Bill Goodwin

Page, U.S. House of Representatives (1953–1955)

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript

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Abstract

Bill Goodwin's eyewitness account of the March 1, 1954, shooting in the House Chamber is a rare perspective of a significant event in congressional history. His recollection of the startling attack—most especially the response of the Pages and other House employees—adds a layer of personal detail to the history of that tragic day. Goodwin also provides invaluable information about the daily routine and education of the House Pages. His interview encompasses a range of topics concerning the House and reveals an efficient institutional system that was dependent on the cooperation and a collegial relationship between Members and Pages.

Biography

William (Bill) Goodwin was born in Oakland County, Michigan, near Pontiac, on November 2, 1936. Raised on a farm in Michigan, he attended Waterford Township High School. At age 15, Goodwin jumped at the chance to help support his four siblings and widowed mother when asked by Michigan Representative George Dondero to serve as a House Page. He reported to the Capitol (after a long train ride from Detroit) at the beginning of the 83rd Congress (1953–1955) as a bench Page on the Democratic side. After a brief stint on the House Floor, Goodwin was reassigned to the Democratic Cloakroom—where he worked for two years. During his time as a Democratic Page, Goodwin answered phones in the cloakroom and ran errands for the Members of the House. He later helped guard the lobby doors and access to the floor.

Goodwin's activities extended beyond his duties assisting Members of Congress: He attended morning classes before the beginning of House sessions, participated in the Page glee club, and sang at two Page graduations, including his own in 1955. Despite his busy schedule, Goodwin managed to find time for fun—going to the movies, riding horseback, and participating in a series of Page pranks. In 1954, Goodwin and his fellow Pages witnessed one of the most violent events in the history of the House when four Puerto Rican Nationalists fired hand guns in the House Chamber; five Members were struck by gunfire. In the aftermath of the shooting, Goodwin helped carry the wounded Representatives on stretchers to waiting ambulances.

After graduating from the Capitol Page School, Goodwin returned to Michigan to study veterinary medicine at Wayne University. He left school to help support his family, taking a job as a technician for National Cash Register (NCR). After eight years at NCR, he started his own cash register business. He later established a hovercraft business, designing numerous patents for the vehicle. Partially retired, Goodwin now resides in Merritt, Michigan, where he runs a landscaping business, enjoys hunting, and sings in his church choir.

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 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* at http://bioguide.conress.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.

Citation Information

When citing this oral history interview, please use the format below:
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Interviewer Biography

Kathleen Johnson is a senior historical editor for the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned a B.A. in history from Columbia University and holds two master's degrees from North Carolina State University in education and public history. In 2004, she helped to create House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of Members and staff. She co-authored two books: *Women in Congress: 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006) and *Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008).

— BILL GOODWIN —

INTERVIEW

JOHNSON: This is Kathleen Johnson interviewing Bill Goodwin, a former Page from 1953 through 1955. It is October 20th, 2005, and the interview is taking place in the Legislative Resource Center conference room, Cannon House Office Building. I wanted to start off with some biographical information.

GOODWIN: Sure.

JOHNSON: When and where were you born?

GOODWIN: I was born in Oakland County, Michigan, near Pontiac, in 1936. I have three brothers and a sister. Dad was a mechanic and a farmer. We were raised on a farm out west of Pontiac, out in the country.

JOHNSON: Before you came to Washington, D.C., what schools did you attend?

GOODWIN: I went to Waterford Township High School. That's a township out in the country—township school. It's a small community. In fact, it's so small, I was one of the first—my class was one of the first to go to that new school. My brothers—my older brothers—went into town, into Pontiac to go to school. Waterford Township is well known for its lakes. It's heavily populated with lakes, as most of Michigan, of course, is.

JOHNSON: Would you be able to describe your route to becoming a Page?

GOODWIN: Yes. Congressman George [Anthony] Dondero of Royal Oak had an opportunity to appoint a Page boy. He wanted to do it in a nonpartisan way, so he selected four people from his congressional district—two Democrats and two Republicans—to form a committee and go through the various high schools of his congressional district. They, in turn, spoke to teachers and mostly principals of the various high schools in his district, explaining they had the opening, and they wanted them to suggest names. And so, they all suggested names of boys that they would recommend for the appointment. And through their interviews of various principals and teachers, they had a good list of names; I don't know how many—hundreds. And through that list of names they had, they had a process of elimination, and through the process of elimination, I ended up being the last one to be eliminated, so they approached my family.

Of course, I was only 15 years old at the time. My mother was a widow. That was one of the criteria Mr. Dondero wanted. He wanted somebody not only who would qualify if—not so much academically, but from a personal character standpoint, he didn't want any felons, of course, down there. But he also wanted somebody appointed that could benefit financially, because in those days, Pages were paid pretty decent, and considerably more than any other 15-year-old boy who had a paper route, or worked at a local grocery store, or whatever, you know. So that was one of his criteria. And so, because Mom was a widow—my father died when I was eight years old. Left my mother with five children. The oldest was only 15. That was a major consideration in me being selected also. And so, I was asked to—actually, they approached my mother, and my mother was agreeable to it, and so I was selected and asked to come down. And I came down in January of 1953.

JOHNSON: What are your recollections of your first day on the job?

GOODWIN: Well, I remember the first day, but before that, I remember jumping on the train in Detroit, which was the first time I'd ever been on a train in my life, and I thought that was really an experience. And I came down here. Thinking back, we were poor, and I had an old, beat-up metal suitcase I remember my mother had, and I was instructed to come down here with a blue suit, and a black tie, and a white shirt, and black socks, and shoes, and be equipped that way for the job. So I came down here, and I reported to Mr. Dondero's office; those were my instructions when I got off the train at Union Station—and Mr. Dondero—I left my old, beat-up suitcase, I remember, in his office, and he brought me over to the Capitol building, introduced me to the Doorkeeper of the House, and introduced me to Turner Robertson, and they assigned me to the Democratic side of the House of Representatives. My first day was just meeting the other Pages, and I remember there was a Page who had been here a couple of years. His name was Oliver Furlong, and he kind of took me under his wing. He took me over to a rooming house over on Maryland Avenue, a couple of places, in fact—there was a couple of places—looking for rooms, because in those days, the Pages were just—wherever they could find housing. Rooming houses…A couple of them had apartments, I know. Some of them actually were living with their parents in the area, in the D.C. and Virginia-Maryland area. But those of us who were from out of town, we had to fend for ourselves. And they had rooming houses up and down Maryland Avenue and other streets near the Capitol building. So I located a room, and I had a roommate by the name of Joe Hillings, whose brother was a Member of Congress at the time, and he appointed Joe. We became roommates for the first year, down here on Maryland Avenue: 218 Maryland Avenue. I remember that. Not very

far. Within walking distance, within sight of the Capitol building, and within sight of the Supreme Court. I remember that. That was pretty much my first day on the job: just getting acquainted, and they were showing me the ropes around the building—around the Capitol building—what my job was going to be.

Now I was assigned to be a bench Page on the Democratic side of the House, working under Turner Robertson on that side. And I hadn't been there, but I think…I'm not sure but, either one or two weeks, and they decided they wanted to use me in the cloakroom. And so, they moved me out into the cloakroom, which, it…In our way of thinking, that was a promotion, because the Pages in the cloakroom were allowed to wear colored ties, not the old black ties. And so, we were allowed a little more latitude in that respect. I worked in the cloakroom for two years. And a lot of good fellows worked with me there. Art Cameron was in charge of the fellows there; he was the Page in charge. And then, of course, the man who was the supervisor of the cloakroom, that would be Colonel Emerson—Colonel Roy Emerson.

JOHNSON: Was one of your major responsibilities to answer the phones?

GOODWIN: That was precisely it. I answered the phones. We had a battery of, I think, around 17 phones, if I remember correctly. They were all in phone booths, all lined along the wall in the cloakroom. Our job was to answer the phones, and the congressional offices would call and want to have a Page sent down to the document room, pick up documents, and take them over to the office, or have a Page sent to various offices, and run those type of errands. So we wrote it up on a pad, and brought it out to the head Page there behind the

desk, and he would assign the runners—we called those "bench Pages." And he'd sign the run to those boys.

That was pretty much my job when the House was in session, Congressmen's offices and constituents would call, and they'd want to talk to the Congressmen. And so, we had to know the Members of Congress. We were given a book—a photo book—with their name and address, and their office number, and we had to memorize all of that information, and be able to spot the Congressmen very, very quickly. So we'll walk up onto the back of the House, and look down across—all we could see was backs of Congressmen's heads—and had to be able to spot the Congressman from that way. We got to the point where we were used to looking for a particular Congressman—he had his favorite seat—and we would usually find him generally located in one particular area. Quite often being on the Democratic side, the New York delegation, they liked to sit in a particular area, and the Alabama delegation, they liked to sit in another area. And so, I would go out there and say, "Congressman Jones, your office wants to speak to you." Then to escort him back there, and I would be back to the phone before he would get there, and our job was to do the courteous thing of handing him the phone because there's 17 phone booths there; he didn't know which one it was, and I'd make sure that he was ushered to that phone and hand him the phone and close the door. Some of the Congressmen didn't like their door closed. They probably had a little claustrophobia, and didn't want their doors closed. But primarily, that was the job of a phone Page in those days.

JOHNSON: Can you describe the cloakroom, since you spent so much time there?

GOODWIN: Yeah, I spent a lot of time there. The cloakroom was an L-shaped room in the corner of the House, underneath the Gallery, of course—the Visitors' Gallery—behind the Page bench. The one doorway there, if you walked into it from the House Chamber, to your right would be the overseer's desk—my boss, Art Cameron, in those days—and then, to the left—or, right straight ahead, on the wall straight ahead was all these phone booths. And then to the left, down in the corner of the L-shaped room was a little snack bar. And to my recollection, I cannot remember the name of the couple—a husband and wife operated that snack bar. A nice, black couple, they were. Boy, if I had a little help, I probably could remember their name. Really nice. That snack bar, we ate there. We ate our lunches there, most often. And then, on around the other side of the L-shaped cloakroom was nothing but just couches and big, stuffed chairs, and more couches, and more stuffed chairs, where the Members just sat back there and read the newspapers, and talked with each other, and relaxed. That's what that was. It was not really a cloakroom. To my knowledge, I don't remember any coat hangers being there. They called it "the cloakroom." Probably, in the early days, it might have been a place to hang your hat and coat. But not in those days.

We had some interesting times in that cloakroom there, and some funny things happened to us. I remember one time—well, more often than one—but they'd get a new Page boy in, and they'd send Pages out on a fool's errand, you know? Going for the left-handed screwdriver kind of thing. But in those days, we called them "bill stretchers." Tell the new Page boy, "Go down to the House document room and get a bill stretcher. Congressman Jones wants a bill stretcher over in his office." And boy, he'd just jump and run, and go down to the document room. And the document room operators, the guys down there, they knew, you know, it was a ruse. And

they'd pretend to look for it. "Oh, we don't have one here. You have to go to the Senate document room." And so, the kid would run all the way over to the Senate side of the Capitol building looking for a bill stretcher, and then... And so, he'd catch on that he was being sent on a wild-goose chase.

