

October 19th, 1938
Mr. Jack Alexander
c/o St. Louis Post Dispatch
St. Louis, Missouri
Sir:

I have read your article appearing in the October 8th, 1938 issue of the Saturday Evening Post, entitled "Missouri Dark Mule."

I take this means of calling your attention to some inaccuracies which create unfavorable impressions and cast improper reflections upon the Junior United States Senator from Missouri, Harry S. Truman.

I have particular reference to the portion appearing on page 38 of the issue:

"Pendergast put up Harry S. Truman, a faithful yes-man who was then occupying an unimportant Jackson County administrative job, which by courtesy carried the title of "judge".----- Whereas he had produced only 90,235 votes for Howell two years earlier, he materialized 120,180 for Truman, by a form of legerdemain which was to be a matter of inquiry later.-----Milligan, with a total of just 12,379 votes in the two big cities, had received 135,235 "home-grown" votes. The senator had merely sponsored, and had not stumped for, Milligan, and this showing out-state was attributable purely to Clark prestige."

First, the term "a faithful yes-man" as applied to Harry S. Truman is not in true accord with the facts. The inference being that he was a "faithful yes-man" to Thomas J. Pendergast. Harry S. Truman began his political career in 1922, when his friends and war time associates (he was a battery commander of the 129th Field Artillery during the World War, having come up through the ranks in the National Guard, to the rank of Colonel in the Organized Reserve, after the close of the war) put him in the race for judgeship of the County Court, from the Eastern (rural) District. He was endorsed, after his strength in the rural district had become manifest, by the dominant faction of the Democratic party of Jackson County, which was under leadership of Mr. T. J. Pendergast. He did not get the office without opposition and defeated the candidate sponsored by the Shannon faction.

He later was offered the backing of the Pendergast organization for the office of Presiding Judge of the County Court of Jackson County. If you will take the time to read the news articles and the editorial comment from both of the Kansas City newspapers, which can be found in their elaborate "morgues", you will find he was not a yes-man, and there was never a word written either in news articles or editorially so insinuating. It is true in many instances when it came to minor administrative appointments, he appointed and named persons from both factions, and many who were not identified with either faction.

He sponsored and obtained the approval, from the real estate board, all newspapers, and political factions of both parties, and many civic organization, of a bond issue for the building of a county road system, which entailed the expenditure of a bond fund of six and one-half million dollars, authorized by one election, which carried by a vote of more than two to one. The people were so well pleased with the performance of Judge Truman that a second issued was authorized for Three and one-half million dollars and at the same time there was authorized the issuance of Court House bonds for Kansas City of Five million dollars, and for

Independence Five hundred thousand dollars, and for County Hospital Five hundred thousand dollars.

You will see that this so called “unimportant Jackson County administrative job” was at least supervising and responsible for the spending large sums of bond money. To this day not a single word of scandal or criticism was leveled at him or the expenditures of this money. You might be further informed that the ordinary expenditures of the County for ordinary purposes exceeded Four million dollars each year and no criticism was leveled at him on that account.

There were a large number of administrative officers who had, and did in fact, exercise the power of spending more money than was available for each current year. There had accumulated a large deficit which was refinanced at a great interest savings.

In order to guard against such a recurrence Judge Truman Sponsored a legislative enactment and aided in the passage of it, which budgeted the County revenues and made it apply to all of the Counties, some of which were worse off than Jackson County, including St. Louis, County.

As to “courtesy title of Judge” I invite your attention to Section 36 of Article 6 of the Missouri Constitution which creates a “County Court” and give the title “County Judge”, I quote it for you:

Section 36 County Courts

In each county there shall be a county court, which shall be a court of record, and shall have jurisdiction to transact all county and such other business as may be prescribed by law. The court shall consist of one or more judges, not exceeding three, of whom the probate judge may be one, as may be provided by law.

There for it is more than a “courtesy title” and is in fact a Constitutional one.

The matter of 120,180 votes for Harry S. Truman for senator being “A matter of inquiry later” is not in accord with the true facts. There was never any inquiry about his nomination, no doubt the investigation you had in mind concerned the general election held two years later, and not the primary election when Truman was nominated or elected.

Of course this suggestion spoils the part of your story which is critical of the Junior Senator, but no doubt you do not want to intentionally do a wrong or disseminate false information concerning anyone.

As to the “home-grown” votes which you say Milligan received, totaling 135,235, that is true. But you did not tell the “whole truth”. That, to a lawyer is just as much a lie as a bare misstatement. The facts are that Harry S. Truman received 152,925 votes from the “home-grown” voters of Missouri, which you define to be exclusive of St. Louis and Kansas City. This 17,693 more than Milligan received.

Your article was quite interesting and we democrats appreciate the favorable light you placed the Senior Senator in, but was it necessary to put the Junior Senator in an unfavorable light when it required the use of untruths?

I believe you and the publishers of your article owe the Junior Senator a public apology. What do you think?

Yours very truly,

c.c.to

Editor-in-Chief
The Saturday Evening Post

October 19, 1938
Harry S. Truman
Court House
Kansas City, Missouri
Dear Senator:

Herewith please find enclosed a copy of the letter written to Mr. Jack Alexander, a copy of which was sent to the Editor-in-Chief of The Saturday Evening Post, also.

Yours very truly,
RBB/pd
enc. 1