

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

MARTHA ANN SWOYER

JULY 9, 1991

OSKALOOSA, KANSAS

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1991-5

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4321-4325

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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Martha Ann Swoyer and Jim Williams reviewed the draft of this transcript. Their corrections were incorporated into this final transcript by Perky Beisel in summer 2000. A grant from Eastern National Park and Monument Association funded the transcription and final editing of this interview.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Martha Ann Swoyer, daughter of J. Vivian and Luella Truman and niece of Harry S Truman, was raised on the family farm in Grandview, Missouri. Swoyer discusses the many relationships within the Truman family spanning four generations. She has some anecdotes about her Independence relatives, but mostly recalls the farm, the home, and the daily chores and items used by the Truman family as Missouri farmers.

Persons mentioned: Curtis Campbell, Will Campbell, David Bryant, Fred L. Truman, Callie Bryant, Callie Louise Truman, Jim Swoyer, Anna Bryant, Alexander Campbell, Robert Myers, Harrison Truman, Harry S Truman, Bess W. Truman, Carrie Nation, Martha Ellen Truman, Arthur Capper, Mary Jane Truman, Luella Truman, Gilbert Truman, James Campbell, John Curtis Truman, John Truman, Matt Truman, Callie Campbell, Florence Campbell, Leona Mitchelltree, Bob Speck, Pughs Cooksy, Ruth Barry, Karl Swoyer, Myron Neal, Terry Diehl, J. Vivian Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, Madge Gates Wallace, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Alben Barkley, George Porterfield Wallace, Frank Gates Wallace, Mike Westwood, Herbert C. Hoover, Joan Finney, Rose Conway, Ella Noland, Ethel Noland, Nellie Noland, Ardis Haukenberry, Harry A. Truman, Thomas Dewey, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln.

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JIM WILLIAMS: We're in Oskaloosa, Kansas, on July 8, 1991, and I'm Jim Williams, from the National Park Service, and also Connie Odum-Soper is here from the Park Service. Well, first of all, I'd like to get a little bit about your background. Could you tell me when and where you were born?

MARTHA ANN SWOYER: I was born at Hickman Mills, Missouri, in 1919. I lived there till I was about four years old and then lived north of Grandview on Grandview Road till I was about a third grader. Then we moved to east of Grandview and lived there three years, and then the folks built in, I believe, about 1930 there on Blue Ridge Boulevard.

WILLIAMS: Where were you living in Hickman Mills when you were born?

SWOYER: Well, we always called it the Prescott place. It was on a farm, on the north side of the road just . . . oh, what is it, a quarter of a mile from where the church is now. It was a big old farmhouse. The folks rented it.

WILLIAMS: North of the church, so to speak?

SWOYER: Well, no, it would be east of the church, on that road the church is on, and on the north side of the road.

WILLIAMS: Okay, that's Red Bridge Road, I guess.

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I go to Hickman Mills Church, so I'm trying to relate to that, too.

SWOYER: Well, of course, my mother's people were always members there.

WILLIAMS: Since I've mentioned it, let's talk a little bit about that. I've been reading some early history of the church, and there are mentions of Curtis Campbell. I know that's . . .

SWOYER: That's my grandfather.

WILLIAMS: Yes, and who was Will Campbell?

SWOYER: It was a brother.

WILLIAMS: Of Curtis?

SWOYER: Curtis, yes.

WILLIAMS: How much do you know about your grandparents, the Campbells?

SWOYER: Well, they came to Missouri right after the Civil War, and they came from Kentucky. Seven of my eight great-grandparents came from Kentucky. Now, the Bryants came in prior to the Civil War. That's Mother's grandfather, was David Bryant. He was a doctor, and at the time of the Civil War, he and his wife took my grandmother, who was a sixth-month-old baby, and went by stagecoach to Nevada, the state, and then he went on to California. And when he came home, he came home by way of the cape. He came by boat.

WILLIAMS: Wow, the long way around.

SWOYER: And I have the picnic basket that they left Jackson County with, with their picnic lunch when they left, and I have just a big wooden box with his name printed on the top of it that they took their possessions with all that trip.

WILLIAMS: And what was his name?

SWOYER: David Bryant.

WILLIAMS: David Bryant.

SWOYER: He was a doctor.

WILLIAMS: And that was your great . . .

SWOYER: Grandfather.

WILLIAMS: Your great-grandfather.

SWOYER: Yes, my mother's grandfather. Now, Fred has the scales that he used in his practice. I think Fred has them.

WILLIAMS: He didn't mention that, but he may. Now, did you know him at all?

SWOYER: Oh, no, no. Now, Grandma Bryant died after I was born, because we have pictures of me with his wife, Callie Bryant.

WILLIAMS: What was her name?

SWOYER: She went by Callie.

WILLIAMS: Callie?

SWOYER: C-A-L-L-I-E.

WILLIAMS: And you had a sister whose name was Callie.

SWOYER: Callie Louise. She was named for our two great grandmothers.

WILLIAMS: I see, and what about your grandparents, the Campbells? Did you know them well?

SWOYER: Oh, yes. My Grandmother Campbell lived to be ninety and she . . . well, she died after Jim and I were married. Now, Papa Campbell died when I was about six years old, I guess.

WILLIAMS: And this was Curtis Campbell . . .

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And his wife's name?

SWOYER: Anna. Anna Bryant. Anna Simpson Bryant.

WILLIAMS: And where did they live when you first came along?

SWOYER: Well, by that time, they had moved to Kansas City, and they lived out on Swope Parkway. He was in a bank in . . . Papa Campbell was in a bank in Kansas City.

WILLIAMS: Did they still go to the Hickman Mills Church then?

SWOYER: They didn't come back out from Kansas City, no, but my mother always attended Hickman Mills Church.

WILLIAMS: So that's how your family became involved in the Hickman Mills Church, because of the Campbells?

SWOYER: Yes. Yes. See, the Trumans were all Baptists. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Right, I was just curious how this one branch got into the Disciples of Christ, and that explains it.

SWOYER: Well, that Disciples of Christ is something new.

WILLIAMS: Called the Christian . . .

SWOYER: Campbellites. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Were the Campbells any relation to that Campbell, Alexander Campbell?

SWOYER: Oh, I don't think so. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: How much do you know about the early history of the church? Did your mother talk about it, or your grandparents?

SWOYER: Well, I remember them saying that some of them objected to bringing a musical instrument into the church.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the church that was before the church that's there now, the building?

SWOYER: I don't remember much about it.

WILLIAMS: How long did you go to that church? You grew up in the Hickman Mills Church?

SWOYER: Well, when we were going to grade school we went to the Baptist church at Grandview, and then when I got ready for high school, my younger brothers and I went to Hickman, to school. I went to Ruskin, and then we started going back to the Christian church.

WILLIAMS: I see. How long did you go to church there?

SWOYER: [chuckling] Well, I was thirty-three years old when I got married, so my membership was there until after I was married, '52.

WILLIAMS: So you knew the Ervin family?

SWOYER: Oh, my, yes.

WILLIAMS: The Slaughters?

SWOYER: Sure.

WILLIAMS: The Scotts?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Do you have any particular memories about the church? No? Some of the people there?

SWOYER: Well, they used to laugh about my mother sitting between my brothers

when she took them to church. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: I think my mother used to do that, too. But your parents went to the . . .

SWOYER: Well, we were most fond of a minister there when we were teenagers. We called him Dr. Bob, Dr. Robert Myers. He became an M.D., but when he was going to med school, he worked his way through as a minister. And when I was in college and would be home for a weekend, if I saw where he was substituting at a church in Kansas City, I'd go to that church to hear him. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So you really liked him?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: You said that you lived several different places before moving to there on Blue Ridge. You would have been eleven years old or so when you moved? You said 1930, I think it was.

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember much about the earlier places you lived?

SWOYER: I don't remember about the one at Hickman Mills because I was only four when we left there. Now, I remember the people by the name of Good owned the place east of town, and we always referred to it as the Good place, and it was a big old farmhouse that was . . . We all hated to leave, even to move to a new house, because it had so many trees in the yard and it was a nice place. We all liked it.

WILLIAMS: So it was good for two reasons.

SWOYER: [chuckling] Yes.

WILLIAMS: And your family built the house there on Blue Ridge, is that right?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And that's just north of the farm home?

SWOYER: It's the one they moved into Grandview.

WILLIAMS: So that's really the house that you grew up in or have the most memories of?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What do you know about your distant Truman relatives, like your Uncle Harrison. How far back do you remember?

SWOYER: Oh, well, of course, Uncle Harrison was gone before I was born.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever hear stories about him?

SWOYER: Oh, yes. I have the . . . well, I think they call it an ice bucket. It's a big silver pitcher with a silver mug on it—I think they call them an ice bucket—that he won by guessing the number of pumpkin seeds in a big pumpkin down in the Savoy Grill. And he apparently was quite a storyteller, from what they say, and Father and Uncle Harry were quite fond of him.

WILLIAMS: Do you know some of the stories? Were those passed down?

SWOYER: [chuckling] No. I know this, that Carrie Nation is supposed to have knocked a cigar out of his mouth one time, and then gave him one of her little gold hatchets. But the little gold hatchet got stolen, so we don't have it anymore. [chuckling] He was a big kid for his age. Mamma Truman was ten, he probably was twelve or thirteen at the time of the Civil War,

and the Red Legs pulled him up as though they were going to hang him. And after that they sent him to school in St. Louis to keep him off the border there, because they were afraid for his life because he was a great big kid, twelve or thirteen years old. I know Mamma Truman said she cried when he came home, because he had grown so she didn't recognize him when they met him at the train station. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Do you know much about the Young side of the family?

SWOYER: Well, I know what's been written in the papers, and Mamma Truman used to tell about things she knew about his trips across the plains with his wagon trains.

