

J. Franklin Little

Senate Page (1910-1912)

Interview

(December 9, 1983)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ritchie: Did you come from the Washington, DC area originally?

Little: I was born in the state of Georgia, in a little town called Guyton. It was a little town, halfway between Augusta and Savannah. I was selling newspapers at the corner of First Street and an extension of Pennsylvania Avenue around the Capitol grounds near the Peace Monument. This Senator Henry DuPont from Delaware took a liking to me, although I was born in Georgia. I asked him to get me a job as a page. He and Senator Augustus Bacon and Senator Alexander Clay from Georgia--Senator Bacon was the junior senator--got together and they went to the sergeant-at-arms and had me appointed as a page. At that time they paid us a per diem wage, which amounted to two dollars and a half per calendar day, against seventy-five dollars an average. That's the way we were paid. We had to report at least two hours before Congress opened, neatly dressed. Although we were not uniformed, we did have to wear clothes alike, which consisted of a Buster Brown-like suit, starting from neck down to the shoes. You had the large collar that extended down from the neck out about two-thirds of the way over the shoulders

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and the back, with a very broad tie. I've forgotten whether it was a bow-tie. I think it was a regular tie. Then the shirt; it was a combination of a shirt and a coat. I remember that well because we had to have our coats made. Then the pants were still in the Buster Brown pattern. They went straight down to the knee with a large bloom or, bulge, whatever you call it.

Ritchie: Like a knicker.

Little: Knickers. With buttons right below the knee, and black stockings and black shoes. All of us had to have that, and it was inspected thoroughly, and kept very, very clean--no spots on anything. Oh, yes, the cuffs had to be showing, too. While there was no prescribed uniform, indirectly it was a uniform because all of us were dressed that way.

Ritchie: Were you dressed all in black?

Little: Dark blue. No, maybe it was black. I've forgotten. Don't forget I'm eighty-eight years old and that's seventy years ago!

Ritchie: Could you tell me a little about what your duties were as a page?

Little: Well, we reported there an hour or two before Congress. At that time, the bills and resolutions were on separate sheets. Now, I believe the Senate was the only one that had them that way. The House of Representatives didn't. We were absolutely a

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separate unit from the House pages. Now, these sheets had to be put in book form. We had to put them in a loose-leaf notebook. They came without any holes or string, so we had to bore holes using a hand auger, a pick, a glorified ice pick. Then they ran strings through and tied them up. Before they put them on the senators, desks, the bills and resolutions and others were all separated. They were inspected by the chief page, and if we didn't have them pretty well neat enough, we had to do it all over again. We were also inspected for neatness, cleanliness, and then we stayed until the Senate doors opened. Then they put two of us at each door to act as doorkeepers until the doorkeepers came back, fifteen or twenty minutes just before the Senate opened, which we all disliked because we thought we ought to get paid for that. We were to serve the senators exclusively. Of course, if there was anything a congressman or ambassador wanted a messenger for, we first would take it to the chief pages, who sat on each side of the vice president, who was the presiding officer. We were supervised by two chief pages, a Mr. Carl Loeffler was on the Republican side, and Mr. A.D. Sumner on the Democratic side. Loeffler was a small, thin fellow, Sumner a great big fellow. But anyhow, the errands were only confined to the House side, or to the Senate Office Building (we weren't allowed to go over to the House Office Building), but we were allowed to take a message to the House chamber or to a senator's office. The two original buildings for the senators and the congressmen are the ones that are the closest to the Capitol today. On the Senate side it was

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bounded by B Street, First Street, and the avenue leading down to now what is Union Station, I've forgotten that street.

Ritchie: Delaware Avenue.

Little: Delaware Avenue. And the other one was of course over on the House side, with B Street, Southeast, and I've forgotten the other streets. But anyhow, they were very strict about it, or else they'd have us running all over the town. The senators were very, very nice to us. Every once in a while one of them would get a little uppish and he'd report us and give us the dickens. Then the senator would leave and someone would "Boys, just don't let it happen again." We never got into trouble that way. The chief page, or the sergeant-at-arms --and by the way, this was directly under the sergeant-at-arms--wouldn't say anything to him except, "We'll take care of it for you, senator." And after that they'd say to us, "Go

on back and don't worry about that." We knew he'd had a couple of drinks and he wanted to ball out a page.

