

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

JESSIE COLBY

NOVEMBER 21, 1985

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY PAM SMOOT

ORAL HISTORY #1985-7

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #3083-3085

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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ABSTRACT

A long-time resident of Independence, Missouri, Jessie Colby (March 1, 1901-September 20, 1995) recalls various contacts that she had through the years with the Trumans. Soon after moving to Independence in 1921, Colby worked in county elections when Harry Truman was elected to the county court. Her husband Harold had contacts with Mr. Truman through the Ararat Shrine. And Mrs. Colby recalls her association with Bess Truman before World War II when both were officers in the local needlework guild. Like many other Independence residents, Colby saw and exchanged greetings with Mr. Truman during his morning walks.

Persons mentioned: Lucas Choplin, Rufus Burrus, Randolph Hearst, Harold Colby, Ray Colby, Ralph Depew, Harry S Truman, Bess W. Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, Bud Knoepker, Karl Knoepker, Madge Gates Wallace, Archibald Stevenson Carmen, Mike Westwood, Roger Sermon, Tom Pendergast, Ermile Doshi, Mouvant Doshi, Grace Schulenberg, May Wallace, and Chuck Haynes.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH JESSIE COLBY

HSTR INTERVIEW #1985-7

STEVE HARRISON: This recording is being made as part of the oral history project at Harry S Truman National Historic Site. We're recording today in the conference room at the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri. We are interviewing Jessie Colby. The interview is being conducted by Pam Smoot, historian with the National Park Service in the Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska. Today's date is November 21, 1985. My name is Steve Harrison. I'll be operating the recording equipment during this interview with Mrs. Colby.

PAM SMOOT: We're going to talk about Harry.

JESSIE COLBY: Oh, we are?

SMOOT: Your friend Harry, okay?

COLBY: Yeah.

SMOOT: Steve, Jessie brought some things here with her. I wonder what we've got here.

COLBY: Well, I'll show them to you.

SMOOT: We'll wait until Steve gets to look.

COLBY: Oh, there I am in the army in Boston, in front of the . . . in the Boston Common. Oh, I don't know why I've got all these things. That was my passport picture for 1937, and here's a picture of the U.S.S. *Missouri* that nobody has got pictures of like that. The chief petty officer of the electricians, he was an electrician on the U.S.S. *Missouri*, and he was an Independence boy, and we were good friends and he sent me that. Now, here I am right here. I was always the shortest one in the rank, see? And here I am, right down here. [chuckling] Now that was way back in 1942.

SMOOT: She used to be a WAC [Women's Army Corps], Steve.

COLBY: The first class of WACs. You know where we slept? In the horse stables. They didn't have any barracks built. And they washed out the stables and painted them and put our bunks in there and put poles up for our clothes, and that was where we slept. [chuckling]

HARRISON: Where was that?

COLBY: Fort Des Moines. It was the only training place for the WAC. That was the WAC. Well, well, well . . . I wish I had had time to . . . I don't know what I've got here. Oh, that's about Luke Choplin. He's one of our old neighbors. It's something about when the Trumans came home on vacation or something. And here I was in *USA Today*, and then there's a write-up on the back but not much. This is Rufus Burrus, and I sure got it on him. Now, I've known him ever since before he got married, and Rufus is no young chicken. He's about eighty-eight years old now, but always he's the high mogul. He comes over here . . . You know Rufus Burrus, don't you? You know, he's always so cocky and so on. So I met him up on the square. We're good friends. He always salutes me and I salute him, you know? [chuckling] I said, "Well, Rufus, ever since I've known you, you've always been the top dog in everything. Now," I said, "by gosh, once I've got it over you." I said, "Have you seen our pictures in the *USA Today*? I've got a better picture than you have!" [laughter] Oh, he got a big kick out of that.

Now, my husband was a Shriner, and he was in the Harry Truman class of Shriners when they were elevated to . . . See, in 1945 . . . He was a Shriner until 1980. And where is he?

HARRISON: Right there?

COLBY: Right . . . Well, wait a minute now. Yes, that's Harold right there. Now,

that was all the Harry Truman novices, you know, into the shrine. That was the class. They called that the 19 . . . what is it, forty . . . ?

HARRISON: Nineteen forty-five, yes.

COLBY: The 1945 Harry Truman class.

HARRISON: It was November 16.

COLBY: Yes, it was a while back, but he was proud of that. Yep, and you know all the years I knew him, I never once called him Mr. President or Mr. Truman. He called me Jessie, and I called him Harry. [chuckling]

SMOOT: So, Jessie, would you tell me your full name, please, and what your address is, and when your birth date is?

COLBY: All right. Jessie Mildred Carmen Colby. [chuckling] Carmen was my maiden name. I was born in Weston County, Wyoming, and I was one of the very first white children. They're practically sure, we don't have documentation, but I have the reputation of having been the first white female child born in Weston County. My dad was with the Home Stake Gold Mine Company. And . . . now, what else would you like to know?

SMOOT: I would like to know how long you've lived in Independence.

COLBY: I have lived in Independence since 1921. However, when I was a child, my dad got into a row with Randolph Hearst and quit the Home Stake Gold Mine and went into the ranching business. And he had a ranch in Wyoming, and he used to take trainloads of cattle back East to the big package companies, big meat companies: Omaha, Chicago, Kansas City, Buffalo, I think Pittsburgh and several different places. I think New York City had a packinghouse then, I'm not sure.

But, anyway, on the way going there, he got to thinking about his childhood. And his father was killed in the northern army, the Yankee

Army, and his mother died shortly after his father was killed. And, my mother's father was a Confederate soldier, and he was killed in the Confederate Army, and his wife died two years later and left my mother an orphan, so her aunt and uncle raised her. But my father was nine years old, and in those days people didn't take care of their orphans as they do today. And he went up to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, one of those suburbs, and he with other young boys picked the slate out of anthracite coal as it came down the belts. And they worked there till they were around thirteen or fourteen years old, and they struck gold out in the Black Hills, Wyoming, or, I mean, South Dakota. Well, they heard about it, and they got all excited about this gold field. So the three of them hitchhiked or bummed their way on freight trains clear across to Edgemont, Nebraska. That was as far as the railroad went at that time. So they got off—that was as far west, I guess, or that direction anyway. They got off at Edgemont, Nebraska, and they walked all the way through the remaining part of Nebraska and up through Wyoming and over to South Dakota, and went to work in the gold mines. Then they worked for a coal mining outfit at Cambria for a while. Well, all three of them made their mark on the history of that part of Wyoming.

SMOOT: Jessie, when did you first meet Harry Truman?

COLBY: Well, I guess about 1918 or 1919, somewhere along there. I can't remember where it was, but he got married not long after I met him. And I can't remember whether it was at a Masonic dance or where it was, but I know that I knew him, because I just remember that I met him before he got married, just a little time before. And I never did know Bess until after I was married in 1921.

