Ronald W. Lasch

Republican Floor Assistant and Minority Postmaster of the U.S. House of Representatives

Oral History Interview
Final Edited Transcript

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"Well, you have to know what you're talking about. You have to be right when you're talking about it. When I was engaged in those things, I knew that what I was saying was right. Whether they wanted to hear it or not, that's another story. . . . It helped that I had gray hair. It helped that I had been there for a long time. It helped because I had a practice of not first-naming Members. I had a very old-fashioned view that I was a staff member. They were the Member of Congress. And I called them, 'Mr.' so-and-so. I never called them by their first name. There were about a dozen of them who had fits that I wouldn't do it."

Ronald W. Lasch
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Abstract

In 1958, Ronald W. Lasch arrived in Washington, D.C., as part of the Page program in the U.S. House of Representatives. He would leave the House more than four decades later, after a long career as an indispensable part of the House Republican Conference. In this series of interviews, Lasch describes his work experience on Capitol Hill, which began with his time as a Page and culminated with an appointment as floor assistant to Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.

From the Republican Cloakroom to the House Floor, Lasch played an essential role in the party's day-to-day operations. In the cloakroom, he served as a resource on the House Rules, distributing information to Members on the voting schedule and the legislative process. As floor assistant, Lasch was involved in the daily battles waged between Democrats and Republicans in the 1980s and 1990s, and his recollections convey a firsthand account of the Republican Party's 40-year struggle as the minority and its ascension to the majority in 1994. Throughout, Lasch provides insight into significant developments in the institutional history of the House, including the impact of new technology, changes in parliamentary procedure, and the dramatic transformation of the political culture of Washington, DC, during the final decades of the 20th century.

Biography

Ronald W. Lasch was born December 7, 1942, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Werner and Marietta Lasch. His family moved to Belvidere, New Jersey, and his parents owned and operated a restaurant nearby. Lasch began high school in New Jersey before his appointment a House Page by Representative William B. Widnall of New Jersey in 1958. After graduating from the House Page School, he worked in Representative Widnall's office while completing his college degree at George Washington University. In September 1963, he moved to a position as telephone clerk in the House Minority Cloakroom, and remained part of the House Republican staff for the next 37 years.

In 1968, Lasch became manager of the minority cloakroom, where he supervised the distribution of information to Republican Members. As a space for Member interaction, the cloakroom was ideally suited for Lasch to answer questions about party positions on pending legislation and other recent developments in the House.

He was named Minority Postmaster in 1976 and floor assistant in 1979. Lasch employed his considerable institutional knowledge to help Members accomplish their goals on the House Floor. Well-versed in the rules of the House as well as Republican legislative priorities, he possessed the ability to stand back and "view the floor" as a whole. This allowed him to identify potential obstacles to Republican initiatives and provide Members with updates on prospective legislation, the length of floor debates, and vote times.

Lasch's role as a House Republican staffer steadily expanded over the course of his career, culminating in his work as floor assistant to Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1995. In each position, he demonstrated knowledge of the legislative process, parliamentary procedure, and House traditions. He was also adept at understanding the personal side of lawmaking, forging relationships with Members from both sides of the aisle. Lasch retired in 2000, and currently resides in Fairfax, Virginia.

Editing Practices

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

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

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

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Interviewer Biography

A House Page from 2000 to 2001, **Barry Pump** was a Historical Publications Specialist in the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, from 2012 to 2014.

— RONALD W. LASCH —

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW ONE

PUMP: This is Barry Pump interviewing Ron Lasch, former Republican floor assistant and Minority Postmaster of the U.S. House of Representatives. The interview is taking place in Room 247 of the Cannon House Office Building. It's April 25, 2013, and this is the first interview with Mr. Lasch. First of all, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this program. Before we get started with your career in the Capitol, we will start with some biographical information. Where and when were you born?

LASCH: I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on the 7th of December, 1942. We lived there until I was 10. Then we moved to northwestern New Jersey, on the Delaware River, in a little town called Belvidere, and lived there until I came down here to be a Page in 1958. I've lived in the area since then—except for a few months after my first appointment was over, and I went back home. In those days, the Congress adjourned usually in July, so my appointment was up. Also, they didn't pay the Pages in those days when they weren't in session. Then I came back in January of 1959. I was reappointed. I was a junior at that point, and I stayed ever since.

I had originally become interested in the Page program when I came to Washington on a one-day tour in 1956. It was the "I Like Ike" [President Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower] year, and we came on a bus tour from Belvidere. One day—one very long day—to meet our Congressman [William Beck Widnall], who was going to give us the tour of the Capitol. He got on the bus with us, and we went down to the White House, and he gave us a tour of the White House. So you can see how in those days—how open the facilities were.

I wrote to my Congressman about being a Page. This is the letter I got back from him: "I wish I could be more helpful to you in your desire to become a Pageboy in the House of Representatives. However, since the Congress is in control of the Democrats, all such appointments of patronage are under their jurisdiction. Being a Republican Member of Congress, I have no patronage. You might contact some of the Democratic Members from New Jersey, in an effort to see whether or not they might give you an appointment. I regret I cannot be helpful." That was in November of 1956.

Then, through an agreement—and I don't know exactly how it was worked out—but between Speaker [Samuel Taliaferro] Rayburn and former Speaker Joe [Joseph William] Martin [Jr.], they gave the Republicans four appointees to work in the Republican Cloakroom, to answer the phones there. My Congressman, in 1958, got one of the appointments, and he appointed someone from a neighboring town in New Jersey. After the boy was already here, somebody on the local Republican committee found out that the boy's parents were registered Democrats and said they were having a conniption. "We don't have any patronage. You get a chance to appoint somebody, and you appoint somebody who's not even voting for you." So I don't know how it was done, but they told the kid he had to go home in March, and that's when I came down, on March 15, 1958, and it was originally until May 15, 1958.

So after I had been here briefly, it suddenly dawned on me that I was going to be in netherland here because the school down here didn't end until like June 15th or whatever it was—the school in New Jersey was probably a little later—so the school down here said, "Well, we can't give you a final grade because you aren't going to be here for the end of the year." And I'm sure the school in New Jersey—since I wasn't there for half the year—certainly

wouldn't want to give me a final grade. I never really pursued it. Instead, I went and talked to my Congressman's office and said, "There's a little problem here, that if we don't resolve it, I'm going to end up with a semester where I don't have a grade, and I'm going to get pushed back." So they said, "Oh, we didn't even think about that when we made the appointment." So it wasn't a problem for them. They said, "Oh that's fine, we'll just extend it." So then I stayed, and then they appointed somebody who came until August or something like that.

Then I went home, and in September my father died. I wasn't sure what was going to happen after that. But the Congressman came to visit in December and asked my mother if she would have any objections to reappointing me in January of '59. So I came back down then and stayed. In fact, I actually was in the Page program after I graduated for an additional period of time because in those days, there were very loose regulations, and they said that you could be a Page until you were age 18. And since I happened to be a young Page from the beginning, I stayed for another six months or whatever it was. In those days, things were kind of on the loose end of things.

PUMP: If we could just back up a little bit. What were the names of your parents and what were their occupations?

LASCH: At the time, my parents were the owner of a restaurant called the Waterfront Inn—before my father died, of course. They both basically worked there. My mother's name was Marietta, my father's name was Werner, and these are some of the clippings from the local newspapers that were published at the time. When I was appointed, when I left, and I graduated. I think they were—I guess they probably don't have dates on there, do they? I wasn't very good about doing that in those days.

PUMP: This looks like June 23rd, and it probably would have been '58, right?

LASCH: Well, no, if that's when I graduated, that would have been '60.

PUMP: Oh, right.

LASCH: That probably is when I went home. That would have been in June or July of '58. That was when I was appointed—I can't remember exactly—so that would have probably been in March.

PUMP: Did you have any brothers or sisters to see you off?

LASCH: No.

PUMP: When did you become interested in politics? It says here that you were part of the teenage Republican organization in your county.

LASCH: Yes, I was. It was a very loose thing back in those days. I guess that was sort of probably because it was the presidential election kind of thing, and the local state senator was from our county in those days. It was before "one man, one vote," and so each county had a state senator. My father had been elected a member of the town council in Belvidere, and he served on that for about a year, a year and a half, two years—before he moved out of the town into the township where the restaurant was.

PUMP: Did your parents know Mr. Widnall very well?

LASCH: No. They had no connection with him at all. I think it came about through the Warren County Republican organization. Let's see if this is the one [shows letter]. This was the first one where the name was submitted, and then this was the later one, when I was reappointed.

PUMP: Do you know how the appointments were handled? One of these letters says just a 60-day appointment, but the other says for the full year of 1959. So do you know how those slots were determined at all?

LASCH: To the best of my knowledge, in those days, the appointment was given to the Congressman, and it was his as long as he wanted it. It seemed the way that it worked in those days. And because the school was a four-year school, and he didn't particularly want to pass it around—and they were satisfied with my performance—I'm assuming he didn't have any other pressing interests that somebody else that wanted to be appointed. I don't know for sure. But all the Pages that were in that timeframe when I was there, they were appointed by the Republican Members who were there, and the Democrats actually did the same thing. They gave the position to an individual Member, and then it was his until he either turned it back in or had traded it for something else. In those days, the southern Members had most of the appointments, and a lot of those Members appointed a different Page every month.

PUMP: Okay.

LASCH: That's just kind of difficult, and so they had to work out an arrangement with their home school, as to whether they just ignored that they were gone for a month. It depended on each school district. They did go to the Page School, but they basically sat in the library and supposedly did their own study or whatever you want to call it. This is when the Page School was still a unified school, under the District of Columbia school system, and they had Senate Pages and House Pages and Supreme Court Pages.

PUMP: One of the articles said that there were 50 [House] Pages.

LASCH: There were.

PUMP: And four were Republicans.

LASCH: Originally.

PUMP: Did that imbalance cause any . . .

LASCH: A little bit. It wasn't too bad. Frankly, Washington was such a different place in those days. It was a sleepy southern town. It was four years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, for the desegregation of the schools, and there was still a lot of discrimination as far as segregation within the general Washington area. In the theaters, you sat downstairs if you were white, and you sat in the balcony if you were black.

Streetcars. I was from a rural town—there weren't black people up there in those days, so I get down here and I don't really think much about it. They had streetcars in those days, and I got on a streetcar one afternoon to go downtown, and it wasn't particularly crowded, but I just kind of walked to the back and sat down. When I got downtown, I went to get off—you got on in the front, and then there were like middle doors where you got off. There was an elderly lady who was well dressed, and she was obviously off to shopping, too. When I got up out of my seat and headed to get out, she had a cane, and she tapped me and said, "You know, you are not supposed to sit back there." I'm going, "No, I didn't know that." What she was telling me is that's the black section, and I wasn't supposed to sit back there.

It was in the restaurants, too. There was a huge cafeteria years ago in the middle of downtown called Sholl's, and a lot of people came by bus. That's where they dropped them off. It was a good price, good food, but when you went in there, the clientele was all white, and the people behind the serving counter were all black.

PUMP: But the Page School did have some Supreme Court messengers who were African American.

LASCH: Yes, indeed. In fact, in my class, three of my classmates were Supreme Court Pages—two were black, and one was white.

PUMP: Was the Page School, in that case, kind of a zone away from the segregation that you saw in the rest of DC?

LASCH: Just barely actually, because at a later point, there was a big controversy when the first black House Page and the first black Senate Page [since Reconstruction] were appointed.[1] You know about the Senate Page, and you probably know about the House Page too. I have a lot of articles on that stuff, but I have to get them back from [former House Page] Jerry Papazian to be able to give them to you. There's one black guy in the front, and I think there's one standing up, and then the other white guy, I don't know, I'd have to look and see here. He's actually standing here, next to Donn Anderson.[2]

PUMP: Did the southern Pages take exception to going to school with African Americans?

LASCH: No, but the "War Between the States" was still a hot subject of conversation. I had several southern roommates when I first came. One was from Richmond, Virginia; the other was from the middle of nowhere Georgia, and he was very southern, and the Civil War was very present. So there was some of it, but it was a little harder to do that when you're kind of thrown together. The Supreme Court Pages, they lived at home—that was part of the process, that they were almost all from the Washington area. They lived at home for the most part, while the rest of us—not everyone—lived in the

rooming houses because they were also sometimes appointed by people from the area, too.

PUMP: Would you say that the race relations was probably the biggest kind of eye-opener for you from your hometown? Or were there other kind of culture shocks that you went through?

LASCH: Definitely. When we lived in Philadelphia, there were race relations there too. Some of the northeast cities, like Boston and Philadelphia and some of the others, were probably worse off racially than a lot of the southern areas, particularly as the migration of blacks coming from the South, looking for better paying jobs and that kind of thing. So there was some of it. I know when we left the area where I actually lived when I was born, in West Philadelphia, had been taken over by a black population. So it was there, but it was never quite as in-your-face as what you run into here. That was the odd thing about it.

PUMP: Were there any other kind of culture shocks that you encountered when you came here? You said you were from a rather rural area in New Jersey—or you had spent the last few years there.

LASCH: Oh yes. Up there they were proud to say, "We have more cows than people in our county." Even though it was the county seat that I lived in, there was only 2,500 people. My father was an immigrant—he came from Germany after the First World War—so we didn't really have much in the way of that. In grade school in Philadelphia, I can't remember any blacks being in the grade school there. There were none in New Jersey either. So it was one of those things where you kind of learned to roll with it. It helps that you didn't come with any real prejudices. Your eyes sort of rolled back in [your] head, with some of the things you saw that went on. It took a long time for it to

change really. It started obviously in the ’60s, particularly after Lyndon [Baines] Johnson became President, and he was able to push through all the civil rights issues.

There were some civil rights bills that were stuck while we were in the Page School. One year—I can’t remember whether it was ’59 or early ’60 —the Senate Pages hadn’t attended school for six weeks because they were having these 24-hour “sessions.” In the real old-fashioned style—they were working 12 and 12, the kids were. Then they’d switch them each week so that half of them would come, and then at school they would switch the periods around—reverse them—so that they could try to keep up with that. They accommodated as best they could, but it was the Lyndon Johnson era. When he was elected in ’64, he took a landslide in the Congress with him. There was a two-thirds [Democratic] majority in both the House and the Senate at that particular point.

They still had a hard time because the southern Senators—even though they were Democrats—a lot of them weren’t prepared. Lyndon Johnson finally broke some of them out, like [Richard Brevard] Russell [Jr.] of Georgia and a few others. Everett [McKinley] Dirksen was the Leader in the Senate. He and the other liberal Republicans in those days helped make up the deficit of the southern Democrats that wouldn’t vote for the civil rights stuff. It came in with voting and nondiscrimination housing, and there were a whole series of them that they did and were able to push through at that particular time. Obviously, when you do that kind of stuff, there’s resistance here and there. We didn’t see too much of it here, at least in our sheltered area, but those were the times.

From the time that I came in ’58 until now, the amount of change is astronomical—just in general but [also] on the Hill itself. When I came, the

Capitol was completely open. There was no security. I mean they had cops, but there was not a professional force. They were patronage appointments by Congressmen. They got some training, but the terror stuff just wasn't there. You could go anyplace in the Capitol Building—any corridor, up on the roof, climb up to the dome, that kind of stuff.

In those days, there were not that many people that worked on Capitol Hill. Congressmen would have like two people per office. And the salaries in those days—my salary as a Page was $250 a month take home pay. Each Member had two rooms, and the Rayburn Building was in the process of being built. The whole Capitol complex was on DC [direct] current—as opposed to AC [alternating current]—and they had big dynamos in the back part of the Capitol Building, which produced the DC current.

So, when the electric typewriter was developed, it was a problem for the Capitol complex to get electric typewriters because they were AC oriented. So they finally got a converter that you plugged into the wall, and then you plugged the typewriter into that. Initially, everybody had manual typewriters. Then each office was allotted one electric typewriter. They finally switched it all over.

Whereas the other things as far as copying machines and what we called "robo-machines"—which were electric typewriters on a device that was kind of like a player piano, where you made like a paper roll with holes punched in it. It ran over this thing which drew air through it, and it moved the typewriter keys.

After I had graduated as a Page, I worked in my Congressman's office for a couple years. There were a lot less restrictions on what offices could do in those days. When it was time to do your petitions to get signed on the ballot,

each office was allocated one of those machines—but they'd borrow another office's machine, so that when he was out of the office, they would set three of them up in his office, and I got to sit in there, feeding the paper in and pulling it out, and starting it and stopping it, and all that kind of stuff.

PUMP: I'm sorry to back up a little bit.

LASCH: No, that's all right, sure.

PUMP: I was wondering if you remember your first day as a Page and what you had to do to take on the appointment once you received it.

LASCH: Well, I'm trying to remember what day of the week it was. My parents dropped me off at the boarding house. They drove me down. I came to the Congressman's office, and they had arranged for me to stay at this boarding house at 223 Constitution Avenue, Northeast. They took me over and dropped me off with my suitcase, and then they headed back to New Jersey. In 1958 they didn't have the interstate systems like we have today. It was a lot more difficult getting back and forth.

They left me there—there were no Pages there at the time when they left me because they were at work. So they came home, and then the next morning, I went with them to the school to get registered there. Then they took me from the school over to work—to the Doorkeeper's Office, where they had me do the paperwork to get signed in. It was run by a fellow named "Fishbait" Miller, who I'm sure you've heard of, and he was a bit of an eccentric.[3] In any event, then we were sent up to the Republican Cloakroom to be briefed on what it was we were supposed to do—answering the phones. In those days, the phone system of the Capitol, there was no dial phone. You picked up the phone, and there were a group of Capitol operators. They'd say, "Capitol." And you'd say, "Well, I want Congressman so-and-so's

office," and they'd connect you. Or "I want an outside line," so that you could make a local call. If it was long distance, you had to ask for the long distance operator. They would hook you up with the long distance operator, who were C&P Telephone employee companies downtown. This, of course, was before area codes. So then, you would give them the information, and then they'd have to figure how they got you connected, and finally, eventually, you got connected to where you were calling.

So we had to learn how to do that and then, of course, learn who the Members were. We did that through flashcards. They gave us a test to learn the faces and spelling because some of the names were difficult—like [Peter Hood Ballantine] Frelinghuysen [Jr.] and [Edward Joseph] Derwinski—and there were a whole bunch of others that were kind of like that. It was on-the-job training basically. Then the other kids were the runners—they ran between the office buildings, delivering packages and filing records on the floor and getting the day's legislation. This is before we had all the electronic devices.

We were there basically from when we got out of school until 5:00, and rarely were they in late in those days. It was more organized. There was not as much in the way of controversies. In '58, when I came, the House was divided fairly evenly—it was like 230 to 205 or something like that. Then the '58 elections—it was [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower's sixth year. The seven-year itch was in there, there was a recession, and the Republicans lost about 40 seats, I think—something like that. So it changed a little bit. There was some question of whether or not they were going to allow the Republicans to continue to appoint the four Pages—which they obviously did.

So it was basically on-the-job training. I tried to learn as much as I could—not only as far as that is concerned, but about the rules and how our laws are made. It all took a little bit of time. In the meantime, you were trying to do your school and your studies and that kind of stuff, but it was fine, and I enjoyed the aspects of it.

PUMP: How did you find out about the boarding house? Was it something your Member told you about?

LASCH: Yes. It was a lady who worked in another Republican Member from New Jersey's office—she lived there. She had a son and a daughter, and her mother lived there. I think there were five of us Pages there at the time. Two to a room, and then the one room which didn't have any windows—like a middle room. So they arranged that, and there were four or five boarding houses on Capitol Hill where the Pages stayed. They were sort of approved but not really. It was a kind of helter skelter situation when it came to all that kind of stuff.

PUMP: Did other Pages from your class live in your boarding house?

LASCH: Let's see, in my boarding house when I first came, I was the youngest. I was a sophomore, and my roommate was a graduating senior whose name was Rusty Robertson. There was another graduating senior named Dan Latimer. The kid in the single room was from Georgia, and I think he was a junior. I'm not sure if the fifth one was—I think he might have been a senior too.

PUMP: So you would have been the sixth Page.

LASCH: No, I was five.

PUMP: Okay.

LASCH: There was Mrs. Smith's, and there was the place where Donn Anderson stayed, Mrs. Duckett's—they had like four people there. There actually was a tourist house on East Capitol Street where several of the Pages stayed, including some of the Senate Pages. They had this so-called list, and you were on your own to find a place, and, basically, because I shared a room, we paid $30 a month. If you had a room to yourself, you paid $40. Then you were on your own as far as food. There was no food provided—although where Donn [Anderson] stayed, the lady there provided like a dinner hour kind of thing. The rest of us went to the local restaurants for food. You were responsible for your cleaning and dry cleaning, clean shirts, clean clothes. There was a laundry down the street, another block or so down from where we lived. You put all your laundry in a bag, and you took it down. You left the bag and they washed your clothes for you, folded them, put them back in the bag, and you went back at the end of the day. For a dollar and a half, you got all your clothes back. These would be ones that didn't need ironing or that kind of stuff. Your shirts and your suits you had to take to the dry cleaners

The Madison Building wasn't there—that was all shops, restaurants, dry cleaners, a drug store, and a little tavern, and all kinds of stuff like that. Behind that was basically the residential housing in those next couple blocks. So that was where we went to get our sustenance and that kind of thing. There was a dry cleaner right there too, on 2nd Street.

We were basically all on our own. If you wanted to go to the movies, you had to do that on your own. You usually took the streetcar downtown. There were four or five movie theaters downtown in those days. The Page School had a basketball team, which they played a number of games in the fall. I think from September to December maybe. There was a coach who was not

actually at the Page School but was at one of the other local high schools, even though he got paid to run the Page basketball program. His name was Peter Labukas.

PUMP: Would you say that your class was a close-knit group? If you wanted to go to a movie, there would be classmates to go with?

LASCH: Yes. Well, you sort of formed cliques like you always do in those things. And there was a division between the House and the Senate, and sometimes it was a little snooty because they only associated with Senate Pages and that kind of thing. But it wasn't too bad. Over the time, the school got shrunk down from four classes to three classes and then down to two classes and then finally down to one. Of course, a lot of it had to do if you were House or Senate Pages—the work schedules were different lots of times. My particular class, it was a good class. We had our 50th anniversary here a few years ago, and last fall, we had our 70th birthday meeting down in the Shenandoah Valley there. The Wintergreen Resort. It's like a ski resort in the wintertime. We've held together pretty well—what's left of us. There are about five or six that are dead, and we're all getting old.

It ended up being a good class. I'm looking here quickly to see if I can find it [shows photo]. This was taken in '94, I believe, with Speaker [Thomas Stephen] Foley. In that photograph is the guest chaplain of the day, the Reverend Dennis Trout, who was in our class; the Clerk of the House, Donn Anderson; Congressman Jim [James Thomas] Kolbe; and me.

PUMP: And Congressman [Robert Smith] Walker, and James Ford, the [House] Chaplain at the time.

LASCH: Yes, he was the one who sponsored the guest chaplain, that's correct. Jim Ford, the Chaplain, right, exactly. So I'd say generally we've done pretty well for ourselves.

PUMP: That was actually one of the questions I had. Given that there were some notable achievements among your class, I was wondering if you thought that there was anything particularly special about that class?

LASCH: No, I think for myself, I enjoyed my job, and so it was a job—and Donn the same thing. He had worked on the Hill for years and years and years doing various jobs. I think he had the hope of being Clerk, and he was in a position to maneuver himself into that position.

Jim Kolbe, I think, always wanted to be a Congressman. Beyond that, I don't think so. Dennis, he's the pastor of the Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania. I believe it's the same church that Frederick [Augustus Conrad] Muhlenberg was also a minister at—who was the first Speaker of the House. We didn't have any reunions for 20 years because people went and did their own thing and had their kids and all that kind of stuff. Then out of the clear blue, one of the guys called me and said, "I think we should have a 20th reunion." I said, "Why do you think we should have a 20th reunion? We haven't had any before." He said, "Well, it's about time, and time has gone by." So I said, "Okay." I was in this area with Donn and two or three other classmates. We knew where a few others were. So we had a fairly good grasp as far as the core group.

The president of the class, his name is Dave Loge—he'd charm the birds out of the trees type person—so he said, "Well, I'll start making some phone calls and see what I can find out." It was shortly after they first started doing area codes, and you still actually got a real person when you called looking for

information, and he'd say, "I'm trying to put together a class reunion, and I'm looking for this person. They used to live here. Can you help me find this name?" Most of the operators would help him find the name, and that's how we found most of them. A couple of them, we sent out letters to the addresses that we had from the yearbook. Some of those worked, and some of them came back, but a lot of the parents still lived in the same area, surprisingly enough, and so that's how we ended up finding it.

Actually, we came back, and everybody just sort of felt like we hadn't missed each other in 20 years, more or less. The wives got along real well, and we had a lot of the kids at the first one and arranged a White House tour and the Capitol tour. Of course, that was impressive to a lot of the family members, and it just kind of grew from there. Anyway, we all talk about how close we are, but the truth of the matter is, like everybody else, you're busy, and so you sort of don't necessarily keep up in the interim five years.

But, anyway, I think we were maybe one of the first classes to have the reunions. There was a group that was like a '70s group. When Ken Smith started doing his—that was from the '40s and the '50s group—that's when it really took hold, and then others have theirs, too. Now the alumni association—and we'll see how long that exists when there's no alumni, new faces coming in. I think it will for a while, but I'm afraid it will end up all falling apart.

PUMP: Could you describe the curriculum at the Page School when you were there? You mentioned rotating classes to accommodate the work schedule.

LASCH: It was pretty basic. It was part of the DC public school system, so they set the curriculum and basically had English—four years of it, depending on what you were doing there. There was a so-called business class, where they taught

typing and how to keep books and that kind of stuff. There was a French teacher who also taught Spanish. There was a mathematics teacher, Mr. [Lewis R.] Steely. He taught algebra and trigonometry, I guess it was. There was the general sciences classes that Mrs. [Naomi Z.] Ulmer taught, and there was the history [teacher]. They, at the time, were teaching all four classes, and then each of them was a homeroom for whether you were a freshman, sophomore, junior, senior. They had their grading system, I assume based on the DC public school system.

They were plum jobs in many ways. It was an odd hour to be teaching, but, really, most of them were done by 10:30, 11:00, and they had the rest of the day free. At least one of them—the math teacher, Steely—he was a professor at the University of Maryland, which he taught on, I don't know, afternoons. It was more rigorous than the school that I came from in rural New Jersey. I think for some that were better off—maybe had gone to private school—and it wasn't quite as rigorous as they had been used to. But it was a good general education. Then you throw into that your outside-of-school education that you were getting as well—so it was pretty thorough. It was like every school: it depends on what you put into it, what you get out of it.

PUMP: So your day started around 6:00. Is that when school started?

