

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
ANDY & GEORGIA N. CLARK GRAY

DECEMBER 19, 1985

TOPEKA, KANSAS

INTERVIEWED BY STEVE HARRISON

ORAL HISTORY #1985-15

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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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ABSTRACT

Georgia Neese Clark Gray (1898-1995), a former bank president and Democratic National Committee Woman from Richland, Kansas, was appointed by Harry S Truman as the first female Treasurer of the United States. Her husband was Andrew J. "Andy" Gray (1912-1994), a journalist and press agent. Though she was Treasurer of the United States the personal relationship between the Grays and Trumans did not begin until Mrs. Gray was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library in the late 1950s and was making frequent visits to Independence. Among the things discussed in their interview are why they feel that the close friendship developed, their many visits to the Truman Home, birthday gatherings, social outings, gifts and postcards to the Trumans from their travels, and the funeral of Harry S Truman.

Persons mentioned: Harry S Truman, Bess Truman, Valeria LaMere, John Snyder, Norm Reigle, President John F. Kennedy, Rose Connelly, Richard Nixon, President Lyndon Johnson, Mike Westwood, Margaret Truman, Thomas Hart Benton, Matthew Piedmonts, and Ted Kennedy.

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
ANDY AND GEORGIA NEESE CLARK GRAY**

HSTR INTERVIEW #1985-15

STEVE HARRISON: This is an interview with Andy and Georgia Neese Clark Gray. It's being conducted at their home in Topeka, Kansas, on December 19th, 1985. The interview is being conducted by Steve Harrison of the National Park Service. The thing that the National Park Service is interested in is that the Trumans seem to have led a pretty private life, you know, inside their home, and it's difficult for those of us who are responsible for managing the home now, presenting it to the public, to really feel like we're doing a good job presenting it. But the only way that we can really get the kind of information that will help us present it better is by talking to people who knew the Trumans personally and who were in the home for various reasons, 'cause we've talked to people who cleaned the house for them, people who were nurses for Mrs. Truman, and there are a variety of people who were actually in the house, spent time with the Trumans.

ANDY GRAY: They do talk to that companion that was with her in—

HARRISON: Valeria LaMere.

GEORGIA GRAY: Yes, Valeria.

MR. GRAY: She knows her. He knows her. Valeria does.

HARRISON: So that's the kinds of things I'm interested in. I told Mr. Gray we don't expect anything too earth-shattering today or anything like that, but just little things that would help us, things that you might remember, that sort of thing. I do have some things in mind, but to go back—

MR. GRAY: Well, why don't you go over what the scope and so forth.

HARRISON: That's pretty much it. It's just to try to find out more about—generally what association with the Trumans was and, you know, time that you went to the house and what kinds of things happened and that sort of thing. But I'm interested, Mrs. Gray, in how you became associated with the Trumans.

MR. GRAY: Well, Georgia was the democratic—

MRS. GRAY: National Committee Woman.

MR. GRAY: National Committee Woman for Kansas from 1936 on. And that's where she had some political affiliation with the Trumans. But nothing in a personal way.

And then he appointed her the first woman Treasurer of the United States.

HARRISON: When were you appointed Treasurer and how did that happen?

MRS. GRAY: Well, I was the Democratic National Committee Woman and when Mr. Tillion died, who was the Treasurer of the United States, and Truman had been appointing women, and he and Mrs. Edwards—and Mrs. India Edwards was the Vice Chair Woman of the Democratic National Committee—and so they discussed it and decided that it would be good to have a woman. And so he said, "Well, find me someone."

Well, in her files and in the Democratic National Committee files, if you were a National Committee Man or a National Committee Woman or a State Chairman or a State Vice Chairman you always send in resumes and descriptions of people that would either fill good jobs or would make speeches and campaign, you know, and I came up in the files two or three different times, and I was President of the bank. It was a small town bank and I was President of a corporation. And I'd been the National Committee Woman since the year '32.

And so—I was elected National Committee Woman in '36, and she took my name—

MR. GRAY: Georgia?

MRS. GRAY: What?

MR. GRAY: I think that you should be brief—

HARRISON: No, that's fine. Well.

MR. GRAY: All right, go ahead.

HARRISON: It's up to you. It doesn't bother me, though. I've got plenty of tape and plenty of time, so it's up to you.

MR. GRAY: All right, but they're more interested in—you're just laying the groundwork for how you were appointed the first woman Treasurer of the United States, and Georgia's association with the Trumans was not an intimate or close one when she was in Washington.

Now, President Truman had been into Kansas a couple of times when he was senator, and then after he returned as the former president. But

Georgia worked very hard and was very conscious of the fact that she was the first woman to receive such an honor and appointment and she really worked. And the best testament to that is that at public gatherings, whenever Georgia and President Truman were there, he always mentioned how Georgia was a hard worker, because that word “work” meant a great deal to President Truman, especially when you know his background, with the farming and the energy he put into it when he was a county executive and so forth.

While he had a [unintelligible] tolerance for people who might be characterized as in the “hangers-on” area, he never—inwardly, and within the family, they never got very much expressions of regard, let me put it that way.

So, with that foundation, they would say—Georgia never got what they call “Potomac fever,” that is, you go to Washington and you get acclimated to the life and the association with the power and perhaps you have some yourself and then you never want to go back to Podunk or Topeka or back home.

Now, as you know, the best example is the fact that President Truman and Mrs. Truman just packed up and went down to the railroad station and went home, and that’s where they wanted to be and that’s where they spent some of the best years of their lives. There is a—219 North Delaware Street.

I remember the address because in the '50s, '60s, and '70s, Georgia and I traveled quite a bit and wherever we went, whether it was in Europe or Russia, no matter where, we always sent them a postcard. And if they knew that we had been out of town somewhere and they didn't get a card, they would say, "What happened?" But I imagine the cards are somewhere, Mr. Curator, in the—because they kept things like that.

Well, Georgia, of course, gave up the post when Eisenhower was elected. She came home to Kansas and she had quite a few business interests here, and I lived in Washington; we commuted for a couple of years and decided that Kansas was where we should be in order to take care of Georgia's interests.

Well, President Truman on occasion would get invitations to speak in Kansas, especially one of his favorite forums was high school. You're probably aware of that. High school, junior colleges, and of course college students, because he wanted to, as he put it, "tell people how the American system works and what the Presidency meant." You know that over the library and the museum, they have what the six or seven functions of the Presidency, they did have, because besides being President he was a party leader and so forth and so on.

Well, when President Truman would get these invitations he would call Georgia and say, "Should I accept?" And because in one sense it was regard for getting into somebody else's political territory and besides that, he did feel friendly enough with Georgia. And whenever he would come

and he would accept an invitation, he would always say, “I want you people there.” So we would go, oh maybe – we probably went to a half dozen or more of them.

Well, during that time—I’m talking now about the late ’50s and ’60s, Georgia was nominated to the Board of Trustees of the Harry S. Truman Library. We would go down to meetings there—as a matter of fact, we were there at the groundbreaking and we were there at the dedication of the building. And we would always call and ask if we could come by and, as they say, “pay our respects,” there at the house. And I must say that there’s never been a time in my memory that the Trumans ever said, “I’m sorry, we’re busy.”

