ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

SUE GENTRY

JUNE 18, 1991

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1991-2

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4313-4316

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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Sue Gentry 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.

RESTRICTION

ABSTRACT

Sue Gentry, a resident of Independence since 1924, worked as a reporter for the Independence *Examiner* for over sixty years. During much of that time she served as a press liaison for the Trumans. Harry S Truman occasionally provided Gentry with "scoops," which she describes in the interview. Gentry also discusses the evolution of Independence society and activities in the city from the 1930s until the 1990s.

Persons mentioned: Harvey Helm Gentry, Nettie B. Gentry, Harvey Gentry, Andrew Gentry, John Paxton, Bill Paxton, Richard Gentry, Mary Shaw Branton, Overton Gentry, Mary Paxton Keely, John G. Paxton, Charles G. Ross, Harry S Truman, Joy Patterson, James Kemper, Arthur Grissom, Julia Woods, William Woods, H. L. Mencken, Mary Gentry Paxton, "Shady" McLaren, Georgia Shumate, Cammie Johnson, Bess W. Truman, David Willock Wallace, William Southern, Spencer Salisbury, Rufus Burrus, May Wallace, Natalie Ott Wallace, Margaret Truman Daniel, Margaret Fullerton, Ellen Bidstrup, Fran Bayse, Dorothy DeTray, Ardis Haukenberry, Adelaide Twyman, Mag Noel, Mary Gentry Shaw, Eleanor Crow, Linda King, Lucy Peters, Edna Hutchison, Thelma Palette, Marjorie Balfour Martin, Benedict K. Zobrist, Morris Kemp, Elizabeth Safly, Ethel Noland, Mary Jane Truman, George Pendergast Wallace, D. Frederick Wallace, Margaret Bryant, Margaret Louise Ott, Albert Ott, Verna Ott, Frank Gates Wallace, Christine M. Wallace, David Frederick Wallace, Jr., Marian Wallace Brasher, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, John McDonald, Merle Miller, Ella Noland, Jody Ragland, Ruth Ragland, Truman Ragland, James Allen Southern, Bob Ragland, John Ragland, J. Vivian Truman, Rose Conway, Nellie Noland, Robert Browning, Matilda Brown, Lawrence M. Proctor, Mary O'Reilly, Walter Cronkite, Susan Walter, Tom Twyman, Inez Robb, Henry A. Bundschu, John Erskine, Nell Snead, Helen Ward Erskine, Eleanor Roosevelt, Herbert C. Hoover, Maude Louise Hartman, Barbara Baird, Howard Adams, Joyce C. Hall, Philip C. Brooks, Sam Woodson, Stanley Gregg, David McCullough, Theodore Roosevelt, Grace Minor, Eleanor Minor, and Valeria LaMere.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

SUE GENTRY

HSTR INTERVIEW #1991-2

JIM WILLIAMS: This is an oral history interview with Sue Gentry. We're in her home in Independence, Missouri, on June 18, 1991. The interviewer is Jim Williams of the National Park Service, and Connie Odum-Soper is the audio technician.

Well, I will try not to repeat too many things from your first interview, but there were a few things that we would like to know about that weren't in that interview in 1985. First of all, you didn't talk much about your own background then. You said that you moved here, into this house, in 1924?

SUE GENTRY: That's right.

WILLIAMS: Where were you before that?

GENTRY: Well, we lived over on North Main Street. I was born out in the country out here about six miles northeast of town near Salem Church on an old pre-Civil War farm. When it came time for us to go to school, my family moved into Independence, and I went to grade school here, junior high, and William Chrisman High School.

WILLIAMS: So you were about how old when you moved into town?

GENTRY: About six, I believe. Six or seven, whenever we started to school.

WILLIAMS: So did you live in another house before this on Main Street?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: North Main?

GENTRY: North Main Street, at the corner of Waldo and Main. And I never thought I'd be living on Waldo all those years later. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: What made your family decide to move over here?

GENTRY: Well, my folks had a farm, and they had a farm at Lone Jack, and then they . . . we still had the place on North Main Street, and then we came here in '24.

WILLIAMS: How long has your family been in this area?

GENTRY: My father came to Kansas City, I believe, in '85 or '86, or something like that, more than a hundred years ago, and my mother came later. Well, she must have come before that. They were married in '88.

WILLIAMS: Do you have a lot of family in the area?

GENTRY: Where?

WILLIAMS: In this area.

GENTRY: No, I have three great-nephews and a niece by marriage.

WILLIAMS: So, when you moved to this house, you were about eighteen or nineteen?

GENTRY: Yes, about nineteen, I guess, and Mother and Father and two brothers in this eight-room house, and now it's just me.

WILLIAMS: What were your parents' names?

GENTRY: Harvey Helm Gentry and Nettie B. Gentry.

WILLIAMS: Nettie with T's?

GENTRY: E-double T-I-E.

WILLIAMS: And your brothers?

GENTRY: Were Harvey and Andrew.

WILLIAMS: And how long did they live here?

GENTRY: Well, Andrew was married in ’25, and Harvey went into the Marine Corps and was gone for about fifteen years or something, and he came back, and he lived here till he died in ’79.

WILLIAMS: And did your parents live here until they died, also?

GENTRY: Yes, my mother died in 1950, and my father in ’48.

WILLIAMS: Connie, I think, had a suspicion that you were related to the Paxtons. Is that right?

GENTRY: Well, John Paxton and Bill and I, and Shawsie Branton, we all share a Revolutionary [War] ancestor.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I see.

GENTRY: He was Richard Gentry, and the family had come . . . Well, they came from England originally, and they lived in Virginia. And the old great-grandfather, let’s see, he was my great-grandfather, that’s rather unusual because he was a drummer boy at the surrender of Cornwallis when he was sixteen years old. And he was married twice. He had . . . I don’t know how many children by the first marriage, and then . . . I think altogether there were about nineteen children.

WILLIAMS: Wow!

GENTRY: And the first wife died. He married a younger woman—it was customary—and Shawsie and John, the Paxtons, they come from the first

family, and I come from the second family. So we're, you know, remotely connected, but we are connected.

WILLIAMS: How did you ever discover you had the same ancestor?

GENTRY: Well, because my father was . . . like all southern people, they trace their ancestry back. And Cousin Overton Gentry, who was Shawsie's grandfather, was Pendleton and Gentry Drugstore up on the square, and my father and he were cousins. And, you know, they always talked . . . My dad's father, that is, my grandfather, came from Kentucky to visit, and my father took him up to meet Cousin Overton Gentry, and he said, "I am so proud to stand by the brother of my grandfather."

WILLIAMS: I see. Well, while we're on the subject, I suppose you knew Mary Paxton Keeley.

GENTRY: Very well.

WILLIAMS: Could you describe her for us?

GENTRY: Well, when I knew her, in the days when I knew her, she was older, because she lived to be 100 and died in '86, I believe, and I knew her. Well, going down to Columbia to press meetings [Missouri Press Association], and I had met her down there, and then I knew that she was John and Bill's aunt. You see, when we moved here in '24, old John G. Paxton, who is John and Bill's grandfather, they still lived on Delaware Street here. Mary Paxton talks about the garden, and it came clear through to Union Street in those days when we were here. Now there's a house on it. And she talks a lot about, you know, about her romance with Charlie

Ross, and she had talked to me about that, and she had shared with me some tender moments with Charlie under a pear tree there in the garden.

WILLIAMS: Oh, my!

GENTRY: And Bill . . . they have her letters, you know, the Ross letters. Now, I don't know whether they are letters she wrote to him or he wrote to her, or how she has them, but Bill has them in his possession. But someday they're going to make good copy for somebody, but I don't know who.

WILLIAMS: I think they have a few of those over at the Truman Library, too. They must be the ones that she sent to him.

GENTRY: Probably not, but anyway, Mary Paxton Keeley, since we were both writers and members of the press association, she had told me about . . . She said, "You know I've written a book back in Independence, but it can't be published until I'm gone." And I said, "Is there very much about Harry Truman in there?" "Oh no, he didn't belong to our crowd. He was a farmer." And we were . . . in those days, people socially were ranked by the churches. Presbyterians were the top, the elite, and then Episcopalians, and then the Campbellites, of which I belonged to down there, the Christian church. We were kind of next there. And then you get the Baptists and the Mexicans and . . .

CONNIE ODUM-SOPER: We won't talk about Mexicans.

GENTRY: Not Mexicans, I didn't mean Mexicans. Methodists and Baptists.

WILLIAMS: Where do the Catholics fit in?

GENTRY: Well, I'm not quite sure, but they came in there someplace. Of course, she

ranked the Mormons the lowest.

WILLIAMS: Of course.

GENTRY: And so I was very much interested in this *Back in Independence*, so several times she shared . . . It was made up of a . . . It's not exactly a book. It's a series of incidents and characters and people. Well, anyway, she told me that she had this, and it couldn't be published. So, one time, oh, it must have been ten years ago or more now, Joy Patterson, who was a professor, a journalism professor at the University of Missouri, called me and said, "We're trying to help Mary Paxton get her book published." And I said, "Oh, I thought she wasn't going to do that until after she was gone." "Well, we're talking about it." She said, "She wants you to write the introduction." And I said, "Well, I can't very well do that unless I see the book." So she said, "I'll send you the manuscript." So she sent me the manuscript, and it was about that thick, say, about four inches, and about 400 pages, double-spaced, and it's very interesting. And as she said, there's not much about Harry Truman in there. But she and Bess were best friends, as you know, and Margaret would have been . . . Well, she wouldn't have had as nice a book as she had if she didn't have Mary Paxton's letters that she had written to her mother.

