

INTERVIEW WITH

John F. Six McDonnell

by

J. Earl Endacott
Historian

(Special Assistant to the Director)

on

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for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



Gift of Personal Statement

John F. Six McDonnell

to the

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John J. Six M^o Donnell

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This is an interview with Six McDonnell by J. Earl Endacott,
2-26-70.

McDONNELL: In the early days, you know, he worked down there
in the [Belle Springs] creamery.

ENDACOTT: He told me he worked at the creamery there--what
was it three years, I think, he told me.

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: Now you can say anything you want to and we can
always take it out. First now, I want to find out how you
got the nickname of Six?

McDONNELL: Oh, well, that's kind of an interesting thing.
I've told a lot of lies about that, some even when I was
playing baseball, you know, so many people would ask me. It
takes quite a while you know--about two or three minutes to
explain it--you haven't got that much time.

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes.



McDONNELL: So I'd say I walked six in succession or I hit
six in succession and struck out six in succession--

ENDACOTT: And fanned out six times.

McDONNELL: --in an important game; they just started to call me Six, but that isn't the story at all. It is rather interesting. They had an art exhibit up there in the old Garfield School, you remember that?

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes, that was still there when I came there.

McDONNELL: Well, they had a big high foyer. It seemed to me like it was terrifically high--much higher--than this ceiling. It was a big place, bigger than our down floor and deeper. Somebody conceived the idea of having a weekly art show or exhibit or whatever you want to call it. So they gathered up all the pictures they could get and copies of noted artists, Raphael and all of them, you know and they hung them up there in this foyer, all kind of pictures, all around this thing. This was a weak deal and the city was cooperating on it. Well then, the school--they'd send a class out to study these pictures starting with the first grade, and I think I was in the third--third or fourth--I came there in the third grade from Oklahoma. My class got to the paintings. There was a copy, I presume, of Raphael's "The Sistine Madonna" and some of the kids got to thinking that Madonna sounded like McDonnell so, on the playgrounds they got to calling me "Sistine". This word had a soft sound and it gradually changed to Sixteen and finally



the teen was dropped and I became "Six".

ENDACOTT: You came there in 1900 didn't you?

McDONNELL: 19--

ENDACOTT: I looked it up in a book the other day.

McDONNELL: '03.

ENDACOTT: 1903.

McDONNELL: Yes, I believe it was.

ENDACOTT: The book said 1900.

McDONNELL: Yes, you may be right, I was 9 or 10 years old I was born in 1891 so that would be--I was thinking of the flood, that's--

ENDACOTT: Yes, the flood--

McDONNELL: We came in 1900 and the flood was about--

ENDACOTT: 1903 now you lived on the south side at that time?

McDONNELL: No, I lived on the north side all the time.

ENDACOTT: All the time. Where did you live up there?

McDONNELL: Well, I lived a way up on Kuney, Olive and Kuney you know.



ENDACOTT: Yes, I know where that is.

McDONNELL: I can't tell exactly. It seemed like it was a awful long ways, there wasn't any pavement there, not very many good sidewalks in those days. Otto Smith lived close to me. You know Otto Smith?

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes, he was a good friend of mine.

McDONNELL: Well, he just lived a couple of blocks down that way, his father did, and we grew up together as kids, you know. In fact I knew Otto before I knew Dwight, because Dwight was way down on the south side.

ENDACOTT: Yes, he was clear down on the south side.



McDONNELL: And then he came up to the north side to school in the eighth grade I believe; they only had seven grades there.

ENDACOTT: No, they had six and seven, and then they came up there for the seventh and eighth.

McDONNELL: I don't even remember him there, and I was about in the fifth--see, I was two or three grades behind him, I

was two in high school--he was a junior when I was freshman. But that's where I got acquainted with him. I finished the grade and then I started into school, it was 1907, wasn't it? Fall of 1907--

ENDACOTT: Yes, it would be about that.

McDONNELL: I suppose.

ENDACOTT: 'Cause he graduated in the first class out of the new school, that was 1909. He and Edgar both--

McDONNELL: That's right. Ed was a senior and Dwight was a junior and I was a freshman.

ENDACOTT: Yes, but Edgar and Ike graduated together in 1909.

McDONNELL: Edgar and you did?

ENDACOTT: No, and Ike.

McDONNELL: Oh, they graduated together.

ENDACOTT: Yes, you see Edgar stayed out of school for a couple of years--



McDONNELL: Yes, I know that.

ENDACOTT: Old man told him he was either going to have to get to school or go work, and he would rather go to school than work, so that's what he told me, Edgar told me that.

McDONNELL: Well, I knew he was out of school a year, but I didn't know exactly what it was.

ENDACOTT: You see, Ike lost that year with that leg too, that he had you know. No, that would be later, no, that would be in high school, wouldn't it? When he had his knee injured and he had laid out a year.

McDONNELL: I don't recall that; I really don't.

ENDACOTT: He stumbled on that brick wall down there and blood poison set in and they got old Dr. [Tracy R.] Conklin. Do you remember old Dr. Conklin?

McDONNELL: Yes, yes.

ENDACOTT: They got old Dr. Conklin down there and he said, "We're going to have to cut that leg off."



And Ike says, "They're not going to take it off!" He got Edgar to stand outside the bathroom door for two or three days, and Mrs. Eisenhower finally got that poison stopped.

McDONNELL: Well, I did hear something about that or read something about it, I don't know which.

ENDACOTT: Well, he lost that year then, you see.

McDONNELL: Oh, yes.

ENDACOTT: Then that put him even with Edgar; so they both graduated in 1909.

McDONNELL: Well, when I came into high school, it seemed to me like Ed was a senior and Dwight was a junior, but whether it was or not, it doesn't matter.

ENDACOTT: Well, I looked at the annual yesterday and it shows that they both graduated in the same year, 1909.

McDONNELL: Well, anyway, where I first really met them that I can remember about--course I must have met them in the fall



because I think it was on the football squad--but I wasn't a regular, I was pretty light, just started to get big--

ENDACOTT: Is that year that [H. E. Snider] coached?

