Albert R. Anness
Page, U.S. House of Representatives (1949–1951)

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript
April 9, 2013

Office of the Historian
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

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Abstract

When Albert Anness first learned about the House Page Program in his high school civics textbook in 1947, he set his sights on working in the Capitol. After volunteering for state and federal Democratic campaigns, Anness received a Page appointment from Congressman Edward Breen of Ohio at the start of the 81st Congress (1949-1951). In his oral history, Anness traces his time living and working in Washington, D.C., in the years following World War II.

Anness and his fellow Pages worked long days and weekends under the watchful eyes of Doorkeeper William "Fishbait" Miller and Speaker Sam Rayburn of Texas. He describes his daily routine, attending the Capitol Page School and working in the House Document Room, as well as his unique assignment to operate the sound system for the House Ways and Means Committee as it debated amendments to the Social Security Act of 1935. Anness also reveals his mischievous side. He and his classmates played hide-and-seek in the Library of Congress, memorized secret passages throughout the Capitol campus, and carved their names on the Capitol roof during President Harry Truman's inauguration. Throughout the interview, Anness recalls how his political interests shaped the course of his life.

Biography

Albert Anness was born in 1931, to Lynn and Clara (Barr) Anness in Hamilton, Ohio. He and his sister, Adeline, attended the local public schools while their mother worked from home and their father sorted mail at the Hamilton Post Office. As a student at Hamilton Public High School, Anness read about House Pages in a civics textbook and contacted his former Congressman, Edward Gardner, about joining the program.

In 1949, Ohio Representative Edward Breen appointed Anness as a Page for the 81st Congress (1949-1951). During his time in Washington, D.C., Anness attended the Capitol Page School, worked as a phone and bench Page, and lived in boardinghouses around the city.

After his Page service, Anness joined the U.S. Army and earned his GED through the United States Army Forces Institute in 1951. While attending Miami University (Ohio), Anness met Sharon Kirby, and the two were married in 1967. In 1960, he opened an independent insurance agency, and in 1962, he ran unsuccessfully for the Ohio state senate. The following year, Anness started his long career in sales and marketing of automobile parts and machinery. Albert Anness died on July 4, 2017, in Franklin, Indiana.

Editing Practices

In preparing interview transcripts for publication, the editors sought to balance several priorities:

- As a primary rule, the editors aimed for fidelity to the spoken word and the conversational style in accord with generally accepted oral history practices.
- The editors made minor editorial changes to the transcripts in instances where they believed such changes would make interviews more accessible to readers. For instance, excessive false starts and filler words were removed when they did not materially affect the meaning of the ideas expressed by the interviewee.
- In accord with standard oral history practices, interviewees were allowed to review their transcripts, although they were encouraged to avoid making substantial editorial revisions and deletions that would change the conversational style of the transcripts or the ideas expressed therein.
- The editors welcomed additional notes, comments, or written observations that the interviewees wished to insert into the record and noted any substantial changes or redactions to the transcript.
- Copy-editing of the transcripts was based on the standards set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The first reference to a Member of Congress (House or Senate) is underlined in the oral history transcript. For more information about individuals who served in the House or Senate, please refer to the online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov and the "People Search" section of the History, Art & Archives website, http://history.house.gov.

For more information about the U.S. House of Representatives oral history program contact the Office of House Historian at (202) 226-1300, or via email at history@mail.house.gov.

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Interviewer Biography

Jackie Burns is a Historical Publications Specialist with the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned her B.A. in history and in international affairs at The George Washington University. Jackie received oral history training at Ohio Humanities' Oral History Institute at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. In 2013 she became the project manager for the Office of the Historian's Civil Rights Oral History Program. She co-authored *Hispanic Americans in Congress: 1822–2012* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013).

— ALBERT R. ANNESS —

INTERVIEW

BURNS: This is Jacqueline Burns for the Office of the House Historian. Today's date is April 9, 2013. It's approximately 10:00 a.m., and today I'm going to be interviewing Albert R. Anness about his Page service with the U.S. House of Representatives. Today's interview is taking place in room 247 in the Cannon House Office Building.

All right, good morning, Al.

ANNESS: Morning.

BURNS: Morning. Today we're here to talk about your Page service. You were a Capitol Page for the House of Representatives. And the first thing I would like to know is how did you find out about the opportunity to serve as a Page?

ANNESS: If memory serves me, it was in the fall of 1947 that, for some minor infraction of the rules, I was being held in detention after school in Hamilton High School. Having no constructive purpose in mind, and absolutely no desire to complete my homework assignments, I was glancing around the room for something to read when I spotted a civics textbook. Out of sheer boredom, I began thumbing through its pages and, by chance, came upon a chapter outlining the function of the United States Congress, including a photograph of a House Page at work. Underneath the photo was a brief explanation of his duties. Immediately I said to myself, "That's for me," and I spent the remaining hour of my incarceration trying to figure how I could get from Hamilton, Ohio, to Washington, D.C.

However, ascending the heights of Capitol Hill first required the resolution

of several monumental problems. In 1947, I was a Democrat. In 1947, the Ohio 3rd District Congressman [Raymond Hugh Burke] was a Republican, and he already appointed a Page who, as luck would have it, was also from Hamilton. But there was a faint, very faint, glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel.

In 1948, President [Harry S.] Truman and Congress would be up for re-election. It was at that moment I remembered fellow Hamiltonian, Edward [Joseph] Gardner, Democrat, who represented Ohio 3rd District in the 79th Congress [1945–1947], and he just might help me. His accounting office was located in the First National Bank building in downtown Hamilton. And upon being released from the detention, I was immediately on my way.

Warmly greeting me, he bade me enter his office. Sitting behind his desk, piled high with papers, he sat puffing on his cigar, a fine Robert Burns cigar. I instantly recognized him as a politician, and, because of all he would teach me, a great man. To this day, although we no longer share the same political and economic views, the late Ed Gardner remains a great man. After telling him I wanted to become a Page, he informed me that, having failed to win re-election, he was not currently a Member of Congress, but he planned to seek the Democratic nomination in 1948, and, if nominated and elected, would appoint me a Page in the 81st Congress [1949–1951]. So far, so good.

Unfortunately, Ed Gardner lost the nomination to the mayor of Dayton, Edward [Grimes] Breen. However, on the plus side, when the Butler County Democratic Party reorganized that spring of 1948, Ed Gardner was elected chairman of the executive committee. Later in July, at Philadelphia, President Truman received the Democratic nomination, along with Senator Alben [William] Barkley of Kentucky as his vice presidential running mate. Several weeks prior, the Republicans had nominated the governor of New York,

Thomas E. Dewey, and Earl Warren, governor of California, and on Labor Day in 1948, the battle was joined. What with the Republicans nominating their "dream team" and the Southern Democrats flocking to the Dixiecrat banner, an outcome favorable to the Democratic ticket was in serious doubt. However, at the Philadelphia [Democratic National] Convention, President Truman had promised the Democrats that he and Senator Barkley would win, and win they did!