WILLIAMS: Right.

GENTRY: Well, anyway, as you know, the [Jackson County] Historical Society is going to publish, republish that memoirs. I don't know if you want to hear all of this or not, but when James Kemper, you know, of Commerce [Bank]

gave the $500,000 check to the RLDS Church to go toward air conditioning the RLDS auditorium, he made a speech at this luncheon in which he presented the check, saying that he felt closely to Independence and that his grandfather, Arthur Grissom, was a poet and editor in Independence. And he said his father was a Campbellite minister. But anyway, the *Examiner* ran the story about the $500,000 check, and later they called me at the office and said that, "Jim Kemper made a real good talk, but we didn't get it until it was too late for our story. And it has some history about Independence in it. Would you take it and write a story?" So they sent it to me. And I thought, Arthur Grissom? Arthur Grissom? Where have I heard that name? I thought, Mary Paxton Keeley. So I go and get the manuscript, and here's a whole chapter on Arthur Grissom, who was a poet, and Mary Paxton . . . He was older than she. She was a young girl, maybe in her early teens, when he was dating some of the girls. He dated the girls in Independence, the elite girls, and she told about this Julia Woods who would come down from Kansas City to visit some of the girls down here, and Arthur Grissom had some dates with her and became very fond of her and wrote poetry to her. Well, when her father, William Woods, who was a Kansas City banker—do you know all this? When he heard that a no-good poet was dating his daughter and writing poetry to her, he thought something had to be done about that. So he sent her to Europe on a trip, and when she came back, her engagement was announced to a banker in Hannibal, and her mother took her to New York to buy a trousseau. Well,

Arthur Grissom was heartbroken, and he was a good student, and Professor Bryant at Woodland College thought that he should go to New York and see if he couldn't make something out of himself. Mr. and Mrs. Paxton were very much interested in him, and they thought he was promising, but he went to New York. And what should he do? He was walking down Fifth Avenue one day, and who should he run into but Julia Woods, who was in New York to buy her trousseau. Well, he bought her violets and took her to lunch at Washington Square, and before the day was over, he had taken her to the little church around the corner and they had been married. Isn't that romantic? [chuckling]

Anyway, they lived in New York and he worked for the *New Yorker*, and he became the editor and was quite promising, and they had a daughter. Well, it took the banker five years before he could get . . . Well, the banker persuaded them to come back to this area with the little daughter, and it took the banker five years, but he separated his daughter and the child from Arthur Grissom. Now, Arthur Grissom was again heartbroken and went on back to New York, where he was very successful. He was the editor . . . Am I saying *New Yorker* right? [H.L.] Mencken was later the editor.

WILLIAMS: I believe so.

GENTRY: Anyway, so I read all this in Mary Paxton's account and I thought, "My Lord, that Julia Woods is Jim Kemper's mother, the little girl." I thought, "She's his mother." But see, I had to verify that, so I called his office and

got hold of his secretary and she said, "Well, he's in the Caribbean, and he won't be back till . . ." I believe she said the fourteenth of April. But she said, "If you will send me your request and what you want to know, I'll put it on his desk. But," she said, "when he gets back, he's got board meetings. He'll be awful busy." So I sent it, and so on the fourteenth of April I thought, "Well, now, maybe he'll be thinking about this and looking at it." The next day, I get a letter from him. He said, "This morning when I got to my desk, I found your letter." And then he wrote me two-and-a-half pages, single-spaced, telling me all about the family. It's wonderful. And sure enough, that was his mother, and he didn't understand why his grandfather turned Arthur Grissom's face to the wall. That's an aside on Mary Paxton Keeley.

So then I got her manuscript out again and started reading it. And I thought, "Oh, this is wonderful!" Well, here was a lot about . . . It would be wonderful for the [historical society] archives because the Paxton family were an affluent family, and they had a carriage and a black man to drive it. They had a cook, and they had a houseman, and they had . . . She tells about what they did as children, what they wore, what they ate, where they went, the people they associated with, and it's wonderful for the archives. My heavens, somebody writing about that era would love it. She told about how their father wanted them to have all the nice experiences, and the good books they had in their home, and what they read, and what an influence her father was. Her mother was Mary Gentry Paxton, and she was a teacher

at the old college here. Then she goes into all these different characters that she remembers. There was one about "Shady" McLaren, who was the town drunk, and he took the pledge and wore a red ribbon. Then there was Mr. Brightman, who was a character, and Miss Georgia Shumate, who sold papers around town. There are just some wonderful characters. It's just going to be wonderful. Then there is one about this woman who made angel food cakes, the most beautiful, white angel food cakes for all the weddings in town. They just thought everything was so spotless. Then somebody went to her kitchen. It was hard to eat her cake after that. [chuckling] Then she told about the bride that was stood up at the altar, and it was at the Christian church, and I always meant to ask Miss Cammie Johnson before she died who that was. And you know I let her die without doing that, so I don't know. But I know who this lady was that made the cake. I figured that out. So, one time when I was down to visit her—Mary Paxton—after she was in the nursing home, and I said, "Cousin Mary, did you change any names?" And I cited one instance where she had told about a prominent man in town who drove his buggy down to visit a widow. I always figured it was on Delaware Street, but I don't know, and how the neighbor ladies got to buzzing about he'd come every now and then, you know, and stay for an hour or two and then go on. And she gave him a name that I had never heard, and I thought, "Well, now, a prominent man, either a lawyer or a doctor or whatever he might be, I would know all those names." You know, they would have come up sometime or other. This

was a name I never heard. I said, "Cousin Mary, did you change any names?" And I recited that instance. "Well," she said, "of course I did. I couldn't use those McCoy men's names." [chuckling]

So that is why, after I got to reading this incident about Mr. Kemper telling about his grandfather, I thought, "Well, I'll go back and read that again"—I hadn't read it for a while—and here were all these wonderful old stories. So I called Bill Paxton and I said, "Bill, that just has to be published. That just has to be published." He said, "Well, all right. John and I, we're willing to do it." I said, "The historical society ought to do that," but, I said, "you know, we don't have any money." He said, "Well, we can get the money." He said, "John and I and one of our cousins, we'll put up the money." And there are four of the cousins that put up the money. So they asked me again to write the introduction, which I haven't quite finished yet. It shouldn't be such a hard job, [chuckling] but I thought I wanted to be careful with it. But anyway, when you asked me about Mary Paxton Keeley, why, it made a long story.

WILLIAMS: Well, how did she become best friends with Bess Wallace?

GENTRY: They lived next door to each other down here on Delaware Street, and Bess was about a year older than Mary. She played together with the Wallace boys and Bess. And the big old oak tree down there—you know, that's still standing—that I had asked Mrs. Truman about it, and she said, yes, she remembered it. Then, let's see, oh, when Mr. Wallace died, you know—killed himself, as we know—why, her father told her, "You go over and sit

with Bess." And she found her out in the garden crying, and so they comforted each other. And then, you see, then Mary Paxton lost her mother, and Bess comforted her. And they remained good friends all their lives. Wrote to each other and sent each other flowers as long as either of them . . . either one was able to communicate.

WILLIAMS: Was it common knowledge that Mr. Wallace committed suicide, in the neighborhood?

GENTRY: Well, when I went to work at the *Examiner*, when I became the city editor—Colonel Southern made me city editor—and Mr. Truman had become president, and Colonel Southern . . . Have I told this?

WILLIAMS: I don't think so.

GENTRY: Colonel Southern took me aside, and he said, "Now, I want to tell you all I know about the Wallace family," because people were coming in there, all the reporters from everyplace, the wire service, and asking questions about the family. And he said, "I want you to understand about it so you'll know how to handle it." And he said that Mr. Wallace had committed suicide and had killed himself, shot himself, and that George, who was May's husband, had found him, and, oh, some other things about Mr. Wallace. So one time a reporter, a dapper gentleman, came in, and he said they'd sent him down from the [Kansas City] *Star* and said he might talk to me. Here came this dapper gentleman. He was a symphony in navy blue. This is the days when gentlemen wore hats. He had a navy blue hat and a navy blue coat, and he had a beautiful smile and white teeth, and apparently was

prematurely gray, because he seemed young enough. And he said, "I'm down here to get a story about . . . you guess who." And I said, "Yes, I know who." He said, "Now, I know all this Pollyanna stuff about Harry Truman." He says, "I want some dirt." I said, "Sir, if I knew any dirt about Harry Truman, I would not tell you." He said, "I can believe that." So then he said, "Old man Wallace was a drunk, and he killed himself." He said, "I want to see your paper, your file, 1903." So I got that paper out, and all it said was that he was found dead in the bathroom, I believe, of his home, and there was a gun by his side. That didn't tell him much.

But you remember, they wouldn't . . . Of course, no one would talk about Harry Truman—I mean, none of his friends—but there were some people who did, and one was Spencer Salisbury. He and Mr. Truman—you know the story—they had been business friends and Army friends and had fallen out. So I remember that . . . I'm trying to think of the magazine. They did an interview with *Cosmopolitan*, I believe it was, did an interview with Spencer Salisbury, and he said all these awful things about Mr. Truman and his family and his mother and everything. And then I remember Rufus Burrus fired back a letter to him, you know. I used that and, you know, it was quite a deal. But anyway . . . Well, I don't know where I am now. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So, from 1924, when you moved into the neighborhood, until the forties when you became the city editor, you had never heard about Mr. Wallace?