We were not allowed to leave the Capitol premises on any errand unless we had permission of the sergeant-at-arms. We couldn't go to the Library of Congress because the Library had a little office in the Capitol, from which they could get books on an underground trolley between the Library and the Old Statuary Hall, which was the former House of Representatives chamber, as you probably know. They had a carrier which would go backwards and forwards underground. In

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other words, everything was confined to the Capitol grounds, practically to the Capitol Building.

Now the pages were divided equally on each side, one on the Democratic side and one on the Republican side, with three pages on the minority side and six on the majority side. The Senate was Republican, so the Democrats had three. I got on the Democratic side. They were very, very kind to us. If anybody got out of line and balled us out, they'd go to the chief page and he'd listen to them and say held take care of it. Then you'd wonder what was happening, and they'd say everything was fine. My sojourn in that capacity left very, very pleasant memories, and I doubt if any of the other boys had anything else for that matter. It seems that years ago one or two boys became congressmen or senators that were former pages, since that time there have been many more, but up to that time there were only one or two.

We had certain orders. For example, if you go into a room and see something going on there you just keep your damn mouth shut or you get fired. And believe me we saw it plenty of times. I've seen them come out with their pants down! We talked about it among ourselves, but it didn't get to the reporters, who would have eaten it up.

We did such sort of things as giving tours. If a senator came in and had some big boys from his town, we'd take them through the

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buildings because we knew the shortcuts, for sightseeing. If we stayed too long we had to go back and tell the chief page where we were. If he thought you stayed out too long, he'd appoint somebody else to finish up the jobs. As I said, they were very kind, and when we had all-night sessions they let us go to sleep around the rostrum there. On the Senate side we sat right in front, and they snapped their fingers. Over on the House side they had push-buttons to call the pages.

Our principal place to show was the cloakroom behind the Senate chamber the Marble Room, a room with two big mirrors, one on either end. They faced those two mirrors so that the reflection if you stood there you could see yourself in multiples all the way down. That was one thing the senators would say "Be sure to show them the mirrors." How they worked that out, God only knows, whether it

was by accident or by design. Then, another thing, they used to have on the Republican side as you came out and went into the back aisle, backing up against the vice president's office, a weather bureau map. They had it marked up with all the little lines and so forth. We dared not touch that.

Ritchie: The senators would come to check the weather map?

Little: Oh, they'd come to look at it. I've forgotten the name of the fellow who was paid by the weather bureau to keep it up. He had to have it all set up on the board.

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Now, over in the House of Representatives, if you went to see a member, he had to entertain you out in the hall. In the Senate, as you probably know, they have the Senators' Reception Room. The stay there was most pleasant. Whereas I didn't go on to be a senator or a congressmen, it did make me go ahead with my education. Now, one thing else, they encouraged us to pick up an hour of schooling. It made my three years of my high school not as thorough as they would be in the public schools, far from it. But I might submit I have two degrees, I have a bachelor of science, I have a master of science, and I'm up now for a Ph.D. at Virginia Wesleyan College.

Ritchie: That's great! Did you go to public schools while you were a page?

Little: I went up as far as I could, until the Congress convened, and then I went to a private school on P Street, Northwest, called Emerson Institute. At that time it was at a private home. It did move and went into a bigger place. I made high school going at night. I'm not going to tell you I had a thorough education, but I made enough points to get my degree. I also went to Georgetown University and I got my degree there, and Virginia Wesleyan will give me my Ph.D.

Ritchie: So after you spent the whole day around the Senate, you would go to high school at night?

