— JOE BARTLETT INTERVIEW ONE —

JOHNSON: This is Kathleen Johnson interviewing General Joe Bartlett, former reading clerk and Minority Clerk for the U.S. House of Representatives. This is the first interview with General Bartlett. The date is April 7th, 2006, and the interview is taking place in the Legislative Resource Center, Cannon House Office Building.

I was hoping that we could start off today with some biographical information. When and where were you born?

BARTLETT: I was born in Clarksburg, West Virginia, on the 7th of August, 1926.

JOHNSON: What were the names of your parents and their occupations?

BARTLETT: Well, both of my parents were descendants of early West Virginia pioneers, or Appalachian pioneers. My mother was a Hacker. She was Blanche Hacker Bartlett. She had been a schoolteacher in her earlier years, before she started raising a big family of 10 children. And my father [Flavius Dorsey Bartlett] was an industrial engineer, way, way ahead of his time. He worked for the glass industry—Hazel-Atlas Glass Company—for some 42 years and was involved in time-and-motion studies using motion pictures, long before anybody was accustomed to that method, and long before {laughter} the labor unions learned to dislike it so much. Dad had come up through the ranks and was a very valued member of that executive team.

JOHNSON: Did you always have an interest in politics, even as a youth?

BARTLETT: I'm not sure that it took the form of politics. I got involved in politics very young. But I got interested in being a Page as a result of an article in a national magazine which told about a motion picture being made about Pages. And it was a casual

interest. I didn't thereupon decide that I wanted to be a Page. I was just interested in the life. Ironically, both the magazine article and the motion picture which resulted were highly glamorized. And I was quite shocked when I finally arrived, to find that it was not that glamorous. And don't get me wrong, I was duly impressed. But it was misrepresented on film, which is often the case.

I'm sure you're wondering, well, how do I get from a magazine to a job as a Page, and it is an unusual story, I suppose. In 1938 I was singled out to be the lone representative of the Schoolboy Patrols of Central West Virginia at their national convention here in Washington. I gained notice because I was just a little guy who couldn't see over the counter at the 3A (the American Automobile Association) office. And they were intrigued with this and, some months later, really, called my mother and wanted to know if they could bring me to Washington for that parade. Well, they also brought a young West Virginia University journalism graduate, Herb Welch. And he had more imagination and more energy than you can imagine. As a result purely of his imagination, he created a news story which resulted in my being named America's Typical Schoolboy Patrolman—an awesome title. I {laughter} did nothing to merit that.

I was a patrolman, and I worked at it, like most school safety patrols do. And so, as a result of that publicity—it hit a very slow news day . . . And there were literally hundreds and hundreds of clippings of this little guy walking down Constitution Avenue.[1] Again, I'm the victim of circumstances, I had nothing to
[4:00] do with it. Well, it just happened that my sponsor had been a World War I trench mate of Congressman Wright Patman's.[2] And they, the foursome (with their wives) got together socially while we were here. We had come to the Capitol and seen the House in action. As a casual comment, Mrs. Brase, my sponsor, said to

[1] For an example of the press coverage, see "Boy Patrolmen Welcomed for Safety Session," 7 May 1938, *Washington Post*: X3.
[2] George M. Brase served in World War I with Congressman Wright Patman. Mr. Brase and his wife, Ethel, helped Joe Bartlett attain his first appointment as a Page. According to Bartlett, a temporary spot opened when House Page Bill Patman (son of Congressman Patman) left Washington, D.C., to spend a month in his home state of Texas.

Mrs. Patman, "Wouldn't it be nice if Joe could be a Page?" {laughter} I was not involved.

And so, months later, I was working on a barn roof, patching a barn roof, when I was called home—it's a long distance, almost an eighth of a mile—back to the house to answer the telephone. I fell from the shed and sprained my ankle, {laughter} but nonetheless hobbled over and got the phone. It was a call from Mrs. Brase, wanting to know if I would like to be a Page for 30 days. Well, of course, I said, "I'd love to, but {laughter} I'm not a bit sure that their folks' farmhand will be freed to go to Washington." Well, I approached Mother, and of course she called Father at the factory office. And as it turned out, it was strictly to be for 30 days, the month of August, 1941. And {laughter} that after much mulling over the circumstances, at midnight that night Dad put me on the B&O's National Limited to come to Washington, and he handed me a $20 bill, which was my total financing. And, of course, the next morning at about 7:00, I arrived at Union Station and looked out that portal at the Capitol dome, and I just went bananas. It was really quite a thrill.

JOHNSON: How old were you at the time?

BARTLETT: Fourteen. And, well, that pretty much summarizes how I got to the Capitol. The Patmans and Mrs. Spain, who was their secretary, were most cordial, most kind. And the Congressman from my West Virginia home, Andrew Edmiston, was very cordial. His secretary, Mrs. McGraw, arranged for me to get a room on Wyoming Avenue, where a lady, Mrs. Fisher, kept a rooming house. Many of the roomers were from West Virginia, mostly from Clarksburg. So when I got there they made me feel quite at home.

JOHNSON: Were these people who worked at the Capitol?

BARTLETT: No, I don't believe any of them worked at the Capitol at the time. But they were a nice group, and they did make it easy for me to sort of meld into the Washington scene.

However, this may seem strange now, but the school started at 6:00 in the morning. There was no school in the month of August, but there was soon to be. And when school started, well, at that hour, it meant that I wanted to get closer—or thought I ought to get a little closer—to the Capitol. So I lived on Wyoming Avenue only for one month, and then moved down to 326 Maryland Avenue, NE, and roomed with Mrs. Stewart, and boarded with her sister, Mrs. Wiley, at 314 Maryland Avenue. And that was full of folks, many of them of Capitol Hill. Very delightful experience. Mrs. Stewart was a motherly person. She ran a very {laughter} tight ship, though! Proper conduct was required. And Mrs. Wiley was a marvelous cook. They had a large number of people they fed
[8:00] there. Oh, yes, I should say—three meals a day for $24 a month! Now that was a pretty fine arrangement back in 1941. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Not bad! {laughter}

BARTLETT: And I was paying $12 for my room with Mrs. Stewart. That's $12 a month. {laughter} You can see the economy has changed a good deal over the years.

JOHNSON: How did your 30-day appointment turn into something longer?

BARTLETT: Well, that's a good question, a very interesting one. I thoroughly enjoyed being a Page. It was one of the most momentous months of all my years here. Within two weeks, we were voting on the extension of the draft; we had neutrality bills; we had arming of neutral vessels; we had Lend–Lease. All of this in the month of August of 1941. And I was just impressionable enough at that stage to try to absorb it all. Somehow or another, I guess, I realized there was something

momentous happening. And that extension of the draft, I remember it. It's something people cite all the time. As a matter of fact, somebody was citing it to me, and I said, "Oh, yes. I remember. I was there." And you should have seen the look on {laughter} his face. That was General Leonard Chapman.[3] And he was just incredulous, it took him aback. Well, I was there, and I do remember it. And it was a very impressive event.

Well, at the end of the 30 days, it was coming to Labor Day, and it was a holiday weekend, and they were taking the weekend off. And as I look back, I just went to say goodbye to the people who had been kind to me. I went to see South Trimble, who was the Clerk of the House, and thanked him.[4] He was a fine old grandfatherly gentleman. Well, we talked a minute. He said, "Now, you stick around." Well, now, what does "stick around" mean? That doesn't put you on the payroll or anything. Stick around. "All right, sir." And then I went down to say goodbye to Joe Sinnott, who was the Doorkeeper of the House, and who had charge of the Pages.[5] He was a man very much feared on Capitol Hill. He was as gruff an old curmudgeon as you could find. I liked him! So we hit it off. And after a short conversation he used exactly the same words that South Trimble had used: "Stick around." Again, that puzzled me.

Well, I went home for the weekend, and used what they had told me as a sufficient reason to come back after Labor Day. And for the next three years I was not on any one Member's patronage.

JOHNSON: That's interesting.

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[3] For information on Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War, see Elizabeth Becker, "Gen. L. F. Chapman, 86, Dies; Former Marine Commandant," 11 January 2000, *New York Times*: B9.
[4] After his tenure as a Representative, Trimble served as Clerk of the House from the 62nd through the 65th Congress (1911–1919) and from the 72nd Congress (1931–1933) until his death on November 23, 1946.
[5] Doorkeeper of the House from the 62nd to the 65th Congress (1911–1919) and from the 72nd Congress (1931–1933) until his death on January 27, 1943.

BARTLETT: I assume that Joe Sinnott, with the collaboration of South Trimble—for as long as he lived—and then with their successors, saw to it that wherever there was an empty spot on the payroll, they'd put Bartlett on. And I had different pay different months. I can remember several of the Members whose payroll I was on who didn't know that they were employing me. I just got a reputation as a hustler. I was a farm boy; I didn't know what it was to not work, and to work hard, and work long . . . Dad's only advice was, "Get there earlier, and stay later, and do more than is expected of you." Well, that's pretty good advice. It wasn't hard for me. That was sort of my nature. But they saw how I worked, and I was soon assigned as Page overseer, which is nothing more than a senior Page, or someone they designate. And those were enjoyable years.

JOHNSON: You mentioned many interesting topics, and I wanted to go back to some of them. But I just wanted you to start off with some basics. What was a typical day like for you as a Page in the 1940s?

BARTLETT: Well, we went to school from 6:00 until 9:00 a.m., and work on the floor started at 9:30. Our first chore was called "filing the [*Congressional*] *Records*." In those
[12:00] days, there was a *Congressional Record* provided for every Member. And we filed it under his seat in a box that's still there, I'm sure. I don't think they do that very much anymore, but that was quite a ritual for us in those days. We filed the *Record*s each morning. We started running errands to the buildings, all of which were clocked out of our little location there at the northwest corner of the House Chamber, two benches there where the Pages would assemble and respond to phone calls coming in up until noon. When the House convened, our primary duty at that point became serving the Members on the floor.

And I must tell you one of the things that I would see as something of a distinction of that time: I knew every Member, certainly every Member on our side of the House. And the great thing was that virtually every Member knew me,

by name. I don't think it is that way anymore. And I'm saddened by that because the friendships that I made were {laughter} priceless. I enjoyed them enormously. And, you know, when you see any Member who was here at that time, representing something like, I guess, some 350,000 constituents, and he had been elected to be their Representative in the Congress, there's something about that person worth knowing and worth studying. And I found that to be true. You'd often see a Member, and you'd say, "Gee! {laughter} How did he get elected?" Well, if you talked to him a little bit, you found out that there was something very special about him that attracted him to his constituency and brought him to Washington as their Representative. So it's a very, very rich experience, just to be in the presence, in the company, of such a group of chosen representatives of the people. I enjoyed it a lot.

JOHNSON: Did you work on the floor your entire time as a Page, or did you have other responsibilities, too?

BARTLETT: No, {laughter} my responsibility during those three years were right on the floor. And, as I say, as overseer I had some responsibilities for the conduct of the Pages and enjoyed that. I graduated from the Page School in '44 and immediately joined the Marine Corps. The war was still on. I didn't know what lay ahead for me. It turned out I didn't have to win the war. It ended before I got there.

But then I came back to Washington again, just to say hello. I had no expectation of returning to the Capitol. But during my visit, Jim Wolfenden, a Congressman from Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, God rest his soul, said, "How would you like to be chief Page, chief of the Pages?" Well, I said, "Yegads, that would be wonderful!" It was a staff job. No one as young as I had ever held the job. But Congressman Wolfenden called the Minority Leader, Joe Martin, and apparently resolved the matter over the telephone. And I went to his office, and Mr. Martin welcomed me aboard and signed me on, and I became the chief of Pages. Well, that was my job

from 1945 until 1953. And during those years, supervising the Pages was very enjoyable. We even had General Funston's grandson as a Page, and we formed a drill team and went to Gettysburg to lead the parade for which

[16:00] Speaker Joe Martin was the grand marshal, or guest of honor, what have you, and the Pages got to lead his car down the parade in Gettysburg, which was a memorable event for many of them, and for me.[6] I thought it was a fine thing. We did a lot of things of that nature. I should say that throughout the earlier years, and particularly during President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt's years, Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt took her role as "godmother" of the Pages very seriously. And, bless her heart, she entertained—very graciously and very generously—the Pages during that period. And we had a number of invitations to the White House. As a matter of fact, during those visits Mrs. Roosevelt asked, "Would you like to see the President?" Of course, everybody responded, "Oh, yes!" So we were. . .

JOHNSON: Was this in March of 1943? I found a newspaper article that mentioned that the Pages went to visit the White House.

BARTLETT: Does it mention Joe Bartlett of Clarksburg, West Virginia?

JOHNSON: And you, specifically. Yes, it does. It said that you were very curious about one of the items that President Roosevelt had on his desk.

BARTLETT: Well, that was this particular occasion. And there are not very many people alive who have had the privilege of making small talk with President Roosevelt in the Oval Office. But he was a very fascinating person, and it was interesting to study him sitting at his desk. He said this mask had come from China, by way of his grandfather. It was quite heavy. He picked it up and put it on his face, and

[6] For information on General Frederick Funston, see "Gen. Funston Dies Suddenly in Hotel," 20 February 1917, *New York Times*: 1.

everybody laughed. He couldn't have worn it. I don't know how it could have been used by actors in China, but apparently they held it in place and did their thing. The President was very kind.

But let me say, Mrs. Roosevelt was exceedingly gracious. And I could tell you stories that may be just as well not told. But inasmuch as I had some responsibility for the Pages, their conduct there was my concern. I shared a feeling of responsibility for them. And not all were brought up to be well-mannered. And so we had a couple of unfortunate moments, point being that Mrs. Roosevelt was sitting right beside a boy who showed neglected table manners. If she saw it—and I don't see how she could help but have seen it—she didn't take any notice [or] indicate that it happened. And I thought that was exceedingly gracious. Then we had a party out in the Rose Garden, and we were coming back into the theater, and we were coming through a door that had just been painted. And I suggested to her that, well, "I'll stand here and make sure the Pages don't get their clothing in the paint." And in the most gracious way—and I cannot paraphrase what she said, but it was to the effect that, "I'm the hostess. I'll take care of my guests. Thank you." {laughter} She stood there and watched each one of them so they would not strike the paint. She was a very gracious lady. And the Pages were really honored to have that kind of attention.

Bess Truman followed on with it. But it was a different atmosphere at the White House after that. And I don't think that the White House visits have been a regular thing since then, which is regrettable because it was very, very nice.

JOHNSON: Earlier you mentioned that you went to school in the morning. Were your classes at this time held in the basement of the Capitol?

BARTLETT: [20:00] Yes. I'm glad you asked. They were held down in what I think is now the air conditioning room. It's called the West Terrace, right close to where

President Reagan established the new location for getting sworn in. It's in that part of the Capitol, on the west side. It was dank. We generated our own electricity. We . . . the Capitol generated its own electricity in those days. It was direct current. So if you brought an alternating current device in, you probably lost it. {laughter} But it was done right across the hall from Page School. And the whine of those generators was constant. They were big! And we met down there. It was a private school.[7] It was conducted by E. L. Kendall. He was the principal, a very spartan Baptist gentleman. I happened to like him very much. But he was strait-laced, there was no doubt about that. We paid $19 a month for tuition. And there were other maintenance problems down there. The roof leaked. And it was not uncommon to go in there and find that on the floor there was a puddle, and they had to put down planks so we could reach our seats. We'd walk in on the planks, take our seats, hold our feet up, and study Latin. It was unreal. And, incidentally, one time a fellow switched on the light, and the light globe was full of water, and of course it went "kapoop." {laughter} We had a darkened room. There was another problem down in that area. This was a forsaken area at that time. Nobody went down there without a reason.

Well, we had a person employed at the Capitol at that time who was a rodent control officer. Call him what you will, he was supposed to make sure we got rid of the rats. Well, he wasn't going to limit his job. But I swear, I think he was breeding rats. There were the biggest rats you ever saw down there! And you'd come around the corner at 6:00 in the morning, and here would be a rat going down the hall, loping like a Scottish terrier or something—that big! And it was something. Then because there were no doors to the generator rooms, there were only grilles, which were up from the floor a short distance—so the rats had easy access to go where they pleased. Well, right after the end of the war, somebody got serious about getting rid of the rodents. And then they realized that there was an

[7] For a detailed history of schooling for House Pages, see Bill Severn, *Democracy's Messengers: The Capitol Pages* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1975).

even bigger problem: cockroaches. Cockroaches were overrunning the Capitol. And so they brought down from Brooklyn—and I've forgotten who did it—but they hired a fellow whose nickname was "Killer Miller." And "Killer Miller" had a powder, which I think was nothing but DDT, and why not? It was good stuff. But you could, for years—and I mean many years—you could open a desk drawer in any office and out would tumble this little paper holder of this powdery material, which had been stuck up against the wall of each drawer of every office in the building. Miller earned his money, if anybody ever did, because he really got around. And for a long time, it was very effective. We didn't have cockroaches. {laughter} "Killer Miller" was quite a character around the Capitol for quite a while.