My husband and I lived with his mother in the Colby residence. His

father was a sales manager for the American Elevator and Machine Company, and he was gone an awful lot of the time, so Mother Colby and her two sons Ray and Harold lived at the house on North River Boulevard. And then when I got married, Harold and I had an apartment all arranged for and everything, where we were going to live over in Kansas City. [Harold's] Dad came home, and Mother and he just had a fit because we were going to pay rent when they had that big house and plenty of room, so we let them talk us into going there to live. So we lived with them all our married life until Harold and I . . .

Well, his mother fell when she was ninety-one and broke her hip. She was in the hospital from November 2 till way up in the middle of April, but she was a very stalwart soul. And a year from the time she fell and broke her hip, she was walking with a walker, with the aid of those four-prong cane walker things. Well, then she couldn't do housework very much. She would run the carpet sweeper, but she couldn't do too much, and we had help, of course. And when she came home from the hospital we had a practical nurse with her, and then we had help, but I was working. I always worked. I loved to work.

SMOOT: Did you ever work for Harry Truman?

COLBY: I never worked for him, no. I only worked for him in our precinct in a political way getting people to vote for him. I did that.

SMOOT: Can you tell me about that?

COLBY: Well, I just went around to all of my friends and neighbors and said, "This Harry Truman that's running to be judge of the Eastern County Court is the guy you ought to vote for." That's what I did, just went around and sold him to people. [chuckling] And then, when the election came up, they asked

me to work at the polls. So I worked at the voting polls the first time he was ever elected to public office as judge of the Eastern County Court.

SMOOT: Who asked you to work at the polls?

COLBY: A fellow by the name of Ralph Depew.

SMOOT: Who was he?

COLBY: Well, he was one of our neighbors. He lived there west of us on College. While we lived on River, he lived west on College Street. But I don't know, I guess he knew Harold, I don't know. But I remember this about Harry Truman. I had met him. I didn't know him, really know him, but when they paved North River Boulevard . . . North River up to that time was just a gravel road that went out to a road that went down to Sugar Creek, and there was no 24 Highway at that time. And in the mornings, early in the mornings before the workmen would get out to lay cement or whatever they were paving that North River Boulevard, Harry Truman would go out there and measure how deep the cement was that they were putting on and so on and so on, and that's been the best street in the whole doggone town. I don't ever remember seeing repair crews on North River Boulevard from what, which is now 24 Highway out to Gill Street, out north to Gill. They paved that first, and then I don't know whether they went on . . . They did go on to Cement City, but I don't know if they did it all at that time or not, I can't remember.

But at any rate, Harold would be out in the front yard, or some of us, you know, and Harry would come by and we'd talk and talk. He'd come in and sit down and we'd have a cup of coffee and a roll or something. And many, many times he came in. We always went out to the kitchen because we always ate our breakfast in the kitchen. We didn't have a breakfast

room, but we had a big dining room, but we always ate in the kitchen. And he'd sit there and they'd talk and laugh and have a great time. Now that's my earliest real close memories of Harry Truman.

SMOOT: About what year was that?

COLBY: Oh, my gosh, it was in the early twenties. I can't remember, but he was judge of the Eastern County Court at the time. And he oversaw all the paving of roads and so on, you know, and that's why he would come out there. He wanted that done right, and they did it right. And I'll bet there's been less repair work done on that street than any street in Independence.

SMOOT: When Harry used to come by, what types of things did you guys talk about?

COLBY: Oh, the topics of the day, and cute little stories and anecdotes, and what they thought this ought to be done and that ought to be done. It was just general, just general conversation of neighbors over the backyard fence. That's what it was.

SMOOT: Do you remember any of his stories?

COLBY: No, I can't remember them. My good heavens, girl, that's been a long time ago. I can't remember those stories. But I can tell you a funny thing that happened in the later years. As the years went by and we had all those, we had a housekeeper and we had a practical nurse with his mother all the time . . .

SMOOT: Whose mother?

COLBY: Harold's mother. She was bedfast from the time . . . You know, after she got to be about ninety-six, she was bedfast. She lived to be 104 1/2. I'll tell you, I was traveling for years. I traveled for Interstate Storage Corporation, and I could not come home . . . Well, when I'd come home I just could not

stay home. I was always with people, and I just had to be with people. So I had a job downtown as a saleslady at the Emery, Bird, Thayer's, and I worked around and I enjoyed it. But I'd come home at night and they'd have stuff piled up on top of the refrigerator. Those people working there, they'd have stuff piled up on that refrigerator. And I told them not to do it, and they'd keep doing it and keep doing it, and they'd do so many things that just irked me, because I'm kind of a perfectionist after a fashion. I want things taken care of, and I hate waste. And I tell you, it just breaks my heart to see the way that America is wasting her resources. Anyway, it just got to be so it was unpleasant for me and it was unpleasant for my husband, so we decided that we would find a small apartment for me. Now, his brother and his wife had a farm out on Holkey Road in Independence, and her father gave that to them as a Christmas present one year. Now, there was two daughter-in-laws [sic] living in the same house, you know? [chuckling] And it wasn't too pleasant.

So I had these friends that I had known since I was seventeen years old, the Pillows [?]. They took music lessons at our house when I was single—I mean, their daughter did. They had built an apartment in their house for their daughter when their daughter was married, and she didn't stay married very long, so they rented it out. Well, it happened to be vacant and I rented it, and I've lived there nineteen years now.

SMOOT: Is that right? Jessie, do you remember when you first met Bess Truman?

COLBY: Oh, gosh, no.

SMOOT: Or where you met her?

COLBY: I have no idea where I first met her, but I know that our big interest together was in the Women's Needlework Guild of America. And it was an

organization of women all across America that collected clothing for poor children. The clothing had to be new, it could not be worn, it couldn't be secondhand, and you had to have two of every garment that you donated. Of course, in that day it wasn't everybody felt like they could donate two new garments, but we had quite a bunch, quite a nice club in Independence.

One year—now I can't tell you the year either—it must have been in the twenties, probably the late twenties or early thirties—I was, Bess had been president before me and then I was elected president of that club and Bess was my vice president. Now, that's when we got to be pretty good friends, so I knew her quite well then. We used to meet each other and talk a lot and I was in her home several times for club meetings, and maybe I'd be going by and she'd be out on the porch and I'd go in and sit and talk a little bit and go on about my business.

