

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

DORSY LOU WARR

JULY 17 & 30, 1991

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1991-7

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4328-4333

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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Dorsy Lou Warr 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

Dorsy Lou Warr, nee Compton, [7 January 1924—25 April 1995] grew up down the street from the Trumans. Her father, a prominent Independence businessman, was a member of Harry S Truman's poker circle and often provided the Trumans with pop and ice cream. Warr relates many stories about growing up in the same neighborhood as a president. Her recollections describe the manner in which Truman neighbors dealt with their famous resident. A contemporary of Margaret Truman, Warr has some stories of Margaret's early visits to Independence as a young mother, then as a daughter of two elderly parents.

Persons mentioned: Margaret Truman Daniel, Harry S Truman, Bess W. Truman, Louis L. "Polly" Compton, Dorthea Givan Compton, George Compton, Lyndon B. Johnson, Floyd Warr, Brian Warr, Roxie Brennan, Jane Barridge, Sue Ogden Bailey, Vietta Garr, Madge Gates Wallace, Edward Gregg, Mary Sue Luff, Jeanne Miller, Dick Miller, Sam Wilson, E. Clifton Daniel, Jr., John W. Snyder, Grace Carvin, Rose Conway, Helen Lucky, Ardis Haukenberry, George Porterfield Wallace, May Wallace, Frank Gates Wallace, Natalie Ott Wallace, Ellen Bundschu, Amy Hatten, Mary Bostian, Sue Gentry, Harriet Allen Kellogg, Mona Allen, Marie Allen Blank, Barbara Allen Gard, Betty Ogden Flora, Henry Bundschu, Charles C. Bundschu, Bill Carnes, W. L. C. Palmer, Raymond Necessary, Gladys Thomason, Mize Peters, Madeline Etzenhouser, Mary A. Luff, Maxine Choplin, Harold M. Hunt, Sue Lindsey, Elizabeth Gentry, Garvin Dyer, Elizabeth Rees, Bill Duke, George Carson, Elizabeth Bush, Virginia Bush, Alex Klein, Virginia Rucker, Jean Rucker Bunyar, Hazel Graham, Kenneth Graham, Margaret Meredith Twachtman, Jessie Page, Byron Stewart, Byron Stewart, Jr., R. Luke Choplin, Josephine Choplin, Rodney Choplin, Mary Ruth Choplin, Dorothy Choplin, Karen Tinnin, Stephen Dice, Karen Johnson, Carol Dage, Delbert Johnson, Brian Hoduski, Jeff Wade, Scott Stone, and Regina Underwood.

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

### DORSY LOU WARR

HSTR INTERVIEW #1991-7

JIM WILLIAMS: This is an oral history interview with Dorsy Warr. Do you pronounce it Warr [rhymes with “oar”]?

DORSY LOU WARR: That’s right, Warr. Warr, yes.

WILLIAMS: Warr, okay, I thought so, and we’re at the Truman Library on July 17, 1991. The interviewer is Jim Williams, from the National Park Service, and Scott Stone from the park service is running the recording equipment. Well, I’d like to start out . . . We always start out by asking where and when you were born and a little bit about where you grew up.

WARR: I was born January 6, 1924. I have lived all my life in Independence, Missouri, except for brief times away at college and such, and grew up on the east side of town, moving to the Truman neighborhood in early 1940.

WILLIAMS: To the house at 318?

WARR: To the house at 318 North Delaware, yes.

WILLIAMS: And you were about sixteen then?

WARR: Yes, I was.

WILLIAMS: Where did you live before that? You said east Independence.

WARR: The east side of town, 418 East Walnut, and we lived . . . Those became Depression years and so we, my parents and my sister and I, lived with my grandparents. It was a very large extended family, with two uncles and an aunt. We were very fortunate during the Depression years because

everyone always had jobs. [chuckling] By pooling their income, why, we were never in dire need of any kind. Eventually, one uncle married, an aunt moved into an apartment, and then, as I say, in early 1940 we moved into the house on Delaware Street.

WILLIAMS: Was that fun living with all those relatives?

WARR: Yes, it was. I never had to do dishes. [laughter] There were always plenty of people around to do other things. I was a privileged child, I guess. [laughter] It was a shock when I had my own household.

WILLIAMS: Where did you go to school?

WARR: I went to Benton Elementary School, and then to what was the Independence Junior High School—it's now Palmer Junior High—and then to William Chrisman High School, and then to Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri.

WILLIAMS: So, even before you moved to the Truman neighborhood, you were familiar with . . .

WARR: Oh, yes. My father and Margaret's father were friends, both members of the famous and infamous Harpie Club. [chuckling] So I knew Margaret a little at school as well. Though we are almost the same age, she's just a couple or three months younger than I, she was a year behind me. I just barely made it under the wire for being in the grade I was in, and so I was very young for that grade, and so we were not in the same class but often in the same activities.

WILLIAMS: What were your parents' names?

WARR: Louis L., L-O-U-I-S L. Compton, C-O-M-P-T-O-N. My mother's name was Dorothea—always called Dorothy, however—and her maiden name was Givan, G-I-V-A-N.

WILLIAMS: And how did you spell her first name?

WARR: D-O-R-O-T-H-E-A.

WILLIAMS: But people always called her Dorothy?

WARR: Dorothy, yes.

WILLIAMS: So you were named after her?

WARR: I was named for both my parents. One person, when she was a child, would call her Dorsy, and she rather liked that. My father, of course, was Louis, and so I became Dorsy Lou. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Now, people called your father . . . He had a nickname, didn't he?

WARR: Polly. He was Polly.

WILLIAMS: Where did that come from?

WARR: Well, it's kind of a fun story. When he was a small child, he went to the square. They lived not far from the Independence Square. And by the way, my father was born in Jackson County as well and had lived here all his life. As a little boy, he went to the square and he came home saying, "Mother! Mother! There was a fire on the square today," and told her where that fire was, and said, "and something so terrible happened." She said, "What was that?" He said, "Well, there was a parrot in the fire, and it burned all its fur off." [laughter] And they thought the fur instead of feathers was so funny, so he became Polly and was Polly to most people all

his life. Even when he was mentioned in newspaper articles or anything of that kind, he was Polly.

WILLIAMS: So he was named after a parrot?

WARR: So he was named for a parrot, had a nickname for a parrot, anyway.  
[chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So the Comptons had been in Jackson County for a while?

WARR: Yes, since the mid-1800s. My great-grandfather was a very early settler and one of the pioneers in Jackson County.

WILLIAMS: What was his name?

WARR: His name was George Compton.

WILLIAMS: Was there a family business that everyone was in?

WARR: Not particularly. He did a number of things, and I really should be more familiar and be able to tell you more about it because it has been recorded that he was one of that early group who did things like taking wagons west and that kind of thing. But my grandfather, my father's father, had a stable in Independence and had horses for hire and also had rigs. One of the interesting things he had was what we would call a hearse, horse-drawn, and he had two, one of which was white, and was small and carried children's caskets. Of course, children died so much more frequently in those days, you know. He had a white horse and there are pictures of him driving that with his tall hat—they always wore the top hats, you know—so that's what his business was. He also owned quite a bit of property around Independence.

WILLIAMS: What was his name?

WARR: His name was Frank Compton.

WILLIAMS: And when was your father born?

WARR: My father was born in 1897, [chuckling] February 17, 1897, not actually in Independence, on a farm just outside of Independence in Jackson County.

WILLIAMS: And was his father's business around the square area?

WARR: Yes, just off the square.

WILLIAMS: So when did the Givans arrive in Jackson County?

WARR: The Givans came in . . . My mother was born in 1900. She was born February 27, 1900, and they came to Independence when she was about three. I don't have exact dates on that, but she was around three years old, so . . .

WILLIAMS: So your parents met here in town?

WARR: They were neighbors, yes. They lived next door to one another.

WILLIAMS: On which . . . ?

WARR: On Walnut.

WILLIAMS: What was your father like as a person?

WARR: It would be easy to compare him with the president, I think. [chuckling] In some ways they were very much alike, very outspoken people, very honest, forthright, daring in their own ways with the things they attempted to do, very . . . I guess, aggressive men in a sense, in a laid-back sense. Is that possible? [chuckling] My dad was an entrepreneur, I think you would say, and always a hard worker. In other ways they were quite different. My

father was a self-educated man. He quit high school and . . . In a way, however, Mr. Truman certainly, though he completed his high school years, certainly was also very much a self-educated man. My father was very family-oriented, his immediate family as well as the cousins and the extended family. He was ambitious and did quite well.

You asked about his nickname, and I can tell you've done your homework somewhat. [chuckling] He had a bottling company here in Independence which he purchased in 1923 and changed the name from the . . . It remained the Independence Bottling Company, but the name of the product became Polly's Pop. The company became known also as Polly's, and it was a very successful business in the days before Coca-Cola and Pepsi and those things became so national that small companies could no longer truly compete with them. But in the very early years when Coca-Cola came here, he had an agreement with them that he would stay out of Kansas City if they would stay out of eastern Jackson County. And for many, many years, that agreement was honored and he was it in eastern Jackson County. And when you're the only show in town, you do very well in the days of nickel soda pop, you know. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, I've heard people refer to Polly's Pop.

WARR: Yes, it was good soda pop. When they'd ask him about his recipe and what made it so much better, he said it wasn't any secret, it was just that in those days the syrup companies that provided the syrup to make the soda pop with provided recipes with it. Where many companies would water it

down, so to speak, he used the recipe and used the best products, and therefore he had good soda pop.

WILLIAMS: Was the bottling plant in town?

WARR: Yes, in fact, there's a Polly's Pop Park [see appendix, item 1]. If you go west from the Truman home on Truman Road and turn at River Boulevard going south, you go a long block and that space there on the corner of Maple and where that street angles in there is Polly's Pop Park. If you look, there's a sign there and it says Polly's Pop Park. [chuckling] So that was the area, of course, where Mr. Truman often walked.

WILLIAMS: I've been reading about the Busch family and how they are weaned on beer. So was that what you were weaned on, soda pop, sort of?

WARR: Very definitely. [laughter] Well, my father also was a beer distributor. It was not in our house, and the soda pop was.

WILLIAMS: I've heard that he would bring pop down to the Trumans. Do you know about that?

WARR: Yes, he liked to provide the Trumans with anything that he had that he thought they would enjoy, so I'm sure he did provide them with soda pop. After he retired, he made ice cream, homemade ice cream, by gallons and gallons. When he did anything it was always in quantity, and he would take ice cream to them whenever he made fresh ice cream. Mrs. Truman, of course, was addicted, I think, to the chocolate in particular, so he always made sure there was some chocolate in the batch. Then, when he was growing his tomatoes, he'd take them tomatoes. He was a sharing person.

WILLIAMS: Do you think that was typical of the neighborhood, that people would exchange things like that?

WARR: I don't really feel I can particularly answer that. I think my dad was rather exceptional in that respect. I don't know of other instances where that kind of thing happened. He did things for other neighbors besides the Trumans. Of course, he was very proud of his association with them, but before Mr. Truman became president as well, not just because of his fame.

WILLIAMS: How did their relationship start?

WARR: I assume with their card play, their poker playing at the Harpie Club.

WILLIAMS: Do you know about when he got involved with it?

WARR: No, I can't tell you that. I really don't know.

WILLIAMS: Do you think it was before Mr. Truman was president?

WARR: Oh, yes, long before. As far back as I could remember, they played cards on Monday nights, and that was when I was a small child, and perhaps . . . I won't say before I was born. I think that may be unlikely, but I would say certainly in the twenties sometime, but I can't identify a date. You know, they had club rooms. Have you heard this before? They had club rooms on the square where they met and played poker, and the wives always joked and said, "You know, our husbands tell us, 'Don't die over the weekend and expect a funeral on Monday because we have to play cards Monday night.'" [laughter] That was how devoted they were to one another and to that poker playing evening. So it was upstairs over what was, I believe, called the Bundschu Building, but it was the corner of Lexington and Main,

it would be the northeast corner, and they were on the third floor, I believe. They weren't fancy rooms. It was just a good place where they could go, and they kept a refrigerator and could keep cold cuts and things of that kind so they could have a snack during the evening. So, when Mr. Truman came home as president one time he wanted to play poker, and they wanted to play poker with him, of course, but they decided their club rooms weren't grand enough for him at that point. And I'm not sure the Secret Service may have felt that way, that it wasn't one of the better . . . because I think that building wasn't in real good condition at that time. So he was invited to come to my parents' home, and they had their poker game there that particular evening. I know it happened once, if it happened more than that I don't recall it, but that would have been about . . . oh, let's see, I was thinking it was in 1946 or 1947.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Truman wasn't around Independence much when he was president, right?

WARR: Well, he came and went quite a bit.

WILLIAMS: He didn't stay?

WARR: He couldn't stay long ever, no, but he came as often as he could. And he'd be out around the yard, he'd walk, . . . He could live much more normally then than our presidents can live now. Of course, the Secret Service was always in evidence, but it wasn't to a great extent . . . There didn't seem to be the danger, even though there was that one attempt on his life. We weren't conscious of the danger involved then to the same extent as we

have been since the sixties.

WILLIAMS: What was your mother like?

WARR: My mother was a very quiet person, and certainly if my father were family-oriented, she was family-oriented ten times over. Very much the homemaker, the woman behind the scenes, so to speak. It was not that she was not a strong character, because she was, but very, very quiet, very resourceful, extremely efficient, but everything was always easy around her. She made a wonderful home, both for us as her family, for her mother after her father's death, and for her brother and sister. She was always looked to, though she was not the eldest, as the one who held the family together.

WILLIAMS: Was she involved in community activities?

WARR: No, not at all; just in her church.

WILLIAMS: Which church did you go to?

WARR: First Baptist.

WILLIAMS: Down on Truman?

WARR: There, right there on Truman, yes.

WILLIAMS: When you moved onto Delaware Street, I guess as a teenager, were you really aware of living down the street from a senator? Did that seem to matter?

WARR: Oh, to a certain extent, but no, it wasn't a big thing at that time. And even when he was president, though we were all impressed, he was still one of us. And you know, they were not pretentious people, and so they were

accepted the way they were, I think, in this community. Much of the notoriety—maybe that’s not the right word—that doesn’t sound as nice as it should—came from other people, I think, outside the community more than within it. The neighborhood stayed quiet and stayed very much the same, I think.

WILLIAMS: Was there a conscious effort to shield the Trumans from attention as much as you could?