GENTRY: No, I really didn't know about Mr. Wallace, but I knew about Harry

Truman. When we lived over on North Main Street, and I was young, why, one of our neighbors said, "Tell your dad to vote for Truman. He's a good man." And he was running for eastern judge. That was the first . . . in '22, I believe. "Tell your father to vote for Truman. He's a good man." Well, I told him, and he did, and Harry Truman won. And so, from that day, I was conscious of Harry Truman. I had never seen him, and I was conscious of him. So, when we moved here and I realized that that was the Truman home, and I went by it every day, I always noted it but I didn't . . . you know, it wasn't important, except that he was a county judge. Then I got acquainted with Mrs. Truman after I was working on the paper. She was secretary of the needlework guild, which is an organization of women who collected . . . They called it in-gathering every fall. They collected warm clothing and bedding for the needy people. So she was secretary, and she would come in and make a report: how many they collected, and all this sort of thing. So I would take her report, and she'd get so if I was busy, she would wait. So that was my connection with Mrs. Truman early on. Then Mr. Southern always said, "Now, call and get little items," you know. So Mrs. Wallace was always very good about giving me their social items when they played cards or when they had company or anything, so I knew Mother Wallace, over the phone mostly.

WILLIAMS: Could you describe her for us? We don't know much about Madge.

GENTRY: Well, I never had really seen her, but she was very pleasant over the phone, and I would . . . Mr. Southern would say, "Well, they have company. Call

Mrs. Wallace and get an item." So I would call. And she'd say, "You want my picture?" [chuckling] You know, they always said that she was pretty stern and very proper, but she would joke.

WILLIAMS: Really?

GENTRY: I remember that about her.

WILLIAMS: Did she joke with Harry?

GENTRY: Well, about that I don't know.

WILLIAMS: [chuckling] We've heard stories that . . .

GENTRY: I've heard stories, that she thought Bess could do better.

WILLIAMS: Those were just stories you heard. You never got it from the source?

GENTRY: No.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember anything else about Mrs. Wallace?

GENTRY: Mother Wallace?

WILLIAMS: Madge.

GENTRY: No, and I think May Wallace has told you this in something that she has given you, about Mrs. Wallace was always . . . She always wanted to know what they were doing: "Where are you going? What are you doing?" And said one time Natalie Wallace came over to her house—I'm pretty sure May has told this—came over to May's and said, "Now, I'm going to Kansas City, and I'm going down this way. I'm not going this way, because I don't want Mother Wallace to ask me where I'm going."

WILLIAMS: Was Mrs. Wallace active in the neighborhood social groups?

GENTRY: Well, about that I don't really know. All these stories I've heard, you

know, about the cake over at the Noland house and . . . But I really don't know.

WILLIAMS: Okay, I think we need to pause and change tapes.

ODUM-SOPER: We have a little bit.

WILLIAMS: Well, I'll ask one more question. What were these stories about that you would put in the paper when you called Mrs. Wallace?

GENTRY: Oh, they were usually . . . They had company from Platte City. You know, the Wells family, Mrs. Truman's cousins lived up there, and they'd come back and forth, and sometimes they'd have a tea or something or a party or a bridge party or something. Usually it was social items.

WILLIAMS: So they would entertain quite a bit at the home?

GENTRY: Yes. Yes.

WILLIAMS: Do you ever remember anything out on the lawn or . . .

GENTRY: No, I don't, until Margaret came along and got the kids to playing and having circuses and things like that.

WILLIAMS: Now we'll change tapes.

[End #4313; Begin #4314]

WILLIAMS: So you remember Margaret's children playing out on the lawn?

GENTRY: Yes, I remember one time when they were playing Indians, or something that had guns or . . . and I remember writing a little something about it, but I really didn't know very much about it.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever notice a swing set or anything like that set up in the yard?

GENTRY: I don't recall it.

WILLIAMS: Okay. You probably know that we are in the process of acquiring the two Wallace houses and also the Noland house.

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So we would like to know more about those families, too. How long have you known May Wallace?

GENTRY: Well, I went to church, of course, with . . . I knew Mrs. Southern and May went to the Christian church, and Carolyn her sister, and, of course, Colonel Southern was a Presbyterian, and so that's how I first knew May. And then, when I went to work at the *Examiner*, and she was Colonel Southern's daughter, she was in the office quite a little bit. So that's when I got acquainted with May Wallace. After Mr. Truman became president, she was wonderful, because I could always find out what was going on. [chuckling] She would tell me what was going on. You know, she was loyal to the *Examiner*, and I would find out some things that some other papers wouldn't.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember anything in particular that she told you?

GENTRY: Well, you know, like when they were going and coming and things like that. She'd say, "Well, Bess is coming home, and Margaret, and they're going to stay this summer"—you know how they did back and forth. But those are the most things I remember.

WILLIAMS: Besides church, when did you see May?

GENTRY: Well, mostly at church, and then May would give me items. Colonel Southern would say, "Well, call May. She went to the bridge club

yesterday." [chuckling] The Tuesday bridge club, you know. He said, "You know those women. They know everything." So that's how I knew May best. Then I also knew May because she was the leader of the Saturday Club—I mean, the Mary Paxton Study Club—where she worked in those, and she would report those activities to me.

WILLIAMS: Were you in any of those clubs, the bridge club . . . ?

GENTRY: Well, not till after I retired. After I retired, I said to those that . . . I made a talk one time to the Mary Paxton Study Club about the time I was retiring—no, I guess it was the Saturday Club—and I said, "I have always envied you ladies because you were so intellectual. You studied all the great poets and authors, and knew all the great books and all those sort of things," and I said, "I just always envied you, because you had all this background in literature." So the next thing I knew, they asked me to join, both the Mary Paxton and the Saturday Club. Well, then I thought, "Well, gee, I don't believe I'm quite ready to do all that yet." I wanted to be a lady for a while and not do anything. So I went down to see Mary Paxton Keeley and she said, "Do you belong to the Mary Paxton Study Class?" and I said, "Well, no, I don't." But I said, "I've been asked to join." "Well, I want you to join." So she wrote to the president and told them she recommended me for membership. Well, what did I do, but I had to join. [chuckling] So I went for a couple of years, and then I decided I didn't want to have to be someplace at 1:30 every Monday afternoon, so I haven't gone since. The girls said, "Well, now, if you . . ." Mary Paxton and the

Saturday Club said, "Go to Mary Paxton, because all you have to do is just sit and listen. If you go to the Saturday Club, you have to give a topic." [chuckling] So I thought, "Well, I'm not going to go to the Saturday Club."

WILLIAMS: You had to be invited to join these clubs?

GENTRY: Yes, you have to be invited into membership.

WILLIAMS: Who were some of the members of the Saturday Club, from the neighborhood here?

GENTRY: Well, I can't remember. They were women from different churches, and I think I knew them all—I know I did in the early days—and then, of course, I know a lot of the girls now who are still in the Saturday Club, but most of them are in the Mary Paxton [Club] now because they don't have to give topics.

WILLIAMS: Who's in the Mary Paxton Club?

GENTRY: Well, some of the younger members of the Tuesday bridge club.

WILLIAMS: Are you still in the Tuesday bridge club?

GENTRY: No, I never was in the Tuesday bridge club. I have filled in a lot. I've filled in so many times that I've had to entertain them. [chuckling] But like, oh, Retta Fullerton, and Ellen Bidstrup, and Fran Bayse, and Dorothy DeTray, those girls.

WILLIAMS: Was May Wallace in both of those clubs?

GENTRY: Yes, she was in both of them. Then, after I retired, I was invited to belong to kind of a local neighborhood bridge club, and May was in it, and Ardis Haukenberry was in it, and the Minor girls were in it. So I was a member

of that, and so I got to playing bridge with May. You see, I always called her Mrs. Wallace, because that's the way we were brought up, and so everybody called her May in this bridge club. I said, "I'm having an awful time calling you May." She said, "Well, you do it now." So I learned to call her May.

WILLIAMS: Was Bess Truman in these clubs?

GENTRY: Well, see, Mrs. Truman never went after Mr. Truman . . . . They came home, she went a while, and then when he became ill, she didn't go. So she didn't go for a long time.

WILLIAMS: Was she in both the Saturday and the . . .

GENTRY: No, I don't think she ever belonged to either of those. She may have been an honorary member or something, but I don't think she ever belonged.

WILLIAMS: But she was definitely in the Tuesday bridge club?

GENTRY: Yes. Oh, yes, from the start.