WILLIAMS: Her father?

SWOYER: Yes. But I very foolishly didn't write any of them down. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Oh, well, I was out at the trail center in Independence yesterday, and it reminded me of Mr. Young and his trips.

SWOYER: I've got a history of Jackson County in there that says he . . . one of his trips through, he left Independence, I think, with 3,000 head of cattle, and got through with half of them to San Francisco.

WILLIAMS: Wow.

SWOYER: One of his trips through, he started out with an ox train and a mule train, and the mule team's feet would get sore and couldn't travel as well as the ox team, and so the mule train didn't get over the mountains, and that's the year they wintered in Utah. Apparently, there's quite a write-up in the Mormon history about what he had and why he wintered, and they told that

. . . The writer out there at that time wrote that he was pulling two small wagons instead of one big one, on the theory that they could . . . [interview interrupted]

WILLIAMS: I believe your Grandfather Truman had died before you were born. Is that right?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So you never knew him personally, but I'm sure you heard things about him. What kind of man was he?

SWOYER: Well, a little energetic man, Papa Truman. A little energetic man, and of course he was a trader.

WILLIAMS: Livestock?

SWOYER: Oh, yes.

JAMES SWOYER: Oh, you bet, horse and mule.

SWOYER: He had a mule barn at Lamar when Uncle Harry was born. He was a trader. He always had livestock and cattle and horses and mules.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever hear much about whether he was a friendly sort of person or serious, or anything about his personality?

SWOYER: Oh, I think he had a sense of humor. They told about somebody was going to report to him that the kids were racing the horses from the front gate to the barn, and it turned out he was one of them that was racing. [chuckling] You know, the front gate was down on Grandview Road, and after they got through the gate they raced to the barn, which is how far? Several blocks. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: A quarter of a mile maybe. What else do you know about Mr. Truman?

SWOYER: Oh, I don't know anything.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever hear much about when they lived over in Independence?

SWOYER: Well, not a whole lot.

WILLIAMS: Or why they moved out there?

SWOYER: Well, they moved there so they'd put the kids in a better school.

WILLIAMS: What kind of schools were there down in south Jackson County?

SWOYER: Well, they were living down in Cass County, I think, before they moved. . .

WILLIAMS: In Harrisonville, or near there?

SWOYER: I don't know where they lived, but they . . . I don't think they moved from Jackson County into Independence, but I wouldn't say that for sure.

WILLIAMS: But Independence was known for having better schools then?

SWOYER: Well . . .

WILLIAMS: Or having schools, period, maybe? [chuckling]

SWOYER: Well, no, Missouri had good schools. See, Ruskin was the first consolidated high school in the state of Missouri, and my mother was in the first graduating class there.

WILLIAMS: Oh, really? You know, of course we know quite a bit more about Mamma Truman, as everyone calls her, since she was around a lot longer. What are your memories of her, growing up right next door, I guess?

SWOYER: Well, yes. She was a very determined person, and I think of her every once in a while when I tell these people I'll admit I'm past seventy, but I'll be darned if I'm elderly, because that was her attitude. [chuckling] She was

probably at least as old, maybe older than I am when my dad hid the little scythe that he saw her using over there one morning, because he didn't think she had any business out there scything the weeds. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So she was a pretty robust woman?

SWOYER: Oh, she was a small woman, but very determined. No, she was a little woman.

WILLIAMS: What do you mean by determined?

SWOYER: Well, you didn't change her mind about anything. It's just like she told Uncle Harry—and she meant it—that she'd sleep on the floor before she would sleep in the Lincoln bed when she went to visit him at the White House. And she would have done it, too. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Do you know of any other examples like that? Did you ever try to convince her of anything?

SWOYER: Oh, no. Uncle Harry always sent her the *Congressional Record*, and she knew more about what was going on in Congress than the congressmen did, because she read that . . . As long as her eyesight was good, she read that from cover to cover. She was quite an admirer of Senator Capper, even though he was a Republican and a Kansan! [chuckling] Her attitude was, "Well, there are good people in Kansas today, but they moved there after the Civil War."

WILLIAMS: Why would she read the *Congressional Record*?

SWOYER: Uncle Harry was in the senate.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay, so just to keep up with that?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did she continue to do that when he was president, or by that time had her eyesight failed?

SWOYER: Well, her eyesight was bad, I think, by that time.

WILLIAMS: Can you pinpoint your first memory of living there on the farm, what we know as the Truman farm?

SWOYER: Oh, we went over there to family dinners, and we went to see Mamma Truman and Aunt Mary. I don't actually remember the old kitchen. Now, somebody got the idea that there wasn't any kitchen there, and they were going to tear that . . . well, they did tear it off, and then we found pictures that showed that there was a kitchen back there. And I'm sure there was a bigger kitchen than they put back on that house, because I have the kitchen table, and I have the pie safe that came out of there, and there isn't room in that kitchen they put on for those two pieces plus the stove. Some of these people, I asked something about how they were going to restore that house, what furniture they were going to use, and they said, well, nobody knew what furniture was there. Well, I've got about half of it, and I remember when the kitchen was remodeled.

WILLIAMS: When was that?

SWOYER: Oh, it was while we were living at the Good place—it would be the late twenties—and I remember how proud they were of those kitchen cabinets that were put in that kitchen, because they apparently hadn't had built-in cabinets in the kitchen. Now, I don't know, but I feel sure that that kitchen

was bigger than what they put back on.

WILLIAMS: So, while you were out at the Good place, you would come over and visit?

SWOYER: Oh, sure.

WILLIAMS: How often would you do that?

SWOYER: Oh, I don't know how often. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: It wasn't like every Sunday or holidays or . . . ?

SWOYER: Oh, we'd stop by. Father, you see, was farming the place, and he'd be back, and we'd ride over with him on the wagon or however he came over, and then he'd stop by to see his mother, and of course we were with him.

WILLIAMS: Why did your family decide to build that house there on the property?

SWOYER: Well, it belonged to Father, and had for years. They intended to build over on Grandview Road, and then about the time they were ready to build, the Kansas City Southern decided to come through, and then they put the Blue Ridge Boulevard through, and so they decided the place to build was over on the boulevard rather than over on Grandview Road, which part of the place had been cut off there. And the barns, you see, were over where we built.

WILLIAMS: So it was just more of a practical matter than anything else?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, for someone like me who didn't meet your parents, could you describe, first of all, your father, what kind of man he was?

SWOYER: Uncle Harry and Father had been taught to respect women, period. You didn't swear in front of women. You didn't have anything ugly to say

about women, and that was his philosophy. The most disgusted he got with me one time was when I said something about a girl in school that implied that she might not be what she ought to be, and he dressed me down for that, that you didn't talk about people that way. And I was grown before I knew he swore, and he didn't know I was around when I heard him. [chuckling] And I never heard Uncle Harry swear. Now, I know they swore, but I never heard him.

WILLIAMS: Margaret says the same thing about Mr. Truman.

SWOYER: Yes, and that's what I didn't like about this portrayal of Uncle Harry, this TV portrayal, was he didn't swear all the time.

WILLIAMS: Oh, you mean *Give 'Em Hell, Harry*, that play?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What else about your father would give us an idea of what kind of person he was?

SWOYER: Well, he always let my mother do the discipline. [chuckling] He'd say, "Ma, see what those kids are doing?"

WILLIAMS: So he wasn't the . . .

SWOYER: Well, when he spoke we moved—we knew we were supposed to—it wasn't any of this questioning his authority. In fact, we didn't question either one of them. It was just understood that we were supposed to do what they told us to do.

WILLIAMS: What happened if you didn't?

SWOYER: We were the different generation. My dad never paddled me.

WILLIAMS: Did your mother?

SWOYER: Yes. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I guess Harry sort of left that up to Bess, too, from what I know.

SWOYER: I suppose.

WILLIAMS: Maybe it was a family trait. Did you ever try to rebel against your parents?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: You knew better, huh? Did any of your brothers?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: And what business . . . I know your father was a farmer. Is that basically what he did all of his life?

SWOYER: Well, for quite a while he was purchasing agent for the county. The county had what, four . . . four or five homes. They had the girls' home, the boys' home, the old folks' home, old men's home, the old women's home, and the colored homes, and so he was purchasing agent for those for a number of years, and then later he was director of Federal Housing [Administration, FHA] in Kansas City.

WILLIAMS: When he worked for the FHA, did he still farm at that time?

SWOYER: No, my brothers were old enough, they were old enough to take care of the farm.

WILLIAMS: How would you describe your mother Luella?

SWOYER: Well, she was a homemaker, that her family came first, and she was always looking out after somebody else's welfare. She was a very gentle person.

WILLIAMS: Could you see in her another one of her relatives? Did she take after her

mother or any of the Campbells that you knew?

SWOYER: She was built like the Campbells. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: How were they built?

SWOYER: Well, big. She was a big woman. Mamma Campbell was a small woman, her mother was small. Her dad and . . . Have you met Gilbert?

WILLIAMS: Not yet.

SWOYER: Well, he looks . . . and I've heard my dad say he even walks like Mr. Campbell. [chuckling] The Campbells were big people.

WILLIAMS: And you don't mean tall, particularly?

SWOYER: Well, Uncle James was six foot, over six . . . six-two, and Papa Campbell was a tall man, too, and Mother was tall for a woman.

WILLIAMS: How tall was she?

SWOYER: Well, probably five-eight, wasn't she? She was as tall as Father.

WILLIAMS: And the Trumans were more medium-sized?

SWOYER: Yes. Papa Truman was a small man.

WILLIAMS: Where did you come along among all your brothers and your sister?

SWOYER: I had two older brothers and two younger brothers. Of course, I never knew my sister. She died at three years old.

WILLIAMS: So you're right there in the middle of all those boys, huh?