LASCH: The first class was at 6:30, and they were 45-minute classes. Class one was your homeroom and your first class. The next class went from 7:15 to 8:00. At 8:00, there was a 15-minute coffee break, so we all jumped on the elevator and went down to the first floor, where there was a little snack bar that was run by a blind employee. So we'd all smash in there, getting junk food, a cup of coffee, or a Coke or a doughnut or that kind of stuff and then have to get back up in the elevator so we were back up in time.

So the next class went from 8:15 to 9:00 and from 9:00 to 9:45, and then there was a class from 9:45 to 10:30, although most people got out by 10:00. So they would switch those around when there was difficulty, and so class one and two would be at the end of the day and class four and five would be at the beginning of the day. I guess in the Senate—I can't remember exactly—when they divided them up half and half, the kids that were there gave the ones that weren't, the assignments. And testing—I guess they just sort of worked it in between.

We got grades. I can't remember exactly how often we got them, but our Congressman got them too, and they had to be signed and sent back. See, if this is one. I didn't do very well when I was at the Page School because one teacher, she figured out what your grades were going to be and—that's not mine, but that's what it looked like [shows photo]. This was a kid who came, and his sponsor died a few months after he was here. I arranged—working in the cloakroom—to be able to keep him on so that he didn't get sent home in the middle of his school year. I had to do that one other time after that, when there was a big turnover, and there were like three kids whose Members were defeated. I arranged with our patronage people to keep them on so that they could finish the school year when they were there.

PUMP: You mentioned that the Congressmen would have to sign and acknowledge the grades. Was there added concern on your part, or even the teacher's part, about the types of grades that they had?

LASCH: The teachers didn't care—but the English teacher, I always thought was prejudiced. The whole time I went to the Page School, I got a C in English. Kids got pegged. There were As, there were Bs, there were Cs, and then there were a few Ds, and the ones who got As and Bs always got As and Bs. One of the kids who didn't do very well and one of the kids who did very well—the

kid that did very well wrote a paper and the other kid that didn't do very well put his name on it, and then he wrote a paper, and the other guy put his name on it. And they both got the grades that they had always gotten—by their name, not by what the work that had been done.

PUMP: I imagine that was probably pretty frustrating to know that about your instructors, that they had their favorites.

LASCH: Well, it was sort of an eye-opener for me because first of all, in my little school in New Jersey—where the classes were bigger—but it never seemed like that was the thing. It seemed like that they were fairer in the way they did their grading. Oh no, they all had favorites, and particularly the English teacher. She was the sponsor of the newspaper, and she had her favorites when it came to that kind of thing and volunteering for that. One of the teachers was the sponsor of the yearbook, and there were favorites there, too. I guess it's one of those things that happens when you have a small school like that, and some people are good students, and other people are not so good students.

Anyway, it went through amalgams over the years where the program was changed. And every time the program was changed, it always was related to the school—that was always the most important thing as far as the people who were redoing the program. Whereas I felt the work was more important than the school. The school was important, but the work was more important for your learning—other than your usual academic subjects.

PUMP: You mentioned some of the activities at the school, like the yearbook and the newspaper, and it seems that you were quite involved with those activities. I think the yearbook also mentioned the chess club and the Key Club, and so I

was curious how you were able to balance those extracurricular activities with your workload and the school, and how those activities kind of worked.

LASCH: Well, they were only for part of the year actually, as far as the yearbook and the newspaper. And the others were kind of fictional events that met once a year, and I think it had to do with meeting some kind of criteria with the public school system. So I don't remember, other than the meeting for the pictures of the clubs that there were. I was trying to think. Yes, activities: the Key Club, the National Honors Society, student council, then *The Congressional* and the *Capitol Courier*—that was the yearbook. And automotive club, chess club, glee club, science club, yes. These were basically, I'm sorry to say, were fictions. They basically got together for the picture, and I don't remember them really meeting other than the stuff for the yearbook and the *Courier*. So when I was here, I didn't know whether I was coming back, so I went and took my yearbook around in 1958 and got a bunch of signatures.

PUMP: From every officer in both the House and the Senate.

LASCH: Yes. I don't know how legitimate the signatures are, I left them in the office most of the time, and some of them I actually got personally. But there wasn't much in the way of robo-pens in those days, they were just kind of starting, although in some offices that were busy, there was always a person in the office who would master the way it was signed.

PUMP: Well, and to describe it for the audio purposes, you were there in 1958, when Lyndon Johnson was the Majority Leader, Richard [Milhous] Nixon was the Vice President.

LASCH: Correct.

PUMP: Sam Rayburn was the Speaker of the House. You have Joseph Martin and John [William] McCormack as the Minority and Majority Leaders. So some pretty big names: future Presidents and Speakers.

LASCH: Correct.

PUMP: It must have been an interesting time to be in Washington.

LASCH: Oh, it was. But again, it was sort of a half a year kind of thing, and it was a lot more organized. The Members were a lot older, and they sort of came as a second career. They had had a first career and made their money in whatever, and kind of came to finish it off. But like Nixon, when he was Vice President, he used to come to the cloakroom on a regular basis to have lunch.

PUMP: On the House side?

LASCH: Yes, he would just sort of pop in and sit there and get his cottage cheese with ketchup on it, and he'd meet and greet Members while he was there. He did it a couple times a year usually, and Sam Rayburn, who was a man of few words—and then of course he died early on, after he had packed the Rules Committee for John [Fitzgerald] Kennedy.

END OF PART ONE — BEGINNING OF PART TWO

PUMP: You were just saying that as senior class secretary, you were in charge of the correspondence for your graduation ceremonies.

LASCH: Right. Lining up a guest speaker, and then you used to go to the White House. In the White House, the President gave out your presidential certificates, but for us, Eisenhower was recovering [his] health, Nixon was running for President, and so nobody wanted to do it. I think we asked

Lyndon Johnson, and he said no. So we ended up with Everett Dirksen handing out our presidential certificates in those days.

PUMP: Did Senator [Barry Morris] Goldwater give the speech?

LASCH: Yes, he did. He was our primary speaker that particular year.

PUMP: Now, given that it was such a lopsided Democratic patronage crowd, did that choice ruffle any feathers?

LASCH: I don't think so. Jim Kolbe's sponsor was Barry Goldwater, and so that's sort of how that came about. I don't think it would have happened otherwise. At some point, we were getting desperate because everybody else had turned us down. They decided, I think, that sort of was okay. It wasn't really that political—the graduation wasn't really that political, and over the years they had many different people.

PUMP: This gets into another line of questions I had for you about the extent of your interactions as a Page with some of the Officers and then some of the Members as well. I was curious if you could describe some of your interactions with someone like "Fishbait" Miller, who would have been your ultimate boss.

LASCH: The truth of the matter is, "Fishbait" was about as much of a partisan as anybody there, and he basically tolerated the Republicans intermingling with his crowd. We were pretty much *persona non grata*.

[A 9-minute, 26-second segment of this interview has been redacted.]

LASCH: Over the years, as times changed, the role of the Page changed. As more and more electronic gear came along, and fax machines and printing machines, and society changed, the interest wasn't there. Members didn't want to

accept the responsibility. I can't tell you how many times, when I was working on our Page appointments, we would have an initial list of people who were interested in appointing a Page. Once that was put together, I always took it—on our side, I would visit with each Member whose name was on the list and ask them about it. I can't tell you how many times they said, "Oh no, I don't know what you're talking about." I said, "Well, we have the correspondence from your office, your name is on the list."

We ask people to send only one. Some people wouldn't do it. They wanted us to say no, so they'd send us three or four. I said, "Well, you better check with your office and see what the story is." Then they'd come back and say, "Oh no, I don't want to take the responsibility for this." I said, "Well, it is a responsibility if you're bringing someone back in your district and something happens, you're going to have to be prepared to deal with whatever those circumstances are. We can't really help you out and the publicity will be back there and maybe even here." So a lot of them said no, and a lot of them had no idea who they had even nominated.

The one that always stands out in my mind was Jack [French] Kemp. He was a very busy person. I had been dealing with his office. I assumed that they had been keeping the Congressman informed. We selected the kid that he wanted to nominate, and the office went and ahead and processed it. The kid and his parents came to the main door on the floor. They sent somebody in that said that they were there, and they wanted to see me, and then they wanted to see the Congressman.

PUMP: Now, just to clarify, is this when you were managing the Republican Cloakroom, or you were a floor assistant?

LASCH: I was a floor assistant, yes. So I went out and talked to them, and I said fine. I said I didn't know if the Congressman is here or not. I think we were at the end of a vote or something, and he happened to be there. So I went in, and I said, "Mr. Kemp, your Page appointment is here." And he gave me this look, and he said, "What did you say?" I said, "Your Page appointment is here." And he says, "No, I am not appointing any Page." I said, "Well, with all due respect, sir, your office is taking care of the paperwork, and the young man and his family are standing outside the door." "Well, I don't know anything about this. How could this happen if I don't know?" I said, "I can't answer the question. That has to be directed at your office staff." "Well, who did you talk to?" And I had the name. "Well, this isn't right, we can't—this—" I said, "Well, you need to get it straightened out because the young man is standing out at the door with his parents—they are constituents from your district."

So he went in the phone booth, and I could hear him yelling at the staff. Why he didn't know? It could have been he had been told, and it was nowhere on his radar list because he didn't give a damn about it. Whatever. So he finally came grumbling out, and he said, "Well, where are they?" I said, "They're out there." He was sort of rattled, and he said, "I don't know if I want to go out and talk to them." I said, "Well, I could go out and tell them you're not here, but they may see you if you're wandering out some other door or something." He said, "Well, can you tell them to go my office?" I said, "I could do that." So he said, "Well, okay, I'll go out and say hello, and could you come out in a minute or two and tell me I have to come and get a phone call?" I said fine. So that's what we finally did. But after that happened, I always made sure the Member knew what was going on and told them that there was a responsibility involved, and you need to be prepared for it.

PUMP: Why had they shown up by the floor doors?

LASCH: I don't know whether the office had sent them over, that was the first stop, or I don't really know how that happened.

PUMP: So it was at the beginning of this individual's appointment.

LASCH: Yes, and I think it was only a summer appointment also. That was the other thing—and there were more of those. Anyway, I always made sure, at that point, that each Member knew. Before that happened, I hadn't gone to the Member individually; I just dealt with the office. Assumed.

There was one other time, dealing with the office and trying to keep them appraised of where we were going, and they were really interested in this kid. I said, "We're in the process of making selections, and we should know in a week to 10 days. We'll be back in touch with you." The next thing I know, I get a phone call from the kid's parent, saying that they had been told that he had been appointed a Page. I said, "Well, that's not exactly true."

"Congressman so-and-so's office said that I had been selected." I said, "Well, in looking over your record. First of all you don't meet the age requirement, so we can't appoint you until you're 16." "What are we going to do? We let everybody know in the school." I said, "I can't tell you what you're going to do, other than there's nothing we can do about it until he's that age."

So they were all upset, and it was a Congresswoman actually, Sue Myrick from North Carolina. She was upset, and I said, "Well, I don't know what to tell you." How they misinterpreted what I said, knowing that the boy wasn't going to be 16. So she said, "Well, what can we do about it?" I said, "The only thing I can tell you for sure is that we will put him at the top of the list when he becomes 16, and we'll see whether or not it's appropriate that we

can do it." So that's what we eventually did, but it caused her a lot of embarrassment. I said, "Well, I don't know what to tell you. I'm sorry, but somebody in your office jumped the gun." Whether they had a personal interest in it or what—but anyway, dealing with the Members is always the same. Some of them are too busy, some of them knew about it, some of them didn't know which one they should choose and that kind of thing. I said, "Well, you'd better go back to the office and go over the applications with whoever is in charge of them and figure it out." Then I kept bugging them until they give me an answer, so that I could then make my list.

We had a process for doing it. You were at the top of the list if you had never appointed a Page. And then when you appointed a Page, you went to the bottom of the list, and you had to work your way back up the list. Sometimes it would take you a few years. In those days, we had 16 appointments, I think, around that number. The Page corps was 50 when I came, and then it got increased to 60, I think it was. Then it got increased a second time, and I think eventually it was 66 or 70—something like that. I can't remember exactly what the numbers were, but each time, as they increased the numbers, we had the four, and then we asked for a fifth one to be the overseer at the desk. So we got five. Then, I think they created the 10, and they gave us half, so they gave us another five. I can't remember how the others got there.

The summer Pages were usually on top of the original Pages, and we got an allocation of those too. We divided ours up into two appointment segments. Then, of course, the way the recesses took place, they ended up being here for a month, which I didn't like, as there's too much turnover. There are too many kids, and I don't know what you learn with that timeframe—and with that many kids, what's going on when they're not well occupied?

PUMP: So when you were a Page and there were four Republican appointments, there were no Republican Pages who were running between the buildings and doing runs from the floor. They were all in the cloakroom.

LASCH: Yes.

PUMP: I see.

LASCH: And the Democrats sent a group of Pages to work on the Republican bench.

PUMP: I see.

LASCH: I don't know how they figured it out, but they divvied it up to run the errands.

PUMP: It sounds like there as a pretty sharp division in the partisan sense because you mentioned "Fishbait" Miller being kind of the detached figure since you were on the Republican side. Was that true across for all the officers?

LASCH: Well, in the early days, I think it was, yes. There was the Sergeant at Arms, Ken Harding, and he initially, I think, worked at the Democratic Campaign Committee.[4] Let's see, who else? Bob Rota—he was Postmaster, and before him there was somebody else. They all had Democratic Party connections, basically, at that point. At my level, as a Page, the officers, they weren't interested. "Fishbait" was only interested in it; it was part of his operation. I don't know if he really would have cared one way or the other if there weren't any Pages, but they were a part of his empire in those days, like the folding room. When I was a Page, we didn't have just Pages. We had Pages who worked as Pages, but they weren't on the Page payroll: they were on the folding room payroll, or they were on some other payroll because in those days, payrolls were kind of fungible. So I think to some extent that unless it

was the employee of the officer themselves, who was interested in any bipartisan-type function, that yes, I am a Democratic officer, but I am an Officer of the House, like Donn Anderson's viewpoint was. They were put there by their party, so obviously that's where their loyalty is, and the same on our side of the aisle. So in reality, odd as it sounds, I was a partisan employee for my whole time that I was there.

PUMP: Was that also true among the Members, that there was very little interaction on your part with any Democratic Members?

LASCH: Oh, no. Over the years, when I was the floor assistant, there were a lot of Democratic Members that stopped on their way in and out. If they were in the Rayburn Building and they came in to vote, I was the first person that they ran into because it's the Republican side of the aisle. Just like Members coming from the other buildings come in on the Democratic side of the aisle. A lot of them knew I was a partisan employee, and I treated them with respect, and I gave them honest answers when they asked a question. They knew that, they appreciated it, and I didn't see any point in lying.

Here and there, if we had some kind of a secret strategy we were going to pop up and do something that they didn't want them to know, sometimes I just didn't say it. But otherwise, I gave them the same information as I gave our Members. Some of them would even say, "Well, how am I supposed to vote?" This was after we had electronic voting. I said, "Well, look up on the board." I said, for the most part, it looks like your party is voting no or yes or whatever.

That served me well in the long run, particularly later, when in the '80s, Mr. [William S.] Broomfield of Michigan was the ranking Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee and was a member of the North Atlantic

Assembly Group. He got a bee in his bonnet about when Members went to the North Atlantic Assembly meetings, there never seemed to be any Republican staff members that went. That's another whole long story about what the Republican ratio of staff members was over the years. So he asked the fellow that I worked with, Tom Winebrenner, if he wanted to go, and he said, "Well, I might, can you tell me about it?[5] Can I bring my wife?" So he came back and said no, he couldn't bring his wife, and he said, "Well, if I can't bring my wife, I don't want to go." So Mr. Broomfield came to me and asked me if I was interested, and I said sure. So he said, "Okay, I'll tell the chairman." It was Clem [Clement John] Zablocki at the time, who happened to know me because he was a senior Member, and he would frequently stop to ask what was going on. So I didn't hear anything, and Mr. Broomfield kept saying, "Is everything under control? Are you ready to go?" I said, "I haven't heard anything." He said, "Well, why not?" And I said, "I don't know. I don't know who's supposed to be handling it over in the committee staff."

Finally, somebody called and said, "Well, you need a passport, you need this, you need that," and I said, "Well, I don't know how I'm going to get all that stuff." So they said, "Oh, you'll have to go down to the passport office." And I said, "Aren't I going to need a letter for an official passport?" "Yes," and they said, "Mr. Broomfield should write it." And I told him. So I hot-footed it down to the passport office and got my official passport, and then they needed to know my health thing, as far as shots and that kind of stuff.

So I get that together, and then, still, there wasn't much in the way of information coming in. It finally worked out, and I got on the airplane. I was the first and only Republican staff member at that particular time, and there were about four or five Democratic staff members. Well, when I got on the

plane—besides the Republican Members—there was Jack [Bascom] Brooks, Charlie [Charles Grandison] Rose [III], Dante [Bruno] Fascell, Zablocki, a fellow named Larry [Lawrence Jack] Smith from Florida, and one or two others. Well, 99 percent of them knew who I was, so it was, "Oh, hi, I didn't expect to see you on the trip." The Democratic staff was like, "What's this? We don't get this."

When we got there, the first stop was in The Hague in the Netherlands, and we got there late at night—it was 10:30, 11:00—and so you go in, and they have a room set up for you. You check into the hotel, and then they have a separate room where you get your per diem. So I waited in line—I was the last one. I'm sure I wasn't pushing anybody out of the line who wasn't supposed to be there and got the room. Then I went into the other room for the per diem—I was the last one in line. The lady asked my name, and I told her, and she was going up and down her list, and she said, "Well I don't have your name on my list." And I said, "Oh, okay, well it's no problem." She said, "Well, maybe it's coming later." And I said, "Well, I don't know, this is the first time I've been on a trip. I'm not going anyplace, I have a room, and we can figure it out tomorrow."

Jack Brooks happened to be standing there, and he said, "What do you mean you don't have the per diem for him?" He was talking to this lady who was an employee of the embassy, and she said, "Well, sir, I don't have the cable transmission that he's part of the delegation." So he was giving this woman a hard time, and I said, "Mr. Chairman, really, it's not a problem because I'm not going anyplace, and I have a room, and I'm sure they'll get it straightened out tomorrow." He said, "That's not the way it's supposed to be." And I said, "It will work itself out, really." So he went grumbling away, and, of course, it was worked out the next morning. The cable had been delayed for whatever

reason because the person at the committee sent it later. I don't know what the deal was. So it worked out. But the Democratic staff kind of didn't quite catch the connection between me, a Republican staff member, and all these chairmen and how I knew who they were and they knew who I was and dealing with them and all that kind of stuff. That's sort of a result of my relationship that I established over the years.

PUMP: When you were a Page, was there a great deal of social interaction with the Members?

LASCH: No.

PUMP: So it was primarily focused on the floor, when they needed to make a call or that sort of thing?

LASCH: Yes. It was in the days where you were just sort of more or less a functionary there, and they had their level that they dealt with, and they were in and out. Most of them were older, and they didn't really care that much about the kids, other than the one Congresswoman from Ohio named Frances Payne Bolton, whose husband had been a Congressman [Chester Castle Bolton]. They were very wealthy, and she was a stickler for protocol. She made a point of introducing herself, and if you were dumb like me and didn't know any better—I was sitting on a bench, and she came up and introduced herself. I put my hand out to shake her hand and say hello, and she said, "You stand when you talk to Congressmen." I said, "Oh, I beg your pardon." So I jumped up. She was very quick to correct you if you misspoke or whatever.

So there were a few of those types who felt they were being teachers and educational but for the most part not really. Sometimes, if they were a little bit younger and they had kids that maybe were the same age, they would be more interested in asking. Or when we were making phone calls—it took a

lot more time when you had to go through the operator, here, there, and elsewhere—sometimes they would, but not really. There wasn't very much action.

PUMP: So what was that process like when a Member would say, "Get my office on the phone?" How did those interactions work?

LASCH: Well, it would have been easy if they could have done it themselves. But they would come in and sort of line up, and they would say, "Get my office," and then I'd go get it. And then the next Page would come up, and they'd say, "Get my office," and that kind of thing. It was pretty much first come, first serve, unless it was the leadership that was coming and looking for help. Martin hardly ever was in there that I recall. Charlie [Charles Abraham] Halleck was in and out, but he usually had two or three people with him. [Gerald Rudolph] Ford [Jr.] was the one who used it the most, and he was very particular about how he got on the phone. He didn't want that phone in his hand until the person he was calling was on the phone, which was a bit difficult sometimes, depending on who you were calling. So you'd have to play this little game with the office and pretend like you were the Congressman, that kind of thing, the higher it went up—like the Vice President or the Secretary of the Treasury or something like that.

Gerald Ford had a temper—a lot of people don't realize that. He always comes across as a nice person, but he had a temper, surprisingly. With his office staff, he [sometimes] didn't have much patience with them. It was always a little dance about getting the person that you needed on the phone before he could get on the phone. He wasn't wasting his time sitting or waiting for them to get on the phone.

PUMP: So what were they doing in the meantime? Were they talking to other Members?

LASCH: Yes, especially as the Leader, if he was just standing there, waiting to get the phone call, as people were coming through, they were chatting with the Leader or asking favors, telling him something or maybe asking him to come to the district and do a fundraiser, that kind of stuff.

PUMP: So when you were there as a Page, what did the cloakroom look like? It's that L-shaped room.

LASCH: It's always been an L-shape, but it was much more utilitarian. It was linoleum floors and no fancy furniture, just sort of this—the earlier version of this furniture—couches and chairs around the backside, and that's all that was there. There was a big table in the middle, which had been in the committee room, and not very decent lighting. There was no TV in those days, and there were no phones around on that side. Finally, we put some phones on the table that was there so that there would be a few extra phones, but it was only in recent years that they've completely remodeled the cloakroom.

PUMP: How often were Members on the floor during that time?

LASCH: More than they are now because you, of course, didn't have TV, where you could just flip it on and see what's going on. There was more interest in things. They wanted to participate because that was the only record of it. They weren't into the massive connections like they are today, with their news releases with their Twitter and tweets and whatever they are, all that kind of stuff. So they would use the debate for that purpose, for people to get up and say, "In my district people want this or they don't want that," or whatever.

So it was a matter of how they got on the record, but that was when there was more regular order. It was general debate. If you missed the general debate or the general debate time was already all allocated to people that were there, then you could use the five-minute rule, which means you could strike the last word and get up and put your statement in the [*Congressional*] *Record* that way. Then, of course, there were the years it got to the point where you didn't have to do that because they got general leave for anybody to put their statement in the *Record*. At some point early on there, there was a differentiation in the way it was printed, as to whether you actually delivered the speech or you didn't deliver the speech. But C-SPAN, I think, was really the thing that changed a lot of that, too. That was something that John B. [Bayard] Anderson, their chairman of the Republican Conference, advocated over the years and pushed and finally got it put in there by wearing the Democrats down basically. It's like electronic voting and that kind of thing.

PUMP: Could you describe the atmosphere in the cloakroom during that time?

LASCH: Well, our corner was work obviously, and around the corner, the people were in and out eating lunch. There were couches there, so lots of times they were occupied with sleepers. Every now and then, there would be individual Members meeting with other Members back there. There was a general pattern. I think that's where people got information before so much of it was available in print. It was busy when things were going on, and, obviously, when things weren't, nothing was happening back there. We went in the back, that's where we did our test for spelling and learning faces and that kind of thing.

It was nothing glamorous. It was smoke-filled in those days. That whole idea of smoke in the '50s and '60s—really, a lot of heavy smokers—cigars, pipes

in particular, cigarettes of course, and then we still had a few spittoons for the chewers.

PUMP: Did you ever have to clean those out?

LASCH: No. Unfortunately, there was one of the folks in the cloakroom, it was their job to do that, and they had gloves and two buckets; one for emptying and one for clean water, and a thing to slosh them around. Fortunately, that sort of didn't last too long, and they finally took them away, because where they were placed around the room, they were frequently spilled, because people, when it was crowded, would step on them or into them or bump into them or whatever. So they put sand traps in instead for the cigarettes, and sometimes that ended up as the—that didn't last very long because there weren't that many chewers left. There was one chewer I was trying to think of—carried his little cup around with him. I can't think of who that was now. A dirty habit, nasty habit.

PUMP: I was also curious, you mentioned earlier that Richard Nixon, when he was Vice President, would come over and have lunch, and I guess it was Helen's father, who was running it?[6]

LASCH: No, he was already gone when I came.

PUMP: Okay, I see.

LASCH: I'm not sure exactly when he died, but I think in the early '50s. Helen was running the cloakroom there with her assistant.

PUMP: Did anyone else stop by, former Members? Was that common?

LASCH: Oh, yes, when they were in town.

[A 51-second segment of this interview has been redacted.]

PUMP: You were also on the dance committee. I wanted to get that question in.

LASCH: I was?

PUMP: In the yearbook. I was curious how dances worked out because the Page School was all men at the time.

LASCH: There was an arrangement with some local girl's school. Some of them who lived here, they obviously had access. I can't remember the name of the school. That's how it came about.

PUMP: Were those planning—or trying to set those up—

LASCH: I don't remember doing it, now that you bring that up. There were the dances, there were like two of them, and let's see here, the basketball prom, Christmas festivities, and then I guess there was like the senior—it was related to graduation perhaps, at that time.

PUMP: Or you may have been on the prom committee at your home school, maybe that's what I'm reading.

LASCH: No, I wasn't there. I haven't read this in so many years. No I don't know, it must have been another fictional event.

PUMP: I was also curious: do you have any memories of Speaker Sam Rayburn and Minority Leader Martin?

LASCH: Not really. I mean, first of all, I was a lowly sophomore in high school. The structure was much stricter as far as protocol in those days. Sam Rayburn was an older man; he had never been married. His job and his life were the Speakership, and he was just a man of few words. Every now and then, you'd

run into him as he was going to the men's room from the office which he used, which was where the Parliamentarians are today. That's the office that he used as the Speaker's Office. He would go through the lobby to the men's room. And every now and then, you might be there, and you would say, "Good morning, Mr. Speaker," or "Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker," and he'd kind of look up. Sometimes he didn't say anything; other times he'd sort of grunt like, "Ah yes, well. . . ." Or something like that. But he was not a very—at least as far as the Pages were concerned—outgoing and friendly. Joe Martin was around so little I never saw him really, that I recall, be engaged with the Pages or anything like that.

PUMP: So when it came to leadership, you really saw the interactions more with Ford and Halleck?

LASCH: Yes, well, I had been around. Halleck, a little more, and then Ford because, of course, he was the boss, and I was in the cloakroom at that time. He was friendly toward the Pages. He would say hello when he went by and that kind of thing. But he usually was in a hurry and going someplace. He actually was the leader who spent the most time on the floor over the years because when they were considering major legislation, he would have us call the office and say, "We're beginning the five-minute rule in the House on the appropriations bill for defense," or whatever. He would gather up his materials in the office and then come over to the floor office, which is the little office there, the next down from the cloakroom. He'd sit in there, working on his signing mail and whatever else he was doing so that he was readily available when we got to an important vote. Then he'd come out and work the floor and that kind of thing.