WARR: I think so. I know certainly on my father’s part. I think perhaps you may have in your records one interview—I’m not sure whether you do or not—but he did grant two . . . I think a high school student and once to a junior high student, and there may have been one with a college student from William Jewell [Liberty, Missouri] or someplace, a tape, but he never granted interviews with reporters. And if he were here today, he would have said to me, “You be careful what you say.” [laughter]

WILLIAMS: Were there a lot of tourists in the neighborhood?

WARR: Oh, there have always been many tourists, of course.

WILLIAMS: Was that bothersome?

WARR: Not really. I think that the people who come here are a different tourist than you find in many tourist settings. These are people who care about their country, who cared about the president, who are interested in history, and they’re not destructive people. Traffic occasionally was a problem, and when in his retired years a president would come in or anyone from Washington, there was special interest if it were announced ahead of time

that they were coming.

I might tell you one very funny story, though, I think about my father. I've told you he was outspoken and had firm opinions, and quite often when someone of note was coming in, one of the presidents or something, I would go over to watch from their lawn. We lived nearby. But when Mr. Johnson was coming in, President Johnson was coming in one day, I was busy and I knew I couldn't get there, and I went over just a little bit later and Daddy was, as usual, out working in his yard. He loved his flowers and his grass and all those things. And I said, "Daddy, did you see the president when he came in?" My father was rather disenchanted with President Johnson at that point, as many people were, I guess, even though he was a staunch Democrat, my father. He said to me, when I said, "Did you see the president?" He said, "No, I didn't look up." [laughter] I thought that must certainly have been the ultimate insult, you know. But he wouldn't even look.

WILLIAMS: That's willpower, too.

WARR: That's willpower, it really is, with all the sirens and the . . . you know, because we were accustomed to those sirens and the motorcades and all those things.

WILLIAMS: I've heard stories about people stopping and asking for directions, and at least children, young people thought it was kind of fun to misdirect tourists.

WARR: Oh, really? Oh, I hadn't heard that. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: So you never did that?

WARR: That wouldn't have been permitted in our family. [laughter] No, not at all. It is rather interesting, Mr. Truman and my father were both relatively short men and stockily built—not in Mr. Truman's later days, nor in my father's for that matter—but he was mistaken often in the neighborhood by tourists, and he had some interesting experiences that way.

WILLIAMS: What would they do?

WARR: They might speak to him as though he were the president, you know, and he would not let that go on, of course, but it was interesting that they often seemed to think . . . And the house itself, if they came from the north, because that house is a rather imposing structure, they would first think, you know, if they weren't really familiar and hadn't seen pictures, they would first mistake that for the Truman home, and so questions were often asked of him in that respect.

WILLIAMS: And since he was out in the yard a lot, he probably . . .

WARR: Yes, he had many questions, many, many questions. He enjoyed visiting with the tourists. He'd give them interviews he wouldn't have given to you. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: Well, how long did you live in that house?

WARR: Not too long, actually, from very early 1940 until summer of 1943.

WILLIAMS: Why did you move out?

WARR: I was married. [laughter] It was time to move.

WILLIAMS: Was that then after college?

WARR: Yes, immediately after college I was married.

WILLIAMS: And where did you meet your husband?

WARR: In school, in the first grade. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Oh, so he's an Independence boy?

WARR: He's an Independence boy also, yes.

WILLIAMS: It wasn't in college or anything?

WARR: No. No, in school. Independence from the word go.

WILLIAMS: And what's his name?

WARR: His name is Floyd Warr, and his family came here when he was a small child. He was born in Des Moines, Iowa, but . . .

WILLIAMS: Have you lived on Waldo then, ever since your marriage?

WARR: Not quite. Those were war years and housing was very difficult at that time, and we rented a house for the summer, a woman who was going to be in California the summer, and we rented her house. Then my parents had a place at Lake Lotawana that summer, and still had it for a while when we needed to move, so we moved out to Lotawana and were there for a little bit, and then rented a home for a month, and then about that time the house came on the market there on Waldo Street and my father gave it to us as a wedding gift.

WILLIAMS: Oh. Who lived in that house before you, do you know?

WARR: Well, I don't think I can tell you the people's name, but it had been a rental house. It had been built in 1939, so it was still quite a new home, but it was built by Mr. Carnes—I'm trying to think of his first name—and his wife was Mrs. Wallace's sister. Are you with me? [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Yes, so that's how the Carnes come into the picture?

WARR: That's how the Carnes come into the picture, yes, and the house was purchased from Mr. Carnes. He no longer wanted to rent it, felt the market was good and sold it at what nowadays is considered a real steal, and I think he always wished he'd held onto it a little longer. [chuckling] But they lived in the neighborhood, too. They lived just around the corner there on Union Street from us.

WILLIAMS: Has it been a nice neighborhood to live in?

WARR: Yes, it's been a very nice neighborhood, and the nice part about it is that it's a neighborhood in the old sense of mixed ages and a mixture of backgrounds. It isn't like moving into a suburb where there are all young couples with little children, or they're all upper income or . . . You know, everybody is more or less the same.

WILLIAMS: I'm amazed at how different the houses are.

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Some are big, and some are small.

WARR: Yes, and the people are the same way. There's just some of everything, and I think that's a healthy way to live and to bring up your children. And for a little while we were all getting older, and then all of a sudden there were children again as younger people moved back in. And it's interesting how many of our children moved back to that area. Our daughter, for instance, lives across the street from us. The Buckley family, they had eight children, I believe, up the street from us, and now some of the Buckley

family live again in the neighborhood. At various times, three different children of the Buckley eight have lived in the neighborhood. The Fender family, for many years had children living in the neighborhood, both their sons. Now their daughter is living in the neighborhood. The Ott family—you've probably interviewed some of them—again, the children, the one daughter remaining in Independence moved back into the neighborhood. It's that kind of a neighborhood, I think, very family-oriented.

WILLIAMS: How many children do you have?

WARR: We have two living. We had triplets. Our first children were triplets, and then we have a son who is an attorney in Independence, Brian Warr, and our daughter is Roxie Brennan, who lives across the street from us. She has two little girls, *they* have two little girls, and our son has two step-children.

WILLIAMS: I used to live across from my grandparents, so . . .

WARR: You know what it's like then: in and out. It's almost like living there, isn't it? [chuckling] I started to tell you something that I thought you'd be particularly interested in, and now it's escaped me. But our children, in getting to the Truman part of the story perhaps, when Mrs. Truman would know that Margaret was coming with the first grandbaby—well maybe not with the first one but probably with the second one—when there were the two children, she called, and she always called me . . . My nickname, by the way, is Tot, T-O-T, and she always called me Tot—Margaret calls me Tot—and she'd call and . . . I'd say, "Hello?" And she'd say, "Tot?" [chuckling] In that voice of hers, and I'd know immediately who it was,

and I'd say, "Yes, Mrs. Truman?" And she'd say, "Could you spare the baby buggy?" [chuckling] And I'd say, "Yes, we could. Is Margaret coming?" "Yes, and we need another bed." So our children would . . . I'd clean them all up, and I'd say, "I'll send the children around with it." So they'd wheel it around. Usually I'd take an extra hour to also scrub the buggy a bit, and they'd wheel the baby buggy around. It was quite a big one, and the newest baby would always sleep in the baby buggy. Then when she was ready to send it back I'd say call, and the children would go around and get it and bring it back. I always hoped Mr. Truman would bring it home on one of his walks, but he never did. [laughter] I'm sure she couldn't persuade him to do that. But each time she would borrow that baby carriage and the youngest baby would sleep in it [see appendix, item 2].

But when the children would take it around or pick it up, she always invited them in and she would pass the Stovers candy. They were eternally with their box of Stovers chocolates, because Margaret and Mrs. Truman both, you know, love their chocolates. So they'd offer them candy. And this funny story, our son is the oldest and our daughter younger, and he picked his piece of candy, and she said the minute he got it in his mouth she knew it was coconut, and he can't even swallow coconut! [chuckling] And he sat there the rest of the time not saying anything, with his chocolate in his mouth, till he could get outside and spit it out. [laughter] And she loves to tell that on him. It was one of life's more embarrassing moments. And

now I remember what I was going to tell you. When the triplets were born, they were . . .

WILLIAMS: We need to change tapes.

WARR: Need to change tapes? Alright, that's a good spot.

[End #4328; Begin #4329]

WILLIAMS: Okay, you were talking about your triplets.

WARR: Yes, I was talking about when our triplets were born in 1945. They were two months premature and very, very small little girls, and very unexpected. We did not know that we were expecting triplets, so there was much excitement in Independence. At that point, there had never been triplets in Independence, according to any records, so the word spread, and someone called the president, I guess. So he sent a wire to my dad, something along these lines, "Three of a kind beat pairs any day. Congratulations." I have the telegram someplace around. So that was kind of an exciting thing to have happen. However, the triplets did not survive, and we lost them within twenty-four hours. But anyway, that was kind of one of the . . .

WILLIAMS: Kind of a poker buddy telegram.

WARR: A poker buddy telegram, exactly. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: How well did you know Margaret?

WARR: Well, I think pretty well. We were acquainted with one another, as I told you, in high school and did some things together. Of course, in high school she was only there one semester and then would be in Washington the

spring semester, so that interrupted her times. But particularly during the short period that I lived there on Delaware, we did more things together. She misremembers in some of her memoirs, by the way, and lists me as a member of that little club, I think, and I was not really because I didn't live there then. But that was a natural mistake because we did become closer friends and did things together some at that time.

I remember in particular one instance when she called and asked if I'd like to spend the day and could we build a badminton court on the north lawn. We talked to her mother. They'd already bought the equipment, I think, and we talked to Mrs. Truman about it. And I think because Margaret and I were both more sedentary than active, and Mrs. Truman had been very active as a young woman and we didn't play tennis and we didn't play softball and all those things, and so I think she was more than willing for us to tear up the yard in order to see us do something a little bit more active, so she said yes. And it was a very hot day, not unlike the last few days have been here in Independence, and we did quite a little tearing up of that north lawn, sort of toward the east, not toward the front of the house—I imagine we were given those parameters, probably. [chuckling] I think probably the park service would not appreciate that I think we tore out a bush or two, or maybe they would, you know. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: There's plenty of them there.

WARR: There are plenty of them, anyway. And we did manage to finally clear a big enough space and to have our net up, and we may even have played a

game or two. I don't remember that we ever used it again more than . . .

Perhaps we did and I just don't remember. I seem to remember that Mrs. Truman came bringing us lemonade and that we cooled off on the porch for a little bit. That was one thing that was kind of fun that we did.

WILLIAMS: So that area of the yard was overgrown or just kind of bushy?

WARR: Well, there were shrubs here and there, no particular plan, you know, things like lilacs and spirea, old-fashioned shrubs.

WILLIAMS: So you just had to clear them away?

WARR: We just had to make a little space, and we did. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: That was back there by the rose arbor and the porch?

WARR: Probably back in that general area . . . Well, now, on the north side . . .

WILLIAMS: More toward the driveway?

WARR: Yes, toward the driveway and toward where the fence now is.

WILLIAMS: And the fence wasn't up then?

WARR: Oh, no, the fence was not put up until he was president, for his protection. I don't think they were really very happy about having to have the fence, but realized the necessity of it.

WILLIAMS: What other kind of activities would you engage in with Margaret?

WARR: Oh, you know, we did things as groups, and others in that little club . . . What did they call it? I can't even think of it?

WILLIAMS: The Henhouse Hicks?

WARR: Yes, Henhouse Hicks, that's what it was. [chuckling] And those girls were my friends as well, Sue Ogden Bailey, who just has been here visiting me in

late May, the Allen girls, Jane Barridge, and so we did things together, like go to a movie or go for a Coke at Brown Drugstore or for a soda, that kind of thing. I was privileged to have the use of my parents' cars often, and so we'd drive and talk like girls talk, girl talk.

WILLIAMS: About boys?

WARR: About boys. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And other things?

WARR: And other things now and then.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever have things like slumber parties or sleep-overs?

WARR: A little, but that wasn't as frequent then as it is now with people.

WILLIAMS: How much were you in the Truman home at that time?

WARR: In and out occasionally, but not on a daily basis by any means. Margaret would have a luncheon, or I would have a luncheon. That is something that we did more of in those days. Perhaps a birthday luncheon or . . . Our mothers were all nice about doing those things, and they were done nicely. At that pretty dining room table in the Truman home, with all the nice china and crystal and silver and flowers on the table, and it was always nicely done. I have some of Mrs. Truman's recipes in my recipe file of things, something that she prepared for one of those that we particularly liked. Though, of course, Vietta [Garr] did much of the cooking, but Mrs. Truman was in the kitchen, too.

That's one thing that worries me and upsets me—you've probably been told this before that I complain regularly about . . . [laughter] Maybe

you want to cut off the tape. The kitchen. I understand the kitchen and the green. That was the color that you painted kitchens then. I had that color kitchen, too, at one time. Kitchens and bathrooms were painted that strange shade of green, and not everyone understands nor realizes that. But Mrs. Truman's kitchen was clean, and that disreputable, terrible dishcloth and dish towel are not typical of Mrs. Truman. True, they were in the house, but let's remember that for a number of years she hadn't been able to be in that kitchen herself. She would not have been aware of the way they were not taking care of her linens and those things, and I think it gives a very unfair impression of Mrs. Truman as a homemaker, and it really distresses me terribly. Every time I take guests through there, I make apologies for the house, because that's not the way the house was kept.

WILLIAMS: Are there other things that are different?

WARR: That's the main thing that bothers me. The other thing is that it was kept in better repair, as far as the furniture was concerned. During her later years she simply was not able to see to having things reupholstered or refinished and properly kept up, as she had done, really had done, and that is not truly the way they lived. It's the way things became in the last, shall I say, ten years of her life? You know more accurately than I, probably. I can't identify the date when she had to have full-time help and was no longer able to really oversee her home as *she* would have done.

WILLIAMS: So she was very interested in housekeeping?

WARR: Oh, I don't mean that—she was not what we would once have called a

persnickety housekeeper—I don't mean that. They lived comfortably, and she didn't make a fuss about things, but things were clean and things looked nice and were kept in good repair during the days when she was able to see to it that they were. And then when you have hired people in your home overseeing things, things get into disrepair, and furniture that had once looked nice begins to look more worn than you would have let it get. So, if you can ever have any influence to at least change the tea towel and the dishcloth . . . [laughter]

WILLIAMS: Well, I don't think we're on the right rung of the ladder.

WARR: We're not on the right track? [laughter]

WILLIAMS: Scott and I aren't.