Also elected to Congress that fall was Edward G. Breen. During the campaign I worked for Ed Gardner, who was running the Democratic campaign in Butler County, and I also helped Richard Wilmer get elected to the Ohio state senate. After the election, Ed Gardner, unbeknown to me, put in a good word for me with Congressman Breen.

During the course of that fall, I had decided that my talents were better applied in some pursuit other than taking up space at Hamilton Public High School, and I became an apprentice printer at the Ohio Casualty Insurance Company in Hamilton. My plans to be a congressional Page remained, and, if I received an appointment, I would enroll in the Capitol Page School and resume my formal education. It was just after President Truman gave his State of the Union speech before the Joint Session of Congress that I was requested to report the following Monday morning to Congressman Breen's office on Capitol Hill. Sunday afternoon, I boarded a Greyhound bus and headed for Washington, D.C., and Capitol Hill, and that's how I became a Page.

BURNS: Wow, that's a great story.

ANNESS: Yes.

BURNS: Now, you boarded the bus. You're on your way to D.C. Do you have any

memories of your first days as a Page?

ANNESS: Yes, I do. Arriving in our nation's capital around 9:00 a.m. Monday morning, I immediately hailed a taxi and headed for Capitol Hill. From the steps of the New House Office Building, which is now the Longworth House Office Building, I quickly proceeded to Congressman Breen's office and introduced myself. As I recall, I was met by his administrative assistant, whose first name was Andy—I cannot remember his last name—and two secretaries.

Shortly thereafter, Congressman Breen, who had been attending a committee meeting, came in, and we went into his office and had a nice chat. He took me to the Capitol building, introduced me to my boss, William "Fishbait" Miller, Doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives. Fishbait, in turn, took me to the House Chamber and introduced me to my immediate supervisor, chief Democratic Page Turner Roberts, an older man from North Carolina. Like Fishbait, Turner Roberts was a "creature of the House" and, consequently, all business. The hiring and formalities had been completed, and I went to the Capitol building basement and was enrolled in the Capitol Page School.

Loaded down with schoolbooks, we returned to Congressman Breen's office, where I picked up my suitcase, and we headed to the Page boardinghouse, located several blocks away on New Jersey Avenue Southeast, which was operated by a very nice lady. She lived there with her husband and two young children, a boy and a girl. She rented rooms to congressional Pages and a Russian family—a man, his wife, and their small daughter. They rarely came out of their room. I remember they were always peering out a half-opened door.

Already staying there were two Senate Pages. I would be the first House Page residing on the premises. I was to share an upstairs room with Senate Republican Page Robert Hansell of Decatur, Indiana, who had been appointed by Senator William [Ezra] Jenner.

After dropping off my books and suitcase, I immediately reported to Turner Roberts on the House Floor, took my seat on the Democratic bench, and answered floor calls from Congressmen, ran errands to both Old and New Office Buildings, had a quick lunch, and finished the day working in the rotunda House document stacks.[1] It was late afternoon when I arrived back at my boardinghouse and met my roommate, Bob Hansell. We talked a while and then went to dinner at Holgate Seafood House, in celebration of my first night in Washington.

I should mention that Bob was somewhat a celebrity, having dated the young movie star Peggy Ann Garner the previous year, when she was in Washington, appearing at Loews Theater. He simply telephoned and asked her for a date. She agreed, much to his delight. It was a lesson for us all.

Later that evening, I met Thomas E. Jones, Senate Republican Page from Detroit, Michigan, who had been appointed by Senator Arthur [Hendrick] Vandenberg. Several weeks later, two House Democrat Pages from Louisiana would join our merry band.

The weekday schedule really began at 5:30 a.m. School started at 6:30, and that was a basic day.

BURNS: So that was a basic day. Now, is that typical of your days serving as a Page in the 1940s?

ANNESS: Pretty much. School began every morning around 6:30, and, as I recall, we

were usually dismissed around 10:30, and it was pretty jammed together. I mean, there wasn't a lot of time between classes. Everything was in kind of a quick hurry. Immediately after school, most of us would head for the House cafeteria and have breakfast before reporting for work. Our first task of the day was usually placing the previous day's *Congressional Records* under each House Member's seat.

I seem to recall that under each seat there would be three copies of the *Record*. The oldest would be replaced by the latest printed copy. We would accumulate all the copies of the removed *Records* for distribution each Saturday morning to House Members requesting them. Upon completion of this task, we would join other Pages who had been working on the Page bench, delivering messages, House documents, etc.

When the House was in session, we would also answer calls from sitting Members. I don't ever recall as read in Fishbait Miller's book about Congressmen snapping their fingers and yelling, "Page." I don't recall that. They always just rang a bell, and at the desk that number would appear. The Page in charge of the bench would then assign a Page to answer the call. I had a little card that they gave me that had all the House seat numbers. You would just look at the number and go to that seat and respond.

I remember one time I answered a call, and it was from Congressman Stephen [Marvin] Young of Ohio, who also served on the Ways and Means Committee. Since he was from Ohio, I kind of knew who he was. I don't know where he had been or what he'd been doing or how long he'd been there, but he looked like he'd been drug through a knothole. {laughter} He looked as though he hadn't shaved for a week, and he was a mess. He wanted his keys. I remember I went over to his office—and I think it was in the New House Office Building—and got his keys for him and brought them back.

He eventually was elected to the U.S. Senate from Ohio two or three terms.

There's also another interesting story in the *Extension of Remarks* section of the April 10, 1949, *Congressional Record* about a 10-year-old boy by the name of Conklin who served the House as a Page from 1879 to 1896. Once, while working in the Ladies Reception Room, he was requested to take a calling card from one lady, to present it to a particular Congressman indicating that she wanted to see him. The Congressman, after reading the card, said, "Tell her I'm not in." The young Page was speechless for a minute having been trained never to tell a lie. Quickly recovering, he asked the Congressman to rise, which the Congressman did, and Page Conklin reported back to the lady that the Congressman was "not in his seat." He repeated this retort many times. So he figured he'd established a precedent in that manner.

We helped in the House Document Room, and this was a new session. A new Congress was starting out, and you had hundreds of different laws and congressional resolutions, and all these things had to be filed. And we would go over into the rotunda, and there was an area there which was a desk there, and the people who would want copies of bills—lobbyists, congressional secretaries, anybody—and they would get them for them. They would order them. And then we could go up in an elevator, and there was two or three levels there where there was nothing but stacks of filings of—well, they weren't file cabinets, but they were just shelves where you could put all these things. But we'd go up there, and if there was nothing going on in the House that day, go up there and work.

[A 1-minute, 16-second segment of this interview has been redacted.]

BURNS: Right. I was going to ask, so did your duties change over time at all? I mean, before you went to the Ways and Means Committee, but in terms of your

typical day, as you got more experienced did they change?

ANNESS: No. I was pretty much always a bench Page. Some guys, like a friend of mine, Dave Cunningham, I think he wound up on the phones, but I spent a lot of time working for the Ways and Means Committee, so I missed on all of that. But no, it basically was the same.