I remember something that's kind of interesting concerning Margaret. There was a tremendous amount of publicity that took place over the kidnapping of a young boy from one of the big motorcar dealers over in Kansas City. And if I remember right—I can't remember that boy's name. I thought it was Hickman, but that wasn't it. But it was a big kidnapping story in all the papers across the country. And Margaret was going to Bryant School down there by where I live, you know, where we turned there? Some people—I don't know who they were—they threatened to kidnap Margaret. Because Harry was very much in politics at that time, and they were threatening to kidnap Margaret. And every day, some of the family, either Mrs. Wallace's brother or sister-in-law, or she or somebody working around there or Harry took her to school and went and brought her home. She was not allowed to get out with the other kids very much

because they didn't want her kidnapped. And I remember that real well, and she went to the Bryant School at that time. That was the Hickman . . . I believe it was Hickman. No, that's not it. Well, you'd have to go way back in the Kansas City history to find out, but the man was a motorcar dealer and he was a very, very successful, very successful motorcar company, probably one of the biggest agencies in Kansas City.

SMOOT: Jessie, you mentioned earlier about Bess being your vice president?

COLBY: Yeah?

SMOOT: Where were the meetings held?

COLBY: Well, we used to meet at . . . we didn't have a whole lot of meetings. We'd meet at somebody's home, in homes. We never met in a hall or anything like that. But we would solicit this clothing from friends, and from, all the members donated to the club, new clothing and so on.

SMOOT: Did you ever have a meeting in Mrs. Truman's home?

COLBY: Gosh, I can't remember. We had a meeting in Mrs. Ott's home. Now Otts, you know, were very prominent people in Independence. Mrs. Ott lived on Waldo, and we had a meeting there once, but I can't remember whether we ever had a meeting there or not.

SMOOT: Did you ever have any other type of activities at Mrs. Truman's home?

COLBY: No, not especially, because they were in a different crowd, different group of people than Harold and I. We were quite a bit younger than they, in the first place, and then our interests were so much different. Harold and I were great dancers in ballroom dancing. That's when people really danced. They didn't hop around like grasshoppers as they do today. We waltzed and two-stepped and one-stepped, and schottische and foxtrot and all that, which you gals, you people don't know a thing about. [chuckling]

In all the years that I knew Harry, he always was so nice. He was very outspoken, but he was really a down-to-earth, good American fellow. The boys that served under him in old Battery B [sic] just loved him. They really did. Harry Truman could do no wrong in their eyes. And I think the very fact that he got into politics was probably because some of them wanted him to. Because he was successful. We know that, don't we? [chuckling]

Anyway, I wanted to tell you something that was kind of cute, I thought. After he came home, retired from the presidency, he and Mike Westwood, who was his bodyguard . . . You've probably heard of Mike Westwood. Well, they used to come up Delaware to Maple and walk uptown.

Well, always having been in the business world, I just could not sit at home. I had to get out and do something. Well, anyway, these friends of mine that owned a store, the Knoepker store uptown, kept after me and after me and after me to come up there and work. And I still would spend almost an hour going to work every morning and an hour coming home at night, going over to the city to Emery, Bird's. One day in July it was hot as it could be. I guess it was in July. It was hot and, I don't know, things just didn't go right for me that day, and I came out to catch my bus to come to Independence and I missed the bus. Then it was so hot, and I got on that bus and I thought, "What a silly fool I am to spend two hours a day going and coming to work, and going home at night and walking . . ." I walked eight blocks down home every night. So I thought, "Well, I just am crazy when I could go up to Knoepker's, and I know they'll pay me as much money as I'm making over here, and I won't have all this long drag." Well, it so

happened that the week or two before that I had been up to Independence and ran into Bud Knoepker. He was Mr. Karl Knoepker's son and namesake and we all called him Bud. I met him, and he said, "Jessie, when are you ever going to quit that job over in Kansas City and come work for us?" And I said, "Oh, Bud, I don't know." I said, "I'm very happy where I am and I'll just stay where I am. But if ever I do decide to quit working over there, I'll let you know. I'll come to you first if I want to work."

SMOOT: Jessie, when you worked on the polls for Harry, did you get paid?

COLBY: No. Oh, no. If you worked as a clerk . . . I worked in the polls and I worked on the election, you know. I don't remember whether I was a clerk or a judge or what. I was something, but yes, we got paid for that. Today they do, too, you know.

SMOOT: Do you remember how much you got paid?

COLBY: I have no idea. I don't think it was enough to set the world afire, probably \$12 or \$15, I don't know, but you worked from seven o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock at night.

SMOOT: Where were your headquarters the first time you worked on Harry's campaign?

COLBY: I showed you there, right on White Oak and River Boulevard, the second house west of River Boulevard on White Oak on the north side of the street there, where I said the house had been torn down? That's where I worked for him.

SMOOT: Were you ever involved in any fund-raising campaigns?

COLBY: No, I don't think I was. I don't remember of it. I started to tell you about being with Mike Westwood. Well, Harry and Mike would come up to Maple and walk up the street, and lots of times I'd be walking up to the

store. I went to work at Knoepker's then, and I'd be walking up there and I'd say, "Hi, guys!" We'd talk a little bit, and I'd go on. One morning they came around the corner, and I was late and they were a little later than usual. I came around the corner and they got up about seventy-five feet east of Delaware and I flew by, said, "Hi, guys!" and away I went, and Harry said, "Jessie! What's the matter with you? What are you in such a rush for?" I said, "Well, I'm late, I'm going to be late, and then I'd get fired." He said, "Oh, hell, nobody's going to fire you!" [laughter] Now, that's right.

SMOOT: Steve's got to change the tape.

[End # 3083; Begin #3084]

HARRISON: Okay, for good behavior you can start talking now.

COLBY: Okay. Now what was I going to tell you about? What did I end with?

HARRISON: You were talking about Mike Westwood and going past Mr. Truman.

COLBY: Oh, yes, so I stopped and I talked to them a little bit and then I flew on and went to work. But every morning when we would meet each other we'd exchange the pleasantries of the day, and they went on about their business and I went on to work. [chuckling]

My husband was in the Harry Truman Shrine class. I think now I'll tell you about that. It was the Ararat Shrine, Truman, Harry S. Truman class of Shriners. That's when they were elevated to being Shriners, November 16, 1945. And they had the biggest class they ever had. Look at how many there were, and Harold was one of them. He worked on that Shrine Club like crazy. Well, Harold and he were real good friends. By this time, Harold had owned the Independence Food Distributing Company for a number of years. He was always into something. And he handled all kinds of cheeses and all kinds of peanut butter—well, Skippy peanut butter and

Koolaid and all kinds of cheeses, especially imported cheeses, from all over the world.

SMOOT: Did he ever give Mr. Truman any gifts?

COLBY: I don't know. He probably gave him a piece of cheese or something. [chuckling] I don't know.

SMOOT: Did Mr. Truman ever give him anything?