But I remember one time, we had a Congressman from Texas—a Congressman by the name of [John William Wright] Patman, from Texas. He came in every morning before session, around 10:00, before session, and he'd have yogurt and honey. Walked up to that snack bar, and just like clockwork; you could set your watch by him. And he'd eat that yogurt and honey. They'd give him this big cup of yogurt, and he'd pour honey in it, and stir it up and eat it. We had a new Page boy, and he said, "What is that Congressman come in here every morning eating here?" And one of the clowns of the cloakroom, Brownie Green, Brownie says, "Oh, that's pigeon's milk!" "Pigeon's milk? I've never heard of that." "Oh yeah. You see all these pigeons flying around the Capitol building, and..." "Well, yeah." "Well, the Capitol Architect's office, they instruct us to milk those pigeons, and get the pigeon's milk, and have it here for these eccentric Congressmen. And that's what Mr. Patman's eating: pigeon's milk." And that kid, he just walked away, scratching his head, you know? And everybody did…We were all laughing. Lo and behold, about two days later, the phone rang, and I answered the phone. It was Mr. Patman's office. They said, "Mr. Patman's busy. He can't come over to the cloakroom and get his yogurt and honey. Would you have a Page send it?" So I wrote it up and went out to the head Page desk, and I handed it to Bill [Norvell William] Emerson, in fact. It was Bill Emerson at the time, who later became a Member of the House of Representatives. Handed it to Bill, and I said, "Bill, Congressman Patman can't come here, and he wants his pigeon's milk." He said, "What?!" I said,

"Yeah, his pigeon's milk, you know?" And of course, Bill had already been privy of the joke we had played of the story he had been told the day before. And I kind of nodded to this new kid, who was sitting there twiddling his thumbs, looking out into outer space. And I nodded to him. "Oh, yeah, yeah!" Bill says, "Okay." He says to this new kid, he said, "Go get some pigeon's milk back there in the cloakroom, and take it over to Mr. Patman's office." "Okay." So he runs back there to the cloakroom snack bar, and we were all peeking around the corner, watching him. And he says, "I got to get pigeon's milk for Congressman Patman!" And they said—these two black people behind the counter, I still can't remember their name, but they were really nice people, nice—they said, "pigeon's milk?" "Oh, yeah! You know, that stuff that Mr. Patman gets here every morning." And so, they caught on too—any time a Page boy is sent out on a wild-good chase, they know.

JOHNSON: They liked to play along?

GOODWIN: They go along. "Well, we haven't"—and then they made a pretense, saying, "Oh, we can't find it here. We don't—we're all out of it. Go down to the House Dining Room." So the kid goes down to the House Dining Room. And, of course, by that time, he was sent all over. He went over to the Senate Dining Room; he was sent to the Senate Cloakroom. Oh, a couple of hours later, he come back with his tongue hanging out to his kneecap, and he says, "There's no such thing as pigeon's milk!" {laughter} We had a lot of fun. That was one of the funny things that happened. One of the funny things, many things.

JOHNSON: Did you have a favorite assignment as a Page?

GOODWIN: No, not really. I don't think. I don't think I did. I just liked working with them all—the Members of Congress. I suppose that probably, the interesting part about it was that you just met so many different kind of people. All kinds of personalities. Sometimes, they were really nice to us; other times, they were real gruff with us, and they were just snippy with us. And we also noticed that the Yankees were less courteous to us than the southern Congressmen, regardless of whether they were Democrats or Republicans. That had nothing to do with it. The southern people had a better attitude towards common manners. And I noticed that. That was kind of outstanding in some cases. And then, of course, a lot of Yankees were very good to us, and very kind to us, and courteous to us. Some of the Members of Congress treated us like we were servants, you know, rather than young boys working there. But that didn't bother us that much. We just rolled with the punches, and kept our mouths shut, and did our job.

JOHNSON: Did you have much interaction with the Pages that worked on the Republican side?

GOODWIN: Not too much. Only at school, and maybe before session started, or walking back and forth between. That's about all. We didn't have that much opportunity. We were pretty busy. Although my roommate worked on the Republican side. But no, other than that, no. We didn't interact at all with the Republican Pages, although we were all—the years I was there; the first two years I was there—I was under the auspices of the Republican patronage. They had the power of patronage in those days, and so, most of the Pages were all under Republican patronage, and were of the same political stripe. A lot of the Pages were holdovers from the previous administration, and they were able to get reappointed, and they, politically, were Democrats, but for

the most part, most of the boys were Republican in those days in their political leanings. But we had no problems in that respect. None at all. Nothing like what I hear today. I guess they're at each others' throat! {laughter}

JOHNSON: And you mentioned going to school. You went to school each morning before the House was in session?

GOODWIN: Yeah. Yeah. Every morning, we went to school from 6:30 in the morning until 9:45. We had about 60 seconds between classes. They really jammed it to us. I think they were 40 minute classes, if I remember right. And we covered all our major high school courses. It was strictly reading and writing and arithmetic. We didn't take any basket weaving courses, you know? We just didn't have that spare time. Just strictly history, and math, and biology. And we did have a language teacher. I didn't take language. But we were pretty restricted on time, and so we just covered the major course in high school. That's all we had.

In those days, it was 79 Pages. I think the number's pretty close to the same, even today. But of course, we had ninth through 12th grade in the '53, '4, and '5 years I was there. We had 14 boys in my class. It was about roughly anywhere between 14 and 18 boys per class, year-wise. And the teachers were great. The teachers were very flexible with us because it was a special situation. You're covering a full day's high school courses from 6:30 in the morning until 9:45. You're out of that building—out of the school building—which was the Library of Congress in those days, on the top floor. We were on our way across the street to the Capitol building to do our day's work. So we really had to bare our nose to the grindstone when it came to

our studies, and lots of homework. We carried our books home, and did a lot of homework. The teachers were very flexible with us. They knew that if there was an overnight session, like a filibuster in the Senate, they were aware of it, and they allowed the boys latitude if necessary, when it comes to studies or tests and so on. They were pretty good to us.

JOHNSON: Even though it sounds like you were very busy, you must have had some pastimes.

GOODWIN: Yeah. After work—we'd get out of work in the evening and that varied, of course. We worked from 9:30 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon on days that the House was not in session. At 3:00, we were out of work, and we went home, or whatever we wanted to do. If we were in session past that, we just stuck it out until they adjourned. We all lived, like I said before, we lived in rooming houses, and so we had to find our own meals. And we had to do our own laundry. And I didn't do my laundry. I took my laundry to a little Chinese laundry down around the corner from my rooming house, and he did a great job for me, and quite reasonable. But as far as recreation was concerned, weekends we all went our various ways. Some of the boys did a lot of—I shouldn't say a lot of partying, but they did some parties. I heard about them, but I was not a party person. I just was not that type. I was a loner—not a loner, but I just stayed away from that type of thing. Some of these guys, in those days—maybe today it's the same way—in those days, you could be served beer and wine at the age of 18 in those days. Now, a 16-year-old could pass for 18 in a heartbeat. And so sometimes, the fellas would do a little bit too much of that, and I'd hear stories about it. At least, I don't know if they really did it, but I heard stories, and I didn't want to be involved in that type of thing. But come Monday morning, they were all fine, and

when they came to school, if they were in those kind of things. But for recreation, I'd quite often, in the summertime, and when we had good weather, come down to the Capitol building, and the military bands put on their concerts. One day of the week would be the Navy band; another day of the week would be the Marine band, and Army band, and so on. And I loved that. I like music, and I always spent my evenings doing that. We didn't have a lot of spending money. Sometimes, we'd go to the movies. Towards the end of the month, when our paycheck had been thinned right down, we were eating pretty slim, and it was so we couldn't go to the movies, and we couldn't spend the extra money. But I know one thing I did do: every now and then…I happened to think about it this morning, too—I saw a sign that made me think of it—a road sign: Rock Springs, Maryland. We used to take the trolley car all the way to the end of the route, and rent horses. And we could go horseback riding at Rock Springs. I don't know if they still allow that or not anymore, but that was one of my pastimes: go horseback riding with some of the guys. They liked to do it, too. Being a farm boy, I liked to get away from the city and out on the horse. And I always rode it bareback. And some of the guys thought I was crazy for riding a horse bareback, but that's the only way I knew how to ride.

JOHNSON: When I looked through the Page yearbooks, I noticed that there was a basketball team, and a glee club.

GOODWIN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you participate? I know you participated in the glee club.

GOODWIN: In the glee club, I did. In fact, they credited me for starting the glee club in those days. We had a couple of guys who were really good on the piano. Ted Bourns was great on the piano, and so he'd accompany us, and we did it just for our own amusement, though, really, for the most part. Sometimes, we would entertain the school with some songs we did. But I didn't play basketball.

Unfortunately, I had a bad thing happen here in D.C. It's not a nice thing. We were at a function late at night. The Pages were asked to go to this function. And on the way home, we were attacked by a gang of guys, and they stuck a knife in the back of my leg. So that was the end of my basketball playing. So I never played basketball. The other guys did. I see in some of the pictures here a couple of fellas who were really good at it, and Brownie Green being one. He was six foot six, or five, something like that. And Barrie Williams, also. Those two fellas graduated a year ahead of me. They were great ball players. Barrie just passed away, just about two months ago, very suddenly and unexpectedly. When he graduated in '54, he took an appointment to West Point, became a colonel in the Army, and he was in Army intelligence and in the 101st Airborne. He was a great American, great patriot. And I had the privilege of seeing him last year at our reunion, and I chummed with him quite a bit, in fact, those two or three days during the reunion last year. It was great. Quite a shocker to lose him. But him and Brownie Green were our tall guys, and they really did a good job at playing ball. But I didn't get the chance to participate.

JOHNSON: With regards to the glee club, I noticed that you had quite the reputation as being an excellent singer.

GOODWIN: Thank you.

JOHNSON: Did you have the opportunity to sing at all while you were a Page?

GOODWIN: Yes. Yes, I did. I sang at the class of 1954's graduation. They asked me to sing at their graduation there. Mr. Hilton—Fred Hilton—was our history teacher, and he was a great piano player. And I learned a lot about music from him. In fact, he taught kind of like an afterschool class on music appreciation. And he had a fantastic collection of recordings. And I learned a lot about classical music from Mr. Hilton. So he played for me as an accompanist when I sang for the 1954 class graduation. And then, I graduated in 1955, and the class asked me to sing again.

And I sang then. And then also, I was asked by Congressman Louis [Charles] Rabaut and Congressman [James] Percy Priest. Louis Rabaut was from Michigan, but Percy Priest was from Tennessee. They, one evening, in the House of Representatives, asked me to sing. And so, I went down, and they asked me to come right down in the well. I'll never forget that. Somebody came up to me in the cloakroom and said, "Bill! Mr. Rabaut wants to see you!" And I says, "Where is he?" "He's right out there." And he was down in the well of the House at this podium. And usually, a Congressman who's at the well doesn't ask for a Page, you know? Usually, it's in the seats. And he was right down there in the well. And I said, "Are you sure?" "Yeah. He's right down there." And Art Cameron, who was my boss, he said, "Yeah, Bill, he wants to see you. Go on down there." So I went right down there to the Well of the House. And Mr. Rabaut, he said, "Bill, I understand you sing." I said, "Yes, sir, I do." He said, "Well, several Members of the House here have told me they heard you sing at the graduation, so I would

like for you to sing that same song here." So I did. And the place was jam-packed, of course, that night. I sang "The Lord's Prayer."

JOHNSON: And this was while the House was waiting for the Senate to adjourn?

GOODWIN: Yeah. The House was in recess. Of course! You know, I wouldn't do this during the regular session! {laughter}

JOHNSON: Right. {laughter}

GOODWIN: Yeah. We were in recess waiting for the Senate to give us word to go home. And so, the place was packed, and we were all waiting, and a lot of frivolity was going on at that time. The guys were telling jokes, and some guys were singing, but then Mr. Rabaut asked me to sing. That was a great thrill, and I got a good ovation for it, too. Which is something different that doesn't happen too often. They don't applaud too much there in the House. But I did. And it was a great thrill, and something I can boast about, I suppose. I still am involved in music. I love it.

JOHNSON: One of the most memorable events that took place during your time as a Page was the shooting on March 1, 1954. So at this point, I was hoping we could switch gears a little and focus on that event.

GOODWIN: Sure. Sure.

JOHNSON: Can you describe your recollections of what was transpiring on the floor before the shooting started?

