, "I'm a taxpayer. I should be able to go in when I want to"?

KETTERSON: Sure. We've got a charge to preserve. And I think, except for maybe . . . and this is feedback I guess I got from Norm or somebody down there, that except for the first couple of months, we didn't get much negative on that. You know, sometimes somebody would say, [speaking with drawl] "Well, I drove 10,000 miles with my Aunt Sally just to see the home. You're telling me I can't go in right now?" I think that is such a rare thing, and the less generous part of me would want to say, but never would say in public as a park service employee, "You should have planned a little better, sport, if it's that important." [chuckling] But I don't think, and you probably know this better than I, that that sort of

response or those sorts of statements happen frequently enough that it's really a problem. I think there has probably been a pretty good job of educating people as to why we're doing it, or I assume that when this happens that the staff gives a response and points out this stewardship responsibility.

WILLIAMS: We try.

KETTERSON: Yeah, okay. I don't know if everybody buys it, but this is our charge, and I think this is a place where we have really done what we should have done.

WILLIAMS: We get compared a lot, or maybe not a lot, but occasionally to Mount Vernon or the Lincoln home or Eisenhower, different historic houses, and people can't seem to see the difference. Some people see the difference.

KETTERSON: Yeah, well, Mount Vernon is, as I recall, the couple times I've been there, it's sort of a meat processing operation. Lincoln home much less so than it used to be, but still a lot of people go through there. I think it's all on tours now. They used to have what we, when I was in the field, called station assignments, and people just walked through. I know we did that at the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and in the summer on a Sunday it was a meat processing operation. But this park, this historic house, is, well, not unique in this regard, but I think it's the park service at one of its prouder hours the way we have continued to manage that place.

WILLIAMS: Am I correct that the Truman home was one of the first park service areas to limit visitation the way it is, with the ticket system and that sort of thing?

KETTERSON: I can't say. It was certainly in this region. Lincoln home has taken that system up now. It has a couple of advantages: one, you limit your visitation, but also people know when they're going to get to go in, so they don't have to stand in these long lines. It's a simple thing. I don't know who came up with it. That

may have been Norm's or somebody on his staff, but it was an excellent way to deal with it.

WILLIAMS: Well, another unique thing, I guess, is the visitor carpet instead of having barriers. Were you involved in that?

KETTERSON: I think that's something either the park staff or working with the interpretive group here or Harpers Ferry came up with. I'm not sure if that is unique out at Truman. I just don't know. I would hesitate to make such a statement as that until I checked it out. I know in most historic houses, you're absolutely correct, there are barriers.

WILLIAMS: Once the superintendent was on board, did you have any involvement in the hiring of the curator or the cultural resource planning?

KETTERSON: Oh, I was involved a little bit with the initial interpretive planning. But once Norm was there, he was, as he demonstrated, quite capable of doing those things. He and I would talk from time to time, but he was the on-site manager.

WILLIAMS: How involved was Harpers Ferry Center in the initial stages?

KETTERSON: Okay, well, we did a draft, interim—I forget what qualifier was put on it—interpretive prospectus, and that was a Harpers Ferry creature, along with the interpretive group here [see appendix note]. I think Jim Schack was the regional interpreter at the time, and Al Swift came out from Harpers Ferry. I can't remember who else was there. A list here of who all was involved. Okay, Alan, Ken, yes, Sara Olson, Tom . . . Okay, so I guess Jim actually drafted this thing. That's the way this reads.

WILLIAMS: So you'd had experience in interpretation before.

KETTERSON: Oh, yeah, sometimes when I'm among interpreters I'll describe myself as a fallen interpreter. Yeah, I was in interpretation. But then there was . . . it used to be what we now know as cultural resources, was really part and parcel of

interpretation as well. It hadn't been professionalized to the degree that it is today. But then at some point, certainly at the regional level, interpretation almost disappeared as a discipline. There was a short period of time when you couldn't find in the Washington office anybody who was really an interpreter. There was sort of a bleak period, and I think this must have been, what, early '70s.

