

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

NORINE (MRS. C.H.) ALLEN

JULY 18, 1991

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1991-9

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4338-4340

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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

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ABSTRACT

Norine Allen, widow of Dr. Charles Allen and longtime neighbor of the Trumans, had four daughters in the same age range as Margaret Truman Daniel. Throughout her interview Allen provides information about the families, including her own, that made up the Truman neighborhood from 1926 to 1991.

Persons mentioned: Charles Allen, Marie Allen Grayer, Harriet Allen Kellogg Thomas, Mona Allen Blank, Barbara Allen Gard, Raymond Gard, Lawrence Comboy, Harry S Truman, Madge Gates Wallace, Bess W. Truman, Mike Westwood, Ethel Noland, Nellie Noland, Ardis Haukenberry, May Wallace, George Porterfield Wallace, Frank Gates Wallace, Charles E. Krimminger, Charles Kellogg, Mary O'Reilly, John Major, Mary Sue Luff, Robert M. Lehew, Frank Mericle, Judge Pruitt, Mary Pruitt, Edward Wright, Ann Pruitt Wright, Henry Bundschu, Perl Griffin, Newton Braby, Louis A. Powers, Emma Plank, Bill Randall, Arthur Palmer, Joanne Huff, Thomas Clark, Fanny Gibbs, Lawrence M. Proctor, Harold M. Hunt, R. Luke Choplin, Maxine Choplin, Louis "Polly" Compton, Thomas G. Melton, Paul Bischoff, Mary Charlton, Millie Twyman, Tom Twyman, Elmer D. Twyman, Agnes Carvin, Hazel Graham, Sue Gentry, Percy Balfour, Harold Balfour, Thomas Dewey, Ellen Bunschu, Vietta Garr, Leola Estes, Jennifer A. Hayes, Tom Hankins, Mary Hankins, Van A. Triplett, and Sue Ogden Bailey.

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JIM WILLIAMS: This is an oral history interview with Mrs. Norine Allen. We're at her home in Independence, Missouri, on the afternoon of July 18, 1991. I'm Jim Williams from the National Park Service, and running the taping equipment is Connie Odom-Soper from the park service. [Mrs. Allen's sister, Mrs. Gilbert (Helen) James, entered during the interview and can be heard making comments occasionally.]

Mrs. Allen, I'd like to find a little bit more about you. Could you tell me when and where you were born?

NORINE ALLEN: Yeah, I was born in Napoleon, Missouri.

WILLIAMS: Napoleon.

ALLEN: Have you ever heard of that little town?

WILLIAMS: I sure have.

ALLEN: As I kid my grandson all the time when he'll say, "Well, that doesn't amount to very much," and I say, "Well, didn't you read the sign that says 'All the Powell kids were born here?'" [chuckling] He just laughs. That's where I was born. Then from there we moved to Odessa, and then my husband and I moved up here.

WILLIAMS: And when were you born?

ALLEN: In 1897.

WILLIAMS: Okay, and what was your name before you got married?

ALLEN: Norine Powell, P-O-W-E-L-L.

WILLIAMS: Powell. And were your parents from Missouri?

ALLEN: Yes. My mother was originally from Kansas and my father was born six miles from Odessa.

WILLIAMS: When did you come to Independence?

ALLEN: In 1926, January 1926.

WILLIAMS: Did your family move up here, or just you?

ALLEN: Just my husband and me and our girls.

WILLIAMS: And what was your husband's name?

ALLEN: Dr. Charles Allen.

WILLIAMS: Where did you meet him?

ALLEN: At Odessa. He's from California, Missouri, but he came there to practice.

WILLIAMS: Well, my family is from California, Missouri, too.

ALLEN: Oh, sure enough?

WILLIAMS: The Phillips family.

ALLEN: Phillips? Well, I have one niece, one of his nieces, still living down there. She's the only one, I believe, of the family that's living down there. She's still there.

WILLIAMS: Both of my father's parents, one was from High Point and one was around California. So you met him down in Odessa?

ALLEN: At Odessa. He was practicing. He came down there to practice medicine. He was a physician.

WILLIAMS: Was he older or younger than you?

ALLEN: He was older than I.

WILLIAMS: And you moved up here . . . ?

ALLEN: In 1926, January 1926.

WILLIAMS: Why did you move?

ALLEN: Well, he had wanted to get out of the small . . . He wanted a larger town, and the older doctor, one of the older doctors here in town had died in

December. And my husband had a real good friend who lived here in Independence. He phoned him immediately, he said, "Come up and see about it." So he came right up and bought the practice.

WILLIAMS: Where did he practice then in town, your husband?

ALLEN: Oh, his office? In the First National Bank Building.

WILLIAMS: Down on Lexington?

ALLEN: Yeah, on the corner of Lexington and Main.

WILLIAMS: Have you lived here then since 1926, in this house?

ALLEN: No, 1927 we moved here. We rented a place for a year, then moved down here.

WILLIAMS: And how many children do you have?

ALLEN: We had four girls, only two of them living.

WILLIAMS: And what were their names?

ALLEN: The oldest one was Marie, the next one was Harriet, the next one was Mona, and the last one was Barbara.

WILLIAMS: Can you tell me when they were born?

ALLEN: Yeah. The oldest one was born in 1920, the next one in 1922, the third one in 1926, and the last one in 1932.

WILLIAMS: So you had two daughters when you moved up here to Independence, and had two more when you were here?

ALLEN: Yeah, that's right. Two more, uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: How long did your husband practice medicine here in town?

ALLEN: About forty-four years. No, he wasn't here that long either. We came in 1926 and he . . . he died in '63, and he'd been retired several years. Now you subtract that. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Okay. There were some other doctors down the street here, weren't there, on Maple?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, Dr. [Raymond] Gard and . . . let's see, what was the other fellow's name? It's been so long he's been gone.

WILLIAMS: Was it [Lawrence] Comboy?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And did one of your daughters marry one of the Gards?

ALLEN: My youngest daughter.

WILLIAMS: Barbara?

ALLEN: Barbara.

WILLIAMS: When you moved here in 1927 into this house, I guess that was just as Mr. Truman was county judge?

ALLEN: Yes, because he ran for senator after we were here.

WILLIAMS: What did you think of having a neighbor who was a politician like that?

ALLEN: Well, we didn't think much about it. [chuckling] They were just neighbors, people in the neighborhood who'd been here a long time, of course.

WILLIAMS: Did you know Madge Wallace very well?

ALLEN: I didn't know her. In fact, I can't place her. Oh, that isn't the one they call Mary?

WILLIAMS: No, no, Bess's mother, Madge.

ALLEN: Oh, yes. Well, of course I met her, but I didn't know her well. She was an older woman.

WILLIAMS: How often would you see the neighbors around here, including the Trumans? Were there a lot of social events?

ALLEN: Well, quite a few. I had a lot of good friends here—they're all gone—and, well, these up and down this block I saw often. I didn't see the Trumans so often, although their daughter played over here at our house a great deal and mine played over there in the house. In fact, I'm sure there are two

Army blankets hanging in the basement over there yet. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Why?

ALLEN: Well, they took their . . . they made houses. I'll bet you did that, hung them over a line and made a house out of them? And they hung them in the basement down there, and they forgot to get them back and I never thought of it.

WILLIAMS: We'll look for those, see if we can find them over there.

ALLEN: [chuckling] But don't return them, I have no place to put them.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So you remember when Mr. Truman ran for senator?

ALLEN: I don't remember just the year. I remember when he was, though.

WILLIAMS: Did that create any kind of stir in the neighborhood?

ALLEN: Well, I expect it did. I didn't pay much attention to it.

WILLIAMS: What about when he ran for vice president, or president, did things change much?

ALLEN: Well, yes. People really did. They were excited about that and they gave dinners and they . . . Oh, the chamber of commerce would, you know. They would have dinners honoring him.

WILLIAMS: Was it exciting to live around the corner from the president?

ALLEN: Well, I hate to say it, but not particularly. [chuckling] But don't repeat that! I mean, it was just, you know, your everyday living and your neighbors and . . .

WILLIAMS: Was it ever a bother to have all of the people?

ALLEN: Oh, no. No. No, they had to put that . . . Of course you know that, they had to put that fence up to keep people out.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever have any trouble with people bothering you, getting in the yard, or anything like that?

ALLEN: No. No.

WILLIAMS: So the tourists were good about it?

ALLEN: Yeah, they've all been real nice. No trouble at all, no bother.

WILLIAMS: Well, how well did you know the Trumans?

ALLEN: Well, of course, I knew the daughter better than any of them. I knew Mrs. Truman as a neighbor. And the first time, I can't remember when I met her. I remember the first time I ever went anyplace with her. We were on a committee together—whether it was a welfare or what, I don't know. We went over to the Waggoner-Gates home, and I went with her and we were soliciting for something—right now I don't know what it was.