GOODWIN: Sure. I've rehearsed it many, many times, and of course, that kept it fresh in my memory. I was in the cloakroom, and we were—the bells rang—no, I take that back. They didn't—the bells did not ring for that, because this was a standing vote; they didn't ring the bells for a standing vote. But they were taking a standing vote, and things were kind of quiet at the time. Joseph [William] Martin, [Jr.], from Massachusetts was the Speaker of the House at the time. I remember distinctly, he held—when he counted the standing votes, he held the gavel—the head of the gavel in his fist, and used the handle of the gavel to point as he would count the Members who were standing. And he was doing that, and he was pointing and counting. And so, the Members had to stand still, too, because they were being counted. He didn't want—they couldn't be moving around, and everybody had to stand still to be counted properly. And so, he was counting, and it was just quiet. And as I was standing there in the archway—it goes from the Chamber to the Democratic Cloakroom by the phones there, where I was assigned—I was just standing there, looking. And because it was quiet, I was just looking around, and I looked directly across from me, kitty-corner—that's in the corner of the Chamber—kitty-corner from me on the other side, the Republican side, up in the Gallery, I saw these people standing up. And that attracted my attention; the movement up there just attracted my attention. I looked up, and a tall man in a dark suit, he stood up, and he reached inside of his suit, and he pulled out a gun. I was looking right at him when he pulled that gun out.

JOHNSON: So you saw this before it even started?

GOODWIN: I saw it before it even started. And he pulled out the gun, and I was looking at him, and I couldn't believe it. He's pulling out a gun! And this is—how

many yards across is that? It's nearly 100 yards across there. It's a huge chamber. And I could see it, he had a gun in his hand. And he pulled it out, and he started shooting. He just wasn't aiming at anybody in particular. He was just spraying the place with bullets. The second fella that was with him was in a light blue suit, he stood up, and he pulled out a gun and started shooting, also. And a lot of guys thought it was firecrackers, but I knew it wasn't firecrackers, because I was looking at the guns. And then, a lot of the Members of Congress and everybody else was hitting the floor, and the others did what I did: just stood there with their mouth hanging open. I didn't have sense enough to duck. And I could hear two bullets land right to my right, just above Bill Emerson. Bill Emerson was sitting right to my right, I'd say about eight feet to my right. And a bullet landed in the wall right above his head, about four or five feet above his head. Another bullet landed in the wall over where a bench Page was sitting. I didn't, of course, didn't see the bullets land. I heard them hit. I learned later that the one bench Page was sitting there, really. It just unnerved him so bad he had to resign and go home. I learned that later.

But anyhow, they were spraying the place with bullets, and the first guy—he had unloaded his gun, took the clip out of the gun, and dropped it on the floor—reached in his pocket, pulled out another clip, jammed it into the gun, and started shooting it again. And then, his gun jammed on him. And in the meantime, the other fella was shooting, and I don't remember if he reloaded his gun or not, the second fella. But when the first fella's gun jammed on him, he turned and ran up the steps and out of the Visitors' Gallery. And I learned later that he was caught by a Capitol policeman up there. Came around the corner, and they faced each other, and he hauled off and coldcocked him, and flattened him on the floor right then and there. In

fact, that policeman's name was Thompson. I don't remember his first name, but he was a big guy. Thompson. He just flattened him right then and there. The second fella who was doing the shooting, he turned and handed the gun to the woman. This woman then stood up.

JOHNSON: Lolita Lebrón.

GOODWIN: Yeah, right. And she had what I thought was her overcoat dangling over her arm. My understanding, those were fully automatic pistols. You can do…My understanding is, you can flip a little lever on those guns, and they'll go into a fully automatic—not just semiautomatic, but full automatic—like a machine gun. You just hold the trigger, and it just *brr-rrr-rrr-rrr*, like that. Well, she took the gun in both hands, and I saw that coat dangling—what I thought was a coat—dangling over her arm, and she took that gun in both hands, and she started shooting, and it got away from her. It just kind of went up, like that, and that's why you see, there's one or two bullet holes in the ceiling of the Chamber. Then, another spectator started wrestling with that fella in the blue suit, and wrestled him to the ground, and somebody else grabbed the woman. Oh, before they grabbed her, she finished her shooting. Because the gun got away from her, she quit shooting, because it kind of got away from her, the recoil of the gun—and she took the coat, not the coat, what I learned later was the flag—it was actually the Puerto Rican flag. I thought it was her overcoat. She pulled it off, and she waved it in the air, and then shouted something. I learned later she shouted, "Viva, Puerto Rico!" or "Independence to Puerto Rico!" or something to that effect. I remember her shouting something; I couldn't understand what it was. And then somebody grabbed her, and wrestled her to the floor, and they caught them. That was the end of that.

Then, of course, the pandemonium just went on. I went back into the cloakroom, and I got on the phone, picked up the phone, and of course, the Capitol Operator came on. And I told her, "Call the police," the Capitol Police. And they answered, and I said, "There's a shooting going on in the House of Representatives." And they wouldn't believe me. They wouldn't believe me. And I said, "I'm telling you, there's shooting going on here!" They wouldn't believe me at first, but then, by this time, they were getting other calls, and then they realized it was for sure. And so then, I went back out into the Chamber, and Mr. Emerson, my boss, he said, "Bill, come on down here," and he brought me down. He says, "Help these men with these stretchers," and so by this time, they had stretchers brought in. And Mr. Emerson picked out large Page boys—I'm six foot and pretty strong—picked me out and a couple of other guys—Paul [E.] Kanjorski, and Bill [Louis Woodard] Emerson—and asked us to handle the stretchers. We were the largest boys of the Pages, and so we…twice, I helped carry out two different stretchers. One of them was Congressman [Kenneth Allison] Roberts, and the other one was Congressman [Alvin Morell] Bentley of Michigan. Mr. Roberts of Alabama. Mr. Roberts was shot through the kneecap. A bullet went through the seat in front of him and hit him in the kneecap, and just literally destroyed his kneecap. Mr. [Clifford] Davis [of Tennessee] was shot in the calf of the leg, and he said he never even knew he was shot until he tried to stand up, and then he realized he couldn't stand up. And then, of course, Mr. Bentley was shot. He stood up, and the bullet caught him in the upper right, and left him in the lower left. The bullet passed through, and he lost a good portion of his liver, and they, of course, they didn't know if he was going to live or not.

JOHNSON: He was the most seriously injured.

GOODWIN: Yes. Yeah, he was very, very [seriously injured], but he was still conscious. He was very, very in dire need at that time. And then, Congressman [Benton Franklin] Jensen of Iowa, was shot in the back. I understood he was shot down through the back muscles, or in the back of the neck. I suspect one of the bullets glanced off the ceiling, but I'm not sure, because the angle that he was located, going out—he was making a dash for the door. If you were to look, I don't think it could have been a direct shot down there, because the wall of the Visitors' Gallery would have been in the way. It kind of goes down underneath, tucked underneath. I don't know the true story on that one. But anyhow, he got shot in the back, and then Mr. [George Hyde] Fallon from Maryland got shot right through the cheek of the butt—right through the buttocks. One of the buttocks. And so, of course, that was not life threatening. The only life-threatening one was Mr. Bentley from Owosso, Michigan. I helped carry Mr. Roberts out, and then came back in to get the other stretcher and help carry out Mr. Bentley from Michigan. And then, when we got to the ambulance, Dr. Calver, who was the Capitol doctor at the time—he was a former Navy man—and Dr. Calver was getting in the ambulance, and he turned to me, and he said, "I want you to go to the hospital with us." So I got in the ambulance, and I think it was either Paul or Bill went also; I can't remember which one of those two of us Pages went. We got down to the hospital, and I'll never forget it. We wheeled Mr. Bentley—and this man is mortally wounded, seriously wounded. You know, the bullet hit him in the upper right chest and exited his lower left of his upper body. And then, we took him in, and we wheeled him in, and we transferred him from that stretcher to the operating table, and he came up on his elbows, and he thanked us. I couldn't believe it. He says, "Thank you,

boys." I just couldn't believe it. You know, this man was very, very badly wounded. Got up on his elbows. Years later, I bumped into him, and that's another story; I'll show you in my scrapbook someday. {laughter}

JOHNSON: You alluded to this earlier that a lot of the contemporary newspaper accounts mentioned that the Members were shocked, of course, by what was happening, but they didn't believe that they were under attack. They thought it was a prank, or firecrackers going off. Is that a fair assessment?

GOODWIN: Yeah. Yeah. That's true. A lot of the Congressmen didn't realize they were real guns. A lot of the Congressmen just heard *pop-pop-pop-pop* going on, and they thought it was firecrackers. Everybody had different ideas. And I saw the gun. I knew they were shooting. They weren't firecrackers.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that you were chosen, because you were one of the larger Pages, to help with the stretchers.

GOODWIN: Yes. Yes.

JOHNSON: What were the other Pages doing to help out?

GOODWIN: Frankly, I don't know. I was just busy with what I was asked to do. All I know is that Paul and Bill and I were pretty busy. We worked together on the two stretchers. Carried out two Members, and in fact, those two Members were put in the same ambulance. It was a crowded ambulance. I remember that. We were very crowded. We had two wounded Congressmen in one ambulance, plus us two Pages, and Doctor Calver. I don't know if all three of us went down there. I think all three of us did. I

know one other Page went with me. I don't remember if it was Paul or Bill. We could ask Paul Kanjorski if he was the one that went with me.

JOHNSON: I think Congressman Kanjorski said that he went in the ambulance.[1]

GOODWIN: Okay. Okay.

JOHNSON: But Mr. Emerson also mentioned that there were several Pages that were helping out with the stretchers.

GOODWIN: Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah, there were.

JOHNSON: And of course, this leads us to the very famous image: the photograph that was taken of you. Could you describe that?

GOODWIN: Yeah. I remember that there were a lot of photos taken. In fact, the Capitol Police, they were requesting that no photos be taken. Well, in circumstances like that, it was pretty tough to keep the press from clicking their cameras, and can't blame them, of course. But they said, "No photos, no photos." And I remember Bill Emerson—in fact, in that famous photo there, that's what Bill's doing there. He's got his mouth wide open, and he's pointing, and he's yelling at the photographer, "No photos!" And that's exactly what he was yelling. I'm just standing there with—one of the guys is saying, "Leave it up to Bill to carry the full load." And Bill Emerson, he was talking about me. See, I got both my arms on it [the stretcher], I was carrying most of the load of it.

JOHNSON: Right. {laughter}

GOODWIN: And Emerson, he's just touching it, but we just teased each other about that. But that's what that was about. Bill was hollering at the photographer not to take photos, but you can't, it's like trying to stop a charging elephant. You can't do that. We were coming down the Capitol steps, and of course it's freedom. I was told later on that that was…that photo was the most repeated photo of 1954, or the most well known photo of 1954. And that was an interesting photo, because not too long after that, I have an older brother who was in the Air Force at the time, and he was stationed in Hokkaido Island, Japan, and through one of his military newspapers or magazines, there that photo shows up. And he says, "I'm way over here in Japan, and I'm looking at a picture of my brother." You know, and he thought that was really amazing. Yeah, that photo was pretty well known. It's on the wall there in the House of Representatives, and it's also on the wall up there in the library.

JOHNSON: In both cloakrooms, too—is that correct?

GOODWIN: Both cloakrooms? I did not know that. I only saw the one that—oh, is that right? Both cloakrooms? I did not know that.

JOHNSON: I believe it is.

GOODWIN: Okay. Okay. I saw the one.

JOHNSON: And Congressman Kanjorski has a copy in his office.

GOODWIN: Yes. Yes. Matter of fact, Jim Oliver got me a good copy, and sent it to us last year. And I've got that on my wall at home now, too, amongst some other nice collage of photos. Really nice of Paul and myself; and Speaker [John] Dennis Hastert; and Jane, my wife; and Jo Ann Emerson, the widow of Bill Emerson. We had a get-together a year and a half ago, in February of '04. It was the 50th anniversary of it. I came down here, and we all got together, and had lunch together, and the photo ops, and met a lot of Members of Congress, that was last year. A year and a half ago. Quite an interesting thing. And we went out on the Capitol, that very step there, Kathleen. And Paul and Jo Ann and myself had our pictures taken at that spot there. I've still got those pictures. I probably should have brought some of those, or maybe I'll ship them to you or something if you're interested in it.