MRS. GRAY: That’s right.

MR. GRAY: And as time went on, and we became really good friends and we visited more frequently, there never was a time when – the only thing that would interfere with it was Mrs. Truman’s hairdressing appointment. That was on a certain day and nothing would interfere with that, and that was a given, so to speak.

Well, I would think that over the 20-year period we had visited the Truman home probably close to a hundred times, just as a guest. And that in the later years, we went down more and more frequently, especially when Mrs. Truman had survived President Truman’s death, and we more or less wanted to give her as much support as we could.

Now, one of the reasons that the Trumans and Grays developed this warm friendship was that whenever we went down to the Truman house, especially in the years following his return to Independence, when he was still a viable political person, there would always be the reporters outside the iron gate and they would ask us, you know, "What did Truman say?" and we were always noncommittal and said, "Well, why don't you ask the president?" And the Trumans were very sensitive about their relationship with people who would, you know, pat their backs and so forth and leave and say, "Well, you know, Harry and I are like that," you know, the two fingers, you know, and what Harry said. We made it a practice never to in a sense carry tales or aggrandize the privilege of visiting the Trumans. And they somehow became conscious of that, that we were not talebearers or that we were not climbers, let's put it that way, that we genuinely liked and respected them and then, on that basis, why we were invited more and more to the home.

As testimony of our closeness, at President Truman's funeral services, and Mrs. Truman's funeral, we were invited as part of the family group, which astounded and delighted us because we had maybe just been conscious of the fact that we were considered to be in that category.

When we would go to the Truman home, Mr. Truman usually was in a little room, little library, so-called, where he had the books up to your armpits on each side of the desk, you know, it was a booklined study with the outlook, I think it's on Truman Avenue, is it? And every birthday we

would go down. That was a must, each year. Where we would have a little gathering. John Snyder, who was the Secretary to the Treasury would always be there, and President Truman and Mrs. Truman and maybe one or two other people. But this was a private little birthday gathering that went on year after year after year.

We have some pictures here. We have a little mini-museum here in the house which I'll show you, and we had pictures taken at this birthday gathering over—not every year, but scattered, and then—

HARRISON: When did those birthday gatherings begin?

MR. GRAY: Oh, I would say in the late '50s. In the late '50s.

HARRISON: Did they coincide with the completion of the Library at all or —

MR. GRAY: Well, they were coincidental to them. Now, Georgia and I, we were married after Georgia resigned as Treasurer of the United States, and they didn't know me at all. And, as a matter of fact, once when we got to know each other better, they'd say, "You know, we wondered about you because we thought a lot of Georgia, but we didn't know anything about you." Well, it turned out that it became more or less of a joke.

HARRISON: When were you married?

MR. GRAY: We were married in '53, early in—I think it was February, wasn't it?

MRS. GRAY: Latter part of—

MR. GRAY: Or March or something. Anyway, I remember once, our 20th wedding anniversary, which would make it what?

MRS. GRAY: '70.

MR. GRAY: '70? It could have—this could be about—we decided to have a little party at the Commerce Bank in the private dining room, and we invited the Trumans. And we went down and picked them up, and they gave us a set for mixing martinis. And neither Georgia nor I had martinis, but we still keep that little martini set.

The Truman house really never changed over the years. I mean, what you see now is what was there, as I understand it. We haven't seen it since it's been renovated, but I must tell you that everybody that's been down there says that the National Park Service has done a superb job with it. I'll get in a plug for you.

HARRISON: Thank you. We do the best we can.

MR. GRAY: And Norman Reigle has asked us to come any time and he'd open it up for us, but—

HARRISON: Call us, and we'd be glad to have you.

MR. GRAY: Anyway,—

HARRISON: Why do you think—if you know, why do you think the Trumans sort of kept their house the same all those years?

MR. GRAY: They had no sense of being phony or pretentious. If it hadn't been for their prominence I don't think they ever would have allowed that fence to go up with the electric gate, but they had to do it. As you know, the Secret Service took that little cottage across the street and during the—over a period of time, that house was under surveillance at all times. And, of course, the FBI people became very fond of the Trumans. They would

check on them and the Truman family had a very low tolerance for being protected, you know. They felt that they were just going to live their lives as normally as possible and they did, to a great degree.

We went down there in every season of the year. We've been on the back porch, that was the favorite place in the springtime. If you're aware that they have wonderful lilac bushes and forsythia. The kitchen in a sense was half old-fashioned and half modern, but there was none of this electronic marvel stuff, you know, all the French—you know, all these utensils they use for cooking and so forth. They had their own cook over many years. Their eating habits were very, very simple. We had never really eaten there. Of course, we were always offered a drink, maybe a cookie or something like that, as an act of hospitality.

MRS. GRAY: We used to go out to dinner.

MR. GRAY: I'm trying to think, after the president died, we made a promise to ourselves that we would go down to visit Mrs. Truman if she would have us just to say hello, and as I mentioned to you, she always raised the level on her voice and you could tell she would be glad, really glad to see us.

As I told you, we would travel a little bit and in our travels, I'd try to pick up little mementos, little gadgets. One particularly, when she was more or less an invalid. I happened to be in a store, I don't know where, and they had a little music box that was so operated, I don't know whether they still have it, and I asked the vendor what tunes it had. And he said, "You Are My Sunshine." [see Appendix 1]

So anyway, we were visiting and I brought out this little box and I went through a great—well, you'd call it a warm-up in show business, you know, of this mysterious, marvelous thing, and I explained to her this is something she had never seen before, you know, [unintelligible] atomic energy plants, she's been to Greece, but this is something. And I unwrapped it and walked across the room to the south side of the house and put it on the floor where the sun was streaming through the curtains and of course it played "You Are My Sunshine."

Well, we all got a laugh out of that and [unintelligible] was just a good laugh. And I picked it up and put it on the little table that she had by the chair she was sitting in. Well, we always made it a practice never to stay too long, but as it turned out we could apparently never outwear our welcome, because both of them always persuaded, "Well, why do you have to go along?" But we didn't want to tire them.

And anyway, when I was leaving them this particular time with Mrs. Truman, and we were saying our adieus and so forth, she turned to me and looked up at me and she said, "Andy, would you do me a favor?" I said, "Well, you know it." She said, "Would you play that music box just once more before you go." And of course, I did.

Now, as I told you, we had not been in the house since the renovation, but one year I decided—Mrs. Truman could not travel in this period. I remember once she went to Washington to visit Margaret and we were visiting with her after they had returned. And we asked them how the

trip was and so forth, and Mrs. Truman said she enjoyed it and how she went out for lunch one day with Margaret and some friends and the next day in the gossip column, Washington cost, I assume, is a mention that Mrs. Harry S. Truman was having lunch and holding in her hand something that looked suspiciously like a martini.

Well, she mentioned this. She said, “There’s nothing to be suspicious about. It was a martini and I’d have told them if they’d asked me.” I mean, this was the tenor of the association we had with them.