WILLIAMS: So you were involved in some civic activities?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What kinds of things?

ALLEN: And then we must have been in a scout troop or something—our girls, some of them must have been—because I can remember standing over there in the kitchen making cucumber sandwiches. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: The kitchen of the Truman home?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Have you been over there lately?

ALLEN: Not lately. I was over there before Mrs. Truman . . . well, after his death, of course. But I haven't been over there. There's no use in me going. I've been through the house. Why am I going to pay to go in it? [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, you would get in free.

ALLEN: [chuckling] I would? Well, I got in free at that time. And, see, I think I've seen more of the house than the tourists do. They don't take them upstairs, do they?

WILLIAMS: No.

ALLEN: I thought not. Well, when Margaret was married, her presents were upstairs in her bedroom and we went to the reception. That's what they had, a big reception over there in the yard, and we could go upstairs and see her gifts.

WILLIAMS: How often were you over at the Truman house?

ALLEN: Oh, not very . . . I really don't know. Not very many. The last time, really, that I remember, I took a picture over to her. There was a picture of Mr. Truman's mother in with some of mine. My next-door neighbor here who had been a friend of mine all my life had worked out there for him, a sort of receptionist or something, and she must have had that picture and left it with me. So, when I found it one day looking through my photographs, and I called her and I said, "I have that. Would you like to have it?" And she said, "Yes." So I took it over to her. She was sitting there in the little library reading—she loved to read detective stories and murders and things like that, you know—so we had a nice little visit. And she said, "Oh, Margaret will be so glad to have this."

WILLIAMS: And that was after Mr. Truman had died?

ALLEN: Oh, yes. I went to his funeral. Most everybody in town . . . I have no idea how many people were there.

WILLIAMS: What kind of clubs were you involved in through the years? Clubs or ladies' groups?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, let me see, I belonged to the Mary Paxton Study Club, I belonged to the DAR, and of course I'm a Baptist, and the Baptist Church, and I don't remember the rest of them. Did you meet these people?

WILLIAMS: And I know you play bridge.

ALLEN: Yeah, not with Mrs. Truman. I never did play with her, but I play bridge. I'm playing bridge tomorrow. That's why I wouldn't let you come

tomorrow. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: How would you describe Mr. Truman from as much as you saw him as a neighbor?

ALLEN: Well, very nice. There was never any friction or anything in the neighborhood, you know. Very nice, good, neighborly people. Very friendly.

WILLIAMS: And you said Margaret was over here quite a bit?

ALLEN: Quite a bit, and my girls were over there.

WILLIAMS: What kind of things did they do together?

ALLEN: Oh, they played badminton together, they played house together, they gave tea parties together in the house. That sort of thing.

WILLIAMS: Am I right, they had a kind of a club? They called it . . .

ALLEN: Oh, yes. Well, did someone tell you the name of that?

WILLIAMS: Well, I've heard the Henhouse Hicks.

ALLEN: Yeah, the Henhouse Hicks, I believe. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And there were some other girls in that, too.

ALLEN: They were the . . . Let me see, who lived down there? There were some others on the block, or a block or two away, that used to come and play. I don't remember just who they were now.

WILLIAMS: What about the girls next door here, the Baileys? Or Ogdens. The Ogdens?

ALLEN: Oh, well, they visited their grandmother. That was the house on this lot that burned, and they used to visit there quite a bit. When they were here, they would play with the gang, of course.

WILLIAMS: But they didn't live there all year round?

ALLEN: No.

WILLIAMS: Did you have parties here for the girls?

ALLEN: Well, I'm sure I did, because two of them came through that door over there one day and bumped into the table and broke the children's tea set. [chuckling] But I think one of my daughters was involved in that, too.

WILLIAMS: They broke the Trumans' tea set?

ALLEN: No, it was theirs. It was my daughters'.

WILLIAMS: Oh. Well, what kind of tea set was it?

ALLEN: It was a very lovely little tea set, had been given to them by a friend here in town, a friend of ours. I don't know what it was, but it was a very lovely little tea set.

WILLIAMS: It must have been china.

ALLEN: It was.

WILLIAMS: How much did you see . . . after Mr. Truman came back from the White House, would you see him walking around?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, I'd meet him on the street sometime and see him. And I guess after they came back from that, a friend and I gave a big luncheon at the Kansas City Club and Mr. Truman was there. But I'd see him walking by. At that time he had . . . and that fellow's name has escaped me, too, that always walked with him.

WILLIAMS: The policeman?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Probably Mike Westwood.

ALLEN: Yeah, that's who it was.

WILLIAMS: And when you would see him, would you say hello or stop and visit?

ALLEN: I would speak. I wouldn't stop and visit. I was usually on my way someplace and he was on his walk, but always speak, of course.

WILLIAMS: What did the people around here call him? Mr. Truman, or . . . ?

ALLEN: I think they did. I don't believe very many—

WILLIAMS: Mr. President?

ALLEN: Well, now, his cousins lived right across the street. Of course, they called him Harry, but I don't believe many other people did. I really don't know about that. Most everybody referred to him as Mr. Truman.

WILLIAMS: Have you ever given an interview before about the Trumans?

ALLEN: I don't believe so.

WILLIAMS: To newspaper people, or . . . ? Were you ever asked?

ALLEN: Not that I remember. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I've heard from some people that the neighbors would keep pretty quiet about the Trumans.

ALLEN: Well, they did. Nobody did any talking or bothered them or anything, you know. Mrs. Truman would come over here sometimes when she thought Margaret had stayed late and it would be beginning to get dark. She'd come over and say, "It's time to go home."

WILLIAMS: Were the Trumans pretty protective of Margaret?

ALLEN: Oh, yes. Now, have you heard that story about the man going to the school one time? A taxi driver went to the . . . I think she was in the first grade at that time, Margaret was, but a real wise teacher said, "Well, just a minute," and she said, "I'll get her." And instead she went to the phone and found out that no one had sent for Margaret, so she just sent him right off.

WILLIAMS: Do you think that's why the Trumans were protective of her?

ALLEN: Well, more so, of course. That would scare anybody.

WILLIAMS: Were they unusual in any way as parents, as far as you could tell?

ALLEN: Very protective.

WILLIAMS: But otherwise pretty normal?

ALLEN: Pretty normal, I think. Now, Margaret wrote in her book like her mother

was quite a . . . What do I want to say?

JAMES: A disciplinarian?

ALLEN: Huh?

JAMES: A disciplinarian.

ALLEN: Yeah, but I never saw any of that. Well, see, I guess she was. She was a good child.

WILLIAMS: Margaret was?

ALLEN: Uh-huh, a good girl.

WILLIAMS: Did the girls ever get into mischief?

ALLEN: I don't think so.

WILLIAMS: At least not that you ever heard about?

ALLEN: [chuckling] That's right. Could be I don't know all of it.

WILLIAMS: I understand they used to put on plays and things like that.

ALLEN: Yeah, they did sometimes. They had a big time.

WILLIAMS: Even sometimes for charity?

ALLEN: No, I don't think so. I think it was just for the other neighborhood kids.

WILLIAMS: And the Trumans have been in this house quite a bit? Mr. and Mrs.?

ALLEN: Oh, here?

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

ALLEN: No, I don't believe he ever was. She's been in, not quite a bit, but, you know, friendly and . . .

WILLIAMS: On occasion.

ALLEN: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: Would she just come over to borrow something or to visit?

ALLEN: Oh, no, she never borrowed anything. She'd come over to get Marg, or for some reason, you know.

WILLIAMS: And did you ever speak on the phone?

ALLEN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: You'd visit?

ALLEN: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: And you called Margaret not "Margaret" usually. What was her nickname?

ALLEN: I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Well, I think you just said "Marg"?

ALLEN: Oh, probably. [chuckling] Yes, probably did.

WILLIAMS: Was that usually what she would go by?

ALLEN: I guess we did, uh-huh. I'd forgotten about it.

WILLIAMS: Was she more friendly with one of your daughters than the others?

ALLEN: Well, more with the three older ones because the little one was younger, you know. She didn't know her so well, but with the three older ones, particularly the two older ones.

WILLIAMS: I understand she invited some of them at least to Washington.

ALLEN: Yes, Harriet, the second daughter, went when he was elected vice-president, I guess. She was there at that time.

WILLIAMS: For the inaugural?

ALLEN: Yeah. Now, not when he went in as the president, went in as vice president.

WILLIAMS: Was your daughter excited going to Washington?

ALLEN: She was in school at that time at the university. Or was she?

WILLIAMS: Of Missouri?

ALLEN: I guess she would have been. Yes, I think she was. Of course, she was down there and left from there, so I didn't see her reaction, but I'm sure she was pleased about it. Had a real good time.

JAMES: Will you let me throw in something?

ALLEN: Huh?

JAMES: Would you let me throw in something?