McDONNELL: '07, '08, no it wasn't, I think Frank Parent was the coach.

ENDACOTT: Frank Parent and he quit and Snider came in.

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: And took over.

McDONNELL: That's right. Well, anyway, I didn't care much about football, but I did play quarterback for three years I think, the last three years. But here I was thinking about making that baseball club; I was a baseball player.

ENDACOTT: That was always what you liked.

McDONNELL: Yes, and I was pretty good at it. And here come these two big guys across the playgrounds, you know, Dwight and Ed. Well, they was the big shots in our school you know, campus, whatever you call it, and hollering at me, "Hey, Six



come here."

And I wondered what the heck they wanted with me so I went over there and I swagger, "What do you want?"

"Well," they said, I think it was Dwight doing the talking too, he says, "I'm President of the Athletic Association and we're going to start baseball pretty soon now, middle of February", I think he said, "and have you been considering going out for the ball club?"

And I said, "Yes, I have. I think I can make your ball club, as an outfielder."

And they says, "We got news for you; you're going to be the pitcher." Yesh, just like that.

And I said, "Pitcher, I'm no pitcher; I'm an infielder." I'd played kid ball in the infield, second base. I was left-handed and that's no good either you know, but I didn't know anything different then. I could field and I could throw but I said, "I'm no pitcher."

They said, "Oh, we think you are. Anyway our big pitcher has moved to Colorado." That was a fellow named Gene Eddy, remember him?

ENDACOTT: I didn't even know him.



McDONNELL: He was the big football star and a pitcher too, and their family moved to Colorado. So he says, "We haven't got any pitcher and you're going to be the pitcher."

I said again, "Why, I don't know anything about pitching."

"Well, we've been watching you play out here on the playgrounds and everywhere and you have a great arm and you got the best arm in school and you're going to be the pitcher."

"O.K. I'll give it a try." So I was the pitcher and I didn't know--

ENDACOTT: And you were a good one too, according to the--

McDONNELL: Well, I won five and lost five, that wasn't very good.

ENDACOTT: Well, that was 500 per cent, that's pretty good.

McDONNELL: Yes, but you know in the next three years, I wasn't beaten by a high school team.

ENDACOTT: Yes, you played even the KU [Kansas University] freshman team once.

McDONNELL: Yes, I lost that game.



ENDACOTT: You lost that game.

McDONNELL: Dwight lost it for me; he claimed he did anyway.

ENDACOTT: Yes, he told me that one time. He said, "You know that damn Six, I lost the ball game for him."

McDONNELL: Well, he really didn't, but he really worried about that. That was when I started to realize what a fine character he had, really had. Well, the way it was, I think the game was 1 to 0 in our favor, or 2 to 0, I forget which, about the seventh inning. KU had a left-handed pitcher by the name of Doyle who was on the freshman team, of course. The next three years he was on the KU varsity and was a real good pitcher, but I had him beat, I think it was 1 to 0.

ENDACOTT: I think it was too.

McDONNELL: Yes, anyway they got a man on first. Bill Moore, he was a friend of mine, he's an insurance man I think, he lives in Manhattan or Lawrence one of the two. He's a graduate of Lawrence. A man on first, and Bill come up and he hit a line drive right past my ear and it was well hit.



Well, Dwight was playing center field and this ball was hit low; it wasn't over a head high and it went past me like a shot. Dwight comes dashing in and the ball sort of kept raising I guess, anyway he ran under it and this ball was-- old Mc Cook Field--that ball just went--

ENDACOTT: Where was that down in Lawrence?

McDONNELL: Down in Lawrence, yes.

ENDACOTT: Well, I didn't know you played at Lawrence.

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: How did you guys get down there?

McDONNELL: Well, we played the Manhattan freshmen one day and Bud Hoffman pitched. And the next day, they pitched me at Lawrence. And Bud only pitched two or three games all the time I was in high school, and he played second base all the time. He could throw hard too. But anyway, this thing went for a home run as I remember it, or a triple. I think it was a home run inside the park; McCook Field didn't have any fence you know and that ball--



ENDACOTT: I know I played football there.

MCDONNELL:--beat me. And Ike, he'd claim to this day, if he was alive, that he lost that game. Well he did misjudge a line drive, but Lord it was well hit, just as hard as a ball could be. So I'd say "oh, forget it, forget it, what does it matter?"

ENDACOTT: Well, he never did; he told me.

MCDONNELL: We'd get out there and we'd hustle; we'd win some; we'd lost some and it's nobody's fault. "It's my fault just as much as it was yours, 'cause I never saw a man hit a ball harder in my life, and it's O.K. with me."

And he said, "Oh, I lost you a possible athletic scholarship."

ENDACOTT: You played some professional ball after that too, didn't you?

MCDONNELL: Oh, yes, I played eight or nine years.

ENDACOTT: Who did you play with?



McDONNELL: Oh, a lot of minor leagues clubs, I played with St. Joe [St. Joseph, Missouri] in the Western League, and I played in the Western Association, and I played in the old Union State--Union, I think--anyway Great Falls [Montana], Salt Lake City, Utah, two Utah towns, Ogden and Helena, all those towns up there in the Northwest.

ENDACOTT: How did you do, pretty good?

McDONNELL: Yes, but I didn't like it out there, it was too cold. I was with Charlotte [North Carolina] in the South Atlantic League, and Nebraska State League and Kansas State League, Central Association--



ENDACOTT: Gosh, you got around, I didn't know you played that--

McDONNELL: Yes, I played in eight or nine different leagues and I did pretty good. I really hurt my arm down in North Carolina. You know, in those days, nobody ever told me anything about pitching or anything--

ENDACOTT: You just threw it.

McDONNELL:--there was nobody to do it. The only man who could do it was Grant Shoppe.

ENDACOTT: Oh, I remember Grant Shoppe.