WARR: It really is, it's unfair to her reputation as a homemaker.

WILLIAMS: I understand what you mean. I think the decision was made to freeze the appearance.

WARR: To leave it as it was, but that is not as it truly was.

WILLIAMS: Was Mrs. Truman outside in the yard much?

WARR: I don't recall her being outside much, no.

WILLIAMS: Because we heard that she liked flowers very much.

WARR: She did like her flowers, and she may have been back there around the roses and things, but I really . . . I can't verify that at all. She loved her flowers, I know that.

WILLIAMS: You don't have vivid memories of seeing her out in the yard toiling away?

WARR: No, I don't. I don't have any memories of seeing her out in the yard.

[chuckling] I know Mr. Truman occasionally had from time to time been seen out with the push lawn mower, you know, the old rotary lawn mower. It was not a happy task for him, and sometimes he did it when he was home in the summer. I remember Daddy coming in and saying that he'd seen him out and had gone up and visited with him out in the yard or something of that kind, and certainly while he was still senator. I can't say that he did it after he was president. More than likely not. I can't identify the time well enough in my mind, but I do know that he was out doing something in the yard when he was vice president during that brief period. And again it seems to me that my dad may have been walking on his way to the Baptist church there and stopped to talk with him, but I'm not sure of that. The rest of it I am certain about. He told Mr. Truman, "You seem preoccupied and concerned." And he said, "I am. I am so apprehensive about what I think I see is about to happen." And I'm sure that he was referring to the state of President Roosevelt's health. My father was not the kind to inquire further, and he had said what he needed to say and shared what he needed to share perhaps. That's sort of a sad . . . [voice breaking]

WILLIAMS: Among the neighborhood kids, how were the Trumans known as parents?

WARR: Just like any other parents, you know? Perhaps having to be more protective of their daughter than any of us needed to be, but outside of that, very normal parents, restrictive of their daughter. All of us were restricted in those days, you know. We didn't have the freedom to tear around that children have today, teenagers. And with the fright that they had over

Margaret when she was still in elementary school, from then on they were more protective, and we were more free. But she was certainly permitted to go and do things with us, to come to our homes and to play cards or to visit, to stay over.

WILLIAMS: Did you know Madge Wallace?

WARR: Grandmother?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

WARR: Only that when we went to visit the first thing you always did was to go in to see Grandmother and pay your respects to her.

WILLIAMS: Where would she be?

WARR: As I recall, either in the living room, on the south side of the house there, or back in her own room, often back in her own room.

WILLIAMS: How would you describe her?

WARR: You know, my contact with her was only that, to go in and to say . . . A dignified, tiny—elderly by that time—person, and I had no relationship with her whatsoever. She didn't visit particularly with us. It was just a matter of saying good morning or good afternoon and paying our respects to her, as we would have done with anyone else. But it was expected.

WILLIAMS: So was she around at these luncheons or anything?

WARR: No, those would always just be the girls.

WILLIAMS: Yes, with Mrs. Truman sort of arranging the food.

WARR: Around, right. They did give for me a lovely luncheon, but not at home, just before I was married, for my wedding party and a few others. That was

at the Women's City Club in Kansas City when it was in downtown Kansas City. A very nice . . . They had a little balcony which was private, a private room for private parties, and it was a very nice luncheon with flowers and favors and that kind of thing.

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Truman was a member of that club?

WARR: Of the Women's City Club. Yes, I'm sure she was.

WILLIAMS: I think I read something recently about that.

WARR: Yes, and I think probably she entertained her bridge club and did that kind of thing there from time to time. They were invited to our wedding. Margaret sang at our wedding and was a member of the wedding party as such and Mrs. Truman did come. I am assuming that Mr. Truman was not in Independence at that time.

WILLIAMS: What did Margaret sing?

WARR: She sang "Ave Maria" and [Edward] Gregg's "I Love Thee."

WILLIAMS: Did you know then that she was going to be a star someday?

WARR: An opera singer? [chuckling] No, I had no idea she would be giving concerts and doing the kind of thing that she did later. But I knew she had a very lovely voice and I certainly felt very privileged to have her consent to do it. I went to the house, and we sat down at the piano. I sat on the bench alongside of her, and she went through her music, and we decided on those two songs. I think probably it was quite a departure for the Baptists to have "Ave Maria" sung at a wedding, [chuckling] but it's what I liked and what she liked, and it was lovely wedding music.

WILLIAMS: So you were married at the Baptist church?

WARR: At the Baptist church, yes.

WILLIAMS: Did Margaret do this quite a bit, or just for you?

WARR: If she ever sang at anyone else's wedding, I don't happen to know it, but that doesn't mean she didn't.

WILLIAMS: She wasn't on the circuit?

WARR: No, she wasn't on the circuit at that time. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: With all your friends?

WARR: No.

WILLIAMS: Did Margaret have a lot of beaux? Did you call them that back then still?

WARR: We may have. [chuckling] No, I wouldn't say a lot. She dated, but again probably protected a little more, and also because she was gone much of the time and wasn't in the regular flow of things, probably made some difference also.

WILLIAMS: Would your group tend to mingle with another group of boys, just kind of that way?

WARR: Our group did, and you must remember again that Margaret was a year behind me, and so her group of the boys that she would be with was a little bit different from the ones that I would have been with.

WILLIAMS: So you would maintain . . .

WARR: You often maintained your own class, though there was . . . We did cross over some, but many of the parties and things would be of your particular class.

WILLIAMS: There were some clubs at William Chrisman, is that right?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Were you in any of those?

WARR: Yes, I was an “As You Like It.”

WILLIAMS: That’s the best one, right?

WARR: That’s the best one, of course. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: That’s what Mary Sue Luff said.

WARR: And then the boys also had a club at that time, though very shortly after that I think it was determined they really weren’t studying Shakespeare, and so the powers . . . [laughter]

WILLIAMS: Were you?

WARR: Not really, no, not that I recall at all. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: I’ve heard that, too.

WARR: We were more social oriented than we were literary.

WILLIAMS: Were you ever invited to the White House or Washington?

WARR: Yes. Margaret had made a point of telling us please come, and so in 19 . . . let me get my dates straight, 1947, I believe, the spring of ’47, another couple, Jeanne and Dick Miller, and Floyd and I decided to vacation together and to go to Washington. And so I wrote . . . We didn’t use the telephones then the way we do now, you know. I wrote Margaret and said that we were planning to come to Washington and that we’d like to see her or take her to lunch or dinner or something and told her where we’d be staying. This was planned sort of on the spur of the moment, that we could

have vacations at the same time, and so when we arrived in Washington we stayed at a place that I think was called the Ward Parkman, something of that kind. Anyway, it was connected with the . . . They had a residential area as well as the hotel area, and it was where the Trumans lived when he was a senator, but we were, of course, in the hotel area of it. So we went out sightseeing and came back and there was a message on the bed saying to me, "Call the White House. Mrs. Truman would like to speak with you." I will interject here that from that moment on we were treated very well in the hotel. [laughter] So I called, and "Tot?" she said, as she always did, "Margaret's in New York, but the president would like to see you." And that's the way she said it. And I said, "Oh, that's not necessary." "Yes, it is," she said. "So we want you to come . . .," and she set a time, it seems to me it was like 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon, and told us which gate to use and said, "Now, I must say this to you. The president's on a very tight schedule. You need to be prompt."

Well, we left the hotel very early, knowing Washington traffic by that time and that it wasn't always easy to get where you wanted to go and get on the one-way streets and . . . [chuckling] So we arrived very, very early at the White House, and we didn't want to go in a half an hour early, so we circled that block, [chuckling] around and around and around, and by the time . . . Oh, we had on our hats and our white gloves, and we were really ready for this. By the time we pulled in, the gate man was really laughing because he realized at that point what we had been doing was

delaying our arrival. And of course he had our name and permitted entrance, and we were still a little early. We were taken into the Cabinet Room to wait, which was interesting, I thought, with all the pictures on the wall of former presidents, as I recall, and we waited there until we were taken into the Oval Office. He greeted each of us warmly. I think he genuinely liked to see people from home, and, of course, visited with me about my father and said something like . . . We thanked him for having us there, and he said, "I'm glad to have you here." He said, "It seems to be important to people to get to see the president," and something of this nature, "I'm not sure why, but I do understand." [chuckling] And I know my husband asked him about . . . My husband was working for the airlines, and he asked him about the planes that are on the mantel, as they are in here at the library. One of them, of course, was his own, the presidential plane, the other one Floyd asked about and identified it—I think maybe it was a Connie or something—and he said, "Well, what is the significance of that one?" And Mr. Truman looked at it as though he had never noticed it before and said, "Oh, I guess just to balance the mantel." [laughter]

So then he said, "Mrs. Truman wishes to see you, so I'm going to call someone to take you to see her upstairs." So he did, and someone escorted us out then, as I recall, through the other door onto the Rose Garden and along by that side of the White House and into another entrance and then up to the third floor, where we sat down and visited with Mrs. Truman. Then she took us on a tour of their living quarters, showing us

Margaret's room and the lack of closet space, which was a problem for all of them, and then she gave us the tour of the public rooms of the White House as well, rather than giving that to someone else to do, which was her own gracious way of doing things. Then we sat down in, I believe, the Green Room to visit a little more. And someplace along at that time she said, "Have you been enjoying Washington?" And we said yes. My husband said, "Yes, all but the No Parking signs. It's so hard to find a place to park to go to the places we want to see." And she laughed and she said, "Well, I can solve that for you. You will take my car and my driver, and he can park wherever he pleases." [laughter] Well, we thanked her and did not take advantage of that. And we've kicked ourselves ever since. Why didn't we do it? She meant it, you know? But we were not raised to take advantage, and we didn't.

WILLIAMS: She must have been very kind.

WARR: She was a wonderful lady, and she had a wonderful sense of humor, which I think most people don't realize because in her pictures she's always very solemn. And she really was a funny lady. She was funny. Our son was married in my parents' home, and we had a reception, a champagne reception for him there, and of course the neighbors were invited, the Trumans included. Mr. Truman was ill and couldn't come . . . Are we getting near the end again? [chuckling] And couldn't come at that point. Mrs. Truman did come. Margaret was away, of course, and so we had friends passing through the group and pouring champagne for the guests,

and our good friend Dr. Sam Wilson was one of those. He said, "Mrs. Truman, may I pour you some champagne?" And she said, "No, thanks. I'm walking." [laughter] And we thought that was a really special one. Another thing I thought which was very funny: she and Mother were not close friends; they were just neighborly, but they did visit on the phone occasionally. Mostly it was when Mrs. Truman would call Mother or Daddy to thank for the ice cream or thank for the tomatoes or whatever and then they would visit. One day she called Mother, maybe just to say how are you, it was wintertime, and she said, "We're going to be going to Florida . . ." And I think this must have been their last trip to Florida, and Mother knowing that she didn't like to fly and didn't really like . . . She liked to go someplace but she didn't like the getting there, I think, said to her, "Oh, are you dreading the trip?" And she said, "No, since Harry hasn't been feeling well and we've been so shut in this winter, I'd go to hell if somebody asked me." [laughter] You know, that's more like something he'd say than like something she'd say. It seems almost out of character, but she really did have a wonderful sense of humor. She just was a very private person. And she wouldn't think that wash cloth and that dishcloth and dish towel were funny, even with her sense of humor. [laughter] Or maybe she would. Maybe she would. Who knows?

WILLIAMS: Would you like to take a little break or get a drink of water?

WARR: I'd love a drink of water, and you would probably like a break.

[End #4329; Begin #4330]

WILLIAMS: Are there other stories about Mrs. Truman's sense of humor that you remember?

WARR: I don't think so. Those are the ones that just impressed me the most.

WILLIAMS: You described Mr. Truman some earlier, in relation to your father. What are some of the instances you remember, contact with him through the years?

WARR: Well, our contact was not frequent. I'd often see him walking by, of course, on his morning walks, because we were on his path from time to time. Perhaps one of the things I remember best, however, was during the 1948 campaign. I think it was Mrs. Truman who called me and asked if I would care to go with them on one of their campaign trips, not a long trip, just over to Liberty, that she thought it would be nice for Margaret to have somebody with her for a change. So Mr. Truman was going to be in town, and he was to make a speech on the steps of the courthouse in Liberty, and I can't remember exactly how we joined up, but it seems to me that we went into the city, that he may have been at the Muehlebach, and that we left from there in a motorcade—not a big motorcade, a little motorcade—with the sirens blaring and all of that, and went to the courthouse in Liberty and climbed the steps. There was, I think, sort of a platform built perhaps there. Some of this is very vague. It's been a long time. [chuckling] We climbed the steps, and Margaret and I were seated on the platform with Mr. and, I believe, Mrs. Truman as well. I remember it was a nice, bright day, and I'm ashamed to say I don't remember a word he said. [laughter] Isn't

that terrible? If I'd only known you were going to be interviewing me I would have taken notes, but one doesn't think about those things at that time. But that was a fun thing to get to do and a very thoughtful thing for them for Margaret, and for me for that matter.

It could have been that it was the '44 campaign, and I do sort of question that in my mind, and I can't hook it up to be absolutely certain whether it was when he was running for vice president or whether it was for the presidency. The reason I keep wondering, it seems to me as though it were the '48, and yet the kind of protection he had, that kind of thing, makes me think it must have been '44. So let's say it was '44.

WILLIAMS: Okay. I suppose you were at Margaret's wedding?

WARR: Not at the wedding. That was very small. I was at the reception.

WILLIAMS: At the house?

WARR: At the house, yes.

WILLIAMS: What was that like?

WARR: It was very crowded, a lot of people there. Everyone in their finery and a reception line and . . .

WILLIAMS: Was it indoors?

WARR: It was indoors, yes. The line stretched outdoors for some little time, and we did stand in line quite a while. As I recall, my parents and Floyd and I went together, and upstairs all the gifts were laid out for you to go upstairs and see the gifts. That's the way we used to do in Independence, and throughout the bedrooms and extra tables and things of that kind, why,

many, many gifts, of course, with the prominence of the family. It was quite a display.

WILLIAMS: Was there food?

WARR: There was food, but it was just typical wedding reception food, as I recall.

WILLIAMS: So you were pretty much allowed all over the house?

WARR: Yes, one of the few times, actually, that I was upstairs. I do remember being up there a time or two, but normally we were downstairs.

WILLIAMS: Had you met Mr. Daniel before that?

WARR: No, not before. A nice man.