WILLIAMS: Do you know who all the members were?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Can you tell me? [chuckling]

GENTRY: Yes. There was May Wallace; and Natalie Wallace; and Mrs. Twyman, Adelaide Twyman; Mrs. Jim Noel, Mag Noel; Mary Gentry Shaw; Eleanor Crow; Linda King; Lucy Peters, Mrs. Mize Peters; and Edna Hutchison. I believe that's about all of them. And Thelma Pallette. Thelma Pallette sent her . . . She sent her scrapbooks after she . . . She lives down in Texas, and she sent her scrapbooks to May Wallace. They kept scrapbooks when they

went to Washington—you know, the Tuesday bridge club went to Washington—and all the different things that they had done, and so she had two scrapbooks that were just wonderful. So she sent them to May Wallace, and she told May that she might want to give them to me or the Truman Library or something. So May called me, and I go look at them, and I thought, "Well, they belong out at the Truman Library." So I told Dr. Zobrist, and of course he welcomed them. So then I got to thinking about it, and so I called like Shawsie [Branton], and she had her mother's scrapbook, and then . . . And May had Natalie's scrapbook, but May didn't keep one. She [unintelligible]. But Natalie had . . . she had the best scrapbook. She had a couple of them. They were very good. Then I wrote to . . . Well, I told Dr. Zobrist, and he wrote to Lucy Peters, and she said, "Well, I've got four granddaughters. I don't know whether I want to give them up or not." And then I did call Adelaide Twyman, and she said, "Oh, I want to look at mine for a little while longer," so I don't know what's ever happened to it. Then Shawsie had brought some down to the library. She brought some down to me, and I looked at them. I wrote a little story about them, and then she said, "Well, I believe I'll take those back. I want the girls to look at them." So she's kept them now. And Edna Hutchison, Shawsie brought hers down here, and I'm pretty sure that they have them at the library. And I don't know what ever happened to Mrs. Noel's. But Linda King, Marjorie Balfour Martin sent that to the library.

WILLIAMS: Did all of those woman live in the area, the neighborhood here?

GENTRY: Yes, they lived in this area.

WILLIAMS: Would it be safe to say that they probably knew just about everything going on in the area?

GENTRY: Well, I would say they did.

WILLIAMS: When they went to the White House, did you report on their trips?

GENTRY: Yes. And when they came back, they had a party where they . . . kind of an afterglow, and I remember Mary Shaw entertained them out here at the truck stop. [chuckling] You know, I thought that was funny. Out there where Stephenson's . . . where the American Legion building is now, out there by Stephenson's. And Morris Temp or something, I don't know . . . Anyway, I've got a good story. I saw it not long ago in my clippings. [shows clipping from *Examiner*] I was looking at this when they had the fiftieth wedding anniversary. You all probably have that.

WILLIAMS: We may.

GENTRY: Now, Liz [Safly] didn't have it.

WILLIAMS: She didn't?

GENTRY: And so I took it out there, and she made a copy of it.

WILLIAMS: Well, we kind of get clippings here and there. We don't have a complete file, by any means.

GENTRY: Well, that reviews the wedding, and I talked to . . . Ethel Noland was still living, and the Minors were still living, and Mary Jane Truman was still living. They all told me what they remembered about the wedding. I just happened to think of this, and I got it out. I read it again, and I thought,

"Well, that's pretty good." [chuckling] And then I was looking at this, and I'm sure you have that.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that's the centennial [issue].

GENTRY: Centennial. And there are some wonderful little reminiscences in there.

WILLIAMS: Well, how would you describe May as a person? Was she happy?

GENTRY: Happy? May always said she was happy. She said, "I never worried about anything, and I was always happy."

WILLIAMS: She always seemed that way to me.

GENTRY: And she was a sharp bridge player, until recent years. One of the last times I played with her, she trumped my ace, so I thought, "May, you've had it." [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, what was the bridge club that we used to see you drive down the alley and . . . ?

GENTRY: Oh, that was that . . . well, they called themselves the widows and the orphans. May would have the bridge club, and of course we always went to the back door, as you know.

WILLIAMS: Right. Who was in that club?

GENTRY: Well, as I said, the Minors, and Ardis Haukenberry, and Mrs. Renick Jones. She and her husband . . . [gap in tape] . . . the Wallaces and the Kluffs [?]—there were quite a bunch of them—and they had dinner bridge, couples. She was in that club. And then in later years, the Minors died, and they were replaced by younger women.

WILLIAMS: Well, you played bridge with her up until the last few years, wasn't it?

GENTRY: Yes, a couple of years ago is about the last time that I remember, and May was getting so she was pretty fuzzy.

WILLIAMS: That's when you decided to quit this club?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: You don't play anymore?

GENTRY: No. Well, the club still goes but . . . Well, I quit about two years ago. I just thought I had too much to do and . . . Like this, every two weeks . . . I didn't want to have to do something [chuckling] at a certain time every two weeks, or two weeks, or something like that.

WILLIAMS: What was George Wallace like?

GENTRY: Well, he was real friendly. He was down here at the . . . worked for the county, as you know. I always admired the things that he could do. He was a handyman. May said he could fix anything, and Margaret always thought . . . I forgot what she called George—she couldn't call his name—she said he could fix it, whatever it was.

WILLIAMS: That was Margaret?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Anything else about George?

GENTRY: Well, Margaret tells it all in her book.

WILLIAMS: What does she say? I don't remember.

GENTRY: Well, you know, they all have . . . Some of them had a little drinking problem.

WILLIAMS: Oh. Perhaps like his father?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did May ever complain or anything about it?

GENTRY: No, no, never. Kept her head right up and . . .

WILLIAMS: Do you think she had a hard marriage with him?

GENTRY: Well, she never let on if she did.

WILLIAMS: You never heard anything from Colonel Southern about it?

GENTRY: The only thing I ever heard from Colonel Southern, he said, "You know I always said that I printed all the news. I didn't hold anything out. If it was on the police record, I put it there." He said, "The only time that I ever did that was my own son-in-law, and I did that for my daughter."

WILLIAMS: That was pretty nice of him. Do you know why neither one of those couples, the Wallace couples, had children?

GENTRY: No, neither of them ever had any children. It's sort of a coincidence, I guess, because Mrs. Truman had the one child, and Fred Wallace, did he have three, I believe?

WILLIAMS: Three. What about Natalie? Did you know her very well?

GENTRY: Well, I knew her in connection with the social items she gave me. I used to have a column on recipes, "This Is the Way I Make It," and every week I had a different hostess to give me recipes. I remember Natalie gave me some recipes that are very good.

WILLIAMS: Did she play bridge or do any of those things?

GENTRY: She was in that tuesday bridge club.

WILLIAMS: What church did they go to?

GENTRY: They went to the Presbyterian church, I believe. Natalie did.

WILLIAMS: So they were up there at the top. [chuckling]

GENTRY: Yes, they were up there at the top.

WILLIAMS: She was a small woman?

GENTRY: Natalie?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

GENTRY: Yes. I remember her very well. She was a small woman, and she was an Ott. Of course, her mother died . . . She had a sister. Her mother died, and the father married again, and he married Margaret Bryant, and this was the Bryant house. See, Professor Bryant lived there [pointing next door] and the Otts lived in the next house, and then there were two . . . She had these two, a half-brother and sister, Margaret Louise and Albert Ott, and they grew up there.

WILLIAMS: And I think one of those you told me about might be good to interview, Verna?

GENTRY: Oh, Verna Ott? Well, she's not any kin. That's a different . . . She was a schoolteacher and came here from Sedalia.

WILLIAMS: This was Margaret Louise, I guess, you told me.

GENTRY: Yes, Margaret Louise. Now, Margaret Louise is not very well, I understand, right now. I used to visit with her on the phone quite a little bit because she grew up right here. She'd call and say, "Straighten me out on somebody in Independence. Who were they? Who were they married to?" [chuckling] "What was their maiden name?" You know, she'd say,

"Straighten me out on Independence." And then sometimes Shawsie calls, and she says, "Straighten me out on something."

WILLIAMS: So she had the same father as Natalie.

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: That's the way it worked. So you didn't know Natalie as well as May?

GENTRY: No, I didn't know . . . I just was associated with May because she was Mr. Southern's daughter and came into the office.

WILLIAMS: So otherwise you probably wouldn't have had much contact with her?

GENTRY: No, just if she'd have a social item or if . . . When I started out, you know, I started out just getting items. [chuckling] I thought, "Lord, I'll never be good enough to write a whole story."

WILLIAMS: Well, when you were starting out, you talked like you felt the Wallaces were . . . You said you were taught to call them "Mrs. Wallace," for instance.

GENTRY: Oh, well, you see, I called . . . When I was growing up, you called all the older people Mrs. or Mr. You didn't call them by their given names like everybody does now. And when I was taught to handle items in the *Examiner*, everybody over sixteen, every woman over sixteen was either a Miss or a Mrs. Now they're all Mary Smith or Susie Brown. Kind of hard to get used to.

WILLIAMS: So you didn't get the feeling that they were . . . You didn't call them Mrs. because they were above you on the social . . .

GENTRY: Oh, no, no, because that's the way you were taught. When I was a child,

you respected an adult. [telephone rings—interview is interrupted—tape turned off]

WILLIAMS: What do you remember about Frank Wallace?

GENTRY: Well, he would come in the office now and then. He was a very sober, dignified man. George was always very smiley and friendly, but Frank was very dignified. He was an official down at the Waggoner-Gates Mill, and I remember that he would walk—you know, people didn't jump in their car and ride around in those days—and he'd stop by the office every now and then to talk to Colonel Southern.

WILLIAMS: About the mill, or just in general?

GENTRY: Well, the mill or maybe just something. I don't know particularly what. Everybody came in to talk to Colonel Southern. Nobody ever ran for office, started a new business, or did anything without coming in and talking to the colonel.

WILLIAMS: So that's about the only time you saw Frank?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: One more brother. What about Fred? Did you know him very well?

GENTRY: No, I didn't. He was younger. The first thing I remember about him: he was driving a car, and he hit a little boy, and the little boy died, you know.

WILLIAMS: Oh, no, I hadn't heard that.

GENTRY: Yes, the little Snow boy. I don't think it was really his fault. I think the child ran into the street. But anyway, nothing ever came of it. I mean, that's where I got his name. I knew, I always remembered people and

events—you know, just something that's part of what I grew up . . .