McDONNELL: But he was gone you know, he was playing ball then, professional ball. And he never had anything to do with the high school at all; he wouldn't come out or anything. But he was the only capable man in town, that I can recall, that knew anything about playing ball at all, really, I mean enough to coach you. But after high school, I went to the Western League; it was class A. You know, nobody ever taught me how to hold men on first or anything, but I could throw like the dickens. I could really fire that ball. And I would strike out ten, and walk eight, and hit three or four on the back side you know, and drive the infielders crazy, you know. They don't like that at all. And a couple of times they sent me out to get control, and I'd go out and pitch a couple of shut-outs and some fast dealing, and right back I'd come you see--the same thing all over again. Well, I hurt my arm down in North Carolina pitching against Richmond, Virginia. Richmond was a double A club; they



didn't have triple A in those days. The highest was double A in minor league and then the majors. The South Atlantic was class B I think, or C, I forget which. But anyway I started this game, and I'd only been there a couple of days, and it was cold snowy, snowing over on the hillside. I pitched three innings, all I was supposed to and they didn't score. And this manager says, "Go another inning, go another inning, go another inning." He wanted to beat this Richmond club, you see, big deal for him. So I pitched seven innings, and I don't think they scored at all, as I recall. But then I says "I've had it, brother, get me out of there, I'm getting stiff, cold." Well, I really got cold in my back, lumbago and everything. And they had electric light bulbs, sixteen of them, sit like this, you know, and then they put blankets over me, and I lay on this damn thing for a couple of hours every day. And that went on for several weeks, and I got well. I got loose, but I didn't pitch for a number of weeks. And when I did, I wasn't quite as fast, that fast ball wouldn't take off, but my arm wasn't sore. That's when I started to learn how to pitch, I had to. Before that, I was just throwing the ball, I had to develop a curve and you



know, change of pace, throw a curve at two or three speeds and so forth. I did most of my better pitching afterwards, but I had lost that good fast ball, you know, that really moved. That's a delicate business there.

ENDACOTT: What did you do in the winter time, did you work Joe [W.] Howe?

MCDONNELL: Always come home and worked for Joe. Yes, I worked for Joe mostly; I worked for Phil [W.] Heath too when he owned the [Abilene Reflector-Chronicle] Chronicle.

ENDACOTT: That was right back of where the Reflector is, wasn't it?

MCDONNELL: No, it was across the street; it was right behind that furniture store, Burnham you know?

ENDACOTT: Where Dave had his cleaning shop [Abilene Steam Laundry]?

MCDONNELL: Yes, yes, that's where it was, right there.

ENDACOTT: Well, now, Joe Howe's paper [Dickinson County News] was where the [Steinhauser] drug store was, wasn't it? It was over across the street.



McDONNELL: Yes, he moved across the street. Well, that was after I went to Pittsburg, Kansas. But I worked for Phil two or three winters, and he was a fine man, so was Joe Howe. You know just observing the press and everything, Joe Howe had a lot more to do with Ike getting in West Point than they give him credit for.

ENDACOTT: Well, I thought that and everybody says that Phil Heath and [C.M.] Harger were the ones.

McDONNELL: Harger, especially. I don't know what Harger ever did, pardon me for saying so, better cut that out too.

ENDACOTT: No, I think that's true. Harger was a good old staunch Republican and Heath was a good old Democrat.

McDONNELL: Yes, and Ike was a Democrat; did you know that?

ENDACOTT: Yes.

McDONNELL: 'Cause Joe Howe was chairman of the Democratic Central Committee. I worked for Joe for years.

ENDACOTT: I know it.



McDONNELL: When I was a little kid, he picked me up off the street and asked me if I wanted a job. Ike would come down there, you know, he and I got to be friends, buddies. And he'd come down and read all the exchanges, sit in there and talk to Joe Howe and read all the exchanges. In those days, if you had a newspaper, you could trade with the New York Times or anybody, they'd exchange with you. The windows just full of all kinds of papers, St. Louis, Kansas City, everything, come every day. And Dwight would come in there and wait for me to get off work. I'd go to work after school, if I didn't have to practice, and work till about 6:00 o'clock, and then we'd go play pool, see. But in the meantime, he was always talking to Joe Howe, and talking about interesting things. Then he got that yen to go to service school and Joe did a lot of work with him, helping him. Of course Joe wasn't a rich man or anything, but he had some influence.

ENDACOTT: He had some pull.

McDONNELL: He was a state senator, and he was on the Board of Regents, and later on was in charge of the Beloit Industrial home I think, for girls.

ENDACOTT: He was?

McDONNELL: Yes. He was a wonderful man. You know I lost my father early and--

ENDACOTT: Yes, you were just a youngster when your father died.

McDONNELL: Yes. I was playing in a vacant lot there next to our place, you know, and Mr. [A. L.] Duckwall, Lease Duckwall--

ENDACOTT: Lease, yes.

McDONNELL:--and Joe would always walk home together. They walked in those days; nobody had a car--maybe one or two--but they would walk home. They were both businessmen, and they would walk quite a ways. It was ten or twelve blocks up there to their home, really. I think they lived on seventh and from their business it was about a mile.

ENDACOTT: Well, let's see, Lease he lived up at seventh.

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: Yes.



McDONNELL: And Joe lived along there somewhere eighth or seventh. They lived close by, that's one reason they walked home together, I guess. But anyway, we'd be out there playing ball practically every night, and they'd stop and look at us for five minutes or so. And Joe called me over and he says, "You're a pretty good ball player, what's your name?" And I told him what my name was and he says, "Well, we like to watch you play."

And I said, "Well, thank you."

And he says, "Would you like a job?"

I said, "A job, yes, I sure would, have you got a job for me?"