WILLIAMS: Were there any, what I would call, dignitaries there at the wedding?

WARR: I have an idea that maybe . . . Oh, dear, the name is going to escape me at this moment. Oh, Mr. [John] Snyder. I have a feeling the Snyders may have been there.

WILLIAMS: Their daughter was in the wedding.

WARR: Yes, but I'm not sure of that because I've met him and seen him other times when he's been here, so I can't identify whether that was another time.

WILLIAMS: So there was a receiving line like at everybody else's wedding?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And you just went through it?

WARR: You just went through and shook hands.

WILLIAMS: Were introduced to the Daniels?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: How much contact have you had with Margaret since she's been married?

WARR: It's sort of spasmodic, but we have stayed in touch, more the last few years than we had in earlier years. When she was very busy with her family, I was very busy with mine. She had more careers going, you might say, with her talk show and the plays she was in and that kind of thing. I was a member of the national board of Girl Scouts of U.S.A., and so I was going into New York six and eight times a year. At some point I thought, you know, this is ridiculous. I'm here and she's here, and maybe her time is . . .

When she would come here, her time needed to be pretty much with her parents and taking care of things here, so often she didn't see her friends when she was here. So I wrote her and said, "I'd like to take you to lunch, and let's get together or do something." So she got back to me, and she said, "Come to the apartment. Clifton would like to see you, too." So I did and we sat down and had a nice visit with Clifton and then went to lunch together. And we did that a few times, not on any regular basis at all, but it did sort of reinforce our friendship again and then we were in touch more.

Then, still later when the Bess Wallace Truman Award was established . . .

She's ex officio member of that committee, and I'm a member of that committee, and so I am liaison with her to keep her informed of what we're doing and to get her opinion about possible recipients, so we started talking on the phone and now we talk more often, sometimes not to do with that.

Additionally, she's asked Shawsie and me to help her occasionally with something related to the family, and we've tried to do that. Because when you are at a distance, with May [Wallace] in particular, there needs to be

someone sort of on site, during some of this. She then called one day and said, “I’m really going to need an attorney to represent me out there with some of the work with May’s estate and that kind of thing. Who would you suggest?” And I said, “This is a little bit awkward, but my son, I think, is the best one,”—and that’s the kind of work he does is estate work. She said, “It had completely slipped my mind, and anyway, I didn’t know that that was his field.” So she did call, and so they are in touch regularly, so he carries messages. He’ll often say, “Margaret said to tell you thus and so,” or whatever, so it’s made an additional touchstone sort of for us, which has been nice. And they just hit it off. I thought, “Oh, dear, what have I done?” [chuckling] Because, you know, lawyers don’t get along with everybody, and clients don’t get along with their lawyers sometimes, but it’s worked out very well. They just seem to understand one another’s sense of humor and where they’re coming from. My son is as forthright as Margaret is, and that works well, you know. It doesn’t work if you’re not, and so they’re very compatible. It’s been a nice relationship, apparently. He’s enjoyed it very much, and she says she does, so it’s good.

WILLIAMS: Does Margaret have the same sense of humor that her parents did?

WARR: Yes, I think she’s more like her father than like her mother.

WILLIAMS: And you used the word “forthright.”

WARR: Yes, right. Mrs. Truman was forthright, but quieter about it, let’s say. [chuckling] As you know, she had great influence with the president.

WILLIAMS: Do you swap stories with Margaret about your families and things like that?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And her sons and grandchildren now?

WARR: Yes, she's funny when it comes to that. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I heard she . . .

WARR: She's very offhand about a lot of it, you know.

WILLIAMS: Sort of didn't know if she'd like the idea of being a grandmother or not.

WARR: She loves the grandchildren, let's put it that way. I'm not sure at first blush how she felt about it, but she talks about the grandchildren, and it's evident that she has lots of feeling about them.

WILLIAMS: I think when they come along it's a different matter.

WARR: Yes, it's different than just thinking about it.

WILLIAMS: Well, when the Trumans came back here to retire, how much contact would you have with them?

WARR: Oh, not really any, particularly. Only, as I say, when she would call to arrange for something, or she may have called a time or two when my parents were ill or something to inquire from me about them, but it was a very casual relationship. There were many years separating us in ages, even between their ages and my parents.

WILLIAMS: Right, ten or fifteen years.

WARR: Yes, and my parents, I have already told you, were very family-oriented and didn't do things socially, and so they moved in different circles outside of the poker club. My mother was not a bridge player and was not a member of that group, though she knew those ladies, and they were friendly

but not close friends.

WILLIAMS: You've mentioned a few times when the Trumans were at your parents' house. [see appendix, item 3] Were there other times that you remember?

WARR: I think I've probably told you about the only ones that I'm aware of.

WILLIAMS: But it wouldn't have been too unusual for the Trumans to be in the neighbors' houses?

WARR: No, I don't think they were in and out of one another's homes to any extent. It would surprise me. I don't think at the Allens nor . . . Again, the Wallaces, family, the Nolands, you know . . . But when it came to in and out of one another's houses, that neighborhood wasn't much that way.

WILLIAMS: Just maybe on special occasions like at the wedding reception?

WARR: Yes. I just don't recall much of that. Now, Grace Carvin, who lived to the north of my parents, Grace and Mother were on that kind of a basis with one another. Grace was in and out of Mother's, and Mother was over there from time to time, but they didn't get together and drink coffee every day or anything like that. But particularly in Grace's later years, Mother was very helpful to her. It's too bad you can't have Grace's reminiscences about the Secret Service and that kind of thing, because she had wonderful stories because they often lived there.

WILLIAMS: The agents?

WARR: The agents, yes.

WILLIAMS: Do you know any of those?

WARR: Not really, no. They were always friendly people, and we would visit with

them. My dad enjoyed them and they enjoyed him, and it was sort of nice for them to have a man to visit with, because in the later years there was no man in the Carvin household. They would visit around outside in the yard. Mr. Dorsey in particular was a friend who stayed in touch for quite a long while after he was not in Independence anymore.

WILLIAMS: I've heard that Secret Service agents lived here during the whole presidency, and they were the ones who kept an eye on the house.

WARR: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you know any of those?

WARR: Only in passing, and as I say, Mr. Dorsey was one who was here for quite a while and lived there at Miss Carvin's, and that's about all I can tell you about him. He was a very pleasant man, but I didn't know him well.

WILLIAMS: There was one through the home earlier this summer who said that he had lived on Delaware Street all those years, but he wouldn't give his name.

WARR: Oh, bless his heart.

WILLIAMS: He said he was retired and didn't want to be bothered, I guess.

WARR: Well, and anyway, you see, they protected the Trumans' privacy. They just wouldn't interfere with that, even to this day; which is quite remarkable, I think, when you realize the books that have been written about other presidents almost immediately upon their leaving. Now maybe Secret Service men haven't done as much of that.

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Carvin, she also kept Truman Library researchers?

WARR: Yes, she did. They were very at-home there, I think.

WILLIAMS: I've even heard that house referred to as the "Truman Library dorm."

WARR: Oh, that's cute. I don't think I ever heard that. She would have liked that, and maybe she knew it. [chuckling] She was a grand person.

WILLIAMS: I think you mentioned before we started that you were a volunteer here at the library.

WARR: Yes, I was in that first group of Junior Service League women who Mr. Truman trained personally to do that job, and that was fun.

WILLIAMS: How was he as a boss?

WARR: [chuckling] Well, it was an interesting tour, of course, and we took heavy notes, and I'm not sure but what much of that was transcribed for us perhaps, too. He was easy, you know. He was very easy with us. He knew many of us, so it was a folksy kind of thing, but then that was his style anyway.

WILLIAMS: Was he around a lot in the museum?

WARR: Oh, not that I was aware of. He was in and out of the auditorium frequently for student groups. Of course, he was here in this part of the building often, and there would be a rare occasion when I would be here in some other capacity or would bring books in to have him autograph. I know with the Girl Scouts, if we were having someone nationally known in as a speaker or something, the best gift we could give them was autographed copies of the president's memoirs, and he was always very gracious about signing those books. In this same sort of feeling that we had about not taking advantage, my own books are not autographed. And I told Rose Conway one day at

the beauty shop—we often had our hair done about the same time—I said, “You know, this has happened to me. I’ve had the books in so many times, and he’s been so nice to inscribe them, and I don’t have mine autographed.”

And she said, “That’s terrible. We need to do something about it. But,” she said, “you know, I doubt if he. . . .” It was in the very later years. She said, “I seriously doubt he’s going to be in the office again. But if he is, you bring the books in and we’ll get them signed.” But he was not back again. She was quite a remarkable lady, too. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: She was very loyal, I think.

WARR: Oh, extremely loyal, very, very protective. And really, it was a long time before she even relaxed with any of us, and then I think she finally learned that there were some of us who could be protective, too, and she relaxed with us.

WILLIAMS: Was she sort of the supervisor of the tour guides, or did she have much to do with that?

WARR: No, not that I recall. I was trying to think who the woman was.

WILLIAMS: I’ve heard Helen Lucky’s name.

WARR: I think Helen Lucky was very . . . I know Helen Lucky was very active with us, and that may have been her job description, I’m just not sure. But Helen was . . .

WILLIAMS: So you would see Rose Conway here and around town, or just here?

WARR: Well, it happens that she had the same beauty operator and that I would see her there, or when I would make arrangements to come into the library for

any reason other than just the tour things, why, you'd always make arrangements with Miss Rose.

WILLIAMS: Did you visit the Truman home anytime in the last part of Mr. Truman's life or after he died?

WARR: No, I don't think I was ever there during that period.

WILLIAMS: What was the reaction in the neighborhood to his death?

WARR: Oh, I think everyone was pretty well prepared for that. My father and mother were invited to that funeral, and it was a very interesting process to all of us the way it was so carefully arranged, with an escort for each of those people.

WILLIAMS: So they were escorted to the library?

WARR: As I recall, they were assigned cars. They were assigned, I think, a military escort. Every couple, I believe, who was invited had a person assigned to them. There surely must be a better record than I can give you of that because I was not personally involved in that. But it was a very, very cold day, and I know my mother was extremely cold that day. I was worried about her.

It was a pretty cold day when Mrs. Truman died, and again, of course, there were the invitations to the funeral, but not as much pomp as with Mr. Truman's—I'm sure the way she wanted it as well. [chuckling] My mother and dad again were invited. My mother by that time was not able to go, was very, very frail, and my father was frail also and needed assistance, and so he called and asked if I might come with him in place of

Mother. It was hard for him to do, and it was hard for me because, again, you didn't want to ask to be included. But in order for him to come, and it was terribly important for him to come, why, he did ask and was told, "Of course," and so I was privileged to be at the funeral and at the grave site with him that day. It was the first time I had seen Margaret for several years and I think she was a little surprised, because of course I was not really on the list. But it seemed to be accepted well. You could see she was taken aback for a moment that it was I who was there instead of Mother, and I quickly explained to her why I was there.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the Nolands at all or Ardis Haukenberry?

WARR: Ardis, but not really the Nolands, no. I knew Ardis a little. Of course, she was . . .

WILLIAMS: You went to church together.

WARR: Yes, she was very active in our church. A valiant little lady. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I knew her a little bit just from working across the street and waving and that sort of thing. I never really spoke to her.

WARR: Oh, sure. Never knew her well. Well, my goodness, that house. I wish that could get settled.

WILLIAMS: I think we're working on that.

WARR: I know you're working on it. [chuckling] There's not going to be anything left to restore.

WILLIAMS: I don't know what the hold-up is. What was she like?

WARR: She was a feisty little lady. She was just darling, I thought. Very, very

committed to her church and to her family, and that's really about all I can tell you about her.

WILLIAMS: She was a Ragland, right? That was her maiden name?

WARR: I believe that's right.

WILLIAMS: You didn't know any of her other family?

WARR: No, I didn't.

WILLIAMS: And I guess you knew the Wallaces, George and May?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Frank and Natalie?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Would you mind talking some about them, because we're trying to get their houses, too.

WARR: I can't really tell you very much. Again, they were much older than I, and I knew Natalie, who was one of the people who helped organize the Independence Junior Service League. She along with Ellen Bundschu and Amy Hatten and Mary Bostian—there may have been another, but that is most of them—were the organizers of that. But then she didn't stay active. She was just a member for a few years, and that was not really her kind of thing to do. So I knew her that way, and I had met the uncles, both of them, but that's about all. May I have known a little better. Margaret would stay there when she would come back and her parents were not at home, or at least May would be responsible for her, you know. [chuckling] So, through that relationship, I knew May a little bit better, and then through

Sue Gentry's close relationship with May, and then sometimes we'd be at the same parties, big parties that were given, like at the Women's City Club or someplace like that. And she was always very gracious to me because I was Margaret's friend, basically. Then, of course, she knew we were in the house that her brother-in-law and sister had built, and there were these cross-relationships, sort of. A nice lady, with her interest in books and in cards. [chuckling] She loved her card games, and just a nice, gracious family.

WILLIAMS: Have you ever been involved in the bridge clubs or the study clubs or anything?

WARR: No. No, I learned to play bridge and didn't like it. [chuckling] And that's just not the way I prefer to spend my time. I miss the association with people, but it just isn't my thing to do, nor really the study clubs. I really like more active roles, like in doing things here at the library or Girl Scouts and more active things. Proactive, sometimes.

WILLIAMS: Natalie was petite, is that right?

WARR: Very tiny, yes. Very tiny. Of course, they were both short, and May is short, but Natalie was smaller.

WILLIAMS: These Otts, I get them all mixed up. She had a half-sister who lived . . . Sue Gentry was telling me this, and I think I have it.

WARR: Yes, but you need Sue to keep all those relationships straight. [chuckling] She has them all right up here in her head.

WILLIAMS: But there were Otts that lived near you?

WARR: Yes, right up the block there, and Albert was related some way. I presume it was Albert's mother, probably, but I'm not sure. I can't sort that out. And of course, Mary and Albert were our friends, and then their children and our children have been friends.

WILLIAMS: If you wouldn't mind, I'd like to talk a little bit about the neighbors back in the forties and fifties, at least the ones you knew.

WARR: All right, I'll try.

WILLIAMS: Because as you know we do walking tours and it's nice to be able to walk down Delaware Street and talk about the people who lived there. Did you know people on Maple very much? Did you have much contact with them?

WARR: A few.

WILLIAMS: And of course you knew the Allens.

WARR: Yes, the Allens. Harriet was just older than I, and Mona was a little younger, was my sister's closest friend, and then Marie and I were particularly good friends in service league, and Mona, too. Harriet was more our contemporary, Margaret's and mine, but I became closer friends with the others as the years went along.