JOHNSON: Okay. Definitely.

GOODWIN: Kind of a 50-year reminder.

JOHNSON: Congressman Kanjorski was quoted at one point as saying that this was an event that he would never forget. Even 50 years later, he would never forget.

GOODWIN: Oh, you bet. You bet.

JOHNSON: Do you feel the same way?

GOODWIN: Absolutely. Absolutely. Paul and I have talked about it, and in fact, at that time, a year and a half ago, when we came here, we remember it just like it happened this morning. You know, that kind of thing you just don't forget.

I'm 69 years old, and that happened 51 years ago now. And you just don't forget that. I remember that as much as I remember the day I got married. {laughter} And in fact, I probably remember more about that than the day I got married. You know, you're kind of googoo-eyed then. But, anyway. Anyhow, yeah, he's right. That's something you just don't forget. To this day, I can still hear those bullets going *phht-dut*, *phht-dut* alongside of me, those two bullets that one landed above Bill Emerson, and one alongside Bill Emerson, which was just eight feet away from me, to my right. I can still hear those bullets hitting that mahogany wall. *Phht-dut*, you know? What a sound. And the thing is, I saw that it was a gun, you know? I saw it right from the start of it. Saw the guy stand up. Well, I'll have to confess: In those days, whenever we saw some motion up in the Gallery, we always looked up there, and we were looking for girls. {laughter}

You know, the visitors came in to watch—on that section, in that particular—in those days came in on that section. They came in in tour groups. In fact, these terrorists from Puerto Rico, they came in in a tour group. And in those days, we did not have any security, none to speak of. And they walked in, and they had the guns under their belts, and they came in with that tour group, and they did their thing. But when those tour groups come in, we're all the time looking at those tour groups because we know that they're class—senior classes, and they're people of our age, and we look for opportunities to meet girls. And that was always the opportunity. We did that. Sometimes, we'd walk down the hallways in our off time, and if we had that suit and tie on, we were spotted just like that as being a Page boy. And the young people would come up to us if they were on a group from their high school, and they'd come up to us. "Are you a Page boy?" "Oh, sure." And we'd swell up, and our head would get so big, we couldn't

put a hat on, and they'd ask us all kinds of questions, and we'd get acquainted with them, and try to make a date with them. Pretty difficult to make a date with them, because they were pretty well chaperoned.

JOHNSON: I'm sure. {laughter}

GOODWIN: So we didn't make a date very much at all. {laughter} But we were always looking. That's why, you know, when I saw that commotion going on—the move, the motion, not the "commotion," but the motion going on up in that Gallery. And so, that just drew my eye up there, and I saw it out of the corner of my eye. And then I looked up there, and that's when the guy was standing up, and pulled his gun out.

JOHNSON: That's such an interesting perspective, because most of the eyewitness accounts that we have are from Members of Congress. One of the more famous is from Speaker Martin, and he said he thought it was firecrackers. And he sounded annoyed, that he turned around, what was this noise that was going on, that's interrupting the procedures?

GOODWIN: Yes. Yes. Yes.

JOHNSON: But to have the perspective of the Pages who might be looking up in that area at the time.

GOODWIN: Yeah. Yeah, right. Speaker Martin, of course, if you think about it, though, the angle that he would be—the angle of vision that he had, he might not have been able to see the guns. They were up in that corner of the Visitors' Gallery, and the Speaker's chair is located in such a way that perhaps, as I

think about it, he might not have been able to see them, really see those people—the angle that they were located. And so, maybe he did—all he thought was firecrackers. Yeah, I could see that.

JOHNSON: Before this event took place, what kind of security measures were in place? You mentioned just a few minutes ago there really wasn't much at all.

GOODWIN: The Capitol policemen that walked around there were patronage appointments. I doubt if they had but maybe 15 minutes' training. I'm being facetious, but I know they did not have real training as far as physically handling people, or—I can't remember if they—no, they had guns strapped on the side. I think they had guns strapped on their sides, but I don't even know how good they were with handling guns. These guys were patronage appointments, and a lot of them were working there as a day job, and going to college at night, these Capitol Police. Nothing like it is today. Today, you have nothing but professionals. But in those days, they were patronage appointment jobs, and so those guys really were not professional security officers by any stretch of the imagination. Only by happenstance did they happen to get a big, strong guy like that Thompson I mentioned, where he'd be really successful in doing a good job of security. But they had no security. And also, there was a House rule—I guess we'd call it a House rule: No firearms were allowed in the Chamber, period. So even a Member could not carry a firearm into the Chamber. Well, as a result of that House rule, there were no police officers in the Chamber, and these armed officers that were walking around the hallways of the Capitol building as guards, we'd chew the fat with them all the time, you know? They'd just stand around, and most of the time they were direction-givers to the tourists. And they kept order, as in "no running in the hallways," and things like that, you know? But they were

not allowed in the Chamber, or in the Gallery—in the Visitors' Gallery. And so as a result, these terrorists, they had free rein when they came in with their two guns and three people. And there was nothing there to stop them. I don't think enough credit has been given to the people who were in that visitors' tourist group with them that, you know, had the guts enough to grab them and start fighting with them. You've got to hand it to them. They really took a chance, really. I mean, these people were armed, and the other visitors weren't armed, but they tackled them, and they wrestled them to the ground, anyhow. So we got to give a lot of credit to those kind of people, I think.

JOHNSON: Several of the newspaper articles mentioned that visitors helped and committee staff helped.

GOODWIN: Oh, you bet they did.

JOHNSON: It really seemed like anyone that could was trying to help the police subdue them.

GOODWIN: It—yeah, yeah. It wasn't the committee staff. It was strictly the visitors that were with them in that same tourist group. Just other visitors. I would have to say, just a "Joe Blow" citizen who was there to take a tour of the Capitol, and he jumped into the fray. That's who it was really, who really wrestled these people to the ground. Probably after the fact, there were some others—staff members came there and put their hands on them so they could say, "I grabbed the guy, too, you know," or whatever. That kind of thing. A lot of glory-seekers, you know. In fact, there was a Congressman who did that, too. If you want to shut that off, I can give you his name. {laughter}

JOHNSON: {laughter} All right. If you don't want to say it on tape, that's okay.

GOODWIN: No. [He was] a real glory-seeker. He was a real mouthy kind of a guy, and blustery kind of a character, and he boasted about he ran out of the Chamber floor, and ran up to the second floor, and he grabbed that one guy. Well, he didn't. Frankly, he didn't. The Pages, all the Pages on the Republican side said he did not do that, period. But he was a glory-grabber. He was going to get his name in the paper, and his picture in the paper. And sure, fine, go ahead. Let him.

JOHNSON: Many articles mentioned him, and he was a veteran of both world wars.

GOODWIN: Yes, yeah, he was a veteran. No question. I give him that. But he didn't do what he said he did. There's too many Pages that said he didn't do it, and too many guys said he didn't. Now, I will say, he did go up there after the fact. After these guys had already been subdued and everything, he went up there, and he got his licks in. But they had already been subdued, and were being held, and had already been handcuffed. So, he was a—he was looking for some pictures in the paper, and a few more votes, maybe. I don't know what his...We all have egos, you know, to one degree or another.

JOHNSON: What kind of changes in security did you notice after March 1st?

GOODWIN: Well, the only change I know is they assigned—they rescinded that rule about firearms, and they assigned undercover officers to sit in the Gallery, at various places in the Gallery. That's all they did right after that for the year and a half—well, let's see. That was in March of '54; I was there for the

remainder of '54, and all of '55. And that's the only changes that was made. There were no electronic surveillance that we have like today. Of course, they weren't even around. That's all they had. They just had these—I don't know whether you'd call them "undercover," but plainclothesmen. And they were armed. And they placed them at various places throughout the Visitors' Gallery. And they just sat there during the session, and when the session was over, they left.

JOHNSON: Did your duties change at all as a Page? Were there any restrictions placed on you?

GOODWIN: No. None at all. None at all.

JOHNSON: You had the same access that you had before?

GOODWIN: Oh, yeah. Sure enough. Yeah, we were allowed to go just about any place we wanted to go.

JOHNSON: What was the overall atmosphere among the Pages? You mentioned one Page that you had heard about that went home because of what happened. But what other reactions were there?

GOODWIN: Well, typical boys, you know? We just sat around and talked. "Where were you?" "I was, well, I was over here, and I saw that!" Or, "I heard this, and I saw that!" We were all relating to each other. "Where were you when it happened?" You know? "Where were you when it happened?" Like—let's see, you're too young to remember, but nowadays, we say, "Where were you when you heard about the news of John F. Kennedy being assassinated?"

You know? And I remember distinctly where I was. I know the exact spot where I was. And, but that's what the boys discussed. They just said, "Where were you?" You know? And of course, the Pages in the Senate only heard about it. They were not in on it, and so, they didn't have too much to say the next day at school, but that was the subject matter, of course, the next day in school. And of course, one of the other things was that everybody was saying they should be executed. Oh, boy. I mean, capital punishment. You know, hang them. That's it. I'm very surprised that they didn't. As far as I'm concerned, that was an act of treason, and I don't know why they didn't, but I'm very surprised they didn't get the maximum. It was an act of treason. It was forcibly trying to overthrow the government.

JOHNSON: With all the talk of terrorism because of recent events, do you view what they did as a terrorist act?

GOODWIN: Sure. Sure. Absolutely. It was a terrorist act. I call them terrorists. They tried to overthrow the government. They might not like it, but Puerto Rico is a part of the United States. It is not a state, of course. It's a protectorate. But they wanted independence. That was and, in fact, that's still her goal. She still—I don't know about the other—do you know anything about the others? Are they still living or not?

JOHNSON: Two are deceased. One of the men is still alive, and Lolita Lebrón is still alive.

GOODWIN: She's still pushing, too. She's really still pushing, and yeah, for that reason alone, too, you know, I don't think she needs to be around. You know, a person gets really—gets cancer. Obviously, you can tell I'm pro-capital

punishment. But I don't call it—I shouldn't say that. I don't believe in capital punishment. But I do believe in "capital removal." In the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy, when the law was given to the Israelites, if a guy did a capital crime—did murder or rape—he was to be taken outside the camp—and I'm quoting the verse in the Bible verbatim now—"taken outside of the camp and stoned to death and thus shall you remove evil from the camp." So I don't believe in capital punishment, but I believe in capital removal. Just like you do with the weeds in your garden: You remove them. Just like you do with a lump of cancer that's in your body. The doctor takes a knife and he cuts it out, and he removes the evil from the community. And does he rehabilitate that cancer cell? No, he destroys it. And that's…and I believe in capital removal. I really do. And I think those people, when they tried to overthrow the government through those guns, forcefully like that, they deserve exactly what the law provides. And they should have been executed. We wouldn't have to put up with her now. We're still putting up with her. She's still stirring up trouble down there in Puerto Rico, spending what? Thirty years in prison, or something like that? Nearly, or so? Boy! {laughter}

JOHNSON: Getting back to the atmosphere after the fact, you mentioned as young high school boys, you were resilient. Were the Members of Congress—the Members of the House—the same way? Did they act any differently? Did they seem more skittish? Was there any noticeable difference?

GOODWIN: Not really, no. I don't think so. They talked—the Members of the Congress—of course, that was a subject for weeks to come after that. But—and they would, all they'd talk about is they'd talk about, "Yeah, I noticed that there's some plainclothesmen up there in the Gallery now." And of

course, at times, we would look up there, and I knew most of the plainclothesmen by sight. I know who they were, and where they were. I could look up there, and I'd see them. I remember one was Captain Shamp, was his name. His wife was one of the tour guides, in fact, and she worked as a tour guide. Very nice people. Captain Shamp and his wife, and I forget her name. But no, the Members of Congress didn't change in their attitude, I don't think. I think a lot of them did feel, though, what I just expressed here, that they should have been executed for attempting to overthrow the government, or treason, or whichever charge you want to lay to them.