Now, under—

HARRISON: Let me change the—

[End #3103; Begin #3104]

HARRISON: This Tape 2 of 4, a recorded interview with Andy Gray in Topeka, Kansas, on December 19th, 1985. You just finish telling the story about Mrs. Truman and the martini in Washington.

MR. GRAY: Yeah. But something always pleased Georgia and me. It could have been the year—oh, I mentioned that Mrs. Truman got to the point where she could not travel back to Washington or New York to visit Margaret. It was too much for her. And I think the first year I became aware of the fact that in a sense—and Margaret would come out and visit and maybe one or two of the boys, but it was around Christmas time and a thought struck me that there would be no Christmas tree in the Truman house.

Well, I looked around and there was this exquisite little bejeweled Christmas tree. It was, as they put it, “high class,” and it was encased in the

glass globe and I brought it down and Georgia and I said, “Now you have a Christmas Tree, Merry Christmas.”

Well, subsequently when we visited we were amazed to see that this Christmas tree was a centerpiece on the mantle on the south side of the living room, and as far as I know, it is still there and apparently it became a treasured memento to her. Of course, that pleased us no end, you know, it would be there all year round.

I'll tell you another good little story about Mrs. Truman. You know, women's jewelry, they go through fads and this one particular period, all the girls were wearing #1 trinkets, you know, with the chains around the neck. And I happened to run across one that—it was good quality Venetian glass, you know, the colors, and I gave one to Georgia and then we were visiting Mrs. Truman and this particular time we were in the President's study because she was sitting right across from me and Georgia was on the right. And, you know, I addressed her very seriously. I said, “Mrs. Truman, I'm going to do something that at the very least it's very hazardous. I'm going to give you something and it may cause a little bit of ripple, maybe some friction in my immediate family. As you notice, Georgia has this #1. And I'm going to give you a #1 too. But I don't want you girls to quarrel at all.” Very quickly she said, “Don't worry about that, Andy,” she said, “Georgia can be #1 in Kansas and I'll be #1 in Missouri.”

We used to go out to eat, Old Steak and Ale, you know, it was a highway 40. And we would be driven over there by one of the FBI men.

And it always amused me because it was heavily patronized and there was no parking. But we would drive up on the side entrance and the car would pull up, back right out, and we would drive right in. And I said, “Geez, this is wonderful. Great living.” What the FBI did was call ahead and preempt the parking.

Well, we go in and there’d be just the three of us and the waitress would come along and say, “Would anyone like a cocktail?” Mrs. Truman would say, “Well, of course I would. I’d like an oldfashioned.” She really wouldn’t drink it, but she wanted to show the world that she still had the old spunk.

To my knowledge, she never drank it. She may—I don’t think I can recall ever seeing her lift the glass.

HARRISON: At the restaurant or at—

MR. GRAY: That’s right. Now, at home, at the twilight hour, President and Mrs. Truman would have a cocktail, you know—he liked bourbon and branch water. And there’s always been some question about what his favorite bourbon was, but I can tell you with certainty, Old Yellow Strong. That I know, that was his preference.

Now, if someone gave him some bourbon, he might say, just to be accommodating, he might say, “Ah, that’s my favorite brand.” But it really wasn’t. It really wasn’t.

HARRISON: So in the evenings then he favored bourbon and water—

MR. GRAY: What we call branch water. That was the old politicians' potion, you know.
Now,—

HARRISON: What did Mrs. Truman like to have?

MR. GRAY: She would have the same thing, as far as I know. She may have had scotch instead of bourbon, but I'm not quite sure.

I remember once we were out in Hutchison and President Truman was the speaker at the Democratic—it was either a convention or a big dinner, and it was right at the heart of the Bay of Pigs crisis. And they had a suite and we were up at the suite and the press were there and so forth, and I had a bottle of Old Yellow stored in the butler's pantry, and when it got close to time to go down to speak, the President went out to the butler's pantry, uncorked the bottle, and he just took—you know, when you take a drink from a bottle you're not going to get more than a half ounce, just enough to clear his throat.

And one of the things I said to him—oh, someone said, "There's a phone call for you from President Kennedy." And I said, "President Truman, you got all kinds of press here. And me, I'm not telling you how to play it, but whatever you say will be picked up right away." And he always appreciated that. You know, it would save him a pitfall.

I drove him from Hutchison back to Independence. We were going down the turnpike, and I was on the turnpike authority. I don't know at that time or not but as you know, they have bridges that have numbers on them? Suddenly he turned to me, he said, "How come they have number 284 there

and then the next one is 305?" I didn't know. I said, "I'll find out for you." So I called the headquarters in Wichita. They number the underpasses of the culverts and so forth and so on so they still [unintelligible].

And that same trip, just to make conversation, a mutual friend, a dull mutual friend of ours was married in Kansas City, and we were at the wedding, the Trumans and—so, just to make conversation I said, "You know, that was an interesting church where the wedding was." I said, "Architecturally I thought it was quite attractive." He says, "It looked like a sales barn to me." That was just noncommittal, you know. That was it. "It looked like a sales..."

Now, we used to visit him over the office too, fairly frequently. And, of course, Rose Connelly, we knew Rose. You knew of Rose?

HARRISON: I've heard her name.

MR. GRAY: She's a wonderful woman, wonderful. And this [unintelligible] in many respects, very protective of them, but you know Nixon came out once and, you know, he played the piano—oh, he gave a piano to the Trumans and he donated it to the library. I'm sure I didn't hallucinate this or dream it, but it seems to me that somewhere along the line the Trumans were discussing the piano and one of them, I don't think I know—well, he gave us a second piano. Not the first one. You know, not the prime one they had in the White House. He gave them what in a sense was a copy.

Of course, he had no great love for Nixon.

We were down to the library when Lyndon Johnson was out to sign the Medicare. I think we have a picture of the signing of—you ask me some questions.

HARRISON: [Unintelligible] Trumans talk about, like Nixon visited the home, in addition to being at the library he visited the Trumans at their home, and other people would too. Did the Trumans ever indicate to you how they felt about having those kinds of people come visit them at the home?

MR. GRAY: The Trumans always felt—the word isn't obligation, but they should be as warm and as friendly and as hospitable to anyone, no matter for what their interference.

Now, we have been with the Trumans when Margaret was there, when they would get into quite heated discussions about what motion picture was best or what tv program, and it would get kind of heated. And because I tell you, each one of them had a mind – well, the President did and the girls did too, but they had discussions and you might have even called them little quarrels about certain – it could be anything. But when they went out in the world, they were united in their viewpoints. Absolutely united.

HARRISON: Just to go back to a couple of things right now before we get too far away.

The music box, do you recall where you bought that and when?

MR. GRAY: I think I bought it in Topeka at a florist shop. It would be somewhere around maybe '70. When did President Truman die?

HARRISON: Right around Christmas, '72.

MR. GRAY: Well, this would be maybe around '74, something like that.