WILLIAMS: I think Barbie is going to be here next month.

WARR: Oh, is she coming in again soon?

WILLIAMS: I hope to interview her.

WARR: I hope you will.

WILLIAMS: She wanted to bring Harriet, but since Harriet broke her leg, that may not be possible.

WARR: Yes, it may not.

WILLIAMS: Anyone else? I could read off names but it would probably be easier if you just . . .

WARR: Just look at them, yes.

WILLIAMS: This is Maple, around the corner from the Truman home, in 1950. This is from the city directory [see appendix, item 4].

WARR: Of course, I knew the Gards and the Comboys only slightly in their office space there. The Allens were the ones I knew the best. The vacant space here was where Sue Ogden lived, who was my good friend, that house burned.

WILLIAMS: That's where her house was.

WARR: Yes, and I knew her and her mother and aunt, and it was really the grandparents' home, I believe, and they lived there with the grandparents, and I knew them a little.

WILLIAMS: That would have been about 612 or 614 Maple.

WARR: Something like that, yes.

WILLIAMS: And she had a sister. Is that right? Betty?

WARR: Betty, yes. Betty lives in Leavenworth and . . .

WILLIAMS: But you were more friends with Sue?

WARR: Sue was my age. Sue was in my wedding, also. Then, at one time, Sue lived across Maple in the Maples Apartments. Well, I'm not sure if it was Maple Wood or Maples, anyway, in one of those. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: You can't keep them straight.

WARR: I only know the Prewitts and the Wrights slightly. The Huhns I knew, but I know them a little and knew Charles, the son, and Caroline well. And of course, Henry Bundschu only slightly, though I knew his nephew and nieces, those people much better, and Ellen Bunschu, his sister-in-law.

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WILLIAMS: I think we were over here on Maple. Bundschu, maybe? Everybody shopped there.

WARR: The Bundschu . . . well, yes, but that was really . . . Henry Bundschu was not so much a member of the store. He may have had an interest in it, but it was C.C., his brother, who ran the store, and Tony who ran the store, and Henry was a bankruptcy judge.

WILLIAMS: And over here on Pleasant you went to school, right?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Any fond memories of Palmer?

WARR: Well, it was, of course, the Independence Junior High School. Well, it burned, you know, part of it burned. My sister was there then, and I believe I had just gone on to high school, if I remember correctly. So that was a lot of excitement when the library burned, the Independence Public Library, all that.

WILLIAMS: And high school was down the street at William Chrisman.

WARR: High school was down here.

WILLIAMS: So would you walk by the Truman home, back and forth?

WARR: Oh, yes, yes, for the brief time that we lived there. You see, I was only

there a year and a half before I graduated.

WILLIAMS: And you said you went to school . . . Sunday school?

WARR: No, they had a kindergarten where the Watson Sunday School Building was. It was a house, and I went to kindergarten there across from the Truman home, cater-cornered across from the Truman home. And I said Mrs. Luff was a friend of my grandmother's, Mrs. John Luff, and the Majors I just knew in passing, and the Nolands we've already mentioned. Maxine Choplin was a longtime friend, even before they moved into that house, and I don't even remember who lived there before. I probably have known at one time.

WILLIAMS: I've been trying to reach her off and on.

WARR: Maxine? Well, of course she works for the Convention Bureau in Kansas City, so you need to probably reach her in the evening.

WILLIAMS: Okay. And the parsonage is over there.

WARR: And the parsonage is there. The Reverend Harold M. Hunt, who lived there . . .

WILLIAMS: And that's the Baptist . . . ?

WARR: That's the Baptist minister who married Floyd and me and was my father's very, very close friend. And then, as you go down the other side, we've already talked a little, what little I have to give you about the Wallace families. I just knew the Danielsons and the Whetstones in passing; the Smiths only slightly better because they had a son the age of my son.

WILLIAMS: We tell stories about Mr. Jackson, I guess, there on Pleasant?

WARR: Yes. Again, he was of a different generation than I. Their daughter taught me to swim—well, she tried to teach me to swim. [laughter] I never really learned. She kind of gave up on me, I think. And then Sue Lindsey up here, I believe I'm right, had the hat shop up on the square in Independence, on the west side of the square, and she and my grandmother, again, were friends.

WILLIAMS: Let's move up the street a little bit here.

WARR: All right.

WILLIAMS: While we're on Pleasant, we might as well . . . Did you have much contact with the Pleasant Street people?

WARR: Well, let me refresh my memory here. This is, of course, Mrs. Elizabeth Gentry, but I don't even remember when she lived there. [chuckling] I had known her late. Garvin Dyer I knew a little because my father owned property around town, and he was with the water company and they occupied one of the buildings my father owned, so I knew Mr. Dyer a little.

WILLIAMS: The Noels? Did you know them?

WARR: Just very slightly. My parents knew them. As a matter of fact, along right in here—and I can't identify from numbers—some of my father's family lived. His uncle and his cousins lived in one of those houses there for many, many years, and I was in and out of one of those houses very often. As a matter of fact, it's sort of interesting because my father's father's brother married my father's mother's sister, which made the children of those two marriages double cousins. So the bloodlines were identical, and

you could tell it by looking at them. [chuckling] And by their actions, by their voices. They were like brothers and sisters, and they lived in this block here.

WILLIAMS: And that's down near the Baptist church.

WARR: Yes, it's down in behind it. It's one of the houses which is still there.

WILLIAMS: Didn't everybody know Mrs. Palmer?

WARR: Yes, everybody knew Mrs. Palmer. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: Was she ever one of your teachers?

WARR: At church, yes.

WILLIAMS: I don't know too many of these names over on Pleasant. I know we talked some about . . .

WARR: Well, the Mitchells, of course, were Baptist people, and I knew both of them. Of course, they had the funeral home where all of our family's funerals were from that funeral home.

WILLIAMS: The Ott-Mitchell?

WARR: Ott & Mitchell, yes. And then their daughter is somewhat older than I, but I've known their daughter Sue for a very long time. The Chandlers I've known, and the Miller-Lambert family, I've known all of those. And that probably . . . Harry Sturges . . . One of the first dates I ever had was with a young man who lived on this corner, and that was the Necessary family that lived here on the corner. The Sturges family was up almost to the alley.

WILLIAMS: That was at Farmer and Pleasant, huh?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Was Farmer really the hill that was good for sledding?

WARR: Yes! [laughter] They used to block off this part of Farmer for sledding for the children when our children were small, put up barricades and make it slide, which made it nice and safe.

WILLIAMS: That's nice.

WARR: It was safer than grabbing onto the bumper of a car, as this boy and I did a time or two. [laughter] My parents, if they weren't gone already, would be gone if they ever had known it. Can you imagine anything? I'm sure you both have done that.

WILLIAMS: No.

WARR: Not really? I guess traffic just got so much heavier that . . . You know, it wasn't quite as dangerous then, but it was never a safe thing to do. Okay.

WILLIAMS: Let's go over toward Delaware. Here's some more Farmer.

WARR: The Holmans, yes.

WILLIAMS: Is that who you were talking about?

WARR: No, this was before the Holmans. It was the Necessary family. Mrs. Hutchins, Mrs. Campbell, and these are some of the people we've already talked about.

WILLIAMS: It overlaps.

WARR: Yes. Let's see, what is that? Let's don't talk about this one. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: All right.

WARR: That lady was something else. The Reeses. Elizabeth, fondly known as Sis Rees, still lives in Independence. Her husband is retired as a dentist, and I

don't know whether you've had any connection with them or not.

WILLIAMS: Is she the daughter of Louise?

WARR: Daughter, yes.

WILLIAMS: No, I haven't, but . . .

WARR: And the Burruses. Of course, we all knew the Burruses. For a long time, Mr. Truman, if he was walking this way, didn't have any sidewalk to walk on because . . .

WILLIAMS: On the east side?

WARR: No, that would be on the Delaware side there, on the west side, but on the east side of Delaware, yes. And because Mr. Burrus, when they widened Delaware a little bit there, they tore out his sidewalk and he wouldn't let them put in another one. It was his yard, and it was going to stay his yard.

[laughter] It's only in quite recent years that . . .

WILLIAMS: Oh, so you'd have to step off into the street?

WARR: Well, no, you just walked through his yard. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: You'd think he'd rather have a sidewalk.

WARR: You would think so. He was a character. A lot of these people were characters, you know? I don't think we raise the same kind of characters anymore in this generation. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: It sounds like a really interesting neighborhood.

WARR: And Mr. Duke, and of course Mrs. Duke was a friend of Mrs. Truman's as well. That house looked quite different then. Everything was perfect, and Bill Duke and my father were very good friends. Of course, the Carson

family and the Grahams.

WILLIAMS: Are the Carsons the funeral home Carsons, or is that different?

WARR: Well, yes, it is. George was the . . .

WILLIAMS: George, that's right.

WARR: . . . was the father, but it is George's grandson who is still associated with the funeral home.

WILLIAMS: I think the next map would probably show Delaware Street a little bit better.

WARR: Okay.

WILLIAMS: Well, we're back toward the Truman home. We can go toward Waldo on the next one, but . . .

WARR: The Bushes, originally when we were growing up, didn't live here but lived on down Delaware further, on the east side of Delaware. So people have assumed that they were part of the Henhouse Hicks, but I think they were not, really.

WILLIAMS: That was Elizabeth and Virginia?

WARR: Elizabeth and Virginia.

WILLIAMS: Did you know them?

WARR: Oh, yes, I've known them ever since junior high. We went all through school together, and then, of course, they were neighbors of my parents for so many, many years. But you see, this isn't back quite that early, these dates.

WILLIAMS: Right, this is '50, and you were there in '40 or so.

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: We have these because they're during the presidency.

WARR: Yes, I understand why you have these.

WILLIAMS: It would be nice to have every year, kind of computerized or something. Matthews?

WARR: Yes, Mr. Matthews was superintendent of schools, and one of his sons was a good friend of my sister's, but I did not know them so well as she did. And the Helfes I knew a little. But again, all these people were much older.

WILLIAMS: I've heard about the Twymans of course.

WARR: Yes, she was a lovely lady and was a member of the bridge club.

WILLIAMS: With Mrs. Truman?

WARR: With Mrs. Truman, yes. But I don't think there's anything I can probably really tell you that you don't know more about than I do.

WILLIAMS: Let's turn the corner up onto Waldo there.

WARR: Now, the Balfours were a wonderful family, and you know for a long time . . . they had come here from Canada, and Mrs. Balfour retained her Canadian citizenship until Mr. Truman was running. Now, I'm not sure, again, whether it was the vice presidency or the presidency, but she wanted to be able to vote in that election, and it's my understanding that she then obtained her citizenship so that she could vote in that election. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: That's nice. Do you know the Sawyers and Sawyer-Jennings?

WARR: Yes, the Sawyer-Jennings, both the Sawyers and the Jennings. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I need to talk to, I guess, Mrs. Jennings.

WARR: No, you need to talk to Virginia Nadeau. Mrs. Jennings is gone, but

Virginia would be a good interview for you.

WILLIAMS: They had the decorating business?

WARR: Yes, in Kansas City, but Virginia would be fine. Of the Ruckers, the daughter is still living, Jean Rucker Bunyar, and they live . . . oh, dear, Kimberling City, I believe it is—anyway, in south Missouri, down near Springfield, down near Branson, actually.

WILLIAMS: Who is Alex Klein?

WARR: I remember them, but only slightly. They didn't live there very long.

WILLIAMS: And the Grahams?

WARR: And the Grahams. They are longtime friends, and of course she's been very active in historical things here because she was the executive director for the Jackson County Historical Society for a number of years, and Kenneth was active in the community as well.

WILLIAMS: That's Hazel and Kenneth?

WARR: Hazel Graham, yes.

WILLIAMS: And what about the Gentrys? Are they good neighbors?

WARR: Of course they're good neighbors. [laughter] Wonderful neighbors, and Sue's a delightful friend. We remember her parents and her brothers, and I'm sure you have all the information that she has stored up and will hope to even get more. The Bryants—Mr. Bryant that is. Only Mr. Bryant lived in that stone house there on the corner. He didn't have a garage, and there's still no garage on that property. The Balfours had a double garage back here, and so he kept his car in their garage, and so he would come and go at

all hours, day and evening, whatever he was doing. He'd take his car down there and put it in in the evening. At that time, that house had a nice big front porch on it, which is no longer there, and the Balfours in the summer would sit out on that porch, and George would go up on the porch, and they'd sit there and visit. It was right outside our bedroom window. Sometimes they'd visit quite late, and we could hear much of the conversation, and always the laughter. There was so much laughter, and such a good thing to have in a neighborhood. Miss Carstensen was a schoolteacher and had that house and apartments in the house across from us there. Always kept it beautifully, just as it's kept now that her nephew owns it. The Stevens family I never did really know very well at 803 West Waldo. Some of the earlier inhabitants I had known, but I didn't know the Stevens well.

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Etzenhouser isn't on here on Delaware. She must have been earlier or later or something. Did you know her?

WARR: Yes, I did, a little. I knew her daughter better, of course. I think wouldn't she have been in the Kelly house?

WILLIAMS: Yes, it's one of those on the west side as you round the corner from Farmer.

WARR: Well, either this house or this house, but I sort of think it was the Kelly house. She was an interesting lady, and of course her daughter is gone now also, so there's no opportunity to interview her.

WILLIAMS: And she was a schoolteacher?

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: The one that foiled, supposedly, the kidnappers.

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I think that's one of the stories on the walking tour.

WARR: One of the better stories, yes.

WILLIAMS: I don't know if this goes up Delaware any more or not. Yes, we go all the way up to . . . Did you know the people in the 600 block?

WARR: Some of them. I knew the Twachtmans. They were grand people. Margaret Meredith is still around there, a schoolteacher.

WILLIAMS: I think she volunteered for us a while ago.

WARR: Yes, I expect she might have.

WILLIAMS: At the historical society.

WARR: Yes, and Miss Weber I knew a little. The Trenchards I really didn't know so well at that time as I knew later. And Jessie Page, all of us knew Jessie Page who taught in high school here, and Miss Thomason who is still a very active person in the community. I don't know whether that's a person you've heard from or not.

WILLIAMS: No. So she's still around?