SWOYER: Right in the middle. I'm seven years younger than J.C. and seven years older than Gilbert. [chuckling] More or less, that's not exact.

WILLIAMS: Right, so there was a fourteen-year spread, more or less?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: We need to change tapes.

SWOYER: Okay.

[End #4321; Begin #4322]

[approximately one minute of unrelated conversation—not transcribed]

WILLIAMS: I read somewhere that your Grandmother Truman, some people referred to her as Matt. Did you ever hear that?

SWOYER: Her nieces and nephews called her Aunt Matt.

WILLIAMS: Why?

SWOYER: Well, that was a nickname for Martha. And then Papa Truman had a sister, an old maid sister, that was Aunt Matt. As far as Uncle Harry was concerned, that was his Aunt Matt.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I see.

SWOYER: And my mother went to school with Aunt Matt Truman.

WILLIAMS: So that was a sister of John Truman?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: How much were your Campbell grandparents around when you moved out there on the Grandview farm?

SWOYER: Well . . .

WILLIAMS: How much did you see them? I know your Grandmother Truman was right there, but how much did you see the other side?

SWOYER: Well, by that time Papa Truman was gone, and my Grandmother Campbell lived with us quite a bit. She divided her time between her three daughters there. Her son was on the West Coast, and so she was in our home just a

lot.

WILLIAMS: So you had an Uncle Campbell, last name . . .

SWOYER: Uncle James, yes.

WILLIAMS: And two aunts?

SWOYER: Yes, Aunt Callie and Aunt Florence.

WILLIAMS: And the aunts lived in the Kansas City area?

SWOYER: Aunt Callie lived in Kansas City, and Aunt Florence lived there at 817 South Forest in Independence for years, and her daughter Leona Mitchelltree lives there now. And I used to go down and spend weeks with them there.

WILLIAMS: In Independence?

SWOYER: In Independence.

WILLIAMS: When was that?

SWOYER: Oh, when I was a grade-schooler. Uncle Jim had the filling station over on Noland Road, and of course they were the old hand pumps that you pumped up, and we loved to go over there and spend the evening over there when he had the station open, and we'd pump the gas into the pumps for him.

WILLIAMS: Probably even had soda in bottles and that kind of stuff, too.

SWOYER: I don't remember about that, but I remember pumping those gas pumps up.

WILLIAMS: Would this have been in the summer then?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And you'd spend several weeks, did you say?

SWOYER: Well, a week at a time.

WILLIAMS: During those visits to Independence, would you then visit with your Uncle Harry?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Wouldn't see him much?

SWOYER: When we'd see him, on Saturday we'd go down to Independence with Father and Uncle Harry would be up at the courthouse, and we'd see him up at the courthouse.

WILLIAMS: And you went to Independence with your father because he worked for the county?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: You said that your Grandmother Campbell lived with you.

SWOYER: Periodically.

WILLIAMS: Was that kind of on a rotating basis?

SWOYER: Well, she really spent most of her time with us. Well, as long as Aunt Callie . . . She spent quite a lot of time with Aunt Callie. Aunt Callie had an apartment in Kansas City, and she spent quite a lot of time with Aunt Callie.

WILLIAMS: Do you know about what years this would have been? Were you still a small girl when she was living with you?

SWOYER: Well, she lived with us until she was ninety years old, when I was thirty-three.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay, you said that earlier. How was she different from your Grandmother Truman?

SWOYER: [chuckling] She wasn't determined. She was very mild in her opinions, and she never gave anybody any hassle.

WILLIAMS: Did those two grandmothers get along?

SWOYER: Oh, sure.

WILLIAMS: Did they seem to have much in common? Did they visit with each other much?

SWOYER: Well, when they were together they did. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Was your Grandmother Campbell a good cook?

SWOYER: Definitely. The whole family were good cooks.

WILLIAMS: What were some of her specialties? Do you remember?

SWOYER: Well, she wasn't doing a lot of cooking by the time I was grown.

WILLIAMS: And your mother was a good cook?

SWOYER: Yes, very.

WILLIAMS: What were some of her specialties?

SWOYER: Oh, well, we hardly knew what baker's bread was, and of course we always had a lot of fried chicken. Now, Mamma Truman was quite good at frying chicken. We always fried chicken like . . . We said we fried it like Mamma Truman. And Uncle Harry one time made the remark that he couldn't get any fried chicken like Mamma Truman did, and Father told him, well, to try ours. [chuckling] We did it the same way Mamma Truman had.

WILLIAMS: How did she prepare it that made it so special?

SWOYER: In an iron skillet, and lard, which is a no-no today. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Right. It makes it good though.

SWOYER: And you got your grease hot, but not too hot, and you just kept turning it until it was done. You just fried it in that hot grease until it was done, but you don't use an extremely hot grease.

WILLIAMS: I suppose you . . .

SWOYER: We floured it.

WILLIAMS: Flour, right.

SWOYER: Salt and pepper, then floured it. Well, we soaked it in saltwater, really, before we got ready to . . . You always, after you've dressed the chickens, you put them in saltwater and chilled them out and let them soak in saltwater before you got ready to fry them.

WILLIAMS: And all those chickens you ate, you probably raised yourself?

SWOYER: Oh, yes, and of course at that time you couldn't wait for the first chickens to get ready in the spring. And they'd probably, what, 200 chickens they'd start in the spring, and then just as soon as they were big enough, you started catching the big ones out to start frying.

WILLIAMS: Was that one of your jobs?

SWOYER: Well, I've helped with the chickens, yes. You probably don't know how to catch chickens to fry, do you?

WILLIAMS: I've heard stories.

SWOYER: You had a long wire with a hook on it, and you'd go out there, and you'd spot the biggest one there and catch that one out of the flock. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, Fred said that he used to shoot chickens.

SWOYER: I wouldn't doubt it! [laughter]

WILLIAMS: He got to be such a good shot that . . .

SWOYER: He was a good shot.

WILLIAMS: You never saw him do that?

SWOYER: Oh, yes, I have. But Mother and I would ring their necks.

WILLIAMS: Then they'd run around for a while?

SWOYER: They would flop till they bled.

WILLIAMS: I imagine being the only girl among four brothers you did a lot of . . .

SWOYER: I was a tomboy.

WILLIAMS: Oh, you were?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Does that mean you didn't stay inside much to help your mother?

SWOYER: Oh, yes, I helped Mother, but I liked to ride the horse and play ball with them.

WILLIAMS: So you were just one of the gang then?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: There wasn't a strict separation then between "this is what girls do and this is what boys do"?

SWOYER: No, but my Grandmother Truman thought it was kind of bad when I'd go over with the boys' overalls on. [chuckling] She didn't think that was very ladylike for me to wear their overalls.

WILLIAMS: She wanted you to have a dress on, I suppose?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So did you become a good cook, too?

SWOYER: Well, a pretty good cook, yes.

WILLIAMS: I suppose I should ask your husband.

MR. S.: Yes, she is.

WILLIAMS: And you have two older brothers, J.C. and . . .

SWOYER: Fred.

WILLIAMS: Fred. Could you describe them for me?

SWOYER: Well, J.C. was very studious. Well, he strained his heart when he was first in high school. He played basketball and baseball and all, then he strained his heart, and they slowed him down, and so he had read every book in the library at Grandview High School. They had to hunt books for him to read. Fred, I think, had J.C.'s scholastic ability thrown in his face until he could care less, but he went on and became an electrical engineer. But he wasn't as studious as J.C. had been, and I sometimes think that maybe the teachers turned him off comparing him with J.C. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: What did he like to do instead of studying?

SWOYER: Oh, he was mechanically-minded and liked to ride his horse.

WILLIAMS: Did you have a horse of your own?

SWOYER: Well, we had a family horse.

WILLIAMS: But not one for each person?

SWOYER: Well, now, the younger boys had ponies, but we had a big horse that we older ones rode. There were always horses around, I mean, but there was one particular family horse.

WILLIAMS: What was its name? Do you remember?

SWOYER: Bob Speck. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Any reason?

SWOYER: Father bought him from Bob Speck. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I've heard that name before, the Speck name. Were they neighbors of yours?

SWOYER: I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Well, then you have two younger brothers.

SWOYER: Yes, Harry and Gilbert.

WILLIAMS: What were they like growing up?

SWOYER: Oh, they were typical boys.

WILLIAMS: Did you have to help raise them at all?

SWOYER: Well, they'll tell you I was awful bossy with them. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Oh, really?

SWOYER: Typical big sister, you know?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Well, I have three big sisters, so that's kind of what I was getting at. And what was Harry like, say, compared to the other three?

SWOYER: Well, I don't know that he's any different.

WILLIAMS: Was he more studious or athletic?

SWOYER: Well, he went out for basketball. Father, you see, didn't finish high school, and he was determined that we would all have a college education. Well, Harry went maybe one semester, maybe two semesters, and he didn't like it, and he didn't want any more of it. And Gilbert didn't even start, because it was during the war and he stayed home and farmed. Now, they classified

him as, oh, how do you say it? Excused for agriculture, but he wasn't. He was 4-F. They turned him down, and then when they issued his card, they put it as an agricultural deferment.

WILLIAMS: Did he have a physical . . .

SWOYER: Flat feet. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So he stayed there on the farm during the war?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I know Fred talked about going off into the Army.

SWOYER: Yes, he was in the Army, J.C. was in the Navy, and Harry was in the Army. They drafted Harry.

WILLIAMS: So what was it like during the war when you were there on the farm?

SWOYER: I wasn't on the farm. I was teaching.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay. Where did you go to school growing up? You've said a little bit about it.

SWOYER: Well, I went to grade school at Grandview and high school at Ruskin. I went two years to Lindenwood [College] at St. Charles, [Missouri], two years to University of Missouri. Then I started my law work at night school at University of Kansas City, and the University of Missouri wouldn't take my night school credits, so I went to KU for my law school.