JOHNSON: Can you describe your curriculum? What were the classes that you took? [24:00]

BARTLETT: We took a regular high school curriculum. You had some choices, just like any high school. Let me simply say that some thought we were not getting a very good education. And some thought we were not getting our $19-a-month's worth. But along came the tests that they gave: the A-5 and the A-12, the B-5 and the B-12—tests for officer material for World War II. And out at Eastern High School they had kids come from all over Washington for those tests being administered by the Army and the Navy. And the irony is that the little delegation that went out from Capitol Page School scored extremely well as compared to other schools in the District. You know, that sort of left you without much of an argument that the schooling hadn't been adequate. We had a Capitol policeman—fellow named Pousson. We had bureaucrats—a patent attorney named Cooper, who was a genius. I loved his teaching. I took physics with him. He was just marvelous. We had a fellow named Lewis, who created on his own, incidentally, an embassy visitation group, which was very good. The kids went to a different embassy every Saturday. And he had been a {laughter} West Virginia bug inspector, where they used to flag you down for Japanese beetles. And he had been in that, until one day

he commandeered a car, got in trouble, and had to escape to Washington. So he was teaching English—and very good at it, as a matter of fact—in the Page School. So, no, we had an interesting group. But as I say, Mr. Kendall ran a tight ship. And he was pretty determined that each of these classes would provide what was necessary for a high school education. And I think he fairly well succeeded. Incidentally, in those days we had senior classes. They no longer have seniors, which I think is too bad. But we had a graduating class. We had a ceremony in the Ways and Means Committee room. Yes!

JOHNSON: Mr. Oliver gave us this image.[8]

BARTLETT: Isn't that something?

JOHNSON: Yes. Since we're talking about it, could you describe it for me, please?

BARTLETT: Well, the picture that I have here shows the graduating class of 1944. And Senator Harold Burton of Ohio was the speaker. He had been the former mayor of Cleveland and [was] soon to be an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. He'd been very much interested in the Pages all along. Harold Burton was a splendid man. [John] Sparkman of Alabama is sitting beside him. And the minister is the Reverend Frederic Brown Harris, the chaplain of the Senate, again a {laughter} man I really learned to like a great deal.[9] Starting at the other side was Principal E. L. Kendall. I got along with him very well. The next one is Dr. Robert Haycock, superintendent of D.C. Public Schools. And then, of course, in the center is the First Lady of the land, Eleanor Roosevelt, who handed us our
[28:00] diplomas and wished us well. And she was a gracious, gracious lady.

[8] Jim Oliver was a longtime employee in the Republican Cloakroom. For information on his career, see *Congressional Record*, House, 109th Cong., 2nd sess. (19 December 2007): 16899–16900.
[9] For additional information on Reverend Harris, see the Senate Historical Office's Web page on Senate chaplains, http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Senate_Chaplain.htm.

JOHNSON: And the graduates at this time were House Pages and Senate Pages?

BARTLETT: There were House Pages and Senate Pages, one elevator operator that I see, who was {laughter} related to the Architect of the Capitol. I think he was his grandson. And there may have been a Supreme Court Page, I'm not real sure. But mostly House and Senate Pages, and all of them made a pretty good account of themselves after that. Many of the Pages beyond this did. They've had a recent reunion of the 1950 Pages, who have been—had been—kind enough to ask me to attend. And to the extent that I've been able to, I have. This particular era (1944) did not remain close, for whatever reason. I've known a couple of them relatively well, one of them because he became a Marine: Randlett T. Lawrence, who was center for Navy football and was East Coast boxing champion of the Navy and was a tough Marine colonel.

Now, of the Pages that I supervised and watched graduate, well, I have [a] much closer relationship with some of them. One of them, I grieved his passing recently. He was a Paulist priest, Bob Curtis from Silver Spring. I don't like to single Bob out, but he was sort of typical of the achievers within the group of Pages that I supervised, and for whom I've taken a great deal of pride.

JOHNSON: I just had one more question about your education.

BARTLETT: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you receive any training to prepare you for what was going to happen on the House Floor, for the proceedings that were going to take place?

BARTLETT: No. That's an interesting point. Whatever training we got there, we received from the older supervisors on the floor. As you probably know, the work of Pages, even then, was divided into several kinds. We had the so-called bench Pages, they were

the primary group. We had the telephone Pages, usually somebody who was showing some special ability as a bench Page. And then we had door Pages, who were often merely a means of placing some patronage. Older people who were no longer suitable for the work inside would work on the doors. I could cite one very special one, Buddy Jones. Buddy Jones had the east door. He was the grandson of Judge Marvin Jones. Judge Marvin Jones probably spent more time in Speaker Rayburn's office than anybody who wasn't on the payroll. Judge Marvin Jones was the brother of Metze Jones, which doesn't mean anything to you except that she was married to Sam Rayburn.[10] And everyone here thought Sam Rayburn was an incorrigible bachelor and never dreamed that he'd ever been married. His

[32:00] closest Texas friends did not know he had been married. But he had been. How that marriage terminated, I don't know, whether it was divorce or an annulment, I would rather imagine. But there were Sam Rayburn Joneses in that family before they were married. He was that close to the family. So Buddy Jones, when he had that east door, he had pretty good entrée because he was very close to Speaker Rayburn. But he was a nice fellow—very good Page. He happened to be tall and lanky, tall enough not to be a House Page anymore. And he later became vice president of an aluminum company here and very prominent in Washington lobbying and social circles. Very fine fellow.

JOHNSON: With the Pages falling under the jurisdiction of the Doorkeeper's office, when you were a Page you worked under two doorkeepers. You mentioned Joe Sinnott. And then there also was Ralph Roberts.[11]

BARTLETT: Ralph Roberts, correct.

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[10] For more information on Speaker Sam Rayburn's life, including his brief marriage and divorce, see D.B. Hardeman and Donald C. Bacon, *Rayburn: A Biography* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987); Anthony Champagne, "Rayburn, Sam," *American National Biography* 18 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 210–211.

[11] Served as Clerk of the House from the 81st through the 82nd Congress (1949–1953) and from the 84th through the 89th Congress (1955–1967). Roberts also served as Doorkeeper of the House during the 79th Congress (1945–1947).

JOHNSON: Can you describe these two men?

BARTLETT: Well, Joe Sinnott, as I say, was regarded as an awfully gruff curmudgeon. He scared people to death. I never could quite understand it because I found him to be a very easy person to get along with. But, nonetheless, there was that fear. His daughter worked as his secretary. There is a rumor {laughter} that she was married at the time, and he didn't know it. And she was married to one of his subordinates. And this became a big rumor. Whether it's true or not, I cannot verify, but I think it was. {laughter} But I liked him. His devotion to the House was unquestionable. He was getting up in years, and he died during the '40s. And Ralph Roberts, who had been his assistant, succeeded him. Ralph was an old Marine master sergeant. And so we were good friends. And Ralph was later Clerk of the House, from Indiana—a good fellow. I enjoyed his friendship and I miss him. He was a good friend.

JOHNSON: Did you notice any difference in the way the Page program was run, between Joe Sinnott and Ralph Roberts?

BARTLETT: Probably. Joe Sinnott took a very close interest in how they were performing. Ralph Roberts stood back and tried to get his subordinates to make sure they were doing it right. And as a Marine master sergeant, that's the way he would have done it. But it was his way. As a matter of fact, I remember at times I would bring to his attention something that I did not think was in his interest. And his answer was always, "They'll find out. They'll find out." In other words, the time would prove him right. Unfortunately, time was not in his favor as Clerk of the House, as you may recall. He had a difficult time. Congressman [William] Pat Jennings of Virginia was not his friend. And they had a confrontation. And then Ralph—there was a power struggle between the Clerk's office and the Committee on House Administration. And again, it was Ralph's way to just think he could wait

[36:00] it out and that people would see he was doing the right thing. He should have been more responsive to the problems. But that was Ralph's way, and who am I to fault it? He was my friend.

JOHNSON: You mentioned South Trimble, who was Clerk at the time when you were a Page.

BARTLETT: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you get to know any of the other House Officers?

BARTLETT: Yes, I sure did. I would say that, again, the Congress being absent a good deal of the year, in the old days, the truth of the matter was the House was run by the Clerk of the House. And South Trimble was a very powerful man. He was dignified and a splendid gentleman. His counterpart in our party was William Tyler Page.[12] Now William Tyler Page was the Minority Clerk. He, anonymously, wrote "The American's Creed," which won first place in a national competition for an American creed. And for years, long before you would remember, every Congressman got a huge supply of "The American's Creed," and they would distribute them to schoolchildren all over the country, by the millions. And William Tyler Page was a splendid man. He had that claw-hammered coat, you know. He dressed a fashion—a formality—100 years earlier. But he and Senator [Clyde] Hoey continued to do this into the 20th century. I enjoyed visiting with William Tyler Page. And I must confess, if I ever had an ambition in the process of my career—and I didn't really have very many, because I thought how unrealistic it was for me to presume that fate might favor me that way, and I wasn't kidding myself—but I so admired William Tyler Page and his knowledge of Congress that, yes, I said, "Gee, wouldn't it be wonderful to follow in his footsteps." And so I must say, when I finally was elected to that job, it had much

[12] Served as Clerk of the House from the 66th through the 71st Congress (1919–1931). For more information on Page and "The American's Creed," see "Obligations of Americans Told in 100 Word Creed," 4 April 1918, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 1; "'American's Creed' by Clerk of the House William Tyler Page," Weekly Historical Highlights, Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/highlights.html?action=view&intID=275.

more significance for me than many people knew. Because I held up the memory of William Tyler Page right then and there. I've quoted him in speeches repeatedly—a very good man.

You asked about South Trimble. He really conducted the work of the House. And that's how he could say to me, "Stick around." Because at that time he and Joe Sinnott could do just about anything they decided to do. Now, let's face it, there's always this controversy about the powerful staff people on the Hill. Neither one of them would have done anything contrary to what they knew the leadership would want or allow them to do. Probably the most powerful man in recent times would have been Lew Deschler, the House Parliamentarian.[13] He would never extend himself to presume authority that was not his. And that was true of South Trimble. He knew what was expected of him. He knew that whatever he did he could justify to the leadership of the Congress if he had to. And so there's a restraint upon, in a sense, responsibility in those jobs. Did all of them exercise it? No, we had a few people who didn't exercise that kind of
[40:00] restraint, and some who suffered serious consequences for not having done it. But with a South Trimble or a Joe Sinnott, you never had to worry that they were going to do something beyond their authority because they just weren't going to do it. They knew, whatever they did, they could go to Speaker Rayburn and tell him why they'd done it and receive his approval. That is just was the way they conducted themselves.

Incidentally, in those days there was a great deal of—what would you say—interrelationship between key figures on the Hill, families that got together: the Architect's (David Lynn) family and the Clerk's family. And their kids married. And you have familiar names to this day. I don't think it happened to Joe Sinnott, {laughter} bless his soul.

[13] Parliamentarian of the U.S. House of Representatives from the 70th Congress (1927–1929) until his retirement during the 93rd Congress (1973–1975) on June 27, 1974. For information on Lewis Deschler, see Richard L. Lyons, "Parliamentarian Lewis Deschler Dies," 13 July 1976, *Washington Post*: C6.

But there were other key figures around. We had a fellow named Gus Cook, who was the assistant Architect of the Capitol, who was the executive assistant because he did everything imaginable. And there's a story that goes that when the queen of England came here in 1939, Gus put on that show, quite a show.[14] Oh, my goodness. So many things that I heard back about that. But they carpeted the grand rotunda with a plush, plush carpet, red—bright red, royal red. And somehow [or] another, nobody's ever been able to find that carpet since! {laughter}

JOHNSON: This was before your time, so other people had told you about it?

BARTLETT: That was before my time. Well, yes. When I arrived, we were still reliving the mysteries of the last few years. {laughter}

JOHNSON: You mentioned a while back, or alluded to, the cordial relationship among Members and between Members and Pages and staff. What do you remember about Speaker Rayburn?

BARTLETT: Nothing but wonderful things. He was a super presiding officer. His romance—his love—was the House of Representatives. And he was a big man—not a big man physically, as a matter of fact, he was quite slight. Most people don't know that because he had the command presence of looking larger than life. He'd put four fingers of his hand in his right coat pocket—and the cigarette, unfortunately, all too often in his left hand. I don't know that the Republicans ever fully appreciated it, but after I went up on the rostrum and where I was within close earshot of him, and learned my trade as reading clerk just a few feet from him and that made me

[14] For information on the queen's visit, see Robert C. Albright, "Standing on Floor Stained by Burning of 1814, British Rules Retake Capitol by Charm," 10 June 1939, *Washington Post*: 2.

privy to an awful lot of conversations, that I, of course, kept in confidence, always . . . But I can tell you that there were many times when

[44:00] Members would rush up and want to do something expedient to take advantage of the minority. And I can remember Mr. Rayburn on more than one occasion saying, "No, no. We're not going to do that." He felt a responsibility to protect the rights of the minority. And that's an unusual characterization. You don't find that very often. Not because the people occupying that chair aren't good guys. But they don't understand, sometimes, the nuances of legislative decorum and their responsibility to all the Members. And Mr. Rayburn did understand that. He was just a good man.

I think some of his biographers, who have sought to make him out to be a real partisan, for whatever reason, are wrong. I think they do him a disservice. Sure, he was a Democrat and a leader of Democrats, and he believed that the Democrat Party was the way to a lot of things. But he was a very big man. And his speeches down there about, "No more East or West, no more North or South," I've heard him make that. And I've heard him rally patriots in the well of the House in a way that . . . He showed that he was much bigger than any petty, partisan point of view.

At the end of my 20th year, which of course was August 1, 1961, I went to see him. And Miss Clary, his devoted secretary, was there, and I said, "Just like to see the Speaker." Incidentally, he was in the little room that had formerly belonged to Minority Leader Joe Martin. And after they'd changed places a couple of times, they got together and said, "This is silly for us to keep moving. Let's just stay where we are." And he was actually in that little room and was Speaker of the House, but he was in that, and I've forgotten the number. But Miss Clary said to me, "Well, he's taking a nap," and "Would you come back?" And I said, "Sure." I turned to go out the door and had just about reached the door, when his door opened, and Miss Clary said, "Joe wanted to see you for a moment." And he said,

"Well, come on in." And as we were walking in, he calls back over his shoulder, "What do you want me to do, double your salary or something?" {laughter} And I said, "Yes, Mr. Speaker. You said it. I didn't." {laughter} And we proceeded to have a fabulous session. I only wanted to recall that first day. I wanted to talk to him about that and thank him because he'd been so courteous. And he wanted to talk about other things. He wanted to talk about a lot of other things. And, in retrospect, I know why: He knew how sick he was. And he was trying to plant a few thoughts in the mind of a younger person, I'm sure, and somebody he trusted. It saddens me to realize that. He told a story about flying home to Austin, I think he said, but I've forgotten which airport. It really isn't significant. But he noticed that a photographer was just trying to get his picture, and he was trying to maneuver all around. So then Mr. Rayburn said, "And I just, every time he got in
[48:00] position, I'd turn around." And so there was a little dance going on between him and the photographer. And he said {laughter} finally the photographer put his camera down at his side and said, "Mr. Speaker, if you know any other way I can make a living, I wish you'd tell me." {laughter} Mr. Rayburn laughed, and he said, "I told him to go ahead and take all the pictures he wanted." {laughter}

And I told you about his stature, which was really quite remarkable that people thought of him as a big man, when he really wasn't. But there were other physical characteristics that people didn't know [about]. When Felix de Weldon was commissioned by the Texas State Society to do his statue for the new Rayburn House Office Building, Mr. Felix de Weldon—who was a friend of mine, I might add, but he said that he knew Speaker Rayburn.[15] Well, his statue shows that he didn't, no matter what he said. So on the day that the statue was to be unveiled . . . And I wish I had a perfect recall on all these names, but I don't. I cannot think of the old fellow who was [a] newspaperman, a very close confidant of the

[15] To view an image of de Weldon's statue of Rayburn, see the Architect of the Capitol's Web page, http://www.aoc.gov/cc/cobs/rayburn_stat.cfm.

Speaker's.[16] But everybody knew him and liked him. And so when they unveiled the statue, all the reporters followed him because he was a reporter that had been close to the Speaker, and they wanted his comments. So he walked around the statue two or three times, and he slowly observed, "Well, I think he got the back of his head." {laughter} That was his judgment. Well, sadly—and Felix was a wonderful character—I think that's about all he got.