HARRISON: Did you give it to her for any special occasion or just—

MR. GRAY: No, no. I would pick up these little things. For example, I was out in Las Vegas once, and I looked around for something to bring back to President Truman because he was going to have a birthday. And I went by a craps table and saw one of the sticks, you know, croupier sticks. So I went up to the croupier and said, "I'd like to buy one." Well, it threw him into shock, you know, what was I trying to do?

So he referred me to the floor man. "Oh, we couldn't sell one," and so forth, and "Why do you want it?" you know. And I asked for the next [unintelligible] obvious that I couldn't buy a croupier stick, I got inwardly angry. I said, "I'll get one."

I went to the phone book and looked under "Gaming Supplies," and took a cab. I remember, it cost me about 8 bucks for a cab. And I got a croupier stick. So with mock ceremony at the birthday party, you know I had a little bourbon, I said, "Here's a souvenir for you from Las Vegas, Mr. President." He said, "What is it?" Now, there's Harry Truman, supposed to be a gambling man, but outside of those cards in a deck I don't think – now that I think of it, I never heard of him shooting craps in the army.

This might be interesting. You know, President Truman had, you know, a reputation for using low if not vile language and you know that famous story about Mrs. Truman being—cleaning up his language, you know, about "Why doesn't he use manure?" You know, [unintelligible].

We were out at the country club. Somehow we invited I think it was one of Mrs. Truman's women's groups out at a club down there, the [unintelligible]. And we got there a little bit early and the Trumans were there and in the foyer were seated four or five of the women. And it was on more or less like a bench and there was a very definite lull. There was no conversation. You could see that the President obviously had been dragged to please Mrs. Truman. And finally someone exchanged some kind of pleasantry with Truman and he responded and in this response he used the expression, "son of a bitch," clearly, unmistakably.

And, you know, I was watching. And I could read his eyes. He was looking for effect. And I know exactly what he was thinking, "I'm sending these ladies home and they'll go home and tell their husbands they met the real Harry Truman."

Georgia will tell you, he never used—now, among men he might use some, but I tell you, you talk about the traditional southern courtliness and so forth with women, Georgia was unique in my opinion. He, of course, knew thousands of women, you know, in politics and so forth, but there was always an invisible yardstick, and Georgia was one of the few women I knew of that he really felt some sympathy with, you know, and I tell you, he can't—

MRS. GRAY: Tell him about the surveys.

MR. GRAY: He came up and visited us. We had a house down in the county, Richland and the Forbes Air Base, it was the Air Force there, and we gave a party at

the officers club there. And we invited maybe 20 people and we were sitting what they call “White House Style,” where the honored guests were in the middle and the host, you know, and other people at the end table.

And the general’s wife was sitting there next to President Truman. Mrs. Truman was sitting on my right. I always keep my ears open, and suddenly I became conscious of the general’s wife saying very clearly to the President, “Mr. President, where in St. Joseph is your museum?” Well, you know, that time frame where three seconds may seem like three hours. And I was waiting for the response, you know, lifting my fork but my ears picked up.

He paused just a couple of seconds. He turned and said, “Well, you know, it’s in Independence and you know where Independence is, Kansas City is a suburb of Independence.” And turned to her and said, “You know, the state insane asylum is in St. Joseph.”” What did he mean by that? In my opinion, he was telling that lady, he thought that maybe she was a little bit cracked, but that’s only my personal opinion and I never dared ask him.

But he visited us down at the house in Richland and he came up and dedicated—we had moved a bank and we built a new bank up here in the south part of Topeka, and he came up and dedicated it. And I think that was the last time that he and Mrs. Truman were at a public event together.

They were just opening up a new shopping center across from the bank. I knew the guy who was running it. I said, “You know, Mrs. Truman may have a little time while the President’s shaking hands.” He had quite a

crowd. We still had grownups coming to us now, saying, “I remember when I was five years old and how we me President Truman.”

Well, I arranged to have a little tour of the shopping center in a jeep. Well, I had a jeep so I drove over, went in. I said, “Mrs. Truman, now you can walk around if you want. I don’t know how you feel about riding in a jeep.” She said, “I’ll jump right in,” and by God, she did.

I tell you, during the baseball, the world series, all I could think of when St. Louis and the Royals, how sorry I was that Mrs. Truman died, because to have the Royals win the world series would have given her more pleasure than being the First Lady of the United States. She was a great sports fan and you know, they were sports. Well,—

HARRISON: When they would come over here into Kansas and so on, how did they travel to these different events.

MR. GRAY: Mike, you know, the chauffeur—

HARRISON: Mike Westwood?

MR. GRAY: He would drive them.

HARRISON: In their car?

MR. GRAY: Yeah. I’ll tell you a good story.

After the lunch down at Forbes Air Base, before the event the general said to me, “What do you think the President would like to see?” At this time, we were in a war, there was really little to see in the flight [unintelligible] and , of course, across Highway 75 was Cullen Village, you know,

government housing. And these—well, we might go through Cullen Village.

I said, “General, forget it. Please do not cross 75. I’m sure the President will not be interested in seeing government houses.” Sure enough, the general crossed and was going to take them and I’m driving. I pulled alongside of it and said, “I’m sorry, but the Trumans want to get back home before dark,” and so the [unintelligible].

We went up the rendezvous with Mike Westwood at Howard Johnsons, right out here in Topeka, and we were saying goodbyes and Mrs. Truman was getting in the car and the President turned to me and said, “Andy, give me a minute.” So I followed him down the rear of the car, I remember the rear bumper. He said, “Andy, can you tell me why they have to show you every shithouse.”

You know, when he was on that investigating committee, he must have seen thousands and thousands of them.

HARRISON: You mentioned earlier, too, just about going to Steak and Ale and the Secret Service would drive you and Mrs. Truman. What car would—

MR. GRAY: No, their own car.

HARRISON: In the Trumans’ car?

MR. GRAY: Yeah, the Trumans’ car.

HARRISON: Where would everybody sit?

MR. GRAY: Well, we’d sit right out in the public parlor there.

HARRISON: No, in the car.

MR. GRAY: Oh, in the car? Georgia would sit in the back and I'd sit up with the driver.

You remember, it had that little garage back of the house where you had the back and then it was really close quarters. I understand there had been many a bumper scraped there, I guess in the latter years.

HARRISON: Back to your visits to the Truman home. Aside from President Truman's birthday, were there other occasions or events that were kind of regular events?

MR. GRAY: Well, coincidentally with the meeting of the board of trustees of the library, but we would—if we were going to be in Kansas City, we would always call and ask them if they had a few minutes and they'd say, "Of course."

MRS. GRAY: You'd see them about once a month.

MR. GRAY: Well, it was an indeterminate frequency.

MRS. GRAY: Yeah.

MR. GRAY: But, as I mentioned to you, we never called—the only thing was that hairdresser appointment that I can—or possibly second to that was the bridge club, you know. For many years, that bridge club.

HARRISON: So, did you make special trips over to Independence to visit or that it was mostly if you were in Kansas City.

MR. GRAY: We would make special trips, especially in the latter years. We felt that—we always got a big kick out of them, and we felt that—we enjoyed the companionship and apparently they did too, and so—and we decided we wanted to keep our eye on them.