WARR: Yes. The Fullertons. I'd even forgotten that they lived there, [chuckling] but that brings that back to mind. And the Stewarts were good friends of my family's, and Byron was for many years my father's attorney, and the son, Byron, Jr., who is an attorney, was a very close friend of my sister's. And the Peters family, a daughter was around my age, I think maybe a year older, and I knew them. The Seas I only knew in passing, and the Riskeys.

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Peters was in the bridge club, too, wasn't she?

WARR: Right.

WILLIAMS: And I've heard Fullerton, I think, in that connection, too.

WARR: Oh, I didn't know that, but that's possible.

WILLIAMS: Maybe not.

WARR: That's very possible, and I might not have known it.

WILLIAMS: Is this Choplin up here, Mabel, related?

WARR: That would have been the mother of Luke Choplin, who is on the other corner up there. Of course, Josephine was probably living there as well as Mrs. Choplin. The family was raised there: Luke, and Rodney, and Josephine, Mary Ruth, and Dorothy. A big family. A good Baptist family. [chuckling] See, I know all those names. Okay, we're back to where we started.

WILLIAMS: I think that's where we started. One thing I didn't talk about was the church relationship, and I suppose it was all mixed in there in the neighborhood. Some people were Presbyterians and Methodists and . . .

WARR: Yes, because there were so many of those churches close, the two Methodist churches, the Presbyterian church, the Baptist church, and then the RLDS churches, of course, and so there was a lot of mixture.

WILLIAMS: One thing Mr. Truman is known for is being a Baptist.

WARR: Right, right.

WILLIAMS: And people ask us about that, and also they have heard that back when Harry and Bess were growing up there was kind of a social hierarchy based

on the church.

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did that survive into the time you were growing up?

WARR: Oh, I think the Episcopalians have chronically—may I use that term [laughter]—been judged to be, let's say, socially superior, if not religiously so. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So that some of that still survived?

WARR: Yes. And then there were a number of Catholic families in that neighborhood, because Saint Mary's was not too far away, and those Catholic children, of course, went to the Catholic schools over there. There's no longer an elementary school there, but the high school is still there. And all during the years our children were growing up and some of the parents were growing up, why, they would have been going to the Catholic school and it was within walking distance, you see. So we had a very eclectic neighborhood.

WILLIAMS: I've heard the Catholics and the RLDS, or the Mormons, were pretty low on the list.

WARR: There may have been some of that, never with my family or the people I associated with, not in any sense. My family in particular has always felt that the RLDS contributed a great deal to this community, and that they're good community people, and while we may not agree with the things they believe totally, that we feel there has been some discrimination and we object to it strenuously.

WILLIAMS: I think I'm probably, along with you, somewhere in the middle there. I'm with Sue Gentry in the Christian church. We were talking about that with her, too.

WARR: Yes, but there is some of that. Some of it still lingers, I'm sure, today. I hear people say disparaging things, and I can't agree in any sense with it. I think they've been somewhat privileged by their sheer numbers, but if you check the numbers of Baptists in Independence and the number of RLDS . . . [chuckling] The only thing is, the Baptists are so independent of one another and everybody else that they don't get together and vote the same way, you know, but I can't fault them for that.

WILLIAMS: It seems like there are an awful lot of churches in the neighborhood.

WARR: Many churches. Isn't it interesting how they came to this side of town, sort of.

WILLIAMS: To the north and west of the square.

WARR: Yes, if you go the same distance in any other direction, you don't find those churches. They're all concentrated in one area.

WILLIAMS: I think along the walking tour route you can stand and see five steeples. Maybe you can probably see the temple now.

WARR: Will be able to, that's for sure. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So that's another one, so that's . . . I have, I think, an article . . . We didn't have much about your family already, but there's a picture of . . . Let's see, well, this is one about pine cones [see appendix, item 5].

WARR: Oh, yes, my dad. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: He made pine cone . . . And it mentions that he has lunch every day with the Reverend Harold M. Hunt who you mentioned. He lived across the street from the Trumans. And this, I guess, was when Mr. Truman died.

WARR: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: It says that . . .

WARR: I didn't remember . . . I don't think I've ever seen it before.

WILLIAMS: This is from the Truman Library. Apparently they . . .

WARR: From the Topeka, Kansas, *Journal*. You see that profile and why he could be mistaken for the president a little bit?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

WARR: I won't talk too much about profiles, however. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: Well, with the nose and the chin.

WARR: That's nice. I'd really like to have a copy of that, if it's possible for you to get me one.

WILLIAMS: Sure. It's not very good and clear, but . . .

WARR: It's not very clear, but it's very evident who it is.

WILLIAMS: And you can see the Truman home in the distance, and he's taking down the flag, I guess, that he had been flying at half-staff.

WARR: Yes.

WILLIAMS: But that's about all we had.

WARR: Well, there are a world of clippings. He was apparently newsworthy. He did interesting things. He had an island in Canada that he owned and that he built a fishing cottage on and then built a guest house so that he could

have his family and friends there, on a nineteen-mile lake and only one other inhabitant on the whole lake. So there were often stories about his trips to Canada and his fishing and that kind of thing, and then about the pop and about the ice cream. There's, I remember, one picture in the paper . . . [see appendix, items 6 and 7]. He had a snow plow, a small one, a little tractor with a snow plow attached, and he would clear the neighbor's. . . and the Truman's sidewalks, always did the Truman's sidewalks. He would come around and do ours and Sue's, and then go down around the block and do the Choplins, the far away Choplins.

WILLIAMS: The sidewalks along the street, or even up to the door?

WARR: Not usually up to the door. We were privileged. [chuckling] He'd do our driveway for us. But yes, he would . . .

WILLIAMS: That was neighborly.

WARR: Yes, and so there was a picture in the paper of him doing the sidewalks, and sometimes he'd even go up and do the ones around the buildings he owned up around the square and those places, you know, just because he liked to be out and be active and doing something. So that would be another reason Mrs. Truman would call and say to my mother or to my dad, whomever answered the phone, and thank them for having the walks cleared, you know. The Secret Service wasn't great on shoveling. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: I think they had the attitude it wasn't their problem.

WARR: It was not their job. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: Well, if some of those clippings are at hand, it would be nice.

WARR: Well, I considered bringing a scrapbook out, and then I didn't do it. I didn't really know what you wanted to do, and, again, I don't want to overkill. [chuckling] But we could consider doing that.

WILLIAMS: But that's a nice neighborhood story, too, him shoveling the snow.

WARR: Okay, well, there is quite a lot you can copy and . . . We could do that.

WILLIAMS: Well, thank you. You've been very nice and . . .

WARR: Well, I hope it's been helpful and not . . .

WILLIAMS: Lots of good information.

WARR: I don't want to make it appear that we were every day in and out of one another's house kinds of friends. I don't want to give that impression at all, because that is not true and it would be taking advantage if I were to imply that, but we were friends.

WILLIAMS: Well, I'll see what I can do about that dishcloth.

WARR: [laughter] Would you really?

WILLIAMS: I'll mention it, but I don't think I'm going to get very far.

WARR: You don't think you're going to get very far? I just haven't . . . I keep trying to get up the nerve to mention it to Margaret. [chuckling] But you know, that dishcloth doesn't bother Margaret; it just bothers me. Because I'd be embarrassed if it were in my home or if indeed I had left it in my mother's home after she died and I was showing that house. My mother would have been so upset with me, and I know that Mrs. Truman wouldn't like it. [chuckling] That's my latest soapbox, I guess. Thank you. You're a good interviewer, by the way.

WILLIAMS: Well, thank you. You've been very nice.

[End#4331; Begin #4332]

WILLIAMS: We're at the home of Polly Compton, 318 North Delaware in Independence. His daughter Dorsy Warr is going to give us a look at the home. It's the afternoon of July 30, 1991.

WARR: Hi, everybody.

ALL: Hello.

WARR: Come in. Hi, Jim.

WILLIAMS: Would you like to be introduced?

WARR: I'd love it, if you don't mind.

WILLIAMS: Okay, this is Karen Tinnin, a park ranger.

KAREN: Hi, nice to meet you.

WILLIAMS: Stephanie Dice, a park ranger.

WARR: Hi, I've met you before.

WILLIAMS: Karen Johnson.

WARR: Hello, Karen.

WILLIAMS: Carol Dage.

DAGE: Hi.

WARR: Hi, Carol.

WILLIAMS: Delbert Johnson.

JOHNSON: Delbert Johnson.

WARR: Yes, I met you the other day, I think.

WILLIAMS: Brian Hoduski.

BRIAN HODUSKI: Well, hello.

WARR: Again.

HODUSKI: Again.

WILLIAMS: Jeff Wade.

WADE: Hi, glad to meet you.

WILLIAMS: And you know Scott Stone.

WARR: Yes, I know Scott.

SCOTT STONE: Nice to see you again.

WARR: Nice to see all of you.

WILLIAMS: This is Dorsy Warr.

WARR: Yes. There are still some more to come, I think, and I have some lemonade in the kitchen for those of you who have been working today. Why don't we go out in the kitchen and you can have some lemonade, and then we'll start you through.

WILLIAMS: Regina Underwood is sick, so she won't be here. I assume she won't be here. [tape turned off]

WARR: [In the kitchen] . . . in the last shipment to come out of Belgium before World War II. My parents purchased this house in 1939. It's only had two owners. The first one was the Sollers family. They built the house and they owned it, and then their daughter and son-in-law moved into the house. Their name was Dunn. They moved in sometime between 1915 and 1939, and then they sold the home to my parents. So it's only had the two families live here in all that time. So, in 1939 my parents did a lot of

renovation to the house, not really changing it but just updating it, and the glass tile is one of the things that they installed at that time.

WILLIAMS: I'm not sure everybody knows where you live. You're a native, also, so . . .

WARR: Yes, I live over around the corner. Do most of you know where Sue Gentry lives, by any chance? We're in the gray house next to Sue Gentry's. Okay, so when you're on your walking tours, why, wave as you go by. [laughter] It's the house with all that green grass that my husband manages. [laughter] I don't take any credit for that except staying out of the way and not walking across it any more than necessary.

HODUSKI: Is there a story with the drinking fountain?

WARR: Yes, it's kind of fun. The home we lived in before, of course we had an icebox when I was very small, and then later we had a refrigerator with the big coils on top—you've seen pictures of them with the big coils. Why don't you pass those to people as I fill them? And my dad always liked to have ice water, so he ran coils, copper coils through that old refrigerator and put just an old-fashioned spigot on the outside so that he could always have ice water, and with the next refrigerator he did the same thing. Then, when we moved in here, he said, "Now I can have what I really want"—which was a water fountain—"so I can always have cold water." And nowadays, why, they have them on the refrigerator. But that was how come.

HODUSKI: So was that right next to where the refrigerator was?

WARR: Yes, the refrigerator was there and the stove, of course, was over here. But they replaced all of the kitchen cabinets in '39—that was all new—and put

in a dishwasher and a disposal at that time. Those were very, very new things to have in 1939.

WILLIAMS: This green looks familiar. [chuckling] Did somebody mention that at the party?

WARR: [chuckling] Yes. It was always white until a couple years before Mother died, and then she said, “I’m kind of tired of all that white.” She loved color. She said, “I think I’d like to paint it green.” So it was a hard shade to match. [laughter] But this was the best they could come up with, and it isn’t too different, is it?

HODUSKI: No.

WARR: So I guess people in those days just plain liked green—I mean on Delaware just plain liked green. How are we doing here? One more? We’re gonna make it. The others are ready for a refill by now.

SCOTT STONE: When was the house built?

WARR: Well, the basement was poured in August—I think it says August 1913 down there. Is that everybody?

ALL: I reckon so. Thank you.

WARR: Okay. All right, you’re welcome, and help yourselves. There’s another jug in here if you’d like more. I have always said that the house was occupied in 1915, and that’s probably about right. . . . It probably took a year and a half to build the house, more than likely, with all the stone, the stone foundation and everything, so it dates back quite a while at this point.

REGINA KLEIN: So they must have quarried locally all the stone, I would imagine.

WARR: Yes, this is Missouri limestone.

HODUSKI: Was it hard to heat?

WARR: No, not really, not with those thick walls. If you notice, it's strange, there's a stone wall here, and I don't quite know why because the kitchen is stone also on the outside. But when you see the thickness of those walls, you realize how it holds the cool and it holds the heat in the winter. So it really was not hard to heat, and the steam heat is very, very efficient, very quiet. Oh, occasionally you get knocking pipes, but it's quiet and it's so clean, you know. You just don't get the dust that you do with the other. Now, if you'd like to look out there, that's the breakfast room. You may have to kind of file through, but you're already used to that. [laughter] Yes, Jim, I brought the scrapbooks. You might want to take a minute and look and see if there's anything you want. Then I have a little group of clippings that I have duplicates of that you may take.

WILLIAMS: That's great.

WARR: It has a little bit of everything in it. Margaret sent letters from the White House and the Trumans at different times, and these are things that aren't in anybody else's files, so you might like to look and see if you want to make copies of anything. That's the way the house looked when it had all the flowers when my parents were alive, and they decorated at Christmas and had lights like the little one back there. This was my dad cutting the grass, as he used to do totally himself.

DELBERT JOHNSON: How long did he have the pop company, the bottling company?

WARR: Well, he bought the bottling company—it was already functioning—in 1923, and then he sold it to his brothers-in-law in the forties, and in '57 it went out of business. One of the brothers died, and at that point it just wasn't reasonable to keep it.

D. JOHNSON: How far did they merchandise the . . .

WARR: They merchandised all of Jackson County, and a little beyond in some cases. But it was kind of interesting because he had an agreement with Kansas City bottlers, and particularly with Coke, that if they didn't come out here, he wouldn't go into Kansas City.

D. JOHNSON: Oh, is that right?

WARR: So he really had a monopoly for many, many years out here. Well, by the time the fifties came along, why, nobody was paying attention to that. Coke was doing a lot of national advertising, and so at that point their business was down some. He also had a beer distributorship. Right after Prohibition he got the beer distributorship for Goetz Brewery, which was in St. Joseph, and marketed Goetz Beer.

WILLIAMS: But Polly's Pop was the best, right?

WARR: That's what everybody says. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: And the plant was just down on River.

WARR: The plant was just down here on River, just off of Truman Road, and if you look, the little Polly's Pop Park is right up there by where the plant used to be. And there's a spring down there that they originally used for bottling, and then later when they had city water, more city water available, why, he

only used the spring water for washing down the plant and that kind of thing. But for years people still came and got water down at the spring. It was one of the best springs—the one at the mill and the one that’s not really good tasting is still real spring water over here. [laughter] And in going through his clippings here the other day, I came across the one because it was a whole article on springs, and they said . . . And it was written because they had just finished restoring down there, and they talk about the spring water, that it’s flowing again, you know. [chuckling] And many years later we find out that it’s city water. [laughter]

You’ll want to look at the stained-glass window. It’s kind of fun because it’s back-lighted. If you’ll watch when I turn it off and turn the chandelier back on, they come on across the top, so it’s still pretty at night.