A couple of things he didn't seem to realize: Mr. Rayburn had no ears. I don't know what happened to them. They'd been frostbitten or something. But he had just little bitsy things for ears that just . . . He also—he had no eyebrows; he had no facial hair. I don't know why, but he didn't have. And it shows up in that statue, that makes it look a little odd. I don't know why—never had anybody give me any explanation of these things about him. But, oh, he was a splendid man. I wouldn't do anything to diminish his image. But those were physical characteristics that Felix de Weldon {laughter} obviously didn't know [about]. Why he didn't find out, I'm not sure.

JOHNSON: As a Republican Page, did you have a chance to interact a lot with the Minority Leader, Joe Martin?

BARTLETT: As chief of the Pages, I had a lot to do with him. Again—fine, fine man. He didn't go to college; he was helping other members of his family through college. He became a newspaperman. He was not sophisticated—very earthy, very wise. Very wise. I remember one time, right after the 80th Congress had been defeated in '48, and most of us were going around like it was the end of the world, and Joe Pew's daughter came down with a class from Hood College, I think.[17] I was asked to take them into the cloakroom and see if we could get the Speaker to talk to them. And

[16] Joe Bartlett later recalled that the reporter's name was Cecil Dickson.
[17] Reference to the Republican Party losing the majority in the House to the Democrats for the 81st Congress (1949–1951). For a complete list of party divisions, see "Party Divisions of the House of Representatives (1789 to Present)," Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/partyDiv.html.

Mr. Martin was glad to. I'll never forget: Here we were, really at the dregs, politically. We thought this was the end of our political fortunes. And he came in there with the most upbeat, positive, and not at all Pollyannaish presentation. He was giving historical statistics to show that things could rebound. Well, of course, you know, less than four years later we elected Eisenhower

[52:00] President. So it wasn't the end of the world, we didn't know it. But he sent those college girls home with a very positive message and just sort of amused me. But his English, his grammar, was not the greatest. When I became reading clerk . . . One thing a reading clerk tries to avoid is the mispronunciation of words. If you mispronounce it, you're apt to mispronounce it at the wrong time. And it was kind of funny. Lawyers and doctors and different professional groups have a lot of jargon that they use, and it's sort of accepted. So I used to go to that huge dictionary off to the left of the Speaker's Rostrum to find that my lawyer partner was misusing words because the lawyer profession misuses them.

Okay, back to Joe Martin. Joe Martin, bless his heart, had certain words that he could not pronounce. One of them is a word that you use often in legislative proceedings, and that word is "pursuant." He could not say "pursuant." {laughter} He said, "perswayant," "perswayant." Always. Well, the trouble was, one day I got up there, and here I was, and sure enough, I used it his way. {laughter} And that was rather unprofessional. But I was very fond of him, and I was just really, really sorry that he didn't retire a little earlier. He was a very pathetic sight. And people who only knew him walking on one or two canes, with very relaxed facial features, and who saw him only at that time, they thought that was Joe Martin. That wasn't Joe Martin. You know, that was what happens to people when they get old. I wish he had been back at Cape Cod, or whatever it is up there, and relaxed by himself and not let people have that sad image**.** He got defeated in the primary, which shouldn't have happened. And, oh boy, that saddened me because he had been such a splendid Member of Congress. Elsie Gridley and Jim Milne were his staff people. They really ran a good shop. That was a real good team. I think of them

often, remember them with tremendous affection because they were good people. And Joe Martin certainly was. His mannerisms were different.

When the Puerto Rican shooting came—and I don't want to jump ahead here because you've got plenty of time to get back to that—but they've always kidded him.[18] He was presiding. And there are some pillars at the top of the rostrum. Standing between them he could not have seen Gallery 11. So he got back between those pillars.[19] {laughter} Oh, golly. He was a good guy. And when we get around to it, remind me to tell you about Judge Louis Graham's attempting an amendment that upset Joe Martin.

JOHNSON: [56:00] One of our previous oral history interviewees, Glen Rupp was a Page during the 1930s, and he mentioned belonging to the Little Congress Club.[20] Was this an organization that you were familiar with?

BARTLETT: Yes. Though I think it broke up during the war years. But it was still going when I came here. And I knew some of them. We had a Congressman from Texas, Nat Patton—not Wright Patman, but Nat Patton—and he had a daughter, Bonnie, who was one of the most popular people on Capitol Hill, a dynamic gal. Kept her daddy out of trouble often. But she was a key figure in that organization at the time I came. I don't know what ever . . . I'm sure Bonnie's gone on to her reward long since. But, yes, I was aware of it. And, of course, again, you know, you're talking about what happened just before I came. And the fact that they keep talking about it . . . Well, the alleged stacking of the Little Congress by staffer

[18] For information on the 1954 shooting in the House Chamber, see "Four Puerto Rican Nationalists Opened Fire Onto the House Floor," Weekly Historical Highlights, Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/highlights.html?action=view&intID=7.
[19] To read about Speaker Martin's eyewitness account of the shooting, see Raymond Smock, "Speaker Joseph Martin's Account of a Shooting on the Floor of the House," *Landmark Documents on the U.S. Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1999): 413–415.
[20] Scant research has been devoted to the Little Congress, but the most comprehensive secondary source that includes information on the organization is Robert A. Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York: Vintage, 1990): 261–265.

Lyndon Johnson was still very much in conversation. And, of course, he became a Member of the House soon thereafter. And so that activity, I think that it lost a good deal of favor with the leadership about that time. I think there was some presumption, and some press, that the leadership wasn't crazy about, and I may be guessing a little bit here. Nothing I ever heard on the part of the leaders—either staff or membership—suggested they wanted to encourage reassembling that group. So I think it fell upon bad times, for whatever reason. You know, you would not like to read in the paper that somebody who has been elected "Speaker" of the Little Congress was assuming stature. You can easily see why that might not find favor. Furthermore, the wartime Congress got very busy, not like the old days when Congress would come and meet and leave town for extended periods. And in those old days, you had a few staff around with not a whole lot to do. And so they had time to get into mischief. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Many sources have indicated that one of the reasons why Congress was able to stay in for longer sessions, especially during the summer, was the advent of air conditioning. By the time you started as a Page in 1941, were all of the office buildings air conditioned?

BARTLETT: I don't believe so. I don't believe so. For a lot of reasons. You had air circulation. The House Chamber at that time was in real bad repair. The roof had sunken 18 inches. And they could not repair it because the war was upon us. And they put up a superstructure that looked like the inside of a dirigible or something that held the roof up, until 1949. And we not only didn't have air conditioning. (A farm boy doesn't worry too much about heat. But I was aware that it was not comfortable in the chamber.) But we didn't even have lighting. We had skylights in the ceiling. We had the seals of the various states in stained glass around the perimeter of the ceiling. And so on a good, sunny day, we had a bright chamber. On a day that was not bright—rainy day or after sundown—the chamber would get terribly dark.

And what lighting they had, they didn't like to use. I know when we came in to work on Saturdays, it was dim.

You asked about a Page schedule. In those days, we worked a half a day Saturday—every Saturday—and worked hard. Because that was the day we took
[60:00] those *Congressional Record*s out from the seats and did what we called "stripping the *Record*s." And we took them down to a dungeon down below what was the then the Doorkeeper's Office. We had a—I don't know what it is now because they've decided to use much of that space for other purposes, but it was a dungeon full of steel lockers. And we put the *Congressional Record*s in there in order by date so that we could . . . As Members would call, "I need a copy," [or] "I need 10 copies," of a particular date. "Be right over." And they were always amazed that we had those resources. Well, the reason we had them was because the Pages spent Saturday taking them from the floor and putting them on file downstairs. And it was true, we were able to make a pretty good account of ourselves in retrieving those and supplying the needs of the Members.

Then we did what was called "skeletonizing." I made quite a reputation of this. But on Saturdays, when we didn't have any other thing to do, we would take a *Record* and strip out those things where 10 Members would have something significant in a *Record*. So I would skeletonize a *Record*, provide 10 Members with that portion of the *Record*. See, this was before Xerox. This was before duplication, printing. And so to be able to give a Member 50 copies of a choice item, he was very appreciative. This is why they knew my name. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Was this something that you started on your own?

BARTLETT: Yes. Yes, I could not see wasting what was a good raw material. And it is absolutely true, our technology has really changed so many of the things that we do on the Hill. And that was one of them. I was able to accommodate a lot of

people by doing that. And it was not a problem. I was happy to do it—take a ruler and rip out a page and provide that service.

JOHNSON: Going back to the air-conditioning topic for a second, many newspaper accounts indicate that the chamber was air conditioned. Was it just a problem of it not functioning?

BARTLETT: It was air-circulated. And I don't think . . . How much it was treated, I don't . . . But if it was air conditioned, it was primitive. You see, back in those days, a lot of air conditioning was nothing more than circulating the air coming off of ice. That literally was true. We used to judge national convention demonstrations. You're familiar with that. Back in those days—not so much anymore—but you'd nominate somebody, and as soon as that nomination was completed, you have a demonstration. And you'd run around the hall—parade around the hall and stir up the delegates. They used to measure the enthusiasm on behalf of a particular candidate on the basis of how much that . . . They'd measure the air conditioning. And they measured it in terms of tons of ice. I don't know why, but they did. And that would indicate the amount of enthusiasm. I was an officer of the 1948 convention. And that was primitive in so many ways. First televised convention. Very interesting. If I may jump ahead just a little bit, only on that aspect of why Congress left town.

JOHNSON: Sure.

BARTLETT: And I think overall, it has not been a good thing because it runs contrary to what Howard Baker talked about, a citizen legislature, dividing their time between a
[64:00] civilian occupation and their legislative work. But I remember very distinctly when we had a particular pay raise up. And Hale Boggs was then the Majority Leader. And he said, "You know, this means we're going to be here the year round. This is going to be a year-round occupation with this particular pay raise."

Said it in the well of the House. And sure enough, I saw that as the determination that Congress was going to change its way of doing business. I've written a little bit on this subject. Someday I'll try to find a copy of that thing and show you, that I think, in order to meet the constitutional requirement for the right of petition, the right of citizens to consult with their representatives, I think we're defeating it by the present system of undesignated times for home work, which, of course, is often a joke. If you want to talk about that another time, I'll be glad to renew my familiarity with the thing I wrote. But I wrote that for—the U.S. Chamber of Commerce asked me to, back some years ago. And I went down and presented to them what I thought should be some of the reorganizations of Congress. And that was what was involved in it, basically, was to reschedule and to create a new calendar for legislative business, which would include scheduled times to be home.

I've heard this so many times, this air conditioning. Well, I must say that it was not comfortable. And long before my time, before air conditioning—or air circulation or whatever—was there, I'm told that it was just terrible. And then when the British burned the Capitol [during the War of] 1812, the Congress met at what they called "the oven," over in the building across the street, where the Supreme Court is now. And apparently it must have been really awful.[21]

But we certainly take air conditioning for granted in this day and age. And it does cause us to ignore whatever the weather happens to be here and keep us . . . Maybe we {laughter} stay inside and stay here a lot longer because it is pleasant.

JOHNSON: That's true. I'm going to take this opportunity to stop and switch tapes.

[21] For more information on the history of the Capitol building, see the Architect of the Capitol's Web page, http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/capitol_construction.cfm.

End of Part One – Beginning of Part Two

JOHNSON: You were a Page during World War II. And I wanted to ask you some specific questions about that period. For obvious reasons, there was little notice before FDR's Joint Session on December 8th, 1941.[22] So, first off, I wanted to know if you were involved in the preparations for this very quick Joint Session.

BARTLETT: Probably as involved as any Page would be, or any staffer. But, you know, we felt the tremendous importance of this occasion. I came to Page School that morning, and I had to present my pass seven times between First Street, where the Supreme Court is, and the Capitol entrance. And I was showing it to a bayoneted soldier. Overnight they had put up tents and perimeter fence around the Capitol. Jump ahead just a little bit to say that they even put up anti-aircraft weapons on top of the Longworth Building. And if you were in the Longworth Building, and you look at the bank of elevators on the seventh floor, there's a door to the left there. That door leads to stairs up to a loft, which leads up to the roof, which is where they had their antiaircraft guns. And after the session that day, I went over and went up there and, ho, ho, ho, I helped them load ammunition. The truth of the matter was, they tolerated me; I couldn't have been much help. But they were lacing .50-caliber ammunition in metal straps. And I tried to help. But that was the conditions in which we found ourselves up there that day.

JOHNSON: And these were put in place overnight?

BARTLETT: Overnight. They must have anticipated the need and had a plan. I would expect them to. That day was very, very exciting in many ways. At one point I had a rush

[22] For historical background and a complete list of Joint Sessions, see "Joint Meetings, Joint Sessions, and Inaugurations," Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/Joint_Meetings/index.html.

to go over to the building, I don't remember what the purpose was. But I fell and skinned my knee and damaged my trouser leg in the course of doing it. And I got back on the floor in time for the events. I remember it very, very well. And I remember, when we finally got around to voting on it, which was the next day or so, which exciting sessions . . . What is the matter with me? The Representative who voted against the war. . .

JOHNSON: Oh, Jeannette Rankin.[23]

BARTLETT: Jeannette Rankin. Well, Jeannette Rankin was sitting in the back row, and I was standing behind the back row, when Harold Knutson—who had been the only other Member of the House at that time who had voted against World War I—and he came running back to her and earnestly pleaded, "Jeannette, Jeannette, don't do it!"[24] He knew what she was fixing to do. And she had such a look on
[4:00] her face, you know, this obstinate look. "Oh, you'll get in all kinds of trouble. Don't do it. Don't do it." He was begging her. And, of course, when came time for her vote, she voted no. And was the only one. It was her second time of sacrificing her seat in Congress for a vote against war. The House adjourned very shortly [thereafter]. And in those days, the press was allowed to come onto the floor as soon as the gavel came down. And they did. Miss Rankin ran into the cloakroom. We had very large phone booths, not like the ones now. And she jumped in a phone booth and closed the door and put her knee up against the door and called the Capitol Police to come and rescue her, to escort her back to her office.

JOHNSON: There's a couple of famous pictures of that moment.

BARTLETT: Are there?

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[23] For more information on Congresswoman Rankin, see Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, *Women in Congress, 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006): 36–41 and http://womenincongress.house.gov.

[24] Fifty Representatives, including Rankin, voted against the war resolution in 1917.

JOHNSON: There's one where Joe Martin is speaking to her while she's in the telephone booth.

BARTLETT: Is that right? I've not seen that. Well, that's interesting. I don't remember Joe Martin being in there. But, of course, he would have been. I just don't remember that aspect of it. But we had an old . . . Mike Bunke was in charge of the cloakroom at that time, from Chicago.[25] And I remember Mike Bunke was really upset when all the press guys came running in there to chase her. And he was trying to throw them out. He'd been a part of that old Cook County crowd. [Robert] Chiperfield was his Congressman. My gosh, that's ancient history! But Mike was excitable. And this upset him quite a bit, that they were taking those privileges about the floor.

The security arrangements in the Capitol were kind of interesting. They divided security of the Capitol between the Capitol Police and the Metropolitan Police. Captain Bert Sheldon was in charge of the detail for the Metropolitan Police. And they came on at 4:00 in the afternoon. And they maintained security for the building overnight, until 8:00 the next morning, when the Capitol Police would take over again. This went on the whole war. Bert Sheldon was a wonderful friend of mine, a great Lincoln scholar. And, oh heck, a lot of fine memories of meeting with his Lincoln scholar group from the University of Harrogate, Tennessee, who came up here, and they would meet and discuss Lincoln at great length.[26] And they were all scholars, except I didn't feel that I was entitled to any credentials in that group at all. But I was privileged to be with them. But Captain Sheldon's maintenance of the Capitol . . . Incidentally, down in the crypt . . . Let's see if I can tell you where. Just inside of where the sales desk is down there in the East

[25] Listed in the 1941 *Congressional Directory* as the minority manager of telephones in the U.S. House of Representatives.
[26] Reference to Lincoln Memorial College of Harrogate, Tennessee.

Front of the Capitol, there was a stairs.[27] It was a strange-looking thing, but right there in that crypt, stairs ran down below. That's where they had soldiers bivouacked, underneath there, and police. And during the night session, the police would be taking over. There were accommodations that were found down there that I'm sure you couldn't find today. They've been gobbled up by these private offices and different things, but I doubt that you could find it. Incidentally, let me say, that afternoon (December 8, 1941) that we were up the loft of the
[8:00] Longworth Building, preparing for an air war. The mood was serious. Nobody was kidding. They were looking to the eastern horizon. And I was, too. They were sincerely expecting to see the *Luftwaffe* come in from the east.[28] That's hard to realize now. We had a lot of air raid. . .

JOHNSON: Drills?