But when he left that ended. The new leadership didn't think there was any time they would be spending on the floor, wasting their time there when they

could be doing other things. Plus, I think as time went on, the more time they spent on the floor, the more they got harassed about something that's not going right or going wrong or they wanted someone to come and speak in their district, or that kind of thing. Being in the leadership was no fun: they were constantly under siege, one way or the other, and no one's ever satisfied.

PUMP: Right. I'm curious if you could describe the political atmosphere, maybe by comparison? It seems like if you're in leadership, you're always under siege—and to the extent that that may have changed—but it still seemed that Ford wanted to be out on the floor. I'm curious if you could describe what the political atmosphere was like in the late '50s, early '60s.

LASCH: It was political obviously but with different issues not so much because the Democratic Party was made up of multiple parts in those days. You had southern Democrats, who had their special interests; you had Western Democrats who had their special interests; you had city Democrats who had their interests—and they all didn't match very well. So there was not the ideology that we have today, where both parties have been cleansed, if you will, of their people who didn't all think alike, which is where we are today.

And so the partisanship was not as much. It grew over the years—really with Lyndon Johnson,the assassination of John Kennedy. It started a little bit before that because Kennedy had different ideas, and they were having a hard time getting some of the southern Democrats to go along with the things that he wanted to do. That's when Rayburn packed the Rules Committee [in 1961]. So that was the very beginning of it. Then, of course, the assassination, which was tumultuous, really, and then Lyndon Johnson coming in, the election of '64, with the two-thirds absolute majority in the House and the Senate. So with that came power, and Lyndon Johnson had

an agenda, and he had his own agenda. He had the Vietnam War, which was already percolating, underway. And that's really when it started.

And the single-issue groups were nonexistent in the late '50s. They came about in the beginning of the '60s, and my personal opinion is, unfortunately, that the single-issue groups are the ones that have ultimately poisoned this well completely. They started it and poisoned it completely. The early ones were abortion, of course, of some form or another, and school busing was a very big thing back in those days, as far as single issues. But then everybody started getting their special single interest areas. Of course, the NRA [National Rifle Association] have always been around. Now everybody has a single-issue group, and if you're not with us on our issue, you're wrong on everything!

That's the way it is, and, sadly, it's that and money that really has been the worst situation, the very worst. When I think of the money that's spent these days—years ago in the '50s, people spent little or no money to get elected to Congress. Then, at one point, there was a thing about one Congressman spent a million dollars, and that was big news. Well, now there are multiple-millions-of-dollars campaigns these days for a House seat—let alone a Senate seat or the governorship or the presidency, which is now billions of dollars. All that came about because of reform aimed at Richard Nixon—Watergate—and the campaign finance reform that came about. And it's like every time we do a reform, then the army of lawyers look for loopholes, and it always ends up making it worse, unfortunately.

The Budget Act—the same thing. That's where we are with the Budget Act today. Aimed at Richard Nixon, because the Democrats appropriated the money, and he didn't spend the money when he didn't think it should be spent, and so of course that pissed the Democrats off because we appropriate

the money. So they passed the Budget and Impoundment Control Act and said that if you don't spend the money, you have to send a message that we're not going to do it, and we can veto it or whatever terms they used in those days. So all it did was create more bureaucracies. There was always that, but it wasn't called the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), it was called [the Bureau of the Budget]. Then we should have our own budget estimate people. And then we should have our own committees, and then the whole deal, when they did that Budget Act, is they were going to give it teeth. Well, the teeth disappeared by the time they finally finished the act, and so it was left with little room, where it's a joint resolution.

PUMP: The concurrent resolution.

LASCH: The concurrent resolution routine, yes, which doesn't get signed by the President as a force of law, and so that meant that the appropriations process is where the force of law is. Then they started to wiggle their way around in that process. All good intentions, all white knights supposedly—and all ending up bringing us to the disaster that we live with today. Anyway, I think I'm about done for today.

PUMP: Yes. One last question I have for you. Given the divide in the partisan appointments that you encountered, did you have any role models that kind of inspired your early aspirations, like Ralph Roberts was for Donn Anderson?[7]

LASCH: Marginally, yes. His name was Harry Brookshire, he was the Minority Clerk.[8] And he ran the floor stuff in those days, and so he was probably an inspiration. He'd been around for a long time; he was from Ohio and had Ohio connections.

So he was there. The other people that were in the minority jobs—the Postmaster and Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper and so forth—those were, when I first came, truly ciphers who really didn't do much of anything at all. Right after I came, there was a brief period of 10, 12 years where the parties did change. There was—

PUMP: '48.

LASCH: '48 and then '52, with Eisenhower, so the parties went back and forth there. As I say, when I came in '58, I believe the division was 230 to 205, whatever it was. But after that, the numbers graduated but they weren't as close, particularly after '74, and '64 to some extent, too. The Watergate classes that came in after that basically took the public purse and upped the ante with regard to all of the benefits for Members of Congress as far as trips home, spending for a number of people in your office, congressional district offices, newsletters, use of the frank, a whole myriad of those kind of things. Before that, the Members got like three trips a year home, and they had stationery accounts which actually they could pocket at the end of the Congress if they didn't use it all, as long as they declared it for cash on their income taxes.

So the whole staff issue bloomed, even including at the committee levels. In the early days—the minority staff on the committees—if they had a minority counsel, they were lucky; if the minority counsel had a minority secretary, they were lucky. That lasted for a number of years, until at one point, Phil [Phillip] Burton and Frank Thompson [Jr.], who was chairman of the House Administration [Committee], did buy into the fact that, "What happens someday if you lost? What are you going to do? How are you going to hire your employees?" So you ought to think about giving us our fair share on the numbers." That was during one of the reforms, and I can't remember exactly

when it was. So they increased then, and they went to two-thirds, one-third committee staff kind of thing.

We used to have minority committee staff meetings with one Member from each committee, and one staff member would come. And we'd put together, as a matter of solidarity, a minority staff manual to help people find their way through because there was no other way. They didn't have any help. The Parliamentarians always said, "Well, we'll be glad to help you." Well, they can only share their time so much, depending on the number of people that are out there. The Parliamentarians had a much smaller staff years ago, particularly when I came. The Parliamentarian, Judge Lewis Deschler, he only dealt with Members of Congress. The assistant parliamentarian was Bill Cochrane, I think, at the time, and then Bill Brown came in there. They have to deal with all the rest of the staff. But I mean there wasn't as much going on as far as procedure and so forth was concerned, but then they finally grew. I think Peter Robinson was in there. Of course, now they've got like seven people in there. [9]

PUMP: Charlie Johnson came in '64, I think.[10]

LASCH: Yes, that's right. Bill Brown was the first and then Charlie, and then there were a couple others in there too. John Sullivan, who actually had been in the military and worked for the Armed Services Committee, and Les [Leslie] Aspin.[11] Then, I think when Les Aspin went to the Pentagon, I think he joined the Parliamentarian's office at that particular time. I can't remember for sure. In the old days, there wasn't much in the way of where you could dig information out. The precedents hadn't been printed since 1909, and *Cannon's Procedure* was a one-volume item, which hadn't been reprinted for, I can't know how many years. So you really had to do a lot of research if you were interested, as a Member, to find things out.[12] I was interested in the

floor procedures and Bill Pitts and so were the others—and some of our Rules Committee people. [13] So we would try to do something, and we couldn't find any information on it, and we'd go to the Parliamentarians, who would say, "Oh yes, we have all that; it's in our cut and paste book." I don't know if you've ever seen their cut and paste books. "Well, can we look at them?" "No, you can't look at them."

So we enlisted a young Congressman named Bill [William Albert] Steiger from Wisconsin, who was interested in the rules as well, and we drafted an amendment to the appropriations bill, which said that they had to prepare the precedents and have them printed and make them publicly available by—I don't know how long it was, 10 years or 15 years or something like that. So then they finally started pumping them out, where the information became more available.

Now, of course, there's tons of stuff out there, and now they're worthless because the rules don't mean anything. They don't let you participate in anything anymore, which was part of the rules process that took place, as the partisanship grew worse and worse over the years. Every two years, the new Democratic Congress had new rules changes to lessen the ability of the minority to participate in the process, which did come back to bite them at one point after we became the majority.

I knew Steny [Hamilton] Hoyer quite well. Actually, it was after I retired, and I had come back to visit for a day, and he was coming around the corner, and he said, "Oh, what are you doing here?" I said, "Oh, just kind of checking things out." And he said, "Well, nice to see you, I hope you're enjoying your retirement." And I said, "Oh, yes." He said, "I have to tell you, I think we were a lot more generous with the rules on how we treated the minority." I said, "Well, with all due respect, sir, that's a matter of opinion, I

would say. But I would give you this little secret: the House Rules, as they exist today, were written by you, when you were in the majority, with very few exceptions." And he looked at me, and he didn't like the answer at all, but he knew exactly what I was talking about. Steny is a nice guy, but he's somewhat blind sometimes.

PUMP: Well, I think we'll wrap it up there for the day.

LASCH: Okay, good.

— RONALD W. LASCH —

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TWO

PUMP: This is Barry Pump interviewing Ronald Lasch, former Minority Postmaster and floor assistant to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. The date is June 24th, 2013, and the interview is taking place in Room 247 of the Cannon House Office Building. This is the second interview with Mr. Lasch. In the previous interview, we discussed your time as a Page. Today, I'm hoping we can discuss your time between your Page experience and the time that you became a full-fledged floor assistant to the Minority Leader at the time.

I understand that, immediately after your Page experience, you worked in the district office for Mr. Widnall, your sponsor.

LASCH: That's correct.

PUMP: What were some of your duties there?

LASCH: As the lowest-ranking staff member, I was the gofer—run down to get coffee at the carryout, routine mails, questions, visitors, sending information to people who were writing asking about appointments to the academies—West Point, Naval Academy, Coast Guard, and Air Force—and filing, which no one liked to do. And those were in the days when we had the old-fashioned copies. You had that carbon sheet that you put between two pieces of paper and put it in your typewriter. So that was the way you made copies in those days. And running what they called the Gestetner machine, which was an early copying machine, which had kind of a gel thing that you typed in what you wanted. You fitted that on the machine and then ran it through, and the

ink came through that gel and produced a press release or whatever you were copying there.

PUMP: How large were the office staffs for Members at the time?

LASCH: In those days, they were very small. They had two-room suites. Each Member had two rooms. Initially, there were two people per office. And then it went up to three or four, I think it was. It blossomed after the Watergate stuff started in '72, '74 maybe—somewhere in there.

PUMP: This was before the Rayburn Building came, and—

LASCH: It was under construction.

PUMP: Yes.

LASCH: It was under construction for four or five years. At the same time, they were extending the East Front of the Capitol. And I think the Rayburn Building opened in '63 or '64. I'm not sure exactly what the date was.[14]

PUMP: Was there a shift when the rooms went from two-room suites for the offices to three-room suites?

LASCH: Yes, over a period of time, they did. They put in the cafeteria. It had been a courtyard in the Longworth Building. There was the cafeteria in the Rayburn Building. And there had just been a carryout in [the Cannon] building, in the basement. I don't know whether that's still there or not. And this is the building that I worked in, from Room 460, up on the fourth floor. The carryout was right downstairs. Security was bare minimal. There was a policeman at the door, but he just said "Hi" as you walked in the door. They didn't bother to ask. There was none of the electronic equipment or any of that kind of stuff. People went in and out. [Room] 460 was up on the fourth

floor in this corner, so it looked out over the Capitol Building because my Congressman had already been here—I think he was elected in '47. And the next-door office, actually, was interesting because it was the office of Adam Clayton Powell [Jr.], who was somewhat well known. And there was one lady who worked in there, and, interestingly, the door was always locked, never open. I don't know why. But she was very nice, and if you ran into her in the hall, she was very friendly. Sometimes we borrowed her "robo-machines," in the day, which was an early, kind of a player-piano electric-typewriter that produced letters very quickly. You just had to fill in the name and address, and then it typed the body of the letter, and you whipped it out, and it was ready for signature at that point.

PUMP: So, just to clarify, the main office door to Adam Clayton Powell's office was always locked?

LASCH: I guess you knocked and went in. I never really paid much attention to it, and I don't know how many constituents there were in those days. We're talking '61 to '63, when I worked in the office.

PUMP: Well, between 300,000 and 400,000 constituents per district at the time.

LASCH: I don't know. It was before "one man, one vote."

PUMP: Right.

LASCH: And some constituencies were virtually nothing, particularly in New York, in some of the redistricting. If you had 100,000 constituents, you were really way below the standard. It's just like in Texas. For years, before "one man, one vote," Sam Rayburn's district had 250,000 people in it. The district next door was the Dallas area—which was growing by leaps and bounds—had a million people in it. It was represented by a Republican by the name of Bruce

[Reynolds] Alger. So that's how unfair—that's how they did the redistricting. I'm not picking on Texas. The other states had the same thing. Even at that point, sometimes when they got new seats—like Ohio at one point, I think in '60 they got a new seat, and they didn't do redistricting. They elected the Member—the new Member—At-Large, for the whole state. And they did the same thing in other states, too from time to time, where they didn't do the redistricting like they should have.

But then, along came "one man, one vote," sometime after that. And that made all the difference in the world. I think the redistricting must have been true in many other states, too—same thing—particularly in the South. Because when I came, there were virtually no Republicans from the South. There was, like, one from Virginia. His name was Richard [Harding] Poff. There was one from North Carolina, who was named [Charles Raper] Jonas, I think. Nobody from South Carolina. Georgia, there was nobody there then. Florida had one Republican by the name of Bill [William Cato] Cramer. Nobody from Alabama, nobody from Louisiana, nobody from Mississippi. Tennessee had two Republicans in the eastern—the two eastern districts were what they called "Mountain Republican" districts—leftover from the Civil War apparently. And Kentucky, I think, had one Republican at the time, too, in that time frame.

PUMP: So just to back up a little bit, in your Page yearbook, it mentions something about you becoming an accountant when you went off to college. I was curious how you went from that career path to sticking around here. What made you choose to do that?

LASCH: When it was time to go to college, there were no funds for me to go to college. So I needed a job, which my Congressman was willing to do. And they were very good to me, in letting me get off a little early to catch the bus

to go downtown. I went to GW [George Washington University], which is in the middle of downtown, over in the Foggy Bottom area. And they would give me time off on a Friday, if I was studying for exams and that kind of thing. So that's why I did it. But I just couldn't figure out why I would want a political science degree since I worked on Capitol Hill. I figured I knew all there was to know working on Capitol Hill. And you know how that is. And so I decided that I didn't know how long I would have a job. I thought it would be best to get a business degree. So that's what I ended up with from GW.

PUMP: Was it difficult balancing school and work?

LASCH: A little bit. But, as I said, my office was very generous to me. They really were. They were very nice people. It got a little bit harder when I went back to the floor in September of '63. There was an opening. The then-Minority Clerk Harry Brookshire called and asked if I wanted to come back to work in the cloakroom. I said, "Oh, sure, but I think I need to check out how the office feels about it." So I did. They said, "Oh, sure, that's fine." So I went back in September of '63. But that's how I ended up with a business degree. I never used my business degree other than for my personal purposes or that kind of thing.

PUMP: Did Mr. Brookshire run the Republican Cloakroom much like the manager of the Republican Cloakroom, or were his duties different?

LASCH: No, he was the top of the food chain, if you will, with the rest of the other Minority Officers under him. And then he was supervisor at arm's length of a manager of the cloakroom whose name was Allan Ames, and his assistant manager was named Tom Winebrenner. And then the third job was called the telephone clerk's job. That's what they offered me at the time.

PUMP: He had known you from your Page experience?

LASCH: When I was a Page, right. You've been on the floor, you know where Peggy [Sampson] is in that little office?[15] That was his office at the time. It didn't look at all like it is now. It was a linoleum floor, a Member's desk, a Member's chair, and two other chairs that people could sit and talk, and a phone on the desk, and a light that hung down from the ceiling that didn't give you much light. And that's all there was to it. There was nothing else in there. It was just almost a storage room for *Congressional Records* until we took it over. There was also a closet in there where we kept the *Congressional Records* after that.

PUMP: Was that the designated area for the floor staff, or did Members use it as well?

LASCH: In those days, it was not really available. I don't remember Members using it at all during that particular time. Probably, mainly, because when you went out the back door of the Republican Cloakroom to the left, there's an office there which was the Republican Whip Office. For many years, Les [Leslie Cornelius] Arends was the Whip, and he was the Whip from, like, '43 to '76 or something like that. So if they wanted to have a meeting, it was easier to go to that office. It was much nicer to sit in there because you looked down the Mall instead of looking at the bare wall from in that room there.

And, as I think I said once before, the minority staff vis-à-vis the committees were virtually non-existent. If we were lucky, we had a counsel at each committee hearing, and they have a secretary. And the leadership staffs were much, much smaller than they are today.

When Gerald Ford was the Leader, he had the three offices at the end of the red hall that looked down the Mall. And he had the smallest office, which was the one on the right. And the middle office was where you entered the

office. The chief of staff sat there and his personal secretary and the receptionist. And the big office, which was the staff room, was where the leadership staff and his congressional office staff was. He didn't keep an office staff—a congressional staff—in the building. I'm not sure why that was—whether he didn't want to run back and forth, I don't know what the deal was. So they were jammed into that space at the time. All of the space that the Leader now has was not part of that suite, at the time. A couple of the offices were storage rooms. One was a private office for, I think, for Emanuel Celler. The other room was a subcommittee room of the Foreign Affairs Committee. And the little office that's in the hall, with the glass windows, was a storage room. There was another storage room where they stored round tables for when they had events in Statuary Hall, where they could wheel them out there and set them up in there. So that all came about later.

When Ford left to be Vice President, he asked to have an office in the House side of the Capitol, even though he had an office as Vice President on the Senate side. They said okay, and the office was in that hall there, which is—I don't know if you've been in that office, but it's at the very end of the hall on the right, before you get to the end. That was a storage room. They said, "You can have that room." So they went about redoing it because it was not usable. I think he was nominated in May or June. He wasn't confirmed until December 6th, which was the day he was sworn in—and they hadn't completed the work. So he became Vice President. And I don't know that he ever got to use the room because before you knew it, he was {laughter} President, in August of '74. The point is that the staffs were just miniscule compared to what they are in today's world.

PUMP: Was that ever a point of contention between the minority and the majority, about the size of staff and the amount of support that each received?

LASCH: At the committee level, yes. Not so much, initially, I don't believe, but it certainly became that way after the '64 election, when we got dumped down to 145, I think the number was. So that became an issue. After the two years of super-dom [*sic*] that the Democrats had there, with their super-majority, the '66 election we bounced back. I think we elected 66 new Members. So we went from 145 to 192, or whatever the number was.[16] A lot of fresh faces in there—a lot of interest. Times were changing, and that started to rattle the cage about "This isn't fair to just give us one person while you have 30," or whatever it was in those days. I don't remember what the ratio was.

It kept going on until the Reorganization Act of 1970 when they finally agreed to provide one-third of the staff to the minority. And I actually was looking for that in the rule book at home before I came, and when we took over, we apparently changed that language to say "a fair share," so the one-third disappeared. But, of course, {laughter} our goal, when we took over, was to reduce the outrageous staff by one-third across the board. It didn't matter whether you did a good job or a bad job or whether you were needed or not. Across-the-board slash was what they wanted to do to everything. So the one-third thing—it was a good PR point, but it didn't last very long. Before you knew it, staffs were growing leaps and bounds again. And I'm assuming—I don't know. But even though it doesn't say it in the rule book, they do, basically, do one-third, two-thirds. I'm not sure whether that's how it works or not.

So it was a contentious issue for those years. And here and there, as things went along with the various scandals and the growth of the committee jurisdictions—particularly Ways and Means and the Commerce Committee and Public Works. Those were all reorganized in the Reorganization Act of 1970, as far as their jurisdiction was concerned—and the Banking

Committee. They were the largest committees and had a lot of the contentious issues really. And Judiciary, too, was civil rights and impeachment and all those type of things.

PUMP: Was there a considerable shift for you, when you went from the district office of Mr. Widnall to the floor again? Or since your Page experience had prepared you so well, you were a natural fit for the role?

LASCH: Yes, I was a natural fit. Obviously, I had to relearn some Members that were different from when I was there two and a half years before that. I had always been interested in the rules, so I was somewhat familiar with the rules in those days and made a point of trying to learn more about them, even though I was only the third person in there. We went to the meetings of the minority committee staff. They created a manual to help their brethren do their work, which actually I brought—I think it's the initial copy that they put together. Yes, first edition. I don't know whether you want to keep that, or make copies of it, or whether it would be worthwhile for your archives to have that kind of a thing or not.

PUMP: Yes.

LASCH: It basically was about floor procedure and committee procedure because there really was no place to learn that kind of stuff before. You could read *Cannon's Procedure*, which applied to the floor. But those books weren't generally available. And the precedents weren't available. There just was nothing in clear English to help you understand what needed to be done.

PUMP: Were any of the Republican officers—minority officers—lawyers or had legal training formally?

LASCH: I don't think so. Harry Brookshire came to the Hill—he had been a Deputy Postmaster General, I think, in the Eisenhower administration. That was the political office back in those days, back in the '50s and '60s. And the others were older men. To be honest, one or two of them spent the day playing cards. I don't believe any of them had a law degree.

PUMP: I'm wondering if that presented a challenge in trying to learn parliamentary law or the mechanics of legislative writing.

LASCH: It does, a little bit. But that's what you have the legislative counsel people for. From time to time, people would get up on the floor and say, "Well, I don't believe this bill is constitutional." Occasionally, they'd make a point of order and ask the chair to rule on it. And the chair would never rule on it. The chair said that that was not within their purview because that was an issue for the courts. And the chair didn't pass judgment on whether it was constitutional. As a result, over the years, there have been unconstitutional things passed and signed into law, and were going through the system, and the courts would rule them unconstitutional.

PUMP: Were the rules and the precedents and the mechanics of floor operation just passed down by the staff over time?

LASCH: I think that's basically how it was. As I said, there really wasn't a lot available other than the rule book, which I don't know if you've sat down and looked at, but it's got Jefferson's *Manual*, which is the process, and it's got the Constitution there.[17] Now it has a lot more in it on the Budget Act, the reorganization, and ethics, and all that kind of stuff, which were not originally in the rules. You read through that, and your head spins. And, frankly, unless you can see it all happening, it's hard to place it and pull it all together. When you're on the floor, you don't have a lot of time. You almost

have to have an instantaneous response to things because if you're trying to think, "Oh, what am I going to do?" by the time you've done that, the chair says, "Without objection, so ordered," and you've missed your opportunity. That helped—the *Cannon's Procedure*, which I got—which was written by Clarence [Andrew] Cannon, who was at the time called the clerk at the Speaker's desk. He left, went back to Missouri, and ran for Congress. He went back to Congress, and when I was here, he was the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, if I recall correctly.

So [Lewis] Deschler was the first Parliamentarian. I think he came in, like, '28 or something like that. So he was there for Members. If you were a staff member, you went to two or three other people that were in the Parliamentarian's Office at that particular time because they also provide assistance to the committees. Some committees have their own parliamentarians that they've developed over the years as an offshoot of learning the process.

Other than *Cannon's* and the—I think there are nine volumes—of the precedents that have been printed up through 1909. And then there wasn't anything in printing. So the Parliamentarian's Office had all of that stuff. They did a cut-and-paste on everything, where they were in big scrapbooks, basically, in their rows of cabinets they had in their office. They knew where to go to get the stuff, but they didn't share it with the people. You asked them questions. They said, "We can look it up and help you," but they wouldn't give you a copy of it. So several of us staff members—there was a Member from Wisconsin named Bill Steiger—a young man. He was interested in the process, and we, kind of, put him up to offering an amendment to the appropriations bill—Legislative Branch Appropriations—asking that the precedents be compiled and printed and brought up to date,

from 1909 to the present date. Well, they're still, of course, in the process of doing that because there was so much. They have done, I think, 13 or 14 volumes now, at this point. I'm not sure exactly how many it is. And then, they have, of course, rewritten *Cannon's Procedure*, and it's now *Brown's Procedure*, I think is what it's called—as in Bill Brown.[18]

PUMP: Do you remember about what year the Steiger Amendment came about?

LASCH: I want to say, he died in 1978, at age 40. So it was before that. I would say probably early to mid-70s would be my guess.

PUMP: Did the Democrats have a similar floor operation to the Republicans?

LASCH: No. As far as my job was concerned? No, they had the [Democratic] Cloakroom, where Donn Anderson was, and Art Cameron and Bob Rota at one point.[19] And that was theirs. Actually, on our side, we didn't have anything other than the cloakroom, originally, when I was there. It was only after Tom Winebrenner became the floor assistant. He was the Minority Postmaster at one time, and then went up to Minority Doorkeeper. He was the one that established our floor operation to a large extent because, as a minority officer, they were constantly under fire that they weren't doing anything, which, {laughter} sorry to say, was true of several of them.

So he decided he needed to make a job out of it, so his role was to just keep track of what was going on. So he read the bills. He had the bills available, and he had the amendments available. He looked up votes that we had on the issues, so that when a Member came in and said, "Well, how did I vote the last time?" He had that available, too. When I came out on the floor in '75, I just followed on. I sat in a different section of the floor and shared the duty of trying to keep Members informed. As I had said before, after the Rayburn Building was opened, most of the senior Members came in from the

Rayburn Building. They came in the west door. Tommy [Winebrenner] was at the first section. I was in the second section, over a little further. And then, of course, we went to electronic voting. Behind where I sat, they put the computer where you could type in and get the breakout of the vote.

PUMP: So the Democrats didn't have to put together a manual like this? They didn't have floor assistants telling the Members what was going on?

LASCH: No, they came with the committee. The staff members came from the committee when they had a bill on the floor. And they were, basically, dependent on—some of the Members, like John [David] Dingell [Jr.], and the more old-time Members did learn the rules. I think in recent years they didn't learn the rules because they're not allowed to use them.

When I first came, there were a group of Republican Members who were always on the floor. They were always asking questions. People like H. R. [Harold Royce] Gross, and there was a Member from Michigan named Clare [Eugene] Hoffman, and another one from Illinois named Noah [Morgan] Mason—and there were others—were constantly asking questions, asking for votes, and that kind of thing. That group grew over the years, with Dr. [Durward Gorham] Hall from Missouri and John [Milan] Ashbrook from Ohio, John [Harbin] Rousselot, Bob [Robert Edmund] Bauman, when he came. They used the rules. So much was done by unanimous consent in the early days. They just took one objection. If it was legislation that they really wanted, they would, lots of times, schedule under suspension. If it was more controversial, then, obviously, they would have to go to the Rules Committee and bring it to the floor.

PUMP: So you worked on the floor starting from September of 1963 until your retirement.