JOHNSON: You've had a lot of years to reflect upon the event. It's been 51 years now since it happened. I was wondering if your perspective of what took place has changed at all? Or do you think you feel pretty much the same as right after the event took place?

GOODWIN: Well, I feel about what?

JOHNSON: About what happened. Have your feelings changed? Do you have a different perspective because time has passed?

GOODWIN: No, I don't—about my philosophy, or is it of the event, is that what you're saying? No. No, I still—if you—I just expressed it to you. I feel that people who do things like that should be removed from the community, forever.

JOHNSON: Is there anything different that you remember? As time passes, do certain details come back to you?

GOODWIN: No, not really, because you know, over the years, I've been asked to speak

in high schools, history classes, and sociology classes, and I've rehearsed this story so many times that it's been kept fresh in my mind, too, for that reason. And I've been very careful not to embellish, not to change it, and keep it the same. And the photographs tell the tale, especially this main photograph. It was pretty telltale as to what happened. But I do remember every step. Every step I covered with you, I remember every step of the way that happened—every event that happened from the time I stood there and saw the guns being pulled out, to the time I rode to the hospital, with the Congressmen, and went into the operating room. We were there for a while, then we asked the ambulance driver, we didn't know where we were! We didn't even know what hospital we were in! And asked the ambulance driver if he would take us back. We were—they were—Dr. Calver was done with us there at the hospital. So we asked the ambulance driver if he would bring us back, and he brought us back. And we came back in and reported back to our bosses, and by this time, of course, the Congress had adjourned for the day. They were still hanging around—a lot of guys still hanging around, just talking and jabbering, and you know, there was a lot of excitement going on at the time, and talking about.

You know, the only other thing I remember about that was later on in the evening, of course, we went home, and I went back to my rooming house. And I called my mother. I knew she was hearing about it on the news. And so, I called my mom, and told her, you know, what had happened. And she says, "Well, you're going to be getting some calls, too." And I says, "Why?" And she says, "Already, I've been getting phone calls from a lot of the news media here in the Detroit area—the Detroit newspapers." And I said, "Okay." And so, sure enough, that evening, I got a couple of calls from the Detroit papers, because it was, you know, a local boy who was "human

interest," I think they call it, kind of a thing? And so, they interviewed me on the phone. That, I'll have to tell you, in answer to your question now, I do have a perspective. I have very little regard for the news media, because I don't think they tell the truth that good. I'm basing that on experience. Here, I'm a 16-year-old boy who went through that experience. I got two phone calls at my rooming house; my landlady let me use her phone whenever they called me. These reporters called me, and they interviewed me over the phone. Which, fine: I told them my story, just as I told it to you. When I saw the Detroit paper the next morning in the Speaker's Lobby—and I—of course, we're all pouring through that; that was one of the things that happened, too. A lot of boys did read their hometown newspapers, because the same thing happened to them as happened to me.

JOHNSON: Right. And these were the newspapers that were put in the Speaker's Lobby—the local newspapers?

GOODWIN: Yes. Yeah, yeah. They were all delivered there, you know, overnight, there. And so, we all were poring over our hometown newspapers, because a lot of the boys had the same experience as myself, as being interviewed by a hometown news reporter. And I read the news article that this Detroit paper wrote about me, and I was livid. He told a lot of it accurately. The other parts of it, he told it—he just embellished it, he changed it around to—like, for example, he said I rushed to Congressman Bentley's side because he was a fellow Michigander. I did no such thing! No such thing! {laughter} If Mr. Emerson—my boss, Roy Emerson—he said, "Bill, come on over here and carry these stretchers out." That's what happened.

JOHNSON: Right. And you were just trying to follow—

GOODWIN: I didn't even—in fact, I didn't even know it was Mr. Bentley at the time! Until, you know, I picked him up, I didn't. And so, I lost a lot of regard for the news media, because they just—they're in it—you know, the Bible says the love of money is the root of all source of evil, and these guys are doing it for the buck. You know, they're trying to sell their newspapers, and this individual newspaper reporter, he's got to make a good story, or else he's not going to please his editor; if he doesn't please his editor, he's going to be out on the street looking for a job! So he has to really make it sound pretty, sound good. And so, from that experience, I really did not like—did not appreciate the news media, and I've not changed my mind since. {laughter}

JOHNSON: What kind of effect do you think this event had on your life? You're talking about this as if happened yesterday, your memory is so strong. But do you think it had a lasting effect on you in any way?

GOODWIN: Not emotionally or anything like that. No, not at all. Philosophically, like I just told you, I believe that criminals ought to be really harshly dealt with, more so than they are now today, and even in those days, they didn't deal with them like I thought they ought to be dealt with. But personally, no, it has not affected me.

Some people have said, "Well, boy, you—probably wouldn't want to…" I've had this happen. I can't remember who it was that asked me, "I'll bet you don't want to be around a gun the rest of your life." The opposite couldn't be more true. As I told you, my wife and I hunt. I don't know if you want to record this; you might not, but I carry a handgun all the time. Not down here, though! {laughter} But at home, I do, you know? And I'm not afraid

of guns, and it's not changed my philosophy on these things. These things don't bother me.

I think that—well, we're back to the same subject. I really feel that the law and the enforcement of the law is really a bit too soft on criminals. And I remember doing a paper in a sociology class in high school at home—my hometown high school, in a sociology class there on crime, in Michigan. And through my research, I found out that 66 percent of all crimes committed in Michigan, and probably the same thing worldwide—nationwide, worldwide—66 percent of crimes committed are committed by people out on probation and parole. So if you want to do away with two-thirds of the crime, just do away with parole and probation, and keep those guys in for the full length of their service, and you'd cut down on crime quite a bit there. I'm still a firm believer in that kind of thing, and letting them out, that's not the answer to it, either. One of the things that did happen to me, and I had to be very careful about, was to let my experience as a Page to go to my head, and give me a swelled head, too. I really became self-conscious about it. I remember going home—see, we went to school—we were appointed from and served from January until Congress adjourned in July, August, September—whatever that would be. And then we'd go home, to our home state. And I went home each of those three times to my home school, and I went to Waterford Township High School from September or November or October—whenever I got home, until the following January. And when the Congress convened again, I came back down here. While I was at home during that time at my home high school, a lot of kids would come up to me and go, "Hey, Bill! How're you doing?" You know? And I'd say, "Oh, fine!" You know? And I'd wave at them, look at them and say

"Hi" to them in the hallway, and walk—look at them, and think to myself, "Who was that?" They all knew me, see.

JOHNSON: Because you were a celebrity of sorts.

GOODWIN: Yes! They all knew me, but I didn't know them. And I felt real bad that I couldn't say, well, "Hi, Joe," or "Hi, John," or "Pete," you know? I didn't know them by name. Or Suzy, or whatever. And I always felt bad, because I just said, "Oh, hey! Hi! How are you doing?" and just go on, and almost like giving them the bum's rush, you know? And they probably went away and thinking, "Oh boy, is he stuck up. He didn't even hardly say 'Hi' to me." I don't know them! I didn't know those people! And so, as I say, I really felt self-conscious about that. I thought to myself, "Boy, I hope I don't let this thing go to my head." And I tried diligently not to allow it to go to my head. And so I don't talk about it very much for that reason. Probably that's not good. That's why I'm really relishing this opportunity to come down here and spill it all out to you, and that way, you can make a record of it, and I'm not fearful of it becoming some kind of an ego trip for me. It's a part of the record. I'm becoming part of the record, so I don't mind that.

And then, when somebody does discover—even today, in my church, just last week. We have special meetings at our church, and tonight's the last night of our special meetings, and I was going to be missing from those special meetings. We were going to have an evangelist there, and I sing in the choir and so on. And my pastor was asking me for something; I don't know what it was. And I said, "Well, I'm not going to be here, Pastor." "You're not?" I said, "No. I'm going to Washington." He says, "Why? Why?" I said, "Well, I'm going to Washington, D.C." "You are? Why?" And I

explained to him. And he was just taken aback by it. He didn't know it. Not many people know that I've had that experience, and when they find out, they just really—and then they're all questions.

JOHNSON: Of course.

GOODWIN: Yeah. They want to know all about it. And, "I've known you all this time, and I didn't even know that about you!" And, "I bet that was a great experience!" And so on, you know? And of course, I would be more than happy to tell them all about my experience, just like I'm telling you.

JOHNSON: Is there anything else you would like to add with regards to the shooting in '54 that we haven't covered?

GOODWIN: Real quickly, off the top of my head, I can't think of any. I probably will think of something later. You know how that goes. No, we pretty much covered that. That was the big thing, so I think we covered that in as much detail as I know—as I experienced. Did you ever get a recording of Bill? Probably not.

JOHNSON: No.

GOODWIN: He died about nine years ago. Nine—almost 10 years ago, now, so you probably didn't get anything from him, other than what was in the *Congressional Record*. Him and Paul would reminisce at times on the anniversary of the shooting.

JOHNSON: Right. I remember reading something; it was 40 years after the fact. It was in 1994. And the two of them spoke about the incident. And Representative Emerson mentioned you by name, because he had a copy of the image that you spoke about.

GOODWIN: Yes. Yes. Yeah.

JOHNSON: He mentioned that you were the third Page that was helping to carry the stretcher down the steps.

GOODWIN: Yeah. Yeah, right.

JOHNSON: Did you keep in touch with the two of them afterwards?

GOODWIN: Yes, I did. Yeah, I did. Not a whole lot, but I did. In fact, Bill sent me a copy of that *Congressional Record* with me—he said, "Turn to page so-and-so, and you'll be interested in that." {laughter} He sent that to me. I've had other contacts with Paul, mostly, because Bill's been gone for a number of years now, and Jo Ann, too. Not so much Jo Ann, mostly Paul. Paul's helped me out on a couple of situations. It was very nice of him to do: a visa situation to the country of Brazil. An interesting thing, and he really, really did us a good service. My church was sending 18—no, sending 12 men down to Brazil to help one of the missionaries that we support down there. And they were going down for a work session, all of these 12 men. And they had taken time off from work, they had taken their vacation time, they'd bought plane tickets, and they were having a terrible time getting their visas through. And it came time to go, almost time to go, and they weren't going to go. And they had taken their—well, spent money on tickets and

everything. And I learned about it at the last second. And I said, "Boy, I didn't know you guys were having this trouble!" And, in fact, it was to the point where our assistant pastor had flown to Chicago to the Brazilian—not the embassy there, but the consulate, to try and hand-work these applications for visas through the Brazilian Consulate in Chicago, and he came up with zip, zero. And he came back, and they were talking about it. And I says, "What are you guys talking about?" And they explained to me they was having a problem. I says, "Why didn't you let me know?" Walked into the pastor's office, picked up the phone, called Paul Kanjorski's office, and I told him what the problem was. He says, Karen Feather—his administrative assistant—he said, "She's good at handling this kind of thing." So that was at 11:00 in the morning. By 3:00 in that afternoon, they had their visas. You know, it was just—and that's the kind of—a couple of other things like that, he's helped me out with. So I guess these Congressmen are earning their keep a little bit. {laughter}

JOHNSON: {laughter} That is good to know. We're going to pause for a minute, if that's all right with you.

END OF PART ONE ~ BEGINNING OF PART TWO

JOHNSON: Up until this point, we've spent a lot of time focusing on the one particular event in 1954, but I wanted to go back a bit and have you discuss some areas of when you were a Page, specifically, an unusual thing is you were sponsored by two different Representatives.