COLBY: Yes, one time. I don't know what the occasion was or how Harry happened to give it to him. Oh, I do, too. Harold went uptown to do something. He had some kind of business uptown, and Harry was then a senator. He had won the senatorial seat, and I guess he was up there cleaning out his office or something, I don't know what, but Harold was uptown and he went into the courthouse for something. He met Harry, and Harry was coming down with some papers and stuff and this gavel in his hand. He says, "Here, Harold, you want my gavel?" And he handed it to Harold. So we had it. I gave it to this boy that we raised, but it wasn't signed or anything and you can't prove it. But I know that it was Harry Truman's gavel that he used when he was judge of the Eastern County Court. [chuckling]

Well, what I was going to tell you, he used to go . . . Bess and Harry, now Bess did all the driving. Harry never did drive the car—I never saw him drive it anyhow. They had a Chrysler, and they traded at a little market out on East College called Jacobson's Market. And they went out there every whip stitch to buy groceries, and invariably Harold would be out there delivering something to the grocery. Bess would go in and do the shopping, and Harry and Harold would stay out there and talk and talk and talk and talk. They'd tell stories to each other, and I expect some of them were a little shady, knowing both of them. [chuckling] And Bess would

come out and she'd say, "C'mon, Harry, let's go." And he'd say, "Just a minute! Just a minute!" And he'd say, "Harold, blah, blah, blah, blah." Then she'd say, "Harry, c'mon, we've got to get home!" "Oh, wait a minute, Harold. Just a minute," and he'd start toward the car. "Just a minute, Harold, I want to tell you something else." And he'd tell Harold, or he'd start to the car and Harold would say, "Wait a minute, Harry, I want to tell you something else." [chuckling] And that's the way it would go on, and Bess would get so mad she could shoot them both. [laughter] Because she was spicy, you know. But I know they spent many, many, many, many moments, and perhaps hours, out there talking. That was quite a, Harold would always come home and say, "Well, Harry and I had a good visit this morning," or something like that. [chuckling]

But did I tell you about him always coming out to test the cement and coming in and having breakfast?

SMOOT: You sure did. I'd like to know if you ever introduced any of your friends to Mr. Truman.

COLBY: Oh, I don't think I ever did. No, I just don't . . .

SMOOT: Did he ever entertain any of your friends before?

COLBY: No, of course, I had oodles of friends, but they were . . . I'll tell you frankly, most of them were Republicans, and we were Republicans. Colby family was always Republican until Harry Truman. First Harry Truman and Roger Sermon, now we were . . . It wouldn't have made any difference. We voted for the man most of the time, the whole family did and always had, but they leaned toward the Republican Party. But Roger Sermon was perhaps the most outstanding mayor and did more for Independence than any mayor we ever had up to that time or since! We always voted for

Sermon, and we always voted for Harry. If Harry'd run for to be man in the moon, we'd have voted for him. [chuckling] We had a great time.

SMOOT: Did you ever have any company come visit you in Independence from India?

COLBY: Oh, yes! That's a nice experience we had in 1967, I think it was. Yes, it was 1967, I believe it was, I had a trip around the world with a group of Independence people. And we went by ship all around the world, and we got to India, to Bombay. Of course, we had been all through the Philippines and down to Australia, New Zealand, and around to India, and we got to Bombay, and we spent a wonderful time around there. But before that when we were in Ceylon, I took a plane and went up to see the Taj Mahal and then flew to Bombay and got there before the ship did.

SMOOT: Did any of the people that you met in Bombay ever come here to Independence to visit you?

COLBY: Oh, well, I was going to tell you. Well, while we were in Bombay, I was introduced to Ermila Doshi [?], and Mouvant Doshi [?] was the port authority of Bombay. He was *the* head man of that port, and she was superintendent of all the schools in Bombay. They were both Hindu religion.

Well, she was coming to America, and I don't know whether it was at the Indian government's expense or our expense. At any rate, she was making a survey of all our different types of schools all across the nation. Well, she started at Washington, D.C., and went to New York and up to Boston, across to Detroit, and all the principal cities where the big universities and the big schools were and where they had good primary schools and intermediate schools and high schools. She went clear all over

the country. She was way out on the West Coast.

Well, they found out when she went to Washington, D.C., who her husband was, that he was the port authority of Bombay. The War Department got word of it, and he was responsible for facilitating the movement of our troops to the China-Burma-India theater of war during the Second World War. And as an act of appreciation, our government called him, or they gave him an invitation to come to America at the American public's expense to make a survey of all our port cities. And he went from New York up to Boston and across Boston over to Detroit . . .

SMOOT: Did they come here to Independence?

COLBY: Well, no, this isn't a port city. They came here as my guests, but he went to all the ports, Detroit and Chicago and all the places across. And when they got to Chicago, I had kept in touch with Ermila—that was his wife—all the time. When they got to Chicago, I called them up and invited them to come and spend some time at my home in Independence. I was still living at 806 North River. So they accepted and they came in on the train, and Ermila had on her first pair of shoes and her first coat. She had never, they wear those sandal-like shoes, and being in India she had never worn a heavy coat, and in Chicago you know you have to have some shoes. She couldn't hardly stand those shoes. Well, I'll never forget. Harold and I went down to meet them.

Well, I did a little bit of fixing up, you know, for my guests, and I bought some new things, and my mother-in-law said, "I don't know what you're going to all that trouble for, they're just people." [chuckling]

SMOOT: What happened after they got here?

COLBY: Well, this is kind of funny. My husband and I went down to the Union

Station. They came in on the Santa Fe train from Chicago, and it was in the evening and there were a lot of movie people on that train, for some reason or other. Harold felt kind of self-conscious, I guess, but I went right up to the door to meet them because I wanted them to see me right away, wanted her to see me, because I didn't know her husband then so very well. But, anyway, the place was just filled with celebrities from the movies. And we went into Fred Harvey's to get something to eat, and Ermila had on a red sarong . . . Not a sarong. Oh, what do they call those they put around them? Well, she had on a red outfit with all these beautiful jewels, and she looked like a doll, and she had a red dot right in the middle of her forehead. Mouvant was dressed like a regular American businessman. Well, we went into Fred Harvey's, and they had a lovely dining room there, and people just went ga-ga over her with all those beautiful . . . They call them bangles—they're bracelets, you know. She had rubies and diamonds and emeralds and everything, because she came from a wealthy family and so did he.

SMOOT: Did you ever introduce either of them to any of your friends here in Independence?

COLBY: Oh, yes. We came home, and Harold's mother had already gone to bed, and Ray and Gertrude lived on the farm at that time. So the next morning we got up and had breakfast, and Mother just fell for them. She thought they were great. And they were just the loveliest people. They had such impeccable manners and they were nice people.

SMOOT: Who else did you introduce them to?

COLBY: That was Sunday morning. So we all got ready and I took them to church, and I introduced them to the entire congregation of the Watson Memorial

Methodist Church, which is now Christ United Methodist Church. Well, we took them around to see all the sights. I had a friend, Grace Schulenberg [?] was my buddy when I went on that trip around the world, and so we took them to see the Nelson Gallery of Art and to see Kansas City, everything of note in Kansas City that we could think of.