And he said, "Well, I run a newspaper. You come down to my place tomorrow morning and we'll see what we can do." I think I was in the seventh or eighth grade. And so I went down and he hired me to sweep out, open up in the mornings, build the fires--had two or three stoves, big bellied stoves, no furnace--nothing but a basement. The big press was in the basement. And I put little gasoline lamps or torch lamps of some kind under all the little job presses, to heat up the presses, to get the ink warm enough so it would be fluid.



you know, light a little lamp down there and sweep out. And then it would be about time for the regulars to come, so I'd have to go to school see. He would pay me by the line and he was cheating himself all the time and I knew it, because during school, I'd make about five dollars a week. I'd set that legal stuff, the real fine type, by hand and I got so I was real good at it, you know. Just pick it up like that and stick it in. And he'd figure up what I earned, just galley proofs you know, and he'd pay me \$4.80, 4.86, 4.94, always pretty close to \$5.00. The journeyman printers were only getting \$12.00. And heck, I was only working you know an hour, an hour and a half a night, and a little bit in the morning. And I was making almost half as much as those guys who were working 48 hours. So he was being a little partial to me and it was a big help, you know. Especially when my mother died and well, no, she didn't die, she went to Nebraska and lived with her daughter, and then I was all alone.

ENDACOTT: Didn't you have a brother there?

McDONNELL: Yes, he was there quite a while, but he left after mother left and I didn't have any home then.



ENDACOTT: Red told me yesterday, your brother--what was his name?

McDONNELL: His name was Ronald, but they called Burley.

ENDACOTT: Burley. He knew Burley, he says--

McDONNELL: Who told you?

ENDACOTT: Red Asper.

McDONNELL: Yes, oh, yes. Burley was a fine man, you know, he died of appendicitis. He married a lady, a very fine lady, but she was she got took in by one of these new fangled preachers, you know, that can heal you with thoughts, see. If you would just hold the thoughts you could get well. Well, he got this appendicitis and she didn't take him to a doctor for six or seven days, I forget which. By the time she got there--she gave up on the thought business and finally got him to the hospital--and he had gangrene, and he died. And he was the huskiest man you ever saw. He wasn't so big, well, he wasn't as tall as me, about your height, but he was really strong. As a kid he worked in rock quarries and everything else.



ENDACOTT: Did he play any baseball?

McDONNELL: No, no, he didn't. I had five brothers, just one of them played baseball, besides me, I mean. I had a brother, Jim, that was pretty good they said, but I never saw him play ball. I was the baby of the family.

ENDACOTT: Didn't you kids have some kind of a boys club in the back of Howe's place?

McDONNELL: Yes, that was a Joe Howe undertaking; they called it the Knights of Honor and that was very good. If I ever give anybody credit for helping me morally especially, I give it to Joe Howe, because I was a pretty rough kid, you know, just run around the streets all the time and no where to go. A man named Schilling, a businessman down at Herington, devised this kid idea, it was something like the Boy Scouts.

ENDACOTT: Yes, something on the order of Boy Scouts.

McDONNELL: Yes, a forerunner to Boy Scouts, I guess.

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes, it wasn't formed till 1910.

McDONNELL: Well, the first one was formed in Herington by a



Mr. Schilling. He and Joe were good friends and Joe and Schilling agreed that they ought to have one in Abilene, so Joe organized it. He had all of us guys down there in his print shop one evening, there was about 15 or 20 of us.

ENDACOTT: Was Ike in that bunch?

McDONNELL: No, he wasn't.

ENDACOTT: I don't think he ever belonged to that, did he?

McDONNELL: No, he didn't, but John Gleissner was and Ed Crawford, Bud Huffman. The amazing thing was that he formed this thing. I was--heck, I was homeless, I didn't have anything. But he read the constitution and had the rooms rented, you know, and he had the boxing gloves, dumbbells and Indian clubs and all kinds of physical contraptions.

ENDACOTT: He paid for that himself probably.

McDONNELL: Yes, he did. Each kid had a key. They elected me president and I was dumbfounded, I was the first president and it scared me to death, but he let the kids vote on it and I guess it was unanimous. I don't know whether it was framed



up or not, but it just shocked me. But anyway with his instructions and everything, I got along pretty good. It gave me a confidence that I wondered if I ever would have obtained any other way.

ENDACOTT: You probably wouldn't.

McDONNELL: And all through my young life, same way, even up till I was married, he sort of--

ENDACOTT: He went to Emporia, didn't he?

McDONNELL: Yes, he just died two or three years ago.

ENDACOTT: I met him up there one time.

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: He was quite a boy.

McDONNELL: He was a real nice person; he wasn't so personable or outgoing, whatever you call it, but he was a wonderful man.

ENDACOTT: Well, he gave Ike some good advice too.



McDONNELL: You bet he did.

ENDACOTT: And Ike listened to him, that's one thing.

McDONNELL: Well, he was a good moral man. You know, he got old, of course he was ten years older than I was, at least, and I'm 78 right now. In his last few years over there at Emporia he was writing me letters. That was when Eisenhower was running for President on the Republican ticket, that's the point. Joe could remember when he made the student speech to the Democratic Central Committee Convention and was a Democrat, see. He wouldn't have made the speech if he hadn't have been, because Joe was the head of the Democratic Central Committee. So that was all right, he wanted a boy that had a democratic viewpoint to make this speech and I guess he talked Ike into it, volunteered, and he made a hell of a speech. He's a good talker.

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes.

McDONNELL: And then that was the end of that until he became famous and then he decided to run for president. He was going to run on the Republican ticket. Joe started writing me letters, and I became sort of the father to him then.



ENDACOTT: Well, he called me one time--

MCDONNELL: About that?

ENDACOTT: Well, he wanted me to try to persuade Ike to not run for the presidency.

MCDONNELL: Well, he wrote me about four times, I think, and I'd write him back. The last time I almost scolded him, telling him to quit worrying about such a thing. Even if he thought he was a democrat when he was a boy, there's nothing wrong with him changing his viewpoints, you know. The world differs every five, ten years, you know, and if he wants to be a Republican that's his right, and don't you worry about it.



ENDACOTT: Have you got any of those old letters? Do you ever save any of that stuff?

McDONNELL: I might have some letters from Joe, let me look-- I don't know whether they'd by the ones or not. That's a good idea, I never thought of that, might have thrown something just a week or two ago, I guess.

ENDACOTT: Well, don't ever throw anything away, hang on to it and let me make a photostatic copy of it. If I can have some of that stuff, I'll take it up and have the photographer make copies of it and we'll send you an extra copy of it.