WILLIAMS: Sure.

JAMES: We were very proud of her. When she came back, she did not talk.

WILLIAMS: Did not talk?

JAMES: Didn't put out a lot, you know, go around and . . .

WILLIAMS: And brag.

JAMES: Never.

WILLIAMS: Did you have to go out and buy a special dress for her?

ALLEN: Who? My daughter?

WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm.

ALLEN: Well, as I say, she was down at the university. [chuckling] I really don't know what she did.

WILLIAMS: So you weren't really too much involved in it.

ALLEN: She had a beautiful rose-colored coat, as I remember, with a fur collar, and that's all I remember about her clothes that year.

WILLIAMS: Did any of the other daughters, of your daughters, ever get invited to Washington?

ALLEN: No.

WILLIAMS: Just Harriet?

ALLEN: Mm-hmm, she was near Margaret's age.

WILLIAMS: Were you ever in Washington and visited with the Trumans?

ALLEN: Not when they were there. Well, I've been there, but not when they were there.

WILLIAMS: Is it correct that you at one time owned the house next door here? How long did you own that house?

ALLEN: Well, let's see, we sold it about four years ago, I believe. Oh, I expect

we'd had it twenty years.

WILLIAMS: Who used to live there?

ALLEN: Well, I didn't know the people that lived there before.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

ALLEN: At least if I did, I don't remember them. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: You don't know who lived there when Mr. Truman was president?

ALLEN: No, I don't.

WILLIAMS: So you rented it out to people?

ALLEN: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: How well did you know the Noland family?

ALLEN: Oh, my goodness, from the early thirties, I'm sure.

WILLIAMS: They were Baptists, right?

ALLEN: They were Baptists, and one of them taught my Sunday school class I was in.

WILLIAMS: Was that Ethel or Nellie? One of those two, you mean?

ALLEN: Yes, it was Miss . . . Now, which one? I believe it's Ethel that taught Sunday school.

WILLIAMS: Did you know their parents?

ALLEN: I knew their mother.

WILLIAMS: Ella? Is that her? How would you describe Ethel and Nellie?

ALLEN: Fine women. Very fine. Very neighborly, very good, just wonderful, well educated, bright women.

WILLIAMS: They were schoolteachers, right?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did they teach elementary school or high school, do you know?

ALLEN: You know, I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Were you ever over at that house?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, many times.

WILLIAMS: Why would you go over to their house?

ALLEN: Well, because she was teaching our Sunday school class, they were neighbors, and their niece played in the same bridge club as I did at that time—of course, she's been dead a long time. And then they had the boys, their nephews. Their mother had died quite young and I knew them real well. They were the age of my youngest girl.

WILLIAMS: And I suppose you knew Ardis Haukenberry.

ALLEN: Very well. Very well. She's the one that played in my bridge club. And then she moved there after they . . . And I haven't heard. Have you heard what they've done with the house?

WILLIAMS: Well, we're negotiating to buy it.

ALLEN: I hope you can because it looks terrible. I wish you'd buy that whole block. [chuckling] Except for the house on the corner, it's about the only one that's kept up.

WILLIAMS: Well, they finally cut the big bush down across the street the other day.

ALLEN: Oh, did they?

WILLIAMS: The city came along, I guess, and cut it down.

ALLEN: Well, I haven't called them, but I have called a man who's kind of in charge of that, asked him to cut the limb off my tree out here because people go under it, duck under it every day, but we get no results. You should have told them, "Come on down and get that one off." [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: What kind of lady was Ardis?

ALLEN: What kind of a lady?

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

ALLEN: She was a nice little person, very bright, well educated, taught school for years.

WILLIAMS: Would you see her a lot at church?

ALLEN: Well, quite a bit, and never . . . And as I said, we belonged to the same study club and we belonged to bridge club together, so I saw her quite a bit.

WILLIAMS: Which bridge club was this?

ALLEN: Well, I don't believe we had any name. We just played bridge.
[chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Mostly neighborhood ladies?

ALLEN: No, from all over. People we knew, you know.

WILLIAMS: And how well did you know the Wallaces on the other side?

ALLEN: Oh, May Wallace? Well, let's see, it wouldn't have been too long after we . . . in the 1930s, I guess.

WILLIAMS: Did you know George, her husband?

ALLEN: I didn't know him. My husband did, knew both the men, Frank and George both.

WILLIAMS: Would you see them much?

ALLEN: Not a lot. Oh, up until the last dozen years, I guess, I played bridge with May until she got so poorly.

WILLIAMS: And did you know Natalie very well?

ALLEN: Just as friends. I wasn't with her very much, no.

WILLIAMS: Not as well as May.

ALLEN: No, that's right.

WILLIAMS: Well, how has the neighborhood changed since 1927?

ALLEN: Everybody I ever knew has moved out, and they . . . [chuckling] you don't know a soul. Changed considerably.

WILLIAMS: Do you think the fact that Mr. Truman lived on the block has changed it?

ALLEN: No, I don't think that made a difference.

WILLIAMS: It hasn't increased your property values or anything like that?

ALLEN: I don't think so. In fact, I think the situation uptown will probably take it down.

WILLIAMS: Around the square, you mean?

ALLEN: Yeah. See, we used to have three good department stores up there, drugstores, jewelry stores, and very little of it left.

WILLIAMS: So that really was the center of activity back when you moved here?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever help out in your husband's office down there?

ALLEN: Oh, no. No, the girls did sometimes. They would supply when his secretary was gone, but I never did.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever work outside of the house?

ALLEN: No.

WILLIAMS: What else has changed besides different people? Does it seem like the same old neighborhood?

ALLEN: No. The school, of course, is still down here. Now, when our girls went to high school, they went right down here on the corner. And that has all changed. I think one of the church groups have it now for some Sunday meetings and meetings in between. Otherwise, the houses haven't changed; there haven't been any new ones, any additions. Well, these apartments over here now, my husband and a cousin built them and owned them for a while. These two over there.

WILLIAMS: The Maples and the Maplewoods?

ALLEN: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: Well, I didn't know that. So your husband was involved in that?

ALLEN: Yeah, he and a cousin owned them and built them, but they got rid of them pretty soon.

WILLIAMS: And there used to be another church across Delaware Street.

ALLEN: The Methodist church. A beautiful church. But it got so . . . the last time I was in it, there were pipes from one end of the church to the other holding it up, you know. It was not safe.

WILLIAMS: So that was torn down?

ALLEN: Yeah, and the Center Stake Building built there.

WILLIAMS: I have a list of your neighbors back in 1950.

ALLEN: Good! Nineteen fifty? Oh, that hasn't been too long ago. [chuckling]

JAMES: Just forty-one years, that's nothing.

[End #4338; Begin #4339]

ALLEN: . . . don't remember how long she'd been here.

WILLIAMS: So the Trumans came to your mother's funeral service?

JAMES: That's what I was telling them. I know they did.

ALLEN: I believe they . . . Well, I don't know whether they did. I know they sent flowers.

JAMES: I know they did, Norine.

ALLEN: I know they sent flowers.

JAMES: I know they came.

ALLEN: Oh, now they did at my husband's.

JAMES: I know, but they came to Mother's, too.

ALLEN: And Mother's too, I'd forgotten.

JAMES: But it would be expected they'd come to Dr. Harry's, but I thought it was very nice they came to Mother's, too.

ALLEN: I think they were at his, weren't they?

JAMES: Oh, yes. As I say, that would be expected, but they came to Mother's also.

WILLIAMS: Did your husband ever doctor the Trumans?

ALLEN: No. Now he did the cousins over here, but not them.

WILLIAMS: I was going to ask you about your neighbors back in 1950, to see what . . .

ALLEN: Well, way back before that, Dr. Krimminger lived down the street here. Now he brought Margaret into the world, but he's been gone a long time. He was an uncle of our sister-in-law's.

WILLIAMS: [chuckling] Okay. And he lived down on Maple?

ALLEN: Uh-huh, down just beyond Union. I think they've torn his house down, two houses down, down there.

WILLIAMS: Let's see, this says next door was Charles Kellogg. Do you remember anything?

ALLEN: Well, he's my grandson. He lived there a while. [interview interrupted by doorbell - miscellaneous conversation ensues]

ALLEN: Oh, that's John with the groceries. Now, you knock him down and have something to eat. Yeah, I forgot that he was coming. Here, John. Give him his check, and he can make it out himself, and he'll leave me a bill. There's a pen there on the table, but I believe he always has one with him. I'm one of the fortunate people who has somebody to deliver my groceries.

WILLIAMS: Well, that's nice. I didn't think they did that anymore.

ALLEN: I think he's the only one that does, and I was fortunate enough a friend told me about him. Well, I gave up driving after I broke . . . had my first break. I needn't have. I could have driven several years after that, but I thought, Well, it's time to give it up now. So somebody told me about him, so . . . just wonderful service. [brief conversation between Ms. Allen and "John" not transcribed]

WILLIAMS: So Charles Kellogg was a relation of yours?