LASCH: Yes. In the cloakroom until '75, when—each time we got new leadership, they did personnel kind of things. Let's see, Jerry Ford had become President, and John [Jacob] Rhodes [III] was the Leader. When he took over, he had a personnel committee set up. And the chairman of the personnel committee was John [Yetter] McCollister from Nebraska. And he happened to be one of the Members who thought I did a really good job. There were a couple of people that were still there and not really doing much of anything. So a couple of people got let go. And one of them was the Minority Sergeant at Arms. So the job became available. And McCollister told me I would get it. Now there were other people that were interested. Bob Berry was interested in it, at the time, and Paul Hays was also interested in it.[20] But it was sort of a done deal at that stage in the game. And then, from '75 on, I worked on the floor through all the ups and downs thereof.

PUMP: It sounds like even though you were the third person in the cloakroom you still had a lot of duties on the floor with regard to legislation and telling Members what was going on. It seemed to be more than just answering phones.

LASCH: Yes, because when people came in, you didn't have all the electronic equipment these days. Basically, a lot of them came in through the door, and they'd come in the cloakroom and say, "What is this? What are we going to do? How long are we going to be around?" Initially, other than a phone, we didn't have anything in the cloakroom. We didn't even have a bulletin board. That was one of the big things that we were able to get when Charlie Halleck took over. I could get a bulletin board up there, so we could handwrite things and put them up, like the daily program, more of that kind of thing.

Then, over time, we put up votes. In fact, I brought a little historical vote sheet that we had, with the most votes. This was the way we did things in

those days. We just kept writing things out. Oh, I've forgotten how many votes we had here. Well, maybe it isn't there. I thought Joe Bartlett had written out—and maybe it's not there.[21] Anyway, those were the days when we had roll-call votes and before electronic voting. Here it is. "Previous Marathon Voting." Joe Bartlett had compiled them with somebody else. I don't remember how many votes there were, but it was on energy, and I think it may have been [President James Earl] Jimmy Carter's energy bill—a multi-parted bill.

PUMP: So, just to describe for audio purposes, these are yellow legal-pad notes. It looks like they were taped together, and then they were posted on the bulletin board.

LASCH: On the bulletin board, yes.

PUMP: It lists every vote that they were having, so if it was an amendment or—

LASCH: Right. Explained what it was, who sponsored it, and the outcome. If it was ruled out as a point of order, we would put "P.O." over the Member's name. Other times, it was just defeated by voice. And if it was a roll call, we wrote in what the end result of it was.

PUMP: This was before electronic voting.

LASCH: Correct.

PUMP: Could you describe what the voting process was like? Because there were divisions, and there were teller votes, and there was also recorded votes in the form of the reading clerk calling the roll.

LASCH: Right. In the early days, before reform came along, there were no recorded votes when the House sat as Committee of the Whole. So you could ask for a

division vote, or you could ask for a teller vote. A teller vote meant the Members—one Republican Member, one Democratic Member, was appointed. They stood on either side of the center aisle. And the chair would say, "The ayes will pass up the aisle." And so the Members would walk in a single file, up through the aisle, and the two Members would count people. And then the chair would say, "The noes will now pass through the center aisle." And the noes would go up. And then the chair would say, "The tellers will report." And the Democratic teller would say, "Yeas are" whatever. And the Republican would say, "Nays are" whatever. That was the end of it. You couldn't have a recorded vote. A lot of controversial issues were starting. This is probably in the late '60s, early '70s. You could get a vote in the House on final passage. You could get a vote on recommit. And if an amendment passed in the Committee of the Whole, you could, first, ask for a separate vote, then in the House, where everybody's name was recorded as to how they voted.

When they voted as tellers, it was just numbers. So the first change they made, they called a "recorded teller vote." And they produced little red and green cards that a Member had to sign with his name, district, and state. And they had the [House] Cabinet Shop build ballot boxes. And the Republican aisle was the aye-voting aisle. The Democratic side was the no-voting aisle. So when they had a teller [vote], you had to fill out your card, walk up that aisle, hand it to the tally clerk—who had a little machine and he was counting the numbers—put it in the box, and when the vote was over, announced the vote. Then the tally clerks had to take all those little cards in the marvelous handwriting of some Members of Congress and try to figure out who voted how. They were separated by yeas and nays, but still, sometimes it was a little hard to read those votes.

PUMP: And just describing the teller votes again—did the Members file down the center aisle towards the well or from the well towards the back of the chamber?

LASCH: The original teller votes?

PUMP: When they were being counted.

LASCH: They assembled in the well and walked to the back. That's a takeoff of the old British system in the House of Commons. But they have teller rooms over there, where they actually go into a room to be counted: the yea room, the nay room.

PUMP: Did that process ever become confusing for the Members, or did they get habituated to it, so that they knew what to do?

LASCH: No. Well, that was the process. There was no other process. The only thing was if they came in late, because there was no timeframe—like a recorded vote is 15 minutes—a teller vote, you had to be somewhat nearby to get there. So, lots of times, the yeas would go through, and the nays would go through, and some people would say, "One more." And he'd go, "Well, I'm voting aye" or "I'm voting no." But the numbers weren't as large, obviously, at that point, because nobody was recorded. They didn't feel the need to come, like nowadays.

PUMP: How often did the teller votes reveal the lack of quorum?

LASCH: It did, from time to time. About the only thing you could do is to make a point of order that the quorum wasn't present. And then, it was too late, because the vote was over. Now, today, in the process you can make the point of order. And then it's all recorded. And the chairs really don't count

anymore, it's basically order it. You used to have to have, I don't remember what the number was—35 or 50 or something—stand up to order a recorded vote. But now, they just automatically give it. Then they usually postpone it, depending on how many amendments there are to do, which they didn't do in those days.

PUMP: Did the Members who were tellers have any staff support to keep track of it, or did they just do it themselves?

LASCH: On the original process, where it was not recorded?

PUMP: Right.

LASCH: They had the staff of the tally clerk's office when they started the recorded vote initially—before we went to electronic voting, when they put in the whole system up there.

PUMP: When they were doing the recorded teller votes, in that stopgap period between mandating Committee of the Whole recorded votes and electronic voting, Members didn't pass through the center aisle. It was on the Republican angular one?

LASCH: Right.

PUMP: Walking back to the cloakroom. And the same on the Democratic side?

LASCH: Right. When you look at the chamber, you have the center aisle. And then, there are two aisles. The center aisle was for the non-recorded teller vote. And then, the next aisle over, on either side, was where they went up for the recorded vote. It went back to where the Page desk is, where it ended up there toward the cloakroom.

PUMP: Did the floor get chaotic during those votes?

LASCH: During the tellers, you mean?

PUMP: Yes.

LASCH: A little bit. But once they had been there and they knew how it worked, then, as I say, because it wasn't recorded, a lot of times they weren't concerned about it. Plus, you had more Members around, usually, than you have today because you didn't have television. There were some committee meetings in the Capitol Building at that particular time, too.

PUMP: Did the bells go off for the teller votes?

LASCH: Yes.

PUMP: Members did have some time to get to the floor, but just not very much.

LASCH: No. They really had to be pretty nearby if they were coming from their office. Fifteen minutes and they're lollygagging, getting there today. And for a while, in the early days of voting the votes dragged on and on and on. Sometimes they would be 30 minutes long. They tried to put a stop to that by saying the vote was only going to be held for 20 minutes or whatever. But then somebody came in late and demanded to be recorded. There was an uproar a couple of times. People got cut off and were none too happy that they were left off.

PUMP: It sounds like the floor was a busier place of legislative activity during this period.

LASCH: During the early period, right.

PUMP: One of the famous quotes in political science is, "Congress in committee is Congress at work," from Woodrow Wilson. Did a lot of actual legislating happen on the floor, would you say?

LASCH: Yes.

PUMP: As far as amending and that sort of thing?

LASCH: Yes. The regular order was the day, basically. You had the authorizing committees sending bills to the floor, authorizing defense or railroads and highways or banking regulations or whatever. Education. In the early days, education was not as big an issue as it is today because it was not deemed to be a federal-government responsibility. Of course, today, it's a whole different story. So they came to the floor with their bills they got passed. They were amended. It was a fairly open amendment process in those days. Then it was up to the Appropriations Committee and the subcommittees on Appropriations to send their bills to the floor, which they did regularly. Usually, by June, they would have had their markups. They would produce a schedule of when they were going to do these bills. And they, basically, came up under the regular process, where people had an opportunity to offer amendments, to cut funds or whatever. Or add funds or put in some kind of limiting language—if they had been drawn properly.

And that, pretty much, happened through the '60s into the '70s. After the Nixon impeachment and that process, there were a lot of reforms done: the Budget Act, campaign reform, House reform. And that was the beginning of where they started limiting amendments and Members' rights, as far as the minority was concerned. Every two years, at the beginning of a new Congress, there are always rules changes, which further limited minority rights as they went along. It seemed like—between Richard [Walker] Bolling,

who was chairman of the Rules Committee for quite a long time, and then Joe [John Joseph] Moakley and Tip [Thomas Philip] O'Neill [Jr.] every two years, there was more limitations on individual rights of Members to participate. It got so bad, before the takeover, where one year—I can't remember what the issue was, but the Democrats didn't want to allow us a motion to recommit with instructions. We protested and had quorum calls and that kind of stuff. They finally agreed that we could have a motion to recommit with instructions. But the Democrats wrote the motion to recommit. There was quite a bit of turmoil. And, finally, there were enough Democrats who were incensed that we defeated the rule. I think this was under Jim [James Claude] Wright [Jr.], if I recall correctly. That's the way things drifted. When we took over, I had hoped we were going to go back to a more regular process. But we didn't do it because every vote was a crisis. They were always rounding up votes, a little bit like the current-day process.

PUMP: The other thing that I noticed during the vote sheets is that it seemed that there were some duties of the Whip folded into your duties in the cloakroom as well. I was curious, as far as the vote counts were concerned, who was in charge of those?

LASCH: The Whip's people were. They didn't have a big staff. They didn't really have a floor staff in the early days. Les Arends didn't have a floor person. He, basically, did it himself. And it was only when Bob [Robert Henry] Michel took over that they ended up with people like that. Now, he had people in his office who worked on that. Bill Pitts' father was Les Arends' chief of staff. There was a lady named Ruth who worked in his office, and they worked it from their angle there. The floor people weren't really involved in the Whip operation, to a large extent.

Now, over the years, Newt [Newton Leroy Gingrich] and [Chester] Trent [Lott], when they were Whip, would frequently stop and ask me, "What did you hear? What do you know?" That kind of thing. But it was never an official position. The Whip organization, it's grown over the years. You have the Deputy Whip and the Chief Deputy Whip and the deputy whips and the assistant deputy whips. It's a whole amalgam of people now. They all have their individual list of responsible Members. Most of the time it was like a delegation—depending on the size of the delegation, obviously. The one-Member states had their own Whip—where there was only one Member. That's how that was done. So, no, we weren't really involved in the Whip operation.

When you had the electronic voting, it made it a little easier for the Whip people, when the vote was going on, to see what was happening. But it also made it easier for a Member who didn't want to be caught to run in the side door, drop his card in, and run out the door again before anybody knew what was going on. So I helped on the floor when the vote was in process and the Whip people were looking for a Member who hadn't voted or had voted wrong, to try and find that person to see if they could get them to change their vote. And I got bolder, the longer I was there. There were times when I would look at the board and see an odd vote up there, and I would take it upon myself to go inquire as to whether the vote was what the Member wanted to do.

PUMP: What was the relationship between the Leader and the Whip? Because Les Arends, as you mentioned was there from '44 to '75. And that spans Charlie Halleck, Gerald Ford, and then John Rhodes, at the end. Was the whipping process completely separate from the Leaders?

LASCH: No, I think they coordinated it. Arends and Halleck were from the same era, because Halleck had been there for years, too. I think that worked very well. When the Ford revolution came, after the '64 vote, in '65, there was a slate of candidates for the offices in the Republican Conference. The Ford people had their own candidate for Whip, whose name was Peter Frelinghuysen. But Arends survived that. Ford won, but Arends survived it by a pretty good number, actually.

PUMP: Were you in on that conference meeting?

LASCH: I was in the room, but I was not involved. Later on, when I was the floor assistant, I was involved in those meetings, passing out ballots and collecting ballots, and turning them in to the Members who were doing the counting. Later, in helping the Members do the counting. But no, I wasn't involved at that time. I was a telephone assistant still, so I wasn't really involved in that.

PUMP: Were the conference meetings contentious?

LASCH: Sometimes they were. When I was first there, Joe Martin was the [Republican] Leader. He was gone by the end of the year when I was there, in '59. We lost a lot of seats, and Charlie Halleck took over. Halleck was there until we lost a lot of seats in '64 and Ford took over. Ford was the Leader until he left. Rhodes became the Leader—he was an uncontested vote when he became the Leader. Then we got an influx of new Members who thought he was too laidback. I think somebody went and had a little meeting with him and said, "Time for you to think about stepping down."

In 1980 we elected Ronald Reagan President, and we had a hotly contested Leader's race for the Republican Leader between Bob Michel and Guy [Adrian] Vander Jagt, who was the head of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, [and] a very spirited and contested race for Whip

between Trent Lott and [E. G.] "Bud" Shuster. And I think the only race that wasn't really contested was the conference chair at that time. I can't remember. So here and there it was contested.

When we took over [in 1995], there was no contest for Speaker. I don't remember there being a contest for Leader. There was a contest for Whip between [Thomas Dale] DeLay and Bob Walker. The second Congress we were in, I think they challenged [Richard Keith] Armey. Steve Largent and Jennifer [Blackburn] Dunn, if I recall correctly, challenged Armey. But he won pretty easily, actually.

PUMP: Denny [John Dennis] Hastert was on the first ballot on that one, but he wasn't formally running. Armey won on the third ballot, after the '98 elections.

LASCH: I don't remember Hastert being—for Leader?

PUMP: Yes, he was.

LASCH: Really?

PUMP: He was put up by Tom [Thomas W.] Ewing and Mike [Michael Newbold] Castle.

LASCH: Oh.

PUMP: He gave the nominating speech for Armey.

LASCH: Oh.

PUMP: He got [about] 19 votes on the first ballot, and he dropped out.

LASCH: I didn't remember that. Thereafter, Newt wasn't specifically challenged. The handwriting was on the wall because two years before there had been some negative votes, or we persuaded people to vote present rather than for another person—because present votes don't count. So Newt was not in contention, and when that all fell apart, then [Robert Linlithgow] Livingston [Jr.] was the alleged successor. Then that fell apart. It was all in one day. And Hastert became the favorite because he was the Deputy Whip, and the Whip organization decided he was going to be the Speaker. And they went around and lined up all the votes before anybody could decide whether or not they wanted to run for that job. So that's how that came about. And after Armey left, DeLay became Leader, and [Roy] Blunt was the Whip. I can't remember whether that was hotly contested or not. I don't think it was.

END OF PART ONE — BEGINNING OF PART TWO

PUMP: One of the questions I had, especially with relation to your transition from the district office to the cloakroom, was the role of patronage and how that worked? Because, at the time, it was still very much a patronage place on Capitol Hill. Was your position in the Republican Cloakroom based on the patronage of Mr. Widnall still, or how did that work?

LASCH: No. That was a leadership post. And the Democrats had the majority of patronage. There was a lot of it in those days. The police were patronage. The elevator operators were patronage. The doormen were patronage, up and down in the chamber. The folding room was patronage. There was a lot of patronage in those days—and the Republicans had a miniscule amount of that. I think they had half a dozen or a dozen police officers that they were allowed to appoint. And there were no doormen in the chamber. Four Pages, which grew to a dozen over a period of time. The cloakroom positions were considered patronage that were for the party. The Clerk's office—I call the

"people at the rostrum." There, the majority of them were Democratic patronage. But there was a Republican in each of those offices. It was tally clerks, reading clerk, whatever. The Minority Officers, which were four originally, grew to five over the years. But that was about all in the way of patronage that was available.

It was basically controlled by the Leader's office, until the various revolutions, when they decided to appoint a personnel committee, if you will. And it seems like Les Arends was the first personnel committee chairman, under Ford. I think John [Thomas] Myers was chairman for somewhere along the line. John Rousselot was chairman at one point. And [John] McCollister was chairman at one point. I can't remember who was under Michel. When we became the majority, Newt took over most of that, and it was managed out of his office. So, while there was a lot of patronage on the Hill, we didn't have a lot.

A lot of offices had patronage, but they were low-paying jobs. And I think the restaurants and so forth ended up being patronage-type things, too, in the early days, until they became more professional. And they were losing money hand over fist, so they would have these fights about contracting it out. They contracted it out, and because of the weird sessions of the Congress, the contractor would say, "Well, we can't do this." And so they'd get rid of one, and try another. I don't know how the current one is working out, but I think they have control over everything on the House side, as well as the [Capitol] Visitor Center, I think, at this point.

PUMP: Maybe.

LASCH: The Senate, of course, is still over there losing money. You may have seen recent articles about that situation.

PUMP: What type of quality control was there, as far as the appointments go? Because it seems like a lot of these jobs may have been rather intense or sensitive. How did they control who had them?

LASCH: I don't know that there really was any control. When they became available, sometimes they knew somebody who might be interested—or they would send out a letter to tell people that there was a job or two available or whatever. They would depend on the recommending person as far as the viability of the person for the job.

When I came in '58, in the Clerk's Office there were people who had been there for years in those various jobs—even in the minority. I don't really know how they got their jobs. They were already there for years. Like Joe Bartlett—he had been chief Page, then he was reading clerk, and then he was Clerk for the Minority. Ohio was his base. I think he got help from some of the Ohio Members. In fact, I think his wife was the daughter of former Senator [George Harrison] Bender of Ohio, which was really way before my time.

PUMP: So were there a lot of people in positions that shouldn't be—or were many of them like Joe Bartlett, who were able to rise up by virtue of their achievement?

LASCH: Well, I don't remember hardly anybody being fired other than when we went through our convulsions of new leadership. And that was to a large extent because they didn't know who the people were. Some of the people weren't doing anything. But I don't recall anyone, really, other than those category of people. They had a fellow that was the head of the Republican Cloakroom when I was there. His name was Allan Ames, and he lived over in Prince George's County. He was there when we were in session, but you never saw

him when we weren't in session. I don't recall him coming in early. He would arrive at 11:45 when the House met at 12:00 noon. I don't remember him putting a lot of effort into figuring out the program or knowing what the legislation was or any of that kind of stuff. I think that caught up with him, when the new people took over. He was one of those who, eventually, was sent out the door.

PUMP: How did one develop a constituency among the Members or among the other staff to advance in your career, when you got started?

LASCH: I did it by having the answers. I made a point, and I was very fortunate in that I had a sixth sense about things. And lots of times, when I gave answers, I got an argument back from the Members about it—particularly about how long we were going to be there and that kind of thing. There were a bunch of them, who I called "shoppers"—"information shoppers." They'd ask the leadership. They'd ask somebody else. They'd ask somebody else and somebody else. Then they'd come to me. And almost every time they'd say, "Well, the Leader's office didn't say that." Or, "So-and-so didn't say that." Or, "How come you're so far off what everyone else is saying?" And I said, "Well, you have to view the floor. You have to see what the legislation is. You have to look to see how many amendments there are, how many are controversial, who the players are. Because depending on who the players are, some of them talk a lot longer than others. And you have to count in the vote times." Eventually, they'd come back and say, "I don't know how you do it, but you always seem to be the one that's closest on the mark, as much as I don't like your answer." And as far as helping them out in parliamentary procedure, I did.

Something else I did at one point over the years, I put together a list of how to participate in the forms of procedure. So that gave new Members an

opportunity to figure out, "How do I get recognized to do a one minute? How do I get recognized to offer an amendment? How do I ask for a vote? How do I get something in the *Congressional Record*?" That kind of thing.

PUMP: Did you deliver this document to every Member, or was it just on the floor?

LASCH: No, it was sent out by the conference.

PUMP: Okay.

LASCH: But I didn't get credit for it. {laughter}

PUMP: Right. If you do your job well, no one will ever know you were here. {laughter}

LASCH: Right.

PUMP: A lot of those same scripts are still used today.

LASCH: I assume they are.

PUMP: When did you rise up from telephone clerk to—I think the title I saw in the *Congressional Directory* was manager of Republican floor services. Does that sound right?

LASCH: Well, I think that's what they called the cloakroom at one point, or something like that.

PUMP: Okay.

LASCH: Let's see. Tom Winebrenner went out, and Bob Bauman was there at the time. And Bob Bauman left in '68—he was from the Eastern Shore of Maryland—to run for the state senate seat over there, with the hope of running for Congress eventually. The district was represented by Rogers C.

B. [Clark Ballard] Morton at the time. He was appointed to the Cabinet by Nixon or Ford—one of the two. The man who succeeded Rogers Morton ended up being only there a short period of time and committed suicide. Bob ran for that seat in '73, I think—when it became vacant—in a special election. He got elected, but he had been gone from the cloakroom since '68. That's when I was the manager. I was the manager from '68 until '75, when I became the floor assistant. I'm trying to remember whether they had already changed the title when that happened or not. I can't remember. That was one of John Rhodes' little bugaboos—about the title and having to answer for these people that never did anything. He was the one who had them change the titles to the floor assistants for the minority, somewhere in that same timeframe.

PUMP: So, from the minority officers to just the general title of floor assistant?

LASCH: Yes. Well, it sort of devolved. In other words, on Opening Day, the Democrats offered their list of candidates for those jobs. Our Republican Conference offered an alternative list, which was our names. And that was defeated. At one point, they separated the Chaplain out, so he was not in the contested part of it. After the House got organized, and the Republican Leader offered a new resolution, which paid us. Initially, it was Minority Clerk, Doorkeeper, Sergeant at Arms, Postmaster, and something else. But then it became the floor assistants. The pay resolution was floor assistants, at that point.

PUMP: The Manager of the Republican Cloakroom, and, I guess even, at your time, the telephone clerk, too, were under the auspices of the Doorkeeper.

LASCH: That's where we were paid.

PUMP: Was that just for administrative purposes, or what was the relationship between the Republican Cloakroom, which was undoubtedly a partisan place, and someone who was as Democratically partisan as "Fishbait" Miller, at first, before Jim Molloy came onboard?[22]

LASCH: I think that that was just a process of when the whole system was set up. The officers had the pile of money. Those were "their jobs," quote-unquote. I think over a period of time—I'm not sure where it was—certain jobs became the purview of the leadership, even though they were on the Doorkeeper's payroll. I think that's where that came from, at that time. I think it's still that way today. Although I think they have now taken those jobs. Because there is no Doorkeeper's Office, I think they now are under the Leader's payroll, or the Speaker's payroll. I'm not sure which it is.

PUMP: Well, I think it depends on if you're in the minority or the majority.

LASCH: Right.

PUMP: So I think now the Republican Cloakroom is under the auspices of the Speaker.

LASCH: Right.

PUMP: When I was even a Page, though, they were under the auspices of the Clerk, which took them over when the Doorkeeper no longer existed.

LASCH: Right.

PUMP: It seems that those positions, then, were always under the purview of the leadership and just for administrative purposes were under the terms of the Doorkeeper.

LASCH: Well, there was not a lot of money out there in the early days. And in the early days, those officers were basically there for long periods of time. And the Congress wasn't here most of the time, so they were the ones that were in charge while all the Members were elsewhere. Because in the very early days, the Congress only met for a couple of months, and then it was gone. Then it met for a couple of months, and then was gone. It seems like they met three different times a year or something like that.

PUMP: As far as the sessions go, how much of a press was there to finish everything by October? Or to adjourn for a session in the summer, for example?

LASCH: Yes, that was always the goal. Because the fiscal year, supposedly, started October 1st. So the idea was to get all the appropriations done, and then they would be on the leaner schedule. But over the years it was more just a hope that they would do it. There were so many issues out there that became contentious that they just didn't get them done, or they kept postponing them, and then, of course, it was election time, and that was an issue. I think the media situation has exacerbated that significantly, over the years.

Of course, there were various issues. The Vietnam War was going on for all that period of time. It was very contentious. There was a lot going on—demonstrations, the whole thing. There were other issues that came along, with the Nixon impeachment stuff and the [President William Jefferson] Clinton impeachment stuff. And the gasoline prices—you're too young to remember, but there were gasoline shortages two different times, actually. There were economic situations here and there. When Jimmy Carter was President, the interest rates on things went through the roof. Mortgage interest rates were 17 percent or something like that, which, then, Reagan inherited. They obviously came down over a period of time.

So I think it was a hope to get done at that timeframe, but all of these outside issues worked against trying to accomplish that. It's even worse today, with twits and tweeters and blogs and 24-hour cable. That 24-hour cable news is sort of new. It's not so new, but there was no such thing until probably in the '70s sometime. I don't know exactly when CNN and all of those folks started. But the news cycle was vastly different. Today, any issue, anything happens—the shooting in Newtown, Connecticut [in 2012], was 24-hour, seven days a week. Not much new, but they just kept reporting and reporting and interviewing people who didn't know anything about it. Just like they do on all of those things. Now it's all of the national-security stuff and what we're listening to and we're not listening to and that kind of thing.

PUMP: One of the questions I had is that the 1960s and early '70s were viewed as a time of liberal insurgency—or ascendancy. Very large Democratic majorities—a 150-Member margin, after the '64 election.

LASCH: Well, '64 and '74—there was no question about that.

PUMP: I'm curious, from your position on the floor, and what you were privy to, what was the Republican strategy during that time? What were your goals given such a small minority?

LASCH: Well, obviously, when the Democrats [had a] two-thirds majority, there wasn't any hope. You did your thing, made your point, gave your speeches for your point of view, and the vote happened, and that was it. And you went about your business. We've always had a Republican Policy Committee. And then, we had the Republican—what was that called? Ford created it, as an alternative to the Policy Committee. The Planning and Research Committee, I think it was called. He appointed someone named Charlie [Charles Ellsworth] Goodell from New York, who later became a Senator, to that job.

That was a competing interest. Nowadays, we have the competing interests of the Republican Study Committee, which is different from the Republican Conference and the Republican Policy Committee and so forth. And, to some extent, that represents a divergence of opinion within the party. I think the Goodell thing was an attempt to be more inclusive of moderates, because there were more moderates in those days. But that faded out, obviously, after a while.

That was the whole process, as far as the floor was concerned, because initially in the '60s and the '70s the Democrats had sufficient majorities, but they were made up of a divergent group of people. There were western Democrats, southern Democrats, northeast Democrats, midwest Democrats. It was a coalition that they had to hold together. Today, it's like I said earlier: when I first came, there were no Republicans in a lot of those places. There were lots of Republicans in the Northeast, believe it or not, when I first came—in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire were almost all Republican up there. In New York and Pennsylvania, there were large groups of Republicans from those states—Ohio and even Illinois. And now, all of that's changed dramatically, partly through redistricting and partly through population shifts. I remember in the late '60s and early '70s, when we had issues it would be Rust Belt versus Sun Belt. Depending where you're from, it was how you were going to vote on those issues, whether it was jobs in the non-union South or keeping those union jobs up in the Northeast or Midwest or whatever.