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Little: I went to school three nights a week. And in the summertime, I went from morning until night. They encouraged it, but they didn't make you. I noticed that those of us who were keeping up our education got the preference jobs around there. I was more or less detailed to Senator T.P. Gore of Oklahoma, who was blind. Quite often they would send me out to get him and bring him in, or I would take him to Democratic meetings, when he couldn't get somebody else to do that. All the boys were absolutely forbidden to take tips, except for those donations they'd give us when we worked at night. Hell, someone would give us a dollar or

two. Senator DuPont and Senator Bacon and Senator Clay, the last two of Georgia, they gave me the Democratic appointment.

Ritchie: Now, would you keep an eye on them in particular when they were on the floor?

Little: Well, the way they did it, we sat on the rostrum, and as they used a page we would move up. But since Senator Gore was blind they would send two of us to him because we were the biggest boys. It was pleasant. They say you get an education up there. Maybe an inspiration, but you don't get an education. You've got to go to the books.

Ritchie: What type of a person was Senator Gore?

Little: Very fine man. There was another Senator Gore who had an affair with a woman, and he got some of that reputation! But I

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knew Mrs. Gore very well. She was a lovely woman. They had a little girl, at that time she was about six or seven years old. When I went out there to get the senator, the first thing she'd do she'd plop herself in my lap. Anita Gore was her name, and she married some fellow when she was young, but something happened and something got between them and she divorced him.

Ritchie: Did you have to go to Senator Gore's home to bring him in?

Little: Oh, yes.

Ritchie: So you would drive down to get him?

Little: I'd get him on a streetcar.

Ritchie: Would you do that every morning?

Little: No, his brother-in-law would bring him every morning. These were night calls.

Ritchie: Were you sent to any other senators' homes?

Little: No. If they left some papers or so forth, they'd call us in, and we'd take it to the chief page, and the chief page would take it to the sergeant-at-arms, and they'd send an automobile out there with the bundle, but they wouldn't let us do that. They couldn't send us downtown.

Ritchie: Did you live close by the Capitol?

Little: Yes. Later I moved to Norfolk, and while I was away they tore down the block that I lived in. We figure that where we lived, if you take the dome of the Library and draw a straight line to the steps of the Senate, then across from there practically as near as we can figure, is where the apartment on the third floor was, and I lived there.

Ritchie: Was the old Maltby Building near there?

Little: Matlby Building was down on B Street on the Hill. I worked in the Maltby Building after I came out of the Army. That was the first office of the Veterans Administration vocational education, but I was up higher than that, I was taking junior college.

Ritchie: Had they built the little subway between the Capitol and the Senate Office Building yet?

Little: Yes. We used to have the funniest looking electric cars. We had two of them, and it had an overhead trolley. They were afraid of gas leaking and exploding. It had two great big wheels in front, two seats this way, two seats back of that, and two seats behind it. It would hold about ten people.

Ritchie: There were two buses that would just go back and forth?

Little: Just go back and forth. They put in an electric one afterwards on rails, and took it out, I believe, because it made too much noise.

Ritchie: Could you ride on the subway or was it just for the senators?

Little: Oh, yes, we could ride on it. It used to make the secretaries mad because if it was full they'd get them off and put the pages on, if we were on an errand. I remember one time they wouldn't let us on and we had to walk. We got so obnoxious that the chief page went down and got a rule: senators first, pages next. Arid secretaries had to do the walking.

Ritchie: They just had one elevator in those days, didn't they?

Little: Two elevators. As you came in the Senate door there was one on one side for senators only, one on the other side facing it. That would go from the basement floor to the gallery floor.

Ritchie: Do you remember any of the senators of that time? Were there any that stand out in your mind?

Little: Of course Gore and Bacon. I can't say that I can, but they were nice to us. Every once in a while there was something that would go wrong with them and they'd ball the hell out of us.

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Ritchie: Some of them had a reputation for being very brusque with staff. Boies Penrose apparently was a hard person to work for.

Little: Oh, I remember Boies Penrose well. He was a great big fellow, six foot something. But it seems to me he was nice to us. On my last year there I was put outside with the telephones, Boies Penrose would come out and go to the left where the telephone booths were and you could hear him coming out shouting "Ring me up 42." We knew it was him and by the time he got seated we had him connected. That was a direct line to his office.

Ritchie: So you were a telephone operator? You would connect them with their offices?