For example, they took President Truman to the hospital once for an operation. They wouldn't allow anybody, you know they had a big suite and so forth, anybody, even to come up on that floor. We were—

I'll tell you a good one about Mrs. Truman. She was in the hospital. And we sent flowers—

HARRISON: Before you get into the story, let me change this—

[End #3104; Begin #3105].

HARRISON: Okay, I think we're ready. This is great, because I don't have to ask any questions. These are all good stories and things that I'd be asking you anyway, so—

MR. GRAY: Okay. Mrs. Truman was pretty sick, she was taken to the hospital, we sent some flowers and we wanted to try and visit her. I called Graham Wallace, you know, the doctor—he was a relative of Mrs. Truman. Have you interviewed him? He'd be an excellent interview. And we said, "Doctor, we'd like to visit Mrs. Truman. What do you think?" He said, "She is seeing nobody, Andy, absolutely nobody. But you know as well as I do, she won't even see the rector of the church." You know, the Episcopal church, as an example—she just wanted seclusion.

He said, "But I'll ask her." He called back and said, "She'd be delighted to see you." Now this is a very touching story. Toward the end of Mrs. Truman's life, you know, her hearing went. And all the signs of old age started coming. And finally, she spent her remaining days in a little bedroom off the first floor, not upstairs. And I knew that she was very sick,

and so did Georgia, and we had to go down to a meeting at the Truman library, and I said to Georgia, "I don't see how we can justify going to Independence with at least calling, not Mrs. Truman, but the companion." And we called, and she called back. She said, "Mrs. Truman would be very happy to see you." She was bedridden, couldn't speak really, and you know, this was a very sensitive time to go visit someone, that can't respond. So, there was a chair by her bed, and I sat on the chair, and took her hand and I would make some irreverent comment, because I always tried to make some cheery or joking outrageous thing. And she would respond by pressing my hand. Well, we stayed there about 20 minutes, maybe a half hour. And then we said, "We must go along, we've got the meeting." And believe me, I had to take her hand out of mine. And that was very sad.

But our relationship with the Trumans, it just grew naturally. There was really nothing that we were striving for, you know, for position or some kind of favor or something. Occasionally some friends of ours would ask us to ask President Truman for an endorsement or something like that, and we were happy to intercede for them – but as far as our own relationship, it was nothing but, I can't put it any better than pure friendship. It just blossomed and of course, the more that time goes on, the more it becomes dearer to us. Georgia and I have been close to the near and the great and so forth, but we never drop our mouths and stand in awe of them. But surely nothing delighted us more than in the last 20 years, the Truman stature has risen in

the polls and with historians and so forth. Where he's sometimes rated among the top five or the top ten, and he's certainly deserving of that.

HARRISON: But as people though, since you did know them well, how would you describe President Truman?

MR. GRAY: Which President Truman?

HARRISON: Mr. Truman, Harry Truman at home, at 219 North Delaware.

MR. GRAY: He preserved almost a sanctity of his home, and with Bess and Margaret. I've seen him with people where he would be affable, agreeable and so forth, and I hate to say it, but there was obviously a touch of veneer. He was always courteous and polite, in fact, the best way I can describe him is that he was a good soldier. That he would do things in a certain way because he thought that that was the right way to address it. Isn't that so, Georgia?

MRS. GRAY: Absolutely. Well expressed.

MR. GRAY: President Truman, I used to try to study him, you know, as you do with all prominent people, you know, what makes them tick? And he had not a flashy brilliance, but believe me, he had what they called common horse sense. And that is the thing, that's a strain that went right through his whole life.

HARRISON: What was it about him though that made you want to be friends with them?

MR. GRAY: Well, he was a former President of the United States. He had this association with Georgia, and as I mentioned to him, when he wanted to come in to Kansas and so forth, and we enjoyed each other. Let's put it that

way. We'd talk about what had happened on the front pages, but we'd never get into depth on politics or international things. I mean, he could get all kinds of people to—no, we might throw in an occasional opinion about something, but as far as—

Let me flip on you. Why do you like your best friend? You. Huh? He's your best friend, isn't he?

HARRISON: Yeah.

MR. GRAY: Well, we considered the Trumans probably of all the people we'd met in the upper tier of our best friends. We're sure that if we were ever in any trouble or anything like that, we could to them for consolation and maybe, help. And that's one of the earmarks of friendship. Even though you'd never use it, it's a great support for you to know it's there.

And I suppose Georgia and I, we had enough pride that we were pretty lucky to know a former President, in that respect.

And of course, Mrs. Truman—she had such blue eyes, I could visualize them now, and she had a laugh that I never, every now and then I'll run across at some party or something like that where there will be a trill, it's almost a trill, and it'll remind me of her. On the phone, when we'd call, you know, she'd have the phone voice—let me say that you know when she said “come ahead” she meant come ahead.

But I don't know whether we've been helpful to you. We'll show you the Truman Room, as we call it. It's just got odds and ends, you know, birthday pictures taken on an Instamatic camera...

HARRISON: When you would visit the Trumans was there a particular room that you would sit in?

MR. GRAY: Usually the President's study. But occasionally, out in the south front room, the living room. And especially when Mrs. Truman in her later years, we would go there for awhile, but it was easier for the people who were taking care of her to have us there.

HARRISON: I was gonna ask, too, how would you enter the house?

MR. GRAY: Ring the gate, the buzzer and someone would come and open the door and we'd just march in.

HARRISON: So you went in through the front.

MR. GRAY: Oh yes.

HARRISON: Were there ever any objects, I guess, in the home or any furnishings or anything that the Trumans told you any stories about or that were extra special to them or that they seemed fond of?

MR. GRAY: Not that I can recall. Of course, they had that portrait of Margaret and Mrs. Truman and the piano. Uh huh. And people would send President Truman a book. I'd always bring him a book that I thought he'd have an interest in, not just to read.

HARRISON: Do you recall what any of those books were?

MR. GRAY: I remember one, what was it, "Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee"? Because of his interest in the environment and the Indians and so forth. And if there was something in the newspaper, I'd just throw it in with it. You know, I just thought he'd be interested in it.

HARRISON: One thing I've noticed in the house is that there's lots of Oriental objects—
jade, ivory vases. Do you know anything about any of those?

MR. GRAY: No, I don't.

HARRISON: It's always kind of puzzled me I guess that there were so many of them, and
I was wondering if they were gifts or if they bought them or what.

MR. GRAY: I'm pretty sure they were gifts. But my guess is if there's anything of real
value, it'd go in the museum. I know that they were very careful about that
because they had all kinds of people trying to curry favor. But they did
make this European trip where I'm sure they were given the usual
ceremonial gifts and so forth, which reminded them of the visits or the tour.

HARRISON: So you mentioned in terms of the things you gave them, the Christmas tree
under the glass dome, which is on the mantle now, we put it out at
Christmas, we don't leave it up all year, but we do put it out at Christmas;
the music box—

MR. GRAY: Is it there?

HARRISON: It's on the table right next to the chair, yeah.

MR. GRAY: Oh, you can check me out. If that doesn't play "You Are My Sunshine",
I'm a liar.