PUMP: So when leaders like Ford were running the show on the Republican side, was there anything procedurally that they did on a regular basis? I'm trying to make some sort of comparison between what Republicans did towards the late '80s and early '90s, versus what was going on in the '60s.

LASCH: There was some of it there, but you were, basically, limited to offering your amendments. And the motion to recommit was always—that was our final gasp, if you will, of what we were looking to do. Lots of times it was triggered to see if we could pull in some of the midwestern Democrats or southern Democrats or western Democrats or something like that. And did, from time to time, particularly after Reagan won. Even though Tip O'Neill had a pretty good majority, he couldn't control his Members. A lot of the Democratic Members easily won their seat, but Reagan won their district. They were a little bit more cautious about voting the Democratic line on a lot of those things, particularly ones that Reagan—taxes and that kind of stuff. So it depended on the time. But it was frustrating.

After the fiasco in '64—Goldwater and going down to 145—we rebounded in '66. That brought in a lot of fresh faces, a lot of fresh ideas. And it made it a little bit easier to maneuver because we had more in numbers. That bounced around until '74 came. With that, I think we went down to 140 Members, so we had a Republican President in the White House and a Republican minority of 140 trying to sustain Ford vetoes, which we actually did most of the time with a few Democratic votes that helped—southern Democratic votes, like [Gillespie V.] "Sonny" Montgomery from Mississippi and a few others. Trying to sustain the vetoes was a major effort in those days. And even with Nixon, but that ended when they did the Budget and Impoundment Control Act to a large extent.

PUMP: In your role running the Republican Cloakroom or being out on the floor, were you involved in the crafting of any of those procedural elements?

LASCH: No.

PUMP: So where did they come from? Like the motion to recommit, for example?

LASCH: Basically, it was done by the Leader's Office. And they looked to the Ranking Member of the committee that was managing the bill. And if there wasn't anyone there, if there was somebody who was a dissident on our side who didn't like what we were doing, they would give them the opportunity to offer the motion to recommit. But, it was controlled by the leadership basically. And, occasionally, they made a point.

Years and years ago—this was when Jack Kemp was here, and Barber [Benjamin] Conable [Jr.] was the Ranking Member on the Ways and Means Committee. Then it was all this tax issue, and they were both from New York. I think they may have had neighboring districts up there because Kemp was from the Buffalo area, and I think Conable was from the Rochester area. But anyway, Jack Kemp thought he was going to have the right to offer the motion to recommit on the tax bill, and so did Barber Conable. Eventually, it fell that Conable would be the one to offer it because he was the Ranking Member on the Ways and Means Committee. So there were those kind of folderols from time to time.

Appropriations Committee—we had lot of those, I think, because of Silvio [Ottavio] Conte, who was from Massachusetts and was pretty liberal. Lots of times he didn't want to cooperate with issues on certain things, and sometimes the leadership went around him and supported the motion to recommit even though he was not for it. So—and that gets into a whole different thing about the Appropriations Committee and how that works and the internecine arrangements between the Republicans and the Democrats, even when they were in the minority. How they sort of got their fair share of the pie—that tainted their interests, sometimes, and left some wounds here and there.

PUMP: Some of the major events during this period included the Kennedy assassination, the Cold War, Barry Goldwater's candidacy, the Johnson Presidency, and the enactment of the Civil Rights Act [of 1964]. In that rather gigantic list of major events that happened, do any stories come to mind about what you witnessed on the floor or your take on them?

LASCH: No, not really. The Vietnam War had started under Kennedy and wasn't much talked about in those days until afterward. Johnson became President, and he shipped 500,000 people over there. Of course, the draft was still going on, which was a big issue, as to who the people are that are being drafted. There were divisions of opinion on our side of the aisle, as opposed to the Democratic side of the aisle. There were a lot of colorful Democrats like Bella [Savitzky] Abzug and Allard [Kenneth] Lowenstein—I think that was his name—on the Democratic side. And then, of course, there were a lot of our people.

I think the only thing that sticks at the moment is that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was the so-called basis for what we were doing in Vietnam. When it happened, there wasn't really a lot of information out there. There were some people who were quite skeptical about it. It was in the days when we still had roll-call votes before electronic voting. There was a Member from Tennessee whose name was Bill [William Emerson] Brock [III] at the time. Joe Bartlett was calling the roll and called Brock's name, and this was on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Brock voted "no." I think Joe thought maybe he had made a mistake, so he called his name again. And Brock said, "no."

In the meantime, he was surrounded by Republicans saying, "What are you doing? Wow, you're from Tennessee. How come you're voting that way?" So he went and changed his vote to "aye," but I think he regretted that later on, particularly when things came out about how Johnson had played that into

stuff that wasn't really there. So it's that kind of thing. That's all part of the process. In a lot of those issues, Members are put into what somebody else thinks the group that they should be in. And there were a lot of bitter feelings.

John [Sidney] McCain [III] came, and when he was there—not long after he had gotten out of his cages over there in Vietnam—and it was a little difficult sometimes. He was not afraid to express his opinion. From time to time, some of the liberal Republicans—he would get after them verbally. So I moved a little closer because I was never sure whether he was going to {laughter} get out of hand or not. Usually, after he did it, and he came back, he felt guilty and apologized to the Member that he had upbraided one side and down the other.

PUMP: Did you ever find yourself in the middle of one of those sorts of flare-ups, regardless of who the Member was?

LASCH: Occasionally. When words were taken down, I usually went down to the Clerk's desk to see if I could figure out—because I didn't, necessarily, always hear exactly what they were—and, in my own mind, determined whether or not they were appropriate. Obviously, it's the Parliamentarians who determine that. Some of it was quite clear that they were inappropriate. Then I'd have to talk with the Member about it, and what they should do about it. I had a number of instances with someone named Mr. [Randall (Duke)] Cunningham from California. You know Mr. Cunningham from California?

PUMP: I know a recent one.

LASCH: That's the one. {laughter}

PUMP: Oh, okay.

LASCH: And he got up and accused Jim [James P.] Moran—who has a temper of his own—of lying on the floor. In fact, Jim Moran had lied because he had said one thing and then he had said another. I don't know whether it was Moran who made the point of order, or another Democrat demanded his words be taken down. So I went down, and I read it. Then I went back to him, and I said, "You either have to withdraw your words, or, if you want to let them stand, then you're done speaking for the rest of the day because that's the punishment because you're going to be ruled out of order." Well, he went through the roof. I said, "Mr. Cunningham, I'm on your side. I'm just trying to be helpful." And he went around and around, and fortunately, Duncan [Lee] Hunter was there. He was sort of his mentor. We finally got him to withdraw the words. But there were a number of times when I got yelled at by him and Jim [James Paul David] Bunning and a few others.

Mr. [Lincoln] Diaz-Balart, one day, when he was managing the rule, said something about I think it was Joe Moakley. And he was called to order. So I went down to read—and he shouldn't have said what he said. I went down and talked to him and said, "Well, here's the problem. What you said is not within the frame of parliamentary language." And he said, "Well, it's true." I said, "Well, {laughter} truth is not a defense when it comes to parliamentary language. You need to think about what you want to do. You're managing the bill. You're managing this rule. If the chair declares that you are out of order, you will not be able to proceed and manage this bill. So you need to figure out what you want to do. And if you want to insist on your language, then we need to hurry and get someone else from the Rules Committee to be able to pick up and manage this bill." He wasn't too happy with me. Finally, he said, "Okay, I'll withdraw my words. I don't want to, but I will withdraw my words so we don't have a problem." So he did. But there were others

that—I'd get yelled at, from time to time, for silly little things, too. But I figured it was all part of the job.

PUMP: I've got two follow-up questions. One, how much coordination was there with the Democratic side? Because part of the parliamentary maneuvering with withdrawing the words is that, it has to be accepted—that unanimous-consent agreement—

LASCH: Yes, well, usually the Parliamentarians tried to manage that aspect of it between the warring parties—if I wasn't involved.

PUMP: Okay.

LASCH: The coordination was minimal, for the most part. They told us what they were going to do, and then we were left to react to it accordingly. That's really about it. A lot of times it was sketchy. Obviously, you knew from all of the paperwork that went out from the conference and all the interest groups and the *National Journal* and these various things that are put out about what's going on on the floor. Occasionally, there were blowups, and the leadership wasn't talking, and nobody was talking in the leadership, and that kind of thing. You just managed through it.

Sometimes it was bumpier than other times. The Jim Wright Speakership was pretty bumpy. It wasn't very long, but it was pretty bumpy. And Foley was a different person. He came over lots of times to talk and see what was going on and tried to make peace here and there. He tried to solve the problem at issue. When we took over, the Democrats couldn't believe that their God-given right to be the majority was no longer there. So there were a lot of problems with them having to adjust to being the minority, the problems with that, and the rights that you now do and don't have—particularly with regard to setting the program.

Of course, we were feeling our oats because this was our first opportunity. We had a whole lot of new Members who knew nothing about the Congress or how it works—nor did they care. They were there for their issues because we had a whole different legislative agenda than the Democrats did. And yet we still had some moderate Members who had to be careful how they voted. They wouldn't come back, and we wouldn't have our majority. So every vote was always an effort by the Whip people to figure out who they could let off the hook to cast the vote the way they needed to cast their vote for their district.

So the minimum-wage issue came up shortly after we took over. And Teddy [Edward Moore] Kennedy was pushing it. It hadn't been raised in, I don't know, 10 years—even though they were the majority. Dick Armey—a heavy smoker—had the office across the hall. He took it over from the Whip Office when we took over as the majority. He would come in the cloakroom when we weren't in session lots of times to have a cigarette and just veg out, I guess. Now and then he'd say, "Well, why don't you come and sit next to me, and tell me what you know?"

One day, he came in and he did that. And so, I said, "Well, I'll tell you what you need to know, but you're not going to like." He said, "Well, what's that?" And I said, "You're going to need to be raising the minimum wage." He said, "Oh, no, we're not doing that." {laughter} And I said, "Well, I would venture to say that you will be forced into doing something on the minimum wage because there are enough people on our side from districts that are going to have to do that. Teddy Kennedy is going to push it. I think you need to consider what you want to do, how to handle it, and what you can get for your own benefits in that situation." He said, "Well, I don't believe you." I said, {laughter} "Well, you asked me for my opinion. That's it.

So why don't we let it go at that?" And he usually came with no staff. He had a large staff, and they usually followed him around. But when he came to do his cigarette smoke, they usually didn't. I don't know what happened, but we ended up doing a minimum wage bill that got signed into law further down the road. But it's that kind of stuff. And the longer I was around, the bolder I got.

PUMP: I guess that's the second follow up that I had. A lot of staff—especially new staff—are very reluctant to ever challenge Members in any respect, or even talk to them, to some degree. How did you develop the authority or the ability or the boldness to confront Members, especially when it came to very sensitive issues, like having their words taken down?

LASCH: Well, you have to know what you're talking about. You have to be right when you're talking about it. When I was engaged in those things, I knew that what I was saying was right. Whether they wanted to hear it or not, that's another story. Whether they liked it or not. It helped that I had gray hair. It helped that I had been there for a long time. It helped because I had a practice of not first-naming Members. I had a very old-fashioned view that I was a staff member. They were the Member of Congress. And I called them, "Mr." so-and-so. I never called them by their first name. There were about a dozen of them who had fits that I wouldn't do it. One Member, right before I retired, he said—from Florida, an older Member—he said, "Are you ever going to call me by my first name?" I said, "Well, not while I'm here at work, but if I see you out someplace, I'll be glad to do it." There was another Member from Texas, for a long time. He called me, "Mr. Lasch," and it was always with a little bit of a dart to it because I wouldn't call him by his first name. Lots of times I think that saved me, if you will. Because there was that line. And I always referred to them as Mr. or Mrs. or whatever.

PUMP: But it sounds like, from some of the early cases—like when people would call and ask about the program—you still had that level of authority to—

LASCH: We could only tell them what we knew. And, for the most part, there weren't any secrets. Occasionally, we were going to spring something on the Democrats, and we just never mentioned that then. But, no, over the years, we had a lot of Democrats, as they went by our cloakroom, would stick their head in and ask what was going on. I asked one Member, one of the Democrats one time, and he said, "Well, we're just trying to get another view. Sometimes, we can do our planning based on what you tell us. Sometimes our people don't know some of that information."

So it's just one of those things—I really don't know how to explain it. It's just like I said, a sixth sense that I had about being able to figure these things out. In the middle of the week, people would come in in droves. "When are we getting out?" "Friday." "No, we're getting out Thursday." I said, "No, we're getting out Friday." "Well, when am I going to catch my plane?" "Saturday morning." And they'd go, "Well, no, that's not what the leadership says." I said, "Well, {laughter} I know what they want to do. But I just don't see how we're going to do that." Then they'd come back and say, "Well, you were right. I should have trusted what you told me." And I just said, "Well, I do the best I can with what little I have to work with." And let it go at that.

PUMP: Did anyone on the Leader's staff ever confront you about getting into their domain, or you going against the company line?

LASCH: I tried not to do that as much as possible. But it did happen a couple of times. One time was when the budget battle we were having with Clinton. They were all out at Andrews Air Force Base. I don't know whether you knew about that or remember that. But they were closeted out there, living in

the barracks, trying to figure this out. Bob Michel was the Leader, and they worked out a deal. I didn't really care one way or the other about this. One of the Members was always asking me my opinion. I just assumed it was a personal response. And I said, "Well, I don't know. I just think we got scalped a little bit." And he was fine with the answer. But there was another Member who was standing nearby who heard me say that, who went and reported me to the Leader's Office. So, Mr. Pitts, who was the legislative director for Bob Michel came around to visit with me. He said, "I understand you're badmouthing this decision." I said, "Not exactly." He said, "Well, it was reported that you said maybe it could have been better." And I said, "Well, I did say that to one Member. And he didn't have any trouble with that." He said, "Well, someone else heard you say it, and he had trouble with it. So you need to be careful what you're saying. You need to be on the team, unless you have some better ideas. Then you'd better come around and let us know what they are." I said, "Got it." And it happened one or two other times, too. Not necessarily with him, but I was too frank sometimes.

PUMP: One other thing—could you discuss Gerald Ford's transition in that time period, from your perspective? How he went from Minority Leader to Vice President, and then to the presidency? That chain of events, from your perspective? What you remember about that time?

LASCH: Well, obviously, things were upended after the [Vice President Spiro Theodore] Agnew resignation. And it was the first test of the 25th Amendment, which had been put in place several years before that because of preceding incidents where—like half a dozen of them—there was no Vice President. The order with regard to President, Vice President, and then, after that the Constitution doesn't say who's next in line. There is a statute that outlines who the next people are in line. And the original statute, as I

understand it, provided for the President *pro tem* of the Senate and then the Speaker of the House and then down through the Cabinet. So the President *pro tem* of the Senate, I think, was Richard Russell of Georgia—very old. I'm trying to think who was the Speaker at the time. It was Carl [Bert] Albert, I guess. Neither of which were particularly good people to fall in line.

So there were, as I recall, not that many names out there that Nixon should appoint because they were looking for someone who would be easy to confirm, didn't have any skeletons in their closet, and so forth. Ford was the frontrunner from the beginning, and George H. W. [Herbert Walker] Bush was in that mix, too, because he had been the [Republican] National Chairman and he had been the CIA director. But there was some concern [Bush was] too close to Nixon. Anyway, they decided on Ford, which was a surprise to a lot of people, even though there weren't a lot of names out there. And then, of course, what it did was, created the term—well, he's nominated for Vice President, and he's still the Republican Leader. Who is going to succeed him? So there was this stuff going on behind the scenes. It took from the time they nominated him, which was May or June—I don't remember exactly when it was—until he was confirmed in December.

So he was Leader, but he was busy doing stuff that he had to do—appearing before committees and being investigated, and all of that kind of stuff. He was the Leader, but he wasn't the Leader. So it was running on its own feet at that point. The Democrats were dragging their feet because it's the first time the 25th Amendment had been used. Some of them didn't want to vote for a Republican. Others didn't want to vote for a Republican, but Nixon had carried their districts because, as you recall, he won the second term even with the cloud hanging over his head. I think [George Stanley] McGovern won one state or something like that. So the Democrats were dragging their

feet. And some of our people were getting antsy thinking that they were dragging their feet. So I said, "Well, you need to get organized. You need to do a bunch of one-minutes, and you need to do special orders. You need to go out there and talk to the press and pump this up. We don't need an empty seat sitting there. We need to get it filled, and there's only one candidate." So some of them did that.

Finally, it was done. They had the vote, and he was overwhelmingly confirmed. I don't know what the vote was. There were some negative votes. Of course, he was there for that brief period of time. [He] became the President in August of '74. Then he had to nominate a Vice President. We ended up with a President and Vice President, neither of whom were elected to the job. There was, obviously, a little turbulence about that. Then he decided he would give the pardon to Nixon and move on. Initially, he had said he wouldn't run for re-election, and then he changed his mind shortly after he said that. He said he was running. It was a lot of ups and downs there.

Once he was gone from our "operation," quote-unquote, Rhodes had taken over. Obviously, they were doing what they could to bolster him. But there were a whole lot of issues. The economy wasn't so good, and they came up with this WIN proposition—Whip Inflation Now—which didn't go over so well. The campaign wasn't so good. And the pardon thing was a big thing. In fact, I believe he came to testify as the first sitting President before the Judiciary Committee, or something like that, about how he came to that decision.

PUMP: I think [Abraham] Lincoln did it, as well, once. He was the first President since Lincoln.

LASCH: Oh, is that right?

PUMP: Yes, I believe that's right.

LASCH: There was a lot of concern on our side of the aisle because of the impeachment process with Nixon. We had a number of Republicans who supported impeachment—six or seven. It was pretty bitter. A lot of the people on our side were bitter that these Republicans were supporting impeachment. Nasty times there, at that timeframe.

PUMP: Was there discussion, at least on the Republican side, that Ford would become President? That had to have been a major consideration.

LASCH: I think it was in the back of people's mind. But it was one of those things where, do we really want to go there? Until the smoking gun came with the tapes that were caused to be released—and there it was. That's when it really became clear that he was actually going to end up being President. I'm not sure that, initially, the Republicans thought he would be anything more than Vice President.

PUMP: Did you witness any of the behind-the-scenes discussions that went on, or conversations among other Members, from your vantage point in the cloakroom?

LASCH: No. I think most of those discussions were held in individual offices or in the conference or someplace like that. Members talked to me about those things, but more just to pass the time.

PUMP: You had mentioned in our previous interview that Ford could have a difficult personality. I was curious if that was a consideration by the Members?

LASCH: I don't think so because it seemed to me that he could be temperamental. He could get angry. But I think his anger with the Members was at a lower level than when he was mad at the staff. When he was Leader, he was always out on the campaign trail and coordinating with the campaign committee and all of that kind of stuff.

PUMP: Would you say there was a divergence between his reputation among the staff and his reputation among the Members?

LASCH: Yes. Well, I think that's true for most of them.

PUMP: Well, is there any other lasting memory that you have from your time in managing the Republican Cloakroom, or from your early experience as a House staffer?

LASCH: Not particularly. It runs together, as these various events took place. There's a lot that happened in that timeframe, between the Kennedy assassination and the civil rights stuff and the Vietnam War and the other aspects of communication and all of that kind of stuff. So not particularly. Some of them were very uncomfortable. The Vietnam War was very uncomfortable. From my perspective, I couldn't figure out whether we knew what we were doing or not at that particular stage of the game. Most of the people on our side thought we were doing the right thing. And it's similar to the situations that we have now, with Afghanistan and Iraq and now Syria. I don't know. It was all very interesting. And I probably should have kept notes. I did at one point, but when there was the big controversy where your notes were not your own, I decided I didn't think I wanted to keep notes anymore. I was never interested in writing a book. Everyone said, "Oh, you should write a book. There's so much you could put in there." I said, "Well, who would be

interested?" And the things that they'd be interested in, I couldn't put in the book anyway, because it was [confidential].

PUMP: Well, people like "Fishbait" Miller wrote a book that made a lot of people very upset. Did that influence that at all, as well?

LASCH: Well, no, he wasn't alone. A lot of people have done that.

PUMP: Yes.

LASCH: And it's usually to try to rescue their reputation. In the long run, I don't think they ever accomplish that in reality. So that was no influence there. I just felt that I wasn't interested in doing a kiss-and-tell book, if you will. The subject matter of the House Rules and processes and so forth just put you to sleep in an instant. I left that to other people. If you want to read about that stuff, you should interview Don Wolfensberger, who was a long time with the Rules Committee and John Anderson, and was up to his eyebrows in the rules and that kind of stuff.[23]

PUMP: Since we started off talking about it, I figure we might as well end talking about it: the voting procedures when electronic voting came online. It seemed to change the dynamic in the House considerably. One of the justifications for electronic voting was that it would make votes obviously more transparent—but also take a shorter period of time and reduce the transaction costs associated with them. I was curious, from your perspective, what the change to electronic voting meant and how it worked in practice.

LASCH: Well, it put people on record on a lot of issues where they could escape voting on prior to that because there was not a recorded vote in the Committee of the Whole. So it meant that they had to step up to the plate a little sooner than waiting until final passage of the bill. And it's about the

time all of that single-issue groups started developing. There were always some of them out there, like the NRA and so forth. But all of the other ones came along. About the same time, we had gotten into television, within a year or two, or maybe at the exact same time. So they could watch in their office. And the whole thing was the accountability to their constituents—that people knew how they were going to vote. Before, they didn't have it recorded in the committee. They could vote one way in the Committee of the Whole, and then, only if they were forced to cast a public vote, then they have to cast it possibly a different way. So it didn't really save any time.

Roll calls took, usually, about 30 minutes because they called the roll twice, and then they waited for the stragglers to run in the door. The same thing happened with the recorded votes. People would be in their offices or wherever. And they'd say, "Well, I know I've got at least 20 minutes to get there." That ended up dragging on to the last minute, and they didn't want to deny anyone the right to vote. They tried, at one point, to limit them to 20 minutes. It worked for a brief period of time because I think they rang a second set of bells to warn them about the timeframe or something like that. But it's just not in a Member's system to be attached to a timeframe. There's always some reason that they have to make a phone call, or they have to stop and talk to somebody or a constituent or whatever. So I don't think it really, in the long run, saved much time.

PUMP: Do you think it started moving the locus of legislative activity off of the floor, to some degree, since Members didn't necessarily have to be there for quick teller votes or something along those lines?

LASCH: Well, not so much that. It was, really, the TV stuff that did that because they sprung up all over the place. In the cloakroom, originally, we didn't even have anything. Then they finally agreed to put a set in there. Lots of times,

they would sit in the cloakroom and watch the TV rather than go out on the floor. So, no, I think it was the TV that really was the one that bollixed the whole business, as far as Members' attendance and being on the floor to debate.

Then, as the rules changed, they were being frozen out from participating, and just expected to vote. So I don't think so. I wonder whether televising was a good thing. But it was an inevitable situation because of the way things were going. It's like the debate whether or not the Supreme Court should be televised. And I just saw in the paper, somebody has introduced a bill in the House or Senate to provide that it should be televised, which really isn't their business. I'd be interested to see if they pass it, and the Supreme Court gets to determine whether or not it is, but I don't think there's enough interest to force it.

PUMP: In the cloakroom itself, you went from just telephones, from your time as a Page, to eventually having a bulletin board. Were there any other technological shifts over the time that you were there?

LASCH: Oh, eventually, they put in what we called "the Whip phone." We made the calls, even though it was the Whip's phone, to give people information where it went out to all the Republicans, and the Democrats have a similar one. The call-in recordings came later, where you could call the number and it would tell you what was going on or what the vote was on, or the second line, which was the program of the day or something like that. So that came along, and computers and the electronic voting. It was just all, sort of, an advance when the TV came. And all the other instruments that are out there these days. I think they all affect everything, unfortunately, as you go along, and not, necessarily, for the better.

PUMP: But during your time as manager, did the electronic—or, the program line—

LASCH: The program line, that came I think it must have been around '68. And the Whip call was before that, by a year or two, I think. We also got what they called a "call director," which had all the phone numbers of all the booths on it. Before, we all got up, and you had to answer each phone individually before they developed the call director. So instrumental things, but it didn't affect, much, the way we did things, other than when we got the call director, we usually tried to have a person answering the calls on the call directory and writing a slip out and giving it to the Pages. Unless it was during something where there were a lot of phone calls. Then everybody had to pick up their phone.

PUMP: You had to race around quite a bit in that little space, so that you could get to every booth.

LASCH: Yes. And when there was a lot going on, it was crowded. You had to squirm through the Members that were hanging around to see what was going on or waiting for a phone call. That, I don't think happens much anymore because of all of the other instant communications that are out there.

PUMP: Did you have a say in who you worked with, given the patronage system and the leadership role of the cloakroom? Like when vacancies opened up in the assistant manager position or something along those lines?

LASCH: There weren't that many changes, frankly, in the timeframe. And it was basically decided by the personnel committee because I wasn't in there anymore. So Jay [Pierson]—when they had a floor assistant thing come open, he ended up getting that.[24] He campaigned for that. That all changed at one point, anyway. But, initially, those positions in the Republican Conference, you sort of ran a campaign for yourself, and you had to have a Member

nominate you, and somebody give a secondary speech. That's how people got elected in the conference, as far as the minority employees were concerned.

That all changed after Ford became Leader. Tom Winebrenner was running for Minority Postmaster, I believe. He had been around a long time. He knew all the Members. They all knew him. So he had, pretty much, lined up all the votes. Well, when Ford took over and they were doing personnel stuff, he decided he had a candidate he wanted to put in that slot. His name was Phil Brennan, but nobody knew who he was. And so they had the conference, and Tommy was nominated and seconded. And Ford nominated Brennan, and then they had a vote by ballot. Tommy won by a huge majority. Ford was not very pleased with that. They then changed the system in the conference so that the Leader put forward the nominations of who he wanted in those positions. And then there was a vote.

— RONALD W. LASCH —

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW THREE

PUMP: This is Barry Pump in the Office of the House Historian, interviewing Ronald W. Lasch, former Minority Postmaster and floor assistant to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. The interview is taking place in Cannon [House Office Building] Room 247. The date is September 6, 2013, and this is the third interview with Mr. Lasch.

So where I wanted to start this session is your election to Postmaster. The first question I had leading up to that was: are you a part of any staff organizations? Like maybe the—I had just recently heard about the Bull Elephant Club, or something along those lines.

LASCH: Right. That was for AAs [administrative assistants] and legislative assistants in the offices. It was around a long time, but I was never a part of it.

PUMP: Okay, or any other of the social clubs?

LASCH: No, because usually they had their meetings at noontime. That was not convenient for me because that's when the House was meeting, and so I never belonged to those. I think Hyde Murray—have you heard that name?[25]

PUMP: No.

LASCH: He was on the Hill for many years, and he was the Minority Clerk at one point, but he had been the Republican minority clerk at the House Agriculture Committee for many, many years. He was active in that, as were some of the other people in the manual that I gave you the last time for the committee staff to figure out what they should do on the floor and how to do

it. A number of those people were involved in that, but it just was never convenient for me.