BURNS: Great. What are your memories of—this is a little off, but do you have any memories of any of the chief Pages? Was the chief Page—I believe it wasn't Joe Bartlett when you were here, but—

ANNESS: It was Turner Roberts.

BURNS: Turner Roberts.

ANNESS: Joe Bartlett was the Republican chief Page. Turner—I can tell you a story. I'm getting a little ahead of the game here, but—Turner ran a pretty tight ship. One day when I reported for work, Fishbait Miller grabbed a hold of me and said, "Hey, I want you to go to the Ways and Means Committee. They've got work for you over there. And don't come back over here until they tell you you can come back." "That's fine." So I went over, and I was assigned to the Ways and Means Committee. They were having hearings, so all week long I worked over there, and then on Saturday they weren't going to have hearings, and I asked the committee clerk if they wanted me to come in on Saturday. The clerk told me, "No, we're not going to have any hearings. You don't have to come in on Saturday."

So that Saturday morning I was back in that boardinghouse. At that time we were living on Connecticut Avenue at Dupont Circle. I was asleep when the landlady knocked on my door and said, "Al, you've got a phone call." I answered the phone. A man with a deep southern accent never identified

himself, but said to me, "We work over here on Saturday mornings! Get your [expletive] over here!" and he hung up. I recognized the voice. It was Turner Roberts, and I knew by his tone, he meant business!

I immediately returned to my room, dressed and got over to the House Chamber. It was nearly noon when I arrived, and while the other Pages were about to leave, my day was just beginning! Turner Roberts was about to give me the worst job imaginable. As I previously remarked, all week we daily collected the outdated *Congressional Records* until Saturday morning when we bundled them for delivery to those Congressmen requesting them. And I got the job of delivering them, too! All Saturday afternoon until nearly 5:00 p.m., I pushed the cart loaded with outdated *Congressional Records* to both the Old and New House Office Buildings. It was dark before I left for my boardinghouse. I had the feeling Turner would give [me] that job as long as I was assigned to the Ways and Means Committee.

Therefore, Monday immediately after school, I walked into the office of the committee's chief legal counsel and told him I was required to work on Saturday mornings. I then asked if it was possible to work with his committee rather than the House Chamber. He agreed and called Fishbait who readily concurred. That's how I got out of that job. I'm sure it took a while before Turner Roberts got over that one. But in those days, the Ways and Means Committee was the most powerful committee in Congress, and nobody really argued with them. When they wanted something, they got it!

BURNS: You attended the Capitol Page School.

ANNESS: Right.

BURNS: So can you tell me a little bit about your time at the Page School? What classes you took, what the schedule was like?

ANNESS: Classes began around 6:30 in the morning, Monday through Friday, and I took economics, modern history, grammar, and composition. Like I said, you have a few minutes between classes. It wasn't like in a regular school. I was a member—as I recall, I joined the travel club and the music club. And I served as sergeant at arms for my class and also once participated in a high school radio program, "Youth Ask the Government," which at that time was a regularly featured Washington, D.C.-area program. But other than that I think we went on a hayride once, and I didn't play sports, so basically that was it.

BURNS: What was the travel club? Did you actually go travel places?

ANNESS: No, I think we just talked about travel.

BURNS: Oh. {laughter}

ANNESS: Same with the music club. You know, there wasn't a whole lot of time for this in the mornings. You were pretty much rushed.

BURNS: Right. And then what were the duties of the sergeant at arms? What was your task?

ANNESS: Well, {laughter} to sort of keep order, but you would have thought—you know, this was amazing to me—we were all Pages in the House and in the Senate and in the Supreme Court, where everything is orderly and decorum and everything, and in that meeting, they just sat and yelled at each other, {laughter} and you couldn't keep order. I mean, if you had to restrain them, you would have had to restrain them all. So it was kind of—and the faculty advisor, who I think was the principal of the school, he always just sort of threw up his hands at the whole thing. They never accomplished a thing.

BURNS: {laughter} And do you have any memories of any of your teachers?

ANNESS: Not really.

BURNS: I know you mentioned yesterday that the Capitol Page School was in the basement.

ANNESS: Yes.

BURNS: Can you just describe the location and what the classrooms looked like a little bit?

ANNESS: Well, it wasn't very big, and they were just rooms with desks and chairs in them, just regular, normal rooms. I remember there was a secretary and the principal's office. His office was separate, but other than that there were two or three, or maybe four, classrooms. They were just regular classrooms.

BURNS: Great.

ANNESS: It had been a private school up until that year, and then it became part of the District of Columbia school system, and I think it went back to being a private school later on. I'm not sure on that.

BURNS: In terms of Capitol Page graduation, did you participate in that at all?

ANNESS: No, I never graduated. I wasn't here for that.

BURNS: How would you describe a typical Page of your era? What was a 1940s Page like? Could you even say there was a typical Page?

ANNESS: Well, I've thought about that question. You have to look at it in the historical perspective, the time frame in which it happened. In 1949, we had just come out of World War II victorious, and we were the greatest nation on earth.

We were the most powerful militarily, monetarily, economically, spiritually, morally, you name it. We were supporting most of the world, trying to put them back together again after the war. During the war, not only did we have a lot of troops and did a lot of fighting, we were also the arsenal of democracy. Without our industrial power the Allies wouldn't have won. So we looked upon the world as our oyster, and everything was coming up roses, and the sky was the limit! It wasn't like it is today. So I think we were all anxious and aggressive, and had high hopes for the future. The outlook for the future was a lot brighter than it is today.

BURNS: Was there any difference between Pages between the North and the South, or do you think everybody was similar?

ANNESS: No. No, I never heard any problems between them. I never heard of any fights. I know I read a transcript of one Page where he described there had been some fisticuffs, but I was never a part of any of that—not that I couldn't have been, but just never came up. And there was never any problem between members of the political parties. I roomed with two Republicans, and then when we moved to Dupont Circle, we were all mixed, and we were just a happy family. Everybody seemed to get along.

BURNS: A bipartisan coexistence. {laughter}

ANNESS: Yes.

BURNS: Well, speaking of Dupont, I know you lived in a few places. Can you describe where you lived in D.C. and the different boardinghouses you were in?

ANNESS: Yes. Capitol Hill is akin to being somewhat like the Vatican. It's a small world located within the confines of a much larger city. When I arrived in

Washington and began residing at New Jersey Avenue Southeast—which was then the unofficial Page boardinghouse—except for an occasional trolley ride to see the sights, Capitol Hill was pretty much my world.

Yes, 64 years ago there were trolley cars running about in Washington, D.C.—and not only in the District, but also in the adjacent areas in Maryland and Virginia. I can still hear the clanging of the trolley bells and the rumble of the cars on the tracks as they passed, and I remember one conductor who would always entertain his riders by singing. I took breakfast after school in the cafeteria located in the basement of the Capitol building, and lunch was pretty much always on the fly whenever the House was in session. Dinner was usually at a cafeteria located across the street from the Capitol building, and all that area is gone now.