HARRISON: Oh, it does, it does. Right. Do you remember where you got the Christmas
tree?

MR. GRAY: I bought it in a jewelry shop I think in Kansas City. But it struck my eye. It
wasn't just a, you know, an ordinary thing. I used the word "bejeweled" for
the ornaments on it, the cost of the jewelry, you know, it's a bright, cheery

little piece and it doesn't take any room. And we wanted them to have a Christmas tree, and that was the whole thought behind it.

HARRISON: Were there any other gifts that you can recall?

MR. GRAY: I seem to recall something in the dining room, some kind of a plaque – or maybe it was a plate. I'll tell you, if I'm down there it'll revive my memory. But we made no attempt with gifts to curry favor. We thought it would interest them and really be a conversation starter instead of going in and shuffling your feet and you know, because I would try to put together a little repertoire about some disaster that happened to me that proved that human nature was absolutely rotten, you know, something like that.

HARRISON: They seemed to have had a pretty good sense of humor, so they probably appreciated that.

MR. GRAY: Oh, of course they had a good sense of humor. And they know I was just giving them a little—I had to laugh, when Georgia and I were married, they confessed later that they wondered who this unknown scalawag could be that married their Georgia, you know? It was almost like, why didn't I undergo the scrutiny and get their permission? It was almost implicit there.

HARRISON: Do you feel that they were kind of protective of friends?

MR. GRAY: Oh, of course they were. They were good-hearted people, they wanted nothing but good to happen to the people who were their friends. And I think that's a good sign of friendship. Now that you mention it, I never saw any evidence of envy or jealousy with the Trumans. That whole ambiance of that house bespeaks it. They never went in for the 20 room modern ranch

style house with a swimming pool. Believe me, they loved that lilac bush better than they did all the great country estates of England, believe me, that I can say. And they loved that porch.

HARRISON: The back porch?

MR. GRAY: Yeah, the back porch.

HARRISON: Can you tell me any stories of anything about it?

MR. GRAY: He loved to have lunch out there, and dinner and supper. That was the time of the year, you know, spring and summer and fall where they almost in a sense lived out there. You know, it's right off the kitchen.

HARRISON: Do you know anything about any of the vegetation out there? You mentioned earlier some of the—I can't remember what now.

MR. GRAY: Forsythia?

HARRISON: Yeah.

MR. GRAY: No. I'm not a botanist myself or an environmentalist.

HARRISON: Did it seem though, like in terms of Truman Road running right along there, was it particularly noisy or did it seem like kind of—

MR. GRAY: Apparently not. Well, you know, the window of his study was almost right overhanging the street. But he was never conscious of any interference with noise. I don't think they allowed trucks, or if they do, there weren't many trucks along Truman Road.

HARRISON: Do you remember any special pieces of furniture out on the porch?

MR. GRAY: No, just ordinary. I'm going to manufacture a phrase now that, God forbid—but in many respects it was “upper blue collar”. That's what they

had, that's what it was like. I think one of the biggest prides they had was having a nice car, you know, because they loved to—he'd drive back and forth from Washington whenever he could when he was senator, and she didn't like flying at all.

HARRISON: Did you ever ride with them when either of them drove?

MR. GRAY: No, no. Someone told me a story. He would drive himself up to the library in his later years, like always. It was a snowy day and he got stuck in that back entrance, you know, the administrative entrance, and I'm trying to think who told me the story—well anyway, he got out and helped push. Yeah, he got out and helped push.

I'm trying to think who told me that. I'll tell you, if it comes to me—this person who told me the story, it was so anti big shot, you know, here's this former President that could press buttons and you know, he always had staff, a sergeant and security people, and he wanted to push it himself.

HARRISON: Getting back to them liking to be outdoors, did they ever sit out in the yard or did you ever sit in the yard with them?

MR. GRAY: No. That porch was almost like a sanctuary.

HARRISON: And when you would visit, did usually the four of you visit together or sometimes would you and Mrs. Gray just visit with Mrs. Truman alone?

MR. GRAY: Oh no, always a foursome. They had I guess about three chairs, maybe four, in the President's study and he would sometimes sit behind the desk,

and we'd sit close by. Now in the living room, when Mrs. Truman's hearing became deficient, I made it a point to always raise my decibel level. Oh, I remember once, he got mad as hell. They forced them to get hearing aids. And like the President, she detested anything mechanical. She'd forget to turn them off, and she'd say, "I'm going broke buying batteries!" That's it.

HARRISON: Did she ever say anything else that indicated her concern for money? Or about money? That is funny. I have a hearing aid, so I know what she's talking about when she talked about batteries.

MR. GRAY: Oh? Georgia does, also.

HARRISON: Do you have any other stories about money, though?

MR. GRAY: No, not really. I think—and this is only an impression I have, but I think that she had, and the President probably, too, a secret regret. They know that the roof was going, and you know, the house was really deteriorating when the government took it over, you know that. Were you there at the beginning? I think they had a regret, I don't think they felt that they could justify the investment in a guaranteed 40 year roof or even painting.

Let me have that paper. I'll give you this, and you be sure to give it to Norman. A friend of mine down in Texas, who's an historian, I think it's an Austin paper if I'm not mistaken—you see, a friend of ours sent us that, so you see, it's generally recognized that we have some affiliation with the Trumans.

HARRISON: When you would call the Truman home, who would answer the phone?

MR. GRAY: Sometimes Mrs. Truman, and then later, that companion, who was she, Valeria. Valeria, believe me, knows Mrs. Truman better than anyone in this world at that period of her life. Did you see Valeria at all? You give her our love.

HARRISON: Okay.

MR. GRAY: Oh, we admire and like her. You even ask Valeria about the Grays and whether or not we got along with them.

HARRISON: A couple of people mentioned you when we were interviewing them, and I think Valeria was one who mentioned your frequent visits.

MR. GRAY: Well, Valeria knew that Mrs. Truman liked to see us, and that there was a friendship. And it was a reflection on Valeria. Valeria's husband, he was very ill.

HARRISON: Did you ever have any meals at the home?

MR. GRAY: Never. Never ate there. No.

HARRISON: Did you ever spend the night?

MR. GRAY: Oh no, we'd never been upstairs, never been. There was something that we got that we gave them as a gift, a plaque or something like that. I can't—when I go down there, if I see it—but I'm telling you about these gifts, see.

HARRISON: Do you recognize any of those things on that table? It's not a very good picture, but this is the table just inside the music room, and there are a couple of crystal birds—an owl and lovebirds.

MR. GRAY: It looks like something we'd do, but I can't take credit for them. But I wanted to tell you that these gifts were not done to aggrandize ourselves.

HARRISON: Oh no.

MR. GRAY: Look, if you want to put them in a category, they were under \$20. Most of them, ten. Little pendant, a number one pendant cost maybe \$12.

HARRISON: You know, I think maybe I'd seen that, it just rings a bell, I think I may have seen that.

MR. GRAY: It's a colored opal.

HARRISON: That's right, it's glass, you said.

MR. GRAY: Yeah, opaque.