PUMP: Then how did you go about gaining a constituency among Members and staff to make the run for Postmaster?

LASCH: Well, basically, I was there doing my job and providing the information in the cloakroom because I was the manager of the cloakroom from '68 to '75. That was before we had much in the way of that information technology that's out there today, so when people came on the floor, the first thing they did was come in the cloakroom and ask what was going on. What are we voting on? How long are we going to be here? When are we going home? Can I go to the gym for an hour? Can I run downtown to a meeting for the hour? I'm going to a bill signing at the White House—can I do that? So I'd have to give them my best judgment. So they knew what I could do. And you didn't have to really campaign in those days, because they had changed the rules.

PUMP: It was after Gerald Ford became Minority Leader that they changed the rules. Could you describe those rule changes a little bit more?

LASCH: It was relatively minor. In the past, in those so-called minority officers' jobs, they were elected by the Republican Conference. In the old days, the people who were in those jobs, they were nominated by Members within the conference, and there was a seconding speech, and then there was a vote. When Ford became Leader, he had the personnel committee interview all of the minority staff, and took them a while before he decided he wanted to put—Phil Brennan was the name that I gave you before—into the minority—was at the time Minority Postmaster's job. But he, I guess, wasn't aware or thought it didn't matter, but Tom Winebrenner had been there for

quite a long time, and all the Members knew him, and he—same thing I was doing: he was giving them information, only he was out on the floor. And so they all knew him, and he basically had kind of campaigned—I don't know for exactly how long. It was a subtle campaign. It's not exactly you wear a button, like "Winebrenner for Postmaster." You just let people know that you're interested in the vacancy and ask for their vote in the conference when the time came.

So they went ahead with the nominations. Tom was nominated by somebody from Indiana. I don't remember who it was, maybe [Edwin] Ross Adair. Phil Brennan was nominated—I don't know whether it was by Ford or whether he had someone do it. Then they had the vote, and Tom Winebrenner won hands down. So it was a little bit awkward that you have a new Leader who wants somebody in there, and he doesn't get him in there. So after that they changed the conference rules, so that the Leader would nominate the people for those positions, and then there would be a vote. And if any one of them was defeated, then they could go ahead with, I guess, nominations from the floor.

PUMP: So after the 1970—well, I guess John Rhodes became Leader after Ford—

LASCH: Uncontested.

PUMP: Uncontested. And then there was the election in '74, I guess, that was the Watergate election, and—

LASCH: It was the pardon election, if you'll pardon my pun. {laughter}

PUMP: So I noticed in some background research and in just looking at the resolution that you showed that you were elected to the post. I guess the resolution came about later in '75, in April and May, as opposed to opening

day. I was curious if your election was any different when it came time for your election?

LASCH: In the conference, you mean?

PUMP: Yes.

LASCH: It was only different in that there was no opposition. My name was presented, and they had the vote, and it was over and done with.

PUMP: So Mr. Rhodes put your name forward?

LASCH: I think so. I don't remember exactly. I'm pretty sure that's how it worked, unless he turned it over to the conference chairman and said that the Leader's nomination for this position was. . .

PUMP: But it wasn't done on the first day of the Congress.

LASCH: No. The first day was in January of '75, and what happened is when Rhodes took over, he had a personnel committee, and they interviewed all the employees, and they let one of the people go that was in one of those jobs. He was actually the Minority Sergeant at Arms at the time. That's what created the vacancy because Tommy Winebrenner had been the Minority Postmaster before that. So they did that. I replaced the guy that they let go, and then in the following Congress on Opening Day they went through the usual routine where when it was time to elect the officers, the Democrats get up and offer a resolution, electing the Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Doorkeeper, Postmaster, and Chaplain. This was all done through the conferences of either side. And then the Republican Conference chairman gets up and asks for a division of the resolution, leaving the Chaplain off so that it's not considered a contested role, and then offers a substitute, which contains our

names for those jobs. So the first time I was nominated would've been '76 January '77. But as you can see by that resolution, Rhodes had already changed the name of the jobs to floor assistant to the minority, or minority floor assistant, whatever it said.[26]

PUMP: And that was because he wanted to, I think you mentioned earlier, change the nature of those positions?

LASCH: Well, there always was the odd inquiry from some reporter nosing around about who are these Minority Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Doorkeeper, and Postmaster. What do they do? And frankly, before Tommy Winebrenner, the people in most of those jobs, other than Harry Brookshire, didn't do anything, really. They were around but didn't do much of anything. I think it was probably Rhodes' staff, as well, got tired of answering those questions and trying to explain, "Well, they work on the floor," whatever. So they changed the names, and it stopped the inquiries about all that kind of stuff.

PUMP: What duties changed when you went from the cloakroom to the floor?

LASCH: Well, it was essentially the same as providing the Members with information. I just didn't have the assistant manager and telephone clerk and Pages. I worked with them, kept them informed. It was sort of a team between Tommy and myself and the cloakroom, trying to be sure that we were all giving the same story, rather than everyone trying to guess what the answer was, which most of the time was—what we gave was a guess, because nothing was ever precise.

PUMP: So as far as your day-to-day goes, would you say that there was much of a shift once you went out onto the floor?

LASCH: No. I just didn't have to come in first thing in the morning and do the stuff in the cloakroom, but I still came in and gathered my materials that were out there and available: the *CQ*, and the Republican Conference always put out a bunch of stuff, and the Democrats put out a bunch of stuff. And then the legislation and the reports—go through those and look for trouble spots and try to figure out what the situation was because most of the stuff was done under a more open rule than we do these days, so Members could come in and offer amendments. It's not like it is today, where the Rules Committee figures out a few rules and selects a few amendments that are going to be offered, and the rest are just out of luck.

PUMP: You mentioned trouble spots in legislation. I was wondering if you might be able to provide an example of that.

LASCH: Well, particularly with appropriations, depending on the appropriation bill, there were issues. And whether it was projects they didn't like, or projects they thought were boondoggles, or whether it was issues like foreign aid, or funding for certain agencies, or someone was mad at the EPA because the administrator had done something to the coal industry, so they might want to get up and offer an amendment and say that the funds for the Office of the EPA Administrator would be withheld until such—you know, whatever they were trying to do. There were the usual subjects in the early days—school busing was a big issue, and abortion, and then the Vietnam War and funding for that. There was always something. Obviously, sometimes it was a little easier than others, so it just kind of depended what was out there.

As the news cycle progressed from back in the early days, when you had ABC, NBC, and CBS—and then we ended up allowing the House sessions to be televised, so you had C-SPAN. After that came CNN, FOX, MSNBC, and the 24-hour-a-day news cycle. Now we've progressed to all the Twitters

and the bloggers and that whole atmosphere out there, so it stirs up a lot more stuff than was out there originally. And as I said before, before they allowed recorded votes in the Committee of the Whole, [it was difficult to find] out how a Member may or may not have voted on some of those issues, unless they called the office, and they admitted to how they voted.

PUMP: Did Members tell you to be on the lookout for some things, or did the leadership tell you to be on the lookout for some things that were coming up in bills?

LASCH: No. If Tommy and I—where we sat in the back, we had a full view of the floor, so you could see people coming and going and other things going on. If we had an inkling something was going on, we would call the Leader's Office and say such-and-such. When I started, there was something going on relating to the Rules Committee on the floor. I think it was before television, actually. The ranking Republican on the committee—H. Allen Smith from California—had been there quite a long time. So I called up his office, and sometimes when you call an office and they don't know who you are, you kind of get the rigmarole. I called his office and tried to explain that he needed to come to the floor because there were some issues with the rules going on and finally got through to the lady who understood what I was talking about. He came over and came back afterward and said, "Well, thank you. I wouldn't have known about that unless you had called, and I hope you will keep that in mind for future considerations." And he gave me the names, who I should talk to in the office when I called, so I didn't have to go through the rigmarole on it. When he retired, he took Tommy Winebrenner and I to lunch to say, "Thanks for your help while I was there."

PUMP: In the minority, you have limited options. It's more responding to events. I was wondering how much pre-warning you may have for when something

like the Smith episode? How much time would you have when bills were reported?

LASCH: Not really much of anything. If there was something going on, it was kind of up to the committee counsel or the minority counsel to call and say, "We have this problem, so you need to be on the lookout." And if someone wants unanimous consent, either for the committee to sit or a late filing for a report or something like that, we need some help. So the leadership—it must've been under Ford—they set up a revolving schedule for freshman Members in particular to man the leadership desk when things were on the quiet side. They were assigned a day of the week or a week that they needed to come to the floor and kind of be the watchdog to reserve the right to object, or to object if that was necessary, to see whether or not it was clear through the process. So we depended on that aspect of it from the Leader's Office because usually the Democrats called the Leader's Office and said, "We're going to do this, and this has been cleared by so-and-so." Then it was up to us to find out from our side whether it was A-okay.

PUMP: How often did Democrats try to sneak something by? Was it a regular occurrence? Did you feel like it happened too much?

LASCH: No, not really. Only because it caused problems when they did that kind of stuff, and then it would blow up in their face in the long run. There are only one or two incidents, and they all related to Members' pay to a large extent. The Members used to have a $3,000 tax deduction, just flat for expenses or something like that. They tried to change that when no one was looking.

The other one was when they—well, they actually temporarily did do it, until it got undone—to raise the Member salaries. I could see it coming. Right after the hour of meeting, and had the prayer, and approved the *Journal*,

John [Patrick] Murtha [Jr.] walked in on the Democratic side, not to the microphone but just to the side of the Speaker's rostrum, and you could hear him asking unanimous consent, but you couldn't hear exactly what he was saying. Dan [James Danforth] Quayle was the designated Leader's desk person at the time, and—no, that's not right. It wasn't Dan Quayle—it was his successor [Daniel Ray Coats]. But anyway, I headed down the aisle to ask him to reserve the right to object so he could hear what the heck was going on. In the meantime, Dick [Richard Bruce] Cheney was coming across the floor and sort of pushed me aside. He said, "No, it's okay, this is cleared." I said, "Well, no one's told me about it." He said, "I'm telling you it's cleared." And I said, "Okay." So the chair just said, "Without objection, so ordered."

Well, the word got around pretty quickly that they just had a little thing on the floor, and Millicent [Hammond] Fenwick—I don't know if you've heard that name before—I think she may have been there, or she came in right after that and heard about it, and she was fit to be tied. So she was looking for some way to get a vote on it. I can't remember exactly how they did it. I think it maybe was on the motion to adjourn. They tried to get people to vote no, so that they could say that they want to review the process. The next day they tried to have the *Journal* read, and then they tried to offer an amendment to the *Journal* to strike it out, which probably, if they had succeeded, wouldn't have actually done anything because it was only the language in the *Journal*, as opposed to the language which raised the salaries. It finally did get repealed because there was so much uproar about it, so the Democrats came to the floor and did it.

It's kind of like the flag thing. I think I brought something I wanted to give to you. Not the flag, but the Pledge of Allegiance. We never said the Pledge of Allegiance. We just had the prayer, and then we went on about that. And

John Rowland of Connecticut wanted to do it, so I helped him do it [in 1988]. And the Democrats didn't quite get the process, and {laughter} unfortunately for them, it blew up in their face. They had to figure out and maneuver how to go back and undo it—because it put their own Members on the record on the wrong side of saying the Pledge of Allegiance. For some they didn't care, and then others were none too happy about it, I can tell you that. I think this is the one—an article from the *New York Times* about that little incident. And there was the incident with a Member who put a bag over his head, who I talked to before he did it and said he shouldn't do it, so he gave a speech and then he put it on.[27] So he got what he wanted to say out there before they ruled him out of order.

PUMP: Well, I'd like to get back to this in a moment, but I was just curious: in the '70s, how would you describe John Rhodes' leadership style?

LASCH: Well, you have to understand that we were at a vast disadvantage. I think we had 140 Members after the '74 election, so that lasted, obviously, for two years. In '76 I'm sure we gained some seats, but I don't remember exactly how many. It was sort of laid back. He was from Arizona. He'd been around a long time. He'd been on the Appropriations Committee as an appropriator for quite some time. But he had worked his way up through the leadership. He was the chairman of the [Republican] Policy Committee for a while, and Les Arends wasn't about to be selected as Leader. But it was kind of laid back. I mean, there just wasn't as much going on. There weren't as many issues. A lot of the single-issue type things hadn't really started at that particular time. They were just beginning to get going, and that was part of the problem for him after a period of time when we had those. He came in '74, after Ford left, and then '75 and '76, and then we got more Members, and the newer Members were looking for a more vigorous style because of President Carter.

He had a lot of big ideas on the environment and energy and that kind of thing. But the Democrats were kind of split. There was an ongoing feud, it seemed like, between Tip O'Neill and Carter and then some of O'Neill's staff and the Carter staff. I can't think of the name of the guy that Tip O'Neill mangled his name on purpose. It wasn't the OMB director, it was a staff guy at the White House. The name escapes me at the moment.

PUMP: It wasn't Jody Powell?[28]

LASCH: No. It was a name that you could make sort of a slur out of, and I just can't remember who it was right now. My old age has taken over, I'm sorry to say. But anyway, they had this massive energy bill that they produced, and we had it on the floor for days, in bits and pieces. It didn't do very well because the Democrats were divided, and I think we scored a few victories here and there. The economy was in bad shape, and I think the interest rates under Jimmy Carter were, like, 17 percent, and we had gasoline shortage under him. We had one under Ford, too, where you had to line up to get your gasoline. And the Iran hostage situation came in under that, and the failed attempt to rescue them. That became a major issue, as far as the next election was concerned. Reagan was elected, and we got a bunch more Members.

So before that election, I think there was a group of our Members who went to Rhodes and said, "You should think about retiring or stepping down, and if you don't then we'll challenge you." That's what brought about the open races for the Leader and the Whip, and I can't remember the conference chair or not. Kemp ended up being the conference chair, and Lott, the Whip, and Bob Michel won the Leader over Vander Jagt, and Lott over Schuster. Maybe Kemp wasn't contested—I don't remember anymore at this point.

PUMP: You mentioned in passing that Les Arends wasn't going to be Minority Leader. I was curious why that was so obvious.

LASCH: Well, he had been there forever. He had been the Whip since, like, '43 or something like that. He was older, obviously. When Ford took over as Leader, he tried to dump him in that election, but he didn't succeed. So they were obviously looking for somebody younger, and Rhodes was younger than Arends. I think he finally retired in '74.[29]

PUMP: So despite the fact that there had been victories against President Carter's agenda, and even when President Ford was in office a couple of his vetoes were able to be sustained, the Watergate Congress that emerged with this two-to-one majority over the Republicans didn't seem to accomplish—they seemed to be very frustrated, according to some of the reports that I read. They were unhappy with what they were able to achieve. I was curious where the discontent with Rhodes may have arisen, given a pretty good track record for the minority.

LASCH: I'm not sure. I think it was just a matter of the times and a bunch of new Members. I think that really is what the problem was. There weren't probably enough victories to satisfy the new crowd that was coming in. With Reagan coming in after the '80 election, they definitely were looking for—that's when we won the Senate, and we had gotten—I don't think we got over 200. We got up to 197 or something like that. So we had a lot more heft. At that time there were enough conservative Democrats who were from districts where they got re-elected, but Reagan actually won their districts, so they had a tendency to vote for a lot of the Reagan stuff early on. I'm not sure.

The presidential wing of the party and the congressional wing of the party don't always see eye-to-eye, and some of that was there in the Reagan years. Not quite as much, but certainly was with George H. W. Bush, and to some extent with George W. Bush. When I was retiring, a lot of Members said, "Oh, why would you want to retire now? George Bush is going to get elected President, and finally we'll have a majority, vis-à-vis the Congress, as well as the Presidency." {laughter} And I said, "Well, I don't want to be the skunk at the garden party, or throwing cold water on your hopes, but it's not going to be as easy as you think it is to have a President of your own party and have to be the ones in the Congress that have to then follow the process, because sometimes the Republicans in the Congress don't see things quite the same way as the Republican President does." And a bunch of them said, "Oh, no, we'll work that, no problem." And you are able to see history—how well that worked. {laughter}

PUMP: So you've mentioned a couple times the new Members that came in the late '70s. I was wondering how you would describe them, as a class or as a new breed?

LASCH: Well, they were younger. They were more active. Some of them were into single issues, and it was part of the progression. When I first came, I think that most of the Members were older Members. Most of them, the Congress was their second career. They had a career before they came to Congress. And as time went by, the whole complex situation of the Congress—you had newer Members, younger Members, some of them who didn't have any accomplishments before they came to Congress. Maybe they were the mayor of someplace or a state senator or state representative or something like that, but they hadn't really worked in the private sector, and were CEO of a company or something like that. They were sort of looked at as career

politicians. More and more, younger people came. Part of it maybe had to do with salaries, where they went up and where they had been originally. I think it was just the news media aspect and that kind of thing. And lots of times the House was a steppingstone for the new Members who came in. They were only there briefly before they ran for the Senate or they ran for governor or something like that. Some of them were successful at doing it, and others weren't.

PUMP: Another big change that happened in the late '70s were a series of rule changes, and one of them was called the gag rule. I was wondering if you might be able to explain that process a little bit more.

LASCH: Well, I'm assuming what they were suggesting is they weren't allowing people to offer amendments, or if they did they would be restricted. In fact, at one point there, they had what they called "queen of the hill" amendment process, wherein at the very end, after all the amendments had been considered, if the Democrats saw what they didn't like, they could undo the amendment by offering a substitute, which if they then could carry would wipe out the amendments that had been already adopted.[30] That went on for a number of years, went on to the latter part of the Democratic rule. I think that helped cause them to lose control because in the long run their own Members were somewhat affected by it—but it was more aimed at the minority.

PUMP: Did you feel that there was a sense of uncertainty on the floor about the outcome of bills that led to those devices?

LASCH: Well, as the complexion of the Congress changed vis-à-vis the Republicans versus the Democrats—for years the Democrats had operated on the so-called [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt—as in FDR—coalition, which was

western Democrats, southern Democrats, northeastern city-type Democrats. That changed after the '64 election when Goldwater—even though we got run over—they did elect some Republicans down South, in Alabama and, I think, in Mississippi or Georgia—one of those places down there. So those conservative Democrats, or Western Democrats became fewer and fewer within the old FDR majority because they elected Republicans to replace those conservative Democrats. That rattled the cage and left each party drifting further and further apart. So, as it is today, the Democrats have very few conservative Democrats, and the Republicans have a few moderate or liberal Republicans left. You sort of cleansed the parties, if you will, which I don't think was particularly beneficial—but a sign of the times.

PUMP: What about the role of leadership generally in the House at this time? Was there more of an effort to centralize control within the Leader offices?

LASCH: In the minority?

PUMP: Or in the majority, from your vantage point.

LASCH: Well, it depended on who the Speaker was, to a large extent, as far as the majority was concerned, and whether or not it was left to the committee chairmen to do their job or whether there was a more hands-on approach. Tip O'Neill, I think, pretty much was—let the committees do their thing, and then we'll work from there. Then Jim Wright took over. He was more in charge, I think. He wanted a bigger say in what the committees were doing and how they were doing it. Then Foley was kind of in between at that particular stage of the game.

PUMP: The other major event that happened in 1979 was television, and you had mentioned a couple of times how that changed the complexion of the floor activity. But Republicans generally were in favor of—

LASCH: Oh, absolutely. We had been pushing for it for a long time. John Anderson was a prominent Republican—a ranking Republican on the Rules Committee and chairman of the Republican Conference at one point. He and other Republicans had pushed for televising because they thought that would give them a better opportunity to get their message out. The Democrats resisted it for quite a long time, and then finally, I guess it was Tip O'Neill when they finally—what year was it?

PUMP: '79.

LASCH: Yes, that was Tip O'Neill, because he was from '77 to '86, I think, when he was Speaker. I guess he had enough pressure on his own side saying, "Well, we think that's the right thing to do." Because at one point there was this big openness thing—you know, let the sun shine in. The sun got a little too bright sometimes, and so they would start cutting back a little bit here and a little bit there too. It was Tip O'Neill who brought in the recorded votes in the Committee of the Whole and the electronic voting. That was all under his process. Carl Albert—I don't think he had anything to do with this.

So all of these things change, and sometimes it's beneficial to the leadership, sometimes it's not. I do think the television did give us some advantage. Although, in my own mind, when they did a lot of special orders on issues that they were interested in, I sometimes wondered who sits at home watching special orders on the TV when somebody's talking about something? Then we had the big blowup when Tip O'Neill directed that the cameras pan the floor when special orders were going on, to show that {laughter} they basically weren't speaking to anyone other than themselves. There was a big to-do about that. Actually, Tip had his {laughter} words taken down by Trent Lott. Joe Moakley was presiding, and I'm sure it killed him, but he had to rule that the Speaker—yes, the Speaker's remarks were

out of order. But then they agreed to do the fixed positions, not roam the floor.

PUMP: Were you on the floor when they started panning?

LASCH: Yes.

PUMP: Did you remember seeing that happen on TV?

LASCH: Well, actually, someone called because sitting on the floor you don't particularly notice. It's hard to see the cameras, whether they're panning or what they're doing. So someone called, and then we made some calls to try to figure out what the deal was. We called the Leader's Office and said, "This is going on. We don't know what the hell's going on"—because they hadn't done it before. They traced it back to Tip. Apparently [he was] annoyed and made the phone call to the people who controlled the cameras and said, "Pan the empty chamber, and show there isn't anybody there." It didn't last for very long at that stage of the game, but all those little events. . .

PUMP: Do you remember who was speaking when he first did it?

LASCH: It was a Republican, obviously, and I don't remember whether it was Bob Walker or—I don't know if Newt was there at that by that time. I don't know. I'm too old. My mind . . . {laughter}

PUMP: Well, I thought it was Bob Walker, so I was just trying to see if that was the name that came to your mind.

LASCH: Oh, you did? Well, it might've been. As I say, I don't remember whether Newt was there. He might've been—he came in '78, I think. Anyway, it was one of that crowd. It was Newt, or it was Bob Walker, or maybe it was John Ashbrook or John Rousselot. I don't remember exactly.

PUMP: That seems to kind of sum up that new crop of Republicans who were coming into the House in the late '70s. Going into the Republican Leadership election of 1980, you had Guy Vander Jagt and Bob Michel seeking the Minority Leader's position. Do you remember which camp went to talk to Rhodes about retiring?

LASCH: My guess it would've probably been Bob Michel's camp.

PUMP: And at some point, he had been closely affiliated with Les Arends, because Billy Pitts' father had worked for Les Arends, and then he had become Bob Michel's right-hand man, and so—

LASCH: That was when Michel was Whip, and Michel succeeded Arends.

PUMP: Right. So you think it was probably Michel's crowd that confronted Rhodes?

LASCH: I would guess. I don't think Bob Michel did personally. I think it's sort of like the Nixon thing. When Sam [Samuel Leeper] Devine and—it may have been John Rhodes, actually, and several other Republicans went to the White House after the smoking gun incident from the Supreme Court, and they went, "Mr. President, we have reached the end of the road at this stage of the game." I think it was the same kind of thing, basically. Unfortunately, I think, they were on the verge of doing that to Bob Michel, if he hadn't retired, too. Of course, I don't think anyone other than Newt really believed we were going to be in the majority anyway. And I don't know, but I'm guessing if he had stayed, and we had been the majority, you would think that they would do him the honor after all the years of electing him—but I think the new group would've been way too rambunctious and throw out the past and start with all the fresh stuff.

PUMP: In 1980 Guy Vander Jagt had given either the keynote address or the nominating speech for President Reagan—

LASCH: Keynote, I think it was. He was a very good speaker, and he was also chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee and had been there for years. So, obviously, if you helped someone get elected, and you're looking for chits as you go down the road—I think that was a large part of it at that point. He was a gifted speaker, but in some respects, he was very lazy as far as the process in the Congress.

PUMP: What do you think turned that election for Michel?

LASCH: I think probably his campaign. Vander Jagt's personality had some—it was an odd personality. I assume that's what it was. Bob Michel had been on Appropriations for years, and he was the Whip—and you can gather up chits as you go along there. I'm sure the personality played somewhat of a role in that, too.

PUMP: Was Bob Michel able to harness the new energy that was coming into the conference?

LASCH: I think briefly. He was really a compromiser, and he had the kind of "get along, go along" personality. He had good relations with the Democratic side, particularly Tip O'Neill and the others. There wasn't the bitterness that exists in the world today. That sort of came about with the [1994 Republican] revolution, unfortunately.

PUMP: I'm curious how he distinguished himself from Rhodes.

LASCH: Oh, he was around more. He was more gregarious. He was more of a listener, more inclusive, I think.

PUMP: So Rhodes represented more of a wing or a faction of the party?

LASCH: No, I think he was a more quiet personality. He wasn't lazy or anything like that. He just was quiet—not a particularly exciting speaker. I don't know, maybe at that particular time he had been there too long, and sometimes when you're around for a long time you get set in your ways about doing things. The new crowd is looking for something else as new and fresh and wanting to be the majority.

PUMP: After the 1980 leadership elections—that change in both the Leader and the Whip, and you also had a new conference chairman in Kemp—how did those changes filter down to how you did your job on the floor?

LASCH: Not really, other than who are the people I was working with in the offices. We brought in a whole new crowd of people in Trent's office. I had known Trent for years because he had been a staff member for a Democrat, Bill [William Meyers] Colmer of Mississippi. So I had known him from that timeframe. Bob Michel had been there for years, and some of the Kemp staff I knew, too. It was just a matter of figuring out who you needed to deal with, and when something was going on, who did you call? Pitts was the obvious person in the Leader's Office. Trent Lott had a number of different people. There was Dave Hoppe and Tommy Anderson, who was his chief of staff in his office but was not in the leadership office, I don't think.

It's just a matter of learning the personalities, what their interests are, what they want to do or don't want to do. I think Trent was ambitious, and he was interested in becoming Leader at some point. I think he got a little frustrated that that point didn't seem to be arriving. I think he didn't actually want to challenge Bob Michel, so the Senate seat opened up, and he decided to run for that. Kemp, of course, he was busy doing his own thing. He was

more on the national stage, interested in the national stage with Kemp–Roth and tax reform. He was a relatively good speaker, but he was out and about a lot.[31]

PUMP: So they didn't ask you to take on any additional duties, or cut back on anything that had previously been going on?

LASCH: No.

PUMP: One of the things that I saw in the staff directories was that you were listed as the key contact person for the Republican personnel committee in the '70s. I was wondering how long did that extend? Was it into the '80s? Or the balance of your career?