Where I lived, the Congressional Hotel part of it looks like a roadway went through there. I remember seeing the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Congressman Robert [Lee] Doughton, and several other elder Members having dinner in the cafeteria located there.

Also located adjacent to the Hill was a very fine English tearoom. After being temporarily assigned to the Ways and Means Committee and lunches were not rushed, Ralph, who was a clerk working for the Ways and Means Committee, and I occasionally had lunch there.

Occasionally, several House Pages, including Bob Hansell, Tom Jones, and myself, would walk over to the Library of Congress and play hide-and-seek in the evening. One evening Bob and I were looking for a place to hide from Tom when we decided he would never consider entering the ladies' room, and we would hide in there. As it was getting late in the evening and no one seemed to be around, we felt safe. We guessed wrong, and in came two ladies.

We quickly broke out into a sweat in mortal fear they would open one of the stall doors and find us standing on the toilet seats. Lady Luck smiled at us on that night, as all they did was look in the mirror and powder their noses. Thankfully, their stay was brief. Shortly after they left, we likewise took our leave. Normally security discovered our game in progress and would ask us to leave, which we always did. Man, if they'd opened one of the stall doors! {laughter} We really were about ready to die.

When I first arrived on the Hill, the House was in the process of changing from Republican control of the 80th Congress [1947–1949] to the Democratic control of the 81st. Not only were there a lot of new Congressmen, but the House committee memberships changed, which resulted in a discarding tons of stationery, etc. It was like grist for our mill. At one point our room in the boardinghouse was piled high with discarded congressional stationery and other miscellaneous scraps of paper. I used to write letters home on the stationery of freshman Massachusetts Congressman John [Fitzgerald] Kennedy.

Later, a group of Pages, including Dave Cunningham of Virginia and myself, moved to a boardinghouse located on Connecticut Avenue Northwest, right at Dupont Circle. It had been an embassy for some Central American country. Nearby was the British Embassy, which had magnificent, hand carved woodwork, including banisters. The interior, while beautiful, was rather dark and foreboding, a great setting for a Sherlock Holmes murder mystery. We took some of our meals at the Connecticut Avenue boardinghouse, but with a busy schedule, our landlady many times did not know when to expect us for dinner. I roomed there for the remainder of my time in Washington.

I dated a young girl named Phyllis Miner, who was secretary to Congressman

Clyde [Gilman] Doyle of California. She was from Long Beach, California. We went on a Page School-sponsored hayride and visited the Smithsonian Institute. Once I took her to dinner at the Iron Gate Inn, which I believe was located, or is located, in Georgetown, and a performance of the Ice Capades.

It was while enjoying the Dupont Circle camaraderie that for the first and last time in my life I got stinking, falling down, puking drunk. {laughter} One night we Pages decided to sow some wild oats, and we all pitched in to buy the liquor. Don, whose last name I cannot remember {laughter} who was a Democratic House Cloakroom telephone operator, and who could pass for being legal age, purchased a bottle of bourbon. I recall hanging off the statue in the middle of Connecticut Avenue and spending the balance of the night with my head in the wastepaper basket.

Right then and there I decided being drunk was not my idea of having fun, and to this very day I've not since been intoxicated. While it took me years to be able to stand the smell of bourbon, I am not opposed to alcohol. I've developed a true appreciation for Scotch and Irish whiskey, champagne, good dry wine, lager beer, and ale, but only in moderation.

BURNS: {laughter} That's great. Well, I live in Dupont, right off Connecticut now, too.

ANNESS: Oh, do you?

BURNS: So I feel like I probably passed right where you were located. Now, you mentioned you would take a trolley ride around the city as part of one of the activities you'd do off the Hill, and you would see the sights. What kind of things would you go see? The museums or some other—

ANNESS: Yes, we used to go to the museums. In fact, I had a lot of photographs of

museums. In those days there were a lot of outdoor displays of military rockets and those kinds of things. As I recall, there used to be an amusement park in Maryland that opened in the spring, and you could ride out there on the trolley. It's sort of like an interurban railroad. But those sort of things—and we used to go to—like I said, we used to go to the Library of Congress. I think then the Declaration of Independence was there. Yes, we'd go over there and look around, when we weren't playing hide-and-seek, and spent a lot of time prowling around the congressional office buildings. But we didn't have a whole lot of time, to tell you the truth.

BURNS: That was my next—would this be on the weekends or if the Congress wasn't in session or whenever you could steal a free moment?

ANNESS: Usually—well, I used to date this secretary, and we'd go to movies and things like that, but still a lot of it—it seemed like a lot of times at night we were doing something, and you always had homework to do. But in fact, for a while, two or three nights, I remember the Ways and Means Committee was having some hearings on a matter, and they called me back for that. But we were there as long as the House was in session. But I don't recall any really long sessions in those days.

BURNS: How long from Dupont—I'm assuming you took the trolley—how long would that take you? What was your commute like?

ANNESS: You know what? I can't—{laughter} a lot of times, four or five of us would pile in a cab and split the cost. And you know, for the life of me I can't tell you what—I know we didn't ride in a cab every day. I don't think it took that long getting to Capitol Hill. Because there wasn't the traffic that there is today. You know, the traffic in this town has really exploded! I've noticed that driving around at night, traffic is really heavy. Obviously, living in

Batesville, Indiana, there is very little traffic at 9:00 at night. Out here in Washington, everything's still going full blast.

BURNS: Yes, it's a busy city, and it keeps—

ANNESS: Yes, I can't believe the amount of construction. I've never in my life—and I've been in a lot of big cities around this world—seen the amount of construction that's going on in this town. This is a boomtown. Really.

BURNS: Oh, yes. You mentioned—I think, when we were talking before—trips to the White House. Were there any traditions or pastimes that the Pages took part in every year that you can remember?

ANNESS: There weren't. I don't remember any trips or anything—and there might've been later on, after I was no longer there. Fishbait Miller once took me to the Father and Sons Banquet at his church. I do not ever recall being invited to the White House, although Mrs. [Bess] Truman was a sponsor, an honorary patron of the Page School in some fashion. But other than that, at least when I was here, I'd answer that as a "No." Pages were pretty much on their own. There was no supervision other than at work, and once you left work you were strictly on your own.

BURNS: Now, one of the main places a Page knows like the back of their hand is the cloakroom, and you had unfettered access to the Democratic Cloakroom. Can you describe what the cloakroom would have looked like? What the atmosphere was like?

ANNESS: Well, today is very different than when I was a House Page 64 years ago. Yesterday, Jackie, when you were conducting our tour of the Capitol building, I could hardly wait until we got to the door of the House Democratic Cloakroom and see if it was the same as I remembered the day I

saved former Speaker [Joseph William] Martin [Jr.] from a nasty fall down the cloakroom steps. And they had not changed!

