

## [J. J. McCarthy]

S241-[KEL?] DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Bessie [Jollensten?] ADDRESS [Ogallala?], Nebr.

DATE Oct. 19, 1958 SUBJECT When I first voted a Democrat ticket

1. Name and address of informant This was written by J. J. McCarthy before he passed away
2. Date and time of interview
3. Place of interview Was given to me by Mr Mrs . J. J. McCarthy, in her home in Ogallala
4. Name and address of persons, if any, who put you in touch with informant
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you no one.
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Southwest room of her home in East Ogallala, Nebraska

FORM C

NAME OF WORKER Bessie Jollensten ADDRESS Ogallala, Nebr.

DATE Oct. 19, [1939?] SUBJECT When I first voted the Democrat ticket

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT J. J. McCarthy

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In the fall of 1884 the County Commissioners of Keith County Nebraska, organized as a voting precinct, all of the territory North of the North Platte River in Keith County, the Political subdivision so created was 42 miles east and west, with an average width of (twelve) miles north and south, and immediately after the organization, it began to make political history in Nebraska, under the name of whitetail precinct. In the nearly 200 mile strip north of the North Platte river, between the city of North Platte and the Wyoming line it was the first organized voting precinct.

The entire electorate were employees of the Ogallala Land and Cattle Company, at the old Keystone Ranch at Paxton and Ware, 12 miles north and east of Ogallala, all the young men between the ages of 22 and 30 years of age and the greater number of the 14 votes; were put in the ballot box by first time voters[.?] Neither of the judges of or Clerks of election had any previous experience, even as election onlookers, still the poll books were properly made out, the election board made out promptly sworn in, and at the close of the polls the tally was properly made out, the result of the election properly certified to, by the judges and the clerks, in as correct a manner as if each was an old hand at the business.

As an active participant in every election since that time, either as an active member of the Democrat party or as a party candidate, it doubtful if my enthusiasm every ever run higher, than it did on that memorable day when I cast my first ballot.

I may have been more sincerely enthusiastic during the Bryan campaigns of 1895-1900, and 1908 and again during the Wilson and Marshall campaign of 1912, when the Democrats of the sixth district honored me by placing my name on the Democrat Democratic ticket at Presidential Elector.

That first election like [m?] first pair of trousers, I shall always remember; the vote as tallied showed Cleveland and Hendricks, [101?] Blaine and Logan, 4.

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At that time there was not a bridge between the old railroad bridge at North Platte and the Rocky mountains except the toll bridge at Camp Clarke, in all of the North Platte River so that getting the returns to Ogallala, and getting election news from the outside world worried us a good deal, the writer was selected to take in the returns, and cautioned to bring back all the newspapers that he could beg, borrow, or steal, he could not buy, as there was not a news stand nearer than North Platte 50 miles away.

A good river horse was a necessary requisite, and needed by all who loved across the North Platte River in those bridgeless days, and it took a good one to get through on that November day when the few sandbars were piled high with drift ice, and the open channels were running full with ice cakes and slush ice, the three quarters of a mile or more across that old river was all swimming water, or very nearly so, but my old buckskin horse made it, and very soon after getting on terra firma I had those precious ballots and poll books in the hands of that county Clerk.

The Republican Paper of that day in Ogallala, there being only one in the county, had the following paragraph in its next issue. "Whitetail precinct has held its first election, out there they went almost unanimously for Cleveland, the wet and bedraggled messenger that brought in the returns, and risk his life in doing so, was one of those that admits that they voted for the party of free trade, that will bring ruin to all American industries.

At that time Ogallala was the point to which all cattle from the south were driven, sold, and distributed to all the cattle ranchers of Nebraska, Wyoming, the Dakotas and Montana; at times it was "some lively Burg," being the terminus of the Texas trail.

Owing to either the disposal of some late trail herd or being delayed by taking orders for next year's drive, a number of Texas cattlemen, were detained in Ogallala until very late in the fall of 1884. Among them being Major Mabry and Shanghai" "Shanghai" Pierce, both being Democrats, and desiring some excitement, they decided that the proper thing was a ratification meeting, and a banquet, it was some banquet all right, but as a

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ratification of real Democratic principles to my idea it fell short, as the crowd that filled the dining room of the old hotel [Mellette?], were more than two-thirds Republicans, no tickets had to be purchased and there were no dress suits; Under the influence of the cup that cheers, some of those Republicans made rattling good Democratic speeches. [My acquaintance??] with Mat Daugherty, dates from that night, from the way he [euologised?] us Democrats for our stick-to-it-iveness and adherence to principal. I took him to be a Democrat, an later years I found out that Mat was a no Democrat. Outside the banquet hall there was a number of side attractions, now days such things are called overflow meetings. We went further than an overflow, ours was a flow and then an overflow. In the fall of that year also Keith County held its first Democratic county convention, and while the Democrats were not very numerous in the county, there never was an election since that one or more Democrats were not elected to some County office, and at times we cleared the platter clean ; Keith is one of the few counties in western Nebraska, that always kept intact its Democratic county organization.

Whitetail precinct although its size has been [addy?] curtailed, by the organization of new precincts from it, never failed in all these years to give a Democratic majority at every election; its voting strength is more than 10 times greater than it was 30 years ago. Now instead of a lone cattle ranch, numerous improved farms and up to date ranches dot the valley and surrounding hills; almost on the very spot where we held our first election the prosperous little town of Keystone stands; the North Platte valley branch of the U. P. R.R. now runs two daily trains along the Valley, each day. And Instead instead of the ford across the Platte, four substantial bridges now spans span the stream int he territory once embraced in whitetail precinct. As the blood of the martyrs was the head seed of the church, so the Democrats of pioneer days in Nebraska battled bravely in season and out of season for Jeffersonian principles, were the seed of our present great state organization, to my certain knowledge it was not lust for office that impelled, their political fervor was equal to the religious fervor, of the Parses's, in that they never allowed, the fires of democracy to be distinguished in Nebraska. "To Democracy they gave their Youth

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and their Prime, and manhoods wanning years” , Such has never had the feeling, wonder why we make annual trips to state conventions, whether we are delegates or not, the cause I assure is not political altogether,” its the word words that greet, and the friends we meet once more, “ that causes the old guard to be on hand, factions within the party they have no use for, neither do they want any qualifing adfective adjective before the word Democrat.