ALLEN: He's my grandson. He married . . . I mean, his father was Charles Kellogg, too, and he married Harriet, and this is their son. He lives over

by the Bryant School over there, but he stops in here every morning and every evening, check on Grandmother.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay. And across on Delaware were the Nolands, and then it says Mary O'Reilly?

ALLEN: I believe she did live on that street a while. She used to live over here on Lexington, but she did buy a house there and lived there a little while.

WILLIAMS: What did she do? Do you know much about her?

ALLEN: No, I really don't.

WILLIAMS: And then there's John Major.

ALLEN: John who?

WILLIAMS: Major. Did you know him?

ALLEN: I don't remember that name. Does he live over there now?

WILLIAMS: No, this was in 1950. And how about John Luff. Did you know Mr. Luff?

ALLEN: Yeah, I knew them, and Mary Sue married old Mr. Luff's grandson, you know.

WILLIAMS: Did you have much contact with Mr. Luff?

ALLEN: Hmm?

WILLIAMS: Did you have much contact with—

ALLEN: No.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Who was Reverend Lehew? It says "Reverend Robert Lehew." Must have been for the Methodist church.

ALLEN: What was the name?

WILLIAMS: L-E-H-E-W.

ALLEN: Oh, Lehew. That name does sound familiar, but I don't know which church it was. Probably was the Methodist over here.

WILLIAMS: And across the street here were the . . . it says Frank Mericle.

ALLEN: I'd forgotten them. Yeah.

WILLIAMS: How about the Landises?

ALLEN: Uh-huh, they were there when we came here. They lived across the street. And then the Pruitts, Judge Pruitt, lived in the stone house across up here, and their daughter was a very good friend of mine. That's the one with the gingko tree, the big stone house.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay. Do you know more about the Pruitts?

ALLEN: Well, quite a bit, because I was in and out of there and they were in and out of here all the time.

WILLIAMS: And he was a judge?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: A county judge, or . . . ?

ALLEN: Well, you know, I don't know. He didn't live so many years after we lived here, and I just don't remember much about him.

WILLIAMS: So was Mary Pruitt his wife?

ALLEN: Yes, and Ann was the daughter. And then she married a Wright.

WILLIAMS: It says Edward Wright.

ALLEN: That's right.

WILLIAMS: So that's her husband?

ALLEN: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: And you were friends with her?

ALLEN: Yes, very good. Very good friends, very close friends.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the Huhns?

ALLEN: Yeah, they lived in the house next to there.

WILLIAMS: What did they do? Clarence, it says.

ALLEN: Well, now, the son was a teacher down here at the school. I think he taught . . . I don't remember what Mr. Huhn's, the older man's name was, but I knew them, and their daughter-in-law still lives here. I know her.

WILLIAMS: And next door to them it says Henry Bundschu.

ALLEN: Yeah, that's the big house with the bed and breakfast sign on it now. We were over there a lot. Well, I believe one of the first places I went after I moved in here was over at Mrs. Bundschu—that was the mother, and she asked me over. And then after they were gone, why, Henry was . . . He was a widower and he lived over there, always had a good housekeeper, and he gave many, many parties in the evenings.

WILLIAMS: Oh, so you'd be over there for social events.

ALLEN: Yeah. He and my husband were real good friends. [chuckling] And I always think of one funny thing they said. We were sitting here in the back yard—we owned this lot here, too—one evening, and Henry always talked at the top of his voice. And I don't know, he was a Republican and Mr. Truman was a Democrat. I don't know what he spouted off about, but anyway he was talking about it, and my husband was so embarrassed. He said, "Well, Henry's talking loud enough, they could have heard him over there." I don't know what he said, but . . . [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Is that the same Bundschu that had the department store?

ALLEN: That did have, yes.

WILLIAMS: And then it says there was a chiropractor next door to him, Perl Griffin.

ALLEN: Here on the block? I never knew them.

WILLIAMS: Can you believe it? [chuckling]

ALLEN: I don't even remember the name.

WILLIAMS: Well, maybe you ran them out of town.

ALLEN: [chuckling] I don't think so, but I don't believe he stayed very long because I sure don't remember him.

WILLIAMS: Okay, and then Newton Braby. Do you know them at all?

ALLEN: Braby?

WILLIAMS: Braby.

ALLEN: Where'd they live?

WILLIAMS: Next door to the Three Trails, on this side.

ALLEN: Oh, on this side. No, I didn't know them.

WILLIAMS: Do you know who lived in that house most of the time?

ALLEN: Up there now? No, I don't.

WILLIAMS: And what was the Three Trails?

ALLEN: Well, that's that big building down here. Well, the three trails were the ones that left here, you know, going west, and you know what the three trails building now is.

WILLIAMS: Right. Is that a hotel or a boardinghouse?

ALLEN: You mean, where the trails . . . I know that was the . . . You mean the one down here on . . .

WILLIAMS: The one right down the street here, next to the Presbyterian church.

ALLEN: Oh, Three Trails down there?

WILLIAMS: It's listed as "The Three Trails." I think they're apartments now.

ALLEN: Well, they may be. I don't know them by that name. They have that big building that was the old Waggoner-Gates Flour Mill or something. That is a town property now, you know, and very interesting. It has displays and a moving picture that'll show you all about it.

WILLIAMS: So you've been down there?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: I was just there for the first time a week or two ago.

ALLEN: Interesting, didn't you think?

WILLIAMS: I'm glad they've preserved the old mill because that was Mr. Gates's mill. Okay, on this side of the street you had Louis Powers?

ALLEN: Yeah, he lived next door in the house . . . Now, not when we moved here.

There was a house here on this lot. He lived in the next house. But he had married Mrs. Harding. He hadn't always lived here. He lived up the street in . . . Somebody up there took roomers, and he got to wandering down to her house and they were married. And he was a fine neighbor. Now, she was not. I wouldn't want that repeated. I hope you're not putting that down. [chuckling] She wasn't very friendly, but Mr. Powers was. A very good neighbor.

WILLIAMS: What did he do?

ALLEN: Well, he was retired by the time I knew him, I believe.

WILLIAMS: And there was a house next door here?

ALLEN: Yes. It burned.

WILLIAMS: And that was the one that the Ogden girls . . .

ALLEN: Uh-huh, and we had owned it. We owned the house.

WILLIAMS: Who lived there?

ALLEN: Before that?

WILLIAMS: Well, anytime when you were here. When you moved in here.

ALLEN: Yeah, when we moved here Mrs. . . . What's that woman's name from Oak Grove?

JAMES: You don't mean the Ogdens' grandmother, Graves?

WILLIAMS: Graves?

JAMES: Mrs. Graves.

ALLEN: Well, Mrs. Graves, they lived there afterwards, but when we first moved here—

JAMES: Oh, I don't know them.

ALLEN: Well, Mother had known her.

JAMES: I don't remember.

ALLEN: Mother had known her in Oak Grove, Napoleon, or somewhere, and they

lived there, but not too long. And then Mrs. Graves moved in there. Mrs. Plank lived in the second floor, and she was an old-timer who lived up on the corner where the lot is where the parking lot is up there. She had a house up there.

WILLIAMS: Near the . . . ?

ALLEN: Up here, where that parking lot is.

WILLIAMS: Oh, across from the church?

ALLEN: The Presbyterian church, uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: Her name was Plank?

ALLEN: Plank, Mrs. Plank.

WILLIAMS: Were they widows or . . . ?

ALLEN: Well, Mrs. Graves wasn't until after they had been here a while. Mrs. Plank was.

WILLIAMS: And the Graves, their granddaughters were the Ogdens.

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And they would come and visit.

ALLEN: And they came and visited them quite a bit.

JAMES: Norine, where did those cousins of Dad's live?

ALLEN: Oh, there was a big house up here where the filling station is—a great big, brick house—and yes, some cousins of our father's, and their name was . . . Well, let's see, Bill is still living. He was what? A representative, I think. He lives down across from the Christian church now. Randall.

WILLIAMS: Oh, that's a relative of yours?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Congressman Randall. I didn't realize he was related.

ALLEN: He's distantly related.

WILLIAMS: So that filling station, you mean the one—

ALLEN: Well, he lives down across from the Christian church now in that one on the . . . which direction we're going. [chuckling] Well, anyway, the other way, the other way down there. But there was a great big, brick house up here where the Randalls lived.

WILLIAMS: Did it burn or was it torn down?

ALLEN: They tore it down when they built that station.

WILLIAMS: And that's where the Skelly or Phillips 66 or—

ALLEN: Yeah, whatever it is up there.

WILLIAMS: Then there were the doctors' offices, Gard and . . .