McDONNELL: Let's see, now there's a letter, I don't know what's in it, right there, you can go ahead and read it, there's no--this is from Time magazine.



ENDACOTT: No, where does he live?

McDONNELL: He's a port man up here at the dock.

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes, sure I know him.

McDONNELL: He's a friend of ours, pretty nice guy, pretty sharp.

ENDACOTT: Yes, he's a nice guy; I like him.

McDONNELL: Barnhardt Caldwell, Caldwell, New Jersey, now who in the hell is that fellow? Did you ever hear of him? There's some paddle fishing up in Montana I did.

ENDACOTT: Springdale.

McDONNELL: I got a picture of a paddle fish with me holding it too.

ENDACOTT: Yes, who caught it?

McDONNELL: Huh?

ENDACOTT: Who caught it?

McDONNELL: Well, I won't--

ENDACOTT: Big rascal.

McDONNELL: Oh, we caught a lot of them.

ENDACOTT: What do they weigh?

McDONNELL: They weigh all the way from 20 to well, I guess



they get up to 50, 60 pounds. Biggest one I saw was about 33, I think, and they all weighed that, every one you caught--

ENDACOTT: They're good to eat, aren't they?

McDONNELL: Well, about a fifth of them are; they don't save much of it. I can't remember; I guess it's too strong or something.

ENDACOTT: I'd rather catch salmon.

McDONNELL: Salmon?

ENDACOTT: Yes, you can eat all of those.

McDONNELL: I never fished for those.

ENDACOTT: I never have either, but I'd still like to.

McDONNELL: Yes. Well, by golly I--

ENDACOTT: I don't think you've got anything.

McDONNELL: I must have thrown them away. Wait a minute here, that's from Detroit News, what I want with that--he was there the year before that, American Legion.



ENDACOTT: They wanted you to pay your dues.

MCDONNELL: I quit the American Legion.

ENDACOTT: So did I. In fact I don't think they even have a post in Abilene any more.

MCDONNELL: Grant Engle.

ENDACOTT: I saw it up there when I came around the dock there. Joe Howe I don't think was given enough credit on Ike--

MCDONNELL: No, I know he wasn't.

ENDACOTT: Did you used to go down there when he was working down at the creamery at nights with Bud and those fellows?

MCDONNELL: Yes, I used to go down a lot. He would call me to work for him. I didn't have to work, he was a night fireman, you know, on the stationery boilers. He'd get a date or something, take a girl to a show or something like that.

ENDACOTT: Who was he dating then? Ruby Norman?



McDONNELL: No, he dated Gladys Harding a lot, and a girl by the name of Hoffnell, Myrtle Hoffnell.

ENDACOTT: Yes, he dated her three times; the third time she stood him up and went car riding with Earl Briney and that was that.

McDONNELL: She was a good looking girl.

ENDACOTT: Yes, and she was supposed to be the prettiest girl in the school.

McDONNELL: Yes, she was; I think she was.

ENDACOTT: I found that out, that was the last date Ike had with her.

McDONNELL: Here, here's one, it'd been here just--

ENDACOTT: I'm always a week late.

McDONNELL: Yes, a week or ten days ago, I cleaned this thing out; it got so I couldn't get anything in there. I just keep odds and ends in there you know, working tools like that. And I didn't have any room, so I cleaned out a lot of old letters.



ENDACOTT: You know Red was telling me about how the guys used to steal chickens and roast them on shovels and stuff like that up there. Were you in that bunch?

McDONNELL: No, but I was in a bunch that used to--

ENDACOTT: Steal ice cream?

McDONNELL:--catch crawdads and boil them in a can, one of these big cans like they burn trash in, down by the river. We used to throw 50, 60 live crawdads in a hot can of some kind and set all this trash on fire in this darned thing. It'd cook these crawdads and then we'd snap the tails off and eat them.



ENDACOTT: They're good.

McDONNELL: They're real good, yes.

ENDACOTT: Oh, they're good.

McDONNELL: But we'd just throw them in there live.

ENDACOTT: You didn't do any fishing then with Ike?

McDONNELL: Very little, very little. I played a lot of pool with him. I ought to say something good about the pool halls in those days. They had a bad reputation, but now, take me for instance, I didn't have any home after I was about 17 years old, of any kind. The pool hall was my country club and it also was Dwight's, Bud Huffman's. It was a lot of guys; we'd congregate in this pool hall, Bert Beagle [Beagle & Spader Billiard Hall] ran it.

ENDACOTT: Where was that?

McDONNELL: Well, that was right on Broadway there, right by the [Citizens] National Bank, just south of it. Well, we'd all congregate in there. I played a lot of billiards; I was a pretty good billiard player in my younger days. Everybody would meet everybody in this pool hall, and they weren't rough necks.

ENDACOTT: You weren't getting into trouble in there.

McDONNELL: Not a bit of trouble. Bert Beagle was a fine man. A funny incident, I told somebody, but he never did use it. Bert had a fellow name of Rogers, Kindy Rogers, and he was



the ball racker in there. They had, I think, he had about 10 pool tables and a couple of billiard tables, big place.

ENDACOTT: Pretty good sized place.

MCDONNELL: Well, Kindy was racking balls, that was his job. That was about the degree of intelligence that he possessed, see. But he was a cute little old guy, and he'd act much dumber than he really was. He liked to get in an argument with you or someone else there about some fighter or something, then he'd make a bet. Well, I knew all this; I knew him better than Dwight did. We were in there one day and Dwight had a couple of bucks and I had about 15 cents. I never had over that, you know, maybe one of us would have 60 cents and the other one wouldn't have anything, or vice versa. So here was Kindy and he got to talking about Stanley [Ketchel] and Billy Papke, you can recall those great middleweights. Well, I knew if Kindy was leading up to a bet, that he knew what he was talking about, because the only book he ever read was the World Almanac, that's where he got all his information. He makes an outlandish statement, he says, "Billy Papke whipped Stanley Ketchel, I think three straight



times or at least two out of three."