Little: We would connect him directly with his own office.

Ritchie: Was this in the cloakrooms?

Little: You know where the sergeant-at-arms is? It was right across from him.

Ritchie: This was on the third floor?

Little: On the main floor. They had the old-fashion pull-the-plugs switchboard.

Ritchie: Did you see much of the vice president in those days?

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Little: Oh, yes. He was president of the Senate. We also had a blind chaplain. He was from the church on New York Avenue and Fourteenth Street, right across from the old George Washington Hospital. I think he was a Presbyterian minister.

Ritchie: The vice president was John Sherman, a man with glasses.

Little: I think Sherman was vice president, William Howard Taft was president.

Ritchie: When I was looking back through the old reports, I saw a Franklin Little who was a special policeman for Taft's inauguration and for Wilson's, and I wondered if that was you or your father.

Little: Me.

Ritchie: That was you. What did you do as a special policeman?

Little: I just walked up and down the aisles and saw that people kept their seats and weren't running around. They paid me a hundred dollars for three or four days.

Ritchie: That was very nice. Taft's inauguration was a very snowy day.

Little: I remember that. There was six or eight inches of snow. The day before Wilson's inauguration the women suffragists came down and had a parade. They were on horseback, and they closed

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up Pennsylvania Avenue, the crowd did, so they couldn't get the horses through. Men would go over and put a cigarette on the horses' rumps and try to make them throw the women. I remember that. See those jobs I had to take to make enough money to go to school. It was interesting. Everybody would say, "You coming back as a senator?" Hell, no. I wouldn't mind, but I just wasn't educated enough, and I stayed in Washington. If I had gone to Georgia or Alabama or Wyoming or South Dakota, I might have come back here as a United States senator, but I didn't.

Ritchie: Do you remember any particular incidents that took place while you were a page?

Little: No, nobody shot at each other. Oh, yes, I think if I'm not mistaken at that time they had the suffragettes. They didn't raise a ruckus over in our hall, but they certainly played hell over in the House of Representatives.

Ritchie: One thing I've wondered about, but haven't been able to find any records on--Do you remember if the public galleries were segregated by race?

Little: I don't think they were. Now, my recollection is that the senators had their own gallery. And then they had one over on the other side, in the southwest corner, that was for Negroes. Maybe it was segregated. I believe it was.

Ritchie: There's nothing in the rules, and it's not clear, but we thought it might have been.

Little: They separated them. There were all white doorkeepers up there. Used to make us so mad, they would wait till the last minute--a half an hour before the Senate convened--to come to work. They found that was too long and they needed the pages. They pulled us out and made them come another hour earlier. Well, hell, they were getting a hundred and fifty dollars a month for doing nothing! The days the Senate was off they didn't have to come. Neither did we, but we had to have a certain number of pages around.

Ritchie: So most of your duties were to run messages. They had restaurants on the first floor, didn't they?

Little: On the first floor they had a restaurant. As you came down the steps there was a restaurant for senators only, and right across was a room where anybody could go.

Ritchie: Did they send you for food for the senators at all?

Little: No. I don't remember even sandwiches. They may have, but I don't remember any. We were allowed to eat in the big restaurant for anybody, but we couldn't eat in the senators' restaurant.

Ritchie: In those days the Supreme Court also met in the Capitol Building, on the second floor. Did you every go down that way?

Little: No. When I was there, you came through the Rotunda from the Senate to the House, and before you came to the Senate chamber you came to the Supreme Court. They met there until they moved to their own building. Now, going over on the other side, you have Statuary Hall, and just before you go in the House they had a little office where you could get books from the Library.

Ritchie: Tell me, what kind of a person was Senator Bacon?

Little: Very fine gentleman.

Ritchie: Do you remember anything in particular about him?

Little: I don't know of anything in particular, I just happened to be born in Georgia.

Ritchie: He later became president pro tempore, just after you left.

Little: Yes, I imagine he did. I wouldn't doubt it. We had a very famous man from Texas, a great speaker, one of the most outstanding speakers in the United States.