HARRISON: It has a number sign.

MR. GRAY: The number one, yes. Why don't I take you in the Truman Room?

HARRISON: Okay.

MR. GRAY: Unless you had other questions.

HARRISON: I had a few other things, maybe we could do that when we come back. Will we be talking about anything in there that I should record?

MR. GRAY: Well, why don't we take a look at it—I cannot judge or speak for your interests.

[End #3105; Begin #3106]

MR. GRAY: I'm pretty sure that was made in Italy. But the thing about it, she came right back with it. This was no afterthought, buying that.

HARRISON: It seems to me just from what I've seen in the home and from what we heard, that they liked to have things around them that were special, and it didn't make any difference if it was of value or anything, it was more who they got it from than the actual object.

MR. GRAY: Uh huh. Well, it's like the post cards. You know, I always tried to put some witticism or wise crack on them, and they seemed to enjoy it. As I mentioned, we used to travel not too much, but we used to travel and the first thing I'd do is get out the old post cards we sent.

HARRISON: If you want, let's take some time now to—

MR. GRAY: Oh, we went to Ireland or no, it was enroute to Russia, we got off at Shannon and I had some St. Patricks Day cards and I wanted them postmarked from Ireland. You know, that's the kind of things I'd do. So they would get it on St. Patricks Day from Ireland, even though they were addressed, you know, I had to bribe the guy to post those, too.

HARRISON: These are some photographs that were taken inside the home in March of '83. And I thought we might just kind of look through them. If you see any objects or if there's anything that may remind you of any stories you might want to tell.

MRS. GRAY: Is that his coat hanging there?

HARRISON: One of the coats there, yeah.

MR. GRAY: And his hat, too.

MRS. GRAY: She left it there after he died.

MR. GRAY: When you consider it, the home was almost austere. I mean, it was what they were comfortable with.

HARRISON: Here's one of the living room mantle. [Looking at pictures]

MR. GRAY: I'll tell you what you can do as a quid pro quo. If that Christmas tree is up there on the mantle, would you make a picture of it for us? I would sure appreciate it.

HARRISON: We'll see it in a picture here. I don't know if you can really see these very well, but there are a few things there, I didn't know if you would recognize them.

MR. GRAY: I'll tell you. We'll take a trip down there. There was something in the dining room that we bought, it was a plaque or dish. I can't fix it now. And when we went back I noticed they always kept it on that north cabinet, was there a north cabinet in the dining room?

HARRISON: There's a buffet on the north side that had some silver on it, and a kind of built in china cabinet in the wall.

MR. GRAY: Yeah, that's what I'm thinking of.

HARRISON: Well, it might show up in one of these pictures, too. This is the downstairs bedroom.

MRS. GRAY: Yes, we visited her in there when she was ill.

MR. GRAY: She had only one bed in there.

HARRISON: There was only one in there when you visited her?

MR. GRAY: Yeah. At least that is my recollection.

HARRISON: Any of these objects here, the music box or—

MR. GRAY: No, no.

HARRISON: There's the coat rack.

MR. GRAY: Yeah.

HARRISON: Did she ever say to you why she left the hat there?

MR. GRAY: We never asked. It was quite obvious that it was a reminder, at least I thought so. Now that's the entrance into the study.

HARRISON: Anybody ever play the piano while you were there?

MR. GRAY: Never, never. Of course you know that was Margaret's piano. Real old Victorian.

HARRISON: This is in the study, photos of the study.

MR. GRAY: Well, you certainly de-junked that room, didn't you? This table was not there that I can recall. They had two chairs. Wait a minute, the desk was there. Am I in the right place? Yeah, his desk was there.

HARRISON: Did he have more of a desk there than that table?

MR. GRAY: When?

HARRISON: It might have been so piled with books that it was hard to tell.

MR. GRAY: It was in the alcove. I'm pretty sure it was.

HARRISON: Now the chair wasn't in the alcove?

MR. GRAY: His desk was there.

HARRISON: Was in the alcove.

MR. GRAY: Yeah. It was like a cockpit almost. I'm pretty sure of that, I'd swear to that.

HARRISON: Did anybody have favorite chairs in there, did Mr. And Mrs. Truman always sit in the same chair, or did they just sit wherever?

MR. GRAY: Oh no, Mrs. Truman would sit I think in one of these chairs, and they'd have one over here. I don't think this table or desk was in the alcove.

HARRISON: There's the built in china cabinet.

MR. GRAY: Goddamn it, there's something else. If I get down there, I'll know it.

HARRISON: Yeah, we can look around.

MR. GRAY: The kitchen. When I said it was upper blue collar, that's what I meant.

HARRISON: Then it goes on up the second floor.

MR. GRAY: Uh huh.

HARRISON: Were there any other staff, any of their help there, aside from Valeria, but in the earlier years, for President and Mrs. Truman.

MR. GRAY: Yeah. They had this cook who was really, but then she got too aged to –

HARRISON: Was that Vietta Garr?

MR. GRAY: I believe so. I think she was a black woman.

HARRISON: Well, let's have a look at your other photos.

[Cut]

HARRISON: Now those are some from one of the birthdays?

MRS. GRAY: Well, when we were just down there visiting, I don't know that it was necessarily a birthday.

MR. GRAY: Up there on the top, there's a little reply that Mrs. Truman, you know, thank you notes and so forth. I'd usually send them flowers on occasion, but I mean, there's a lot of that.

HARRISON: Let's see, it says June 21, 1978. It says, "Dear Georgia and Andy, I greatly enjoyed the lovely mixed flower arrangement and also the cheerful card which you sent me during my stay at the hospital. As always, your kind thoughts of me is appreciated. With warmest regards, love, Bess" and it had her name signed.

MR. GRAY: Well, I don't think she was supposed to put "love" on them.

HARRISON: Well, that one was typed on some of her stationery from 219, and then there's another one in her handwriting that is postmarked February 16, 1969 or something. It's addressed to Richland, Kansas. When did you live there?

MR. GRAY: We lived there until '67.

HARRISON: Okay. Maybe it's 50 – I can't tell. Anyway, "Dear Georgia and Andy, your valentine is the loveliest one I have ever seen or have ever had. And how we are enjoying it. Thank you loads and loads for thinking of me. We are still remembering the good times had at your anniversary party. Love, Bess Truman."

And then, underneath:

"Some of these K.C. florists should take lessons from your Alexanders", which is in quotes.

MR. GRAY: Oh yeah. Well, I would go to the florist and tell them that I wanted something, a little bit eye catching and so forth. Now this is President Truman. Washburn University gave Georgia an Honorary degree, and he came up for that. Two days later they had the famous tornado, and a lot of people said, "Well, Harry visited us two days ago." That's a dedication of a bank, they're looking at a mural.

HARRISON: That's on August 4, 1965.

MR. GRAY: Is it '65?

HARRISON: The date here that he signed it was '65.

MRS. GRAY: That's all at the library with Lyndon Johnson, that's the Medicare. I think they still have that table. That's from their very good friend, Mike.

HARRISON: A photo of President Truman and Mike Westwood walking down the street.