ALLEN: Up here, uh-huh, on beyond this first house here. There was a big house there—I don't remember the name of the people—he had the water company—and then they tore it down and built those offices, Dr. Gard and Dr. Comboy did.

WILLIAMS: They didn't live there? Those were just their offices?

ALLEN: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: Did you know them pretty well, being doctors?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Do you think that's how one of the Gards ended up marrying one of your girls?

ALLEN: Well, no, they went to school together. Well, they did go together. They went to the university. They both went to the University of Kansas.

WILLIAMS: And then it says Arthur Palmer.

ALLEN: They lived in the, I believe . . . No, it wasn't the last house on this block, it was about the third house down, the Palmers. He was an old gentleman, a fine old fellow, and his daughter then moved in there. Well, his name wasn't Palmer, his name was Hutchinson, and his daughter who moved in later with him was named Palmer.

WILLIAMS: Okay. And then there's the hotel, The Maples.

ALLEN: The one on this side? Well, now, let me see. I didn't know who was there for a long time, and then there was a family moved in there, and I can't remember their name.

WILLIAMS: Was it still a hotel when you . . .

ALLEN: It was at that time—well, just rooming, roomers, I think. And then Huffs have bought it and fixed it over beautifully. They haven't done anything on the outside. Now, Joanne said they were going to . . . Well, he had to get somebody to help paint it. I think he hasn't done that yet. I think he did all the work on the inside.

WILLIAMS: Have you been inside lately?

ALLEN: Oh, yeah. Beautiful. It really is.

WILLIAMS: Even not painted it looks kind of neat on the outside.

ALLEN: Kind of neat?

WILLIAMS: Well . . .

ALLEN: I wouldn't describe it that way. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, neat as in . . .

ALLEN: They all do. I want you to bring a paintbrush and get to work on this block.

WILLIAMS: Well, your house is the immaculate one that everyone can try to imitate.

ALLEN: Well, it hasn't been too long, I don't remember how long, but not too long since it was repainted. And we built that side of the house after we'd been here several years. It stopped at that door. That was a window over there and we just built onto it, had two baths and two bedrooms.

WILLIAMS: So it was a smaller house when you moved in.

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Do you know when you added on, about?

ALLEN: Well, let me see, about . . . Oh, let me see, it would have been in the thirties.

WILLIAMS: I suppose you needed more room with your two extra girls.

ALLEN: We needed a bigger house. We wanted a family room and another bedroom.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever have any other relatives living here besides your daughters?

ALLEN: Just my mother was with us sometimes. For several years, wasn't she?

JAMES: Yes.

WILLIAMS: So she moved up here to Independence, eventually?

ALLEN: She moved in here with us. Well, she was over with you a while, wasn't she, Helen, and then she came to live with us.

JAMES: She didn't live with me.

ALLEN: Hmm?

JAMES: She didn't live with me.

ALLEN: I think she did a while. Well, she lived with us, but I don't . . . She died here, but I don't remember just how many years she was here.

WILLIAMS: And then it looks like the house before you get to the junior high, it says Thomas Clark. Did you know him?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, I knew the Clarks.

WILLIAMS: What was that family involved in?

ALLEN: You know, I don't know. Now, she belonged . . . I believe she belonged to the DAR with me, and I gave her all my flower pots. I saved them for her. [chuckling] She'd always come down and get the flower pots. But they were nice people.

WILLIAMS: What was her first name?

ALLEN: Her first name? I don't recall.

WILLIAMS: Why would you have flower pots to give away?

ALLEN: Oh, people sent us a lot of flowers. The girls were always being sick and they'd send the doctor flowers. And I just always saved them and she'd have flowers to put in them, come down and I'd give her mine.

WILLIAMS: So these are the pots you get from the florist.

ALLEN: Yeah. Not like you get now, but the ones you used to get. You wouldn't remember those.

WILLIAMS: Oh, were they sturdier?

ALLEN: They were clay. Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And then there's the junior high. Did your daughters go to school there?

ALLEN: Yeah. They went down to Bryant first down here, and then up to junior high and then over here to high school.

WILLIAMS: So were you down at the junior high for programs or to the high school?

ALLEN: Oh, yeah, all of them. I went a good deal, having four daughters. [chuckling] They were never all in school at the same time. The two older ones were over here at the same time; the rest of them weren't.

WILLIAMS: Did they have things like PTA or . . . ?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Music programs, plays, things like that?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Where did you vote?

ALLEN: Down at Bryant School.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever vote at the Memorial Building?

ALLEN: Vote up there? I don't know. I was up there a lot, probably did. I don't know whether we voted up there or not.

WILLIAMS: I guess that hasn't been there . . .

ALLEN: Yes, I think it was finished about the year we came here. If I'm not mistaken, I think it's about that old. And they used it for everything. We

didn't have these big churches, didn't have the temple down here, you know, and it was the biggest place. They used to have the high school commencements there. You could only have two tickets because it was too small for them to get in, so each graduate had two tickets. Now anybody can go.

WILLIAMS: Well, I graduated over here in the auditorium.

ALLEN: Oh, did you, down here? So many of them do.

WILLIAMS: That was one of the reasons, because it's so big.

ALLEN: Oh, it's a wonderful thing. Really, it's been a great help to Independence.

WILLIAMS: A nice big organ and . . .

ALLEN: Uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: Did you know any of the people on Pleasant Street?

ALLEN: On these side streets?

WILLIAMS: On Pleasant, Pleasant Street, across from the school? It says there's the Gibsons . . .

ALLEN: Yes, that we used to know. Fanny Gibbs lived there a while, and . . . oh, I can't think of the people that lived on the corner. Yeah, I knew some of them.

WILLIAMS: And as you go up toward the Baptist church on Pleasant and Truman Road, the Jacksons lived on . . . Did you know them?

ALLEN: Yeah, in that corner house.

WILLIAMS: How well did you know them?

ALLEN: Well, pretty well. We'd been there to things, and they were here, and their daughter was a Red Cross nurse, I guess. She went across with the women . . . They would go across and she'd come back with them, you know, and come on the ships with them. And she brought my husband a little Hummel from over there, "Little Doctor," it was called, and one of my

women working for me broke it. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: That's too bad.

ALLEN: Yeah, it was too bad. It was really the only one I cared . . . that he cared a lot about, of course. Well, it wasn't broke until after he was gone. But they were nice people, Mr. Jackson. They were very nice. Then the house on the corner that faces Truman Road—now not the one that goes down on Delaware—but this was the Baptist parsonage.

WILLIAMS: Okay, and that's where . . .

ALLEN: Yeah, what is it?

WILLIAMS: Hunt?

ALLEN: They did live there. When we moved here, Proctor was here, Brother Proctor. He had been our pastor in Odessa, and he married my sister after they came up—I mean, he didn't take her as his bride, he performed the ceremony—and we knew them well.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the Reverend Hunt?

ALLEN: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: He's the one who showed—

ALLEN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And he was the Baptist minister for quite a while.

ALLEN: Yes. I still know his wife. She still comes to church.

WILLIAMS: Another person down on Maple here, Susan Ott?

ALLEN: Oh, yes. I'd forgotten they were living there. The Methodist parsonage was right on the other side of this building. The parsonage was there and they had different ministers in, and then the Otts lived there.

WILLIAMS: Let's go up Delaware a ways. Did you know the Choplins?

ALLEN: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: This says Lucas.

ALLEN: They lived right on the corner, right across there. She's still there. Luke's dead, but she still lives there.

WILLIAMS: His wife?

ALLEN: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: Is that Maxine?

ALLEN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Did you know them very well or were you in that house much?

ALLEN: Well, I've been there quite a few times, yeah.

WILLIAMS: It looks like a nice old Victorian house.

ALLEN: Uh-huh, it is a nice house. And the house next door, you know, I don't remember the name of the people that were living there when we moved here, but later then the Bush sisters . . . You know them, who they were, and then Polly Compton had the big stone house.

WILLIAMS: We interviewed Dorsy Warr.

ALLEN: Oh, Dorsy Lou. Uh-huh, Dorsy Lou.

WILLIAMS: Did you know Polly very well?

ALLEN: Well, we knew him pretty well.

WILLIAMS: He was a Baptist, right?

ALLEN: Yeah. But now, not all my friends are confined to the Baptists. I'm the only Baptist in the bridge club. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Well, besides the church then, you would meet people other ways, I guess.

ALLEN: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: And then across from those houses there are some parsonages. The Presbyterians are on the corner here, aren't they?

ALLEN: Oh, down here, Mr. . . .

WILLIAMS: At Truman and Delaware.

ALLEN: Yeah, Reverend Melton lives there now. I don't recall the names of the

people that were there, but he's been there a long time.

WILLIAMS: This says that it was a Paul Bischoff?

ALLEN: I don't know that name.

WILLIAMS: Okay, and then it was Proctor, Lawrence.

ALLEN: Yeah, after he moved out of the . . . When he retired and moved from the parsonage, he moved into the second house there.