Ritchie: Senator Joseph W. Bailey?

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Little: Senator Bailey. When he was up in the Senate you couldn't get standing room. He defended Senator William Lorimer with a speech twice, and got him acquitted. The third time, Lorimer said the hell with you and quit, I believe.

Ritchie: What was it about him that made him such a great speaker? His voice, his gestures, or what?

Little: All of that. I wouldn't take anything for my experience there. On the other hand, I just don't remember all of it.

Ritchie: Do you recall if while you were there President Taft came to the Capitol?

Little: Yes, it was during the latter part of his administration. I remember that they lined us all up to meet the president for the first time.

Ritchie: Did Taft use the President's Room?

Little: Yes. First there was the senators, toilet, then the President's Room, then the Marble Room, then the Vice President's Room, and the little alcove for the weather map, then the Reception Room. After I left there they gave the Vice President a suite of rooms, if I'm not mistaken.

Ritchie: Yes, but the Vice President's Room is still there.

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Little: That's his room to have to carry on conferences and so forth.

Ritchie: Did they still have the baths down in the basement?

Little: Oh, Lord, yes. I began to show a little fuzz on the face, and they got me down there and shaved me.

Ritchie: They had a barber down there?

Little: They had three of them. And it didn't cost the senators anything. They made them cut our hair free of charge. We had to be sure to get haircuts. No long hair.

Ritchie: Did they still have those big marble tubs?

Little: I don't know if they've still got them, but they had them then.

Ritchie: Did people use them then?

Little: Yeah, senators came down there and used them. I came down there. Two of us got in.

Ritchie: They were big enough for two.

Little: They had all black barbers. Didn't charge a cent for it.

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Ritchie: Those were the days they used to have shaving mugs for all the senators, too.

Little: Yes, each senator had his name on one.

Ritchie: Did you need a ticket to get into the baths, or could you just go in any time?

Little: They knew us. All of us got our haircuts there.

Ritchie: They still have one or two of the tubs. They're not in use any more, but you can still go down into the basement and see them. Was there a steamroom in the office building?

Little: In the Senate Office Building?

Ritchie: Yes.

Little: Yes, they had it at that time. It was opened up when I was there.

Ritchie: What was it like?

Little: I don't remember much of it. But I remember they had a steamroom.

Ritchie: Also they had a big telegraph operation over there.

Little: Not then. Right outside of the Republican side in front of what was then the sergeant-at-arms they had a row of four to six booths and the senators used them. Some of them had direct connections.

Ritchie: Did you get up to the Press Gallery at all?

Little: I used to have to go up there for messages.

Ritchie: Do you remember a man named Jim Preston?

Little: I believe I do, that name's familiar.

Ritchie: He was the superintendent of the Press Gallery.

Little: I believe I do remember him.

Ritchie: Do you remember what the Press Gallery room was like?

Little: Well, you went into a room and then into another room where there was a lot of desks, and two doors, and what was on the other side of that I don't remember.

Ritchie: So the senators would send messages up to the galleries? Or the reporters would send messages down?

Little: Yes.

Ritchie: I understand that when they had executive sessions they would close the doors?

Little: Absolutely, to reporters and all. Even us, they wouldn't let us go in.

Ritchie: Would you have to sit outside the door and wait for them?

Little: We had certain doors to go to. I had the door over on the left on the Democratic side, leading to the steps going down to the main floor.

Ritchie: And you'd just sit there and wait until they opened it up?

Little: Senators wanted to send messages, they came after us.

Ritchie: Could they still smoke in the Senate chamber then, or was that forbidden.

Little: I don't think there was smoking in any chamber.

Ritchie: Did you go up to the Senate Library at all?

Little: I don't remember the Senate Library.

Ritchie: I've heard that the pages sometimes played pranks on each other. Do you remember any incidents like that?

Little: Oh, we did that all along. It didn't amount to anything.

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Ritchie: The pages will sometimes send a new page to find a "bill stretcher," and things like that. Do you remember anything like that in particular?

Little: The page's room was just a little space with a table where we ate. After I left they gave them a bigger room, down on the ground floor.