BARTLETT: Drills. We had lots of them. Later on, as it went on, we got less and less uptight about it. Because it was obvious that we need not fear an air attack. But that took a little while. When the Army realized it wasn't going to happen, without telling anybody, they took the antiaircraft guns off of the Longworth Building and off of the Department of Commerce at the same time and put up imitations. They were two-by-fours and what have you, and hammered together in the shape of a gun. {laughter} And Congressman [John] Rankin climbed up there and found out that they were all fakes, and he came back to the House Floor and very indignantly said that he didn't appreciate being protected with these fakes. It was quite a speech.[29] {laughter} I'll bet later on he was sorry he had made that speech. Because it just—it showed that he was more concerned about his own survival,

[27] Before the opening of the Capitol Visitor Center in 2008, the United States Capitol Historical Society had a gift shop sales desk located in the crypt of the Capitol.
[28] Reference to the German Air Force.
[29] The local press covered the event and reported that Representative Harold Cooley of North Carolina climbed atop the Capitol and discovered the "decoy soldiers" and wooden guns. For information, see Robert De Vore, "Wooden Guns 'Guard' Capitol Against Air Raids, House Told," 24 February 1943, *Washington Post*: 1.

I guess, than whatever. But it made no sense to keep real antiaircraft weapons up there any longer. And that's what it was all about.

JOHNSON: Since this was such a historic day, I was hoping that you could set the scene during President Roosevelt's Joint Session. Was the mood somber, or was it more charged? Can you describe your recollections?

BARTLETT: Well, you had a lot of different moods. And I'll tell you why. Secretary of the Navy [Frank] Knox put out a public statement immediately that the United States would blast the Japanese out of the Pacific in two weeks.[30] Now, of course, he probably was told to make that speech, and he knew perfectly well it wasn't going to happen. But there were some people who believed it and thought that this was something we could do in two weeks. So you had a mix. You had a lot of people who were draftable age, who were eligible for service. They took it very seriously. Some of them rushed to join or what have you. We had some Members of Congress in that group, several, including Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Van Zandt, Mel Maas, and Al Gore [Sr.]. There were several who responded to the thing at that time. But it was a broad measure of different attitudes toward the war. I think there were plenty of old-timers with a mature perspective who were very concerned, very, very gravely concerned. The importance of passing the resolution, when we got around to that, that was serious business. I don't know how Jeannette Rankin could have resisted the appeal. I don't know. It was a fixation with her. We corresponded after she left Congress, and she was an unusual lady. They had a little reunion here recently and honored her, and I felt
[12:00] kind of put out that I wasn't invited. {laughter} I would have liked to have been there as probably the only one there who would have remembered her. And she was an interesting person. We've had so many interesting Congressmen, women

[30] For information on former Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, see William L. O'Neill, "Knox, Frank," *American National Biography* 12 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 831–833.

Congressmen. I talked to Charlotte Reid just recently and Shirley Pettis.[31] I talked to both of them recently on the phone, just to learn how they were. And they've each left their mark. Charlotte, kidding her because she's the same age as Gerald Ford, which is 92 now.[32] And she used to be featured on the Don McNeill Breakfast Club.[33] It was a famous radio program. And she was the vocalist on Don McNeill's radio program. I remember the commercial songs. So I always kid her by recalling them. Yes, you know. But her husband was the candidate for Congress and died, and she took up the contest, won, and was a fine Member, fine Member.

JOHNSON: The Joint Session was broadcast by radio on December 8th, 1941. And one of the radio broadcasts had kept the microphone on inadvertently. And so afterwards—this is something that Walter Cronkite chronicled—you were able to hear what was happening on the floor and Speaker Rayburn and Joe Martin asking for unanimous passage of the war resolution. One of the things you're also able to hear in the background was some of the banter between Speaker Rayburn and Jeannette Rankin, and Jeannette Rankin trying to get the attention of the chair. Were you aware of this? Did you recall this at all?

BARTLETT: I'll have to think on it. I do not recall it. There is no reason why it shouldn't have been.

JOHNSON: Well, I'm sure there were many things going on. You could just hear in the background that she was trying to get recognized by the chair, and Speaker Rayburn was ignoring her at this point.

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[31] For information on Congresswomen Charlotte Reid and Shirley Pettis, see Office of History and Preservation, *Women in Congress, 1917–2006*: 416–419, 538–540 and http://womenincongress.house.gov.
[32] President Gerald Ford died on December 26, 2006; Charlotte Reid passed away on January 24, 2007.
[33] For information on Don McNeill's radio program, see Lawrence Van Gelder, "Don McNeill, 'Breakfast Club' Host, Dies at 88," 8 May 1996, *New York Times*: D21.

BARTLETT: Was he? Well, of course, you don't recognize somebody during the call of the roll. And I'm assuming the roll was under way. If it was prior to the call of the roll, I may not have been there. Maybe I had come off the floor.

JOHNSON: This was prior to the call of the roll.

BARTLETT: Well, I may not have been in the chamber. Because I don't remember that, specifically.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the reaction when she stood up and voted no?

BARTLETT: Everything was focused on her. And by that, I mean whatever happened, whatever anybody else did, the whole thing, and, of course, that scene of Harold Knutson. Harold Knutson, incidentally, had to leave Congress under a cloud. I don't know whether you ever knew that or not. You know, people think certain things that are happening never happened before. Well, they have happened before. And he had a situation down in Alexandria, and quietly terminated his service. It was one of those things. It was kind of sad. He was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee in the 80th Congress and had a formidable position. You know, inasmuch as that they didn't write about it, wasn't newspaper copy, so
[16:00] whatever you heard, you heard rumors, and you didn't know how much of it was authentic. Rumors have a way of being less than perfect. But that was what we heard at the time. But his reaction that day, he was trying to protect her from making what amounted, in his mind, to a terrible mistake. Rather interesting that she could not see it as he saw it at that point. I don't know how anybody, after the attack on Pearl Harbor . . . Maybe we weren't given sufficient evidence of what had happened out there, you know, that we're talking about a very short time, and here you've got Secretary Knox saying we're going to clean this thing up in a hurry. So there was plenty of reason for people to believe it wasn't as grave a

situation as it certainly turned out to be in every respect, including the casualties at Pearl Harbor, about which we're probably still learning.

JOHNSON: Another one of our oral history interviewees was Irving Swanson, former reading clerk.[34] And he was the person that read the roll on this historic day. Did you get to know Mr. Swanson?

BARTLETT: I knew Irv Swanson real well. I would not have remembered that. He called the roll. But I knew Irv very well, and he was a good reading clerk and a good guy. Irv Swanson and George Maurer were the two reading clerks I guess I got to know best. I don't know what year.[35] George had been the timekeeper of the House, and, when the vacancy occurred in the reading clerk's post . . . [Anderson Howell] Tad Walters of Pennsylvania was his Congressman. He arranged for George to just be promoted into that job. Unlike when I went after it! {laughter} There were 21 candidates, and we had a terrible time. I hated that, to have to compete for something like that, and then audition. And the whole thing was very stressful. However, it turned out all right.

I guess I shouldn't complain. {laughter} But I was so amused when you told me earlier that you had talked to Irv Swanson. And the reason I was, was because, unfortunately, I had assumed that he had passed on to his reward. Because I just hadn't heard a thing about him in years. And the people that worked around the desk when he was up there—Curtis Christianson and Frank Hoye and all those people—are gone, long since.[36] So I just assumed that Irv was among them. But it surprised me, and pleased me, to know that he's still enjoying life. And I hope someday to be able to read his memoirs. Because it would be very interesting to

[34] Irving Swanson served as the House minority reading clerk from 1940 to 1943 and from 1945 to 1953. Mr. Swanson was interviewed by the Office of History and Preservation on July 27, 2004.
[35] For information on longtime reading clerk George Maurer, see "George J. Maurer Dies, Reading Clerk of the House," 18 November 1962, *Washington Post*: B10.
[36] For information on Francis "Frank" Hoye, a longtime journal clerk for the House of Representatives, see "Francis P. Hoye, 67, House Journal Clerk," 17 February 1979, *Washington Post*: B4.

see what his perspective was. As you well know, no two people's perspective is going to be the same. When Ben Jensen, who was one of the five shot on the House Floor at the Puerto Rican thing . . . And he came back, and I heard him telling some people how he was helped out this door. Except for one thing. I was there. He didn't go out that door! {laughter}

JOHNSON: But I'm sure that's how he recalls it.

BARTLETT: He recalled it. And, of course, he was shot at that point. He also would not have liked for me to tell the story about how he was shot. The bullet entered his right shoulder and, for some crazy reason, didn't penetrate his carcass, but followed
[20:00] under his skin and out the side. It didn't really do a lot of damage; it just followed the course of his body, just under the skin. And he was never what you'd call "life-threatened" by the wound. But Ben Jensen was a dear friend, he was a part of the old poker group. We'll talk about that another time. {laughter}

JOHNSON: And I'm certainly going to ask you more questions about the '54 shooting since you were an eyewitness.

BARTLETT: Sure.

JOHNSON: I just wanted to go back just a little bit more on the very historic days in December. December 11th, 1941, the declaration of war against Germany and Italy, Irving Swanson once again played an important role in the proceedings because he read President Roosevelt's message asking for a declaration of war against Germany and Italy. Do you remember the events of this day, on December 11th? Jeannette Rankin also played a role, in that she voted present this time. But what are your recollections?

BARTLETT: I have a less vivid memory of it. It's not the declaration of war. But the resolution called it "A state of war exists." I would need to refresh my own memory about some of that. Now that you mention it, I remember that she voted present subsequently, but . . . Well, those were momentous days, and so filled with stress, events, that some of it just gets lost, and as far as the particulars go. I don't remember anything, off the top of my head, about that particular event, the next Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. And let's see. You say that was Thursday? Was that the 11th?

JOHNSON: The 11th.

BARTLETT: My goodness. {laughter} It shows you how little I remember. I would have put those resolutions on Tuesday and Wednesday.

JOHNSON: Well, you were very young at the time. {laughter}

BARTLETT: Must not have been keeping very good track of the days of the week. And I haven't gone back and read some of that, which I should have done—would have done if I hadn't been so preoccupied.

JOHNSON: One of the topics that you mentioned was security measures. And there's very little documented on the security measures at the Capitol. So could you talk a little bit more about that, what happened afterwards? And then throughout the war. Were there more security measures that were implemented?

BARTLETT: {laughter} Well, it'll probably astound you to know how few. Now the soldiers put up a fence around the west lawn of the Capitol, put up their tents on the southwest lawn of the Capitol for a while. They maintained a perimeter guard, with their bayonets. They marched around the Capitol back there. The front plaza wasn't guarded {laughter} very well. As a matter of fact, we had many

demonstrations on the front plaza for the sale of bonds. We had, I can remember, Jack Benny and Dorothy Lamour and a group of them that came through there for a demonstration on the plaza out there, to help generate sale for bonds. At one
[24:00] point, they brought a two-man Japanese submarine that they had captured and installed it out there right at the foot of the east steps. And they built some wooden stairs up, that you'd go up and look down inside. Well, I came to school, again at 6:00 in the morning, and this was a new installation. It had gone up overnight. I didn't know it was there. And there was nobody around, nobody around. I walked over and climbed up those stairs {laughter} and looked down in there and screamed and jumped back off of that platform. I don't remember whether I hit stairs or not. I just jumped off. They had a dummy Japanese in that darn thing! {laughter} I didn't know.

JOHNSON: Not what you expected to see.

BARTLETT: Didn't expect to see that. I've often said that, having gone through a couple wars with the security at the Capitol, I'm a little astounded at our obsession with security at this point. It's not my responsibility, so I don't know what's required and what isn't, but I think of how we confronted a couple of other serious world enemies without going into garrison government, and I just wonder how much of it has to be. But this is a new enemy and new method of bringing the war to our shores and to our Capitol, so maybe it's necessary.

You know, after the Puerto Rican shooting, I would just inject the fact that there was a great hue and cry to put up bulletproof glass around the House Galleries. And Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Martin got together and said, "No, we're not going to do that. We owe it to the people not to impose a barrier like that between them and their Representatives." Which I thought was rather profound and rather, again, rising to an understanding of what should take place in a representative republic. And I wonder if there's anybody around today with that perspective, who

ask themselves—and maybe there is—but who ask themselves . . . Whenever people come in whose whole life has been one of providing security and that their form of security has always been, "The best way to provide security is to keep the people away." Well, that doesn't go for the United States Capitol. And I think that there needs to be somebody around to say, "Hey, this is where the people govern. And you've got to accommodate them as well as provide the security for the Members."

But, you know, there's no such thing as perfect security. President [Rafael] Trujillo spent more of his national budget—Dominican Republic—on personal security than any head of state we have ever known.[37] The percentage that was to protect him was the biggest item in the budget. "National security," he would have said. But, by golly, they shot him in office. And no schoolteacher goes to school any day without knowing that there's danger there. No policeman takes his beat without knowing that there's a danger there. So I don't think that any public official should expect 100 percent personal security. I just think you've got to realize that if you choose to serve the public, that sometimes that public can turn on you! {laughter} So be it. I didn't mean to get on my stump here.

[28:00]

JOHNSON: No, that's fine. I have one final question. Did you have any role models during this period, when you were a Page, that may have inspired your long career on the Hill?

BARTLETT: I had lots of wonderful role models. I'm glad you asked that question because I feel a great debt to any number of people. I started to mention William Tyler Page . . . any number of people who were. But I must tell you a little secret, a very personal one. I've always had tremendous support from my home folks, well, not just my family, but my neighbors and my home folks. They've always held me to a

[37] For information on the dictator Rafael Trujillo, see "Dominican Strongman Trujillo Slain," 1 June 1961, *Los Angeles Times*: 1.

standard that [was] a little unreal. And yet, in each instance where I had a question of whether or not I should do something, I've had to remind myself, how's this going to sound to the folks back home? And that's not phony. Many, many a time I've thought, "I can't let them down. I certainly can't let my family down. Because they have. . ." I told you. I left the farm. And that left them short one hand to do things that I would otherwise do. So people were sacrificing for me. And, gosh, I don't know whether in this day and age you dare mention it, but to this day I don't go out to keep an engagement that I don't repair to my faith to ask that I might be used, in that instance, to do something useful. And I try never to forget, when it's over, if in fact things have gone well, to say thanks. But, you know, it's sad that you don't dare talk about that. Next question. {laughter}

JOHNSON: I wanted to ask if there's anything else you wanted to add for today. Anything else you wanted to add.

BARTLETT: For today? You've gathered so many questions that were so pertinent to that period. I'll probably think of things that might be useful to add to it. But I think that you've covered the war years, the early war years—the one we won, as Jim Corman used to say {laughter}, pretty well. And if I think of anything, I'm sure we can add it at the appropriate moment.

JOHNSON: Exactly. Or bring it up for the next interview. All right. Thank you very much.

— JOE BARTLETT INTERVIEW TWO —

JOHNSON: This is Kathleen Johnson, interviewing General Joe Bartlett, former reading clerk and Minority Clerk for the U.S. House of Representatives. This is the second interview with General Bartlett. The date is May 17th, 2006, and the interview is taking place in the Legislative Resource Center, Cannon House Office Building.

I was hoping today that we could start with a few follow-up questions that I had based on your last interview. You spoke very fondly of the former Clerk of the House, William Tyler Page.[38]

BARTLETT: Well, now, he was not the Clerk during my time. He was the Republican clerk, Minority Clerk.

JOHNSON: Right. Newspaper accounts indicated that the House appointed a committee to attend his funeral in 1942.[39] And they also explain that when the Democrats took control of the House in 1931, that they worked with Republican leaders to create the lifelong post of Minority Clerk for Mr. Page. What I was wondering is, do you think these actions were a sign of the close relationship between the House Officers and Members of the period, or do you think this type of behavior was something special, reserved for a select number of Officers like Mr. Page?

BARTLETT: I think you would have to assume that he was very special. As the author of the "American's Creed," I think he had a status that was unique. There were other Officers of the House who had great respect, and even affection, on the Hill. But I

[38] Originally a House Page, William Tyler Page served as Clerk of the House from the 66th through the 71st Congress (1919–1931). For more on Page, see "'American's Creed' by Clerk of the House William Tyler Page," Weekly Historical Highlights, Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/highlights.html?action=view&intID=275. For a complete list of House Clerks, see "Clerks of the U.S. House of Representatives," Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/clerks.html.

[39] William Tyler Page died on October 19, 1942.

think that William Tyler Page would have been in a category pretty much of his own. He was an extraordinary man.

JOHNSON: Could you comment a little bit more on the relationship between Members and Officers. Were they closer during that time period? Was it a more collegial relationship?