WILLIAMS: Do you know the Hankins very well, the people that live in what was the Baptist parsonage?

ALLEN: I didn't know they lived there. The Hagens?

WILLIAMS: Hankins.

ALLEN: I don't remember them.

WILLIAMS: They're a younger couple.

ALLEN: No, I don't know them.

WILLIAMS: How about Van Triplett? Doesn't ring a bell, huh?

ALLEN: Not anymore. It may have at one time, but not anymore.

WILLIAMS: Mary Charlton?

ALLEN: I probably knew them all at one time, but I don't remember them.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the people on Delaware any more or less than—

ALLEN: Some of them. Some of them.

WILLIAMS: How about the Twymans?

ALLEN: I knew them. He was a doctor, we knew them, and their daughter-in-law was a very good friend of one of my daughters.

WILLIAMS: Who's their daughter-in-law? What's her name?

ALLEN: Millie Twyman, and let's see, what was his name? He died just a few weeks ago. Tom.

WILLIAMS: Oh, Tom. That's Tom's wife.

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: That was a long line of doctors, right? There were several.

ALLEN: Yes, I think their father, and then there were two of them in that family. Tom had a brother, Elmer Twyman. He was a surgeon in Kansas City.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the Carvins very well?

ALLEN: Not very well, but I knew them.

WILLIAMS: This says Agnes Carvin. Was that Grace's mother?

ALLEN: It must have been. I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Of course the Burruses lived down there. Did you know them?

ALLEN: Yeah, I knew them well.

WILLIAMS: Why did you know them so well?

ALLEN: Well, I don't know. Now he was a lawyer, and he and my husband were real good friends. And one of the girls had taught, oh, at the Bryant School down there and had some of my girls in class. I don't know, I just always knew them.

WILLIAMS: And the Jennings?

ALLEN: Yeah, I knew them. And that's another house for sale down there.

WILLIAMS: A nice house.

ALLEN: A big old house, uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: Did they ever do any decorating for you or anything like that? Don't they own a decorating business?

ALLEN: Oh, yes. They've covered some of these chairs, but I don't know which ones. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And did you know the Grahams? Hazel Graham and her husband?

ALLEN: I knew who they were. Now, I didn't know them.

WILLIAMS: And I know you know Sue Gentry.

ALLEN: Oh, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Is she in your bridge . . . Does she play bridge?

ALLEN: She was. She was, and she got involved in so many other things, she doesn't have time now. But I told her the other day, I said, "The next time I have to have a guest, I'm going to call you first." She fills in once in a while, but not very often. She's very, very busy.

WILLIAMS: It's amazing how . . .

ALLEN: She's a grand person. I'm very fond of her.

WILLIAMS: She's sort of like the neighborhood historian, I think.

ALLEN: She really is. I call her. When I want to know things, why, I call Sue. She's supposed to know . . . And of course she was on the paper so long, she knew so much about the town and what was going on about the people.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the Balfours?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Percy?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: It says Percy Balfour.

ALLEN: That's right, he was the father. And do you have the son's name there?

WILLIAMS: No.

ALLEN: What was his name? He died. Oh, Harold was his name.

WILLIAMS: What did they do?

ALLEN: Mr. Balfour? You know, I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Professor Bryant, did you know them?

ALLEN: No.

WILLIAMS: I guess that's about the neighborhood. Do you remember anybody I've missed around here?

ALLEN: [chuckling] Well, I don't think of anyone right now. Those are the old-timers.

WILLIAMS: And you said when you moved here in '26, did you buy all three of these lots then, or did you just . . . ?

ALLEN: No, we bought that one about, oh, I expect ten or twelve years after we'd been here, and bought these two across the street here where the apartments are. Well, the first one here was finished in 1929, and the other one about the year after.

WILLIAMS: You didn't own those very long, though, you said.

ALLEN: Not too long.

WILLIAMS: And what about the lot next door?

ALLEN: Hmm?

WILLIAMS: The lot next door here? Did you buy it?

ALLEN: Oh, well, that's the one I couldn't remember those people's name. Hayes, I believe. No, I don't remember what their name was. Real good neighbors. And my mother had known them, oh, long years ago, but they didn't live there too long. But the older girl, one of them died and the one that was left married a fellow from Oak Grove. And he would get out in the yard—he was building a boat—and had all the kids in the neighborhood, particularly mine, watching him, and using the things that curls, you know, for their curls, put them on their black hair. He was a good baby sitter. [chuckling]

[End #4339; Begin #4340]

WILLIAMS: Okay, if you don't mind, I'd like to have one more tape and talk a little bit more about your daughters. Is that okay?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Is Barbie still planning on coming out?

ALLEN: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Next month?

ALLEN: She's planning to.

WILLIAMS: And Harriet's doing okay?

ALLEN: Well, no, she broke the bones in her lower leg about a . . . I don't believe it's been a month, maybe that long. I'm not sure if she'll be able to come. And the other two have passed away.

WILLIAMS: Is Harriet at home yet, or is she still in the—

ALLEN: She was to leave, I think, the last of this week, and Barbie will call me. Barbie has an office in Sacramento, and she'll be going down to Chico this weekend, and then she always calls me and tells me how she is.

WILLIAMS: How did they end up in California?

ALLEN: Well, Barbie's husband was in the navy and he was sent to Hawaii. Then, when he came back, he was assigned to that naval hospital there in San Diego. Then he went to Great Lakes, of all places, the last place he wanted to go. And from there they moved . . . Oh, what is the one up on the . . .

JAMES: Libertyville?

ALLEN: Huh?

JAMES: Libertyville, wasn't it?

ALLEN: That's where they lived, but I was trying to think of the naval station up there on the Grand Lakes. Anyway, they moved to Libertyville, and from there they moved back to California.

WILLIAMS: I guess when you're in the military you move around a lot.

ALLEN: Yeah. Not a lot, but then he was gone quite a while while he was in the navy. That's when they lived in Hawaii. And she's been mayor of Redding, the first woman on the council in Redding and the first . . . only woman mayor I believe they've ever had.

WILLIAMS: That's Barbie?

ALLEN: Barbie.

WILLIAMS: She sounds like quite a talented person.

ALLEN: Quite a gal. And she's executive administrator of the Psychiatric Department of the State of California now. Now repeat that after me.

WILLIAMS: Executive director of the Psychiatric Association of the State of California.

ALLEN: I didn't think you could do it. I didn't think he'd do it. [chuckling] I have such a time remembering it myself.

WILLIAMS: Ask me in about ten more minutes and then we'll see.

ALLEN: That's pretty good.

WILLIAMS: Now, your oldest daughter was . . . ?

ALLEN: Marie.

WILLIAMS: Marie, right.

ALLEN: She lived in Milwaukee for years.

WILLIAMS: How would you describe her as a person?

ALLEN: Well, very outgoing, a very intellectual girl, a good businesswoman, and into everything in Milwaukee.

WILLIAMS: And the second one is Harriet?

ALLEN: Uh-huh. And she taught for a while here in town before they . . . I guess that was before or after she moved back from Florida, I don't know, in the . . . Well, it was for . . . I guess you'd call them . . . They don't call it that, but for the mentally retarded, the first school they ever had here. It was out on . . . I believe it was on Noland somewhere. She taught in that a while. That's all the other outside work she's done.

WILLIAMS: So she was kind of a therapist or a teacher?

ALLEN: No, just a teacher.

WILLIAMS: And then, was her personality any different than Marie?

ALLEN: Yes, they were quite different. They were all . . . all individuals.

WILLIAMS: And then there's Mona? How was she different from the rest?

ALLEN: Well, she was the . . . I believe she was the sweetest one of all of them.
[chuckling] And she taught in that school for a while. She's been gone since 1971.

JAMES: Very smart.

ALLEN: Very smart. She was the valedictorian of her high school class, Phi Beta Kappa in the university. A very intellectual girl.

WILLIAMS: They all went to college, I guess.

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And did well, probably.

ALLEN: Went to the college and the university, uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: And then there's Barbie, and she's . . .

ALLEN: She's a graduate of KU. She's the one that's in California now.

WILLIAMS: I've spoken to her on the phone, and she seems . . .

ALLEN: To Barbie?

WILLIAMS: I called her a few weeks ago to ask her if she would do an interview when she was out here.

ALLEN: Oh, you did?

WILLIAMS: But she sounded like a very lively and energetic . . .

ALLEN: Oh, she is, very outgoing and very lively. Full of pep.

WILLIAMS: Was one of them particularly funny or a joker or anything like that?

ALLEN: Well, not particularly, I don't think. Not outstanding above the others.

WILLIAMS: You said Harriet was the closest friend of Margaret's.

ALLEN: Well, she was the closest in age, yeah.

WILLIAMS: In age.

ALLEN: Yes, and she was, because she's the one that went to Washington.