Ritchie: Was Senator Nelson Aldrich there when you were a page?

Little: Yes, where was he from, New York?

Ritchie: Rhode Island. Do you remember much about him. He was a pretty big man at that time.

Little: No, not much. He was about your size.

Ritchie: Did you have any opportunities to go back to the Senate after you had served as a page?

Little: Not in an official capacity. The congressman from my district, Bill Whitehurst, I gave him the first fifty dollars for Congress, and the son-of-a-gun won't ever come over here to see me. I know he knows me.

Ritchie: Well, I've enjoyed hearing your stories. We still have the pages in the Senate today, and they still do many of the things you described.

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Little: Yes, and making three times as much as I got!

Ritchie: They now have a page school, though.

Little: Yes, we had to go and shell out money for our education, and I don't know but what two or three of us might have been responsible for that, because we tried to get them to have a school there in the Capitol. But they wouldn't appropriate the money.

Ritchie: You mentioned before Mr. Loeffler

Little: Yes, Carl Loeffler.

Ritchie: What type of a fellow was he?

Little: Very strict, very kind.

Ritchie: He eventually became the Secretary of the Senate.

Little: Yes, I understand. Is he alive?

Ritchie: No.

Little: Sumner was the other chief page.

Ritchie: Did you get paid once a month, in cash? Where was the disbursing office?

Little: Yes; outside of the Senate chamber, it was the treasury.

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Ritchie: Was that outside of the Secretary of the Senate's office?

Little: Probably was.

Ritchie: What did the disbursing office look like?

Little: Well, you went in and there was a high counter that hit you about chest-high. There was a door in the back leading into the Secretary's office.

Ritchie: So you were a page from 1910

Little: 1910 to 1913.

Ritchie: So you left just when the Democrats were taking the majority?

Little: Yes.

Ritchie: Then you went to college and then into the Army.

Little: You know the funniest thing about that, I came out and I got a job in a laboratory as a bacteriological and pathological assessor. When I retired, I got four years civil service credit, although they didn't take any money out when I worked for the government. I can live very comfortably in here with what I'm getting in pensions.

Ritchie: So they gave you credit for the years you were a page?

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Little: Yes, that's what I'm driving at. Gave me credit and everything, and longevity pay. Then I got credit for being in the Army. I'm sitting pretty, in other words.

Ritchie: Well, this has been a delightful experience for me. I enjoyed hearing your stories.

Little: Well, I wish I could tell you more.

Ritchie: Your descriptions are quite good for things that happened over seventy years ago. One other thing, I was going to ask you what the opening ceremony was like every day?

Little: Well, they came in, and the first thing was the doorkeepers had to be recognized. The chair recognizes the doorkeepers. Are the doors closed? The doors are closed. Then he turns to the chaplain and they had a little prayer. Then they dismissed the doorkeepers. All of them wouldn't come in from all of the sides, but only the two in the main door. Then he'll announce that at the main door some members of the House of Representatives would like to be admitted, that they were eligible. They'd come in and go about their business, not until after he raps on the gavel. He says, "The Senate of the United States is in session. The clerk says, "The vice president will preside," or in place of the vice president, a senator was called by name, and where he was from. Then the presiding officer--this is in general--will say "The second session, 61st Congress is now in session." This is mixed up in my mind. Then

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they would read the minutes, if I'm not mistaken, that's the way it was. I doubt if it's changed much. As we boys used to say, I could sail that in my sleep.

Ritchie: You heard it so many times.

Little: I used to get up there--and I wasn't the only one--and open up the Senate.

Ritchie: You would have a little mock session with the pages?

Little: Yes. The sergeant-at-arms or anyone else that came in wouldn't stop us. They didn't say anything, or else they said, "Go ahead, go ahead."

Ritchie: Did you have to keep the snuff boxes filled up?

Little: I was chief filler-upper of snuff boxes.

Ritchie: Did anybody use them?

Little: Darn tootin, a lot of them.

Ritchie: They did!

Little: They'd bring visitors and give them a little bit, tell the ladies to put it on the back of their hand and sniff. That's what made us work to keep those snuff boxes filled.