And Dwight said, "Oh, he never whipped him in his life." Now Kindy was from Peoria, that was one angle he had, and that was where Billy Papke was from. So they kept arguing and I felt this coming on. Kindy said, "I betcha two dollars that he whipped him twice," or three times I forget which now, I'm a little hazy on that.

Ike says, "you've got a bet, that's all I've got or I'd betcha a hundred." Dwight was pretty cocky. I held stakes, and I kept kicking Dwight in the shins all the time to lay off this bet, see, but he was so confident. So they got out the money and he gave the money to me, four bucks. And Dwight said, "Well, now how you going to prove it? You want me to go over to the newspaper?"

And Kindy said, "No, I'll go right across the street there to the book store." Old lady Hubbard [C. L. Hubbard & Co.] run a book store. He'd probably just read it the day before or so, probably didn't even buy the book, just went in there and snooped through it. But no, he was from Peoria and he did know what he was talking about. So he come back with the book and there was the listing, Papke



beat Ketchel such and such a date and the next year he beat him again. And I had to pay off and old Dwight, we were really both broke then and it was terrible. I laughed about that a million times. Now there was a guy that wasn't very smart at all, and Dwight was very intelligent, but he got took in with this guy. It was funny when you get to thinking about it, and I still think about it. And I'd seen Kindy do that to a lot of guys, just a screwy nut like that--

ENDACOTT: He could make a good living out of it.

MCDONNELL: But he knew what he was talking about. Then he would start this conversation and wind it around to this, and pretty soon he'd act like he was mad or something, first thing you know he had a bet. Well, he was the coolest one in the crowd all the time. I often laugh about that. Dwight was very intelligent; he wasn't what you would call a great student as far as grades were concerned, I guess.

ENDACOTT: Oh, he made good grades.

MCDONNELL: Well, he was in the upper third or so--



ENDACOTT: In the senior class, I was looking at those yesterday, he had 1 plus in most of his work.

McDONNELL: Yes, he was very intelligent anyway.

ENDACOTT: He didn't do so good in his freshman year.

McDONNELL: You take playing athletics, or stuff like that, if we didn't know what to do or how to go about something, you know, we'd nearly always wind up asking Dwight about what he thought about it. And what he thought about it made sense.

ENDACOTT: He had a kind of an analytical mind.



McDONNELL: Yes, he did. He wasn't a bookworm, but he could grasp anything that he read and understand it and remember it well. He had a very good head on him.

ENDACOTT: Were you in on that deal with Bud Huffman and those guys that stole the ice cream from Lou Chrisman?

McDONNELL: No, I knew Lou Chrisman.

ENDACOTT: Well, they used to go over and steal ice cream

from Lou Chrisman and he said, "I'm going to break them of that." And he put croton oil in it--he broke 'em. That was the last ice cream--Bud told me that story. I never did publish it; I've kept that one quiet.

McDONNELL: That's pretty good, pretty good. Another thing I did with Dwight that was kind of interesting is about a fighter too, Battling Nelson and was it, heavyweight champion that guy that whipped him--Wal

ENDACOTT: [Ed] Walgast?

McDONNELL: Walgast, yes, he whipped him in 44 rounds, wasn't it?

ENDACOTT: Yes, something like that.

McDONNELL: Well, Dwight and I was over there at the restaurant, ole mom's restaurant, the Golden Rule. And he says, "Hey, Six that fight's coming in over the wire and it's on its way to New York." Martin, a fellow by the name of Martin was the telegrapher.

ENDACOTT: Yes, I remember him.



McDONNELL: He says, "We can go over there and he can get that as it goes through and copy it off and we can get every round."

So I says, "That sounds good to me." So we go over there and we knew Art, Art Martin was his name; he was a little older than we were, but he was a nice guy. He agreed to do it, he said, "Yes, when it comes through, I can,"--you know, he could read that Morse code and he could get it. So we kept eating these ham sandwiches for a nickel, and we stayed there all night long, got home at five o'clock in the morning. You know there was difference in the time schedule--

ENDACOTT: Yes.

McDONNELL: And the fight went 44 rounds as I recall--

ENDACOTT: You probably ate 44 sandwiches.

McDONNELL: Yes, just about, just about. Had another funny thing about that, just a couple of years later. I was playing over at St. Joe, Missouri and Ed Walgast came to town and he was world's champion, see. He was a guest out there at the ball park on a Sunday or holiday of some kind, had a big



crowd anyway. He had a gold headed cane, walked with it, little guy, about 5 foot 6 you know, but a tough looking little guy. He sat on the bench with us, and I was so proud, you know, to sit there with the lightweight champion of the world. The guy that whipped Battling Nelson, especially, 'cause Nelson was a real rough character.

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes.

McDONNELL: And then they took him up to home plate and introduced him. He waved his gold headed cane at us, had a thing on it about like a baseball, see, supposed to be gold, gold washed, I guess.



ENDACOTT: Did you ever work around [C. W.] Parkers', down there any?

McDONNELL: I worked down there at that skating rink.

ENDACOTT: Red was telling me yesterday that he used to sand horses over there, got 10 cents an hour.

McDONNELL: Oh, yes, he probably did. No, that was over there in the amusement factory.

ENDACOTT: Yes.

McDONNELL: Yes, they made--

ENDACOTT: Some of these books say that Ike worked over there, but Asper says not. You remember old Chris Bath that used to be a piano--

McDONNELL: Yes, yes.

ENDACOTT: Well, he was the organ maker down there and he told me one time that Ike never worked over there.

McDONNELL: I don't ever recall him ever working anywhere except the [Belle Springs] creamery. I do recall those kids having a little boys wagon you know--



ENDACOTT: Well, now he worked one summer--

McDONNELL: And would sell vegetables from house to house.

ENDACOTT: You do remember this. He worked one summer out there at that Lumber Company [Rice-Johnitz-Nicolay] making steel bins, grain bins, because I've got a cancelled check from out there he got--

McDONNELL: Oh, yes, wasn't the fellow there named George, George Setong or something--

ENDACOTT: I don't know, Nicolay signed the check.