WILLIAMS: Shame on you. [chuckling]

SWOYER: Well, the University of Missouri was feuding with Kansas City University at that time. And then I've taken summer courses various places.

WILLIAMS: Why did you decide to become an attorney?

SWOYER: I had said from the time I was a grade schooler I was going to study law, and my father didn't think that was a suitable occupation for a woman, and I let him talk me out of it. [chuckling] Then, after I was grown, I decided to go back, and I started night school, and he told me that if I'd go full-time, he would help me with my tuition.

WILLIAMS: So he changed his mind?

SWOYER: [chuckling] Well, I was determined enough I was going to do it, and he thought I was going to ruin my health working and going to night school.

WILLIAMS: You said you were a schoolteacher for a while?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What did you teach?

SWOYER: Business: shorthand, typing, and bookkeeping.

WILLIAMS: So at a business-type school?

SWOYER: No, in high schools.

WILLIAMS: In high school? Where were you a teacher?

SWOYER: Well, I was at Lee's Summit. I taught junior high in Independence one year. The first year I taught at Raymore, Missouri, and then I applied for a business teaching job in Arizona, and I took the job as school secretary for one year in Arizona, then I came back to Lee's Summit. Then I decided . . . I worked as a bookkeeper for Peat-Marwick Mitchell while I was going to KCU night school, and then I went out to KU.

WILLIAMS: Did you like Arizona?

SWOYER: Not particularly.

MR. S.: And you taught out here.

SWOYER: Well, that was after I got my law degree. Then I taught at Winchester and in Nortonville for a number of years.

WILLIAMS: So you didn't go straight through college and then to law school? There was a gap between?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And how long have you been practicing law?

SWOYER: Since '52. Not full-time, I taught part of the time, but I got my law degree in '52.

WILLIAMS: And where along the way did you meet your husband?

SWOYER: In law school.

WILLIAMS: At KU?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So you're both KU graduates?

SWOYER: That's right.

WILLIAMS: And have you lived here in Oskaloosa all of your married life?

SWOYER: Since 1952.

WILLIAMS: It looks like a nice town.

SWOYER: Lived in the same location for thirty-nine years.

WILLIAMS: It almost reminds me of Independence around the courthouse here.

SWOYER: The square. Well, they've ruined the Independence square. That's a disgrace anymore.

WILLIAMS: Why do you say that?

SWOYER: Well, they paved all the courtyard and blocked it off.

WILLIAMS: It didn't used to be that way?

SWOYER: Why, no, they had a decent yard on the courthouse.

WILLIAMS: So you remember the courthouse from going out with your father to Independence?

SWOYER: Well, sure.

WILLIAMS: Were there ever any other reasons you would go to Independence?

SWOYER: Well, one year I taught junior high in Independence.

WILLIAMS: Well, when you were growing up there on the farm, what was the social life like in the community? Did you see much of your neighbors, for instance?

SWOYER: Oh, we had family dinners. We thought it was kind of bad that we didn't get to go to town on Saturday night like some of the kids did. But if we went up, we went up when the folks bought their stuff, and we came on home. We weren't allowed to just run . . . They didn't turn us loose on the town on Saturday night like . . . [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And the town was Grandview?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Why didn't they turn you loose?

SWOYER: They didn't believe in it.

WILLIAMS: So you had stricter parents than some of your neighbors?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Who were some of the neighbors that you remember?

SWOYER: Well, you don't have close neighbors out there. The Cooksys lived over on

Grandview Road, and Pughs lived in the little house that the folks built before they built where we are—the last place. A woman by the name of Cheek lived . . . No, that wasn't her name. Well, at the time we lived over on Grandview Road, we neighbored with the people across the road. There were two houses across the road there that we neighbored with. Now, at the time I was high school age, the women that Mother finished high school with were all living, and they as girls had formed the "Never Grow Old Club," and they would meet once a month, or as long as any of them were living.

WILLIAMS: Would they go from house to house?

SWOYER: Yes. I don't know whether they met once a month or not, but they were . . . And then Mother and Mrs. Strode, and Mrs. Clements, and Mrs. Robinson—and who else?—used to get together at each other's houses quite often. Mother had lived neighbors to Mrs. Clements in Grandview for a while, and Mrs. Clements was a real good friend always. In fact, she crocheted me a bedspread for my graduation present from high school.

WILLIAMS: Were the Slaughters still around as neighbors when you were there?

SWOYER: They were down there, yes. We didn't neighbor . . . what you'd really call neighbor with them.

WILLIAMS: But they had an adjoining farm?

SWOYER: Oh, yes. And I took music lessons from Ruth Barry, who had been a Slaughter.

WILLIAMS: Were you the only musical one in the family?

SWOYER: I wouldn't call it musical. [chuckling] No, J.C. and Fred took music lessons for a while.

WILLIAMS: Do you mean piano or . . . ?

SWOYER: Piano.

WILLIAMS: Were any of you any good?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: As good as your Uncle Harry?

SWOYER: Oh, no. It was more fun to go out and play ball with the boys than it was to practice.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any girlfriends around in the neighborhood?

SWOYER: No, not in the neighborhood.

WILLIAMS: But you had cousins in Independence, for instance?

SWOYER: Well, Leona Mitchelltree used to come out and visit, and we used to go in to Aunt Florence and Uncle Jim's for dinner, and they'd come out to our place, and on holidays we always had family dinners.

WILLIAMS: Which families would be there?

SWOYER: Well, Mamma Truman and Aunt Mary, and Mother's family, and sometimes Uncle Harry and Aunt Bess.

WILLIAMS: So it was all mixed in there?

SWOYER: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: It just wasn't one family or another?

SWOYER: Oh, no. No, and if Mamma Truman and Aunt Mary had a family dinner, Uncle Harry always carved the meat and filled the plates. That's the only

place we did that. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Why was that his job?

SWOYER: Well, I don't know. It just was.

WILLIAMS: I suppose you had to learn to sew and do things like that?

SWOYER: Oh, sure. I belonged to 4-H Club and made a wool dress—I don't know which year it was in 4-H. But we all belonged to 4-H.

WILLIAMS: Did you enter contests or the fairs or anything like that?

SWOYER: Well, we had the fair over at what . . . oh, it used to be called the Drumm farm—it's the county boys' farm—and they always had the 4-H fair over there every summer.

WILLIAMS: Did you win any ribbons?

SWOYER: [chuckling] I don't remember.

WILLIAMS: Now, I've heard that your father was a good livestock trader.

SWOYER: Oh, you betcha!

WILLIAMS: He had a good eye.

SWOYER: You betcha.

WILLIAMS: So did he take after his father?

SWOYER: His father, yes. He didn't buy a ranch out west because they refused to run the cattle up so he could see them, and he wanted to count them, and he knew that if they ran the same cattle through twice he would know it. He was quite a judge of livestock and could guess the weights of livestock within just a few pounds. He bought a bunch of cattle in south Missouri that were all ages and all sizes, and what was it he was off on it?

MR. S.: Eighty pounds on forty-two head.

SWOYER: He was off eighty pounds on forty-two head that he estimated what those cattle . . .

MR. S.: He went with me to buy cattle. He missed twenty head of yearlings one pound per head.

SWOYER: He was an excellent judge of livestock.

WILLIAMS: Was he away quite a bit trading?

SWOYER: Oh, no.

MR. S.: He loved horses.

SWOYER: And he was real proud of his hinnies. Now, you don't know what a hinny is. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Probably not, no.

SWOYER: It's a mule, a little mule . . .

MR. S.: It's reversed breeding of a mule. He took some . . . A mule's mother is a horse, and its daddy is a donkey. A hinny's mother is a donkey, and its father is a horse. They very, very seldom breed.

WILLIAMS: That would be dangerous, wouldn't it, for the mother?

MR. S.: Oh, no. And he had a pair, he had a little . . .

SWOYER: And so he had a pair of those little sorrel hinnies.

MR. S.: He had a little donkey. He called her a Jesus mule because she had the black withers and the black stripe down her back which made a cross, which allegedly they carried Jesus to the cross on a mule with a cross. Well, he had his little Jesus mule, and she raised two hinnies, two sorrel

hinnies. That was after we were married.

SWOYER: Oh, yes, and he was real proud of those.

MR. S.: He had many little sorrel Shetland ponies. The fact is, he gave our son a Shetland when he was too young. She could ride the pony but the boy . . .

SWOYER: It would lay down with Karl, and so Father then traded him . . . a nice little mare that was going to have a colt for that outlaw. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Where would he do most of his trading?

SWOYER: Oh, just around the county.

WILLIAMS: No one place in particular?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: What were some of the chores that you all did around the farm?

SWOYER: Well, whatever had to be done. Father didn't believe in women milking, so he never would let me learn to milk, but we had to take care of the chickens and feed the chickens and gather the eggs.

MR. S.: Kept birds.

SWOYER: And I've gone to the field with the hoe with the boys after the cultivator to chop the weeds that they missed in the corn, and just whatever chores needed to be done.

WILLIAMS: Did you have a favorite?

SWOYER: No, not particularly. [chuckling] At milking time we'd get our cups and go down and drink warm milk. [chuckling] We thought that was good stuff.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any pets?

SWOYER: Oh, we always had dogs.

WILLIAMS: Any cats?

SWOYER: Oh, there were always cats around the barn.

WILLIAMS: No house pets?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: What were the dogs for?

SWOYER: Well, we had a nice collie that my dad could send after the cows. But my brothers couldn't, she wouldn't go for them.

WILLIAMS: They were herding dogs and hunting?

SWOYER: Well, they were just dogs. We had a pretty brown bird dog for a while. We just had dogs.

WILLIAMS: But he didn't trade dogs like he traded horses?

SWOYER: Oh, no, no.

WILLIAMS: You mentioned that you would have family holidays. Which holidays were most important?