LASCH: Yes. Well, it was really more of the Page appointments than anything else because we didn't have that much in the way of personnel. It was the mechanics of getting Page nominations and soliciting them from individual Members and then going through and checking to see that they were what we asked for. After that was done, we compiled a list of the applications by Members who had not previously sponsored a Page. I took that, and after getting burned once or twice, and worked the floor with that master list and talked to the individual Members to see what they knew about their applicants—if they knew they had any, were they really interested, or they were not interested. Sometimes they would send us three or four, even though we asked for only one because they couldn't make up their own mind, and they preferred that we said no rather than them having to say no. So I got a truer list of what we were working with—as far as how we were going to do the appointments. Carol Goodwillie worked for the personnel committee there and did all of that for many years.

After we became the majority, Christy Surprenaut and Rachel Hodges, they kind of did the work of sending out the letter under the Leader's signature and soliciting the applications, collecting the applications, cataloguing the applications, trying to get grades—which we sometimes had a hard time getting. Once I had gone through the process of trying to come up with the master list of those we were going to select—sitting down and seeing if there were any last minute glitches that we weren't aware of—then they made the calls to the offices to let the Member know that their candidate had been selected for the summer or the school year or whatever.

PUMP: How were those decisions made for the most part? Was it just simply a matter of once you had the Member information that was enough?

LASCH: No, it was pretty mechanical. We had so few appointments for all those years until we began the majority that they determined that we would give Members who had not previously sponsored a Page first priority. So that's how we ranked everybody. We went down that list, and when we got through the ones who hadn't appointed, then we started on the next list, which was people who had appointed, but in reverse order, so that you came up and down the list. I just went through and made the decisions.

PUMP: Were you ever confronted with having too many people in the pool that you had to narrow it down?

LASCH: When we were the minority—because we were only appointing 12 in the school year. Then summer would be 24, usually, because they divided it in half. But most of the time, when we were in the minority, we had more than enough applications to fill our needs. Now, once we became the majority, the first year or two or three, we got more than enough applications. I think it was maybe by the fourth year or so that the number of applications shrank,

and I don't know exactly why—whether it was because it was only one year. It was the junior year, which in a lot of schools is an important year because it has to do with your academics and your SATs. People who are engaged in playing sports or other activities at the school, if you either take the whole year or half the year and come here and then go back home, lots of times it's hard to fit in the process because while you were gone, someone else took over the process. So we tried to insist that, as far as the grades were concerned, in meeting the B average.

END OF PART ONE — BEGINNING OF PART TWO

PUMP: Was John Rousselot the chairman of the personnel committee the entire time that you were?

LASCH: For a period of time.

PUMP: I was curious, what were the issues beyond the Page program that you had to confront? What was the role of the personnel committee within the House organization?

LASCH: Well, it was the leadership appointee who the chairman was, and it was really basically the Pages, although when I was looking through stuff, I found this list. A lot of these people were in minority jobs in the various offices, in the Clerk's Office, like the front desk—what I call the front desk down there, the journal clerk and the bill clerk and the tally clerk and whatever. That came under their jurisdiction, but that sort of waned, because people stayed and there were not a lot of openings at that particular time.

PUMP: One of the issues that we had seen in the directories was minority and majority rooms. I was curious what those were and what they did?

LASCH: I assume you're talking—they were the printers.

PUMP: Okay. Yes, it just said majority and minority rooms, and I think they were in the Rayburn Building.

LASCH: In the basement, yes. They left that kind of foggy. They used to be in the basement of the Cannon Building originally. But they were businesses, actually, that were run by an individual, and they were given sanctions by the Republicans for one group and the others for the Democrats. That's where they did a lot of the unofficial printing kind of stuff—campaign and other things. I think we did away with those when we took over, and I think that's when they were gone. But from time to time there was controversy about them. They were private businesses on government property, and they had this kind of carefully controlled clientele. Tom Lankford on there was ours, and I've forgotten the guy that was the Democrat there for years. But they had been there for years and years.[32]

PUMP: So by my count there are 19 or 20 floor employees.

LASCH: No, they were in different—three or four of those are the cloakroom, and then several of them—it's like me and Walter Kennedy, and I don't know who else was on the list.[33]

PUMP: Like Jay [Pierson].

LASCH: And Jay, right. They were the floor assistants to the minority. I don't know; I have to look at those to see. Joelle [Hall] and Tim [Harroun] and Jim Oliver were the cloakroom, Peggy [Sampson] was the chief Page, and Pitts, at this particular time—this is a list from '89—he was one of the floor assistants because that was controlled by the Leader. And Helen [Sewell] was the lady who ran the snack bar, and Eleanor was her assistant, and Barbara Schaeffer—can't remember where she worked. And then Jay. And Eve [Butler-Gee].[34] I guess that's the total number if you want. Some people did

work on the floor, vis-à-vis being part of the Clerk's Office and sitting up there where the tally clerk and the journal clerk and the reading clerk and all that kind of stuff.

PUMP: Was there ever any concern about having Democrat and Republican tally clerks or Democrat and Republican reading clerks? Or did that seem to not come up?

LASCH: No. The idea was, supposedly, that each party should have a coterie of people who can run those particular offices when they took over. Well, {laughter} the only problem was that there weren't any turnovers, except in '49, '50 I guess there was, and then '53, '54. From '54 on, there was never any turnover until '95. So I guess they could've done away with—but I don't think it really ever came up because everybody did their job. While they were partisan appointees, they still had to do the work for all Members and treat all Members the same way. But I suppose it was also intended as somewhat of a check and balance kind of thing so that it wasn't all one-sided. I don't think there was ever any real problem there as things went along. Every once in a while you had some personality problems with individuals not getting along or something like that.

It just was that way, and I think when we took over, they weren't sure what we should do about it. There was this big campaign where they needed to reduce everything by 33 percent. The problem was most of the people making those decisions didn't know anything about the institution because they'd never been in the majority. They didn't know what these people did, what their role was—some of it a very intricate role, like the . . . I can't think of the title. The name of the person in the Clerk's Office—part of that operation that reads the bills before they get sent off for signature.

PUMP: The enrolling clerk?

LASCH: That's the one, yes. None of those offices were really overstaffed. And there were places where some people were overstaffed, particularly on the committee level. But they didn't ask any questions—the people that were doing the work—which was kind of annoying, but that was the way it was. So after we won the elections, some Members came to me and said, "Well, I think you should get elected Clerk, because you've been around a long time and you know what's going on." What they didn't know is before they got to me, both Dick Armey and Newt had come to me and said, "Oh, we hope you're not planning on going anyplace because we need your expertise on the floor because nobody knows the floor like you know the floor, even if you were in the minority." So I said, "Well, it's going to come with some requests." Newt said, "Whatever you want, we'll take care of it." {laughter} Which he did, of course.

One Member from Texas, in particular, was insistent. He said, "You deserve it. You've been around a long time." I said, "Well, here's the problem: Newt and Dick Armey don't want me to leave the floor. I can't do the floor job, and I can't be the Clerk, too. You're putting me in a position of going against them when they control the slot in the first place." He grumbled, and he said, "Well, I don't think that's fair." I said, {laughter} "Sometimes life isn't fair." But there were a bunch of them that thought that. I said, "Listen, as we take over, we have all these people that are insistent upon we reduce the staff by 33 percent. These are not people who know what the situation is, what the jobs are, who does them, whether it's overstaffed or not overstaffed, and I don't want to be the Clerk of the House who is given the mandate to slash the budget by 33 percent when most of it is salaries, and there just aren't that many extra people in that operation." And they said, "Well . . ." {laughter} So

anyway, it all got worked out, and I went about and did my business as the floor assistant.

PUMP: It sounds, though, that if you had a frictionless existence, you may have wanted to be Clerk.

LASCH: If they had not had the mandate of 33 and a half percent, possibly, but I always enjoyed my job on the floor. And being the Clerk is being an administrator of personnel, and it was fraught with dozens of personnel problems. I knew about lots of them from my relationship with Donn Anderson when he was the Clerk. Not talking out of school or anything like that, but that was the majority of the work that he had. Then problems from Members who were calling to say that they thought they should be allowed to do whatever when the rules said you couldn't do it.

PUMP: I was going to wait to ask this question, but I figured since we're kind of on the subject we'll discuss it. Did you or did some of the other minority officers ever feel constrained or limited by the fact that you were in the minority for so long, and some people had their entire careers in the minority? Did you want to take on the roles in a non-minority capacity? Like Clerk?

LASCH: Oh, you mean as the majority?

PUMP: Yes.

LASCH: Well, sure. Everybody hoped that we would end up being the majority, and elections came and went, and sometimes we had high hopes, and other times we knew we were going to end up with 140 Members or whatever. So it was just part of the ups and downs of the process, and, obviously, amount of money that was spent, how much, what the issues were, how much was put in to the campaign, and that kind of thing. The reason we won, I think, the

first time there, in '94—there were some issues out there that the Democrats overstepped their bound and forced through, including gun control. There was this huge crime bill that they pushed through, and that had the gun control stuff in it. That, and a couple other issues, just did them in in some of these districts. Even in Texas where Jack Brooks, who had been there for I can't tell you how many years, had got wiped out by this character named Steve Stockman. And so it was just by accident. Plus Newt had been working very hard over the years, between GOPAC, and raising money for the Campaign Committee, and out campaigning.[35] And, of course, the outside groups that they worked with, besides GOPAC.

PUMP: Would you say that you were, or some of the other minority officers felt frustrated, constantly being in the minority?

LASCH: Minor frustration. It wasn't an antagonistic situation—where we worked, anyway. It's not as if the Democrats came and beat the crap out of us all the time. In fact, Tommy and I both—I think I've told you before—had a lot of Democratic Members who frequently, as they came in the door, because we were the closest to the door, that stopped and asked questions and visited and that kind of thing.

PUMP: One last question about the personnel side of your role. When openings in the Clerk's Office were to arise, how did one get those positions, either in the Finance Office or reading clerk or tally clerk?

LASCH: Well, they were usually people who had been there in other jobs. Paul [Hays] had been one of the other clerks in the office—I'm not sure which one it was at this point. Basically, that's how it was. Occasionally he had somebody from an office maybe that knew about it, but we didn't advertise. They just basically came, or somebody had somebody, had something sitting in their

file and found out about it, so they just sent that person over whether they knew about whatever the job was or not. There was no basic organization thing, but it mainly was an internal movement of people that were there in other jobs moving into these jobs.

PUMP: But did they have to get the sponsorship of a Member?

LASCH: Well, after we had our various revolutions, the personnel committee came into play, and so the personnel committee held interviews. They did that—well, after Halleck took over, we had the personnel committee there, and they interviewed all the minority employees and then made decisions, and Ford's people did the same thing, and Rhodes did the same thing. And I don't remember Bob Michel doing that. I don't know why. And then, of course, when Newt took over, he sort of kept that under his wing at that point.

PUMP: In the 1980s you have a change in the Republican Leadership, a change in the White House. President Reagan gets elected. You also have the continuing shift of the Democratic Party in its composition, as well as an increase in new Members on the Republican side, and they are more activist Members for the most part. I'm curious how that dynamic played out in House operations and the floor, especially from an institutional standpoint?

LASCH: From an institutional point, I think it was changed in that the newer Members didn't want to put a lot of effort into actually learning the rules. They wanted to offer amendments, and they wanted to bring up issues, but they weren't particularly interested in learning the rules. Sometimes they felt the rules got in their way and that things should be different. So there was a little bit of that aspect. But every time you have new people—younger

people, people who haven't had any legislative experience in the past, or they have a specific agenda.

Tom [Thomas Allen] Coburn, he came in our sweep, and he's a very bright guy. He's a doctor. He had his own view of the world, and he wanted to do a lot of things—and sometimes he didn't know what he was doing. Early on I tried to help him out and say, "I'd be glad to point you in the right direction if you want to do this." He was quite dismissive initially because I think he thought I had been around too long, too much institutional memory and that kind of thing. I said, "I don't have an agenda. My only agenda is to help you succeed at what you want to do here, and point you in the right direction as far as the language that you need to use and how you get a vote, and all that kind of thing." Eventually he came around to trust that I was trying to help him do what he wanted to do. I didn't agree with him all the time, but it's like Ron [Ronald Ernest] Paul. When I retired, he came and said, "I made a point of coming to your retirement party because I wanted to tell you how much I appreciated your help over the years. I know it put you in a difficult position from time to time because I am not part of the majority around here." I said, "Well, didn't hurt me any, I don't think." That was what my role was supposed to be, is to help Members do what they wanted to do.

PUMP: We're going to circle back and talk about the Pledge of Allegiance and how that may have come about. It was John Rowland of Connecticut that launched that? He came to you about how to get it done? Could you describe that a little bit?

LASCH: I tried to dissuade him. I said, "It's going to create a bombshell here because people aren't going to know what it is if it's done on the spur of the moment. It would be better if you put out notice that you wanted to do this or take

some action along that way." He said, "No, I want to do it." I said, "Well, that's what you'll have to do." I can't remember exactly how he did it. I think he did it through a question of privilege, and they ruled it out of order, and then he appealed the ruling of the chair or something like that. I'd have to go back and look to see for sure.

PUMP: [Reading from newspaper clipping] "The motion was ruled out of order by Representative Kenneth [James] Gray of Illinois, a Democrat, who was presiding in the temporary absence of Speaker Wright. But the Republicans insisted on a recorded vote. The Democrats, many of them evidently not recognizing that the vote could be taken as a referendum on the pledge, upheld Mr. Gray's ruling by a vote of 226 to 168. All Republicans voted against the ruling, and they were joined by seven Democrats, five of them from the South."[36]

LASCH: Well, they were ones who were more cautious about those things. I think the Democratic Whip organization worked the doors when the vote started. When the Democrats came in, they were just told, "Vote aye and support the chair." A lot of them didn't ask any questions, so they didn't really know for sure. Then they left and found out what it was, and they were hopping mad that they had not been informed as to what the vote was about, other than the procedural vote in supporting the chair.

PUMP: And so after that, they—

LASCH: They came back with a resolution, I think. That's what it was. To try and sort it out and say that it would be done and give all the Members an opportunity to get their vote correct.

PUMP: It seemed to be in response to Michael Dukakis and the presidential race because he apparently had vetoed a bill requiring teachers to lead students in the Pledge.

LASCH: Oh, I don't remember that part of it.

PUMP: But that was a lasting change to the House Rules that continues today before every session. Do you think those sorts of changes are good for the institution generally?

LASCH: The Pledge—I don't think that was really anything related to the institution. I don't think it took away from it really—other than in today's litigious world, to give someone an opportunity to do the same thing that they would do in schools or other places. Just like the prayer issue is now back on—I don't know if you've seen that on the burner again.

PUMP: Meaning public meetings?

LASCH: Well, no. The Congress shouldn't have paid chaplains. There's some kind of a case working its way through the Supreme Court again. They've ruled on it before, but this is, I guess, a different angle or something like that. So no. It's the other things where they limit the Members' rights and the right to participate as far as offering amendments and limiting the debates, that type of thing.

PUMP: So that also started in the early '80s, and so I was also curious, as far as the dynamic goes. You have a lot of reforms in the '70s that opened up the process, and one theory that I've read is that those reforms that opened up the process had unintended consequences, namely that the leadership of both parties lost control of some degree of the schedule and reverted to structured rules and closed rules more in order to gain control over the schedule. I was

curious if that was something that you witnessed and if that was an assessment that you might agree with?

LASCH: Absolutely, and particularly under the O'Neill administration. Every two years in January, at the start of the new Congress, they had a package of rules changes, and all of them were aimed at curbing the rights of the minority. A little bit, little bit, little bit—like that. And a little bit under Jim Wright, but not so much under Foley. But it was there. On Opening Day, it ends up a party-line vote. Nobody knows what's going on on Opening Day, and if you knew you just followed the party line on those issues. After we did finally win the majority, I had hoped that perhaps we would recognize some of the issues that we had raised over the years about how the minority was treated and maybe think about trying to be more inclusive. Well, that fell on deaf ears because the Democrats were so mad that they weren't given any ground on it.

PUMP: It also seems that the tone of the Republican opposition started to change dramatically in the '80s, and that coincided with the rules changes. From your perspective, were you able to see what came first? Was it a change in the Republican opposition? Or a change in the procedural positioning of the Democratic leadership?

LASCH: Well, I think the single issues started it.

PUMP: On both sides?

LASCH: Yes. Well, the Republicans raised them, and the Democrats didn't want to have to deal with them. They were always looking for ways to protect their Members from not having to vote on certain issues while we were trying to get everybody on board on those issues. It sort of started there. Then the frustration of being in the minority for a long period of time, and people who

were more media savvy coming into the business and trying to effectively underline what some of the key issues were, which were related to what was going on in society most of the time. Later, philosophically, it came about more and more and more, particularly after we took over. But unfortunately, in the long run, it's provided the situation that we have now with a government stalemate, basically.

PUMP: Do you remember your first interactions with Newt Gingrich?

LASCH: No. Newt was sort of this professor. I don't know if you had any actions with him, but he's sort of the garrulous professor. He talks to everybody, asks a lot of questions. I obviously knew what I was doing as far as helping Members, and after he became Whip, he frequently stopped to visit to pick my brain, to see what I heard, what's going on—that kind of thing. I got along with him fine. I was always amazed because in a number of times when he asked me things I told him things he didn't want to hear, and I was lucky or fortunate or I don't know what. He took them, I guess, not as a threat, but that he had asked for advice, and that was what I gave him.

PUMP: Were there inklings early on that he would eventually become one of the leaders?

LASCH: Oh, there was no question that he was aiming for that direction.

PUMP: Did you think he had what it took?

LASCH: Well, he had the energy, and he was a good speaker, and he did have the network on the outside that he could use to raise money. And there was no one really there who wanted to do all the kind of work that's involved in getting there. The problem with Newt was he has a million ideas a minute. He went gung ho on this one minute and then before long he was on another

subject. So that created a lot of issues as far as doing that kind of stuff. But really, it was his energy. If he hadn't put forth all that effort—maybe because of the Democrats' folly [with] what they did in that last time, it might've worked without his energy, but I kind of doubt it.

I think a lot of people looked on him as a transitional figure. He worked hard to get it and then sort of floundered once he had gotten into the position, whether there was too much going on or too much hubris. It's hard to tell exactly what it was, other than he does get all these ideas—and some of his staff, I'm sure that he drove them crazy when [he said] "I have this idea about doing that. Could you get the information and material for me? And I want it today." Of course, he should've asked for it two weeks before. So they'd all be running around like chickens without their head, gathering the material for him, and they'd give it to him. He'd kind of leaf through it and say, "Oh, this is good. Now, what about this?" And he'd go off on a tangent on something else. He didn't stay very long on most things. He just moved on.

Of course, he got in trouble with some of the things that he did. I think he was a gambler in some respects. He was one of those people who knew where he wanted to go, and there was the line here. He walked the line, and he hoped when the time came, he fell off on the right side of the line, rather than the wrong side of the line. And in a few instances, he didn't.

I remember when he was elected by a very narrow majority as Whip. It was in May or June or whenever it was, and I think right before the August recess the word was around that he was going to teach this course in this little college down in Georgia. I went to Dan Meyer, who was his chief of staff, and I said, "I know I don't work for you guys, and I know it's none of my business, but I think really Newt should put a lot of effort in the first six months or so into learning how to be the Whip—what's involved and vote

counting and whatever—and that he ought to postpone this teaching thing until the next semester or something like that."[37] And Dan said, "Well, I don't disagree with you. However, it's set in stone, and it's happening, and no one is going to dissuade him." He said he figures that Bob Walker is the Chief Deputy Whip, and he knows the ropes, and he'll carry the ball in the interim timeframe. I said, "Well, he's the boss. He makes the decisions. I don't think it's the right decision, but that's the way it is."

PUMP: Was his leadership style markedly different from the other leaders? Whether it was a Whip or the Minority Leader, was this kind of frenetic energy—

LASCH: Yes. I don't remember anybody, other than somewhat Jack Kemp. He had national ambitions, I think, when he came to the House—was conference chair, and he had a name from his previous occupation. He was kind of frenetic, but he didn't have the energy that Newt had. Newt had his goal was being the majority, and that was what he worked toward, and that's, I think, the only reason it actually came about.

The others, they wanted to be the majority, too, but they didn't have the energy. And they had been in Congress for a long period of time—Bob Michel had been there since the mid '50s, I guess, and Rhodes too. I think he came after Arizona finally got the second seat. So that probably was in the '50s, as well. By the time they got to the leadership, they just didn't have the energy. Bob Michel didn't. He had been head of the congressional campaign committee before Vander Jagt was—not immediately, but for six or eight years, maybe, 10 years—and Michel was out on the road, campaigning and raising money.

But it all takes a toll after a period of time. And then I think the age. Everybody has a different opinion, and it's just like John [Andrew] Boehner,

been there a while, and all these new folks have come in, and they have their own idea, and that makes it difficult. The situation—we've had it before. We had it a number of years ago, similar to what's going on today. It just wasn't quite as virulent, and the numbers weren't quite as large.

It took a long time for the dissidents to figure out that if you don't vote for compromise, what you're going to end up having placed before you—and what will pass without your vote—is a compromise which is going to spend more money, which is sort of what's happening now. So people learn that, but this crowd hasn't been around that long, and I don't think they will learn it because it's bigger. I think they have a false attitude in that they have safe districts right now because of the last round of redistricting, but if the cards aren't right in the next round of redistricting, there could be a whole flood of them that are redistricted into districts they can't win.

PUMP: What made leaders like Bob Michel successful? Were they able to achieve policy concessions that the other leaders may not have been able to, since they never won the majority?

LASCH: Personality, for Bob Michel. In particular, having been around a long time, having good relationships with people on the other side of the aisle, including Tip O'Neill. So here and there they won some issues—hard fought, but they won them. But it wasn't a ton of them because the Democrats weren't that anxious to compromise, really. They figured they had votes—which they did—for those 40-some years. It really wasn't close, really from '58 on.

PUMP: The '80s also featured many scandals within the House and calls for reform.

[A 4-minute, 48-second segment of this interview has been redacted.]

LASCH: But the Hill is a world of its own, and it has a lot of privileges, particularly

for the people at the top of the feeding chain. A lot of them are really little privileges, in some respects, but they can build up in your head when everything you want to do the answer is always, "Yes, sir." There are a lot of people who think those kind of things they can do, and no one's going to find out about them—or if they do they can explain it.

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

PUMP: Do you think that same attitude affected the other issues that came up in the '80s, like the House bank scandal?

LASCH: That was the way things were set up over the years between the [House] Post Office and the banking scandal and so forth. That was the way they did business, and in the interim, there were reforms about various things. Older Members, they get a thing in their mind of that's the way it was. They somehow can't figure it out in their mind that, well, okay, that's the way it was then, but when you have reforms, it applies to everybody. You're not grandfathered into the process. I think that's what happens. The bank was never a bank. It was a wholly owned subsidiary, if you will, of the House of Representatives. The Sergeant at Arms made a relationship with a big bank initially downtown, which was controlled by the unions—First National Bank of Washington or something like that—where they did all the paperwork processing and so forth. They supplied Capitol Hill with the money, and it was all done through that.

Then, of course, they got into the loan business, which was facilitated by the Sergeant at Arms at the bank, and Members probably got special terms because they were Members. And the Post Office—that was just the way it was. You got an allotment of postage stamps for your non-legislative mail, like you were sending congratulatory letters or other things. You were not

supposed to send it under frank, you were supposed to send it with a stamp on it. So you got X number of dollars. I can't remember. It wasn't a lot. It seems like it was, like, $500 or something like that of postage stamps because in those days the postage stamp was four or five cents or whatever. If you didn't use it, you could put the balance in your pocket as long as you declared it as income—same as the stationery room. That was the situation for many years. You had X number of dollars for stationery for running your office and so forth, and if you didn't use it all then, you could pocket that money as long as you declared it as income.

I laugh every now and then when I think about these things. There's this gentleman from Iowa named H. R. Gross, for years railing about government spending, offering amendments to cut this, cut that, cut the next thing. The money apparently accumulated in the account if you didn't take it out. When he retired, legally, he took whatever was left in the stationery account and put it in his pocket, which, unfortunately in my mind, kind of took away his golden stars for all the work. Legally, he could do it.

So that's how those things happen. All that's done now. The bank was the same thing. They were easy on the Members who floated checks, and the bank that did stuff went along with it. The loans—I don't know whether they were interest bearing or not or didn't get repaid on time.

PUMP: Given your longtime role as Minority Postmaster, how closely did you ever work with Bob Rota or any of the people on the staff?

LASCH: Nothing at all. I knew him. He worked in the Democratic Cloakroom before he went over there, and he had his connections with [John William] Wright Patman and [Thomas Ellsworth] "Doc" Morgan from Pennsylvania, and that's how he got the job, basically. He was a nice guy, and he probably got

where he was by doing favors for people over the years. Maybe the favors got out of hand, I'm not sure. It wasn't all his fault because it was the process about cashing in the stamps or however. And Jack Russ I knew quite well because he had been the chief Page before he was the Sergeant at Arms, and he inherited that and maybe didn't know what he was getting into. Once he was there, he may have found himself that he couldn't do anything anyway because the senior Members had all been used to that's the way it was. Pretty hard to step in there, if you want to keep the job.[38] I'm assuming—I don't really know.

PUMP: One of the things that you mentioned earlier about the staffing was the idea that if the Republicans were to ever take over, there would be people who knew what to do in those jobs. Did you feel at the time that if Republicans had won the majority, you would've been able to be Postmaster?

LASCH: I never really thought about it because I never thought we were going to be the majority, to be perfectly honest, and if we had I probably would've been. I'm sure there would've been a smooth transition. Bob Rota would've just been out of a job, and he'd have to figure out what to do over there. I don't know how helpful he would've been. And the staff that was there, he'd have to figure out should they all be replaced or whatever. Fortunately, I didn't have to make those decisions.

PUMP: When these issues came up, how eager were Members to capitalize on them on the Republican side?

LASCH: Some were, some weren't. And as they found out, the ones who were caught a few people in the trap that were quite shocking and surprising to them. That's always the danger when you're working with 435 individuals from different parts of the country, different backgrounds, different ethics, and all

that kind of stuff. So when the "Gang of Seven" started raising that kind of stuff, when they first started, in one of their initial meetings, they asked me to come and talk with them about process and things they could do on the floor, and I said okay.[39]

So I went and talked generally about demeanor on the floor, and you have to do it within the rules—that kind of thing. There was a Member there who was on the Ethics Committee. They were talking about various things, and I said, "Well, I think we have one problem, and that is one of your Members here, who's on the Ethics Committee, participating and raising all these issues, which could come as a result before the Ethics Committee in one form or another. This is going to put him in a very difficult position, having raised the issues and then having to be the presumably impartial judge." {laughter} And he looked at me and said, "Are you talking about me?" I said, "I am. As far as I know, you're the only Member in this group that's on the Ethics Committee." And he said, "And your advice would be?" I said, "Well, I think my advice would be you have to make a decision. If you're planning to stay on the Ethics Committee, then I think you need to get out of this process. If you want to dabble on the sides, but you can't be the Gang of Seven. Or whatever you want to do." So he finally decided it was good not to participate, and over the years from time to time he'd come through the cloakroom and he'd say, "You know, that advice you gave me back in"—whenever it was. He said, "The best advice I ever got." And I said, "Well, I always tried to give the best advice. It's just that a lot of people didn't take it." {laughter}

PUMP: Do you remember any of those instances where maybe you had given some advice, they hadn't taken it, and it turned out poorly?