The House was not in session the day in 1949 when I came over from the Ways and Means Committee, located in the New House Office Building. I don't recall the purpose of the errand that brought me to the Capitol building, but there I was. It was getting late in the afternoon, and having completed my task, I returned to the House Office Building. I crossed through the Rotunda and once again on the House side, proceeded around the chambers.

Jackie, it was eerie. In that corridor, normally bustling with activity, I was entirely alone. No one was within earshot! As I approached the Democratic Cloakroom, the door opened and out stepped the Republican Minority Leader, Congressman Martin. He started down the three steps, tripped, and began falling. Having no banister to grab, he was about to have a very nasty fall onto the marble floor. At that precise moment I was passing the door he fell harmlessly into my arms. Congressman Martin thanked me and went on his way. He later gave me his autographed picture.

BURNS: Talk about right place, right time. {laughter}

ANNESS: Yes, it was uncanny. But going into the cloakroom yesterday, I remember there weren't all those telephones. There were some on the right side and a few on the left, but as you first went in, those were all hooks where the Congressmen would hang their hats and coats.

In fact, it was rather interesting. The first day I went in the Democratic Cloakroom there was Edward J. Gardner's {laughter} name still up there, and he hadn't been a Member of Congress for the two previous Congresses. When you turned to the right, there was a lounge area where Members could

sit and talk, and in those days they smoked and chewed [tobacco]. I seem to recall there was a black couple who operated a snack bar with sandwiches.

But I felt at home in the Republican Cloakroom as I did in the Democratic Cloakroom. In fact, in the Republican Cloakroom, they did have a black married couple—very nice people—who had sandwiches, and they were very good roast beef sandwiches. In fact, their pictures are today hanging in the Republican Cloakroom.

I remember one day I was sitting on the Page bench when one of the telephone operators came to me and told me I had a telephone call. It was most unusual for a Page to receive a cloakroom telephone call. Congressman Breen had a friend who was a lobbyist for the petroleum industry and was on the line inviting me to a Sunday brunch he was giving for the Congressman's staff. That was very nice, and I was very surprised in that.

But other than that, the cloakrooms were not at all like I noticed yesterday when I was in there. Both cloakrooms now have a refrigerator for ice cream and cold drinks and a hot dog machine. They now also have a microwave oven. None of that was in the cloakrooms in 1949. This is all later stuff.

Also, it was interesting that now there is no smoking in the House. I remember when there was smoking. I can remember when there was smoking in the back of the House Chamber. But the present chamber was not there when I was there. They renovated the chambers after I left. In the back behind the Speaker's podium, I was quite surprised to see a rug on the corridor floor. The House Bank was back there. There was also a post office. I was quite surprised to see that the Speaker's Ceremonial Office where I had my picture taken with Sam [Samuel Taliaferro] Rayburn, was now a ladies' restroom. {laughter} So that has all been changed.

BURNS: Pages are known to have unfettered access to the Capitol. You know, they can roam places that other staffers can't go and definitely not the public at large. Do you have any stories about some of the areas of the Capitol that the average visitor would never see?

ANNESS: Well, yes. I remember on the House side of the Capitol was a lower Rotunda, and from it, several passages led into older parts of the House. I doubt if I could find them today, but I seem to recall crawling back through them and seeing burn marks on the stones where the British burned the Capitol in 1814.

One morning, when I was on the Senate side, my former roommate Bob Hansell, took me on the Senate Floor before it went into session, and then took me back to the old Senate Chamber. I was in the old Senate Chamber yesterday, but now I see it's on the regular tour. During my time, it was not even open to the public. It hadn't been restored like it is now. During part of President Truman's inauguration, Jim Richardson and I were on the roof of the Capitol building watching the ceremonies—and you couldn't do that today. But those are pretty much the places we used to roam.

BURNS: Did you ever have—did you have a favorite spot or room in the Capitol that you would go to or in the House office buildings?

ANNESS: No, not really.

BURNS: Did you have a favorite place off campus, around Washington, that you would go to?

ANNESS: No, not really, just went around to different places. {laughter} I can't recall any favorite haunts we ever had.

BURNS: Obviously there are some House Leaders and Officers that Pages often have really great memories of. Do you have any memories of Speaker Sam Rayburn?

ANNESS: Yes, I remember Mr. Sam. He ran a tight ship, too. And then April 1949, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* wanted to do a pictorial thing about me in their Sunday paper. They had a pictorial section with photographs. So they assigned a freelance writer named Elizabeth Shelton who lived here in Washington to write the story and get the photographs. And so, for about, I don't know, a week or so they followed me around and took pictures. I think you have that article, so you know what I mean.

But they wanted a photograph taken with myself and the Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn. The first time they approached him on the subject, he said no. He didn't like doing that. Finally, I think they went to my Congressman, Congressman Breen, and he interceded, and finally, Mr. Sam agreed. "Okay, but it's got to be quick." And right before the House was going into session this day, we went into the Speaker's area right behind where he comes out, and it was really kind of funny because there was the reporter, myself, and this photographer.

And so immediately we ran into the assistant sergeant at arms. The writer Elizabeth Shelton and the sergeant at arms got into this screaming argument because he said, "You're not supposed to be back here. Get that camera out of here!" She kept trying to tell him that she had gotten prior permission. Finally, it was decided that permission had been given, and we were allowed to proceed. All this time Mr. Sam is in his office waiting on us. {laughter}

So we go into his ceremonial office, and it's big, ornate, and beautiful. Mr. Sam was not a tall man, and he's standing there behind this big, huge desk.

Boy, that was the most beautiful desk I've ever seen in my life.

So I stepped behind the desk with him, and he hands me this piece of paper, and he says to me, "Well, they raise Pages tall in Ohio." And I said, "Yes sir, Mr. Speaker." And so that was that. I always carried an autograph book with me, and I said, "Would you consider giving me your autograph?" And he says, "Oh, sure." And then he—this is something I've never forgotten to this day—he said, "Sure, I'll give you my autograph."

There was absolutely nothing on his grand ceremonial desk top, so he took his keys from his pocket to unlock his desk drawer, and pulled out a small cloth sack. Inside the cloth sack was a beautiful fountain pen set. This was before ballpoint pens! He autographed my book then retuned the set to the cloth bag, placing it in the drawer. He then locked the drawer and returned the keys to his pocket. For some reason, that struck me as funny. {laughter}

BURNS: Absolutely. What about Fishbait Miller? I mean, you mentioned him before, but do you have any standout memories of Fishbait Miller?

ANNESS: Yes. Let me get to Fishbait. William Fishbait Miller was the second longest serving doorkeeper in the history of the House—from 1949 to 1953 and 1955 to 1974. A gentleman by the name of Thomas Claxton, 1795 to 1821, was the longest serving Doorkeeper having served 26 years. Fishbait, in one capacity or another, served the House nearly 40 years. His long tenure was made possible because of Democrats' control of the House. However, the Doorkeeper is elected by House membership and serves at their pleasure. If nothing else, Fishbait not only knew on which side his bread was buttered, but also who was doing the slathering, Speaker Sam Rayburn and a majority of the House membership.