WILLIAMS: Did one of your daughters seem more like Margaret than the other ones?

ALLEN: Seem more like her?

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh, as far as personality and . . .

ALLEN: No. No, I wouldn't say so. They were all individuals.

WILLIAMS: And were all your daughters married? So their names aren't Allen anymore.

ALLEN: No, that's right.

WILLIAMS: It was Marie . . .?

ALLEN: Grayer.

WILLIAMS: Grayer? G-R-A-Y-E . . .

ALLEN: A-Y-E-R, mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: And Harriet . . .?

ALLEN: Harriet Kellogg. She's Thomas now. Her last name is Thomas now. And then Mona Blank. And by the way, her son lives in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, and he should be in the end of this week. He's moving to . . . well, where they have a good law school in Idaho. He's going to take that up now. Been all these years, and now he's decided he'll be a lawyer. And they should be in the end of this week.

WILLIAMS: And Barbie is Gard, right?

ALLEN: Mm-hmm. She's the one at Sacramento.

WILLIAMS: How many grandchildren do you have?

ALLEN: Five, and seven great-grandchildren.

WILLIAMS: Do you see your family very much?

ALLEN: Well, not always. They usually get in in the summer, but I don't think any of them . . . I don't believe the two girls will be in this summer. And just the one grandson. Of course, the one lives here in town, and the one from Idaho will be in. I think he'll be the only one in this summer.

JAMES: Well, tell him about Charles, Norine.

ALLEN: I did tell him about him.

JAMES: Comes by twice a day.

ALLEN: Yeah, he comes by twice a day.

JAMES: We don't know what we'd do without him.

WILLIAMS: He's the one used to live next door.

ALLEN: He did for a while, and now he lives down across from Bryant School.

WILLIAMS: What does he do?

ALLEN: He's a lawyer, an attorney.

WILLIAMS: And he comes by twice a day? He is a good . . .

ALLEN: He comes by to read the paper and changes his clothes, and comes back in the evening and does the same thing. In the meantime, checks on his grandmother.

WILLIAMS: He sounds like a good grandson.

ALLEN: He is.

JAMES: He's the best.

ALLEN: A good fellow.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever know the Trumans?

JAMES: No.

ALLEN: No, she lived in Texas a long time.

JAMES: I've lived in St. Louis and Texas.

ALLEN: And then she's always lived in Kansas since that time.

JAMES: I never have lived here.

WILLIAMS: Did it ever impress your relatives that you lived in the neighborhood? Did it impress your friends or relatives from out of town?

JAMES: It didn't impress her relatives, I don't believe.

ALLEN: I don't believe so. [chuckling] I don't believe it did. We just took him as a matter of course, you know. We'd been there . . .

JAMES: As a matter of fact, our father was a red-hot Republican.

WILLIAMS: Oh, really?

ALLEN: But I've always voted the way I wanted to. My father was a Republican, my husband a Democrat. I voted the way I wanted to. Always.

WILLIAMS: Connie?

CONNIE ODOM-SOPER: Well, I don't have any extra to that. I'd like to hear more about what your girls did outside the house and over here in the driveway and making canals and boats and things. The question that popped into my mind with what you just said was: How did you vote in 1948? [chuckling] Do you remember? Did you vote for Mr. Dewey or Mr. Truman?

ALLEN: Did I vote for him? I'm sure I did. That's been so long ago I don't remember, but I'm sure I would have voted for him. I don't know, I don't remember who was running against him. Who was?

ODOM-SOPER: Mr. Dewey.

WILLIAMS: Thomas Dewey.

ALLEN: Oh, was it? Well, I don't remember, but I'm sure I would have voted for him.

ODOM-SOPER: I was just wondering about seasons. Were your daughters outdoor people, or did they usually play inside?

ALLEN: No, they played quite a bit in the yard. They had badminton, and there used to be a . . . I think it had been an old chicken house on the back of this lot next door, and they had a playhouse in there, had rabbits and turtles and things, and they played tennis and swam.

WILLIAMS: Is that where the "Henhouse" name came from?

ALLEN: Yeah.

ODOM-SOPER: Well, sure.

ALLEN: Uh-huh, the Henhouse Hicks.

WILLIAMS: Why did they call themselves “Hicks”?

ALLEN: Well, I don’t know. They were hicks. [chuckling]

JAMES: Because it started with H.

ODOM-SOPER: It rhymed, or it was alliterative there. [chuckling] What about winter? Did they go sliding?

ALLEN: Riding?

ODOM-SOPER: Sliding. Sleds.

ALLEN: Oh, they had sleds, I guess they did, and then they all went horseback riding.

ODOM-SOPER: Oh, they did?

ALLEN: Uh-huh. Oh, yeah, Mrs. Bundschu, who lived over here on Waldo, picked up a load every Saturday morning and would take them over to the Benjamin Stables in Kansas City, and they all took riding lessons over there.

ODOM-SOPER: Did they go to the movies at all? Was there a cinema down here on the square?

ALLEN: Go to the movies?

ODOM-SOPER: Uh-huh.

ALLEN: Oh, yes.

ODOM-SOPER: By themselves?

ALLEN: Well, I had Barbie . . . yeah, Barbie the youngest girl, and a friend of hers went. You could let them go then. They could go clear uptown. Not after night, but then in the daytime. And they went up to the one . . . There was one uptown on the south side of the square at that time, a picture show. They went up one afternoon, and I waited and I waited and waited, and they didn’t come home, and it was getting near evening, you know. So I

went up and looked, and they had stayed to see the show over again.

ODOM-SOPER: [chuckling] What show was it?

ALLEN: What show? I have no idea. No idea.

WILLIAMS: Did you go to the movies yourself?

ALLEN: Oh, yeah. We had one right up here on the corner.

ODOM-SOPER: On the corner?

ALLEN: Right up here, yeah.

ODOM-SOPER: Where the gas station is?

ALLEN: No, it was on this . . . on the corner right up here. No, Mrs. Plank lived there. What was that movie? It was right close here, just, oh, a block or so, called the old Lewis Theater. Then they changed it to the Granada Theater. We used to have good shows there.

ODOM-SOPER: Thank you.

ALLEN: That was real nice because we could go and we could walk up there, you know, and go anytime.

WILLIAMS: A lot of VIPs or celebrities have visited the Trumans.

ALLEN: Oh, I'm sure they did.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever stand out with the crowds and watch?

ALLEN: I could see it from the window. [chuckling]

JAMES: She has been invited to some things out there, though.

ALLEN: Oh, yes, been over there to things and . . . I don't know, things going on every once in a while.

ODOM-SOPER: When they had things over there—is it okay if I ask?—was it done very elegantly, or was it kind of . . .

ALLEN: You mean, the house?

ODOM-SOPER: Describe the table, for instance.

ALLEN: You mean, the house?

ODOM-SOPER: Did you go to luncheons or something over there, or receptions?

ALLEN: Yes, I have been to things over there.

ODOM-SOPER: Can you describe—

ALLEN: But not too elaborate, no.

ODOM-SOPER: How did she set the table? There's a beautiful silver epergne over there now. I'm wondering if they ever used it. Did you ever see it?

ALLEN: Oh, I'm sure they did.

ODOM-SOPER: Do you remember it?

ALLEN: Because they'd have . . . No, I don't remember. I remember seeing it, but I don't remember it ever being on the table. But they had a lot of guests, you know, and people.

ODOM-SOPER: When you were there, what did the table look like, do you remember?

ALLEN: I didn't pay that much attention to it.

ODOM-SOPER: Did she use a tablecloth?

ALLEN: I think so. Very nice, uh-huh.

ODOM-SOPER: But then you went on through and went on into the back yard?

ALLEN: Anybody what?

ODOM-SOPER: You picked up your meal or your food in the dining room?

ALLEN: No, we ate at the table. I wasn't over there very many times for meals, but we ate at the table.

ODOM-SOPER: Oh, you did? I see. Was this while Mrs. Wallace was still alive?

ALLEN: I think it must have been.

ODOM-SOPER: You don't remember where she sat, do you?

ALLEN: No, I don't even remember whether she was at the table.

WILLIAMS: Did you know the Trumans' maid, Vietta Garr?

ALLEN: Mm-hmm, and then later Mrs. Truman had one that came over and worked for me for a long time.

WILLIAMS: Who was that?

ALLEN: I had a letter from her just the other day. Leola Estes was her name. And she had worked for them, and I don't know . . . I don't know who they had last. Well, Mrs. Truman had nurses, of course, but Leola had been with me from the time Charles was a baby, and before that. Excellent help.

WILLIAMS: Is she the one who lives out in Ohio?

ALLEN: Yes, she's moved to Ohio lately.

WILLIAMS: It's too bad I can't get out there and visit with her because I'm sure she would . . .