SWOYER: Well, Thanksgiving and Christmas. We always had a Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner, and Fourth of July. We always had a lot of fireworks on the Fourth of July and would have company.

WILLIAMS: I hear you have the family out on the Fourth of July.

SWOYER: That's right.

WILLIAMS: Did they come out this . . .

SWOYER: Well, we had twenty-five or thirty of them out, for the two families.

WILLIAMS: Was Easter a big holiday?

SWOYER: No, and we didn't get new clothes for Easter. My mother didn't feel like

that was what Easter was all about. I know I had friends that always got new clothes from top to bottom on Easter, but Mother said that wasn't what Easter was.

WILLIAMS: Did she make all of your clothes?

SWOYER: Practically all of them.

WILLIAMS: Not many store-bought things?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Maybe shoes?

SWOYER: [chuckling] Well, yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, we need to change tapes again.

SWOYER: Okay.

[End #4322; Begin #4323]

WILLIAMS: Connie really likes talking about the farm. My family was Missouri farmers too.

SWOYER: Where were you from?

WILLIAMS: Well, I grew up in Hickman Mills. My father grew up in Raytown and Hickman Mills. I am sure my grandparents knew your parents pretty well.

SWOYER: Do you remember Reverend Icenogle?

WILLIAMS: My parents have very fond memories of him.

SWOYER: He married us.

WILLIAMS: Oh, the first minister I remember is Neal, Myron Neal. He was in the '60s and '70s.

SWOYER: Then there was a woman there when mother died.

MR. S.: When was her funeral?

WILLIAMS: When did your mother die?

SWOYER: Oh, about ten years ago.

WILLIAMS: That's probably Terry Diehl. She is the senior minister. . . . Terry's a nice woman.

SWOYER: Yes, we liked her.

MR. S.: If you were sitting in an auction room with Mr. Truman, Vivian Truman, and they brought a calf in with a warthog's nose or a [unintelligible] eye, he saw it. If a calf, or a bunch of calves, a single calf or a cow went through the ring and somebody bid it in and didn't want it, or maybe the auctioneer bid it too high, pretty soon that same cow or same calf came back through the ring. Mr. Truman would tell you when it came through.

WILLIAMS: So were you a farmer on the side, too?

MR. S.: Oh, yes. I farmed on the side until . . . Well, I guess I still am.

SWOYER: You still are.

MR. S.: I still am, but I'm not as engaged as I was. I used to put in my own crops and make my own hay, and I had fifty cows and fed out my calves and kept lots of hogs and so forth. But I don't do that anymore. I'm not physically able.

WILLIAMS: You must have a busy life.

SWOYER: [chuckling] We have.

MR. S.: I've got a crew working today, just . . . Well, we're building a barn, aren't

we? Kind of a barn, a storage building. We cut a barn down into a storage building, and we're filling it up with junk. [chuckling] Well, we stuck in there yesterday. We put a '37 Chevrolet car and a '30 Chevrolet truck in that we want to rebuild, just junk. I'll get out and get off your tape here.

WILLIAMS: I forget what . . . Oh, holidays and clothing. You said you didn't get new clothes on Easter.

SWOYER: No. No, Mother said that wasn't what Easter was all about. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: What was Christmas like for your family?

SWOYER: Oh, we always had a big Christmas. We didn't have toys like they have now, but we always got something for Christmas and had the tree Christmas morning.

WILLIAMS: Would you go out and cut one down?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What kind of toys did you have?

SWOYER: Well, I remember one year I got a Bylow doll, and then laid her on the sidewalk to go play the boys, and I knocked the thing over and broke it.  
[chuckling]

WILLIAMS: What kind of doll?

SWOYER: Well, they called them Bylow dolls. That was a brand name.

WILLIAMS: Bylow?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Was it a china doll?

SWOYER: The china head and hands and cloth body. And Mother made me a doll one

year.

WILLIAMS: Like a rag doll, or . . . ?

SWOYER: No, it was a stuffed doll, and she bought a head . . . Well, it had an aluminum head on it. I haven't seen one for a long time, but it was a painted aluminum head that she sewed on it.

WILLIAMS: Did she like to sew?

SWOYER: She never felt like she knew how to sew as well as her mother, because she had been a tomboy growing up and hadn't done the sewing with Mamma Campbell that Aunt Callie and Aunt Florence had, but she did a good job. She made all my clothes. She made me my wool suit that I went to college with and made a coat for me. Did a nice job.

WILLIAMS: Did you do much quilting?

SWOYER: She and Mamma Campbell always had a quilt under the north window there every winter. We, of course, didn't have air conditioning, and so in the summer their hands would get too sweaty to quilt, but they always had a quilt under that north window in the wintertime and quilted. I have numerous quilts that my mother and my grandmother made. In fact, I've got a quilt that each one of my great-grandmothers made.

WILLIAMS: Oh, that's sure special. How would you describe your Aunt Mary Truman?

SWOYER: She was a very gracious person, wrapped up in the Eastern Star. She became grand worthy matron of the Eastern Star. She was an excellent piano player and . . .

WILLIAMS: Did you ever know why she didn't get married?

SWOYER: Well, why don't people get married? Who knows? [chuckling] The right person didn't come along. But now this idea that Father and Uncle Harry kept her from getting married like this [Monte] Poen wrote is hogwash. Because if she'd wanted to get married, those boys couldn't have kept her from it, and Mamma Truman would have backed her up in it. And this idea that she stayed home to take care of Mamma Truman, Aunt Mary would have been . . . Well, let's see, she was a couple of years younger than Father. Father was twenty-five when he got married, so she would have been a woman twenty-five years old, anyway, when her father died, so she didn't stay home to take care of Mamma Truman. I can't see why anybody would say she was an embittered old maid.

WILLIAMS: Were you involved in the Eastern Star?

SWOYER: I belonged to it. I didn't attend there because I was teaching and all. I joined there, and then I belonged here and had an office for several years.

WILLIAMS: Why do you think the Masons and the Eastern Star seemed to be so important for your family?

SWOYER: Well, I can't tell that, but it was a tradition. I mean, the ancestors had all belonged, and they believed in the teachings of it.

WILLIAMS: Were there any other groups like that that you belonged to, like at church or anything?

SWOYER: We all belonged to the church, yes.

WILLIAMS: But were there any women/ladies' groups at the church like they have now, CWF or . . . ?

SWOYER: Well, I was teaching all the time I was there, so I didn't belong to that.

WILLIAMS: Did your mother?

SWOYER: Yes, she belonged. Yes, she belonged.

WILLIAMS: What did your Aunt Mary do all those years?

SWOYER: Well, she was assistant postmistress for some time. She worked at the post office for several years. But she, when Uncle Harry was farming, she was doing the cooking and feeding the hired hands and doing the housework.

WILLIAMS: And when he was off in World War I, didn't she run the farm?

SWOYER: Well, I suppose.

WILLIAMS: How would you describe your Uncle Harry, maybe in contrast to the other two, Vivian and Mary?

SWOYER: Well, I don't know what you'd say about that.

WILLIAMS: Well, what comes to mind when you think about Harry, other than he was president? As an uncle what was he like?

SWOYER: Well, he and his family came out to see Mamma Truman every . . . just about every Sunday afternoon, and my younger brothers would take the ponies over for Margaret to ride. But Margaret, see, when he went into the senate, why, Margaret wasn't there a whole lot. I mean, they were back east so much. When they would come out, he was just like any other uncle. He and Aunt Bess came out here in Oskaloosa . . . oh, what—in the early sixties?—for dinner, and we had, oh, probably thirty people there. I had stretched the table in the end of the kitchen and one in the dining room. Of course, we let the older people go through the line first—I served a buffet—

and Uncle Harry and Aunt Bess and all of them sat down at the kitchen table and the kids went to the dining room. [chuckling] I had put some of the preserve dishes and cream and sugars and the like that Uncle Harry and Aunt Bess had given us on the dining room table, but they stopped at the kitchen table. When they were out for dinner, Aunt Bess would help clear the table just like anybody else.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever think it was anything out of the ordinary to have an uncle involved in politics like he was, a judge or senator?

SWOYER: Well, it sometimes was a handicap.

WILLIAMS: How so?

SWOYER: Because you had to be very careful what you said or what you did so that it wouldn't be a reflection on him. And you had to weigh every word you said so somebody wouldn't misquote you.

WILLIAMS: So with that Truman name you had to be careful?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Was it ever a benefit?

SWOYER: Well, it didn't hurt, but I never played on the name. Our family never tried to take advantage of the name.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever help in the political campaigns?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Margaret is, I guess, five years younger than you are?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So were you kind of bossy with her like you were with your brothers?

SWOYER: I wasn't around her that much.

WILLIAMS: So when she'd come out you didn't play much together or just didn't see her very much?

SWOYER: I didn't see her very much.

WILLIAMS: Would you describe her as a tomboy?

SWOYER: I don't know.

WILLIAMS: But she did ride horses and do things like that?

SWOYER: Well, the boys would take a horse over for her to ride when she was out.

WILLIAMS: Because people describe Bess as a tomboy.

SWOYER: Yes, I guess she was.

WILLIAMS: Did she ever ride horses or anything like that out there?

SWOYER: Not that I remember.

WILLIAMS: Bess and Margaret, did they seem to like visiting out in Grandview?

SWOYER: Oh, just to come out for the afternoon.

WILLIAMS: Did Mamma Truman or any of you ever go to Independence to visit?

SWOYER: Mamma Truman and Aunt Mary occasionally went down for dinners.

WILLIAMS: You never did?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Any holidays out there?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever wonder why?

SWOYER: Well, when they had their family dinners it was the Wallace family.

WILLIAMS: So the two families didn't mix very much, the Wallaces?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever wonder why?