Ritchie: Because of the visitors. Did the senators use them?

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Little: I don't remember. I think one or two of them used them, or used them in fun anyhow. Used them and sneezed. I know one time they were missing, and they had us all lined up and we searched all over the place, in the senators' desks. They found them somewhere.

Ritchie: Were the senators carving their names in the desk drawers in those days?

Little: I've heard they have. Now, with those augers, I nearly got fired. Putting that auger through those papers with a table as a solid back, I scratched one of the desks one day. They gave me the devil, and I thought I was going to get fired. But I didn't. After that I made sure that I put it down on the floor. They cut out the liquor. They used to have two decanters of whiskey on each side in a recess. But the Temperance people made them stop.

Ritchie: You kept them full all the time?

Little: We didn't, the custodian did.

Ritchie: Where were these recesses?

Little: If I remember correctly, in a recess right around behind where the chief page of the sergeant-at-arms sits.

Ritchie: They had decanters of whiskey in the chamber?

Little: In the chamber; on the Democratic side and the Republican side.

Ritchie: And the senators would just pour themselves a drink in the chamber?

Little: If they wanted to, yes.

Ritchie: There were glasses out there as well?

Little: I never saw one do it, I won't say I have because I didn't.

Ritchie: But there were plenty of other places in the Capitol where you could get a drink.

Little: Oh, yeah. Shucks, I've seen those senators and congressmen so piss-assed drunk they have to have somebody to help them.

Ritchie: Were there certain places where they tended to go for drinks?

Little: I don't know, but there was more then their own offices.

Ritchie: But you said you had to be discreet whenever you saw anything like that.

Little: Yes.

Ritchie: They had a relatively small police force back then. I guess there wasn't much security.

Little: That's always been a question. Why haven't they blown the Capitol up yet? When I was there a girl went into the ladies toilet and set off a bomb.

Ritchie: I didn't know that.

Little: You look it up. There was a hallway off the Rotunda on the Senate side, going around to the back, and there was a woman's toilet down there. The funniest thing was they caught her.

Ritchie: They did? How did they catch her?

Little: I don't know, they caught her outside the building somewhere.

Ritchie: Do you remember about when that was?

Little: I'm not sure. I think it was either in the last year that I was there, or right afterwards. It was a young girl, something she got mad about. Oh, yes, there was also--I don't remember what time--but somebody tried to blow up some of the statues in Statuary Hall. You look that up, and if you find out, let me know. I know that what I say is true. I think it was over there near the place where the underground tube comes from the Library. It was on that side.

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Ritchie: Do you have any idea why they tried to blow up some statues?

Little: Some guy was mad at Congress, didn't get a bill passed. I just happened to think of it.

Ritchie: I knew about a bomb years later, 1915, in the Senate Reception Room, but I'll have to check these others out.

Little: I'm trying to think of anything else that happened. I do remember, I don't know when it was, they didn't have any safeties on the elevators and a woman got caught in the doors, and they had a hell of a time getting her out. She got caught in the senators' elevator. If I'm not mistaken, an engineer by the name of Gay, who was from out West, he went and drew up plans for the automatic controls. They didn't have that long.

Ritchie: They had operators, didn't they?

Little: They had operators. I don't know if they had operators at the time of the accident, but they did put on operators until they got this worked out by Mr. Gay.

Ritchie: What exactly was the accident?

Little: The elevator doors were opened. Somebody pushed the lever and it caught her. She was caught in the door and elevator both.

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Ritchie: Was she all right?

Little: I think she was injured slightly.

Ritchie: A lot of the doorkeepers and Capitol Police at that time were Civil War veterans, and Senator Bacon and Senator DuPont had fought in the war, on opposite sides. Did they talk about their experiences?

Little: No, I never heard it. Now, I'll tell you, this is kind of vague, but I think before I came to the Senate a couple of senators got into an argument, and one of

them was a Republican. He came over and took his hunting knife and scratched the other senator's desk right across.

Ritchie: In the chamber! You don't remember who was involved?