But anyway, when interpretation came back to life in regions and in Washington . . . Well, cultural resources started coming up as a separate strain at the time, so even though I was in interpretation in parks for fifteen years, I was very much involved in what we call cultural resources management. Working with the chief of maintenance at Blue Ridge Parkway, we actually got a part of the budget in there for historic preservation. When I was at Roosevelt/Vanderbilt, a lot of what I did involved historic preservation activities. So anyway, even though I was an interpreter, a lot of interpreters in historic areas were involved—and I hope we didn't do too much damage—in what is now cultural resources management.

WILLIAMS: How concerned were you in the beginning with the cataloguing of the many thousands of objects in the Truman home?

KETTERSON: Oh, we knew it would be a tremendous undertaking, that it would be very important to get it done. And for the past . . . And I've forgotten how things have evolved down there, but I know for the past two or three years we've had a line item in our 302 program, the cultural resources preservation program, for cataloguing at Truman, as opposed to the other regional curation projects. So the cataloguing and care of that collection has always been a concern up here, and of course it's been a great, great concern down there. I was just talking to Carol about getting a bigger computer for the collections down there.

WILLIAMS: I think they're up to 42,000 or 45,000 objects.

KETTERSON: Yeah, and a lot more to go. So that's very important. This is something we recognized. The library folks recognized it as well. I can't remember if we actually did a video . . . John Hunter, early on, who is the regional curator, suggested that a video record of the rooms be done. Was that done, do you know?

WILLIAMS: I've never seen it.

KETTERSON: You might ask, but that was one of the things. A quick way to inventory things at least that were visible.

WILLIAMS: Didn't you take pictures? Were you the person?

KETTERSON: I took a lot of pictures early, and I think they're down at the park. The quality in some cases . . . Whoops, you've run out of tape.

[End #4356; Begin #4355]

WILLIAMS: Did you have any dealings with the Secret Service?

KETTERSON: No. No, the Secret Service pulled out, I think, well, within a day after Mrs. Truman died. I forget just what the time frame was, but it was very fast, and I think they just cut off everything at the walls.

WILLIAMS: In your notes, I think there's the name of the regional director of the Secret Service or something. Some notations about it. I guess you had called.

KETTERSON: That could well have happened, but they were really uninvolved. I think we found out more about the Secret Service and that whole thing when Ron [Cockrell] was doing his research. They didn't have anything that I needed immediately. I guess I wish we had called them earlier and just asked them to leave stuff in the house across the street, because I got the impression what they were using was not state-of-the-art. But still, it would have been nice. It would have helped the interpretive picture.

WILLIAMS: Some of the agents still won't talk about what they used when we interview them.

KETTERSON: Oh, is that right?

WILLIAMS: Some will and some won't.

KETTERSON: Well, then maybe the stuff was state-of-the-art, I don't know, but I got the impression that it wasn't.

WILLIAMS: From what I've heard it's not. They act like it's confidential. There are also some notes. You were talking to the attorney and the owners of that house about acquiring it?

KETTERSON: Right. At that time we were really looking around and just trying to see what the possibilities were, because historically the house related directly to the Truman home. Plus, it could have served as administrative offices. We were just pursuing anything that came to mind that we thought would relate. And because there was such a strong relationship, we could have had the house the Secret Service was in, plus have some space for administration, initially.

WILLIAMS: When did that idea evaporate?

KETTERSON: Good question, Jim. As I was talking about it, I knew you were going to ask me that, and I don't remember. Maybe Tom . . . But I know I met with Janet Paxton a time or two, and nothing came of it, and for the life of me, I don't remember why.

WILLIAMS: Were you also thinking at that time, that early, about the Noland house and the two Wallace houses?

KETTERSON: Yeah, that went through our mind. I think we were thinking more about the house across the street simply because of the historical connection between that house, you know, with Mr. Truman and Bess Wallace. That house was more directly related to the . . . You know, it's the Harry Truman line that we were primarily thinking about, and that certainly was much more connected than were

the other two houses. Plus, Aunt May was still there. In fact, she was still driving at that time and parking her car in the Truman garage. The other house was [was that one, is that one—I'm not sure what the tense is] owned by Margaret? Half-owned by Margaret? Didn't she have an ownership in that second house?