Fishbait ran a tight ship, and when it came to meeting the personal needs of

the House Members, he could be counted on to deliver in a timely and, if required, discreet manner. On page three of his book, Fishbait stated, "The rule of this place is every man is king, and don't you forget it."[2] He was friendly, trustworthy, amiable, a tireless worker, and he never failed in his duty, or to act in the best interest of the House.

Fishbait was a creature of the House. The House was his constituency. And I remember I've read from one of your other interviewees that he talked about Fishbait and his cigarette lighter. {laughter} That's true. He would light Congressmen's cigarettes, and Dave Cunningham and I observed that. So we went out and got cigarette lighters, and for a while, we passed ourselves off as understudies for the Doorkeeper by going around lighting cigarettes. But before we got ourselves in trouble, we stopped our antics.

Fishbait talks in his book about the only automobile he ever owned was a 1945 Dodge custom-built sedan. I recall that he took me in that same sedan to his church's father-and-son banquet.

I always thought he did a fantastic job. Fishbait was a protégé of Sam Rayburn, and as long as he kept Sam Rayburn and the other Congressmen happy, he was doing a good job.

I've been a Mason now almost 50 years, and in his book on page 225, Fishbait says, "One way you can measure the power on the Hill is by the number of honors you receive, and when you're on the Hill all kinds of honors come your way. Some are worked for. Some fall into your lap. You can imagine how many honorary degrees a Congressman or a Senator gets in the course of his term of office. If I tell you, it's just a partial list of mine."

He continues, "I'm a Kentucky Colonel, an Alabama Colonel, a Mississippi Colonel, a Texas honorary citizen, a Nebraska Admiral of the State Navy, a

Louisiana Colonel, a Georgia Lieutenant Colonel, an Oklahoma Okie Colonel, and I have an honorary doctorate of law from Atlanta, Georgia, Law School. I am an honorary Sergeant of the U.S. Marine Corps, based at Quantico, Virginia, and a Flying Colonel on Delta Airlines. Showing that honors rise above party affiliation, Roger B. [Clark Ballard] Morton, Secretary of the Interior and President Ford's campaign manager in his bid for re-election, made me an honorary Deputy Game Warden {laughter} of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But as long as I'm being modest, the thing that means the most to me is my standing in the Masonic world, for fellow Masons, Shriners around the country." And he goes on to give a list of various things he's done in the Masonic world.

I remember the last time I saw Fishbait, he pointed it out to me that he had been a Shriner, and he had been appointed the doorkeeper at the Shriner convention. {laughter} So he was rather proud of all that. I have nothing but the fondest memories of him. He was always good to me.

BURNS: What would you say his relationship—you said he ran a tight ship—what would you say his relationship was like with the Pages?

ANNESS: Oh, I think it was good. Fishbait was the Doorkeeper and had overall control, while the daily work-related activities of the Pages were supervised by Turner Roberts (Democrats) and Joe Bartlett (Republicans). However, it was Fishbait who called me aside and temporarily assigned me to the Ways and Means Committee.

BURNS: Joe Bartlett.

ANNESS: Yes, Joe Bartlett.

BURNS: So normally—so you would say your supervisors were the chief Page. That

was who you reported to.

ANNESS: Right.

BURNS: Great. Did you ever have any dealings with the Clerk of the House, Ralph R. Roberts?

ANNESS: No, I did not.

BURNS: One of the last individuals I wanted to ask you about was the Reverend Bernard Braskamp. He was the House Chaplain. Did you ever have any dealings with him?

ANNESS: No. No, I didn't.

BURNS: You talked about it a little at the beginning of the interview, but what are some of your memories of your Congressman Edward Breen? Did you interact with him at all?

ANNESS: Well, not a whole lot. I didn't see too much of him, to tell you the truth. I remember Congressman Daniel [John] Flood who was from Pennsylvania. He always reminded me of the Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dalí. He had a moustache exactly like Dalí. The reason he reminded me of him, because years later, when I used to go to New York City on business, for a while we used to stay—our company—we'd stay at the St. Moritz Hotel. You'd go by—Salvador Dalí had a shop there and you'd walk down the street and you'd go walk by his shop, and he'd be—I can't tell you how many times I walked by that door, by his shop—and he'd be sitting there looking out the window at you—and a weird looking guy. {laughter}

BURNS: That's great.

ANNESS: I remember Congressman Frank [William] Boykin of Alabama, and unless I've got him wrong, I always thought of him as kind of a dandy with a Southern accent and a pair of pince-nez eyeglasses hanging from a silk ribbon. He was dressed different from the other Members—always had those glasses on. But other than that, he seemed to be a nice guy. Boykin got in trouble later. I don't know the circumstances. He was the one that said, "Love makes the world go around." I think that got him into trouble somewhere along the line.

Another Congressman I remember well was John [Elliott] Rankin from the state of Mississippi. He was an elderly man. He always dressed, as all Congressmen did, in a suit and tie, however, he chewed tobacco. I never saw him that he didn't have tobacco stains all the way down the front on his tie, shirt, and coat.

There were spittoons strategically located all over the House because a lot of the Southerners at that time chewed. The Democrats were in control, and they had all the—what do I want to say? They were in service longer. I can't think of the word I'm looking for. So they were a lot of the chairmen and then—and they were the ones—and a lot of them chewed tobacco, you know, and they'd be spitting all over the place.

It was amusing yesterday, what the lady said about—what's this woman that was the Speaker of the House? Nancy Pelosi. I was thinking to myself when she was telling me about that, I was thinking what their reaction would have been {laughter} when she told them they couldn't chew or smoke or cuss. That would've been funny to listen to.

BURNS: Probably would not have gone over well. {laughter}

ANNESS: No, I don't think so. Another Congressman I remember—and I think he was

the only black Congressman at the time—was Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.[3] On page 50 of Fishbait's book, he talks about having long conversations with Congressman Powell, and I can seem to recall seeing the two of them deeply engrossed in conversations in the back of the chamber. The thing I remember about Congressman Powell didn't take place in Congress. It took place in New York City probably 30-some-odd years later.

I used to call on the J.C. Penney Company in New York City, and their offices were on Avenue of the Americas and 57th Street, and right across the street was a restaurant called Joe's Pier 52. One time, I was in there, and I had one of their engineers from their test labs in there with me, a fellow by the name of Joe Scalisi. Joe was legally blind. The first time I ever saw Joe, he was at the Detroit Metro Airport, where I went to pick him up, and he was reading the time table. I mean, he had to do his face like this. {holds paper close to face} But Joe was sharper than a tack.

But at any rate, Joe and I go in there, and he said, "Go in there. The maître d' has a little—" You walk in this little area, and I look up, and there on the telephone is Adam Clayton Powell. I said, "Hey Joe, there's Congressman Adam Clayton Powell." Of course, Joe couldn't see him. He says, "Where? Where?" So I said, "Right there." And Joe keeps going right up to Congressman Powell. Congressman Powell's standing on the phone. He's starting to go back like this, and Joe's getting right up in his face right as he—{laughter} that was so funny! He probably thought he was about ready to get assassinated.