WILLIAMS: They thought of everything.

WARR: Yes, Daddy was really very creative, and Mother liked to decorate, and I think it shows. She had help, also. But this was the scene of many a big family dinner, and then, at one time . . . I’ve told Jim and Scott about this, when Mr. Truman became president and he was coming back home and he wanted to play poker with the boys. And they didn’t really think their poker club was quite nice enough for the President of the United States, [chuckling] so they decided to have it here, and so they played poker around the dining room table when he was here that time.

This is the den. This was where we really lived, in this room. If we can get everybody on in I’ll show you the pocket doors, because they’re so

unusual. . .

ALL: Oh, wow! Oh, beautiful. Neat!

WARR: Aren't they gorgeous? I've never seen any as pretty anyplace else.

WILLIAMS: We'll chip in and buy them.

ALL: [laughter]

WARR: Well, they really are a treasure, I think.

WILLIAMS: We could have a dormitory for park rangers.

WARR: [chuckling] Okay. If you can sell the park department, I'll sell. [laughter]  
It's for sale. [chuckling] Those were my maternal grandparents' things.  
These were my grandmother's and these were my grandfather's.

HODUSKI: So are these similar to these pocket doors, or are these hollow?

WARR: These are just hollow. Just oak panels. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: And they work, even with the carpeting, unlike the Trumans'.

WARR: Oh, theirs don't work?

WILLIAMS: No.

HODUSKI: After the carpeting went in.

WARR: I have a feeling that they had these worked on, but I don't know that. And  
the living room.

WARR: Yes, and that is original, I'm sure. Many of the light fixtures are not  
original in the house. That one is. And the foyer.

HODUSKI: I love this bench.

WARR: Yes, and that's the only place they didn't put storage. This house has *lots*  
of storage. This is a little powder room. You know, when the ladies used

to come in would like to stop and take off their hats and fix their hair and powder their nose, and then reverse it before they went out. [chuckling]

TINNIN: I like bathrooms. I've got to look at this one. That's kind of cute.

WARR: I had somebody ask me the other day, "Well, what would you use a powder room for?" [chuckling] All the closet doors have beveled-glass mirrors, and they're original. I think those windows are pretty, too. Then you want to notice this one back up here. Then there's just the deep closets here behind that. We won't go into every closet. [chuckling] And then you go up . . . And you heard the doorbell, couldn't miss it, could you? One of the kind of interesting things is that originally there's a half stair back here just at the landing from that little hall, and all the woodwork is oak on this side of that back stairway, and they have the same stained-glass windows, but that is pine. [chuckling] The servants didn't get oak, they just got pine.

TINNIN: Was that the servants' room then?

WARR: I assume it was a back way for them to come and go.

STEPHANIE DICE: Did they have live-in help?

WARR: Did my parents have help? When there were six of us living in here. My grandmother and a young uncle lived with us, and so Mother had help a good part of the time. Then after those two were gone there were just the four of us.

TINNIN: Just once a week?

WARR: Just once a week. But she was a very meticulous housekeeper. Everything was kept just so. Just go on in and look: the blue bedroom.

CAROL DAGE: This is nice.

WARR: The central hall is nice, isn't it?

WILLIAMS: Karen found another bathroom.

WARR: [chuckling] I know who's in the bathroom.

KLEIN: This is so nice. Usually, these older houses, they have all these odd ways of getting into bedrooms, and this is so nicely set up.

HODUSKI: Which bedroom was yours?

WARR: This one.

HODUSKI: This one.

WILLIAMS: The green and pink.

WARR: It wasn't green and pink then. [laughter] That's a later addition. But you can see how big the closets are, and each one is a little different. It has some little built-ins of some kind in every one.

K. JOHNSON: How many bedrooms have we got?

WARR: Four bedrooms and a sleeping porch.

HOUDSKI: So did you have to share a bedroom then ever?

WARR: I didn't. I was the eldest, and I had one sister, and briefly, until my grandmother died, they shared the other room. My uncle had the room over there, and my parents had the master. Now that's birch. One of my aunts did that painting. I really think it's paint-by-number, but [unintelligible].

[laughter]

KLEIN: Yes, it is.

WARR: I'll let you all look at that. [chuckling]

KLEIN: Karen, have you seen this?

WARR: This was the master bedroom.

JEFF WADE: When is the last time someone lived in the house?

WARR: Actually lived here? It's been about five and a half years. We had our fiftieth high school reunion this spring and so I had two couples staying here. We had four couples, out of town guests, and I couldn't house eight people with us, so I put some of them over here, and they seemed to enjoy it. And this is the other bath.

KLEIN: Oh, my!

WARR: The sleeping porch. Most houses the age of this house . . . and in this style, had a sleeping porch.

TINNIN: We like this one. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: It's a little bit bigger than the Trumans'.

WARR: Nice and bright.

KLEIN: I love these bright windows.

STONE: It's slightly larger than the one at the Truman home.

WILLIAMS: And you don't have to crawl out a window.

HODUSKI: You don't have to crawl out the window to get into it.

TINNIN: I'll take this one, too. I like this room, too.

WILLIAMS: You can see all the neighbors from back here.

ALL: [chuckling] Yes.

WARR: A view of everything, and we're going to be able to see the new temple tower, too, when it's complete.

D. JOHNSON: How many total bedrooms do you have?

WARR: Pardon me?

D. JOHNSON: How many total bedrooms do you have?

WARR: Four bedrooms and a sleeping porch.

WILLIAMS: Which could sleep lots of kids.

WARR: Several, right. [chuckling] There's no heat out there but today that wouldn't be a problem. There is a laundry chute right along in here where Jim's standing someplace, and when Mother had an . . . Mother had an area rug she'd just toss it back and put the laundry down the chute. Those little things are speaking tubes over there, one to the front door and one to the kitchen, where someone could talk and say, "Dinner's ready," or "Come up here and make your bed," or . . . [chuckling] whatever the message of the day was.

DICE: Do they still work?

WARR: They still work, to a certain extent. You know, it's not quite like an electronic one, but they do work. You can hear. You have to speak up. [chuckling] That's a linen closet right there behind you all. I'll go out to the hall. This small room right here. And this is the way they cooled the house with the big exhaust fan.

TINNIN: It's nice and cool.

WILLIAMS: This would be so great for a big family.

WARR: Yes, it really cries for a big family. [inaudible miscellaneous conversation]

HODUSKI: The park service could buy it.

WARR: Well, I think it's on the acquisition list for, what is it, plan five or something like that? [chuckling] There's a little sitting room and another bedroom. All cedar closets.

STONE: Cedar closets, wow! My gosh!

WILLIAMS: And what did you do up here?

WARR: We had parties.

HODUSKI: That's wonderful.

WARR: Teenage parties.

WILLIAMS: With lots of pop?

WARR: Yes, in fact that I won't attribute to my friends. One of our first parties up here when my sister was in junior high or high school, we had soda pop always, of course, and one of her friends shook the bottle with her thumb on it and then, whee! My parents weren't real thrilled about that spot on the ceiling.

HODUSKI: Was it grape?

WARR: Probably, or cream maybe. [chuckling] The panel goes onto the fan during the winter and that way you don't have all your heat escaping up here, and of course it looks better when you're entertaining. Not too warm for a hot day up here.

HODUSKI: No, it's nice.

WILLIAMS: Well, they've managed to keep it in very good condition.

WARR: Yes, they took good care of it.

WILLIAMS: It's certainly not a fixer-upper.

WARR: No, I think that's the problem with selling it. When people look at a big home, they think, "Oh, we'll go in and we'll buy it for next to nothing and we'll fix it up." And this isn't a fixer-upper, you know, and I'd rather not sell it for a fixer-upper.

HODUSKI: Right. May I ask what you're asking for it?

WARR: You may. You no doubt get that question sometimes.

HODUSKI: All the time, all the time.

WARR: Yes, I don't mind telling you. You might always preface it by "the last I heard . . ." [laughter] \$155,000.

HODUSKI: I'm surprised you haven't had a taker.

WARR: We are, too. We really are. What do you say about the house when you go by? Who wants to give me a tour?

KLEIN: I talk about Polly Compton.

HODUSKI: I talk about Polly and that he was one of Mr. Truman's friends and a poker buddy.

WARR: Poker buddies, yes.

HODUSKI: Yes. I talk about Polly's Pop. I talk about your dad not being very fond of pigeons.

WARR: Right.

HODUSKI: I point up to the cages in the eaves. And is it true that he used to shoot the pigeons off the Truman home?

WARR: Oh, yes, that's kind of a fun story, too.

HODUSKI: I mention that, too.

WARR: They were disturbed by the pigeons, and he knew they were, and so he talked with Mr. Truman about it, and yes, he'd like it if Daddy could do away with them. Now, he shot them, you know. So the first time he went down there with his gun, [chuckling] the Secret Service went into total shock. [laughter] So then they checked with Mr. Truman and he said, no, this was what he wanted, that they were to do that.

TINNIN: What year would that have been?

WARR: Oh, probably soon after they came back, I would imagine. And so, from then on, if he walked by he'd just wave. Otherwise, when he got so it was hard for him to walk that far, he'd drive down, and he'd just stop in front of the Secret Service house over there, just beep his horn and keep on going back down the alley and take care of the pigeons from the backyard. [chuckling] But I thought it was really . . . And he got a big laugh out of that.

HODUSKI: Now, Mary Sue Luff was telling us that your dad liked to joke, liked practical jokes.

WARR: Yes, he did.

HODUSKI: And that a lot of times the kids here in Independence would direct people to the wrong home when they asked for the Truman home. She said on many occasions this home was confused with the Truman home.

WARR: Yes, it often was confused.

HODUSKI: And she mentioned that your dad would oftentimes just stick his hand out and wave. [laughter]

WARR: With what their size, if you look at the pictures, and the profile even, they're not unlike. They were both short men, rather stocky build in their younger days, both of them. Of course, much frailer in their later years, and they were not unlike, and he thought it was funny, you know. But if anyone asked him, as people sometimes did, why, of course he told them that's the president's house and I'm not . . . [chuckling] But he enjoyed that very much. You all have your stories pretty well up-to-date, I'd say. [chuckling] Well, shall we go down? [inaudible miscellaneous conversation – someone asks about square footage]

WILLIAMS: That's a little bit less than half [of the Truman home]. Do you count the basement in that?

WARR: No.

WILLIAMS: Is that 44,000?

WARR: No, 4,480 [square footage in the house].

STONE: Thank you.

WARR: Well, what is the Truman home, do you know?

WILLIAMS: I think it's close to 10,000, but that includes the basement.

WARR: I suspect it does, don't you.

WILLIAMS: Every time that somebody asks, I look, and then I can't remember if it does include the basement or not.

STONE: This seems so much larger than the Truman home.

WARR: Yes, it does, doesn't it. Well, I've not been upstairs in the Truman home in many, many years, so I . . . you know, I'm not real . . . Now you're

welcome to see the basement, if you want to, but it is just a basement. You can turn right and go right down there.

HODUSKI: So they didn't finish the basement then?

WARR: No. I'll get ahead of you here and turn on some other lights.

WILLIAMS: You should say that you're not allowed to see the basement.

WARR: Now, originally, the house had a central vacuum cleaner in it, which I think is quite remarkable for 1915.

HODUSKI: Yes, indeed.

WARR: Mother used it for quite a while and then decided that she . . . Well, I think it broke down and she didn't want it replaced. It was a great big tank that sat right there with a big motor, so the pipes are all still in, and with people's affinity for them these days, I suppose they could put one back in. And they tell me they're just little things that hang on the wall now, probably with a very strong motor even so. Watch your head, Jim. [laughter] And this is the last of the stories. The old coal bin. Well, you know, Dad in his later years made pine cone wreaths. There's a picture in here we can show you, or a better one upstairs, and he did them by the hundreds, and for many years gave them away to his friends. And then he didn't run out of friends but they ran out of space for all the things he gave them, so he started selling them to Halls on the Plaza for their Christmas shop, and for ten years he supplied them with those things. Then he got a little tired of meeting deadlines, and so he just really marketed them very quietly out of the basement here. But that's what all these shelves held. By

November they would be full of pine cone wreaths, nut wreaths, trees, bells, all kinds of things that he built, and then Christmas night, after everything had quieted down, he'd be back down here in the basement starting over. Many, many times when he couldn't sleep, he'd be up at 4:00 in the morning and down here working on wreaths.

I think one of the funnier stories is that they made a big thing out of Christmas. It was a big occasion, and he'd work harder and harder the closer it would get. Mother bought for a lot of extended family, and wrapped gifts beautifully, and she'd do that in the north bedroom up there. And one evening he'd been down here working and she'd been up there working, and I guess they both decided to check on one another, just to be friendly, you know, since they hadn't seen one another for a few hours. She came down; he went up. How they missed one another I don't know. [laughter] They never did find one another. They just each went back to their own tasks. It seems somebody went to the back stair and somebody went to the front. [chuckling]

STONE: Where was the coal chute then?

WARR: Well, it's kind of . . .

STONE: Oh, there we go.

WARR: If you stand back, you can see it across the top there.

STONE: Okay.

WARR: When we moved in, they used coke in the furnace—you know, smaller round things, sort of, and they had a conveyor belt that carried it from here

and directly into the furnace. So nobody had to tend the furnace.

[inaudible miscellaneous conversation]

WILLIAMS: The ceiling is a little bit better than the Trumans'.

STONE: Looks like the whole basement is almost.

WILLIAMS: Regina and I don't have to stoop.

KLEIN: Yes, in the Truman basement would knock our heads off.

WARR: Yes, isn't this a deep basement?

HODUSKI: Yes, it is.

WARR: We're seeing the stone foundation. Yes, that's one of the pictures. A couple of pictures on the other side of the pillar there.

DAGE: In one oral history I recall, someone had mentioned that he invited them, Mr. Compton, to come and make selections from the things that he had made.

WARR: Yes, that's right. He was a very generous, giving person. He made ice cream, gallons at a time. You know, he gave the ice cream, always took ice cream to the Trumans, and particularly the chocolate because he knew Mrs. Truman really loved her chocolate. And when Margaret was home, he made sure there was extra chocolate ice cream because Margaret likes chocolate, too [see appendix, items 8-11]. [chuckling]

HODUSKI: Were you in her same class, or . . . ?