WILLIAMS: She and May owned half apiece.

KETTERSON: Okay. And it was leased out. May was still alive. Yeah, it was something, you know, that we were aware of, and I think we . . . you know, somebody early on said that it is part of the scene but it wasn't a real . . . it didn't get the attention, let me put it this way, that the Haukenberry house did. Can you stop that? [tape turned off] Okay, so there's a lot . . . But then, and you can check this notebook for the dates. In fact, let me give you this stuff before it gets lost in my pile over here. When Jack Boucher, HABS photographer came, that was what, '82? No, '83, I think.

WILLIAMS: It was January or February.

KETTERSON: Yeah, that Jack was there. So we had a great concern that we do as much documentation as we could. And the historic structure report was a documentation, both Ron's portion of the historic structure report and the historic resource study. Yeah, we were greatly concerned with the house and the contents thereof. I don't think there was any doubt in anybody's mind that this was one of the greatest properties, as far as its completeness goes, that the National Park Service has ever gotten.

WILLIAMS: Did you insist that a certain amount of the collection be catalogued before the house was opened?

KETTERSON: Oh, I don't know that I was even in a position to insist, but I think we got on it, you know, organizationally, the park staff out here, fairly early in the process.

WILLIAMS: What have been the biggest challenges, from your perspective, in the first almost ten years now of this park? Nine years.

KETTERSON: Well, from our perspective here the biggest challenges were those we faced in the first few years, getting a house preserved. The Trumans through the years, certainly as they got older, just didn't spend as much on the maintenance of the house. I think they were probably not all that greatly concerned about that. I don't mean that they were careless. I think perhaps they were just . . . they just weren't that . . . you know, it just wasn't their big thing. I think they were maybe such a self-effacing couple that they didn't look on this as a great historic site. I don't know, that is pure speculation on my part. But the electrical system, as I mentioned earlier, was a fire sitting there waiting to happen. There were some roof leaks that needed taking care off. There had been a great build-up of paint through the years that needed to be dealt with. We knew that there were going to be people in the house, a much greater traffic load than you would normally expect, that a house is built to withstand. And so there was the matter of going in there and doing what structural strengthening we could. It was the documentation, cataloguing thing that we talked about earlier and is still going on. So it was a great concern with the resource itself to get things into a maintainable condition, and I think we've achieved that.

One of the things we learned that just never crossed our minds before the place opened, is even though we were limiting the number of people who were going in there, nevertheless, we had a lot more people going through there in the summertime than ever went through there when the Trumans were there, which meant that doors were opening and closing a lot more, which meant heat and humidity in the house were building up. So we went in and retrofitted with an air conditioning system. It was a good thing that the house had central air, you

know, forced hot air, as opposed to radiators, because it made getting the air conditioning in there a lot easier. At one point, there was so much heat and humidity in the house that the big painting of Margaret, so it was reported to me, was actually sagging. And that meant there was a lot of humidity in the air. So we went for that.

We have made the conscious decision that we would not try to go to any sort of environmental control system—that is, the adding of humidity and trying to maintain a constant humidity—because this would do long-term damage to the house. By injecting moisture into the house, it migrates through the walls, and without vapor barriers and all this stuff, we would have condensation in the house and we would destroy it. And I gather that this seems to have worked reasonably well.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever have contact with Margaret Truman Daniel?

KETTERSON: No. Never met the lady.

WILLIAMS: You've never spoke to her on the telephone?

KETTERSON: No.

WILLIAMS: How would you characterize, from what you know, her reaction to the park service initially and . . .

KETTERSON: Yeah, can you stop right now? [tape turned off] Okay, the question was Margaret Truman Daniel.

WILLIAMS: I hear mixed reviews.

KETTERSON: Well, I'll tell you what I've heard. I think all I've heard is positive. Initially, I gather she was not all that excited about the National Park Service administering the home. I forget just how that had gotten back to us. I think she had more an idea of some sort of study center or something like that. I think she was just worried about our ability to take care of it and to protect it.