WILLIAMS: When you were writing these social bits for the paper, since he lived in the Truman house . . .

GENTRY: Fred?

WILLIAMS: Right, did he ever come into those stories that you wrote?

GENTRY: Well, not very often. I remember next about him when he was an architect, and when Mr. Truman . . . When they tore the courthouse down and Mr. Truman made all those trips and decided what the pattern would be, and he decided on a Williamsburg theme, and Fred Wallace was associated with the architects that did the planning. That's what I remember about him.

WILLIAMS: And what do you know about Christine Wallace?

GENTRY: His wife?

WILLIAMS: Right.

GENTRY: Well, I never knew her until in later years. She'd come to visit Mrs. Wallace, and I would meet her on occasion. I thought she was very pleasant, but I never did really know her.

WILLIAMS: Did she play bridge or do any of those things while they were still here?

GENTRY: Well, as far as I . . . I don't remember, but I do remember meeting her on occasion. I don't know whether it was a social thing or . . . I don't know why.

WILLIAMS: What about their children, David and Marian?

GENTRY: Well, I just know of them, and I know the boy is a writer, I believe.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

GENTRY: David. Out in California. I remember he came and did a story or two or something, but I really didn't ever know him.

WILLIAMS: How well did you know Margaret?

GENTRY: Well, not too well. I really didn't know her very well until . . . oh, when they went to the senate, every now and then I'd write something about them. And then when Margaret decided on her singing career, she made her debut in Kansas City, and she called me to come up to Muehlebach. She had a press conference. And I have a picture of myself interviewing Margaret. She was very pleasant, and we've always had good relations. I remember when she christened the [U.S.S.] *Missouri*. Well, see, Colonel Southern always could . . . I was accepted as a reporter, and a trusted reporter, by the Trumans on account of Colonel Southern—I mean, I know that. But he would say, "Well, give it to Sue," or something like that. So that's why I was trusted with anything that they had. Mrs. Truman sent a letter telling about Margaret going to christen the *Missouri* and, you know, gave us the scoop. She sent me a special delivery letter, and I still have it, telling all about the ceremony and that sort of thing. Then, when Mr. Truman died . . . Well, when Mr. Truman died, Mrs. Truman invited me to the funeral, and I was in the [press] pool. I remember when I came out of the church, we didn't have television then . . . No, that was Margaret's wedding, I guess, Margaret's wedding. We didn't have television then, and I remember being interviewed by some of the radio people, and a friend of mine in California told me she heard me. [chuckling] Then, when Mr.

Truman died, why, she asked Dr. Zobrist and me to be the liaison with the press. We went up to the house when they planned the funeral, and the mayor was there, and the chief of police, and Truman Library people and all that, the preacher, and then we had an office at the library and kept contact with the press, answered their questions. I remember I thought it was . . . you know, it was real pleasant to be in contact, to be able to give out all that information from the family.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any contact with the VIPs who visited the Truman home? I think there were five presidents and all sorts of celebrities.

GENTRY: Well, I was right there all the time. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Do you remember anything in particular about any of the presidents who came to visit?

GENTRY: Well, yes, I remember LBJ coming, and I remember Richard Nixon coming. And I remember that Mr. Nixon . . . he tried to help Mr. Truman off the front porch, and he . . . He didn't want any help. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: He shrugged him off, huh? Did you ever get to interview any of those people?

GENTRY: No, I really didn't. You know, I was just with the herd.

WILLIAMS: Standing outside the fence probably.

GENTRY: Yes. And when Mr. Nixon came that last time . . . Well, no, I guess it wasn't the last time, but when he brought the piano from the White House? I remember I was down at the house, and John McDonald . . . I went down to the house when they came, and went back and wrote my story, and John

McDonald went on to the library where they presented the piano. I remember that Merle Miller, when he wrote his . . .

WILLIAMS: *Plain Speaking*?

GENTRY: *Plain Speaking*. He came, and I went to lunch with him one time. So he said that he was putting me in the book, and I thought, "Oh, my lord, what did I say?" So when the book came out, it was out at Jones Store at the mall. So I rushed out there and bought me a book and went and got in the car, and looked at the index, saw my name, turned over. And he was real kind to me. The only thing he had, and he had me at the library, see, and I wasn't out there, and here's what he said. He said that Harry Truman turned to Mrs. Truman, and he said . . . Nixon sat down and played the "Missouri Waltz." You know, he worked real hard to learn that, and he played the "Missouri Waltz." Mr. Truman turned to Mrs. Truman and said, "What's he playing?" And so I thought, "Oh . . . He was getting a little old then, you know, and maybe just having a little trouble remembering things." And I thought, "Oh, dear, they'll think I think he's senile." When Merle Miller came back and he talked to me, I said, "I wasn't out there, and I was kind of worried about that story." I said, "Them thinking Mr. Truman is senile." He said, "Oh, no, that wasn't it." He said, "Nixon did such a poor job that Harry didn't recognize it." [chuckling] He didn't like the "Missouri Waltz," as you know, anyway.

WILLIAMS: No, I think he got tired of it, didn't he?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: How did Margaret and Shawsie become friends?

GENTRY: Well, their mothers were in the bridge club together, and I think that probably had a lot to do with it.

WILLIAMS: And where did Shawsie live in the neighborhood?

GENTRY: Well, Shawsie lived up on Maple Avenue there, right across from the Memorial Building, and then later they moved down on Proctor Place.

WILLIAMS: I see. When you moved into this house, who was living in the Noland house?

GENTRY: Well, Mrs. Noland was living then.

WILLIAMS: Which? Ella?

GENTRY: Ella, yes, was living then, and her granddaughter, Jody [Josephine] Ragland . . . There were three of those Noland sisters, and only one of them married, and that was Ruth, I guess it was. She was Mrs. Ragland. And I went to school over at the Ott School with Jody Ragland and her brother Truman Ragland. Jody was so pretty. I just thought she was such a pretty girl, and Truman was such a handsome young man. He was a little older. So that's the way I first knew who the Nolands were.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever know Ella very well?

GENTRY: No, I really didn't. And you see, then at the *Examiner* I worked with Colonel Southern's nephew, who was James Allen Southern. He's Judge Southern's son, and he married Jody Ragland. So, of course, I worked with him, and I knew Jody. The family, they always went there for dinner like once a week, the boys, and . . .

WILLIAMS: Which boys?

GENTRY: The two Southern boys, Jody Ragland's two boys, and so I would hear about Grandmother Noland and . . .

WILLIAMS: And Jody was Ella Noland's . . . ?

GENTRY: Granddaughter.

WILLIAMS: Granddaughter. So her great-grandsons went to dinner?

GENTRY: Her great-grandsons. There were two of them. There were two: Bob and John. Bob's a lawyer in Chicago, and John I think lives down in the Ozarks.

WILLIAMS: We need to change tapes again.

[End #4314; Begin #4315]

GENTRY: I went to Vivian Truman's funeral.

WILLIAMS: That's the one that my parents really liked.

GENTRY: Yes, he was a nice man. And Miss Rose Conway, of course, was his secretary before she was Mr. Truman's secretary.

WILLIAMS: Oh, really? At the housing administration?

GENTRY: At the housing, yes. Because that's how Harry got her.

WILLIAMS: I see. She was a faithful secretary.

GENTRY: She was nice. She let me use her typewriter, you know, when I went to the White House.

WILLIAMS: We're on the Nolands. What about Ethel and Nellie? Did you know them very well?

GENTRY: Yes, I knew Ethel more than I did Nellie. She was a little more outgoing.

But Ethel Noland was . . . she was great, and she had a great sense of humor, and you could get the best story out of her. She tells me a good story in this golden wedding [article] [see appendix, item 1] about how radiant Harry looked and, you know, how happy he was, that it had to be the happiest day of his life. And then in here she has written a real good story in this . . . No, in Mr. Truman's memorial edition, which I did. I had to work two years longer than my retirement because they told me I couldn't retire until Harry Truman died, because I was doing this special edition. See, I'd worked on it for two or three years. You know, we really started it three or four years before he died. I got all these wonderful interviews from people that knew him, and one was from her, which was just great, and I reprinted it in here. Then another thing I remember, when she retired as a schoolteacher, she said, "Don't go off to Florida or California or something. Stay in your own territory."

WILLIAMS: So you took her advice.

GENTRY: Yes. Well, I wasn't about to go anyplace.

WILLIAMS: Did she work?

GENTRY: She was a schoolteacher.

WILLIAMS: Oh, that's right. And Nellie?

GENTRY: Nellie was a schoolteacher.

WILLIAMS: They were both schoolteachers?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And Nellie was quieter than Ethel?

GENTRY: Yes. I didn't know her as well.

WILLIAMS: Were they involved in any of these clubs or bridge groups or anything?

GENTRY: Well, not until after they retired. I think they went to the study clubs, but I never knew them to be in a bridge club.

WILLIAMS: What church did they belong to?

GENTRY: The Baptists.

WILLIAMS: So they weren't high on the list.

GENTRY: No, they weren't high on the list. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, Mr. Truman used to go over there and visit a lot, didn't he?

GENTRY: Oh, yes. And, you see, he and Ethel, I believe . . . Nellie was a little older, he and Ethel were the same age, and they studied Latin together and a lot of things together.

WILLIAMS: I see. Well, what about Ardis?