BARTLETT: It was a different relationship, there's no doubt about that. As I mentioned to you earlier, with the Congress gone for much of the year, in those days, the Officers of the House ran this institution. And I would say people like South Trimble were very definitely people of great prestige and respect because, in the absence of Congress, they were expected to carry out whatever institutional decisions were needed.[40] And they did it, and they did it with great confidence and great responsibility. They had a charge to keep. I hope I'm interpreting their attitudes, as I viewed them as a youngster. But it was my impression that they took their roles very seriously. Their roles were much larger then. Part of that was due to the different nature of congressional sessions in those days. However, as we have discussed, where there is power, there is always bound to be a contest for power. There was competition. That is a nice word for the relationship that developed between the Office of the Clerk and the Committee on House Administration during a decade or so. Different personalities got into it, of course. But reading the daily newspapers after I had left here, I gathered that there was still some considerable contention that continued long after I left. Personalities were incidental—this was a struggle for power.

To put this into context, when Wayne Hays was chairman of Committee on House Administration and Carl Albert was the Speaker of the House, there was an unmistakable competition to see who was going to control the affairs of the

[40] South Trimble, a former Member of the House, served as Clerk of the House from the 62nd through the 65th Congress (1911–1919) and from the 72nd Congress (1931–1933) until his resignation on August 2, 1946, during the 79th Congress.

House.[41] The rules of the House very clearly give the Speaker of the House control of everything on the House side of the Capitol and many related
[4:00] responsibilities. However, Mr. Hays was a very clever, resourceful, ambitious man, and he intimidated Speaker Albert in his determination to garner some of the Speaker's authority.

I had a personal experience where I got caught between them—a matter of a little $300 travel bill. I believe I am the only person ever to have been nominated to go to the Federal Executive Institute as a representative of the House of Representatives. That was done by Speaker Albert, bless his heart. He was a Rhodes Scholar, appreciated education and learning, and was very happy to endorse my nomination to go down to Charlottesville to attend that seven-week course, mostly during a time the House was not meeting. It was a splendid experience. However, I came back to the Capitol every weekend and attended to my duties in the House. I spent Saturdays and Sundays in my office. So it certainly did not feel as though it was inappropriate for me to submit a bill for the mileage from Charlottesville on those weekends. Well, it was a minor thing for a person who was a notorious junketeer, as Wayne Hays was. But when I submitted it, for reasons I will never understand—because most of the time I had a very good relationship with Mr. Hays—he turned it down. I went to the Speaker, Albert, and said, "As the nominee for this assignment in Charlottesville, do you not think I am entitled to this mileage?" Speaker Albert agreed, but he became strangely timid. It was obvious he was not going to confront Wayne Hays over a $300 bill. I never got the money.

It was said that the authority of the Clerk was emasculated during that period [1970s] and taken over by the Committee on House Administration. And

[41] For a complete list of Speakers, see "Speakers of the House," Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/speakers.html.

without having a personal, first-hand knowledge of the details, I gather that that was the case. I know in one instance, the Garage Committee, the Parking Committee, which was made up of Wayne Hays, H. R. [Harold Royce] Gross, and B. F. [Bernice] Sisk. Wayne Hays got upset with the press one day. I saw this scene, and was later told by H. R. Gross what happened. Hays came across the aisle to where H. R. Gross sat, on the Republican side, on the center aisle. And they had a rather vigorous discussion. Hays went away, and you could see he was upset with H. R. Gross. Well, then H. R. told me—and he was a dear friend and a wonderful man—but Mr. Gross said that Mr. Hays had come over and wanted to throw the correspondents in the press gallery out of their parking spaces. And he thought that H. R. would go along with him. And, of course, H.R. was an old newspaperman himself, well, actually, a radio man. But he did some newspaper work. And he wasn't about to do a thing like that. And Hays just couldn't believe he could not roll Gross over and get him to do that. So this is indicative of a theory I've shared with young Clarence Brown, Jr., a dear friend, a dear friend, a contemporary—we've experienced many things together, including national
[8:00] conventions. And we've sat and philosophized a bit. One of the things we philosophized about was that political power, like matter, exists only in a fixed quantity. And that you don't create or eliminate political power, it just changes locale, under different pressures, as influences are applied to it. And so, the theory was that any time that one entity gained power, they did it at the expense of another entity, who lost power. And we played the game of the flow of power. At one time you would hear concern about an imperial presidency, at another time the fault might be lodged against an unrestrained committee, a despotic chairman, an overpowering Congress—or at least, one body or the other—a presumptuous Judiciary, or a Chief Justice who ought to be impeached.

Well, what's happening is that flow of power that we're talking about seems to lodge in one place for a little while, until somebody comes about with a different influence that brings more power to them. It's a game that goes on constantly. It's

a perfectly human endeavor, and we've seen it, we've certainly seen it, within the power of the House of Representatives. Being where the people govern, it has the ultimate power on many things, as it should. And so, of course, that power is going to be contested from time to time.

JOHNSON: In your last interview, you made a statement—and I wanted to quote you because it's along these lines, as far as the Clerk goes, and the changing role of the Clerk. You said, "I would say that, again, the Congress being absent a good deal of the year, in the old days, the truth of the matter was the House was run by the Clerk of the House." And a couple of questions came to mind, based on this statement. First of all, specifically, how do you believe the role of the Clerk of the House has changed from when you first started as a Page to when you retired in 1979?

BARTLETT: Well, I'm not an authority on the present status of the Clerk. I've watched the House Administration [Committee] take over procurement and different things. The power of the dollar really dictates an awful lot of influence in this world. And that's one thing that the House Administration wanted, was the procurement dollars. And they got it, back under the time of [William] Pat Jennings, and the contention between him, as the Clerk, and the chairman of the House Administration Committee. I watched, in the days of South Trimble . . . he had an assistant named "Harry" [H. Newlin] Megill, who was very knowledgeable. Not the most popular man on the Hill because he had decisions to make. But he was very, very effective, and, like a lot of other subordinates around here, knew what he could and should do in order to please his boss. He was a very significant member of that staff.

But I watched very closely the decisionmaking in those days. And there was no doubt that the authority lodged in that office, for the conduct of the business of the House, whether they were talking about the maintenance of furniture,

refurbishing or whatever, it all went back to the Clerk of the House. And I think it was performed very responsibly and well.

When they eliminated the Office of the Doorkeeper, this created a whole new shifting of power. There had been some similar experiences in days gone by. At one point, Lyle Snader held both the job of Clerk of the House and Sergeant at
[12:00] Arms of the House at the same time.[42] A very unusual thing. And then we had, as you know, a Sergeant at Arms not long before who had been sent to the penitentiary for inappropriate conduct of that office. So I don't mean that every Officer of the House in the past has been a paragon. That just isn't the case. And we've had some very heartbreaking events with some of the splendid people who've happened to have offices. And quite frankly, as you know, the elevation of Officers of the House is not always based upon any determination of their qualifications. And there were many people who thought that some of them exceeded the "Peter Principle," went beyond their abilities. I would not mention any names but there were some who were thought to be inadequate to the responsibilities entrusted to them. But that did not apply to people like South Trimble, who carried out the Office of the Clerk with such great competence. At least, that was my view. There may have been contemporaries of his who might have had a slightly different view. But I don't know that. But I know I've thought very highly of the way that office was filled.

And I must tell you, I lament (at the time I hoped someday to be the Clerk of the House instead of the clerk to the minority), and every time I saw somebody whittling away at the authority of that office, it pained me. Just as when I saw them moving functional offices of the House into obscure locations, in favor of having all kinds of activities that do not relate to the legislative product. And I've

[42] Lyle Snader was Clerk of the House during the 83rd Congress (1953–1955). On July 7, 1953, William Russell, the House Sergeant at Arms, died, leaving the office vacant. Snader was appointed the duties of Sergeant at Arms—while still serving as Clerk of the House—until the election of a replacement. See *House Journal*, 83rd Cong., 1st sess., (8 July 1953): 545.

always felt that the Clerk of the House should be located where the Appropriations chairman is located now because he should be immediately available to the floor, and he (or she) should have the status and authority commensurate with the senior Officer of the House. Administratively, the Clerk should correspond to, and complement, the august role of the Speaker. That is the way I view the ideal organizational arrangement. And if the House is going to take away the authority and the function of the Clerk, then I guess it doesn't really matter whether or not the Clerk of the House is immediately accessible to the Speaker, as I've always felt that he should be.

JOHNSON: Well, would you say then that the Clerk remained a powerful figure during the time that you were here, through 1979? Because you mentioned about the Doorkeeper's Office being eliminated. But that wasn't until 1995. So, do you think that the power stayed consistent?

BARTLETT: I'm not sure I'm qualified, Kathleen, to say what the present role is.

JOHNSON: No, not present. If you can just talk about while you were an employee here, how you think that the role had changed.

BARTLETT: Well, I always had great respect for that office. Other people have occupied that office. Regardless of who was there, that was an office that represented the authority of the Congress. I wanted the Clerk's office to have the utmost respect,
[16:00] and I wanted them to carry out that authority with a great sense of responsibility. I feel that during my time, it generally was done. I would not want to reflect anything but honor upon those that I've known who have held these offices. Because I honor the offices.

I was very impressed when Donn Anderson had to step down from the Clerk's office.[43] The tribute that he gave to the opportunities, the privilege he'd had, was very impressive. I admired Donn for that. His attitude, at that moment in his life, impressed me a great deal. But Donn would be a far better authority on the transition of that role than would I.

There have been an awful lot of fine people who have worked within that office. I don't want to personalize it, but there were people who were transitioned into that post, and I knew them before they went in. And I thought they had a pretty good understanding of some of the intricacies of the sub-Clerk level. And then they got in there, they certainly didn't follow through on what we had discussed before they had been elevated. I have often wondered where the pressure came from that caused them to step back from some of the things, some of the reforms that were not brought to bear after they took office.

That's another story, for another day. But it just happens to be a curious experience, that I talked with them, knew them well. We had discussed the things that needed to be done, things that I would never have an opportunity to do. I didn't sit idly by during my many years pre-dating my becoming Minority Clerk. But I'd written up reforms like you wouldn't believe, only to find that they were not going to be a part of any plan. [Clarence] Bud Brown—again, back to my dear friend Bud—his point, "They say most politicians are paranoid, but I'm not, am I?" And that's sort of it. I think there is a paranoia. I think there has been a concern, in more recent years, and I think I could document this, that there are certain leaders who were paranoid and certain elected leaders of Congress who were afraid that some staff member might be made an Officer or what have you, and then would put together something that they would regard as a power base. This is unthinkable to me, just unthinkable. Because the Members are always in charge.

[43] Donnald K. Anderson served as Clerk of the House from the 100th through the 103rd Congress (1987–1995). The Office of History and Preservation conducted eight oral history interviews with Donnald Anderson covering his 35-year career working for the House.

And no Officer would ever, should ever, knowingly exceed his authority, or exceed the license that he's given to perform. We've discussed this a little bit before, and I think it's the key to people like Lewis Deschler's many years of service, was that he always knew. . .[44]

JOHNSON: Right. The longtime Parliamentarian.

BARTLETT: [20:00] Right. And a brilliant mind. An autocrat, a tough son of a gun. I mean, he was much feared. I had a good relationship with Lewis Deschler, and not everybody did. {laughter} But I respected him so highly on that very thing that I knew that, when he directed anything, that he did it with the full confidence that he was carrying out the wishes of his boss, of the Speaker. And that's a crucial relationship, that anyone [must understand in] any line of business, Congress or anywhere else. Everybody has a boss, and you've got to know what your relationship should be, in order to serve him, that boss, he/she, properly. And this has been pretty much my experience with the Congress.

But there is that paranoia. Oh, my plans are still in a file drawer. At that time, we had no organization. There was no such thing as a sick leave, no such thing as scheduled holidays. There was no job evaluation of any kind, by anybody. And we had a rather large payroll, by the standards of that day, and yet we had complete autonomy. People went their own way—they had their own sponsor, they served that sponsor, and they didn't really much care about what anybody else did. But this was the kind of staffing, at that time, that I felt, we've just got to get this thing organized. And so that was the basis of much of my table of organization that I prepared. But I took it before the leadership at that time, and I guess that wouldn't be hard to figure out who that was. But I took it before the leadership,

[44] Lewis Deschler served as the House Parliamentarian from 1928 to 1974. For more information on his career, see Richard L. Lyons, "Parliamentarian Lewis Deschler Dies," 13 July 1976, *Washington Post*: C6. For a complete list of Parliamentarians, see "Parliamentarians of the House," Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/parliamentarians.html.

and I'll never forget, the leadership was not going to accept it. And that was an interesting relationship, too. But Glenn Davis, of Wisconsin, spoke up and tried to explain the word "compensatory time," which nobody had ever heard of in that room, apparently. {laughter} It was funny. But he was the only one who tried to advance the cause. So what I'm saying, really, was, at that point, there was no desire to see the staff put into a mode of organization. I just wanted to introduce self-evaluation. I wanted each person to evaluate what they were doing. But, oh, having said that, I think things were reasonably acceptable in the eyes of the membership.

JOHNSON: I'm certainly going to ask you more detailed questions about your time as minority clerk, but I just wanted to fill in a few gaps first. You mentioned a few minutes ago Harry Megill. He was appointed acting Clerk for a short period of time.[45]

BARTLETT: Yes, he was. You are so knowledgeable.

JOHNSON: Well, there's really not very much, except the *Congressional Record* that refers to this. I was hoping that you could shed some light on this period and this unusual circumstance of an acting Clerk.

BARTLETT: That's right. That is right. I remember that, his having taken that position. Harry was fully capable of that. He had never been elected Clerk of the House, although he had run for the office. He did not have the necessary base of
[24:00] support. Harry was very well informed. And the many, many details that come into running the Clerk's office, particularly in those days, the statutory requirements and the rules of the House, as they applied to the work of the Clerk,

[45] H. Res. 753, passed by Congress on August 2, 1946, authorized the "appointment of an acting Clerk." Harry Newlin Megill was designated that same day. See *House Journal*, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., (2 August 1946): H799; H918; "South Trimble, Deputy Clerk Harry Newlin Megill Assumed His Responsibilities on August 2, 1946," Weekly Historical Highlights, Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/highlights.html?action=view&intID=326.

Harry knew all of that. And he worked long hours. He really was one of those devoted people.

JOHNSON: He had been a longtime assistant to South Trimble?

BARTLETT: He had been a longtime assistant. I don't know how far back it went. And he had a son who was a Page. He only had one son. And his wife, bless her heart, would come down and wait for him hours on end, while he would be working at carrying out the duties. So it was altogether appropriate. Now, he remained in an assistant's role under Ralph Roberts and Lyle Snader.[46] I don't know when Harry left. And I frankly don't know when Harry died. I think we must not have been here because I would certainly have wanted to pay my respects to Harry. Because I thought he was a very fine public servant. He carried out his duties devotedly.

JOHNSON: He was acting Clerk. He was appointed August 2nd, 1946, and he only served until the next Congress started, on January 3rd, 1947. And I know you were young at this point.

BARTLETT: Yeah.

JOHNSON: But do you remember anything about the circumstances surrounding him being named acting Clerk?

BARTLETT: I thought Megill might have also been acting Clerk at the time of Lyle Snader's coming in. You have no evidence of that?[47]

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[46] Ralph R. Roberts served as Clerk of the House from the 81st through the 82nd Congress (1949–1953) and from the 84th through the 89th Congress (1955–1967).

[47] General Bartlett subsequently requested an addition to his interview at this point of the transcript. It follows: "South Trimble died on November 23rd, 1946, and is buried in his native Kentucky, which had elected him to Congress for three terms at the turn of the century. Without a specific memory, I think we can assume that Mr. Trimble had become disabled in the summer of that year. There are so many official requirements on that office that the Speaker would have thought it prudent to give legal authority to his deputy [Megill] to act on his behalf, and without looking it up, I am sure the House passed such an authorizing resolution. With Harry Megill, those duties

JOHNSON: No.