McDONNELL: What Nicolay? J.P.?

ENDACOTT: J.W. or J.P.

McDONNELL: Wasn't it sort of a tank--

ENDACOTT: It was a steel grain bin.

McDONNELL: Didn't they make cattle tanks?

ENDACOTT: Well, I thought they were grain bins and what--

McDONNELL: Well, they did that too. Yes, there was a lot of those kids that worked for that, and maybe Dwight did.

ENDACOTT: He did, because I got a couple of the cancelled checks.

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: From out there.



McDONNELL: Yes, yes, that's true, several of my friends worked there.

ENDACOTT: He got more money out there than he did at the creamery and that's the reason he went over there.

McDONNELL: Yes, I can believe that. Of course, in the summertime, you know, I wouldn't know what they was doing; I was working at Joe Howe's all the time.

ENDACOTT: Yes.

McDONNELL: And I wouldn't remember what they was doing. But I do remember that George Sotong or some such a name, he later came up to Salina, was custodian of the Salina Journal building for a long time, still there if he's alive I don't think he is, he'd be in his 90s. But that was the foreman at this plant. They all worked for George. I can remember them talking about George, this foreman, giving him hell you know like kids do.

ENDACOTT: Well, it must have been hot in there in those steel things all summer.

McDONNELL: I'll bet it was.



ENDACOTT: We were even going to pull a trick. Some of Ike's aides came out from the White House one time, and I got two of these checks, they were throwing checks away, and they found these out there and they gave me a couple of them. Oh, they were dozens of them, I should have kept the whole bunch. And I gave them one of them to take back. They were going to take it and put it in his bills, and when he'd turn them over he'd come to this cancelled check, and then they didn't have guts enough to do it--when they got back. I forget what he got; I think it was fourteen dollars and something for a week's work out there.

McDONNELL: Yes, yes, that's right, they made tanks of all kinds, I think. I never did know who was the owner, J.T., was it J.T. Nicolay or J.P.?

ENDACOTT: J.T. or something like that.

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: Well he signed the checks; he was treasurer of the company.

McDONNELL: Yes, well, then his sons were Wilbur and Carl and the girl was Madeline.



ENDACOTT: Don.

McDONNELL: Yes, Don, and the girl too--

ENDACOTT: Don's still there in Abilene.

McDONNELL: I saw the girl up there when I went up there a year or two ago. What was her name, Ellis or something like that--

ENDACOTT: Who did she marry?

McDONNELL: I should know, but I don't.

ENDACOTT: Oh, let's see, oh what was her name, I've forgotten now but--

McDONNELL: I didn't know her very well, I knew Carl--

ENDACOTT: Carl was a good chap, I liked Carl.

McDONNELL: Yes, Carl.

ENDACOTT: He was about your age, wasn't he?

McDONNELL: Yes, he played ball with me in high school.



ENDACOTT: Did he football and baseball?

MCDONNELL: Baseball, both, he was an end in football; he was a center fielder. I got so mad at him one time. They hit a big fly ball out there, you know, and the score was nothing to nothing and this game went 17 innings. We beat Salina High 1 to 0. But along about the 13 inning of the tie game like that--this Carl was a screwball; he was funny.

ENDACOTT: Yes, he always was.

MCDONNELL: They hit this big high soft fly out in there in center field, and he laid down on his back and caught this ball. And there was a man on, there was two outs, see, and they had a man on, and I just went from the pitcher's box right out to center field, and I really gave him the works. He caught the ball all right; he knew he could, you know, but that was too dangerous, you know, in a nothing to nothing game in extra innings. But he was liable to do anything; he was really funny, but he was a real good ball player, a real good football--

ENDACOTT: Where did you play your ball at that time? At the park?



McDONNELL: Where did we play our games?

ENDACOTT: Yes. Where did you have your ball park? Was it in the fair grounds?

McDONNELL: I keep getting Abilene and Salina mixed up, yes, it was in the fair ground that's where we played.

ENDACOTT: Well, now the old fair grounds used to be over there where the dump was; it was across the Union Pacific tracks south, wasn't it? That was the old fair grounds.

McDONNELL: Yes, out there we called it the "jungles."

ENDACOTT: Yes, it was south and west of town.

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: Now it wasn't where the Eisenhower Park is; that was put in later. Now it's the city dump over there; it's over on Mud Creek.

McDONNELL: Yes, Mud Creek, that's right.

ENDACOTT: Yes, that's where it was; that was the fair grounds.



MCDONNELL: Yes, that's right. But we played the high school games at the new fair grounds, I think.

ENDACOTT: Did you?

MCDONNELL: Yes, I get a little bit mixed up on that. I played so much baseball, you know, I pitched a lot of games out there at the fair grounds. They had a park southeast of town for a while, didn't they?

ENDACOTT: Well, I didn't--

MCDONNELL: Baseball park?

ENDACOTT: I don't know that one, that was before my time.

MCDONNELL: That was when George McDonald was running the club; I was at Pittsburg, Kansas working then.

ENDACOTT: Well, I think that would be, about the time I came to Abilene, about 1923.

MCDONNELL: Yes, that's right.

ENDACOTT: I think he was running a club the time that they used to play out there at the Eisenhower Park.



McDONNELL: Eisenhower Park?

ENDACOTT: Where it is there now, you know where the park is there?

McDONNELL: Well, that could be where it was it seemed--

ENDACOTT: They had a swinging bridge.

McDONNELL: Yes, that's right.

ENDACOTT: And right across that swinging bridge, across Mud Creek and over to the park, from what street is that? 4th Street, from the west edge of 4th Street, they had that swinging bridge, and you went across the bridge, past Davis' house and over to the park. You know Arch [W.] Davis?

McDONNELL: Yes, I know him. Well, I wasn't living there when they played out there, but I pitched several games, most of them against Abilene, I think. And I--

ENDACOTT: Boy, I bet they booed you, didn't they?

McDONNELL: I'd come up there to visit once in a while, and they'd even schedule a ball game, so I could pitch it.