GENTRY: Ardis Haukenberry. Now, she was Ruth's daughter. She was Ardis Ragland, and she was the older sister of Jody. She was also a schoolteacher. She said she had to be, growing up with two aunts that were schoolteachers. Then she married . . . I think she was maybe a little older than usual, but she married. She never had any children. And she was quite active, after she got married, in the study clubs, in the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution], and I knew her in the DAR because I got into the DAR early on, and I have my fifty-year pin.

WILLIAMS: Because of that relative you were talking about, Richard Gentry?

GENTRY: Yes, Richard Gentry. You see, old Richard Gentry was married twice, and

my grandfather was one of the later children. And then my father and mother . . . My father was thirty-one or two before he married, and they didn't have children . . . Let's see, my oldest brother was born fifteen years after they were married, and then I came along, and so, you see, my dad was as old as most people's grandparents. So, when I went into the DAR, my dad was a grandson of a Revolutionary soldier, which is very unusual. Because most of those DAR ladies, you know, they have eight and ten generations. And I don't know what they are now, but that was back then.

WILLIAMS: Ardis, I never really knew her that well, but she seemed like a very sweet lady.

GENTRY: Well, she was a stickler for getting things right.

WILLIAMS: Oh, was that the schoolteacher in her?

GENTRY: Yes, that was the schoolteacher. She was a regent of the DAR, and she was very plain-spoken. She was secretary of the historical society from the start in 1940, and all her minutes are up there in the archives. And as I said, she was a stickler for getting it right.

WILLIAMS: Did any of those Noland women give you news bits like May Wallace did?

GENTRY: Well, after they retired . . . I never knew them until they retired, and then after they retired . . . and then Mr. Truman became president while I was visiting with them quite a bit. Because Miss Ethel, you know, was the genealogist for the family and had all these wonderful people, and then the Browning Society met at their house, you see, all the time.

WILLIAMS: Could you tell us what that is?

GENTRY: Well, it was a literary society, and of course it gets its name from the poet Robert Browning and his wife. And Mrs. Palmer, whom I'm sure you know who she is, she was quite active. I think maybe she was the founder. And the Nolands, I don't know why, but in later years the society met at their house every . . . I guess it was once a month on Monday.

WILLIAMS: What would they do?

GENTRY: Well, they studied Robert Browning's poetry.

WILLIAMS: That's all?

GENTRY: That's it.

WILLIAMS: Well, in your interview with the Truman Library where you're driving around the neighborhood, you mentioned that you remember Harry Truman going over to the Nolands' for a meeting of the Browning Society, and it sounded like it would have been about '63 or '64, and I didn't know what the Browning Society was.

GENTRY: Well, that's what it is, and those women were very devout and very sincere about their studies of Robert Browning. And Miss Matilda Brown, now, you know who she was?

WILLIAMS: The schoolteacher?

GENTRY: Yes. She was director of the Browning Society to begin with.

WILLIAMS: Was Harry Truman involved in the Browning Society?

GENTRY: No, I don't think . . . It was mostly women. I don't know, maybe there were some men in there.

WILLIAMS: I just wonder why you'd mentioned that he was over there for the Browning

Society.

GENTRY: Well, I think they might have invited him to come over and make a talk or something, or just because he was who he was. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Just to have a celebrity around.

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Well, that clears that up. Can you give us an idea of what it was like in the neighborhood, what has changed from the twenties now that we're in the nineties?

GENTRY: Well, of course, everybody was very excited when Mr. Truman became president. And I remember *Liberty* magazine . . . Did you ever hear of *Liberty* magazine? It was a magazine back then. And a reporter, Edgar somebody from *Liberty* magazine called the office and said they wanted to interview . . . a reporter to get a little story about all the neighbors in the neighborhood. So Colonel Southern said, "Well, Sue, you do it." So I got busy, and I called everybody in the neighborhood—the neighbors across the street, the neighbors up and down, just all around—and got quotes from them. Gee, I worked hard. And then this woman was going to call me at like ten o'clock on a certain morning. So I came home, so I could do it at home. And so that was the first time that I really felt like I was really getting into the swing. Like the preacher, Reverend Proctor, lived across the street there—the Hankins live there now—and then the Cushwas lived across the street, Miss Mary O'Reilly, and the Nolands, and I just called all the people around.

WILLIAMS: For this story?

GENTRY: Yes. And I saved my copy. I still have it. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: What's the biggest change in these past fifty or so years, sixty years?

GENTRY: Well, you know, I was thinking about it when I had your little note about the people, the neighbors around. You know, there's just none of them left. Now, Maxine Choplin across the street there, I know that she grew up in that house and lived there since she was married.

WILLIAMS: She called me, and I'm going to have to call her back tomorrow.

GENTRY: Yes, well, she'll give you a good tale. Then, of course, the Proctors. I remember Reverend Proctor. Their son was killed downtown some way, and I don't know what the circumstances were, but I think they were kind of unpleasant some way or other, but Reverend Proctor told about how kind Mrs. Truman was. She sent food over and that sort of thing. All of them had a different tale to tell. Then, of course, Mr. Truman was president, and he would come home. You know how everybody would go up there? Of course, I was up there, and the '48 election night I was standing outside there with everybody, you know, waiting for Mr. Truman to come out, and found out he wasn't there. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: We heard that Walter Cronkite was out on the lawn. Did you know that?

GENTRY: That night?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

GENTRY: No, I did not. Of course, he wasn't as important then as he later became.

WILLIAMS: No.

GENTRY: Because he was in Kansas, probably with the UPI in Kansas City, UP in Kansas City at that time.

WILLIAMS: I had heard that somewhere, that he'd mentioned that in a television program he did.

GENTRY: Is that right?

WILLIAMS: Where do you think the neighborhood is headed? Any idea?

GENTRY: I feel bad sometimes when I go up and down Delaware Street. You get one house, somebody takes one house and fixes it up, and then here goes another one. Now I understand Tom Twyman died night before last. Did you know that?

WILLIAMS: No, I didn't know that.

GENTRY: I don't think it's been in the paper yet.

WILLIAMS: Well, I remember you said he was ill. What do you think about the efforts that have been made to preserve the neighborhood?

GENTRY: Think about what now?

WILLIAMS: The efforts that have been made to preserve the neighborhood the way it was?

GENTRY: Well, it's going to be hard to do. But I think everybody is interested in keeping it in character. Susan Walter has gone a little overboard. [chuckling] And the Twyman house looks so bad.

WILLIAMS: Is that the one on the corner?

GENTRY: No, it's right across the street from Susan Walter's, back in there, and it looks pretty bad. Of course, Tom has been ill for a long time, and he never

was . . . His father was a doctor. There are five generations of Twyman doctors, starting out in eastern Jackson County, and he never was one who measured up. Tom just never measured up. I don't think he ever had much of a job or anything like that. His little wife worked all the time, but he never did anything to improve the house or . . . It just looks awful bad, I think.

WILLIAMS: You said earlier that people didn't talk about the Trumans?

GENTRY: Well, the Trumans, they sort of kept to themselves, as everybody knows. Of course, Mr. Truman was very friendly because he was a politician, and he was out patting them on the back and shaking hands. And Mrs. Truman did her best to be with him and make appearances when she should, but it just wasn't something that came natural for her, I don't think.

WILLIAMS: Do you think there was an attitude of the neighborhood trying to protect the Trumans from a lot of attention?

GENTRY: Well, yes, I think when the press started coming here, you know, and everything. And I remember like when Herbert Hoover, you know, told them they had better put the fence up because they'd be losing everything. And I remember when the first swarm of press who came. I remember a little gal that was from . . . a reporter, she was from down in Texas, and hid in the spirea bush under the parlor window there [chuckling] before she was flushed out.

WILLIAMS: I hadn't heard that.

GENTRY: But, you know, I'll tell you, when Inez Robb . . . Do you know who she

was? You all are too young.

WILLIAMS: Inez?

GENTRY: Inez Robb. She was a columnist, and she wrote a column which was published in the *Star*. One time our Theta Sigma Phi, now Women in Communications, had her as a guest speaker. And Judge Bundschu, you've heard about all his parties that he always had for the press, and he always invited me, and he had her for . . . She was a pretty thing. She was blonde, and she came one evening for dinner. I remember she had on a black taffeta dress, and I thought she was so beautiful. I called our photographer for the *Examiner* to come down, and I got a little story from her. And he said, "Where do you want her?" And I said, "Well, she just looks beautiful sitting there in front of that table." There was a big bunch of jonquils behind her there, and I thought, "Now, that's a beautiful setting. Take the picture right there." So the next morning after she was gone and I got the picture, why, the jonquils were growing right out of the top of her head. [laughter] I thought, "Well, I know better than that." But I said, "She just looks beautiful there."

WILLIAMS: Were there ever any other times that the press went a little bit overboard trying to get a good story, hiding in the bushes and . . .

GENTRY: Well, that was the thing I remember the most. But I remember talking to Inez Robb, and I said, "You know, I just am very upset with the press. They're just doing everything to . . ." And I remember this little thing, you know, and all the tricks they would try to do to talk to Mrs. Truman, and

she wouldn't talk to them. And I said, "They're condescending and . . ." I said, "Someday I'm going to . . ." And they say what they . . . They made fun of the local press, I think. They thought we were kind of country. And I said, "Someday I'm going to write a story about what I think of them." And Inez Robb put a whole column on that. And, you know, I never did do it. I guess I figured I had enough exposure without that.

WILLIAMS: So, in a way, you were there sort of as a buffer between the national press and . . .