BARTLETT: Well, he served. And I know that Lyle was very dependent upon Harry to provide the knowledge that he did not have. A funny story went with that. That Lyle was elected, of course, in the 83rd Congress. Back when the 80th Congress was elected, in November of 1946, Congress was not in session. I was back on the farm in West Virginia, doing what farm boys do. And I got a call from Speaker [Joe] Martin's office, soon-to-be Speaker Martin's office, saying I should get back here in a hurry. And I set a record of coming back across the mountainous Route 50 to get here. When I got here, they said—they didn't say, in so many words—"We're not prepared for this." But they weren't. They were totally unprepared. And Leo Allen was going to be the head of patronage, the Congressman from Galena, Illinois. And he didn't know anything about patronage. That was kind of funny. He said, would you get together a list—sort of like the plum book for the House of Representatives? And here, I'm a kid. I'm 20 years old. I've never voted. No, I hadn't; I was 20 years old. {laughter} So I didn't even know where to start. I took a yellow pad and went down to the disbursing office, which was then located in what is now that corridor between what was the Doorkeeper's Office and the Clerk's Office. That was the disbursing office. That's where you went to get your money. And there were two ladies in there: Alice Sattgast and Anne Trimble,

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were in good hands. His authority was until the organization of the next Congress. As it turned out, the Republican 80th Congress [1947–1949]. That Congress elected a Clerk about whom we have not spoken: John Andrews of Massachusetts—a sterling gentleman in every sense, a fine cut of a man who walked the eight blocks down Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, from his residence, and brought to his job all the integrity and dignity of his illustrious predecessors. He enjoyed the confidence of Speaker Martin and the friendship of many. Andrews had been a World War I Marine, and when he died some four years later, he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, in a very ordinary grave. For reasons I cannot recall, I rode to his interment in a car with Congressman John McCormack. He, too, had great affection for Andrews. I remember him pointing to a little black insignia on his lapel and declaring that it was a high honor he was proud to share with John Andrews. They were Knights of Malta. And both were famous for honoring friendship. You will be interested to know that when Republican John Andrews was elected Clerk, he named H. Newlin Megill as his administrative assistant! And, of course, we know, Harry went on to similarly serve Clerks Ralph Roberts and Lyle Snader.

Incidentally, during the 80th Congress, Snader was clerk to the Rules Committee. After the 80th Congress I think he tried lobbying for a time. But in 1951 he was listed as assistant reading clerk and Irving Swanson, who had been assistant reading clerk, was now listed as minority clerk. I do not remember the mechanisms of this transition, but Snader's patron was the very powerful Chairman Leo Allen of Illinois, who was not reluctant to use power."

[28:00] who had to be a Trimble. I never knew her relation. She ended up marrying a Congressman from North Dakota, named Don Short, a nice, nice fellow. And she was a sweetheart. Well, I went to them—Alice and Anne—in all innocence, and I said, "I've got this responsibility to put together a list for the new chairman of the Patronage Committee," or whatever. I don't know that I used that term because I didn't know what was going to be. Congress hadn't organized the new Congress yet, the 80th Congress.

JOHNSON: And at this point—I'm sorry to interrupt—but at this point you were chief Page, correct?

BARTLETT: I was chief Page. I had been chief Page from October of 1945. Anyway, there were just not very many Republican staffers. So I sort of stood out like a sore thumb. And, obviously, they thought I could put this thing together. Alice Sattgast and Alice Trimble sat with me and drew up a list. Maybe they helped me because they wanted to be sure their names weren't on that list. I'm not sure. {laughter} But they were really nice to me, always had been. They were just a couple of real good gals in that office. So I took the list back up to the Speaker, to the soon-to-be Speaker. And Elsie Gridley, who was his secretary, was very pleased to get it. And Allen was overjoyed. He absolutely was ecstatic about this. He thought this was a great list. I don't have a copy of it. I don't know whether it was any good or not, but he liked it. And he said, "I'm going to be chairman of the Rules Committee. Would you like to be my clerk?" And I said, "Would that mean I'd have to leave the floor?" And he didn't answer me directly. I'm not sure he knew. But I didn't want to leave the floor. And so I didn't accept the job, which Lyle Snader later got. {laughter} But Lyle was from Illinois, and Leo Allen was his Congressman. I never told Lyle in his lifetime that I'd been offered the job before he got it. {laughter} But it was an interesting time of transition. And I did want to stay on the floor. And I was rather young.

JOHNSON: Another follow-up question that I had was, you talked quite a bit about Ralph Roberts. And, specifically, you mentioned a conflict that occurred between Mr. Roberts and the House Administration Committee. Could you elaborate a little bit more on that? You spoke briefly about it, but could you just provide some more details?

BARTLETT: Well, I probably can't. I may have already told you about as much as I know. But there was a conflict of personality between Pat Jennings, who was then a Member of Congress, and who later was Clerk. He was from Marion, Virginia. And I never could quite understand it. And I guess, maybe, that's where I ought to kind of leave it, that I couldn't understand it. But there was a conflict. And I told you that Ralph had a way of believing that time would solve all things, and that they would find out. You know, he wanted to be patient with them. A number of times, I said to myself, if I didn't say it to Ralph, "Really, you need to make an issue of this. You need to project your own point of view on this thing." And he
[32:00] was reluctant to do it. He was a very fine fellow, in my book. I liked Ralph a lot. And I always hated to see him misused, as I think he was.

JOHNSON: So is your perception that it was more of a personality conflict, rather than an institutional one?

BARTLETT: And a power struggle. I think that always enters into it—that that somebody is exercising some power that somebody else would like to exercise. Of course, as I told you, Joseph Sinnott had been a powerful Officer.[48] And he exercised power!

The two cloakrooms, where they had their little snack bars in each one . . . well, the one on the Democratic side was run by a fellow named Coats, C-O-A-T-S,

[48] Doorkeeper of the House from the 62nd Congress through the 65th Congress (1911–1919) and from the 72nd Congress (1931–1933) until his death on January 27, 1943. For more on the career of Joe Sinnott, see "Doorkeeper of the House of Representatives Joe Sinnott," Weekly Historical Highlights, Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/highlights.html?action=view&intID=322.

and he was blind. And he had an assistant named Jimmy, whose last name I do not know. But Jimmy had a shoeshine stand up there. And that seems kind of funny today, but he had a shoeshine stand in the Democratic Cloakroom. And he had a good clientele. But he could imitate Joe Sinnott. Joe Sinnott had a gruff {grumble}, you know? And Jimmy could imitate him. And he would do it, if there was any misbehavior going on back in the cloakroom. It's an L-shaped cloakroom. And his stand was on one side, and the other side was where they had the couches. And if Congress wasn't in session, Pages frequently just lounged on those couches. And if there was misbehavior—occasionally a craps game might be going on back there—Jimmy would come around the corner with his imitation and have those kids trying to dig a hole through the wall to get out of there. It was funny.

People stood in awe and some fear of Joe Sinnott. I didn't. I was very fond of him, as I've testified. But he ran a different operation. Ralph was his assistant. And you would have thought that Ralph would have garnered some of his attitudes towards the job, but he really didn't. Once Ralph took over, it was a different operation.

I told you they put me on a different payroll every month. They did. One month, I thought I was off the payroll. I went around to see Charlie Smith, who was then the operating engineer and in charge of the elevators. Charlie Smith put me on elevator number one, the Members' elevator that goes up to the [House] Press Gallery. So I'm on there, operating this elevator—nothing was automatic in those days you know, you had to crank the thing. I'm in there cranking the thing. Ralph comes, gets on the elevator. "What are you doing here?" "I'm running the elevator." He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, I needed a job." He said, "You've never been out of a job." He said, "You've got to make up your mind. Do you want to run this elevator, or do you want to be a Page?" {laughter}

JOHNSON: And you chose the latter.

BARTLETT: I called good old Charlie Smith, and I said, "I'd like relief, because I'm going back up to being a Page." {laughter} Page overseer, in those days.

JOHNSON: Another topic that we spoke about in the last interview was the "Little Congress." And there really hasn't been much documented on this organization. [Robert] Caro's biography of Lyndon Johnson describes it in a few pages.[49] But I wanted to ask you a specific question, because you seemed to suggest that Johnson's actions may have had a backlash effect on the organization, and may have actually led to
[36:00] its demise. Can you elaborate on this, or describe more of your insight?

BARTLETT: Very little. I think it was more of an impression than anything else. But you've got to remember that the war came on at about that time, and we had other things to be concerned about. But no, I don't think there was any question that . . . I've heard enough comments over the years, that there was a certain presumption of grandeur that took place among the staffers who conducted that. And the Members didn't think it was necessary to have them making the news. I heard enough of that to have formed that impression, that they were very glad when it started folding. And I do think that the stacking of that election discredited the operation, to the point where there wasn't that much feeling for continuing it.

JOHNSON: And you're referring to when Lyndon was able to maneuver to become Speaker of the "Little Congress?"

BARTLETT: That was the rumor, that he had stacked the election.

JOHNSON: By inviting the elevator operators and other employees that hadn't previously been included.

[49] Scant scholarship has been devoted to the organization "Little Congress." The most comprehensive secondary source that includes information on the "Little Congress" is Robert A. Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York: Vintage, 1990): 261–265.

BARTLETT: You know, he enjoyed calling himself "Landslide Lyndon." He went through life knowing how to win a close election. So I don't think it was out of character for him to have been a part of an expedient election. It seemed that way.

JOHNSON: Another thing that I asked you about, and you provided some great detail, was the wartime security measures that were implemented. And you said that there were very few. But one of the ones, specifically, you said, was the air-raid drills. And I was wondering if you could describe these in more detail. Specifically, were these something that Members and staff were involved in? Did they have to evacuate the building? Were they aware that these drills were occurring?

BARTLETT: Oh, yes. They were aware, and they did participate. And most of these took place in the evening, when Congress was not in session. I don't ever remember a drill during a session of Congress. But I do remember a lot of drills when we were around in the evening. And there were several things that were required. Of course, the blackout of the windows was required. You were expected to go to certain areas. There were certain air-raid areas. I remember, having been caught on First Street, and went into the Senate office . . . it was the center of the Senate office building [Russell]. You know, the Cannon Building and the Senate office building, being very much of the same construction, had gardens with fountains out in the middle.[50] That's hard to realize now because all of that space has been taken over by different activities, and they've built right over where the fountain was.

[50] For a detailed history of the Cannon House Office Building, see "Cannon House Office Building: A Congressional First," Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/art_artifacts/Cannon_Centennial/index.html. For information on the House and Senate office buildings, see "The Congressional Office Buildings," Architect of the Capitol, http://www.aoc.gov/cc/cobs/index.cfm.

But one air raid, I remember I just ducked in through the driveway, into that center court. And I spent the time there until the air raid was over—until the air-raid drill was over. But we had—all of the Capitol community behaved just like any other community. We had buckets of sand around that were supposed to be used to put out incendiary bombs and things. Actually, down the corridor, you'd have buckets of sand. There were a lot of precautions.

[40:00] You know, Kathleen, this thing faded fairly quickly. The grave concern was the first six months of 1942. People were excited. The first six weeks after Pearl Harbor [December 7, 1941], there was a lot of tension here. I got the impression, and it was a child's impression, that there had been a lot of planning for civil defense that had preceded Pearl Harbor. Because air-raid wardens and things sort of came on the scene very quickly. And it didn't take them very long to start doing that, the black curtains that went up everywhere.

JOHNSON: What were those?

BARTLETT: For light. You couldn't have anything that showed the slightest light through a window. You couldn't have a lit cigarette. The light from a single cigarette was supposed to provide a target for the *Luftwaffe*.[51] We did a lot of things that seem silly now, but we were certainly serious about defending the Capitol.

JOHNSON: But by mid-1942, you'd say most of this was not used anymore?

BARTLETT: Pretty quickly, at about that time, it started to be obvious that we didn't have to look for the *Luftwaffe*. We really had thought that was a threat.

JOHNSON: Related to the war years, even though this is going to seem like an odd segue, beginning in 1909, there were congressional baseball games that were held, almost

[51] Reference to the German Air Force.

annually, between the Democrats and the Republicans. Well, first of all, I wanted to ask if you remember any of these games?[52]

BARTLETT: Oh, heavens, I was a part of them. Very much so. I was out with the team every day. And I've still got my *Washington Star* certificate that Sid Yudain was handing out at that time. And I remember one of the early games up at old Griffith Stadium. And again, our friend Glenn Davis—I mentioned his name a while ago—he hit the first home run up there. And it was funny—he had a plane to catch—and he hit the home run and just kept running into the locker room, changed his clothes, and went. And nobody got a chance to pat him on the back or cheer or congratulate him, or anything, because he caught the plane back to Wisconsin that night.

JOHNSON: Any idea what year that was or the period?

BARTLETT: Oh, golly, my certificate says 1953.

JOHNSON: Right. And just to explain my connection with the war period. . .

BARTLETT: Yes.

JOHNSON: In the research that one of my colleagues has done on the Congressional Baseball Game, it's unclear if there were games held during the war years. We know there was one in 1945. Do you remember any?

BARTLETT: I think, probably, that there was not during the war years. I don't remember anything at that time. The activities of the war years were bond drives. And we

[52] First organized in 1909 by Representative John Tener of Pennsylvania, the Congressional Baseball Game was held sporadically until 1962 when it became an annual event. For a detailed history, see "Congressional Baseball Game," Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/art_artifacts/baseball/index.html.

had so many of them. And so much talent and imagination went into the bond drives. I've mentioned earlier that Jack Benny and his crew showed up, in the old Maxwell automobile for which he was famous, out on the plaza. There were many things, as a matter of fact. The duck mobile—that amphibious thing which they
[44:00] created in World War II—was used as a medium for bond drives. You could get a ride into the Tidal Basin in the duck. And there were many things done. And if anybody had any energy, it was pretty much harnessed for the war, rather than for anything else. I don't remember anything other than that.

But the ball games, we had a heck of a good, young team after World War II. We had a lot of veterans who were real good ball players. And then, of course, later on, [Wilmer] "Vinegar Bend" Mizell . . . and I've talked to Vinegar Bend, bless his soul. He's gone on to his reward. But Vinegar Bend—the other side was afraid of him because he was terribly good. And he told the stories about when he was a professional baseball player, how he had been instructed to hit a batter. And it was a gruesome story, to me. When he protested, his coach said, "Well, it's going to cost you $200 if you don't." Heck, I didn't have $200. Well, when he got on the Republican team, the Democrats were trying to think of all kinds of handicaps to "even the playing field." {laughter}

JOHNSON: It just wasn't possible.

BARTLETT: Oh, he was a tiger. But we had some good players, in addition to Vinegar Bend. There were many contests that were not much of a contest because we had some superior players.

JOHNSON: Were these competitive affairs that the Members took it seriously, and they wanted to win the game?

BARTLETT: Some did. Some took it terribly seriously. As a matter of fact, that was a concern, I might add, to Joe Martin and to Sam Rayburn. There was a real concern that a Member was going to get hurt. And they tried to talk them into playing softball, and they wouldn't have it. And I remember Speaker Martin's very serious concern about the physical well-being of his Members that they are going to go out there, and somebody's going to get hurt. Yes, it was highly competitive. And Mr. Martin would have said that they were too competitive.

Silvio Conte took over later, as the Republican whatever [manager]. And, as a matter of fact, he was probably a longer-term manager of the team than were the Democrat managers. They seemed to alternate, or be replaced a little more often, during that period. But they would take [to] the well [of the House] and have their little pre-game goading of one another and then gloating afterwards. It got to be . . . it was a lot of fun, but there was a degree of seriousness about wanting to win, certainly.

JOHNSON: What was the attendance like for the congressional staff? Was this a big event?

BARTLETT: It varied widely. At little Griffith Stadium, it looked like we had a crowd. When we started going out to Alexandria, and different places, to play . . . or Arlington. And anyway, across the river, in Virginia, there were games that didn't have very good attendance. Part of that would be publicity. When Sid Yudain had *Roll Call*, he gave it his all. He really had an awful lot to do with it. Have you ever
[48:00] done Sidney Yudain? He'd be a good source, certainly on this subject. I don't know whether he's still around. Last I knew he was living out on Potomac Avenue. But he certainly would know all about congressional baseball. Congressman [William] Ayres of Ohio was very close to Sidney Yudain. And they discovered . . . and promoted Mark Russell, the comedian.

A 3 minute, 40 second segment of the interview has been redacted at the request of the interviewee.

JOHNSON: I was hoping we could switch gears to your time as chief Page.

BARTLETT: Absolutely.

JOHNSON: In the last interview, you described how you became chief Page. But what I wanted to know more about is your responsibilities and your duties in your position.

BARTLETT: Well, the chief Page job was a staff job. It was a permanent, year-round job, as against the Page job. And I was the youngest person ever to be chief Page, by quite a little bit. Obviously, because I was 19, I think, when I got the job. Of course, I was the Republican chief Page. I supervised the Pages on our side. It didn't occur to me, at that time . . . as I told you, I turned down the job with the Rules Committee, but there were other jobs. I rather enjoyed being chief Page. And at that age, I didn't really feel like I wanted to venture beyond that work. We had outstanding young people. But we didn't have girls.[53] That was not one of my problems. We did have young people. We had, at one point, I think, in the Page school, about 20 grade-school students, meaning they were not old enough to be in high school.