BURNS: {laughter} That's great. Well, I'm going to change the tape.

END OF PART ONE ~ BEGINNING OF PART TWO

BURNS: Well, we're back on.

ANNESS: Oh, where are we?

BURNS: I'd like to talk a little bit about your assignment on the Ways and Means Committee. You said you got the phone call. You were called down to the Ways and Means Committee, and it sounds like you stayed there.

ANNESS: Yes, I did.

BURNS: So tell me a little bit about your experience, serving as a Page for the Ways and Means Committee.

ANNESS: What number is that?

BURNS: It's 13.

ANNESS: Oh, here it is. Okay, well, it was in early spring 1949. One morning Fishbait Miller gets me by the collar and says, "You're going to go over to the Ways and Means Committee. They're having hearings, and they need you to work over there. I want you to go over there, and you don't come back until they release you." And I said, "Fine." So I went over to the Ways and Means Committee, and they were having the first hearings ever on the major revision of the Social Security Act of 1935—this was actually the second day of their hearing.

On the first day of the hearings, Doorkeeper Miller sent a fellow Page, Dave Cunningham from Virginia, to operate the sound system, but he hated the assignment and asked to be reassigned. The next day Fishbait collared me, and away I went to the New House Office Building and the Ways and Means Committee. Had I been present the first day of the hearings, I would have met Herbert Hoover, who was President of the United States when I

was born. He was then, in 1949, president of the Hoover Commission, and the first person to testify before the committee. To this day, I deeply regret having missed the opportunity to have made his acquaintance.

I couldn't have been happier with being at the Ways and Means Committee. They were all great—Chairman Doughton was a fine old Southern gentleman. He was from North Carolina, and consequently all the staff was from North Carolina. They liked me, and I liked them, it was a wonderful time. I learned a lot sitting there in front of the committee. You pick up a lot of things sitting there, listening. Of course, you're 18 years old, and a lot of it's going in one ear and out the other.

But I do remember one gentleman very distinctly who testified, and he was—I can't think of his name, but he was president of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. He told the Ways and Means Committee that the Social Security system was going to flounder, that it was not set up on a sound actuarial basis, and he told them exactly what was going to happen. He said, "This didn't work in the Weimar Republic of Germany, and isn't going to work here. This is what's going to happen." They were upset {laughter} at his comments, particularly the Democrats. But what he told them has come to pass. That was in 1949, and it's here today!

Did I tell you the story about getting called over on Saturday from the Ways and Means Committee? Did I tell you that on tape?

BURNS: When you were up in Dupont?

ANNESS: Yes.

BURNS: Yes, yes, you told me, yes.

ANNESS: Oh, okay, then I won't tell that story again. Once is enough.

BURNS: You got the ominous phone call from a Southern voice.

ANNESS: Yes, yes, okay. {laughter} But working on the Ways and Means Committee was really an interesting experience, because you got to listen to all of the testimony from these mostly-experts on something, and they all had something to say.

Congressman Doughton, who was chairman of the committee, he must have been in his 80s or his 90s at the time, and he was hard of hearing. I remember he had a gentleman, a black fellow by the name—we called him Green, and now they refer to him as Mr. Green, but he was a fine, fine fellow who worked for the committee. I was delighted yesterday to have met his son, who now works for the Ways and Means Committee. His job during the hearings was basically to replace the batteries in Chairman Doughton's hearing aid. {laughter} He sat at all the hearings. He sat right at Doughton's elbow, making sure his hearing aid worked.

One day a man came to testify, and he gave his name and title. Congressman Doughton, not being able to hear him, asked, "Who do you represent?" The man said, "I represent the bums and hobos of America." {laughter} Chairman Doughton got his hearing aid out, "Huh? What'd you say? What'd you say?" Green had to tap on his hearing aid just to make sure the Congressman was able to hear. Doughton was astounded with what this guy just said to him. {laughter}

One time after the completion of the Social Security hearings, the committee called me back as they were going to have rare hearings to be held in the evening on some kind of an excise tax on cigarettes. I remember that one man during his testimony made some off-hand remarks about a certain

member of Congress. I remember Congressman [Thomas] Hale Boggs[Sr.] took great exception to this man casting aspersions on his friend and colleague. {laughter} The whole episode was rather amusing. I was delighted yesterday to go back and see the committee hearing room again.

BURNS: Great. I'm just going to stop the tape quickly.

ANNESS: Yes.

END OF PART TWO ~ BEGINNING OF PART THREE

BURNS: What were your duties as a Page for the committee? What were your assignments?

ANNESS: My basic assignment was to sit in front of the committee at a little desk with a sound system and operate the sound system so everybody could hear. I also passed the microphone from one Congressman to another because there was only one microphone in this really—now it would be an antiquated system. I also worked in the clerk's office.

BURNS: Which did you prefer, your duties on the floor or your duties for the committee?

ANNESS: I liked both, but I liked being on the committee. I liked being on that team better. It wasn't so large and so hurried. Everything was more, a little more sedate, and you were a cog in a smaller wheel. {laughter}

BURNS: What was the mood like in the committee during the amendment process for the Social Security Act?

ANNESS: Well, the mood was very amiable. I don't recall that there was a whole lot of division between the Republicans and the Democrats. I think it was probably

mostly over how you were going to fund the Social Security system. But the Congressmen, I don't recall there were any problems.

I remember Congressman Jere Cooper of Tennessee. He was a ranking Democrat, who replaced Chairman Doughton when he either retired or passed away.

Chairman Cooper was replaced by Congressman Wilbur [Daigh] Mills who I remember quite well. Wilbur Mills was a Harvard educated, very sophisticated man of tremendous intellect. I never could figure out how he came from Arkansas. {laughter} He just didn't fit the mold, you know. A very nice man. I really liked him.

Then there was Congressman Stephen [Marvin] Young of Ohio. He was only in his second year, second term, and usually the Ways and Means Committee members had to be a Member of Congress a number of years before you got to serve on that committee. In 1949, there were maybe only 14 members of that committee. Now there must be 30. My father was a Democrat and always voted for Congressman Young and corresponded with him on legislation concerning post office matters. In 1958, Young was elected to the U.S. Senate, defeating John [William] Bricker, who had been a long-term Republican Senator from Ohio.

BURNS: Great. Well—

ANNESS: And—okay.

BURNS: Well, I wanted to ask you a little bit about Truman's 1949 inauguration. I know you were there that day, so I wonder if you could describe the day a little bit, what the mood was like?

ANNESS: You have my article, right?

BURNS: Correct.