GENTRY: Well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Truman always . . . she would talk to me. I remember one time Helen Ward Erskine, she was married to John Erskine, who was a writer, and she came . . . *Collier's* sent her to Independence to do a story on Bess Truman. Well, Mrs. Truman would not see her. So she came up to the *Examiner,* and I tried to help her as much as I could. So I called Mrs. Truman, and I said, "Mrs. Helen Ward Erskine is here, and *Collier's* sent her to do a story on you." She said, "I'm not going to see her." And I said, "Well, Mrs. Truman, she's going to write something, and so I'm trying to help her. Because if I don't tell her what's going on or give her correct information, she'll speculate"—you know how they do, and I said, "So I think . . ." "Well," she said, "all right." So I would tell her, and then I'd help Helen . . . And Mrs. Truman said, "Now I'll tell you . . ." And Nell Snead was up at the *Star*. She was the women's editor. She said, "I'll tell you and Nell Snead anything you want to know, but I am not going to talk to all those women." So, anyway, Helen Ward Erskine, she just tried

every way in the world. And when the Tuesday bridge club was going to meet, why, she was outside watching the ladies go in and all that sort of thing. And then finally, she even got on the same train Mrs. Truman got on going back to Washington, but she never did see her. So Helen Ward Erskine told me later—we corresponded—she said, "Well, I finally saw Bess Truman. I went to a reception that she gave some women writers at the White House." She said, "If I could just look into her eyes, so I know what I'm doing, you know, just get a little personality into my story . . ." So she finally saw her.

WILLIAMS: Why do you think Bess was so private like that?

GENTRY: I guess it was just her nature. Of course, coming after Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt, who was entirely different . . . But to me Mrs. Roosevelt was never offensive. I admired her, thought she was a very . . . She came and spoke in Independence once, and I remember Mr. Truman introduced her. She spoke out at William Chrisman High School, and I sat there, and I took down every word she said, and I thought it was the most wonderful speech I ever heard. You know, she talked about how we ought to . . . about the United Nations. Mr. Truman, you know, had appointed her a delegate to the United Nations, and she thought we ought to take China in. But I just thought it was the most wonderful thing, and I thought . . . And I had a story in the *Examiner* that long, and I was reading it not long ago, and I thought, "Gee, I couldn't do all that if I had to." [chuckling] You know, get it in one ear and out the other and down on paper.

WILLIAMS: That's what tape recorders are for.

GENTRY: Yes, they have those now, but, you see, I had to do it the hard way.

WILLIAMS: Do you think Mrs. Truman was misunderstood because she was so defensive against the press?

GENTRY: Yes.

WILLIAMS: She seems to have a reputation of being rather short with people.

GENTRY: I know. One time—I think I wrote that in here—that I was visiting with her, and Mr. Truman was just building the library, you know, and he said . . . When he moved down here and had an office—he was paying rent up there—you know, he said, and he moved down here. He was going to get free rent, he said. And Mrs. Truman said, "Mr. Truman tells me he's coming home for lunch every day now." I think I told that. And she said, "I don't ever eat lunch. I don't know what to serve him. He said, 'Well, just give me a roast beef sandwich and a glass of milk.'" She said, "He talks like we have roast beef in the refrigerator all the time." I sent that story to *Life* magazine . . . *Reader's Digest*, you know, a little thing, and they didn't use it. And I thought, "Well, now that's a good story." So a real well-known writer came. He came up to see me, and I told him that story, and he used it. [chuckling] And it was a syndicated story.

WILLIAMS: Well, did you have much contact with Mrs. Truman toward the end of her life?

GENTRY: Yes. Well, not after she was sick, I really didn't.

WILLIAMS: Did you have to go through Valeria?

GENTRY: No, I would . . . Well, May Wallace was mostly my contact then. And I always sent her a Christmas card, and you know she always answered it, always "thank you for our Christmas card."

WILLIAMS: Was Mr. Truman as private, do you think, as Mrs. Truman was?

GENTRY: Oh, no, he was great. Did I show you what he said on a picture he autographed for me?

WILLIAMS: No. We can look at that.

GENTRY: I'll show you. He was very friendly, and he always made me feel like the story I was after was just as important as those guys from New York.

WILLIAMS: That must have made you feel good.

GENTRY: And then another time: he'd been ill, and I went out to the office, and I said, "Mr. Truman, any news this morning?" And he was sitting at his desk reading a letter—I think maybe I told you this—it was from Herbert Hoover?

WILLIAMS: I'm trying to remember.

GENTRY: Well, he handed me this letter, and it was from Herbert Hoover, and Mr. Hoover was thanking him for being so kind to him when he was in the White House. Hoover referred to the fact that he'd offered to do something for President Roosevelt, and he ignored him. And so he handed me that letter, and I read it, and I said, "Mr. President, may I make an item out of this?" And he said, "Sue, I'm giving you a scoop, and you don't know it." [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Did you ever put any items in the paper about his Harpie [Club] meetings or

anything like that?

GENTRY: The Harpie Club?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

GENTRY: No, really, because that was kind of a little private deal, and I wouldn't have tried to write something about that, not being there.

WILLIAMS: Well, did you ever have much contact with the Secret Service when they were around?

GENTRY: Not really.

WILLIAMS: They were cooperative, though?

GENTRY: They seemed to be, and they became friends with all the people that walked by the house, a lot of people. I've gotten stories from people that did contact the Secret Service, because they were out in front every day and they'd walk by there, some of the old gentlemen. [gap in recording] There were always some wonderful stories that people told about young folks, and I thought now . . . Maude Louise Hartman, they lived in the house where the Meltons live now? And she grew up there, and I remember . . . She's told me some things, and I've forgotten them now, but she and I write all the time. She lives in Colorado, and I was getting ready to write her a note—it was her birthday—and I thought, "Well, I'm just going to write to her and say, [Do you remember anything about . . .]" See, this was along years ago, before he became president, and she might have a little story to tell. Then, Barbara Baird, who used to live down here, she's a musician in New York. I thought I'd write to her and ask her if she has something to

contribute.

WILLIAMS: That would be good. Well, Connie, do you have any questions?

ODUM-SOPER: Only one, I think. First of all, I love to listen to you talk. This has really been a treat, and difficult for me because this is Jim's show, and I don't want to interrupt. How long have you been associated with the historical society?

GENTRY: It was founded in 1940, and then it kind of fizzled out, and so it was reorganized in 1958.

ODUM-SOPER: And Judge Bundschu was part of that, right?

GENTRY: Well, yes, but Howard Adams is the one who really did it.

ODUM-SOPER: That's right, that's right.

GENTRY: Adams Dairy.

ODUM-SOPER: When did Mr. Truman contribute that first county record book that he had rebound, and we used to keep it in the safe, remember?

GENTRY: Well, now, I don't know. I don't know when . . . I never was clear on when that was done, because he said . . . I remember we made him an honorary member, a life member, at the first meeting out at the Truman Library in January 1958, and he said that he found this old first records of the county court laying up there in the attic, and he had it rebound. I remember some people . . . I don't know whether he kept it or whether they ever gave it back.

ODUM-SOPER: We have it.

GENTRY: You have it?

ODUM-SOPER: Oh, I don't.

GENTRY: The Truman Library?

ODUM-SOPER: The archives have it.

GENTRY: The archives have it?

ODUM-SOPER: Yes.

GENTRY: Well, sure, I didn't know. You're sure the archives have it?

ODUM-SOPER: Well, they did in 1985. I know that.

GENTRY: Well, I know the county had some stuff, too, and I didn't know whether . . . I really didn't know.

ODUM-SOPER: Was he ever active at all in the historical society?

GENTRY: Well, I'll tell you, the thing he did, you see, we had a . . . When we finally got the old jail in our name from the county, from the American Legion, why, they had a drive to raise enough money to restore it, or to use it for a headquarters for the historical society. And Mr. Truman, you know, made the first call, and he called . . . Hall, Joyce Hall. And Joyce Hall gave a check for $1,000, so that was our first check. So he did that. You know, we met at the Truman Library so much, and of course Dr. Brooks helped us when we set up our archives so we knew what we were doing. We did it according to Hoyle.

ODUM-SOPER: Thank you. I wondered about that. And I didn't have anything else, really.

WILLIAMS: Do you think there's still an attitude among the people that knew the Trumans not to talk about them or give away any secrets?

GENTRY: Well, you see, the generation that really knew them, they're gone. You know, when I look around . . . I used to have people I could ask when I wanted to know something. There was Colonel Southern, Mr. Sam Woodson, Stanley Gregg, people I could ask. Now they're asking me, because I've outlived all the reporters that were around when Harry Truman was a judge on the old county court. And you know this book that David McCullough is writing, I think that's going to be great.

WILLIAMS: It's supposed to be out at the end of the year.

GENTRY: Well, it's not going to be out . . . He was here, you know, a couple of weeks ago, and he told me that he would be finished absolutely with it by October, and then it would take all this time for the proofreading and the printing and all that stuff. He said it would probably . . . The historical society is going to have an autograph party for him, and we've made arrangements with him, talking with him and the publisher, and it will be sometime in the spring.

WILLIAMS: Well, I'll be sure to get a copy from you.

GENTRY: I knew him first . . . It was '82 when he came. It's the first time I had a contact. Dr. Zobrist, when he has to go back that far, why, he sends them to see me because, you know, there's nobody left now. So David McCullough came to see me in '82 and I thought, "Oh, Lord, another book on Harry Truman." But, you know, when he came he was so pleasant and so good-looking, and in five minutes I was telling him everything I knew. [chuckling] When I knew he was coming, and I knew he was an important

writer, and I meant to run out to the library and get a rundown on him, but I didn't get it done. So when he came, I was kind of cold, but he put me at ease, and then he told me that he had done Teddy Roosevelt, *Mornings on Horseback*. Have you read that?