GOODWIN: Yes. Congressman George Dondero of Royal Oak, Michigan, appointed me my first two years there, and then Congressman [William] Homer Thornberry of Austin, Texas, appointed me the third year there. That was an interesting thing, and I love to tell this story, and I love to tell it to high school sociology classes, or government classes, or whenever I'm invited to speak. And the story goes like this. My second year—after I had finished my second year there in 1954, Mr. Dondero was running for re-election. And he's pretty well locked in. He'd been in the House a long, long time up to that point. And so, it was one of those shoe-in type of elections. And anyhow, a man who worked in his campaign—who heads up his campaign, in fact—came to me, and he said, "Bill, would you help us in the Congressman's campaign this fall?" I was at home now. Congress had adjourned, and I had gone home, and I was going to school at my hometown school. And this was my senior year of high school. And I said, "Sure." This was in November, or just before November—just a day or two before the election day, in fact. And I said, sure, I'd be glad to hand out brochures and so on, flyers at the precinct. He said, "Well, I'll pick you up, and I'll take you to a precinct, and I'll drop you off there, and you hand out flyers and you introduce yourself, and since there's been a lot of news articles about you—you were in the *Pontiac Daily Press* and the Detroit papers—your face is well known. And your story is well known, about you being Congressman Dondero's appointed Page." Okay, fine. I'll be glad to do that. And he says, "I'll pick you up at your house, and I'll take you to the precinct that we want you to work." I said, "Fine." He said, "I'll pick you up about 7:00." I said, "Well, that's almost too late. The polls close at 8:00." He said, "Oh, no! I mean 7:00 in the morning." I said, "Well, I can't do that, Mr. Blick." I said, "I'm going to school." And he said, "Well, can't you skip school?" And I said, "Mr. Blick, I've never skipped a day of school in my life. I've never

done that. The only time I ever missed school was when I was sick or dead." And, you know, I just don't miss school. I wasn't raised that way. And he said, "Well, you could miss it for this, right? I mean, this is important for Mr. Dondero, for you to come and campaign for him." I said, "I can't do that." And he really got upset about it. And he said, "Well, you know, I could recommend to Mr. Dondero that he not reappoint you." I mean, mind you, think about this. I'm a 16-year old boy, anxious to go back to Page school and finish my last year in Page school, and graduate from Page school, and this guy makes a threat to me. And this man is about 50 years old, and he knew better, and he makes this threat to me. And boy, I bristled at that. And I didn't get nasty with him; I was taught better than that. And I said, "No, Mr. Blick. I can't do it. I don't care." He said, "Well," he said, "I'll just recommend Mr. Dondero not to reappoint you." So that was the end of that, and I didn't work for him.

The day after the election, of course, the Democrats had taken over the Congress. And so, Mr. Dondero had lost his patronage privilege, so he wasn't going to be able to appoint me anyhow. And this guy called me up, and he just gloated. "You're not going to go down there anyhow." And I says, "Mr. Blick, I'm going to go down there." "You were appointed by a Republican! No Democrat's going to appoint you!" I said, "I'll get down there. I'll get appointed." "Well, you're not going to." He was really, *Nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah* to me and all. And what a thing to do to a 16-year old boy.

JOHNSON: Right! After the fact.

GOODWIN: Can you imagine? Yeah. Afterward, even. He was really gloating. And I,

of course, I was upset. And I thought, well maybe, you know, I might not get appointed. But I wrote a letter to a Congressman Jim [James William] Trimble from Arkansas. And sent him a little photograph of me and my dog, and I wrote him asking him if he'd appoint me. He wrote me right back. In fact, I got it in my scrapbook. He said, "I'd be glad to appoint you, Bill."

JOHNSON: Why did you write to him in particular?

GOODWIN: Because I just measured him in my mind as a good man, you know? When I had worked—seen him there for two years, and he was friendly to us, and not that I knew him personally at all. I just knew him after working in the cloakroom, and he knew me, and in fact, I did send him a photograph of myself with my dog, and just to remind him who I was, you know? And he wrote me back. He says, "Sure, Bill, I'd be glad to appoint you." And I got that letter in that scrapbook. And so, I reported down here on January 3rd, on the opening day of the session, and Mr. Trimble came up to me, and he says, "Bill, I got bad news for you." Now, mind you, I had bought a ticket, flew down here, got my room—you know, my rented room—reported for work here, and he comes to me, and he says, "Bill, I got bad news. I can't appoint you. I've got pressure, somebody's really pushing me to appoint their boy from my own district." Well, okay. He says, "But don't worry." He says, "I'm going to go to bat for you." And he went to Homer Thornberry. And he told Mr. Thornberry the situation. And Mr. Thornberry says, "Oh, sure. I know that boy. He's a good boy. I'll take him. There's two Democrats went to bat for me, knowing that I had been appointed under a Republican regime, and by a Congressman who was a Republican, Mr. Dondero, but these two guys went to bat for me, and they reappointed me for my third year here. And they both told me it was

because of my character, not because of any political affiliation, knowing that very well that I was a Republican in my background.

And I love to tell that story, because—stick to your guns. And here, here that man threatened me, and he wanted me to skip school, something I had never done a thing like that in my life. Of course, today, I imagine kids skip school without even batting an eye today. Maybe kids don't have the standards that they had in those days. But I stuck to my guns, and the Lord allowed me to be blessed with a third appointment—or, a third-year appointment. And I was. I like to tell that story, because it's a good illustration that character does count. It really does.

JOHNSON: And a real tribute to you that they noticed your character, and that you were performing your job well.

GOODWIN: Sure! Sure! They saw my job for the two years that I was there. That was good enough for them, and so they were willing to appoint me. That was great.

JOHNSON: That leads into a question that I had thought of earlier. What kind of interaction did you have with the Members besides running assignments for them? Did you have the chance to—in the cloakroom...

GOODWIN: Yes, depending on which Congressman it was. Like I think I mentioned before, some Congressmen just wouldn't have anything to do with us. Other Congressmen would chew the fat with us, and talk about—I remember Mr. [John Anton] Blatnik from Minnesota, I had overheard him say something about hunting. And that perked my ears up, because I love to hunt. I'm an

outdoors boy, and farm boy, and so I just mentioned something to him about hunting. Boy, he and I just hit it off, talking about hunting. And he was very friendly to me in that respect. Other Congressmen—if they talked about other interests—a common interest of subject matter, you know, if it was ball games or ball teams, and so on—they'd sit down and talk with us, and chew the fat, especially if they were not busy, in a hurry to go anyplace, and didn't have any appointments. And they would sit there in the cloakroom, and chew the fat with us about one thing and another. Tell jokes sometimes, and Mr. [Frank William] Boykin from Mobile, Alabama was a classic example of that. He was the most jovial Congressman I've ever met. Frank W. Boykin was his name; Mobile, Alabama. Big man, with a big old gravelly voice. He said, and his famous saying was, "The whole world made for love." {laughter}

JOHNSON: {laughter}

GOODWIN: He had that emblazoned on his hatband. I remember it was in his hatband. I remember, he opened up his coat, there it was right there: "The whole world is made for love." He had it embroidered on his coat, inside of his coat. He carried—I remember, he carried a great big old pocketknife, and he had it right on there: "The whole world is made for love." And in fact, if I remember correctly, if you look at my yearbook, you'll sign—you'll see where he signed it that way, too. "The whole world is made for love." {laughter}

JOHNSON: You had the opportunity to see a different side of the Members.

GOODWIN: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. I saw some Congressmen that I thought were pretty dumb, too. {laughter} And I saw one who I thought was really crass, and it's

a joke. I reminded Brownie Green of it last year at the reunion. He had forgotten about it until I reminded him, and he says, "Now I still want to forget about it!" I'll tell you this story. You might want to erase it, but a Congressman by the name of—oh, boy, I've forgotten now—I think it was Mrs. [Maude Elizabeth] Kee from West Virginia. It was a woman. We called them "Congressmen" in those days. We didn't call them "Congresswoman." We called them "Congressmen." Congressman Kee. Even though it was a female. Edna [Flannery] Kelly from New York. You know, a female. Tall, lanky lady. And we called her "Congressman Kelly." That was the protocol. But anyhow, Congressman Kee was in the cloakroom drinking an orange juice. She had it like this, and she was quite a large, bosomy woman. And she was talking to another Congressman, and had this orange juice with her. And she stepped back, laughing at this joke. And Brownie Green was just walking behind her just at the time, and she bumped into him. And she dumped the orange juice on her front. And, oh, Brownie says, "Oh! Mrs. Kee! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" And he runs over and he grabs a towel which was right there by the snack bar. He grabs the towel, and he offered it to her. And this is the thing: she says, "Don't just stand there—wipe it off!" {laughter} And we're all standing there, and we're aghast. We couldn't believe it! We're all in the cloakroom watching this, you know? And Brownie goes, with his big, tall, six-foot-five guy, you know, towering over her, and he's got this towel in his hand, and he's going like that, and wiping off her front, wiping the orange juice off the front. And we just about split a gut laughing. We razzed him about that for weeks afterward. "Brownie, give me a towel!" "Hey, Brownie, give me a towel!" So, we really…But she was dumb. We ran into some dumb Congressmen. I remember that same Congressman, she came in there, the bells rang—they still ring bells for the votes, right?

JOHNSON: Right.

GOODWIN: And the bells rang—four bells for a roll call vote, it was in those days. And they were all pouring in, and—"What are they voting on? What are they voting on?" Well, you tell them what they're voting on. Or sometimes a phone would ring, and, "What are they voting on?" We'd say, "Well, they're voting on such and such a bill." And she came running in. And she turned to one Page boy and she says, "What are they voting on?" And the Page told her what was the name of the bill they're voting on. She turns to this other Page boy and she says, "How shall I vote? How shall I vote?" And we looked at her, and we looked at each other, and we didn't know what to say! We just were dumbfounded! We didn't know what to say! She was actually asking a Page boy how she should vote.

JOHNSON: She wasn't joking with you?

GOODWIN: No! Oh, no! She was not joking. She was not joking. "How shall I vote?" She was in a rush because her name was coming up on the roll call. You know, I remember the roll call. The reading clerk, he would read it: "[Watkins Moorman] Abbitt, [Edwin Ross] Adair, [Hugh Joseph] Addonizio." I can still remember those two or first three names.

JOHNSON: Because you heard it so often.

GOODWIN: Yeah. But anyhow, that was one of the funny things, of Members of Congress. Other Members of Congress, I remember they—a lot of them stood on the back rail, smoking their cigars, and leaning and talking with

each other. But they were, for the most part, they were very, very kind and courteous to us, and they never sent us on stupid things, you know. They really were pretty courteous to us. For the most part, they were. I do remember when [William] "Fishbait" Miller, he was there, you know, and he was all the time being talked about behind his back.

JOHNSON: Right, and he was Doorkeeper at the time.

GOODWIN: Yes, he was the Doorkeeper. Well, the first two years I was there, he was assistant Door—or, Minority Doorkeeper, because the Republicans were in charge. And Tom Kennamer. But anyhow, "Fishbait" was, the first two years I was there, was the Minority Doorkeeper. And then the third year there, he was back up as Majority Doorkeeper.

But a lot of the guys used to talk about "Fishbait" Miller, about what a foot-kisser he was. He kissed all the Congressmen's feet. Oh, it was nauseating! Just absolutely nauseating. I couldn't—everybody couldn't stand that. No Congressman could pull a cigarette out of his pocket without *click*! Right there was a cigarette lighter right under it. I mean, the guy would appear from nowhere with a cigarette lighter. And he didn't smoke himself. That was the funny thing. But he was a pretty good guy other than that. But that part really, just a real foot-kisser that none of the boys liked. It was just, kind of went against our grain.

The Members of Congress, by and large, they treated us very good. Very nice. Very courteous to us. And I can't think of anything else.

JOHNSON: That's fine. As Pages, you had a reputation for pranks, and a lot of—

GOODWIN: A reputation for what?

JOHNSON: Reputation for pranks.

GOODWIN: Oh, pranks? Oh my, did we do—

JOHNSON: In books that have been written about Pages.

GOODWIN: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were there any that you were involved in?