WARR: We're almost the same age. I'm just a couple of months older than she, but my birthday is January 6 and the cutoff date for the class was January 15, so I was a year ahead of her.

HODUSKI: So you were a grade ahead of her.

WARR: A grade ahead of her, yes.

HODUSKI: Because I remember once we talked and you were telling me that you talked to Margaret and that she had told you she was having some problem with her publisher or something, her book publisher.

WARR: Yes. [chuckling]

HODUSKI: I was curious how far back your relationship . . .

[End #4332; Begin #4333]

WILLIAMS: And you still stay in touch with her, right?

WARR: Yes, we still hear back and forth. I haven't talked to her for probably six weeks, something like that. Mostly these days it's about the Bess Truman Award, since I serve on that committee and we . . .

DICE: When is the next one coming out?

WARR: It'll be next May. We have decided to do it every two years rather than annually. Margaret was very much in favor of that. She felt that annually was a little too much and too often. And she . . . Is that still going?

WILLIAMS: It doesn't have to be. [tape turned off]

WARR: It's just that there's no doubt that that was the most outstanding person. No matter who we ask, that would have been the one, and we're very fortunate to have her and I think we're going to do very well next year. It's underway . . .

HODUSKI: Can I ask you, is the award limited to those in political and public office?

WARR: No, not at all.

HODUSKI: It could include women of literature and art and so forth and so on?

WARR: Right, right, and we would hope from time to time that that would be true.

WILLIAMS: Mystery writers or something. [laughter]

WARR: Right, and that may be sometime, you know. It would not be inappropriate to have Margaret, I would think, at some time . . . But we felt it would be inappropriate in the very beginning perhaps . . .

DICE: So how do you search for this person? Do you ever take nominations, or . . . ?

WARR: We're always happy to hear from people. Strangely enough, we did publicize that the first time, and some people did write to us who had seen in the paper that we were glad to have suggestions. But they were all for people . . . Even though it said "national award," they were all local, and people were complaining, actually, a little bit, that they felt it should be a local award. They knew it was national, they just felt it should be local, and we said she was a national figure. And that does not say that we couldn't have a local person receive it, but that was not the purpose of the award.

WILLIAMS: Do you consider international people?

WARR: No, we say national. We talked about that a long time, and, you know, Margaret Thatcher would be wonderful. [laughter] And there are other women, really, in places of prominence in other countries almost more than there are here, presidents of other countries or prime ministers and such, but we felt that it really should be a national and not an international award. That doesn't say it won't ever change, but for the time being that's it. So

we'll look forward to seeing . . .

DICE: So was that the first award last year?

WARR: That was the first award, yes, in 1990. And with the war and the problems involved and the person we asked, it just was not . . . We'd just never could quite get it tied down—I suppose some of the same difficulties that the Truman Award was having.

HODUSKI: Yes, that was unfortunate.

WARR: Yes, but we're going to do better this year. [chuckling] Are you ready to go up? Go ahead. [sounds of footsteps ascending stairs]

WARR: Anybody like more lemonade? If you have any questions, I'll try to answer.

D. JOHNSON: I don't believe I have any. This has been a real nice tour. I appreciate that.

TINNIN: It's really lovely, really nice.

STONE: Yes, this is really nice.

TINNIN: Now we know what to tell people about the home. [laughter] And they can't have it until we go get our lottery tickets and win. [laughter]

WARR: Okay. You might tell the ones who didn't get to come today that I'd be happy to do it again sometime. And Regina in particular, I'm sorry she couldn't be here. So if someone wants to come another time, I will set it up if I can do it.

KLEIN: We really appreciate it.

WARR: Alright.

WILLIAMS: I think two others are on vacation, and I'm sure they would like to see it.

WARR: Well, we can do that.

WILLIAMS: It might be useful if you mention how often the Trumans were here, other than the poker game that you mentioned.

WARR: Oh, you want me to tell some of those? [chuckling] All right. We had our son's wedding reception here. Well, they were married here, right in front of that window, and that was all banked with ferns and things so the radiator didn't show. [chuckling] But it was just a small, family wedding and then we had a large reception, and of course the Trumans were invited. This was in 1968 and I really don't remember whether Mr. Truman was not feeling well or may have been gone. I sort of have the feeling that he wasn't feeling very well. Anyway, Mrs. Truman did come and friends of ours were pouring the champagne and mixing around through the group. So Dr. Sam Wilson, who lived over on Union Street, said to Mrs. Truman, "May I pour you some champagne, Mrs. Truman?" And she said, "No, thanks, I'm walking." [laughter] She had a sense of humor, and as I've told Scott and Jim, I really don't think people realize how funny she could be.

And another time . . . They always sent a poinsettia or some kind of a plant at Christmas to my parents, and the scrapbook out there is full of little notes from Mrs. Truman and from Mr. Truman thanking for the ice cream and the tomatoes in the summer and those things. Anyway, she had called Mother—I don't know whether to thank or inquire how they were feeling or what. They were not really quite contemporaries. Mother and

Daddy were several years younger than they and they didn't socialize as the Trumans did, to a certain extent. Mother wasn't a bridge player, but they would visit as neighbors might on the phone. So she called one time and said . . . The weather had been so bad, and Mother had asked then how were they, and she said, "Oh, we're all right, we're going to Florida." And Mother knowing that she didn't like to fly and really didn't like to travel particularly, said, "Oh, are you dreading the trip?" And she said, "Oh no." She said, "We've been closed in so with the weather and Harry not feeling well that if someone asked me to go to hell, I'd say yes." [laughter] I'm sure it surprised Mother considerably. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: So much for the idea that they liked to stay in Independence. [chuckling]

WARR: Right at that point anyway. But they weren't here often. My parents didn't entertain, except family, very much. We did have one very large tea one time, and I would have to get out the book and look, but unless she were ill . . . I know she was invited and she probably was here.

HODUSKI: Were your parents guests in their home very often?

WARR: No. Daddy was in and out more when he'd take the ice cream. In fact, one of the notes in the book, I think, says something about . . . Well, he would often just go and hand it either to the Secret Service man, the ice cream or the tomatoes or whatever, and ask them to take them in, or to the back door to Vietta or whoever was around, you know. And in the note Mrs. Truman said something about, "I'm always happy to see you, and I want to see you when you come, so please come in." And that was in their later years when

I'm sure that a visit was appreciated. But he would sometimes sit out on the back porch with them and visit or visit out in the yard with Mr. Truman when he'd be outside, which he was.

HODUSKI: Well, the impression I've gotten is that they had developed such a reputation for privacy that people were very hesitant to disturb them at home.

WARR: I think to a certain extent that is true. I noticed also . . . I had told you the story about the baby buggy and . . .

WILLIAMS: I was just going to mention that.

WARR: When Margaret started coming home and bringing babies with her, why, each time Mrs. Truman would call on the phone to me—and she called me “Tot” as Margaret and most people of that age did, my nickname—and she'd say, “Tot?” And I'd know immediately who it was because her voice was distinctive, you know, and I'd say, “Yes, Mrs. Truman?” And she'd say, “Margaret's coming. May we borrow the baby buggy?” And I'd say, “Of course, I'll send it around.” So we'd scrub up the baby buggy and scrub up the children—the children would take it around. And she'd always invite them in, by the way. That's the way she was. She was a real lady. And I had told you I always sort of hoped I'd see him wheeling it back on his morning walk. [chuckling] But apparently he did a time or so bring it here, because there was a thank-you note to them for the baby buggy and it said, “Harry will be wheeling it around someday soon.” [laughter] So I guess he did.

WILLIAMS: They needed that to sleep in?

WARR: Yes, the newest baby was always in the baby buggy. The others would move into a crib or something. I think maybe they still had a crib. I really don't think they used the baby buggy for the first one, but after that, then they needed someplace for the latest one to sleep. [chuckling] I wish I'd kept it. The Truman Library might have liked to have had it, don't you think? [laughter] It's been gone a while. Any other questions? Anything else, Jim? You know better than I what might be of interest.

HODUSKI: I'm curious, the Trumans' neighbors, were they as . . . Well, I hate to use the word "nonchalant," but I mean, was it just normal to them as it seems to have been to you?

WARR: Oh, I think so. I don't think there's any doubt about that. Shall I tell them the President Johnson story? [chuckling] It was always sort of interesting to us when various notables would come to visit, and often we knew they were coming, though usually you didn't have much notice when a president was coming, though you had more notice then than you would now. You know how they come and don't let anybody know until they're practically on the doorstep. So we were all interested. We'd hear the sirens, and we'd look to see the president that was coming, or secretary of state or whoever. And one time we knew President Johnson was coming in. I often came over and stood out here on the porch or wherever I could get a good view and look. And I just couldn't get away to come, but I came later in the day, and Daddy was working out in the yard, as he did most of the time in good

weather. And I said, “Daddy, did you see President Johnson?” Well, my dad hadn’t been very happy with President Johnson, as many people weren’t, as you know, in those later years, and he said, “No. I didn’t look up.” The ultimate insult, right? [laughter]

WILLIAMS: He wasn’t a Democrat, your father?

WARR: Oh, yes, my father was a Democrat, but he just wasn’t happy with President Johnson. As you know, President Johnson didn’t seek another term because people weren’t happy with him.

HODUSKI: Was it mostly the war?

WARR: I think to a great extent. But yes, I think they were just accepted in this neighborhood, for the most part. Respected, highly respected, but not made much of. You know, it was not unusual to look out the window and see him walking by, and you just . . . It became very usual.

WILLIAMS: Is it any different now that we’re here? Does it seem any more or less . . .

WARR: It’s busier. [laughter] No, there was always a lot of traffic by the house, even before it came to you all—in a way, maybe almost more people hoping to catch a glimpse, you know. And traffic could be a problem. Traffic is less of a problem now that the place is up there and it’s controlled. Why, it really is not, and there used to be . . . It seems to me there used to be more buses going by; I don’t know whether I just haven’t happened to see them as much or not. They park down around in here someplace and people get out and walk around. But you all do a good job, and I enjoy seeing who’s on duty which days. [laughter] And you had a big crowd last

night.

HODUSKI: Yes, that was fun taking those ladies. It was mostly ladies there.

WARR: Yes, I noticed there were a lot of women.

TINNIN: I had all the men, I think, on my tour. [laughter]

HODUSKI: Well, that figures. [laughter]

WARR: Did you have three van loads or more?

HODUSKI: More than that.

KLEIN: I think we had three vans, a carload, and some others.

WARR: I think I saw the three vans when I was walking, so I wondered. Now, these are people who will be going other . . .

HODUSKI: They're from all over the park system.

WILLIAMS: They're here for an administrative training course at Crown Center.

WARR: I see.

HODUSKI: Kansas City is such a central location, I think the park service will start using it more. They've done the VIP training here and a number of others.

WARR: I see. Well, it is easy access and it probably cuts their expenses a little bit.

HODUSKI: I imagine. Probably the hotel rentals are cheaper here than most other metropolitan areas, too.

WARR: Well, that's probably true, and I would think they'd give them a nice break besides. [chuckling] Well, if any of you want to look at the notebook, and if Jim has two minutes I want him to look and see if there's some stuff he needs to go with what he already has.

D. JOHNSON: We're going to need to go, though. We appreciate your hospitality.

DAGE: Yes, thank you very much.

WARR: I've enjoyed having you.

DAGE: It's been a real pleasure. Thank you.

WARR: It's always nice. You all are so friendly, and I enjoy visiting with everybody.

TINNIN: We'll see you when you walk by. [laughter]

WARR: That's right, walk or drive.

HODUSKI: Or drive by. [laughter]

TINNIN: You've got to honk at me, though. [laughter] I have a vision problem, so I'm not being snotty or anything. So don't wave at me and think I'm being a snot.

WARR: All right. Well, you all attend to business pretty well anyway, so I don't expect a big hi every time I go by. [chuckling] Those tourists are important and they need your full attention, so that's fine.

HODUSKI: At least you drive slow enough by we can see you. Sue Gentry goes by . . . [laughter]

KLEIN: It's like, oh, see that lady zipping by? [laughter]

DICE: Yes, it was. She'll be back in a couple of minutes. [laughter]

WARR: She does get around. She worries me a little. Whenever we're going someplace, I drive. [laughter]

HODUSKI: I don't blame you.

WARR: And she likes to be chauffeured, anyway, so that's not a problem. But she's a grand lady. And talk about stories, she has the best of all of them.

TINNIN: She is. She's a neat lady.

WARR: Knows everything and never forgets anything. A wonderful memory.  
Well, you all are probably wanting to get to your dinner. [laughter]

STONE: Thanks again.

ALL: Thank you, goodbye.

WARR: Goodnight.

STONE: Nice to see you again.

WARR: Nice to see you, Scott.

STONE: And the lemonade was really good.

WARR: Oh, thank you.

WARR: Do you want to look? Anybody who wants to may.

WILLIAMS: I forgot to take your picture the other day. Would you mind if I . . .

WARR: Oh, I didn't know I was supposed to have my picture taken. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: We'd like it to go along with the tapes so people know . . . Is there a favorite place in the house?

END OF INTERVIEW

## APPENDIX

1. Photograph of the City of Independence Polly's Pop Park sign.
2. Letter from Harry S Truman to Louis L. "Polly" Compton, 14 October 1957, about baby carriage.
3. Letter from Harry S Truman to Louis L. "Polly" Compton, 25 June 1953, about Harpy Poker Club.
4. Map of Truman neighborhood based on 1950 Independence city directory.
5. Photograph of Louis L. "Polly" Compton and pine cones.
6. Newspaper articles about Louis L. "Polly Compton" and snow plow.
7. Letter from Harry S Truman to Louis L. "Polly" Compton, 1 January 1958, about snow plow.
8. Letter from Harry S Truman to Louis L. "Polly" Compton, 4 August 1948, about ice cream.
9. Letter from Bess Truman to Louis L. "Polly" Compton, no date, about ice cream.
10. Letter from Bess W. Truman to Louis L. "Polly" Compton, 22 February 1971, about ice cream.
11. Letter from Harry S Truman to Louis L. "Polly" Compton, 11 May 1972, about ice cream.

For copies of other articles, photographs, and letters about Louis L. "Polly" Compton, see the park's historical file:

Harry S. Truman National Historic Landmark District, 318 North Delaware  
CULTURAL RESOURCES HISTORICAL FILE