Then it was in the paper. There was a little notice in the paper that these people were visiting me and who they were. Everybody who had anybody at all come to see them would drag them over to see Harry Truman, and he'd come to the door and he'd shake hands with them and say, "It's very nice of you to call, thank you," and that would be it. He'd shut the door unless they were somebody that he knew something about, you know. And I thought, "Well, I'm not going to pester him." Every Tom, Dick and Harry takes their guests over to see Harry Truman, but I did bring them over here to the library before.

Then one night my telephone rang and I answered it, and it was Harry Truman. He said, "Jessie! What's the matter with you?" I said, "Nothing's the matter with me, why?" He said, "This is Harry Truman," and I said, "I know it." So he said, "How does it happen you haven't brought these people over to meet me over to the library?" And I said, "Well, we've been up past there. We were going to come in and look over it a little later." "Well," he said, "I think you'd better bring them over. I want to meet these people." So I said, "Well, when do you want me to bring them?" He said, "Oh, how about 10:30 tomorrow?" and I said, "Okay." So, at 10:30 the next morning, we were over here with Grace Schulenberg. I don't know, do they still have his reception room back there that they had at that time? I guess they do, where the piano is? At any rate, I brought them over and the guard,

the sergeant at the desk there, he took my name and then he called Mr. Truman and Harry came out and greeted us. Then he asked us to come in the parlor and sit down. And we went in the parlor and sat down and they talked and talked and talked. I thought they were never going to quit talking! And I said, "Well, gee whiz, we've got to get out of here and get something to eat." It was about one o'clock, close to one o'clock. He said, "Oh, no, you're not going out to eat. I'm going to have something sent in for you." So he did. [chuckling] And I don't even remember where he got it, but I know we ate back there in his little place.

SMOOT: That was very nice of him to meet your friends.

COLBY: Yes. Well, that was a wonderful thing to do, because, see, all the men that worked on the docks, everybody that worked at the port of Bombay was under Mouvant Doshi. And all those teachers . . . And they have different kinds of schools. They have what they call the Jakarta schools, and they have religious schools, and they have some other kind of schools. They've got three or four different kinds of schools. But think of the teachers and the people that were under her, and she told everybody about having met President Truman. Well, you never heard . . . That's one time I kept my mouth shut. They talked and they talked and they talked, and they had a great time.

SMOOT: Did she ever tell you what her impression of Mr. Truman was?

COLBY: Oh, yes, she thought he was . . . She just thought he was the nicest person. She couldn't imagine anybody being in the high position that he was in being so down-to-earth, you know? Just like the rest of us. And he was. He never was high-hat. I don't think he ever flaunted his position or anything over anybody. He was a "live and let live" sort of fellow. He was just a, if

you ever have seen his little house where he was born down in Lamar, you'll wonder how in the world they all lived in that house, because it's hardly big enough for two people, let alone three or four. [chuckling]

Of course, Mary Truman was an Eastern Star sister of mine. I belong to the Eastern Star, and she used to come out here an awful lot to our . . . She belonged out at Grandview where their farm was, you know, but she used to come out here to our Eastern Star meetings every once in a while. I knew her real well. She was a real nice lady, but just like all the rest of us. After all, she was just a person like you and me, with a heart and a mind and a soul, and he was the same way. And he could be very, very cordial.

And Bess was very nice to me always, but Bess was a little bit more . . . shall I say, she could tell you off if she wanted to. That's what I mean, you know? She was very stern sometimes, but she was a nice lady, she really was. I thought an awful lot of Bess, and I think she thought a lot of me.

But, you know, I have to tell you something. I'll never forget, I came home . . . See, I used to get home about every other weekend for three or four days when I traveled for that big company in the East. See, I traveled for years for the Interstate Storage Corporation, and I'd get home every once in a while like that. Now what was I going to tell you? Something.

SMOOT: I think it has something to do with Bess.

COLBY: I can't think what it was now. Oh, the house, it had to do with the house. Well, after he got elected president . . . Well, I'll tell you, you would never know, except for the architecture, that house is the same house today that it was then. Because it was so sadly in need of repair and upkeep, and there was no fence around it and the lawn was deplorable. It was the worst lawn

on Delaware. It had plantings all over it and dandelions and chickweed and everything else. It wasn't a nice lawn at all! And the sidewalk was all rickety and rickety along there, and their porch was a sight! Some of the boards were loose, and I wouldn't have wanted to walk across that porch. Now, really, I went around to the veranda part there before he got to be president. When he got to be president, the army came in there and whim, bang, bing, boom, up goes the fence and they planted a nice lawn and they fixed the porch. They really fixed it up. But it was in sad repair, it really was, when he got to be president. But, of course, after he got to be president, boy, they started fixing it up. The army did it! [chuckling] I remember that real well.

I remember something about Mary Margaret that was kind of cute. It was Christmas time and I was home, and she was . . . oh, I imagine she was twelve, maybe twelve or thirteen, somewhere . . . She was out in front trying to hang up a Christmas wreath on the front door, and I was walking uptown because I always walked uptown. I very seldom took a cab uptown. I nearly always walked and I never did learn to drive. I couldn't drive a car a half a block today. I don't know a thing about a car. Anyway, she says, "Jessie, would you come in and help me?" And I went in and helped her hang the Christmas wreath on the front door. [laughter] I thought that was kind of cute.

Oh, I didn't tell you about what Harry did when I was in the army!

SMOOT: Tell me!

COLBY: Well, I was in the army and I was in communications in the army post office. And I came in to work one Saturday morning, and here on my desk is a manila colored envelope with an engraving of the White House up on

the corner of it, on the opposite side of the stamp. I looked at that, and I thought, “My gosh, what’s this?” And I opened it, and here it was an invitation to the christening of the U.S.S. *Missouri*. It’s somewhere. I’ve got it somewhere in some of my belongings, but I’ve got so much stuff, honey, it would be a job to hunt it.

SMOOT: Maybe one day I’ll come down and help you look for it.

COLBY: [chuckling] Well, anyhow, it said that I was to be a guest at the christening of the U.S.S. *Missouri*. So I thought, “Well, gosh, guess I’ll go.” And it told me the date and everything, so I took the letter and I went into the colonel’s office, and I said, “Well, Colonel Eagleton, you’d better get somebody to take my place a week from Saturday because I’m not going to be here.” He said, “You’re not? Are you going on furlough or sick leave or something?” I said, “No, look at this.” And he read it and he said, “My gosh.” Harry Truman had torn a little piece of paper, just taken it off like that, and written on there, “You’d better be there. Harry,” on the bottom of it. [chuckling] And that was on the card of the invitation.

SMOOT: So did you go?