SWOYER: No, it was just a fact of life. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, you were talking about how the Trumans and the Campbells seemed to mix pretty well. I was just wondering why the Trumans and the Wallaces didn't mix more than they did. I suppose the distance had something to do with it.

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did Uncle Harry tell you stories? Was he a friendly uncle to visit with?

SWOYER: Oh, he was friendly, but we weren't really around him too much. He was back east so much.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever visit him in Washington?

SWOYER: Jim and I spent some days in the White House in '52, just before he left office.

WILLIAMS: What was that like?

SWOYER: [chuckling] It was all right.

WILLIAMS: Was that after you were married?

SWOYER: Yes. We went up three days during Christmas holidays. We were there for three days during Christmas holidays.

WILLIAMS: So it was there toward the end.

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: That would have been close to when Mrs. Wallace died. Is that right? Bess's mother?

SWOYER: I don't know when she died.

WILLIAMS: It was right around Christmas of '52. I don't know the exact date. Anyway  
...

CONNIE ODUM-SOPER: [whispering] December 5.

WILLIAMS: December 5? I guess it was before that. What do you remember about the  
White House?

SWOYER: Well, I was a traitor to Mamma Truman. I slept in the Lincoln bed.  
[chuckling] And we had a chauffeur to take us around to any of the places  
we wanted to visit. They took our car, and we didn't see it till we got ready  
to leave to go up to New York to see Uncle James.

WILLIAMS: So you drove out to Washington?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did they have . . . I suppose you had dinner?

MR. S.: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you see the president very much while you were there?

SWOYER: Well, he was at the dinner table when we'd eat. Yes, we saw him.

WILLIAMS: Was Bess more in charge of seeing that you had a good time?

SWOYER: Well, it was both of them.

MR. S.: We were completely busy.

SWOYER: Hmm?

MR. S.: We were busy.

SWOYER: Yes, we were busy all the time we were there, sightseeing and went out to  
Mount Vernon.

WILLIAMS: Did you get special treatment as the niece of the president?

SWOYER: Yes, we got to go behind the ropes. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Oh, so it did come in handy on occasion, huh? Is that the only visit you had to the White House?

SWOYER: Yes. Well, we went up for the inauguration when he was vice president.

WILLIAMS: Before, then?

SWOYER: In '48.

MR. S.: In '48 he was President.

SWOYER: Well, we went up both times. When he was inaugurated as president and when he was inaugurated vice president. He was living in the Blair House when we went up, when he was inaugurated as president. Then we were up when he was inaugurated vice president, and it was during the war, and they didn't have a lot of ceremony, pomp and ceremony, and they took the oath on the porch of the White House, that south porch. Then they had a reception inside, a dinner, a buffet, and they let us in those back steps, and we went up to the state room—what do they call it?—in the dining room and had a buffet, just a stand-up dinner.

WILLIAMS: Did you meet the Roosevelts?

SWOYER: I never met President Roosevelt. I've met Eleanor on more than one occasion. One of the most charming persons I met was Vice President [Alben] Barkley, and I was fortunate to be in the room and listen to his storytelling and all. He was a charming fellow.

WILLIAMS: When you say, "We went up to the inaugurations," who did that include?

SWOYER: Well, Aunt Mary . . . And the boys were in the service. Gilbert couldn't get away, so Mother stayed home. Father and Aunt Mary and I went up.

WILLIAMS: So you were the family delegation?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I'm sure that was exciting.

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did any of you ever suspect that when he was elected vice president that Harry would become president?

SWOYER: Well, you never know what's going to happen.

WILLIAMS: Did he ever express any desire to be president?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: What was the '48 inauguration like—'49, I guess?

SWOYER: Well, he was elected in '48.

WILLIAMS: Right.

SWOYER: Well, we all stayed at the Blair House, and they would load us into a caravan of limousines to go to the receptions or go to the ball or wherever we went. See, there were some cousins of Uncle Harry's that were there, too, so there was quite a group staying at the Blair House. Oh, and Aunt Bess's family.

WILLIAMS: So did you have to buy ball gowns and all of that stuff?

SWOYER: I made one.

WILLIAMS: Have you ever been to . . . When Harry and Bess were alive, how many times did you visit their home in Independence? You said earlier on . . .

SWOYER: Maybe three times.

WILLIAMS: Do you know, was that on any special occasion?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Would they invite you out to visit?

SWOYER: No. When they had family dinners, it was the Wallace family. See, that was the Gates family home, Mrs. Wallace's family home, and when they had family dinners it was that family. Mamma Truman and Aunt Mary were asked occasionally.

WILLIAMS: Did you know Mrs. Wallace, Madge Wallace?

SWOYER: I've met her.

WILLIAMS: What kind of person was she?

SWOYER: I didn't know her that well. I've just met her.

WILLIAMS: The picture we get of her is that she was pretty . . . well, maybe the same as Mamma Truman, determined.

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you get that impression?

SWOYER: I wasn't around her at all.

WILLIAMS: Of course, we hear all these stories that she didn't care for Harry as a son-in-law and . . .

SWOYER: Read Margaret's book about how the people of Independence felt about the farmers of the county.

WILLIAMS: Right, and he was a Baptist, too, so that didn't help, I guess. Did you know any of the other Wallaces, Mrs. Truman's . . .

SWOYER: I knew George and Frank and their wives. Their wives were real nice people. And then I knew Fred and his wife.

WILLIAMS: What was George like?

SWOYER: I was never around them that much.

WILLIAMS: On those three or so visits to the house, do you remember anything in particular about visiting? Would you come in the front way, the back way? How long would you stay? That sort of thing.

SWOYER: One time that we were there was the night he gave his acceptance speech, and as soon as that was over we left.

WILLIAMS: Acceptance speech to . . . ? For what?

SWOYER: Well, it must have been when he was vice president. Didn't he give an acceptance speech there in Independence? It was something like that. I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Have you been to the house since it's open to the public?

SWOYER: Yes, the downstairs. We've never been upstairs.

WILLIAMS: So you were never upstairs at all?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Did it seem different at all to what you had remembered?

SWOYER: I wasn't in there enough to know.

WILLIAMS: Did you attend the Truman Library ground breaking or any of those ceremonies?

SWOYER: Yes. [chuckling] When we dedicated it we were there, and we met all the dignitaries. Jim, tormenting Mother and I, said he was going to go see if he

couldn't find a good Republican. Mother got word to Uncle Harry what Jim had said, and here came Mike Westwood pretty soon looking for Jim and I. He said, "The president wants to see you." When we got there, he asked Jim if he had made that remark, and Jim said, "yes." He said, "Will President Hoover do?" [chuckling] So he introduced us to President Hoover. Eleanor Roosevelt was there, and Clements—what was his name? He was a governor, I think. Clements was there and a whole bunch of them.

MR. S.: Harriman.

SWOYER: Harriman was there.

WILLIAMS: That was at the dedication?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: That was a hot day, wasn't it?

SWOYER: Yes, it was. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: That's something everybody always mentions, how hot it was. Then did you go down to the house? They had a reception or something on the lawn, I think.

SWOYER: Yes, we went down there.

WILLIAMS: So are you a Republican?

MR. S.: You betcha. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And how about you?

SWOYER: Oh, I'm still a registered Democrat, but this governor we've got is about to make me a former Democrat. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Governor Finney?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, I'll skip that issue. [chuckling] So you were looking for a Republican around Independence. There probably weren't too many around, were there, besides Herbert Hoover?

SWOYER: Oh, there's more of them than you'd think.

WILLIAMS: Did you visit with him for very long?

SWOYER: Just a few minutes.

WILLIAMS: What did you talk about?

SWOYER: Oh, I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember any particular conversations you had with those people?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Eleanor Roosevelt?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: You said you met her on several occasions, or more than once?

SWOYER: Well, just to shake hands with her.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever visit Mr. Truman at his office at the library?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Would you just drop in for visits, or were there particular occasions?

SWOYER: No, we'd just drop in.

WILLIAMS: Would you have to call ahead?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: He would see you?

SWOYER: [chuckling] Yes.

WILLIAMS: Without an appointment. Did you know Rose Conway very well?

SWOYER: Oh, yes. See, she was secretary for Father before she went to Washington. Father instigated that because she was such a dandy.

WILLIAMS: She was very loyal, I guess, to both of them.

SWOYER: Oh, yes. Father insisted that he take Miss Conway up there because he said she'd know how to keep her mouth shut. [chuckling] Not tell everything she knew.

WILLIAMS: Unfortunately, she kept her mouth shut even after Mr. Truman had died, and she wouldn't even allow herself to be interviewed, I think, by the Truman Library.

SWOYER: Aunt Mary made Margaret mad because she burned the letters that Uncle Harry had sent to her and Mamma Truman.

WILLIAMS: Why did she do that?

SWOYER: She said they were letters to her and Mamma Truman, and it wasn't anybody's business what was in them.

WILLIAMS: She didn't want them published?

SWOYER: No, she took them out and burned them.

WILLIAMS: Bess did that with some of the letters, too, I guess. How did Bess seem to you as an aunt, coming from, I guess, a different social circle?

SWOYER: Well, she was always all right to me. I wasn't close to her or anything.

WILLIAMS: A nice lady?

SWOYER: Oh, yes, very gracious.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever visit with her after Mr. Truman had died?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: And I suppose you went to your uncle's funeral, Uncle Harry?

SWOYER: Yes, and I went to Aunt Bess's.

WILLIAMS: By invitation only, I guess.

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What do you remember about his funeral? Anything in particular?

SWOYER: No, not especially.

WILLIAMS: Your brother Fred expressed some disagreement with Margaret's decision not to send the body back to Washington, as was the custom. Is that an issue at all with you?

SWOYER: Well, no, it's none of our business. I see no reason for it to go back.

WILLIAMS: So you agreed with her?

SWOYER: Well, it was her decision, but I think it was all right.