ALLEN: She's a grand old person. I had a letter from her just the other day. She went to California for a while, was in Los Angeles—I don't know whether she had family there or why she happened to go there—but whenever Barbie would be down at Los Angeles to a meeting she always called Leola and had her come over to the hotel and meet her for dinner. They all loved her.

WILLIAMS: So Leola worked for you at the same time she worked for the Trumans?

ALLEN: No, after she was through at Mrs. Truman's.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Did you know any of the other help at the Trumans, like their yard people or any other housekeeping people?

ALLEN: No, I didn't.

WILLIAMS: You said you were over there to visit Mrs. Truman, and something about the study? Is that where she would entertain?

ALLEN: That must have been when I said I took the picture over to her and sat in the little library and visited with her.

WILLIAMS: Did you always visit in that room, or . . . ?

ALLEN: No. I didn't visit them often. I was just over there a few times.

WILLIAMS: Which way would you go into the house?

ALLEN: I think I went through this back door.

WILLIAMS: On the side? On this kind of . . . back by the—

ALLEN: No, that goes up on the porch. I believe they've changed that, though. There were steps going up there. We went in that way.

WILLIAMS: On this side of the house?

ALLEN: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: You didn't go to the front door?

ALLEN: No.

ODOM-SOPER: When you all ate with the Trumans at their dining room table, were your girls along?

ALLEN: No, it was just for grown people.

ODOM-SOPER: I wondered. Margaret—

ALLEN: And I don't remember being there to a luncheon more than once.

ODOM-SOPER: I'm curious, because Margaret had said that she was only allowed to speak at the table when she was spoken to, that that was a rule, and I'm wondering, if there were five girls at that table, how on earth they did it. [chuckling]

ALLEN: No, not unless they were playing and just playing house, why, it wouldn't have been.

WILLIAMS: Did you have that rule in this house?

JAMES: Oh, goodness, no. [chuckling]

ALLEN: I always had an extra one. That their mothers worked or gone all the time, and they'd say, "Now, go down to Mrs. Allen's if I'm not at home." So I had several. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So you were pretty popular with the neighborhood children?

ALLEN: Well, with their mothers because they knew I was . . . [chuckling] No, they were very good friends of the girls. Very good friends.

WILLIAMS: Well, it sounds like this was a nice neighborhood to raise children in.

ALLEN: It was. Of course, as I say, it's changed so now we don't even know each other. [chuckling] But it was very nice, real nice.

WILLIAMS: Well, I guess if I have forgotten something I can ask Barbie, if I get to talk to her.

ALLEN: [chuckling] What are you going to call her about?

WILLIAMS: Oh, mostly playing and her friendship with Margaret.

ALLEN: Well, now, she was the youngest one. She was not as close to her as the other girls, as the two older girls, because she was the baby. They said she tagged along. I think that's the way Margaret expressed it.

WILLIAMS: I think she mentioned on the phone that one time the bigger girls locked her in the Trumans' basement.

ALLEN: I had forgotten about that. They did! Yes, they sure did.

WILLIAMS: Did she come home terrified?

ALLEN: [chuckling] Well, I really don't remember much about it now. I just remember that did happen. I had forgotten about it.

WILLIAMS: So I think she'll have some nice stories to tell about.

ALLEN: She's liable to flower them up pretty well, too. You better watch out.
[chuckling]

JAMES: I was thinking the word you were looking for was "embroider."

ALLEN: "Embroidery" was the word I was looking for, yeah. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Thanks for the warning. It was very nice of you to let us come by.

ALLEN: Well, I've enjoyed visiting with you.

WILLIAMS: And I hope we haven't worn you out with all the questions.

ALLEN: No, not at all. I haven't done anything but sit here.

WILLIAMS: [chuckling] Okay. Well, you've told us a lot more than I think you thought you would be able to.

ALLEN: I sure have. I surely have.

WILLIAMS: And we really appreciate it.

ALLEN: Well, I've enjoyed meeting you both. It's nice.

WILLIAMS: And if you ever have any questions . . . We were talking about giving walking tours before you got here, Connie, and you watch us go by.

ALLEN: Uh-huh, and I watch them go by now because the windows are right over there on that side, you know, and I can see them go by. That's where I do all my writing, my letters and things like that, you know.

WILLIAMS: Well, if you ever have any questions or need anything, just let us know, okay?

ALLEN: All right. It's been real interesting to watch them, because as I said, it seemed to me there were so many more people. Either I've watched more or there are more. But you thought they had increased, didn't you?

WILLIAMS: I think it's picked up some, but I don't know how much. Of course, in the summer it's always a lot busier.

ALLEN: Well, of course.

WILLIAMS: May I jot down your name, also?

JAMES: Mine?

WILLIAMS: So that when we make a transcript . . .

JAMES: Well, if you want to.

WILLIAMS: Helen?

JAMES: Mrs. Gilbert James. Helen.

ALLEN: You can say she was there answering the phone for her sister. [chuckling]

ODOM-SOPER: And the doorbell.

WILLIAMS: And you live over in Kansas?

JAMES: Yeah, I live out in Shawnee Mission, Prairie Village, Kansas.

ALLEN: Just about an hour from here, isn't it?

JAMES: It's a good forty-five minutes, and you can't do it in any less. I've tried every road there is.

ODOM-SOPER: I have, too.

WILLIAMS: 435 is probably . . .

JAMES: No, I don't go.

WILLIAMS: You don't go that way?

JAMES: No. No, I don't. I don't like the freeways.

WILLIAMS: I don't really, either. I live down at 95th and Raytown Road, so I go Noland Road.

JAMES: Oh, there are lots of ways to go. I don't remember, I go sometimes Sterling to 63rd, over south on Mission Road and 79th. I live out in that Corinth area.

WILLIAMS: So you weren't around here much when all the Truman excitement was going on.

JAMES: No. No, I have never lived here. I've never lived in Odessa since I was in junior college. I've been in St. Louis and Texas, and back in Kansas City and Napoleon.

ODOM-SOPER: Well, I think Napoleon is a pretty little town.

JAMES: Well, and we often say the house we were born in is in better condition than we are.

ALLEN: We were what?

JAMES: The house we were born in is in better condition than we are.

ALLEN: [chuckling] Yeah.

JAMES: Out there overlooking the river.

ALLEN: That's right.

JAMES: Of course, I don't remember anything—

ODOM-SOPER: Someone from our Methodist church in Liberty decided late in life to go into the Methodist ministry, and his first pastorate was Napoleon. His wife taught school there.

JAMES: Oh, really? You live in Liberty?

ODOM-SOPER: Uh-huh.

JAMES: No, we were always reared in the tradition of Liberty, too, because our father was—

ODOM-SOPER: Well, now, we Methodists predate you back just by six months.

JAMES: You do?

ODOM-SOPER: Yes. [chuckling] We date from 1821.

JAMES: I didn't know that.

ODOM-SOPER: I showed Jim William Jewell today.

JAMES: It's a beautiful . . . Dad graduated there in 1897.

ALLEN: Oh, and I think Liberty is such a nice place.

JAMES: Oh, I like it. I do, too. I think it'd be a lovely town in which to live.

ODOM-SOPER: It is.

JAMES: You have so many good things that come there.

ODOM-SOPER: Yes. Well, William Jewell has done a great deal with the community. It's something, I was telling Jim today, I've never seen. I grew up in New York State, in three really different college towns, and [unintelligible]. But down in Columbia, I graduated from Baker in Baldwin, Kansas. Never, no matter what the size of the school or town, have I seen a school try and blend with the community as Jewell has done. No, even in little old Baldwin, Kansas, there's the school and there's the community, and the two don't mix.

ALLEN: William Jewell has so many nice things going on there, don't they?

ODOM-SOPER: Yes, they do.

ALLEN: Oh, so much. Now, our father, as she told you, was a graduate, and this grandson of mine is a graduate of William Jewell, too.

JAMES: And also, I understand, and I know some of them was looking into the ratings of colleges. It rates very well.

ODOM-SOPER: It's one of the top.

JAMES: One of the top in the country.

ALLEN: Well, I think it's getting warm in here.

JAMES: My father wanted to send me there, and they didn't want girls at that time.

ODOM-SOPER: That's right. That's right. Not until . . . it was 1921 when it became coed.

JAMES: Well, see, I graduated from high school in '21, and they were just beginning to let them.

ODOM-SOPER: Yes, just beginning.

JAMES: And I said, my, if I'd gone there I might have married a Baptist minister, and I would have made a poor minister's wife. I've always been very grateful I didn't have to.

ODOM-SOPER: My dad's a Methodist minister, but I didn't marry one.

JAMES: Well, of course, our father was a minister at one time.

ODOM-SOPER: Oh, was he?

JAMES: Yeah, but he quit the year I was born.

ALLEN: He didn't stay in the profession very long, though.

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX

1. Truman neighborhood maps based on the 1950 Independence city directory. Harry S Truman NHS files