COLBY: Did I go? Well, I didn’t want to go over to Brooklyn by myself. I didn’t want to go by myself very much, but there was a little girl in the outfit who had never been out of Pumpkin Center. And she was born down at Fort Scott, Kansas, and I don’t think she’d ever been fifty miles away from there when she joined the army, and the first thing they did was send her to New York. She was a darling little girl, but she didn’t know from anything. So I said, “Scottie”—we always called her Scottie, she was so tiny— “Scottie, how would you like to go to the christening of the U.S.S. *Missouri* with me today?” “Oh,” she said, “well, I’d love it!” And I knew she would. So I

took her and I said, “Now, I have no idea whether you can get in to the christening or not, but at least you can see something of Brooklyn and see the Brooklyn Navy Yard.”

So we went over there and ended up at the gate, the entrance, and we had to dig our dog tags out because everybody had to be identified. They had navy personnel and Marine personnel lined up according to rank all the way down to the ship. And you’d go along and you’d show him your invitation and your dog tags and he’d pass you to the next one and so on and so on. Finally, I got down to the steps where they had a platform to the side of the ship, because the christening platform itself with the secretary of war and the Trumans and three or four . . . there was only about . . . not to exceed eight people up there because it was a small place. It was much smaller than this room.

Mary Margaret had on a Mouton coat, and while she can be very attractive, she didn’t look so hot that day. Her hair was stringing down, that blonde hair, and she could not break that bottle. She had a heck of a time.

But this is the funny part. When I got down to this christening stand, then there was another stand by the side of the ship. And law me! All those people up there were generals and admirals and their ladies in mink and diamonds and orchids—you never saw such a display of splendor! And here comes two little short WACs, and they did give me the look-over. They really looked at me. They wondered, now, what is that up here for? And all of a sudden, Bess was standing over on the platform and she saw me and waved, and I waved back to her, and it just separated just like this. “Sergeant! Sergeant! Now right here’s a nice place. Now, Sergeant, you can sit here. Oh, Sergeant, here’s a good place.” [chuckling] And I’ll tell

you, it was something! [chuckling]

SMOOT: So did you get a chance to talk to the Trumans after the christening was over?

COLBY: Well, just a little bit because they had a lot going on that day. I just spoke to them and raised my hand to them and went on. But I'll never forget that. Boy, I'll tell you, those admirals' wives, you know, oh, they thought they were the hottest stuff in town. But when Bess waved at me from over there, they just separated just like this. "Now, Sergeant, right here's a good place." But they were kind of pushing us to the back all the time, you know, and getting in front of us and being haughty. And when she waved at me, boy, they just went whoosh! [laughter] That was kind of fun, you know? Kind of put them in their place. But, anyway, it was fun.

SMOOT: Jessie, did you ever have coffee or tea in the Truman home when you visited on occasion?

COLBY: Oh, yes, I've had a cup of tea up there. I never did drink coffee very much, but I've had a cup of tea with her. She had nice china, and we'd just sit there and talk a little bit. I never was, you know, just real, real, real chummy with her, because she was older than I was and her interests were different. Harold and I were great on dancing, ballroom dancing, and bowling and stuff like that, you know.

SMOOT: What room did you and Bess have tea in?

COLBY: In the living room.

SMOOT: You had tea in the living room?

COLBY: And sometimes in the kitchen.

SMOOT: In the kitchen. What color was the kitchen, do you remember?

COLBY: Oh, gosh, I can't remember. I just can't remember. It's just faint in my mind

that it was either light gray or white, and I can't remember. Gosh, girl, that's a long time ago! [chuckling]

SMOOT: On your periodic visits to the Truman home, did you ever meet Mrs. Wallace, Bess's mother? Did you ever meet her?

COLBY: Yes.

SMOOT: What was she like?

COLBY: She was just a little grandmotherly kind of a lady, just a nice, sweet, old lady, just very quiet and very nice. And I know, do you know Mrs. [May] Wallace?

SMOOT: No, I haven't had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Wallace yet.

COLBY: Well, she's nice. She's really nice. I called her up and told her I was going to do this. [chuckling] And she thought it was great. She's quite a lady.

SMOOT: The first time you met Bess's mother, what room in the house were you in?

COLBY: In the living room. In the living room. And I used to walk past sometimes at night when I was walking a lot, and I'd see . . . Harry always sat by the window on the north there, by the north window, with the floor lamp, sit there reading the *Examiner* or the *Star* or something, lots of times.

SMOOT: When you first met Mrs. Wallace and you were sitting in the living room, what was she doing?

COLBY: I don't remember. I really don't remember. I just remember . . . I think I went there . . . something to do with the club, but I never knew her real well, but I knew Mrs. Truman pretty well.

SMOOT: Steve's got to change the tape.

[End #3084; Begin #3085]

COLBY: . . . much, something about my travels, I think. See, I've been in over 100 countries. Well, well, well, well, well, well, well, where is it? Well,

something in here was . . . there was something that I said . . . Oh, [reading] “Jessie Colby, eighty-four, who remembers Truman as just Harry, joined the Women’s Army Corps in 1942. ‘I knew I could do something for my country, and I got to be a sergeant in nothing flat.’” [chuckling] That’s what it says. Then someplace it says something else about me, what I said. I don’t know. Oh, nothing great, but I thought it was kind of nice that they had my picture in here.

SMOOT: I think so, too. You should be very proud.

COLBY: Oh, I’m not proud. I’m just an ordinary gal, that has had a very long life.

HARRISON: [chuckling] I guess.

COLBY: I’ve been rich, I’ve been poor, I’ve been in between. I have never had to sleep on a park bench, and I’ve never gone hungry, and I’ve never been out in the cold in the winter without good warm clothes. And I consider myself a very fortunate person in all the wonderful people I’ve known.

Because at one time when I was in northern Italy I went through a friend of mine who knew the countess who owned the Villa D’Este. Now, the Villa D’Este is the former Italian royal palace, but it was sold to this countess after World War I when the Italian government was so broke. That’s where I gained entrance through this friend to go there. He told me, he said, “I don’t know whether she’ll take you in or not, but I will call her by phone this afternoon and I will give you a letter of introduction. It will be in your box at the hotel when you return this afternoon.” So I went down there and she welcomed me with open arms. Now, that is the palace where Napoleon lived with his illicit love, the countess, the Polish countess, and where his illegitimate son was born, and, also, Catherine the Great spent lots of time there. And her boudoir and Napoleon’s rooms were not

supposed to be open to the public. But one night, after the dance out on the terrace and everybody had gone to bed, there was a knock, knock, knock at my door. And I went to the door, and here's the countess with two candles in her hand, and just, "Shh! Shh! Shh!" And she took me downstairs, all through Napoleon's rooms that were left just as he left them, just as they were when he was there, and through Catherine the Great's boudoir and room. And that was quite a treat.

SMOOT: Oh, I can imagine.