WILLIAMS: Did he ever talk much about World War I, that you know of?

SWOYER: Not to me.

WILLIAMS: And did you ever visit the Nolands, that part of the Truman family?

SWOYER: Oh, yes, oh, yes. We often stopped by to see Aunt Ella. And Ethel and Nellie gave me a quilt that Aunt Ella had made.

WILLIAMS: What were those Noland relatives like?

SWOYER: Very nice people, very congenial.

MR. S.: Beautiful people.

WILLIAMS: We're in the process of buying that house. I don't know if you knew that.

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: So we would like to know more about the Noland . . . those Truman relatives over there.

SWOYER: Well, as long as I can remember, Aunt Ella was rather frail, but Ethel and Nellie were very congenial, fun-loving people.

WILLIAMS: So you would visit them frequently?

SWOYER: Yes, we'd stop by to see them.

WILLIAMS: They were schoolteachers, right?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever know Ella's husband, that uncle?

SWOYER: Oh, no. No, he was gone before I . . .

WILLIAMS: And did you know Ardis Haukenberry?

SWOYER: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: What was she like? I actually knew her a little bit. I'd wave to her across the street.

SWOYER: Well, she's a very congenial person.

WILLIAMS: The Nolands were sort of the genealogists in the family.

SWOYER: Yes, Ethel was.

WILLIAMS: Did you try to keep up with that much?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Ever have any questions for her? I suppose all of her stuff went to the Truman Library?

SWOYER: I suppose. She has a mistake on one thing. She has Mamma Truman's

death wrong on one of the papers that I got a copy of.

MR. S.: She checked me out for DAR, didn't she, when I married you?

SWOYER: Oh, yes, before we were married, she had checked and found out that I would be eligible for the DAR through the Swoyers. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So she approved of your marriage?

SWOYER: I guess. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: There seems to be some confusion about the whole foreclosure issue on the farm. Do you know much about that? Could you clear that up?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: You don't know?

SWOYER: I have no comment.

WILLIAMS: Okay. I thought I'd try. You hear all sorts of different versions of the story. What effect has it had on your life to have been the niece of a president and to have, at least for a while, the Truman name?

SWOYER: Well, it kind of is annoying for people to meet you and say, "Oh, Truman. Are you related? Well, then I *am* glad to meet you!" [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I don't suppose you get it as much as you would if you lived maybe out in Grandview still?

SWOYER: Oh, you'd be surprised how many people come in here, and say, "Now, Jim married a Truman, didn't he?"

WILLIAMS: I don't suppose that's why you married her.

MR. S.: No.

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: So you still get questions?

SWOYER: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: And when you drive around in Jackson County especially and see all these things named Truman, this, that, and the other, how does that make you feel?

[End #4323; Begin #4324]

SWOYER: Well, I think it's wrong to have changed Van Horn to Truman. Van Horn was a prominent man and it should have stayed that way. There was plenty of things they could have named for him without changing the name of that street. And I just don't . . . I can't see changing. That's one example that I think was wrong.

WILLIAMS: For the people that visit the Truman farm, I know that Congress is now studying whether to include that in the National Park System. The county has asked them to do that, so there may be a lot more visitors there someday than there are now.

SWOYER: They don't publicize it. They don't have it in any of these AAA booklets or anything.

WILLIAMS: Right. Well, the county can't afford to keep it open but a few hours a week, so that's one reason I think they want to give it away. When people visit the farm, what knowledge or what experience do you think they should take away with them that would help them understand the Truman family and Mr. Truman?

SWOYER: Well, they should take away the knowledge that he came from just a rural,

middle-class background. They didn't have, it wasn't an elaborate home like . . . And that's what concerned me about how they were going to furnish that home. I thought maybe they'd get elaborate stuff in there, and there wasn't. Now, Mamma Truman's bedroom had a walnut bed and a walnut dresser that her father had given her for a wedding present, and I have those. And Aunt Mary's bedroom had . . . I think it was an oak . . . a very plain bedroom set, and she had a beautiful walnut dresser . . . well, it's a low, two drawers with a marble center and handkerchief drawers on each side, and then a tall mirror, and that was in her room. And there was an oak washstand in her room. Then I understand that in the back upstairs there was a cherry bed, and Aunt Mary gave that to people by the name of Flynn that burned out, oh, while I was in grade school. And I don't remember that at all, but I remember them saying it was a cherry bed that she gave to the Flynns when they burned.

WILLIAMS: Do you think that was an important period in Harry Truman's life, living there on the farm?

SWOYER: I think so.

WILLIAMS: Why, in particular, was it important?

SWOYER: Well, I think you get a lot of discipline in trying to farm and trying to earn your living on a farm.

WILLIAMS: Was he a good farmer?

SWOYER: Mamma Truman said he plowed the straightest row in the county.  
[chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I think the . . . Go ahead.

SWOYER: Now, as long as I can remember, there was a big roll-top desk in a corner of the dining room, and there was a square table that I have that always had one leaf in it, at least, and they always kept an old oil cloth tacked on it. But it was always . . . But when we had family dinners, they got out the linens. And the dishes were always kept in those cabinets there in the dining room. And there were two sets of chairs there. There was a set that . . . You see, Grandma Young's house burned in about 1900, and so the furniture that's Grandma Young's is about 1900 vintage, and she had a set of little cane-bottom chairs that I think Fred gave the house one of those. I think I only have four of them, don't I, Jim?

MR. S.: Yes, you have just four of them.

SWOYER: And then I have three or four of the split hickory-bottom chairs that belonged to Mamma Truman. Then I have some press-back cane-bottom chairs that were Grandma Young's, and I thought I'd get the rest of them someday. But when Aunt Mary died, those were gone, so I don't know where the rest of them are. I have three of those press-back oak chairs that were Grandma Young's.

WILLIAMS: You seem to have a lot of the furnishings from that house. Is there any particular reason?

SWOYER: I just like them.

MR. S.: I grabbed them.

WILLIAMS: Nobody else wanted them? How many children do you have?

SWOYER: One.

WILLIAMS: A son?

SWOYER: Karl, yes, and three grandchildren.

WILLIAMS: Does it matter to them that their great uncle was president?

SWOYER: I think the little girl who will be a third grader is very conscious of the fact when she studies history.

MR. S.: A very good student. She can read as well as I can.

WILLIAMS: A third grader?

SWOYER: A third grader, she's . . .

MR. S.: She's ready for the third grade.

SWOYER: She can read anything. It's amazing how she can read.

WILLIAMS: Do any of them want to be attorneys someday?

MR. S.: She doesn't know. It will be attorney or doctor, at this point. Of course, last week she wanted to be a rancher.

WILLIAMS: What did your uncle think about you being an attorney, since he sort of went in that direction?

SWOYER: He thought it was fine.

MR. S.: He gave you a set of books.

SWOYER: When I finished law school, he sent me a set of federal . . . What are they?

WILLIAMS: Do they call those federal reports, or . . .

SWOYER: Well, he sent me the set right there in my office.

MR. S.: In your office, aren't they?

SWOYER: He sent me a set of them.

WILLIAMS: That's while . . .

SWOYER: In '52.

WILLIAMS: So he was still president.

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So did you graduate and get married all in the same year?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And then you set up shop out here?

SWOYER: Yes.

MR. S.: Here's the three grandchildren. There'll be a fourth one in September.

WILLIAMS: They're cute. I'll bet they like going out to Grandma and Grandpa's.

SWOYER: Well, just about every Sunday.

MR. S.: Come over and eat Grandma's cooking. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Some of that fried chicken.

SWOYER: Well, we don't have much fried stuff anymore.

MR. S.: I have high cholesterol.

WILLIAMS: Spoils it, doesn't it?

SWOYER: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, I know that Connie probably has some questions since she knows more about the farm than I do.

ODUM-SOPER: Really, I think you've covered it quite well. I think I will always have an interest. I felt very at home there.

SWOYER: When we went over to go through it after they opened it, I went to the cellar, and they came down and told me I wasn't supposed to be down

there. [chuckling]

ODUM-SOPER: What was in the cellar? Did they use it for canned goods?

SWOYER: Well, not canned goods. They kept their milk down there. They set the big crocks of milk on the floor. We had a rock floor to cool the milk. And I've gone down there with Mamma Truman many a time to get cream for our cereal, skim the milk that was down there in these crocks.

ODUM-SOPER: What kind of milk cows did you have?

SWOYER: Well, Father took milk to them whenever.

MR. S.: She grew up on that cream and she has cholesterol of 136. [chuckling]

ODUM-SOPER: Was there a root cellar for things from the garden to can at all?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: Were you involved in the restoration of the farm home?

SWOYER: No.

WILLIAMS: They didn't ask your advice or anything?

SWOYER: No, they didn't ask any questions. They argued with me that I didn't know where the door was in Mamma Truman's bedroom. [chuckling]

ODUM-SOPER: Is it where it should have been?

SWOYER: Yes, but their drawing showed it over by the west window, and I told him it wasn't there.

MR. S.: They did change it. I mean, they got it correct after the drawing.

SWOYER: Yes, but the drawing had that, and I told them that it wasn't there. I *knew* it was there at the top of the stairs.

ODUM-SOPER: Custom-wise—back to everyday life—I grew up, too, eating my

meals in the dining room. You cooked in your kitchen, and you ate in the dining room.

SWOYER: Yes.

MR. S.: Absolutely.

ODUM-SOPER: And I gather it was the same there?

SWOYER: Yes.

ODUM-SOPER: And the big meal was at noon, right?

SWOYER: Yes.

ODUM-SOPER: I often wondered, too, I know that the room at the top of the stairs off the dining room was shared by your father and by your Uncle Harry until Vivian was married in 1911. Before they used it, what had it been? Was it a servant's room? Do you know what it was in those ten years before?