WILLIAMS: No.

GENTRY: You ought to read it. It's wonderful. I always admired Teddy Roosevelt. Like he said, this is an . . . "I'm going to do an in-depth story on Mr. Truman." He said, "Margaret has written her book, and she's told it like she wanted it, and Mr. Truman has written his memoirs, and he told it like he wanted it." He said, "I'm going to do an in-depth story, warts and all." And so then he mentioned this *Mornings on Horseback* and asked me had I read it. And I had to say I hadn't. So he goes out and buys one and brings it to me. Well, when I was reading it, I knew what he meant. Because, you know, Teddy Roosevelt had asthma when he was a child, and it was quite a struggle till he was older, and so David McCullough made a . . . he made a thorough study on asthma, so he knew what he was talking about. And then Teddy Roosevelt, see, the elder Roosevelt, they were an affluent family, and he took the family to Europe, and they stayed a whole year, took all the servants and the whole family. And young Teddy would write to his grandmother and to his aunts, so he had those letters. He had everything. It was just really a wonderful book. So I thought, "Well, he'll do a story on Mr. Truman. It'll be just that good," and I know it will be.

[End #4315; Begin #4316]

WILLIAMS: I think I have one more question. In this interview at the Truman Library, you talk about the Palmer School. Could you just talk about that so we have it on tape?

GENTRY: Yes. The Palmer School, it was named for . . . Oh, I was on the school naming committee that the school board appointed, and it's called a junior high school. I thought it ought to be named for Palmer, because Mr. Palmer was the superintendent of schools and Mrs. Palmer was his [Harry Truman's] teacher, and so we got that done. Then I was also on the committee when Truman High School was named. And we were going along pretty good there and . . . [gap in tape]

WILLIAMS: . . . and I promise we'll be finished.

GENTRY: Well, on this, I'll just tell you this on this Truman High School when we were trying to name it. Well, I was for naming it for Mr. Truman because, you know, he'd come home then. There were two Republicans on the committee, and they weren't about to call it Harry Truman. They wanted to call it like Independence South or something—you know, a real dumb name like that. So there was a little girl in Truman High School who thought it should be Truman, so she campaigned real good there. But I was always amused that these two Republicans, [chuckling] they weren't going to have it named for Harry Truman, even though he graduated from the Independence schools and had become President of the United States. I thought, "How could you be so stupid?" [pause] Say when. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Okay, the Palmer School. [telephone rings and interview is interrupted]

WILLIAMS: Okay, the Palmer School.

GENTRY: The Palmer School. Well, now, of course, I didn't know this, and it wouldn't have been important to me at the time, but Harry Truman and . . . Well, I guess this was before I was born. [chuckling] Harry Truman and Charlie Ross were students at the old Ott School, and they were building the new high school, and the school board had asked the citizens to approve a bond issue. Charlie Ross and Harry Truman were not old enough to vote, but they wanted this new high school to go to when they became of high school age, so they campaigned for the bond issue, and it passed. Now, that's the story I remember.

WILLIAMS: And that's the school that is now Palmer?

GENTRY: Called Palmer. And that was Independence High School, the first high school. And Professor Bryant, who had been president of Woodland College right over here—you know, where the Bryant School is—he became the first principal, and that was in . . . Well, it was just before the turn of the century, because the Trumans had graduated, and Charlie Ross in 1901.

WILLIAMS: And what about . . . you were saying you were on the naming committee. When was that?

GENTRY: Oh, well, quite a bit later. There were four schools in Independence, like called Southeast, Northeast Junior High School, and they thought they ought to have names and could be named after somebody who was prominent. So I figured out four of them, and they took my suggestions on

all of them. One of them was Palmer Junior High, which I thought was great because Mr. and Mrs. Truman had graduated . . . Of course the school burned, but the new school, but they had graduated from a school on that very spot, the Independence High School. Mr. and Mrs. Truman were in the class, and Mr. Palmer was the superintendent of schools, and Mrs. Palmer was their teacher. So I thought Palmer was a natural, so we got that done. And the other was Proctor School down there, May Wallace's grandfather, and that was done. And then one was Randall School out here—Mrs. Randall was on the school board. And the other was . . . I don't remember that. Oh, Blackburn. Yes, Professor Blackburn.

WILLIAMS: Well, thank you very much, again.

GENTRY: Well, I know I rattled.

WILLIAMS: No, you're always a great help.

GENTRY: I rattled and gotten off the . . . strayed from the subject. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Can we take a look at that picture you mentioned?

GENTRY: Oh, yes. Do you want to unhook me?

WILLIAMS: Can we leave it on? You said there was an inscription.

GENTRY: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: I'd like to maybe get that [on tape].

GENTRY: Here it is on the wall here.

WILLIAMS: [reading inscription] "Sue Gentry, Kindest regards to a great newspaper woman, from an admirer for her accurate reporting. Harry S. Truman, 3/6/63." That's something to be proud of.

GENTRY: Yes, you can't do better than that.

WILLIAMS: My father has his lodge card signed by Mr. Truman, but it's nothing as grand as that, out there at the Grandview Lodge, you know.

GENTRY: Well, here's Mary Paxton Keeley's picture. I used it in the journal. You see the journal?

ODUM-SOPER: Not any more.

GENTRY: Well, I'll get you one. I did a little story in there about us going to reprint the book, so I had a little space and I asked Bill for a picture. So he brought me this painting. This was in her early days. Then this is one . . . This is not a very good picture. It wasn't anything I could use, but Bill brought it. She wore her hair cut real short, you know, real close- clipped, and she wore clodhopper shoes and, you know, she was very plain. She was a character herself, she said.

ODUM-SOPER: Yes.

GENTRY: You want to undo me? Oh, I'm really tangled up. [chuckling]

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX

1. Golden anniversary article by Sue Gentry in *The Examiner*, 1969.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

SUE GENTRY

JUNE 18, 1991

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1991-2

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4313-4316

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

EDITORIAL NOTICE

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted for Harry S Truman National Historic Site. After a draft of this transcript was made, the park provided a copy to the interviewee and requested that he or she return the transcript with any corrections or modifications that he or she wished to be included in the final transcript. The interviewer, or in some cases another qualified staff member, also reviewed the draft and compared it to the tape recordings. The corrections and other changes suggested by the interviewee and interviewer have been incorporated into this final transcript. The transcript follows as closely as possible the recorded interview, including the usual starts, stops, and other rough spots in typical conversation. The reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word. Stylistic matters, such as punctuation and capitalization, follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition. The transcript includes bracketed notices at the end of one tape and the beginning of the next so that, if desired, the reader can find a section of tape more easily by using this transcript.

Sue Gentry 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.

RESTRICTION

ABSTRACT

Sue Gentry, a resident of Independence since 1924, worked as a reporter for the Independence *Examiner* for over sixty years. During much of that time she served as a press liaison for the Trumans. Harry S Truman occasionally provided Gentry with "scoops," which she describes in the interview. Gentry also discusses the evolution of Independence society and activities in the city from the 1930s until the 1990s.

Persons mentioned: Harvey Helm Gentry, Nettie B. Gentry, Harvey Gentry, Andrew Gentry, John Paxton, Bill Paxton, Richard Gentry, Mary Shaw Branton, Overton Gentry, Mary Paxton Keely, John G. Paxton, Charles G. Ross, Harry S Truman, Joy Patterson, James Kemper, Arthur Grissom, Julia Woods, William Woods, H. L. Mencken, Mary Gentry Paxton, "Shady" McLaren, Georgia Shumate, Cammie Johnson, Bess W. Truman, David Willock Wallace, William Southern, Spencer Salisbury, Rufus Burrus, May Wallace, Natalie Ott Wallace, Margaret Truman Daniel, Margaret Fullerton, Ellen Bidstrup, Fran Bayse, Dorothy DeTray, Ardis Haukenberry, Adelaide Twyman, Mag Noel, Mary Gentry Shaw, Eleanor Crow, Linda King, Lucy Peters, Edna Hutchison, Thelma Palette, Marjorie Balfour Martin, Benedict K. Zobrist, Morris Kemp, Elizabeth Safly, Ethel Noland, Mary Jane Truman, George Pendergast Wallace, D. Frederick Wallace, Margaret Bryant, Margaret Louise Ott, Albert Ott, Verna Ott, Frank Gates Wallace, Christine M. Wallace, David Frederick Wallace, Jr., Marian Wallace Brasher, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, John McDonald, Merle Miller, Ella Noland, Jody Ragland, Ruth Ragland, Truman Ragland, James Allen Southern, Bob Ragland, John Ragland, J. Vivian Truman, Rose Conway, Nellie Noland, Robert Browning, Matilda Brown, Lawrence M. Proctor, Mary O'Reilly, Walter Cronkite, Susan Walter, Tom Twyman, Inez Robb, Henry A. Bundschu, John Erskine, Nell Snead, Helen Ward Erskine, Eleanor Roosevelt, Herbert C. Hoover, Maude Louise Hartman, Barbara Baird, Howard Adams, Joyce C. Hall, Philip C. Brooks, Sam Woodson, Stanley Gregg, David McCullough, Theodore Roosevelt, Grace Minor, Eleanor Minor, and Valeria LaMere.