Little: I don't know. I think a Republican came after a Democrat. But I believe it was before 1910. I remember that repairs at that time were prevalent. I think it was the third or fourth desk from the aisle, in about the second or third aisle over. You look that up, I'd like to find out if I'm wrong or right.

Ritchie: I know that "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman got into a fight with Senator McLaurin of South Carolina.

Little: I remember reading about that. That was in the early 1900s.

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Ritchie: Ben Tillman was still in the Senate when you came.

Little: I believe so.

Ritchie: Do you recall him at all?

Little: No.

Ritchie: Did you find yourself impressed listening to the senators? Were they great speakers, or did you find it kind of boring?

Little: I found some of them boring. Probably the most outstanding was the fellow from Texas, Bailey, big fellow.

Ritchie: How did you find the late night sessions?

Little: Bore some. The trouble with me was that I lived too close. I just lived at 131 A Street, Southeast, just a half a block off. They made me stay there for night sessions.

Ritchie: Do you remember if sessions ever went all around the clock until the next morning?

Little: I remember them running right on through the clock. Then they would let me go home.

Ritchie: Did you ever see them set back the clock?

Little: Oh, many a time.

Ritchie: How did it work?

Little: Well, one fellow would be down on the floor in front of it, and another fellow would go upstairs through the Press Gallery, and he would reach over and take his finger and set it back.

Ritchie: That was at midnight before the session would end.

Little: Never more than one or two hours at a time, and always backwards.

Ritchie: Would they send a page up to do that?

Little: No, sergeant-at-arms outfit.

Ritchie: Well, you had quite some experiences as a page.

Little: It was fun, nothing exciting. No senators getting into a fight. We boys would get in more fights than anything. And they treated us so nice. How many pages are there now?

Ritchie: I don't know, perhaps fifty.

Little: Fifty pages! Shucks, we didn't have but twelve or fifteen. We all sat on those two or three steps on the rostrum. I'll tell you one thing that I did that I always worried about. You know the ladder over the dome?

Ritchie: Yes.

Little: I went from the top to the bottom and back again. If I'd slipped off I wouldn't be here talking to you. We went up to the top and climbed over the railing. That ladder ran right along the outside of the dome. The painters use it. And I'll tell you something else most people don't know: how hollow that dome is. You go up those backstairs and you can see all the rafters.

Ritchie: You climbed down the dome Just to see what it was like?

Little: Two of us. Boy. I'm glad I didn't slip!

Ritchie: Sounds like the whole experience was an adventure.

Little: I used to go over there before I got to be a big boy, and the senators would say, "Hi, Frank", "Hello, Frank". Underneath the House--before I became a

Senate page--we boys used to go down into the trash room down in the basement and go through all that trash and see what we could find.

Ritchie: What kinds of things would you find?

Little: I've forgotten; junk.

Ritchie: So you had pretty much free run of the Capitol.

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Little: Yes, and after I left there I used to go over to the Senate quite often, walk right onto the floor. Of course, they weren't in session, but the boys let me go in and talk to them. "Hi, Frank; Hi, Frank."

Ritchie: I meant to ask you, what did your father do?

Little: My father worked in the Census Bureau as a clerk. He didn't have such a big job. That's the reason I had to go to work. So I sold newspapers. My mother saved my money and helped me get an education. I tried to study medicine, but I didn't make the grades. They gave me credit for what I did do in bacteriology and chemistry, and put me through the science program. As I say, I'm not rich or poor, I'm just well fixed.

Ritchie: Tell me, what kind of a city was Washington, DC like in those days?

Little: More white. There was no rule for or against segregation, but we just didn't have it. They didn't have to walk out in the street or things like that. They didn't have segregation in streetcars and buses. But the big hotels didn't take them in, now they do. I got a job down in Norfolk and made good down there. Member of the Lions Club; I've been president of my Bible class in church; and I'm an honorary member of the American Legion and the Lions Club.

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Ritchie: Well, I want to thank you very much for letting me come out and talk to you today.

Little: Well, I want to tell you something, it's made a pleasant afternoon for me.
[End of Interview]