MR. GRAY: Yeah.

HARRISON: Who's that?

MR. GRAY: Oh yeah. We brought Mrs. Carlin—Governor Carlin's first wife down there, and—

HARRISON: Okay, so that's the picture then. So the first Mrs. Carlin is on the left. And Mrs. Gray on the right.

MR. GRAY: She looked pretty good then. This would be somewhere around '80, maybe '79. I don't keep up with the governor's marital—

Now we made no conscious effort to collect these, they just happened to, all those bottles over there, the special bottles, wine, good neighbor lunches. I'll tell you one thing that isn't generally known. The good neighbor lunches, oh, what's his name?

HARRISON: Henry Talge?

MR. GRAY: Yeah. There was a time when Mrs. Truman got the idea that they were trying to exploit President Truman, and I gather that she said, "You're not going there any more." And he didn't. And that's true. You look up the records somewhere around, oh, '68 or about, and he just wouldn't go. And believe me, they called and of course Talge was a real operator, no question, and the presence of President Truman meant something to him.

Now there's an unusual, that's Alf Landon, who happens to be a good friend of mine and still is. On President Truman's birthday, I would call Alf Landon and say, "I'm going down to see President Truman, do you want to take a note down to him?" Whatever he wrote, I don't know. But that was more or less of a custom, I would deliver the Landon notes. Because they got along pretty well together, considering they were Republicans and Democrats.

But we made no conscious effort to put these—because there are many things that we could have collected, retained, but you lose track of them.

HARRISON: Were these taken at the same time, or at different times?

MR. GRAY: I think there were two different years.

HARRISON: This one says May 8, 1968; in fact, there's a couple that have that. And it shows the—

MR. GRAY: John Snyder, that's John Snyder. He was on that. You see, Georgia has a different dress on in that one. He was getting on in years. These are just Instamatic shots.

HARRISON: Let me describe a little of this because in one of these here, the 1968 one, it shows President Truman sitting in the chair near the Gates bedroom, and he's autographing a book to what would be his right of the chair, between the chair and the Gates bedroom, is a nest of three wooden tables, and on them are about three books, and also a set of three Winston Churchill books with a silver ashtray on top, it looks like, but not the crown ashtray.

And behind them on the wall, this would be the wall just to the right of the door of the Gates bedroom is a painting by Thomas Hart Benton. Also in another one of these which is undated, but has John Snyder in it, it's a different year, there is a photo of a painting of John Snyder sitting on the wooden tables. Okay.

MR. GRAY: This is the study of the Truman house by Matthew Piedmonts, and it's a nice picture.

HARRISON: Oh, it is nice.

MR. GRAY: We just have odds and ends, but we call this the Truman Room.

HARRISON: Yeah, it's very nice.

MR. GRAY: Oh, here's a picture of Georgia with a very young Teddy Kennedy. You wouldn't recognize him, would you?

HARRISON: I was in 1972, it looks like. There's the date there. What they call the Truman Room has various plaques and photos and mementos of Mr. and Mrs. Gray.

MR. GRAY: If you're familiar with photography, it's such color.

HARRISON: Who put this out?

MR. GRAY: Some friend of ours in Oregon. I got 20 or 30 of them. Just as little token gifts.

HARRISON: Oh, that'll be nice, yeah. Norm would like this because the one on the back has trumpeter swans, and he likes birds, he's a bird watcher.

MR. GRAY: Those are museum quality reproductions.

HARRISON: Uh, huh. I was born and raised in California, so anything western I like.

MR. GRAY: That's really extraordinary.

HARRISON: That is nice. Well, I want to thank you for visiting with me today and for sharing some of these stories and memories.

MR. GRAY: Well, I don't know whether I've been helpful or not. As a matter of fact, I really don't like to talk about them because I've met too many God damn many people like Harry that are like family, you know?

HARRISON: Do you think they had many close friends like you and Mrs. Gray?

MR. GRAY: Oh sure, they did. I think we filled a particular niche in their lives, because they were very loyal to their relatives and that sort of thing, and we never presumed, you know, to intrude ourselves on them in any way. We were just accepted for what we were, and it was just a natural thing, it just happened.

HARRISON: One of the people we interviewed at the home told us a story about the Secret Service bringing over the mail -- because the mail was delivered to the Secret Service, and then they would bring it over. So here came the Secret Service men and handed this pile of mail to the nurse, who we were interviewing, and they said, "Here, we want you to give this to Mrs. Truman" and she said, "Well, you usually just take it to her yourself, why don't you go ahead and take it?" They said, "No, it's the electric bill, here on top."

And then somebody else was telling us, we were in the downstairs bedroom and they were telling us how one time they brought in the mail and the bill was there, and Mrs. Truman was looking through the mail and she

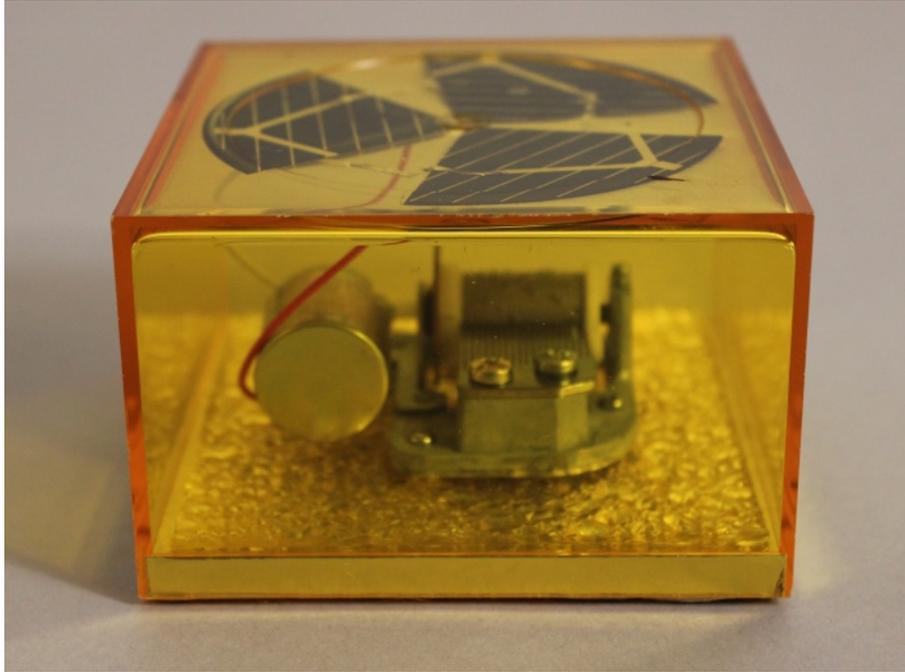
came to the bill, she looked at it, she proceeded to just rip it up, and threw it in the waste basket. It was too high for her, I guess.

MR. GRAY: Yeah. Well, you know, Truman always said that when interest rates went up to five percent, or above five percent, someone was being screwed, and that was his rule of thumb.

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX

1. Photograph of music box given to the Trumans by the Grays.



Currently on display in the living room of the Truman Home.