ANNESS: Okay. It was very exhilarating. President Truman's inaugural day dawned cold and gray, a chilling fact roommate Senate Page Bob Hansell and I immediately discovered upon leaving our boardinghouse that January 1949 morning. On our way to school and breakfast, we arrived at the Old House Office Building entrance, and quickly discovered a strong presence of the Army. It was almost as if Capitol Hill was in a state of siege. After breakfast, I went to the House, which held a brief session, and then as a body, the House Members walked to President Truman's inaugural platform.

A fellow House Page, Jim Richardson, and I briefly occupied what would have arguably been considered among the best seats at Truman's inauguration. The operative word in this scenario is "briefly," as our up close and personal presence at this historic milestone in our country's glorious history was soon, very soon, cut short by our boss, Fishbait Miller, Doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives.

I cannot remember how it came that I found myself in the Rotunda, and I got confused on this. Maybe it was the Rotunda on the House side of the Capitol building, where I stood next to the Secret Service man guarding the entrance to President Truman's inaugural platform. An even bigger mystery is how fellow House Page Jim Richardson came to be standing next to me, but there we were. And as luck would have it, the last Congressman to pass through the door and on to President Truman's inaugural platform was my Congressman, Edward G. Breen of the 3rd Congressional District of Ohio.

After greeting me, Congressman Breen proceeded to invite Jim and me to come along and watch President Truman's inauguration. I explained that our

passes did not extend to the inaugural platform. Congressman Breen, while patiently waiting to pass through the huge, double, ornate doors, casually turned to the Secret Service man and informed him that we were official House Pages. Unhesitatingly, and without uttering a single syllable, the Secret Service man with a mere wave of the hand gave permission for us to join the Members on the inaugural platform.

Albeit, our stay on it was brief, but the undeniable fact remains that Jim and I were the only Pages—House, Senate, or Supreme Court—who on that day gained admission onto President Truman's inaugural platform, and I think that's a great distinction! Jim and I were ensconced in the nosebleed seats. Behind us was the outside stone wall of the U.S. Capitol building. As a matter of fact, we rested our backs against it.

In front of us sat the House of Representatives. Across the wide center aisle was the Senate. The Supreme Court was in attendance, including Chief Justice Fred M. [Frederick Moore] Vinson, who swore into office that day both Vice President Alben W. Barkley and President Harry S. Truman, the members of the president's Cabinet, and invited VIP guests. Sitting immediately in front of the inaugural platform was the United States Marine Band, and in front of the band were the members of the Washington diplomatic corps, and beyond them, thousands of invited guests.

It was an exciting scene that Jim and I were certain we would always remember. With the arrival of Vice President-Elect Alben W. Barkley and his daughter, the Marine Band played "Ruffles and Flourishes," and we all stood up in place on the platform. We arose from our seats when the Marine Band struck up "Hail to the Chief," announcing the arrival of President Truman, his wife, Bess, and daughter, Margaret.

Standing there, thrilled to be participating in inaugural ceremonies, Jim and I were thunderstruck when out into the middle aisle stepped Fishbait Miller looking straight up at us, and, unexpectedly, with great emphasis, gestured for Jim and me to leave the inaugural platform and to leave immediately! We looked at each other in utter disbelief! How could Fishbait in this huge throng of people have known Jim and I were on that platform? Considering the distance from where we were seated to where he was standing, it would just not seem possible. Congressman Breen, who had been observing the scene, turned to me and said, "Al, I guess you will have to go." With the sound of "Hail to the Chief" ringing in our ears, we quickly left the platform.

I'd like to point out one other thing here with regard to that. The historical significance of President Truman's inauguration is greatly enhanced when you consider that of the Members of the 81st Congress sitting, attending his inauguration, four of them would someday themselves become President—i.e., John F. Kennedy, Lyndon [Baines] Johnson, Richard [Milhous] Nixon, and Gerald [Rudolph] Ford, [Jr.]—three of whom—Johnson, Nixon, and Ford—would, like Truman, serve first as Vice President, and they were all right down sitting in front of us. And of even greater historical significance, Congressman Gerald Ford would become both Vice President and President without ever being elected to either office!

So disappointed, but not ready to call it quits, Jim and I scurried up to the roof of the Capitol building, sharing a lofty vantage point with the Marines who were there en garde, but it was not the same. After a while, we came back down, and with several other House Pages, viewed the remainder of President Truman's inauguration from one of the House windows. To mark the occasion, we opened the window panels and inscribed our names. {laughter}

Several days passed before the opportunity presented itself to inquire of the House chief Democratic Page why Fishbait ordered Jim and me off President Truman's inaugural platform. He told me that Jim was inappropriately dressed, as he was wearing a World War II Navy Surplus pea coat. More than 60 years have passed since that day, and I still cannot figure out how Fishbait spotted the two of us in that crowd. I'll never figure that one out.

BURNS: Now, I want to switch gears a little bit. You ran for Ohio state senate in 1962, and so you obviously viewed public service as important, and I just wanted to know what impact your Page service had on your decision to run for office, if any?

ANNESS: I don't think it had. It was all part of it, but, I mean, I was always interested in politics. My dad and I discussed politics at the dinner table when I was a kid growing up. It was something I always wanted to do in the early years. Eventually I just realized that I had to do other things, {laughter} and so I just sort of got away from it. But I've always been interested in it.

BURNS: Overall, just—if you could describe the personal impact of being a Page, how that shaped your life.

ANNESS: I can vividly remember the first time I ever stepped onto the floor of the House of Representatives as a Page. It was really inspiring. You're among all those legislators making federal laws. They're the movers and the shakers, and there you are amongst them all. I was over on the Senate side one day running an errand, and here coming toward me was President Truman and a Secret Service man. He was going over to have lunch with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Years later, I would meet Vice President Barkley at a Democratic Jackson Day dinner in Middletown, Ohio. I always remember we were in a room

with him—there were maybe four or five of us—and he wanted a glass of water, and someone asked, "Well, would you like a drink of whiskey?" The Veep apologized, {laughter} and said, "No, I just want water." But just to realize you're there, it is really inspiring. It adds to your intellect. But strangely enough, it's not a ticket to being a Senator or Congressman because the percentage of Pages returning as Members of Congress is very low. But I think it's all part of growing up, and those who are lucky enough to become Pages are really blessed.

BURNS: I think that's a great note to stop on. Did you have anything else you wanted to share before we wrapped up today?

ANNESS: No, I think that's about it, unless you have more questions.

BURNS: That's all I have on my list. I can't think of anything else, so if, you know, if you think of anything later on, feel free to contact me.

ANNESS: When I get the copies from you I'll go through this, and there's some things add, but we're running out of time now.

BURNS: Well, Al, thank you very much.

ANNESS: My pleasure.

NOTES

[1]After the Longworth House Office Building opened in 1933, Cannon, the first House office building, became known as the "Old House Office Building," and Longworth was referred to as the "New House Office Building."
[2] William Miller and Frances Spatz Leighton, *Fishbait: The Memoirs of the Congressional Doorkeeper* (New York: Warner Books, 1978).
[3] During the 81st Congress (1949–1959), two African-American Members served in the House, William Levi Dawson of Illinois and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., of New York.