And I had a couple of Pages—the Kelly boys from Indianapolis, the Sughrue boys from Massachusetts—who were 10-, 11-, 12-year-old kids. Very, very young. And

[53] On May 21, 1973, Felda Looper became the first female to serve as a Page in the House of Representatives. For a brief summary, see "Felda Looper, the First Female Page," Weekly Historical Highlights, Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/highlights.html?action=view&intID=131. The Office of History and Preservation conducted an oral history interview with Felda Looper on May 21, 2007.

they did fairly well. The older Kelly became a priest. And both of the Sughrue boys became lawyers. But Eddie Sughrue was the most mischievous Page I ever had. Among the tricks he would play, he would get a new kid to go up to the top of the dome—we had easy access in those days—and wait for the air-mail drop. And not to come back without it. That seems incredible today, but in those days they would fall for it. And Eddie was a real con artist! We could buy a Coke for a nickel, so Eddie would go around looking forlorn, with four pennies in his hand, mumbling that if he had one more penny he could buy a Coke. Truth was, he had a pocket full of pennies, and he kept collecting more!

Burgess Meredith—who was a celebrity in those days—made an appearance in the gallery, and Eddie ran up and got his autograph. The next thing I saw, he was back at a little table we had in the cloakroom, taking some thin paper and tracing Burgess Meredith's autograph, and selling them. But the worst thing he did . . . this is incredible. Eddie went around taking up a collection for the widow of the Unknown Soldier. And he got away with it, for a long time, until I found out about it. But he was full of mischief. It was his nature. But bear in mind, he wasn't old enough for high school. I don't know, at that time, he probably was 11 years old. But these are part of the heartaches.

You were asking what does a chief Page do? In those days, the Members were paid by check from the disbursing office. It was not uncommon for them to get a Page to go down and pick up the check and bring it to the office. That wasn't all that strange. Well, one day—gee, I can't even remember now for whom this was—but we sent Chippie Melchiorre, from Philadelphia, down to pick up the Member's check. The next thing I knew, the check had been picked up, the Member had not gotten it, and Chippie Melchiorre was on his way to Philadelphia. I was frantic. I dashed to Union Station [Washington, D.C.] and ran up and down the train, looking for Chippie and calling, "Melchiorre!" And somebody's calling back, "Heathcliff!" You know, they thought it was a big joke. Well, I came back to the

Capitol without Chippie and without any clues. The House was adjourned, and I slunk into the dimmed Democratic Cloakroom announcing the question, "Does anybody here know anything about Chippie and a check he was supposed to deliver?" Most of the kids, off duty, didn't even bother to look up from their sport, but one Page, very much engaged, said, "Oh, yes, I have it here in my coat pocket. I promised Chippie I would deliver it for him." I aged a great deal that afternoon—$863 was a lot of money in those days. There were better days, and the Pages participated in a lot of interesting activities.

General [Frederick] Funston had been General "Blackjack" Pershing's right-hand man in the Expeditionary Force in Europe in World War I.[54] And his grandson, Eddie Funston, was one of my Pages and a very fine fellow. We formed a drill team, and Eddie was in charge of the drill team. And they went out on the Capitol lawn and drilled every day for a while. They got to be pretty good. And as I think I may have mentioned, they went to Gettysburg with Speaker Martin, who was the Grand Marshall of the Memorial Day parade, and they were the Honor Escort for Speaker Martin in that parade. Congressman Chester Gross had set that up. And it was a nice experience. There were many other activities with which they were involved. Of course, I was a graduate of the Page School, but as chief Page I did not have any direct involvement with the school. They had many splendid extracurricular activities: some White House invitations, embassy visits, travel club trips, and numerous social engagements. Back on the job, their duties were focused on the House Floor.

As most people, I think, know, there's a Page calling system on the floor. It works electronically. It's been upgraded. They have a much better system there now. The Pages have a diagram of the floor. And when a bell signals, the Page, taking his little card with the diagram, can go directly to that seat, without any trouble.

[54] General Frederick Funston, the son of Kansas Representative Edward Funston, died shortly before U.S. entry into World War I. For information on General Funston's military career, see Stuart Creighton Miller, "Funston, Frederick," *American National Biography* 8 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 577–578.

And that's his number-one priority. At least it was when I was chief Page. Your number-one priority is to respond to the Members' calls on the floor. And that
[60:00] could involve a lot of things. But the direct service to the Members of Congress, that was put above everything else.

Concurrent with that, we would get phone calls coming into the cloakroom, wanting documents from the old document room and things of that nature. That was the second priority. And we would dispatch Pages from the Page bench. In our instance, our central was located in the northwest corner of the House Chamber. We had two benches, without cushions. And we would try to maintain a few boys on those benches. We'd sometimes have eight or 10 sitting there, waiting for their next assignment. But most of the time, we were lucky to have two or three there, waiting to take care of the House Floor, if it was a busy time of day, a busy legislative situation.

JOHNSON: So would it be fair to say that you supervised to make sure that everything ran smoothly among the Pages?

BARTLETT: Yes. I felt a great responsibility to make sure that the Members were facilitated in their legislative work, in any way that the Pages could do it. I tried to impress upon the Pages the great opportunity we had to provide a very crucial service. And, oh yeah, it was not fun and games, as far as I was concerned. We had an important duty to carry out there. And I mentioned the lapses on that. But I could also say that, for 363 days of the year, I didn't have any of those kinds of problems. We simply performed. I had some awfully fine Pages. If you look back across the yearbooks of that day, it makes me maudlin just to think about what outstanding young people we were able to bring in. That, too, is kind of ironic. Because there's no test that's given to decide whether or not somebody is qualified to be a Page. And the Member would select them, purely by his own standards.

End of Part One – Beginning of Part Two

JOHNSON: Would you be able to provide a description of the Republican Cloakroom, both a physical description and some insight on the atmosphere and the types of things that took place in this room?

BARTLETT: I hope so. It's been completely redesigned now, but I can give you a little better picture of the old cloakroom. It was in fact a cloakroom. It isn't anymore. There was a rack in the cloakroom that had a place for a hook for a coat and a place for a hat for every Member on that side of the aisle. Those had little plates that had their names on them. I have many of their plates because nobody else took them. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Really? That's interesting.

BARTLETT: I have given them to their families as a keepsake, whether they had any particular reason to want them or not, but that was my purpose in getting them, to distribute them to the families, but I still have many of them. One part of the institution that is long forgotten was the spittoons, of which there were many. And Ed Marshall—I know I've mentioned him—Ed Marshall was a sweet old fella who wore a little grey cotton coat, and he was something else. He had charge of many things. But his job was those darn "sugar bowls"—those spittoons all around the floor, which would get kicked and get splashed. I always thought they were a most unpleasant part of the chamber. Ed took care of them. He had a big old bucket with some kind of disinfectant in it, and he would go up and clean them. That was the last duty of the day.

In the cloakroom, there was a huge fireplace back in the back. And the first thing that Ed Marshall would do, virtually every day in the winter and summer, would be to go back and lay down a fire in that fireplace and have that beautiful oak

wood crackling back there, and what a marvelous scene that was. Alone, Ed would ruminate with ghosts, and we enjoyed visiting about it. There was a little round table that was in front of that fireplace. The overstuffed lounges back there were a rich red with headpieces that went up to a curl in the design of the couches—I don't know how to describe those things, I'm not knowledgeable—but they were lounging couches, and they were certainly a welcome sight in the cloakroom for the Members who needed to stretch out for a short while.[55] But they gave it an old club look. The phone booths were so different that it's hard to imagine how different they were from the ones that are there now. There are many more of them than there were then. The old ones were really sturdy booths, large enough to move around in and accommodate a much larger telephone
[4:00] instrument than you have today. Again, that was just a part of it. They now have a command center in there where they can really accommodate a lot of communications—that didn't exist in those days at all.

The food service was on the opposite wall. I mentioned earlier that Mr. Coats—black man who had the cloakroom . . . had the whole room, blind, on the Democrats' side. On the Republican side was Ben Jones—marvelous man.[56] I saw a picture a couple days ago of the Pages being served in the cloakroom when they'd come up from Page School at 9:00 or 9:30 in the morning. They were a pretty hungry lot and he usually had something waiting. It was terrible what they'd eat—Ben stopped by the factory every morning and brought in this big box of Krispy Kreme donuts. It was strange to mix them with Coca-Colas, but that was their choice. Ben was a good man, a leading member of the community, a pillar of his church, and a Lodge member, a homeowner up on 5th Street, right next to Soldier's Home, raising three girls: Florence, Helen, and Dorothy.

[55] General Bartlett later recalled that the earlier versions of the "overstuffed lounges" were black leather.
[56] Ben Jones worked in the Republican Cloakroom for nearly 40 years. For more on his career, see *Congressional Record*, House, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., (15 April 1946): 3714.

JOHNSON: And Helen ended up taking over the lunch counter.[57]

BARTLETT: Helen did. But both of the other girls, Florence and Dorothy, had served their time. When Helen was out having a baby, Jamile, her sisters were there helping their dad. Helen took care of her folks in their old age. Helen's not well now. Helen has been a dear friend for so many years. I have not been in touch with her lately, but now that I'm reminded, I will be.

Ben cooked a roast beef every night before the House was going to be meeting. It was marvelous, marvelous roast beef. He served the most sumptuous sandwich for 25¢, and everybody had to line up and get one. But he did such a fine job. And he'd work a long day. I have a mind's image of Ben that's very kindly. I think back to him with real affection. He was a good man. He had one run-in with a fella who didn't realize that he was not in Rison, Arkansas. He treated Ben in a way that Ben was not accustomed to being treated, and, boy, did Ben let him
[8:00] know. {laughter} That was something that was not like the usual conduct there. Between Helen, the present thing, she has so many friends. When the Members come back, the first thing they ask for is: "Where is Helen?" "Is Helen here?" She has so many friends from among the former Members.

In the renovation, in 1949 and '50, in redoing the House, they simply redid the cloakroom completely, and it has a totally different atmosphere than it did before. They have huge television sets now. That was, of course, unknown; we didn't even have a radio! {laughter}

[57] For information on Helen Sewell—the daughter of Ben Jones and longtime manager of the Republican Cloakroom—see "Longtime House Employee Helen Sewell," Weekly Historical Highlights, Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/highlights.html?action=view&intID=88; Bree Hocking, "Friends Remember the Smile Behind Café Helen," 24 July 2006, *Roll Call*.

JOHNSON: What kind of activities took place, as far as the Members [in the cloakroom]? Do you remember if they came there to rest in between sessions? What kinds of things took place?

BARTLETT: Well, of course, even in those days the telephones were very busy and a very important part of their communicating with their offices and their constituents. A funny thing happened—one day Mrs. [Edith Nourse] Rogers from Massachusetts came in, and she says, "How aw ya? How aw ya?"[58] That was her Boston accent. We had an eager beaver Page who was on the telephone, who said, "Where in Hawaii do you want?" He was going to get Hawaii for her. She said, "How aw ya?" {laughter} That's a true story.

The Members, of course, they would sometimes—oh golly, I can think of one very dear Member who would play poker all night and show up the next morning. There's a water fountain there. He'd take his hand in the water fountain, wash his face a little bit, then go back and insist that the lights on that side of cloakroom be turned down, and he would put those little white towels over his face, and he'd be up in an half an hour or so on his way to committee.

There were lots of dramas that took place in the cloakroom over the years. People would be hurt, be sick, be whatever, be grieved, and that drama would play out in the cloakroom. And there's one story that I'll tell you that's a real pip. I know you've never heard this one. {laughter} [Margaret] Peggy Heckler.[59]

JOHNSON: From Massachusetts.

[58] For information on Congresswoman Rogers, see Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk, *Women in Congress, 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006): 70–75, and http://womenincongress.house.gov.
[59] Office of History and Preservation, *Women in Congress*: 434–439, and http://womenincongress.house.gov.

BARTLETT: When they ran out of telephone booths, as they did, they moved a couple of huge tables into the cloakroom, which took up more space than people liked. But they just put on those tables some loose telephones—no booth, no nothing, just loose telephones. So I was on the other side of the cloakroom one day and I heard— we, several of us heard—we heard this female voice coming from the other side. See, when you're on one side of the "L," you don't see what's on the other side of the "L," but you can hear. She was screaming, "Oh, you can't do that. I'll tell ya, go get them. Get them back! Get them back!" And we're thinking, "What the heck is going on?" Well, I looked around the corner, and it was Peggy, and she was speaking very loudly to her office saying that "You've got to do this." Then we found out what it was that they had to do. They had to get back a mailing that had just gone out that day—a very large mailing, as most Members do. And that
[12:00] mailing had included a newsletter. And on the cover of that newsletter was a cozy picture of Peggy Heckler and the fella who was on the front page of the [Washington] *Post* that day with his girlfriend who jumped into the Tidal Basin. Peggy was posed with Wilbur Mills on the front of her newsletter.[60] She didn't want it to go out, and so she was trying to get it back from the post office, and it was too late. {laughter}

JOHNSON: So those are the sorts of things that you witnessed in the cloakroom?

BARTLETT: Oh, that was funny. I told Mr. Mills that story; he got a kick out of it. Incidentally, he was a man who had tremendous respect. There's no way to overstate that. When he was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, one of the few people who could bring a bill to the floor unchallenged—no one dared amend it. It was just the way he put it. It reflected his vast, vast knowledge of the bill, of the subject, that very few people had. He was a real giant. So when this happened, I asked around if anybody had known he was having a problem. Only one Member

[60] For more on the incident involving Congressman Mills, see Julian Zelizer, *On Capitol Hill: The Struggle to Reform Congress and Its Consequences, 1948–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 164–166.

ever told me that he thought he did, and I wasn't really sure. I had no idea, and I saw Mr. Mills every day and just had no idea that he was having this problem.

Long after these episodes, he came to the Federal Executive Institute and spoke at a luncheon, and I have never seen such candor. Contrition, I wouldn't even call it that. He just was simply acknowledging a terrible fact of life. He completely reformed. And while he had been discharged from his Masonic Lodge in Little Rock when this happened, he won his way back into the Lodge and was fully accepted, a fully honored member of the Lodge. He recovered from this, and I think a lot of people didn't know that—it didn't get a lot of publicity. His candor of acknowledging what happened to him was incredible. I've never heard anybody—I'm a big fan of Wilbur Mills. I think he was a great man, and I'm so sorry about his illness.

I mentioned that people listened to what he had to say, and I'm reminded of another member who brought the House to a hush. Jess Wolcott out of Michigan—chairman of the Banking Committee. And Jess Wolcott was one of the few people that I've ever heard who didn't need a microphone. The minute he stood up, the House hushed. He was quite an extraordinary fellow. He was also a great wordsmith. An incident again, I don't know how many of these sort of things I need to tell anybody, but it was rather funny. We had a Congresswoman from Illinois, Jessie Sumner.[61]

JOHNSON: Jessie Sumner.

BARTLETT: Did I tell you that?

JOHNSON: No, no.

[61] Office of History and Preservation, *Women in Congress*: 180–185, and http://womenincongress.house.gov.

BARTLETT: She and Jess Wolcott were good friends. She got down to the committee table, where apparently we had a banking bill up because he was at the table. He said, "Now, Jessie, I didn't say that you were steatopygic." And of course she looked
[16:00] quizzical, but she did not want to admit she did not know what he was saying. So she went running over to that big dictionary that's on the right-hand side of the rostrum and looked it up, and then she came back with fire in her eyes. It was a fake fire nonetheless; they were such good friends. And he was backing off, "Jessie, I told you, I didn't say that you were steatopygic," which means "heavy in the buttocks."

JOHNSON: I see.

BARTLETT: Oh, there was no question that she qualified, but it was a funny, funny thing. Probably the greatest wordsmith that I can think of, next to Jess Walcott, would have been John Anderson of Illinois. He had a tremendous vocabulary. Unfortunately, most of the Members couldn't understand him when he spoke because he did use words that were a little large for the occasion. Possibly the most powerful speaker, that I can recall, would have been Dewey Short, from Galena, Missouri. Does that ring a bell with you at all? Well, Dewey . . .

JOHNSON: Yes, about his skills as an orator?

BARTLETT: Yes. Did I ever tell you the story about him and Helen Gahagan Douglas?[62]

JOHNSON: No.

BARTLETT: That's a good story too. Helen Gahagan Douglas was in a little group of about six people who ran their own show completely. Dewey was more than a match for any challenger. First of all, you know, he had trained at Harvard, at Heidelberg, at

[62] Ibid., 232–237, and http://womenincongress.house.gov.

Oxford. He was an ordained Methodist minister. He loved to play it down. He loved the role of an Ozark hillbilly, but he was erudite, and he was smart. He had a very famous speech, which incidentally I don't think you will ever find in the *Congressional Record*, it was called, "The Vermin in the Temple." It told about the downfall of various civilizations. It was brilliant. He didn't put it in the *Record* because he was selling it on the rubber chicken circuit. He and Martin Dies [Jr.] the only two people that I know of at that time who were making money on the circuit—making $100 a night, you know, big money.