An incident that was related to me had to do with her not thinking we were really up to taking care of it was: We had a list of people who would be permitted into the house. This was early on that this list was developed, and the people needed identification. And so the story goes, and I think it's true, that one evening when Mrs. Daniel was in town, she went to the house and wanted to go in, told the guard who she was. He asked for I.D., she didn't have any, and she didn't get in. And I gather this, so the story goes, struck her very positively, that even though this guy didn't work for the park service, this was the park service's administration. I think that caused a positive response on her part.

The fact that Norm consulted with her frequently on things we were doing, on things we planned to do, again elicited a positive response. As far as I know, overall our relations with Mrs. Daniel are quite positive. I think there was some difference of view as to who owned a particular painting. What was it? Was it the Grandma Moses or the Winston Churchill? I forget which. And the icon. Because the will says that Mrs. Daniel can take out anything of hers that she wants to. Unfortunately, the will doesn't specify what is hers. [chuckling] But what, the icon is back?

WILLIAMS: The National Archives has it.

KETTERSON: Okay. What about the Winston Churchill? Which was it, the Winston Churchill or the Grandma Moses?

WILLIAMS: She has both of them, to my knowledge.

KETTERSON: She has both of them? Okay.

WILLIAMS: Everything I've ever found, including the "Person-to-Person" interview, says the Winston Churchill was given to Mr. Truman. Margaret brought it back, but who knows if during his life he said, "Margaret, I want you to have it some day."

KETTERSON: Yeah, and someday we might get those back. Now, you say archives has it. Is it at the Truman Library or in Washington?

WILLIAMS: I'm not sure which. I've heard that we're trying to get a reproduction, at least, to hang up where it used to be. And we don't really want the original because it's a preservation nightmare or something.

KETTERSON: Yeah, well, whatever that is. And the other painting. And those are things that are nice to have, they are important, but I don't know that one's understanding of Mr. Truman is enhanced by their presence or diminished by their absence. I suspect that neither is the case. It's part of the house and I would very much like to have them, or good reproductions. But as far as our understanding Mr. Truman, his presidency, and years after, I think these are negligible in that regard. They're certainly not negligible items, but they're negligible in the understanding. And I think maybe Norm is working on getting some of that stuff back, I don't know. I have little contact down there anymore. There's simply not need. We have fires to fight. [chuckling] That one's in good shape.

WILLIAMS: It's the park that runs by itself almost.

KETTERSON: We hire park managers to run parks, and we get involved where we need to when we're asked to, if there's enough of us to do it.

WILLIAMS: Were you involved in the furnishings plan?

KETTERSON: Oh, I was aware they were going on, but I wasn't directly involved. That was with Sara Olson and things like that. You know, I was aware, but those are professional people.

WILLIAMS: I understand the landscape report was sort of the first of its kind, or the model of . . .

KETTERSON: Oh, it was one of the early ones. I'm not sure I would characterize it necessarily as a model, because the cultural landscape as a field is almost brand new in the

park service as a profession. We just hired our first cultural landscape architect here in January, and I think we're the second region to have one. Well, no, the third, because sometimes Philadelphia had one. The guy was sometimes their architect, sometimes he was their landscape architect. A very talented individual. But Mary came on in January, and we were the second regional office to get a cultural landscape architect. In fact, they're so new they're still debating whether they're cultural landscape architects or historical landscape architects. And just within, oh, a few months of us hiring Mary was a historical landscape architect hired in the Washington office, so it's a very new program. We had an historian and a landscape architect involved in the development of this, the one at Truman, and I think it's fine, but I don't know that I would characterize it as a model. I don't say that in any pejorative sense.

WILLIAMS: Do you ever foresee—this is my own question and my own interest—a permanent historian at Truman?

KETTERSON: Well, back in the old days, as we of thirty years plus have experienced, the interpreters in historical parks were historians. They did historical research and writing. I think that would be a good thing to have happen again. It gives your staff greater credibility in the historical community to have your interpreters who are also qualified historians. Now sometimes historians don't want to be interpreters. You know, they don't want to go out and meet the public and things like that.