ENDACOTT: You remember Joner Callahan?

McDONNELL: Yes.

ENDACOTT: Now he was older than you fellows?

McDONNELL: Yes, quite a bit. Joner and Harry Harding and guys like that.

ENDACOTT: Where did the Hardings live; did they live up on the north side?

McDONNELL: No, they lived on Enterprise Street, Enterprise Avenue they call it.

ENDACOTT: Yes.

McDONNELL: They lived, oh, about five blocks east of Buckeye.

ENDACOTT: East of Buckeye on Enterprise.

McDONNELL: It was down on Enterprise, yes, past the old court house about five blocks on east.

ENDACOTT: Didn't Ruby Norman live down--

McDONNELL: She lived a little farther, yes.



ENDACOTT: She lived further down.

McDONNELL: Yes, that's right.

ENDACOTT: I'm glad to know that; I can't find out where the Harding's lived.

McDONNELL: Well, the Harding home was just north, by the way the crow flies, from C.W. Parker's layout down there. It was down south a ways. The rink was--I can remember it, I can see it--from Enterprise Avenue. The Callahan girls, do you remember them?

ENDACOTT: Yes.



McDONNELL: Well, they lived right across the street from Hardings; they lived on the north side of the street.

ENDACOTT: What did Ruby Norman's father do?

McDONNELL: He dealt in livestock.

ENDACOTT: That's what I thought; he bought and sold horses and cows.

McDONNELL: That's right.

ENDACOTT: Yes. Now she married Ralph Lucier.

McDONNELL: That's right.

ENDACOTT: And she gave me a picture here several years ago of Ike, that she took in Chicago, when he was on his way to West Point. She was kind of stuck on Ike, and she was out with the Chautaugus [Lecture Series or boat?].

McDONNELL: Well, so was Gladys Harding.

ENDACOTT: Yes.

McDONNELL: Gladys Harding and Ruby were close friends.

ENDACOTT: Yes, but--

McDONNELL: But Ruby was stuck on Ike too, huh?

ENDACOTT: Yes, oh, yes, he had a lot of dates with her. When we went to the inauguration, Ralph Lucier and his wife were walking down the street, and we went to the inauguration with them. And she was telling me how she and Ike used to date all the time. She was a good looking girl, I guess.

McDONNELL: Ruby?



ENDACOTT: Yes.

MCDONNELL: They were both good looking. Gladys Harding was a good looking girl, then she got heavy, she got pretty big when she got heavy. But Ike was real sweet on Gladys when he went to West Point. That was one of the last things he ever talked to me about, was for me to take care of Gladys, to call her up and take her to a show once in a while--

ENDACOTT: I'll tell you something that I've never told anybody else. In 1958, he and Mamie came there to Abilene, Gladys Harding was standing on the corner up there, right by the Catholic [Rectory] where you make that turn from the house. And Ike spotted her over there, and he stopped the caravan and had her come over and he reached over and kissed her, and it made Mamie madder than hell.

MCDONNELL: It did?

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes.

MCDONNELL: Well, I thought he was going to marry her. He says, "Now you call her up once in a while, and if she's



lonesome or something, you go down and take her to the picture show or something." I didn't know her very well, but I called her up in February, about the 1st of February. And I think we had about 20 dates that month, almost every night, see, and then I left to play ball--

ENDACOTT: Who took your place then, Cecil Brooks?

MCDONNELL: Well, I don't know. But in the summer, I was pitching up here at Lincoln or somewhere, Lincoln or Omaha. I pitched this game, and I asked the manager if I could go home for a day or two, and he let me go. My real intent was to see Gladys Harding. I got to Enterprise some way. I can't remember how I got to Enterprise, instead of Abilene. But anyway, I hired a guy to drive me from Enterprise to Abilene; it's only six miles, give him a buck or something and came right down the Enterprise road. I was going to say, 'Let me off here,' but you know who was sitting in the yard--Dwight Eisenhower with his West Point uniform on and Gladys sitting out there. They had a couple of chairs out there on the nice green grass. I said, "Just keep on going."



ENDACOTT: Just keep right on going.

McDONNELL: Yes, I went up and played pool with the boys all night. The next morning I went back to Lincoln.

ENDACOTT: Didn't you get to see Ike?

McDONNELL: I saw him just that once, but I didn't talk to him; I was embarrassed. Well, he had a few days off see, it was, well, what could it have been?

ENDACOTT: Well, that would be probably 1912 because he came home his first year in 1912.

McDONNELL: Yes, that's what it was, 1912.

ENDACOTT: He was up town in his uniform strutting up and down the street, and he came back to the house. His mother, you remember--you ever been in their house?

McDONNELL: No. I never was.

ENDACOTT: They had a big cook stove over here and then a stovepipe that went clear over to the middle of the north wall. And she wanted that cleaned. And Ike said, "Oh, I'll



clean it." He got a step ladder and reached up and dropped the whole thing all over that vest, soot and all, all over that white... He told me that one time. But he was quite a character. He was the best friend I ever had; he did some things for us--

McDONNELL: Dwight was?

ENDACOTT: Oh, yes.

McDONNELL: Well, he was a good boy.

ENDACOTT: He was the most thoughtful man I've ever known.

McDONNELL: Well, you knew him when he was a man, now actually, I didn't.

ENDACOTT: Well, I didn't know until after he was chief of staff.

McDONNELL: Yes, I didn't know him after he graduated from West Point. I never saw him for 30, 40 years.

ENDACOTT: Didn't you?

McDONNELL: I just knew him about 5, 6 years there, as a boy.



ENDACOTT: Now what kind of a guy was Edgar?

McDONNELL: Edgar was a wonderful guy.

ENDACOTT: He was a pretty shrewd boy, wasn't he?

McDONNELL: Well, he was a big, pretty good sized guy, and he was pretty rough and a heck of a good football player, baseball player too, always ready for a lot of fun. I liked--

ENDACOTT: He still is, he's my favorite of the boys.

McDONNELL: I liked him awfully well.

ENDACOTT: Now, he came in there one day here a year--