GOODWIN: Yes. I pulled a lot of pranks. I told you the one prank about the going and sending the Page boy after pigeon's milk.

JOHNSON: Right.

GOODWIN: Another prank I did over at Page school, I did, and we had talked about it for a long time. We said, "Boy, wouldn't that be neat if somebody just laid down there on the porch of the Library of Congress, three floors below the"—you know, in those days—and they still do—French doors opened up onto the balcony from each classroom. And so you could walk out of the classroom and look over the balcony, and look straight down, three floors down—three or four floors straight down at the porch, or I think they call it a portico, of the Library of Congress. And we always talked about, wouldn't it be neat if one of us laid down there, and put a bottle of catsup alongside of us, just lay there flat on our back, and make it look like we had fallen, you

know? Finally, we cooked it up, and I got up enough courage to do it with another guy. And I laid down there on that—this is early in the morning before school started. I remember it was daylight, so it had to have been closer to the summer. It was daylight at 6:30 in the morning, or about 6:15. And I poured a bottle of catsup there on the porch of the Library of Congress and laid down alongside of it. And this other guy was in cahoots with me. He was up there in the classroom, and leaning over the balcony. And he let out a scream. And Miss Block, our language teacher—language and typing teacher, she come running out, looked over the balcony, you know, and then this other kid, he's pointing at me down there, and I'm laying flat on my back, looking right up at her, you know? Three floors down with—and she couldn't tell if my eyes were open or closed, but I was watching her. And she let out a scream and threw her arms up in the air! Ran back in. And so, when she disappeared, I just got up and walked back in, and walked past the guard who was sitting there at the at the door, and I says, "Morning, Mack." He goes, "Morning, Bill." And I went on in, and I pushed the button for the self-operated elevator. Pretty soon, the elevator came down, and the doors open, and out comes charging Miss Block. I said, "Hi, Miss Block!" "Hi, Bill!" And she just charged ahead, her head down, just charging and running, running down the hallway and went right past me. And I stepped in the elevator, closed the doors. Just as the doors were closing, she's pounding on the doors, screaming at me. {laughter} And she caught up with me later, when I got up—she caught the next elevator and come up there, and I got chewed out pretty good, but that was one of the pranks I pulled.

Another prank I pulled, my third year there, I was in biology class, that was my first class, but right after, homeroom was like a 10-minute period of attendance taking. Mrs. Ulmer was the biology teacher and my homeroom

teacher. She handed me the slip to take down to the office, and take this down. Okay, I took it down to the office. And on the way back, I went into the—we had a little lounge-type room there, and there was a big old upright piano in there. And I took that upright piano, and I pushed it out into the hallway, and it crossed the whole hallway. Then I came back into the biology room and I sat down there, and then the bell rang for the guys to leave the homeroom and go to their next class, but my next class was right there. I didn't have to move. And then, all of a sudden, there was a whole bunch of commotion out in the hallway. It just jammed up, you know? And the guys were pushing on both sides of the piano, and they couldn't get by, and screaming and carrying on out there. And she says, "What's going on out there?" She went out there, and pretty soon, she come back in the office. She says, "Goodwin, go move that piano." I said, "What?" And, you know, I was pretending like I didn't know anything she was talking about. She goes, "Go move that piano." She says, "You're the biggest guy in the school here, and you're the only guy that could move that piano now, and you're the only one that had the opportunity. So go move that piano back." {laughter} And so, I had to move the piano back. But it caused a lot of stir there. I can't think of any other pranks offhand, other than we always sent a new Page boy for a bill-stretcher. Yeah, down to the document room.

JOHNSON: So that was a ritual for each of the new Pages?

GOODWIN: Almost every new Page got sent after a bill stretcher, yeah.

JOHNSON: And they all fell for it?

GOODWIN: Pretty much, yeah. As far as I know, they pretty much did. It was mostly the bench Pages. They never tried it on me. I wasn't a bench Page for very long, and they put me in the cloakroom.

JOHNSON: Let's see. You described a lot of the typical activities you did as a Page, and we've certainly discussed at length what happened with the shooting in '54. Were there any other atypical events that you remember that took place on the floor?

GOODWIN: On the floor? Yes. You might not want to record this, but we'll record it anyhow. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., a black man from Harlem, New York, was a big fella, about six foot three, weighed about 250 pounds. A big man. He was always fighting with Congressman [Cleveland Monroe] Bailey from West Virginia. And you know, the northerners and the southerners, they never got along, especially a northern black man and a southern white man. And Mr. Bailey was a little old wiry Irishman, and he was a little shriveled up man, and he was probably close to 80 years old, and just, you know, he probably weighed a pound if he weighed anything. And they were all the time at each other. And Mr. Bailey was down in the well of the House making a speech, and Mr. Bailey said, "nigger" this and "nigger" that, and "nigger" this in a speech! And Mr. Powell, he got up and he says, "Mr. Speaker, would you instruct the gentleman from West Virginia to pronounce it correctly?" And Mr. Bailey shot right back, he says, "I pronounce it correctly! I said 'nigger!' N-E-G-R-O, nigger! You're making fun of my southern accent!" Powell just sat there... {laughter} And that was the end of that. The place just went into a roar. And it's probably not even recorded, probably, but that's what he said. That's one of the funny things. You probably have to erase that one.

There's another one, with Mr. Powell and Mr. Bailey. I didn't see it, but one of the Page boys came back and reported it. And he came back and he said, "You should've seen what I saw!" What was it? A bench Page had been sent over to a committee room on an errand, and he came back and told us the story. What happened, he just got there, and Powell and Bailey were sitting at their committee table, and Powell is to Bailey's left. And they were just arguing back and forth. Now, two Democrats they were, but they were really, really fighting about something. And Mr. Bailey—now, mind you, think of this: Mr. Bailey, little old—about 80-year-old—shriveled-up man; Mr. Powell's a big, strapping man about six foot three, 250 pounds. Mr. Bailey come around with a haymaker with his right, and hit Mr. Powell right in the face with a doubled-up fist. Mr. Powell went back, and his chair and all went down on the ground. And it took about two or three men to hold Mr. Powell back from tying into Mr. Bailey. He actually hauled off and coldcocked Mr. Powell! And Mr. Powell could've just mopped the floor with him, but {laughter} he wasn't afraid to, oh, boy! That's the only real strong fisticuffs I've ever seen any Member, or heard of; I didn't see that. The other Page boy saw it—really going at it. He come back, that Page boy come back, and he couldn't stop talking about it. It must have really been a doozy.

JOHNSON: Something he probably will never forget.

GOODWIN: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I met some interesting people, too. I met, like I mentioned before, Tallulah Bankhead, who was a Hollywood personality. Her father was Speaker [William Brockman] Bankhead from Alabama; she's from Alabama, of course. And I found out that the Alabama delegation just hated her guts. You know why? Well, she came to the Capitol building for

some reason. She came there to visit; I don't know why. And Mr. Robertson asked me to give her the tour of the Capitol. So I escorted her around, and I think she had a secretary or somebody that was with her, maybe her press agent, or somebody was with her. And I took her for a tour of the Capitol, and told her all about the various things in the Capitol building. And she gave me her autograph on a piece of paper I had with me. And she left, and I came back, and I was telling all about it. And the other guys say, "Man, don't talk about that to any of the Congressmen from Alabama." "Why?" Because when her father, Speaker Bankhead, died, she didn't even come home from California, from Hollywood, to attend her own father's funeral, and the Members of Congress from Alabama, they just thought that was the biggest affront anybody could ever do. And so, they wouldn't spit on the best part of Tallulah Bankhead. {laughter} And I do remember that.

Then, on another occasion, I had an opportunity to meet a great, great American hero: Audie Murphy, from Texas. That was my third year there, in 1955. Audie Murphy had just finished his movie, the story of his life, called *To Hell and Back*. And they were making a premier showing of that film to Members of the Texas delegation. And of course, my third year there was a Texan, Mr. Thornberry. So as a result of that, or as part of the Texas delegation, I was invited to this showing also. And I was able to get invited, and went to it. And it was held in one of these big rooms, big theater-type rooms they had in one of the House office buildings; I can't remember which it was. Anyhow, we were there, and they were showing this film to the Members of the Texas delegation, and Mr. Thornberry was outside with me, talking to him, and a couple of other Members of—oh! Mr. Olin [Earl] Teague, who was also a real well-known World War II veteran. In fact, Mr. Teague had a special shoe built because he had been

seriously wounded in World War II as a soldier in Europe. And I guess he was also a very highly decorated man also. And we stood outside the film room, or the projection room where they were showing this film of Audie Murphy's life with Audie Murphy. And he stood out there and just talking with everybody. And I had a 45-minute talk with—not only myself, but just two or three of us, standing there talking with him for about 45 minutes or longer. I hardly ever got to see any of that film, but I've seen the film a hundred times since then, and I'm glad. But he also gave me his autograph. I have that in my scrapbook. You can take a peek at that, too. Quite an interesting man. Audie Murphy was a very quiet type of a man. Very unassuming and quiet natured, and gentle type of a guy. The very opposite of what you would expect of a hero of that category. Of course, you know he was the most decorated soldier in U.S. history. He has more decorations, and of course, a Medal of Honor. But he has more decorations than any other soldier in U.S. history. And, but to meet him and talk to him on a person-to-person basis, he's just as quiet and meek and quiet natured type of person, you'd never, ever guess what his background was, you know, during World War II. And that was a real nice highlight, to meet and have his autograph.

JOHNSON: You obviously had a lot of opportunities as a Page, just what you're speaking about: to be able to see Members, that personal side, to be able to meet people that you otherwise wouldn't have met. One thing I'm curious about is, did the fact that you were able to witness politics up close, and to see the democratic process, did that make you more politically active, do you think, in your life?

GOODWIN: Yes. Yeah, I'd have to say yes, to the point where there was a couple of times where I seriously thought of—when I was specially offered some money to, thought of running for Congress. But then, I just didn't feel that the Lord really wanted me to be involved in that. You know, I'm a born-again Christian, and I'm very staunch on my testimony in that regard, and so, I make sure that I consult the Lord on all of my decisions. And that was one that I just could not follow through on, in all honesty, and become involved in politics in any way, shape, or form. The most I get involved in politics right now is I write about a million letters to the editors a year. {laughter} I got a file about this thick [large] of letters I've written to the editor, and I got a file about this thick [small] of the ones they print. {laughter} I think they have a special file for me when they see that oh, here comes that letter from Goodwin, and then it goes into a special round file for... But that's about the extent of my political activity, but I speak out very strongly on the issues of the day. I'm very conservative. I'm a conservative Christian, and I speak very strongly, and from that standpoint.

JOHNSON: Do you think that you follow the events closely of Congress and of the House because you spent so much time here?

GOODWIN: Not so much the House. You know, I've also learned, too, that local politics is far more important, because that's where it all starts. School boards, local representatives to the state legislature, or local representatives to the county board of commissioners. These are really important, and these people all—in fact, you probably, if you were to interview all of the Members of Congress, probably, you know, a huge percentage of them started out as county commissioners, or a mayor—you know, or a school board member, trustee of the school board, getting in local politics like that. I have learned since then

that those things are more important—local things, than congressional—not to minimize the congressional. And I do keep track of what the Members of Congress are doing, and I'm very sorry when my party doesn't get in power. But yes, it has really sharpened my appetite for the political scene. And it is good. It's good. We should. I'm sorry that people are not as active as they ought to be, and I'm talking of the general public. If people say, "Oh, what's my vote? You know, what's my vote?" You know, I remember working in both Congressmen's office, and I did a lot. I worked on the side with them after hours. Went over to the office; I didn't have anything else to do, and I spent a lot of time in their office, and I did a lot of filing for them. You know, they write letters back to their constituents, and I'd make copies, and I'd take the copies and I'd file them. And I learned from that, and being in those offices that those Congressmen paid a lot of attention to the letters that came to them. Phone calls, too, of course, but anybody who would sit down and write a letter to a Congressman, they would take special note of that. They would say, "Well, if somebody went to the extent of sitting down and taking the time and effort to write me a letter about what they thought of X issue, I better sit up and take notice," especially if—and they count the letters pro, and the letters that were against that particular piece of legislation, not that it would always sway their thinking on it, but they'd make sure that they gave it a second thought before they cast their vote on that issue. So I always tell, when I talk to the general public in my realm, I tell them, "Look. Your letters to the editor and to your Congressmen do count. They do pay attention to those letters, and the more they get saying on this side of it than they do on that side of the question, then they'll sit up and take notice of it. They might not vote the way you want them to vote, but they do sit up and take notice, and they're careful about what they do." So I really highly stress

that. I think people ought to be more involved in it. But yes, my political knife has been sharpened by my experience, we'll put it that way. Yeah.