COLBY: Can you imagine that? But am I not fortunate?

HARRISON: I think so.

COLBY: I've had a great life.

SMOOT: When you and Bess Truman were sitting in the living room, where in the room did she sit, do you remember?

COLBY: Oh, gosh, I think she sat on the east . . . to the east there. I can't remember. You know, I never paid any attention. I never thought I'd be doing this or I'd have made notes. [laughter]

HARRISON: Is there anything that struck you about the inside of the house at all at that time?

COLBY: Well, it was a typical house of that period of people of wealth, that had money. Now, by far it was not the finest home in Independence of that era. The finest home was the old Swope mansion that the RLDS church tore down. That was a mansion! You know, the Swopes were *somebody*.

HARRISON: And when was it that you visited Bess in the home then, about?

COLBY: Oh, gosh, it wasn't a set-up thing, you know. I'd just drop in. Well, when we'd have a club meeting or something there. I'd say that was in the late twenties, early thirties, about in that period. And she was just a nice

neighbor, you know? We were just like neighbors. Just like if you lived next door to me and I had something real good to eat, I'd say, "Come on over and have a piece of pie." You know, it was that sort of thing. No formality. I never was to any formal parties at her home.

HARRISON: You mentioned that the Trumans used to do their grocery shopping at Jacobson's . . . ?

COLBY: Market, on East College.

HARRISON: On East College. Do you recall, for any reason, any other stores in Independence that they shopped at?

COLBY: No, I don't. Well, Emery, Bird's and Bundschu's was a well-known store, and I imagine that Harry bought clothes at one time at Casper and Chimfessle [?], but they were out of business years and years and years ago. But they would patronize Independence people.

HARRISON: What about at Knoepker's?

COLBY: Well, I don't know whether they ever did much shopping at Knoepker's or not. Knoepker's wasn't quite their speed. They went for quality, you know, and at that time . . . Knoepker's ended up the last few years a very good store, but in the old days they were very cheap. You know, it was kind of like a cut-rate store, but it wasn't. They bought stuff and sold it real cheap, you know.

HARRISON: One of the people that we talked to said that Mrs. Truman liked to get some of her clothes at Harzfelds.

COLBY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, Harzfelds was her favorite shopping center. It was mine, too. I always liked Harzfelds better than . . . Well, I liked Emery, Bird's. If you were buying linens or household things or anything, Emery, Bird's was fine. And Emery, Bird's had nice ready-to-wear, too, but Harzfelds had the

good clothes. Wolff Brothers, too, but yes, Harzfelts were . . . And I loved to shop at Harzfelts. In fact, my trousseau came from Harzfelts when I got married in 1921, Columbus Day, October 12! [chuckling] So, you see, I'm a flag-waver, don't you? [chuckling] Oh, dear!

HARRISON: You were talking about your father earlier. What was your father's name?

COLBY: Arch, Archibald. No one ever called him that. It was Arch Stevenson Carmen, C-A-R-M-E-N. His grandmother was an opera singer. Now, Carmen is a Spanish name, but his grandmother was an opera singer and sang in the opera in London, and went to Madrid to sing in the opera down there and met a Spanish grandee or a Spanish nobleman of some kind and married him. And his name was Carmen, and that's where my name comes from, see?

HARRISON: Pam asked you your birth date, and you got to talking about Weston County. So now tell us what your birth date is. [chuckling]

COLBY: March 1, 1901. So March 1, 1986, I'll be eighty-five years old. How do you like that? [chuckling]

SMOOT: I don't think you told us what your address was either.

COLBY: Now?

SMOOT: Yes.

COLBY: Well, now I live in an apartment with this friend that I have known since I was seventeen years old, and it's 822 1/2 West Maple in Independence. It's up there by the old high school. You know where that little stone bungalow is between River and Union on the north side of the street?

SMOOT: We went past it yesterday afternoon.

COLBY: Two big lots . . . They've torn out two big houses there, you know. The RLDS church is tearing them all out. They want to make some kind of a

deal. They've got some kind of a plan. But the house I live in is the only one, I think, in the block that doesn't belong to the RLDS church, and my landlady is not going to sell to them.

SMOOT: Well, I only have one other question for you. You stated earlier that you would have voted for Harry no matter what office he would run for.

COLBY: That's right.

SMOOT: Why?

COLBY: Why? Because he was so forthright and so honest. And if ever anything described him, it's "if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." He could stand on his own two feet, he was learned, he read all the things that were informative, and he was honest. He was really honest. Now, he was mixed-up for a good many years . . . Pendergast was a good friend of his, but Harry never did a doggone thing that was dishonest because of Pendergast. I *know* that. I just know he never did. But he was something else. [chuckling] He wasn't afraid to cuss a little bit and tell a snappy story to the men—I don't think he ever did around women. But he and my husband were two of a kind: a spade was a spade with them. And they would get out there at Jacobson's and Bess would say, "C'mon, Harry, let's go home." "Just a minute! Just a minute!" "C'mon now, Harry, let's go home. It's getting late." "Oh, just a minute!" and Harold would say, "Just a minute, Harry. I've got to tell you this . . ." And that would go on maybe for an hour. [chuckling]

HARRISON: You mentioned about them driving. Who was it who drove again?

COLBY: Bess did all the driving.

HARRISON: You never saw Harry drive?

COLBY: I never saw Harry at the wheel of that car. Now, he might have sometime,

but I never saw him at the wheel of that car. They had a big Chrysler. They bought it from Chuck Haynes, who I knew very well, too.

HARRISON: What period of time would that have been?

SMOOT: Or do you remember what color the car was?

COLBY: Black. It was always a great big black Chrysler, the big one.

HARRISON: And that would have been after they came back from Washington?

COLBY: After, yeah. After they came back from Washington, yeah. They might have bought it while they were in Washington and just let it be here when they'd come home. But Harry and Harold used to sit in Lodge together, and they were buddy-buddies. Oh, I've got the cutest thing to tell you.

SMOOT: About Harry?

COLBY: After Harry won the election and he came to Independence, Harold and Ray were going down the North River . . . I don't know where they were going, but they were going someplace, coming down North River, and the cars were just going down to . . . coming up Lexington and going down to the railroad station, scads of them. And Ray said, "Gosh, Harold, Harry must be coming in town." They said, "Well, let's go down. We've never gone down to meet him. Let's go down and meet him."

Well, my husband was six-foot-three or four and his brother was taller. They were tall, fine, Danish-German. Their mother was a full-blooded German and their dad a full-blooded Dane. Now that's some mixture for you, but they were tall and stalwart, fine-looking men, and they towered above the crowd. When they got down there, here's all these people. I guess they were in the truck. I don't know what they were in, but anyhow, they got out and they were walking around there, and they were standing up close to the car because you never knew what somebody might

do. They might have had merchandise on there, too, I don't know. But, anyway, Harry and Bess came out the back of the observation car, and he looked over and he saw Harold and Ray and he says, "Hi, Colby brothers!" [laughter] That shows the meter of the man, you know? Don't you think? He never forgot his old friends.