SWOYER: I don't know what . . . I don't know.

ODUM-SOPER: They never said?

SWOYER: No.

ODUM-SOPER: I'm only theorizing.

SWOYER: Probably if they had any hired hands. Probably hired hands.

MR. S.: Did the hired help go up the kitchen stairs into the back part?

ODUM-SOPER: That's what I wondered.

SWOYER: Well, I don't know. And I don't know, I can't tell you what was above the old kitchen. I don't remember.

ODUM-SOPER: There's nothing now. It's just . . .

SWOYER: Well, see, the kitchen I remember, there was a big room up above where Uncle Harry's trunks and his World War I souvenirs were always out in that room.

MR. S.: Well, now, Martha Ann, when your grandmother lived there, she had a brother that lived there, didn't she?

SWOYER: Uncle Harrison.

MR. S.: Yes, so he had a room there someplace.

ODUM-SOPER: Harrison, right, but her Uncle Harry's room was at the top of the stairs, supposedly. That's what I've been told.

SWOYER: Yes, he had the back upstairs.

MR. S.: The back upstairs.

SWOYER: Yes. See, Aunt Mary and Grandma Young had the . . .

MR. S.: Grandma Truman.

SWOYER: No, Grandma . . . Mamma Truman had the north room, and if it got real cold she'd go in the south room, because they had a fire in the sitting room, and they didn't have a fire in the parlor to heat her room. And if it got too awful cold, why, she'd condescend to go across the hall and sleep with Aunt Mary. [chuckling]

MR. S.: And you stayed over there quite often, didn't you?

SWOYER: Oh, yes, and Mamma Truman would make shadow pictures on that wall.

ODUM-SOPER: What did she make? An eagle?

SWOYER: Oh, yes.

ODUM-SOPER: And those sorts of things?

SWOYER: Yes.

ODUM-SOPER: Moving outside the house, right there at the back, is the pump there now what it looked like? Do you remember that at all? I've seen one picture of your uncle and your father and Mamma Truman and your Aunt Mary outside, and there's a box-like affair where the pump is.

SWOYER: Well, I don't remember that.

ODUM-SOPER: Do you remember that at all?

SWOYER: No. The old hand pump is the one I remember. No, I don't remember that other one. I've seen the picture.

ODUM-SOPER: And then out in the back, pictures make it look as though that wonderful barn that burned was quite close to the house. Is that . . .

SWOYER: No. No, that isn't that barn. Now, I don't know what that . . . I don't know what's in that picture. I've seen that picture. Now, whether that . . . I don't know when that left, but . . .

MR. S.: That barn came from Hickman Mills, didn't it?

ODUM-SOPER: Right, the big one.

SWOYER: But no, there's a picture with a barn right out back of the house, and I never remember it.

ODUM-SOPER: Yes, there is. Whether that was a henhouse, maybe?

SWOYER: No. The henhouse was out on the north line, and the privy was out there, too. Now, they've moved the location of that. [chuckling]

ODUM-SOPER: Speaking of which, there never was any plumbing or electricity, right? At least while Mamma Truman and Mary lived there?

SWOYER: There was electricity.

ODUM-SOPER: There was?

SWOYER: Yes.

ODUM-SOPER: When did that come in? Do you know?

SWOYER: No. But there wasn't plumbing, but there was . . . No, when Harry was going to move there, they put the bathroom in.

ODUM-SOPER: Oh, so there was a bathroom?

SWOYER: No, when my brother Harry . . .

ODUM-SOPER: Oh, all right.

SWOYER: And they cut the door from the sitting room to the dining room. Harry did. Mamma Truman never wanted it.

ODUM-SOPER: Oh, so that wasn't there before?

SWOYER: No. No, you came through that cold hall. And Father wanted them to cut that door, and no way. But no, to go to the sitting room where there was heat, they went through that cold hallway from the dining room.

WILLIAMS: When did you move away permanently, I guess, from your parents' house?

SWOYER: Well, when I got married, I guess. I'd be home in summers when I was teaching.

WILLIAMS: So you were still living there at least part of the year until 1952?

SWOYER: Yes. And the asparagus bed was out there . . . There was a big gate on the east . . . in the middle of the east fence, yard fence . . .

[End #4324; Begin #4325]

SWOYER: . . . about halfway in that yard, there was a big gate out into the lot, and the

asparagus bed was right to the north of the gate.

ODUM-SOPER: You're asparagus eaters?

MR. S.: Oh, you bet.

SWOYER: Yes, and Mamma Truman always had a good asparagus bed.

ODUM-SOPER: Beyond that, what did she raise, do you remember? Green beans?  
Tomatoes?

SWOYER: No, they didn't garden much.

ODUM-SOPER: They didn't?

SWOYER: No, but she always had nasturtiums and coxcomb in that old foundation that  
was out in the back there in the yard.

ODUM-SOPER: What was in what's now just kind of a lot, behind . . .

SWOYER: Well, there was a chicken yard out there.

ODUM-SOPER: All right, behind what your Uncle Harry bought to use for a garage,  
the old post office that's there in the yard, and then there's a lot behind that.

SWOYER: Well, there was an L-shaped lot that was the chicken yard. It went around  
the yard, and Mamma Truman always . . . The chicken house was out in  
that against the north fence, or more or less, and she always raised her  
chickens and had her chickens out there.

ODUM-SOPER: There are a pile of timbers in the middle of that small lot behind the  
old garage right now, and I wondered what those were. Those obviously  
aren't barn timbers.

SWOYER: Oh, there was a post pile there at one time.

MR. S.: There was an old granary that had timbers, I believe.

SWOYER: Well, but that was down in the barn lot.

MR. S.: Yes.

ODUM-SOPER: How far away . . . What is now standing where that barn was?

SWOYER: I don't know.

ODUM-SOPER: The great big one. Do you know?

SWOYER: I don't know whether there's anything or not, but the lot and the granary were down there. There's a picture. They've probably got that picture of Mamma Truman and Harry Arnold, and I out there where they were feeding hogs in front of that barn.

ODUM-SOPER: I've seen one of Aunt Mary, I think. I didn't know whether they were slop buckets or what they were that she had, but by the barn.

SWOYER: No, I don't know what that was, but there's a picture of . . . I think I've got a stocking cap pulled down over my head, and Harry was just a little thing, and we were with Mamma Truman, and we were down there in the lot where they were feeding the hogs. And I don't know who was out . . . It wasn't Father on the wagon. I don't know whether that was Mr. Dewey or who it was, but they had a wagon load of corn there, I suppose.

WILLIAMS: Were you involved in the sale of the land for the shopping center?

MR. S.: That was your daddy.

SWOYER: My father was still alive then.

WILLIAMS: Were you the family attorney for any of these things?

SWOYER: Oh, no.

WILLIAMS: Did they decide to sell that just because they got a good price or nobody

was going to farm it?

SWOYER: Well, why keep it when they tax you to death?

MR. S.: The taxes eat you alive. The brothers had been there farming the place.

WILLIAMS: Harry and Gilbert?

MR. S.: Yes, and they moved on down to Louisburg, [Kansas]. Well, you were involved when they sold Aunt Mary's ground across the road, Blue Ridge.

SWOYER: Well, yes.

MR. S.: And your mother's remaining seven-and-a-half acres.

SWOYER: Well, yes, but not . . . Yes, just as an heir.

MR. S.: Just as an heir.

SWOYER: But it's like they reappraised that little acreage that was left at the house and zoned it commercial and they wouldn't leave the farm, and we got it sold before the first taxes were due because it would have broken us to pay taxes.

MR. S.: Yes, we'd have lost it.

SWOYER: We were getting, what, \$150, \$200 a month rent off the house, and they zoned it commercial.

WILLIAMS: So the assessment went way up?

MR. S.: It went up 900 percent.

SWOYER: What was it? Well, what was it they were going to be . . . The taxes were going to be \$6,000 or \$8,000.

MR. S.: It was \$6,000 or \$8,000 a year.

SWOYER: A year.

WILLIAMS: And at \$200 a month rent, that doesn't add up, does it? [chuckling]

SWOYER: No. So you can't get sentimental over keeping property under those circumstances.

WILLIAMS: Why did you move the house?

SWOYER: We didn't. We sold the place, and the people that bought it sold it.

WILLIAMS: Decided to save it, or . . . ?

SWOYER: They sold it, I think. It wasn't a matter of saving it. Somebody bought it.

MR. S.: Wanted to buy a house to move . . .

WILLIAMS: And that's down in Grandview now?

SWOYER: Somewhere.

MR. S.: Your dad's tenant house is over on Grandview Road. They moved it when they put the shopping center in.

WILLIAMS: Well, I know we've enjoyed talking to you, and thanks for taking part of your day.

ODUM-SOPER: Thank you very much.

WILLIAMS: And if you don't mind, I'd like to take a picture or two of you for the record, of both of you.

MR. S.: Did you show him your collection of campaign paraphernalia?

SWOYER: No, I . . .

MR. S.: You've got to take them in your office. We just got it hung up the other day. We took it down and the glass fell out, and it got in the way here, so we had this young boy up here and said, "Hang that up."

WILLIAMS: Thanks a lot. [tape turned off]

WILLIAMS: It's pretty heavy, isn't it?

MR. S.: The little granddaughter came home from first grade and she said, "Grandpa," she said, "Do you know who the first president was?" I said, "George Washington," and she said, "Yes." She said, "Do you know who the best president was?" And I said, "No, who was the best president?" And she said, "Abraham Lincoln." Now, wouldn't Great-grandmother Truman have liked her? She said, "Abraham Lincoln." And I said, "And what made Abraham Lincoln so great?" "Well, he freed the slaves." Okay. So we had a book on the presidents, a new book I bought, and I handed down to her the index that listed all the presidents, and she, as a first-grader, read and pronounced . . .

END OF INTERVIEW