JOHNSON: You've spoken very fondly about your three years here as a Page.

GOODWIN: Yeah.

JOHNSON: How do you think your service here changed your life?

GOODWIN: Well, I've always been a person who got along with people well, and of course, you have to get along with people if you're going to be in this atmosphere here as a Page boy. But I've always been an outgoing personality. I think that probably the biggest things were what I described to you a while ago about sticking to my guns about not skipping school. Character is the thing. You know, I mentioned to you, I'm a born-again Christian, but I didn't become a Christian until I was 21 years old. I was not a Christian when I was a teenager here as a Page boy. I was not. In fact, I had a poor reputation here at Page school—I was called "Luigi the Mad Irishman." I was also, I had another nickname called "the Grim Reaper." I used to fight something terrible. I had an awful temper. And guys used to love to watch me fight. And I'd get in fights. We'd get in fights of one kind or another. We'd go down to the basement of the Capitol, down in "the catacombs," we'd call it. The catacombs of the Capitol, where no one was watching. We'd get down there, and we'd duke it out, fisticuff it out with somebody we had a disagreement with. But Brownie Green nicknamed me "the Grim Reaper." It's a reputation I'm not really proud of, looking back, you know. I would fight at the drop of a hat because I was an Irishman and had a hot temper. And when I became a Christian when I was 21 years old, I have

never once wanted to swing and punch a guy on the nose since then. And the Lord really made a change in my life in that respect. And not that I've become a Caspar Milquetoast, either! But I just handle myself differently now, and a little more wisely. Hopefully wisely, anyhow.

Yes, my experience has changed me. I have opportunities to talk about it. I get probably invited once, twice, three times a year, sometimes, to speak at schools—high schools, in my experience—and tell my story. Or at the Rotary Club. I used to belong to a Rotary Club in my hometown—or, not in my hometown—where I live now, and various groups like that would invite me to speak. I've had those opportunities, and I enjoy doing that, to tell them about it. Because a lot of the people I talk to, a lot of them are my age, and they do remember the Puerto Rican shooting, so that's an outstanding event. And they, and to hear it—just like you're hearing it, you know, it's really something to hear it from an eyewitness.

JOHNSON: Exactly.

GOODWIN: Yeah, it is. And I appreciate that. I've got to be careful not to embellish it, and I've got to be careful not to let it go to my head, and the attention that it brings to me, I try to be careful not to let it give me a swelled head about it. But I also, at the same time, like Jane, my wife, says, "You really should tell the story, because a lot of people want to hear it." And I hesitate telling it. I say, "Well, it makes it look like I'm boasting on myself." And then, "No, you're not," she says. "It happened. Just tell it."

JOHNSON: And as you said, you were an eyewitness.

GOODWIN: Yes. Yes. Yeah. It was really something. It was a tremendous experience. A great experience. I wouldn't trade it for a million bucks. Maybe I would. {laughter} You're going to pay me a million bucks for this interview? Fine! I'll take it!

JOHNSON: Oh, I don't think so. {laughter} If you were to speak to the Pages that work here today, or Pages of the future, what advice would you offer?

GOODWIN: Good question. I would tell them, since they're here away from their parents and away from supervision—and I was away from—they're under a certain amount of supervision here, right?

JOHNSON: Yes, definitely. They live in a Page dorm, and they're well supervised.

GOODWIN: They have a dorm and all, and they're under supervision. You realize that we had no supervision in those days? Zero! Zip! Now, there's where your character really stood out. I heard somebody one time say, "Character is what you are when you're 50 miles from home." And I think that's true. The advice I'd give to today's Pages... Have an appreciation for what this place is. You know, honestly, looking back, I have more of an appreciation now for what that building, that Capitol building is, and this House office building, and the Senate office buildings, and all that surrounds here is all about. In those days, I knew I had a unique situation. I was one of 79 Pages selected from the entire United States, of a population of those days—200—roughly 200 million people. And here I'm one of 79 selected. And that's quite a thing to happen to any young fella. And I did appreciate that. And I roamed the halls on my off time, and saw people, and came over here to the House office building and different Congressmen's offices. I'd stop by and

say hello to the secretaries that I had talked to on the telephone, and just, you know, just to see who they are, what they look like, and just talk a little bit with them, and come over here mainly with Congressmen's secretaries, the ones that sponsored me, Mr. Thornberry and Mr. Dondero's secretary, and they'd invited me out to lunch or dinner here on the Hill with them, and just chew the fat with them. Of course, in those days, I was homesick. Very homesick.

That's another interesting thing. I'll get back to your question about the other Pages. I remember one time, I had been here—my third year, I think it was my third year. And of course, by this time, I was looked upon as the old man, being, you know every other Page that was there were brand new! And this young fella by the name of Charlie Crook from Mississippi, I think. But anyhow, he was standing alongside of me, you know, and he was moping. And I says, "What's the matter, Charlie?" "Oh, nothing." And I said, "You homesick?" "Oh, no, no! I'm not homesick!" You know, he was a young boy, about 15 years old, and that was the last thing in the world that he would want to admit to anybody that he was homesick. And I said, "Are you homesick?" "Oh, no. I'm not homesick." I said, "You're not?" "Oh, no, I'm not." I said, "Well, I am." Boy, he looked at me with a double take. He says, "You are?" I said, "Yeah, I'm homesick, and I'm proud of it." And then he kind of melted, and he said, "Yeah, I'm homesick, too." And you know, he didn't want to admit it. Pride, you know? "Pride goeth before the fall," the Bible says. And I told him I was homesick, and I was proud of it. I was proud that I had a home to be homesick for. And so he admitted it.

And in answer to your question about the boys today, I'd advise them to keep their nose clean, and character, character, character. Personality is good.

Nothing's wrong with having a good personality and a good attitude, and a good smile on your face, and a ready "hello" to everybody, and friendly. And I think most of the boys—Page boys—I say Pages, but there are girls here too, now.

JOHNSON: Right.

GOODWIN: Most of the Pages I see here, when we saw them last year, they're very friendly, and outgoing in their personality. But character is different than personality. Like I told you, character is what you are when you're 50 miles away from home. And I think that they need to really develop a character that is above reproach, because therein lies a lot of things. First of all, you can look yourself in the mirror. Secondly, someday, when you have a boss who gives you a paycheck, you can look him square in the eye and not be afraid to say—in your mind or in your heart, if not verbally to your boss—"I gave you a full week's work for a full week's pay." And you can go home to your wife, if you're married, or husband, and know that you have not done anything to bring disrepute on their name. Because you know, your spouse is you, really. The Bible says you become one flesh. And anything I do, it reflects on my wife; anything she does reflects on me. And so character has got to be—first of all, it has got to be taught, from parents. Secondly, it's got to be practiced, you know? You can cave in. Like I could have caved in to that guy who was threatening me, you know, if I didn't skip a day of school. I could've caved in to him, and then where would I be? Because Mr. Dondero still didn't have the opportunity to reappoint me. And I'd have skipped school and felt bad about that, and now I just stuck to my guns, and I felt better about sticking to my guns. Not that it felt good that I was being belligerent to the man, but I just knew it was the right thing to do. It was right. You know,

do right till the stars fall, you know? Do right, do right, do right till the stars fall. I really believe that that's what I want to try to get across to the Pages of today is to develop their character. I hope they're taught good character qualities from their parents, and have good teachers here. And then, practice it. Put it into practice. Make it become second nature. You know, plan ahead what you should do should a situation come up in front of you. Bob Jones University had a professor that taught our pastor something, and our pastor related it to us. You should know ahead of time what you would do in any situation. You should have it practiced to the point where you would know. And for example, he was telling about he was a youth pastor in Chicago. Rough town. And he grew up in Chicago. And he became a youth pastor of his church over there after he graduated from college. And he was knocking on doors and calling on people from the church, and also calling on other people trying to drum up people to visit their church. And he went to this one apartment, and he knocked on the door, and a woman answered the door, and she was there in her birthday suit. Now, you know, he says, "You don't stand there and think about, 'Well, what should I do?' You know? You should have it all fixed in your mind. You run! You go!" You know, that's character. It's an automatic thing. You don't start thinking about, "Well, I wonder what I should do here? What does the Bible say I should do here? Or what did my pastor say? What would my teacher do? What would my mother and father tell me to do?" No. You should already know ahead of time what you would do in certain situations. Without question, just do it. You know? That's part of practicing the character that you've been taught. Enough sermon. {laughter}

JOHNSON: {laughter} Thank you. And we're just about out of time, so that was perfect. Thank you so much for talking with us today.

GOODWIN: Oh, we're out of time, are we?

JOHNSON: Yes.

GOODWIN: Oh, okay.

JOHNSON: Thank you very, very much.

GOODWIN: Okay.[2]

NOTES

[1] Recalling the 1954 shooting on the 40th anniversary of the attack, Congressman Kanjorski indicated that he and Representative Emerson helped three injured Members and rode in the ambulance with two of them.
[2] Mr. Goodwin subsequently requested an addition to his oral history interview: "My wife and I were watching the wartime movie *This Land is Mine*, with Maureen O'Hara and Charles Laughton. In it is Laughton's character, a timid schoolteacher turned brave and was caught by the Nazis. In his trial he made the most eloquent, patriotic speech I've heard in years. That speech reminded me of one of my favorite Members of Congress, Representative Martin Dies, [Jr.], of Texas. Mr. Dies possessed a speaking ability that had everyone spellbound when he spoke. Most of the times that he spoke it was spontaneous, without notes. Even if he gave a three-hour speech on peanut butter, he had us on the edge of our seats! Every time he got down to the well to speak, Members would come running into the Cloakroom and say, 'Martin's speaking! Martin's speaking!' The Cloakroom members would fly out to the floor just to hear him speak—didn't matter what his subject was, they just wanted to hear him speak!

But besides this ability of oratory, he had something more that I greatly admired. Years before I came to D.C. as a Page, I learned that Mr. Dies was head of the House Un-American Activities Committee [HUAC]. It was told me that he was rubbing the fur of President Roosevelt the wrong way with his investigations (you know at that time the communists were our ally against Germany), but Mr. Dies didn't veer from his goal of exposing anyone that opposed the American way. That attitude got Mr. Dies in hot water with his own party, but he stuck to his principles. That meant a lot to me, reinforced the teaching I learned at home, and later on, much later in fact, I heard a similar phrase quoting Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., of Bob Jones University, was repeated often: 'Do right, do right till the stars fall!' Mr. Dies was a man of principle, he did right in the face of great opposition of his own party. While a Page, now this will sound strange to you, I learned an interesting thing: That is, often your personality shows up in your walk. I watched Members walk; their gait, matched their demeanor. As an example, you'll never see a "pigeon-toed" salesman—outgoing toes, outgoing personality; ingoing toes, ingoing personality. Mr. Dies was about six foot four and weighed about 250 lbs, and when he walked, he held his head up, walked in a militant stride and an interesting deliberate, "plopping" down of his feet. It gave the impression that nothing was going to interfere with his forward progression! It was quite a gait! His patriotic speeches were always inspiring, and you know he meant them."

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