No doubt about it, when he got into politics, Pendergast probably helped him. Pendergast at one time was a saloon keeper. I don't know, I never saw Harry take too much liquor—I never saw him drink, even. You know, we weren't social friends, we were just neighbors, you know. We didn't go to the same parties. We weren't in the same crowd. They were in a different crowd entirely, and they were older than we were.

See, I was just past twenty and Harold was about twenty-two. He was twenty-two in September when we were married the twelfth of October. So, you see, we were quite a lot younger than they, and our friends were different kids we'd gone to high school with and various friends. There were fourteen couples of us who ran around together from 1921 to 1937. Never did we have a big real rough fight. We didn't always agree with each other, but we never had arguments, we never fussed, nobody ever got mad. Nobody ever got in a fight, and we had a wonderful time and we always entertained in our own homes.

And one time I'll never forget, I decided to have a party on Decoration Day, because everybody was off work Decoration Day. Well, our living room is eighteen feet long and thirty-two feet wide, and the dining room is eighteen by eighteen, and I had thirty-two guests and seated every one of them, because we took the tables and put them this way out of the dining room and clear down the whole length of the living room. I had

everything done in pink and white, and I gave orders to all the girls that if they had a pink or a white dress to wear it, because I wanted everything pink and white. I hand-painted all the nut cups. I hand-painted the invitations with pink roses, and we had a big window seat. You know how a window seat is, don't you? We had that, and I had that banked with pink and white peonies, and I had ivy going down the table with pink and white roses all the way down. [chuckling] It was a party. Oh, and Mother Colby and my mother started cooking at eight o'clock that morning, and they cooked all day long. And we even had ice cream with a rose. In those days, you could buy ice cream in the brick with a flower or an emblem in the center of it. They'd fix them somehow. They don't do that anymore, but I had white ice cream with a pink rose in the center of it and had angel food cake with pink icing. Everything was pink and white, and it was a beautiful party, and I seated all thirty-two of them. I had a Samoyed dog. Do you know what a Samoyed is?

HARRISON: No.

COLBY: Well, they're northern, they're Arctic-type dogs. Jack was so white. Now, this sounds crazy, but he was so white across the driven snow, if he hadn't had a black nose you'd have had to look two or three times to see him in the snow. He would just eat snow like he was just crazy for it. And I tied a great big pink satin bow on him and put him down in front of the fireplace, and all night long he laid there just like this with his head down between his paws. Now that's the kind of parties we used to have. Kids wouldn't appreciate a party like that now, you know. But we had a good time.

HARRISON: Yes, it sounds good.

SMOOT: So, Jessie, we've really enjoyed talking with you.

HARRISON: Yes.

SMOOT: Steve, do you have any more questions?

HARRISON: No.

SMOOT: It's really been a pleasure.

COLBY: Well, I hope I've given some insight into the family, how they were. We were just . . . you know, just like I'd see you on the street and I'd say . . . I don't know what your name is, but I'd say, "Hi, Steve." You'd say, "Hi, Jessie, how are you doing? The world all right?" [chuckling] Something like that, you know, and that's the way it was.

SMOOT: And Steve would love to take your picture.

COLBY: Oh, you would?

SMOOT: Yes, Steve would love to take your picture.

COLBY: Oh, dear me! Well, you'd better have me standing up. I look awful sitting down, I'm so short anyhow.

SMOOT: This chair will swallow you up. [tape is turned off]

COLBY: . . . Valeria?

SMOOT: Yes.

COLBY: Has she been . . . ?

SMOOT: Yes, I talked to Valeria on this past Monday.

COLBY: Oh, did you? I'll bet she could tell you a lot of things.

SMOOT: Oh, she told us a lot of things. Do you want me in this picture, Steve, or do you just want to get Jessie?

HARRISON: No, you can be in there.

COLBY: Well, now, you see, she would have an entirely different . . .

SMOOT: Do you want to smile? We've got to smile.

COLBY: Okay. [chuckling]

HARRISON: I'll take some more, too. You guys keep visiting.

COLBY: Okay.

SMOOT: Oh, we're just visiting.

COLBY: Do I have to have this thing on me? They'll think I'm wounded. [tape is turned off] Well, one time Harry and Mike Westwood, his bodyguard, were walking up North Liberty, and they were up by that Catholic church. And a little girl was going to school over at the Catholic school, and Harry spoke to her, and the little girl just rushed on by and haughtily got out of the way. Mike said, "Say, young lady, don't you know who that is? Don't you know who you're talking to?" He said, "That's the President of the United States." And she just looked at him and went on; it didn't make any impression whatsoever, she didn't care. [chuckling] I thought that was cute [pause]. That was about 1926 is when that needlework guild, when I was in that needlework guild. You got it?

HARRISON: Do you remember any other people who were in that group?

COLBY: Oh, gosh, Mrs. Rowe. She was a teacher here in this high school. And, oh golly, Mrs. Ott was in it, and Mrs. Ott's sister that lived on the corner of Union and Waldo, and I cannot think of her name. I never knew her husband, but she was formerly an Ott. Oh, gosh, I can't remember. I think Miss Wallace was in it, I'm pretty sure. I couldn't swear to it, but I can't remember all that stuff. Good heavens, I didn't think I'd ever be telling anybody about all this. [laughter]

END OF INTERVIEW

APPENDIX

1. Obituary, *The Examiner*, September 21, 1995, p. 5A.

Page 5A — The Examiner — Thursday, September 21, 1995

JESSIE M.C. COLBY

Jessie Mildred Carmen Colby, 94, Independence, died Wednesday, Sept. 20, 1995, at a hospital in Warrensburg, Mo.

Mrs. Colby was born in Weston, Wyo., and had lived in Holden (Mo.) Manor Care Center since 1989. She had lived in the Mount Washington area of Independence. She was a millinery merchandise superintendent for Interstate Stores Corp. of New York in various cities from New York to Des Moines, Iowa, north to Green Bay, Wis., and south to Knoxville, Tenn. She was an Army veteran of World War II, serving as sergeant in the Communications Department of the Army Post Office in New York. She was a member of Christ United Methodist Church and a former member of Watson Memorial congregation. She was a member of Order of the Eastern Star 329 in Independence and the Order of Beauceant Chapter of Independence and the Robert Browning Literary Society. She was a member and organizer of the Independence Chapter of Travelers Around the World Club. Her husband, Harold Colby, died in 1980.

Services will be 1 p.m. Friday at the Carson Independence Chapel. Burial will be in Woodlawn Cemetery. Friends may call from 7 to 8:30 tonight at the chapel.