But I know in my early park service assignments—in fact, my first job at Colonial—I got inoculated early as a student trainee. I was there working in the summer, and all the history interpreters had historical research projects. The chief interpreter at that park—well, his title was chief historian—insisted on it. You know, when we got there, we knew that we were going to do this. And

when I was at Chickamauga I did research and writing, at Booker T. Washington, at Golden Spike. I don't know whether I foresee this. I would say this is a very desirable state of affairs because there's always some research that's needed. You'll never know everything.

WILLIAMS: Well, I see a lot that needs to be done, and I hadn't seen whether it's a matter of time or interest on the interpretive staff.

KETTERSON: Well, I think it's a . . . you know, it's what park management wants. We sometimes advise, try to influence, but one of the problems, I think, is the fact that . . . What are the interpreters there, GS-5?

WILLIAMS: The chief ranger's a 9 and there's a permanent 5 and two permanent 4's subject to furlough.

KETTERSON: Yeah, and so somebody with, say, a degree is not going to want to stay as a GS-4 or as a GS-5 very long.

WILLIAMS: Right, and most of the people there are parks and rec, biologists, and . . .

KETTERSON: Yeah. Yeah, I think it's unfortunate that we make those kind of hires if there's somebody who has any sort of history background. And frequently, you know, people will want to work for the park service. They'll come into these jobs, you know, to get into the park service and work their way up. I started with a bachelor's degree as a GS-5 and stuff like that, and did research as a seasonal, as a 4 I did research. But I think we should hire those types of people, and I would suspect they are out there.

WILLIAMS: Well, I've done research in the past two or three summers, part-time interpreter, part-time research, and that's just because I have the interest in all this.

KETTERSON: Well, I think in any historical park this should just be institutionalized. It should just be a part of it.

WILLIAMS: It's not typical to have a separate historian position?

KETTERSON: Well, I'm not sure that typical is a fair word to use in any instance. In St. Louis they had somebody who was a historian. That was their title. I don't know if they did any interpretation. You can ask Tom Richter or somebody. At the Lincoln home, George Painter is a historian. He does some interpretation.

I guess my view is: Why not hire people with a history background? I don't know that parks and rec majors I view as the biggest single threat to the integrity of the National Park System. I would think we need more discipline specialists, whether they're botanists, naturalists, historians, archaeologists, and have people with that sort of academic training in those sorts of parks. It's a case of common sense rearing its ugly head.

WILLIAMS: It sounds like the establishment of Harry S Truman encountered remarkably few problems.

KETTERSON: It was a love feast, it really was. Because from the regional director on down, my boss, John Kawamoto, had been interested in it for a long time. So, within the park service, within the Department of the Interior—like I said earlier, I think James Watt got a real bum rap on this one—it was very positive. Everybody knew what we had. There wasn't any question of significance. There wasn't any question of the quality of the resource. I think we were just, well, maybe ecstatic overstates the quality of the resource we got. We were not, of course, ecstatic at Mrs. Truman's demise. We would have liked for her to live much longer. But that aspect of it aside, to get a resource of this quality, of this integrity, was a rare thing.

WILLIAMS: Were you glad it was in your region?

KETTERSON: You bet. Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. It's been fun talking to you.

KETTERSON: Oh, my pleasure. As I told Ron Mack when he first got there, we're just letting him use Truman. It belongs to me and Ron. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Ron Cockrell.

KETTERSON: Right.

WILLIAMS: I have to keep my Rons separate now.

KETTERSON: Oh, that's right, yeah. Yeah, we were just letting him use it, that it was ours. [chuckling]

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX

1. Independence *Examiner* article, 21 December 1982.
2. Telephone log of calls made by Andy Ketterson, 5 November 1982.

NOTE: In 1991 Andy Ketterson deposited his Truman home file with the park. The items above were copied from this file. For more information, including copies of the notes, task directives, memoranda, and other materials mentioned in this interview, see the Ketterson file in the Harry S Truman National Historic Site cultural resources historical file.