But Dewey was also a well-known drinker—one of a group of five, an interesting, accomplished, and wonderful group. Dewey would not have been embarrassed for me to say that. They liked to drink. Yet, when he drank, he was able, notwithstanding, to speak eloquently. He was a powerful speaker. So he came in one day—we had a defense bill up, I don't know what it was—he came in and was granted time to speak. It was a limited amount of time, as is all debate in the House. Whatever the limited time, he just got wound up and was really going strong and his time expired. He asked unanimous consent for an additional five minutes, usually routinely granted. Helen Gahagan Douglas squeaked up, "Mr. Speaker, I object!" Carl Albert, then the leader, was aghast. He ran over to her. "Oh, Helen, don't do that! Everybody wants to hear Dewey, don't do that!" She was adamant. So Dewey sized up the situation. He starts back up the aisle toward the Republican Cloakroom as it elevates slightly. He got to the top of the aisle,
[20:00] and he looks around, and he sees that Carl Albert is not having any success getting her to relent. And he was inebriated and with a sweep of a hand, he said, "Mr. Speaker, I care not to cast my pearls before swine." You could have heard a pin drop. The moment was electric. Dewey stumbled into the cloakroom. That was a great scene.

But of all the speakers—one you would probably never identify—but the most eloquent speaker that comes to my mind was Guy Vander Jagt of Michigan. He,

too, was an ordained minister. He, too, had a sophisticated education, a brilliant mind. Guy has never gotten his desserts as a speaker. He made the keynote address at a Republican [National] Convention that was out of this world, and he got no media.[63] I forgot what they broadcasted instead; it was something totally extraneous. And I think it was because they knew how good he was. He was a fabulous speaker. He was eloquent. And he worked at it. I always got this impression that Dewey Short had this in his mind that he could go out and just roll it out whenever he wanted to. Not so with Guy Vander Jagt. If you ever watched him preceding a speech, he would go off by himself and really mentally prepare himself for it. But if you haven't heard him, I'm sorry. If you ever get a chance to see a film copy of Guy Vander Jagt speaking, they don't come any better.

JOHNSON: This has been fascinating; thank you. You talked a few minutes ago about the remodeling that took place in the House between 1949 and 1951. What are your recollections of this period? And one of the things I'm very interested in hearing is about the temporary headquarters for the House that was in the Ways and Means Committee Room and what that was like.

BARTLETT: That was certainly memorable. It's hard to imagine the House meeting in the committee room under those very tight circumstances, trying to host some press, trying to provide for some visitors; the circumstances were chaotic. There was a terrible breakdown in the dignity of the House, the formality of the House, the rules of the House.

JOHNSON: Was that unavoidable, do you think, because of the situation?

[63] Congressman Vander Jagt gave the keynote address at the 1980 Republican National Convention. For information on his speech, see Bill Neikirk, "Vander Jagt's Keynote is Patriotism," 17 July 1980, *Chicago Tribune*: 8.

BARTLETT: People respond to circumstances, and you had a situation that was so undisciplined, uncontrolled there, you couldn't maintain order. There were things that happened there that I could not repeat. The pranksters took advantage of the informality to "humanize" one of their colleagues. They worked Connecticut Congressman John Davis Lodge over rather unmercifully. A great

[24:00] guy who became an ambassador of some great merit; he was after all, a Lodge. And when he came to Congress, I remember I was in the cloakroom one day, and John Davis Lodge came in to make a telephone call. I was sitting there with Paul Shafer when John Davis Lodge came in. He had trousers on—it was summer—but they were up about six inches above his shoes. Paul said to him, "You borrow your brother's trousers; is he out of town this week?" Or something like that. And then he said, not necessarily to me, but I was within immediate earshot, he said, "You know, I'm going to make a human being out of that guy if it's the last thing I do." There's an irony in that. John Davis Lodge became one of the most popular Members of the House, with everybody. I think it had more to do with the fact that they broke down that Brahmin façade, and he became very popular with the other Members. But that didn't happen instantly by any means. In the meantime, his brother, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, was not popular and for good reason. But it was an interesting comparison.

During this session, in the Ways and Means Committee Room, as an example, Shafer worked John Davis Lodge over until I thought Lodge was about to quit. Only in the casual atmosphere of our temporary quarters could that mischief have been carried out. It's hard enough in the present setting to always know what's going on and what is the status of a particular transaction. Over there, it was just about impossible. It served its purpose. We had to meet some place; I guess it was better than "the Oven," where they went following the British arson.[64] But it was

[64] Reference to the War of 1812, during which the British burned down most of the Capitol in 1814. For information on the Capitol building, see "A Brief Construction History of the Capitol," Architect of the Capitol, http://www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/capitol_construction.cfm.

not a satisfactory situation. The Members were mighty glad to get back into their own quarters.

JOHNSON: Can you provide an example of some of the institutional changes that took place?

BARTLETT: Over there? Well, it was just so doggoned informal when the Members would come in, just to find a seat. In order to get as many seats as they could, there was virtually no well. So it was a real tight situation. And then that little robing room or whatever you call it in the back, where they put some of the press. It really was very, very difficult.

I'm sure you're familiar with the layout of the room, and you've got that entrance that comes in behind the rostrum, and there's a little anteroom back there. That was a scene of a lot of negotiations. I don't think the quality of legislation during that period was up to par by any standards, simply because the atmosphere
[28:00] didn't lend itself to deliberation. Over next to the entrance, there would be a little gaggle of Members—right just as you came in the entrance where the Members came in. There'd be a little gaggle of Members there, some of them leaning against that end of the rostrum. But to get their attention, to get their order, was very, very difficult. I remember that so well because it was very frustrating for the presiding officer. Of course, this was before I became reading clerk. So I didn't have that responsibility, and I'm glad.

JOHNSON: Well, for you specifically, did your job change at all, and the work of the Pages?

BARTLETT: Well, of course, we managed to provide some Page service from there, and I think it, again, was as good as we could do. People were understanding when we weren't able to function quite as effectively as we might otherwise have. I don't remember any particular incident, other than the informality of it and the confusion. There are people who believe that our business thrives in chaos and that may not be

altogether untrue. For those of us who are idealists, that is a contradiction of what we think circumstances should be. But people do differ in their attitude toward it.

I remember a reorganizational plan that I presented to the national chamber of commerce at one point and in that group—a very distinguished group—who was kind enough to sit and hear me out. John Byrnes of Wisconsin was then Ranking Member of the Ways and Means Committee. And one of my tenets, one of my strong tenets, was calling for the maximum participation by the Members of Congress in the process**.** So I was writing suggestions for different reforms that would allow a larger participation by the Members in the floor activity. (Television has really messed this up because many Members use the television, or use it as an excuse if they don't use it.) But John Byrnes spoke up at that time and said, "Well, Joe, I don't know about this maximum participation. I'm not sure about this. You know, Wilbur [Mills] and I get together, and we work things out, and it does pretty well that way." In other words, what he was saying—and I said to him (gee, talk about being impertinent), but I said to him, "You just don't believe in deliberative government." John shook his head. We had all been young Republican friends, but I was still being impertinent to challenge him. He was very serious. "No, Wilbur and I get together, and we work these things out. It works out all right." He didn't want maximum participation. So when we met in the Ways and Means Committee room, there's a very good chance that there were people there who got their legislation through in a way that was more satisfactory to them than having a full-blown debate before the public, God, the whole world. That's a perspective that I'm not really ready to adopt. But it was certainly chaotic. Oh, golly, order was hard to come by. Attendance was off.

JOHNSON: I was going to ask about attendance.

BARTLETT: It was off.

[32:00]

JOHNSON: Were the sessions generally shorter?

BARTLETT: Well, there were times where you had to have a quorum. And when you had to have a quorum, they had to come, and even if they came and went, there had to be a presence. I remember the presence of the ladies in there—Mrs. [Frances] Bolton of Ohio, I remember particularly.[65] It was uncomfortable. It was just uncomfortable.

JOHNSON: Why was that?

BARTLETT: Well, just to get around. I remember in one instance trying to get around this gaggle of them there at the door, trying to get through, take a seat, and avoid the horseplay that was going on there. Incidentally, did I tell you about the documentary on Mrs. Bolton? You ought to have that. But that ought be a part of your archives. She was an interesting personality. This documentary movie, I went out for the premiere, to Cleveland, to see it. It was done professionally. It is not a puff piece. It is warts and all. I was, "How did the family let this get through?" But they did. It's a wonderful piece of work. The man who did it, I know him, and I give him credit because he had to be pretty brave to do it. That was the only way he would do it. Play it straight in our temporary chamber.

She was very uncomfortable. You asked about the situation—I just remember that one incident in particular where she had a hard time getting past this group and then to find a seat and to try to find a seat far enough away that she wouldn't be hearing what they were saying, or so she could hear at all. It was pretty difficult.

JOHNSON: What are your recollections of the Members' reactions to their new quarters, the modernized House Chamber?

[65] Office of History and Preservation, *Women in Congress*: 190–195, and http://womenincongress.house.gov.

BARTLETT: It was very impressive. The décor in the new chamber was beautiful. They had coordinated the carpet and the upholstery on the chairs upstairs beautifully. They have not done it since. It has not had that beautiful appearance since.

At one point, {laughter} I cannot put a date on this, but I came back one day when Congress was not in session, and they were putting down new carpet on the floor. I was absolutely taken aback; it was the most horrible stuff you ever saw in your life. I have a piece of it. If I could find it, I would show it to you. You would have to agree with me, I know. It was a horrible design, this particular design. So I thought, "Gee whiz, what do I do about this thing?" So I took a little swatch of it and sent it to Mrs. Bolton out in Lyndhurst, where she was spending her time. So she came back, and she was aghast. She had tremendous good taste. One of the world's wealthiest women. She said, "Joe, where did this come from?" I finally got the story, and this is the story that you'll enjoy. Ralph Roberts was Clerk. He was buying the carpet for the chamber. The old carpet probably did need to be replaced—I don't think that's questioned. But he got hold of a manufacturer, and they submitted three samples that could be had at a bargain. Now, the bargain
[36:00] becomes the key to this almost.

JOHNSON: And was this for the carpet that was going to be laid in the new chamber?

BARTLETT: The whole chamber. Now, this is after the earlier carpets wore out. So he brings these three samples up to the Speaker's office to get the Speaker's collaboration on what they should put down. Mrs. McCormack happened to be there. Faithfully, John McCormack either went down to the Washington Hotel to dine with her, or she came up to the Capitol to have dinner with him. They had dinner together every night. They were that devoted. She unfortunately wore very thick glasses. Her sight was very poor. So John McCormack, being the gentleman that he was, deferred to his wife to make a choice of these three samples, and she made

the choice. Horrors. {laughter} So I told Mrs. Bolton how the choice was made, and she said, "Mercy!" {laughter} That was the end of that story. {laughter}

JOHNSON: Was a change made?

BARTLETT: Nope, it was not. We put up with it for maybe a year or two before somebody got the courage to get it out of there. It was awful. I hope I can find that piece. I keep telling you things that I'm going to bring and show you, but that's one thing that I think you'd get a kick out of. It was something. Ralph got a bargain! {laughter} That tells you something about Ralph, too.

JOHNSON: You talked about several women and that brings to mind a question I had about Congresswoman Ruth Thompson.[66] In 1954, she sponsored a bill to establish a Page academy or dormitory. And newspaper articles and other documents show that this wasn't a new bill that was presented, that there were other Congressmen before her that thought this . . .

BARTLETT: Harold Burton.

JOHNSON: Right, that thought that this would be a good idea. So, since you were chief Page, and you were a former Page, I was wondering how this concern had arisen about the lack of supervision for the Pages. Was this a big concern that people had?

BARTLETT: Well, it was a concern, but it was a wish of mine, a desire, to have a decent place. I have a hard time putting a date on it—it was during World War II—they found a house that belonged to somebody, a foreign government. It was on Rhode Island Avenue, off Connecticut Avenue; it was a very handsome place. It could be had. It had a garden, and it had a huge dining room, and it would have been ideal except it would have been a little far away from the Capitol. But a trolley ride on

[66] Ibid., 288–291, and http://womenincongress.house.gov.

the old Lincoln Park line would have come right by and brought them to the Capitol. Harold Burton was alerted to this, and we thought we were going to get it, but there was a Page named Bill Ethington, who was a Page of Congressman [Victor] Wickersham of Oklahoma. But Bill did not want it, and he got his Congressman to oppose it. And when Senator Harold Burton heard that Congressman Wickersham was taking a strong opposition to it, those who were even considering it just said, "Forget it."

I must tell you, Kathleen, I'm one of those that's really saddened by the fact that the Page School does not provide a graduating class. It does not provide for seniors. It was such a wonderful experience that I hate to see it discontinued. I recognize all of the advantages to having short-term junior class Pages who come
[40:00] and go and don't get into mischief and all of this. But I think there was also something to be said for those who came and spent a couple years here and got their high-school education in the Page School and graduated. I just think it was a wonderful experience. Longer service for some would mean fewer openings for others. Many fewer, but I kind of regret it. Forget it. It's the past; it isn't going to happen, and we all know that there were some shameful scandals that happened which soured the whole Congress as to whether or not they should continue to have any Pages. They came up with the idea that maybe they should have college boys and girls, and I thought, "You think you have trouble with these kids, if you had college boys in here, you'd really have your hands full." The thing was debated back and forth.

But the idea of a dormitory was a superb idea. I kind of hate the fact that the House and the Senate have gone different ways on this thing, and, of course, the Supreme Court isn't even in the same picture in the same sense. I regret that because, again, there was something to be said for their togetherness. I suppose in this day of modern communication, it could be argued that we really don't need Pages. Most of the things the Pages did in my day are now easily done

electronically. And if that's the case, why do we need to have that echelon of employees? A case could be made for that. I'm not making it, and I'm not sure I would subscribe to it at all because there are some advantages to having Pages—live Pages—on the floor serving the needs of the Members.

There are other things that I have always felt that they should not do. They should not be delivering flags. For awhile we had a Page force that their major occupation was delivering flags between the Architect's Office and the individual Members' offices. A very bad idea in my opinion. A very poor use of their talent, and that's not their role. There were other things. We had some misuse of Pages. I hate to tell you how many things I was able to deal with myself. You know, there were Pages who needed to be sent home, and I never went to a Member and told them that they had a Page that needed to go home, that I met any resistance at all, any argument, anything at all. They immediately understood. They did not want a Page who wasn't making the grade in school, who was misbehaving, living a life that he did not want their parents to find out about or that was going to do something that would displease his electorate back home. So I never had a problem with that.

It should be obvious—I enjoyed supervising the Pages, and I thought we were quite successful. I didn't think that all of the reforms that were made needed to be made. I think they were made in the absence of testimony based on experience. I was never asked. I was never asked. Can you imagine that? They're going to reform the whole Page thing, and they don't ask a former Page, a former chief Page? Well, I was never asked.

The dormitory thing—I was on that committee at the time that Senator Burton
[44:00] was quite active. Bless his heart. He was sincere. He was one of the best friends that the Pages ever had. There were other Members of Congress who took a kindly interest in Paging—out of 535, not too many—but there were those, and I

appreciated them. I had a good relationship with, I remember, [John] Costello of California. My goodness, he was very intent upon the welfare of the Pages. He was just one of a number who had that feeling. The dormitory idea had a lot of merit. And could have been done. But as with most things congressional, there is nothing strange about the fact that Members are home-district oriented. They have to be concerned with their constituency. There are very few Members of Congress who are really intently interested in the institution of Congress. This is what made Sam Rayburn so different from most. He loved this institution. I'm not unmindful of the fact that given the 24 hours a day that each and every one of us has, that a Member of Congress has to spend most of his waking hours being concerned with the folks who sent him here. I understand that. But it's wonderful when you have somebody who will show a real interest in this institution as it functions on behalf of the people. There have been others. Mr. Rayburn is the best example you could find of someone who devoted themselves to the institution. The whole question of Paging probably needs review regularly. I'm not an authority at this point. I wouldn't pretend to be. There was a time when I would have felt qualified to respond to almost any suggestion of reform that anybody might have. But that's not my claim anymore. I trust that those who have that responsibility are carrying it out faithfully and well.

JOHNSON: This is a good stopping point for today, unless you had anything else that you wanted to add.

BARTLETT: No, I hope that we have made a contribution to advance the cause here today. I have some former Pages coming to town on the first of June for a get-together, and I'm looking forward to that. They're Pages mostly of the 50's, a former Speaker's Page. You know, Kathleen, we really do have some outstanding people who have been Pages. You can't help but come to the conclusion that that experience has served them well. I certainly take a lot of pride in their

accomplishments. And if they are kind enough to remember old Joe, that's kind of nice too. {laughter}

JOHNSON: I have many more questions, so I hope that we can have another session.

BARTLETT: Sure, whenever.

JOHNSON: Great, thank you.

BARTLETT: Thank you.

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