LASCH: No, I guess because I never really judged it that way. Other than Newt.

There was that a couple other things that I said to him, and, amazingly, he tolerated the dissent.

PUMP: We've kind of talked about this before, but this idea of being able to talk so bluntly with Members is not an attribute that most staffers have. At what point did you feel that you could speak so frankly?

LASCH: Oh, it just came about over the years. Plus it just was part of my personality. I didn't like being in the business of not telling the truth, because it always comes back to haunt you one way or the other. It may not be immediately. I didn't see any point in doing it any other way. And it served me well, as the situation turned out.

PUMP: Would that be advice that you would offer someone else?

LASCH: Well, yes. I think if you can do it. Obviously, you have to build a reputation. If the people don't know who you are, and you haven't been around, and you don't have gray hair—and you have to know what you're talking about, which I did as far as the rules and things were concerned. I personally think that's part of the problem in today's world is people, they aren't asked—or the advice that they're given lots of times they don't take. In some situations, particularly, I think, on the Hill, you are somewhat intimidated by the end result because when you work on the Hill you don't have any protections. You may think you're doing the right thing, and giving the right advice, and, in fact, it is correct, but if the individual you're involved with has the authority over your job and your payroll, they can easily say, "I'm sick and tired of your advice. I'm going to do it my way."

Now, I didn't have really an individual boss all those years, so a lot of the people that asked me advice, they just came and went on a daily basis. I was an at-will employee the whole time I was there, which means that they could

just say one day, "Sorry, your job is over. We need your slot." They don't have to give me any excuses, and you didn't have any way to fight back—although at one point when we did the reforms they put in some kind of an appeals committee or something. I can't remember what it was called now—a human resources department-type thing, where you can appeal, but you don't have much standing. You can appeal it, but there's not any real authority to say, "Okay, he's right, and the Congressman's wrong. You've got to rehire him." I don't know how they resolved those things, and whether they're individual offices or whether they're more the functional offices like the Clerk's Office.[40]

PUMP: I've got a couple more questions for you. One is that one of the major tactic shifts that occurred was going after Members' ethics, and the major case seemed to be Newt Gingrich for Jim Wright's book. I was curious what your thoughts were on that change in the general posture of the minority party.

LASCH: I think I had a mixed opinion on that. In some respects, if you don't take on some of those things, it just gets worse. Institutionally, it's a mixed result. You do, and it's bad publicity. Hopefully it means that it's going to change. But if you don't rock the boat, you don't really get any success. I just don't know that it's necessarily good for the institution overall. Whether it really improves the institution or whether it just drives the problems further underground, I'm not sure about that.

But that's why the Ethics Committee is set up, and that's why they did that round with the outside group, [the Office of Congressional Ethics]. Former Members and former staff members review the situation, and then they report to the real Ethics Committee, and it's up to them. I think they've got six or seven things going on right now that's been referred from the outside committee. The Ethics Committee—it's hard to find people to serve on it. In

fact, the chairman is resigning here, if he hasn't already done it. I guess he's already gone.[41] I haven't seen anything of who they appointed to be the new chair, whether they're just going on or an acting chair, whoever the next one on the list is. I haven't seen anything about that.

PUMP: From a floor perspective—like when Newt Gingrich raised the point of personal privilege about the "Dear Colleagues" [letters], and then later on during this debate, Tip O'Neill's words had to be withdrawn after Trent Lott's protest. How involved were you in those events? Did you have forewarning, or did a lot of these new individuals kind of take the initiative?

LASCH: No, the only forewarning I had was with Tip O'Neill's words. The debate was on the floor, and Trent came running in. So there was no warning, other than that.

PUMP: But with a lot of the protestations that were being made during this period, and the points of personal privilege and that sort of thing, were those scheduled?

LASCH: No. You can schedule a point of privilege by going to the Parliamentarians. If you've been beat up in the press, and it's incorrect, or you want to answer the whatever they're charging, you can go to the Parliamentarians. They review the material, and then they determine whether or not it rises to a question of privilege. You can get an hour doing that. I think that's still the rule—I don't know for sure.

Other than that, there's not any way other than special orders or something, to raise it. Because there just isn't any time. Try to offer a resolution, but usually that has to do with the institution and the rules as opposed to individuals. The rules are designed basically to avoid individualism. That was the argument I had several times with Members who spoke out of turn and

had their words taken down. I'd have to go down and talk with them, and say, "This is the deal. What you said is not within the rules, and this is your choice: you either have to withdraw them, or if you don't want to withdraw them and you're ruled out of order, then you're done speaking for the day if there's anything else you want to say." Sometimes they didn't care because they didn't plan to say anything else anyway. It just sort of depended on the individual situation.

There was a Member who I had a frosty relationship with, and he used to like to come in and taunt me when there was a group of Members around—like during a vote or something like that. And one day—it was within a year or two or three before I retired, and there were a lot of Members around. They were all asking questions. And he came in and he said, "I'm so damn mad, I'm going down, and I'm going to take the floor, and I'm going to [criticize a Democratic Member during debate]." I looked at him—and all these Members are looking {laughter} to see what's going to go on. "Well," I said, "you may think you're going to do that, if you can do it within the purview of the rules, but it doesn't sound to me like you can do that within the purview of the rules." Some of the Members that were standing there, their jaws started dropping, and thought, "You're telling him he can't do it?" {laughter}

PUMP: So, the one-minute speeches, the special orders were all scripted, and I think Bob Michel had a messaging team that would send out the message of the day.

LASCH: Yes, he designated—for a while it was [Jack] Kingston. He did it for quite a while. Yes, from time to time they did, and sometimes the [Republican] Study Committee did it. I remember there was someone who was there—I can't remember exactly who it was right now—who every day came right

before the one-minutes. They had a file folder of one-minutes, and people would come in and—I don't know whether it's the [Republican] Policy Committee or the—I'm not sure what it was anymore, but they did that.

PUMP: But some of the other things, like personal privilege or those sorts of things, weren't as scheduled or as organized as—

LASCH: No.

PUMP: I see. My final question I wanted to wrap up with you about is that towards the late '80s, by that point Jim Kolbe was a Member, Donn Anderson was Clerk, and then you were the senior floor assistant. When all three of you were back interacting on a regular basis on the floor, did you ever meet up and talk? How close were your relationships at that point?

LASCH: Oh, just in passing. I don't know if you know Jim Kolbe or not, but he's {laughter} got a lot of energy, and he's always on the move. Sometimes he stopped and chatted, but most of the time it was about our class reunion, or something along those lines, so it was no different than it had been. Of course, he was there for, like, 22 years or something like that. But it was a long trip back to Arizona, and he was back and forth all the time, and he was lots of times a singular Republican vote, voting with the Democrats here and there because of the district he represented, and he had somewhat of a testy relationship with some of the other Members.

PUMP: But it seems like you had a closer relationship than maybe with Donn Anderson.

LASCH: I think only because he was a Republican, and I was on the floor, and Donn came and went on the floor. He didn't spend a lot of time on the floor. So I think that's the only reason why.

PUMP: It sounded earlier like he confided in you in various issues that may have come up and that you would know something about.

LASCH: Who is that?

PUMP: Donn Anderson.

LASCH: For 10, 15 years, lots of times after the House adjourned we went to dinner, and we talked about shop talk, if you will. We frequently went to the Monocle in those days. It was always full of Members, and a lot of union types. Phil Burton, who was a liberal Democrat from San Francisco—predecessor to Madam Speaker [Nancy] Pelosi—was quite a character, and he spent a lot of time at the Monocle. He was a heavy drinker. Every now and then he'd come in, and he'd kind of survey the restaurant to see who was in there, and the labor boys were always over in the one corner, and lots of times he would see Donn sitting there, and he would come over, pull out a chair, and sit down—not ask or anything. He would just say, "I'm joining you guys for dinner," plop himself down, take off his coat, undo his tie, take off his shoes. He was a slob. Order his snifter of vodka and {laughter} give the waiter a hard time about what he wanted to eat, and what he didn't want, and all that kind of stuff. So I got to know him fairly well.

Every now and then he would come across the floor and say, "Well, I need to pick your brain today, see what the opposition's up to." I'd say, "Well, I'm sure whatever it is is all out there in the public. I don't know that I have anything I can tell you." That's the kind of relationship we had. Every now and then, he would be sitting with us, and somebody from the labor crowd would come over and say, "We'll take care of your bill for you, Congressman." And he'd say, "You'll take care of the bill for the table. Don't take care of it just for me." And a couple of times {laughter} I said to him,

"Well, I can pay for my own. It's kind of putting these poor labor people in a box here, having to pay for my dinner here." He said, "They can do it. They got lots of money." {laughter} So that's how it developed over the years.

PUMP: It seems like there was a pretty cozy relationship, all told, after hours.

LASCH: Yes, it's definitely there, but people who think alike are usually the ones who get together to do things or whatever—particularly these days. I think that's why you don't have much interaction. First of all, they're never here anymore. When you look at the schedule—I know, you need to get home to the district and visit with your constituents, but it's just {laughter} a little too top-heavy as far as the constituents versus what needs to be done here. So you don't get to know the Members. You don't get to know individuals. You only know the people that you work closely with or on the committee that you're on. It's been that way for quite a while anyway.

PUMP: Well, is there anything else you'd like to add at this point?

LASCH: {laughter} No, no, I think we've exhausted what I don't know and what no one else needs to know.

— RONALD W. LASCH —

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW FOUR

PUMP: This is Barry Pump in the Office of the House Historian. The date is Friday February 7th, 2014. This is the fourth interview with Mr. Ronald W. Lasch, a former floor assistant to the Speaker and Minority Postmaster of the U.S. House of Representatives. The interview is taking place in Cannon [House Office Building, Room] 247.

I think where I wanted to start was with your travel abroad. You mentioned in your previous interview that William Broomfield of Michigan had asked you to go along with him on that. I was wondering about what year that was that you started taking these trips?

LASCH: That was in 1983. I think it was in the spring of '83. The meeting was in The Hague in the Netherlands, and from there we went to Geneva. The UN [United Nations] has a big center in Geneva, and we went to a meeting there where we met with the Russian delegation. From there we went to Vienna. We went to the IAEA. The International Atomic Energy Agency was headed by Hans Blix at the time. We had a meeting there, then we came back. We were gone, I don't know, better part of a week.

PUMP: How did you get started with those trips? Did minority staff always go on those trips?

LASCH: No. I was the first of the minority staff. It was just a bee in Mr. Broomfield's bonnet that there were usually a number of Democratic staff, but there were no Republican staff. I don't know what the story was on that, why that happened. He decided, "I think I'm going to try." He asked Tom Winebrenner first to go, and Tommy couldn't go. So then he asked me to go. The Democratic staff was none too happy. First of all, I wasn't even on the committee staff. So it was a little bit of a go-around

about that. I left that to the Members to worry about. One of the staff members said, "Well, this will be your first and only trip." I said, "Well, that's not my determination to make, that'll be made at a level beyond my pay grade." But I then was asked to go on the trips after that from there until 2000, from '83 to 2000. And there were usually three trips a year. There's a spring meeting that's around Presidents' Day in February. No, beg your pardon. That's the committee meetings, those were in Brussels and Paris. Then spring meeting is usually around Memorial Day. Then the fall meeting, depending on whether it was an election year or not, was around Columbus Day or in November. So we dominated the scheduling for that to the chagrin of some of the members there. But since we were the biggest contributors as far as helping the organization's funding—25 percent at the time—it was a little hard for them to say no.[42]

PUMP: Who else went on these trips? You mentioned committee staff—I imagine it was committee staff of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

LASCH: Yes.

PUMP: Who else went along with the trips?

LASCH: The chief of staff, Jack Brady, and then there was some of the people who were—there was a professional responsibility.[43] I can't remember the names exactly at the moment. There was a secretary who went along—somehow the name escapes me at the moment—who worked for Fascell on the Foreign Affairs Committee for quite a long time. He's now the secretary-general of the CSCE, which used to be the Office of Economic Security and Development.[44] That's now based in Copenhagen. It's one of those umbrella organizations that got developed over the years, particularly after the Second World War, to try and improve relations between Europe and the United States. And, of course, the Canadians are involved in that too.

PUMP: Did you have a lot of interest in foreign affairs?

LASCH: Some. It grew because I had work to do while we were on these trips. Basically learning the process—how it took place, who the staff members were of the committee over there in Brussels, and then who the members of the delegations were, so I could help our Members know who people were, what party they belonged to, what their role—there was a group who were very active because a lot of the parliaments in Europe, a lot of the members don't have much to do. Like the British Parliament—only really a very small handful of people have any responsibilities. So when these other international meetings come along, then a lot of the people volunteer to do those kinds of things. When I first started going there was just the original NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] group, which was basically Canada, Iceland, United States, and then Western Europe. Not all of Western Europe, but from Norway down through Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany. Let's see, Greece and Turkey. I think that's all of them.

Then as the Iron Curtain came down all those countries that had been under the purview of the Iron Curtain, they were first granted observer status. Now I think almost all of them are members of it. The Baltic States were the first to rush to the door, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and then, of course, Poland and Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and now Romania, Bulgaria. I think maybe even Albania. I'm not sure. The parts that were Yugoslavia at one time, almost all those are member states—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia. Poor Macedonians that were from Yugoslavia, when they wanted to join—Greece was opposed to them joining as Macedonia, because the northern part of Greece is a large area that's called Macedonia. They insisted that the new Macedonia be called the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. They finally—took them like 15, 20 years until they finally got to remove the verbiage as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. So they're all now members. It's a much larger diverse group that you have to work with from where it started.

Of course, there were language problems, particularly at the very beginning, where everything was translated into English, German, French, Spanish, Russian. Interestingly enough, after we became free of the Iron Curtain, the major language of the assembly suddenly became English because all those new folks who were required to speak Russian when they were under Russian domination said, "No, we're free, we're now speaking English." So it changed the whole complexion of the way the assembly operated.

PUMP: Do you recall your favorite trip?

LASCH: They were all interesting. London and Paris, obviously, were. But I think the Canadians, when they hosted the meeting in Banff [Alberta], was interesting. It was one of those big old Canadian National Railroad hotels, the Banff Springs Hotel. And it was all within there. And that was in May. And we got there at night, and the next morning there was snow on the ground. But each one had their interesting things.

A lot of the countries, they have a lot bigger budgets than we do, and it rotated around through everybody that was part of the assembly. The meetings in Turkey were interesting, Greece, and the Germans were very hospitable. They apparently had a lot of money to spend on these kind of meetings, and they always were outstanding hosts. Meetings generally ran about four days, two days of committee meetings, a day when the host country planned an outing, a touristy outing kind of thing, and then the last day was the plenary, where they voted on resolutions that were adopted by various committees of the assembly on issues that they were interested in, whether it was economics or military issues or trade issues.

PUMP: So was there a particular event or issue that came up during any of these meetings that sticks out in your mind?

LASCH: Not really, because the way the situation was set up, there was not a lot of room for a lot of sparks. Every now and then there was a division between the United States and some of the Europeans, particularly over the timeframe that I went. The governments in various European countries went from conservative to like Labour in Britain or Germany's Socialist Democratic Party (SPD), and the French, they switched back and forth. The Italians had elections all the time, and you never really knew for sure who was there. Actually, when I first started going, I think two or three members of the Italian delegation were communists. They ran as communists in Italy and got elected. So that changed the perception depending on who was the majority of the government.

When I first started going, the big issue was putting missiles in Europe with Reagan. And some of the governments, they wanted to put missiles in Belgium, and the Netherlands, and I guess in Germany. There was a lot of opposition to that, so they had to struggle to get it authorized in order to put those missiles there. After that passed and the wall came down, a lot of the European countries didn't think they had to spend as much money on defense. So there was a constant problem that they were cutting their budgets. The Icelanders and the Canadians contribute hardly anything these days. So we depend on the Eastern Europeans. I think we gave grants to a lot of the Eastern European countries in order for them to meet the requirements to get into the organization.

PUMP: When these committee meetings were going on, what sort of tasks or roles did you have among the Members and the Parliamentarians?

LASCH: Mostly to monitor them and to make sure that the Members could figure out where they needed to go. There are five committees. So I usually sat in the science committee and occasionally in the economics committee. Some of the Democratic Members, when they were the majority and were active Members of that group,

chaired some of the committees over there, like Charlie Rose and Jack Brooks. I don't think Fascell ever did.

PUMP: One of the things that a lot of people have mentioned is that when Members go on CODELs [congressional delegations], they tend to let their hair down a little bit more, be more relaxed, and you really get to know people. Was that your experience as well?

LASCH: Yes, because it's a small group. You're in a confined situation, so you more or less have to. This is the group that socialized—other than with other members of the delegations, when they have general receptions and that kind of thing. Usually several nights there were free, so people would go out to dinner as a group.

In fact, the first group I went on as minority staff, but some of the Democrats were Phil Burton, Charlie Rose, Larry Smith of Florida, Fascell, Jack Brooks. I've forgotten some of the others. But anyway, in the Netherlands, Indonesian restaurants are big, because they once owned Indonesia. I think it was all the Democratic Members, were going to dinner at an Indonesian restaurant. Charlie Rose said, "You want to come to dinner with us?" I said, "Well, yes, that's fine. But I don't know whether your colleagues might be suspicious of a Republican staff member at the table." He said, "Why would they be suspicious?" I said, "I don't know. Maybe you'll talk politics and not want me to know what's going on." And he said, "Well, that's ridiculous." I said, "I would suggest, if I may, that maybe you might test the waters a little bit and ask Phil Burton or Brooks or Fascell whether or not they minded." So he said, "That's stupid, but I'll do it." He came back and said, "Nobody has a problem." I said, "Okay."

PUMP: Did anyone have a problem?

LASCH: Not that I know of. I went and I was the only Republican there. They didn't talk about much other than anything that was going on at the meeting and that kind of

thing. Only real divide we had was when Charlie Rose was running for President [of the Parliament of NATO in 1990] and so was Senator [Victor William] Roth [Jr.]. The delegation split—the Republicans for Roth and the Democrats for Charlie Rose. That was in London. It left a bad taste. It was at the time that Margaret Thatcher was being dethroned. The meeting was there, and the final dinner that the British hosted was in some of the rooms in Hampton Court Palace—without any heat—in November.

PUMP: When you were there did you have the sense of the disturbances going on in the other governments at the time?

LASCH: You could see it sometimes. If it was particularly nasty the delegations were very slim. There would only be a few people there. And you could also observe it—like the British delegation. The Labour and the Conservative folks, they were friendly to each other, but they didn't really hang out together.

PUMP: What would you say would be the biggest thing you learned about your contemporaries in other foreign governments through these trips?

LASCH: Well, I think it probably was that we were the biggest country involved there. We had our own internal domestic problems, and so did they. And lots of times they were much deeper than ours are. I think ours are deeper now maybe than theirs are now. But back in those days I think that was the difference. And trying to balance their position so close to the East—the Russians and that area—versus the United States, across the pond over there. Occasionally the left-wing parties, I think, resented our influence in the organization, just because they didn't agree with our position on a lot of issues.

PUMP: Were you ever concerned—given the Cold War tensions—that anything might happen to the delegation or to the meetings? That they might be targeted?

LASCH: Well, the meetings were always very well protected by the local governments. The only place that I one time felt uncomfortable was the first time the meeting was in Istanbul. At the time I think the junta was still the government there—it was not the elected government. It seemed like on every street corner in the area of the hotel where the meetings were [there] were military with their machine guns at the ready.

One of the meetings in Rome, I can't remember what the story was on that, other than in the hotel that we were staying in—the Ambasciatori—there were armed military guards on every floor that we were on with machine guns. I couldn't ever figure out whether I was glad they were there or was uncomfortable that they were there and were we going to wake up to gunfire going off in the hallways or whatever. So it was a little bit uncomfortable with that kind of thing. Some of the places in later years, Romania in particular I think it was, they suggested that when you left the meetings areas and were out in the rest of the city, it would be better if you didn't wear your credentials or have your American flag on. But there were very few incidents that I can recall.

There were some pickpockets, which is big—happened in Rome a couple times. In fact, we had a partial tour of the Vatican Museum and were standing outside with a bunch of little pushcarts that were selling ice cream and soda and stuff. There were a bunch of little kids running around playing—except they were the pickpockets. We had gotten water or whatever it was, were standing there talking, and the next thing, I looked down at the ground. There was all this money lying on the ground. I said, "What's a lot of money doing on the ground?" Everybody's reaching in their pocket. The one guy whose pocket was empty, his money lying there. But the kids had run off. I guess they dropped it as they pulled it out of the pocket.

PUMP: Did you meet with people who held similar jobs to yours in the other parliaments?

LASCH: Only the people who were the secretaries of the delegation that represented their country. So like the Canadian people or the British or the Danish, Norwegians. I think those were the delegations where our Members had the closest relationships probably because of language. And the Dutch, because they speak English in a lot of those places. It was harder in Spain and Italy and Belgium, which has a tremendous language problem, as you know. Recently it took them two and a half years to be able to form a government over the issue of language.

PUMP: So there weren't minority or majority floor assistants per se that had a similar coordinating role in their parliaments?

LASCH: No. Relatively speaking the number of staff that most of the European countries have are much, much smaller than what we have here—probably compared [with] the days before we had the massive explosion of staff here in the Watergate era.

PUMP: So the world was changing rather dramatically as far as the end of Russian influence—the Soviet Union's influence, and the end of the Soviet Union. Could you tell that those sorts of momentous changes for Germany, for Russia, for Greece in many respects were on the horizon?

LASCH: Not so much Greece. Greece and Turkey, they're over there. But for Germany in particular because when I first started going they were still divided. And the one time we went, meeting was in Hamburg, we went up to the Baltic Sea to Lubeck, and along the way we stopped at an area which was clearly marked East Germany. They had the tower over there with people with their little spyglasses. That was really the only time that I was a little uncomfortable. You just didn't really know what to expect.

Then the other time was the day we were in Cyprus. Cyprus is divided between the Turks and the Greeks, and we went to both sides for meetings. Crossing the Green Line—I guess that's what it's called, the border between the two of them—was a

little scary because both sides had their machine guns. You had to stop there, and they checked you out. And they let you through to the other side, and then they checked you out. Of course, the rhetoric on each side was they're supporting their own position and why they should be there, what they're doing, and the other side doesn't want to reach agreement with them and that kind of thing. So it was more a listening situation. It's not an area that we were really going to get involved in. We had enough other problems in other parts of the world at that particular time.

PUMP: Well, is there anything else about your trips abroad either with the delegation or the subject matter that come to mind?

LASCH: No. They were coordinated by the Air Force as far as the transportation—going over in a government plane and arranging buses and that kind of stuff within the host city where we were. The Members who had been going had been going for quite a while. So they pretty much knew their role. There was a lot of work that got done. Usually there was like a half a day that the host country planned an outing. So you did get to do a little bit of sightseeing.

PUMP: Are these places you would have visited on your own?

LASCH: Oh, yes, but it's a lot different when you're going with the government airplane, when you land at the airport and you don't have to worry about going through all the rigmarole. Obviously, to travel to all those places on your own dime would be a lot more expensive. I don't know that I would have gone to Turkey or Greece, just because it was further out of the way. But anyway, that also led to for me a couple other opportunities to go to Africa one time. It was not related to that particular organization. And then to Asia also.

PUMP: So you like to travel.

LASCH: Yes. Well, it's a nice way to travel. Except in the early days, the airplanes were old planes. They were from the '60s, and a couple of them were actually old tanker planes and the interiors were not completely finished. There were two windows in the front and two windows in the back. Then they put in pallets for the seats—and the food service and that kind of thing. When those planes were on the ground and the engines weren't running—no air conditioning, no heat sometimes. So a little uncomfortable, particularly when we took the one to Asia and all those countries over there. It's like high summer all the time it seems like—humid and 80 degrees or more temperature.

PUMP: How was the Air Force staff during that time? Did you get to know any of them?

LASCH: Well, each of the services has a liaison office here in the Capitol complex, both on the House side and the Senate side. I'm not sure exactly how they go about choosing. Most of the time it was the Air Force. The one time I went the Army did it, and another time the Navy did it. I guess the Members, whoever is the delegation chairman, got to choose which organization it was. But they worked hard, and obviously, for them, they used their time to more or less lobby Members—subtly—on their interests.

PUMP: Could you describe that a little bit more? Like how subtly or what were the types of things that they said?

LASCH: Obviously, the Air Force has its own interests. I wasn't party to all the conversations. So I don't really know. But I'm sure they were using the opportunity to just say, "Well, we're really interested in this particular situation," or that kind of thing.

PUMP: Did you ever talk to Members about maybe some of the things you wanted to do or take advantage of the opportunity to have them in a captive audience, so to speak?

LASCH: No, not really. I was perfectly happy where I was as far as the job was concerned. And I just tried to do basically what I did here, which was facilitating the Members getting around at the meetings, showing them where the rooms were, showing them who the players were, helping them identify who the players were at the various meetings. Other than that, basically conversations were mostly routine things about what they were doing in their districts or how the election was going. Getting kidded about being in the minority, which then, of course, turned around after we became the majority.

PUMP: Did you learn anything about those Members who went on those trips that you could then use down the road?

LASCH: No, because I as much as anybody was able to see their quirks, if you will, on the floor by dealing with them on a one-on-one basis all the time there. Whether it was answering the questions about what are we voting on, explaining the amendment process, explaining parliamentary procedure. When we're getting out? Could they go to the gym for an hour without the bells ringing? That kind of stuff.

PUMP: Did you witness any interaction between the Members who were on those trips? Were they lobbying each other? Were they talking about policy ideas or did they mainly use it as a social occasion?

LASCH: It was mostly social, but I think there was a division. The Democrats I'm sure talked about their own internal aspects of what was going on in their party, as did on our side. The worst part of all was when it was our turn to host, was in 1994. And the meeting was in December. And so it was at the JW Marriott here, downtown. But it was hard because there was so much going on on the Hill. Then our Members were torn to be where they should be just because everybody was looking for office space, and chairmanships, and committee staff, and electing leaders and all that kind of stuff.

PUMP: So switching gears. One of the directories said that you were Newt Gingrich's floor assistant. I think that they probably got that a little bit wrong because they said that you were Newt Gingrich's floor assistant from a period well before he was even in Congress. But it seemed that you were pretty closely related to him, especially after he became Whip. Would you say that was accurate?

LASCH: Yes. I never worked for him until he became Speaker. And then I was actually a direct part of his staff. His chief floor assistant was Len Swinehart.[45] There were several other people with specific interests that worked on the staff—the foreign affairs stuff and some of the appropriations stuff and that kind of thing. But no, I didn't work for him before. He stopped and talked to me a lot and asked questions, trying to pick my brain for tidbits of information here and there. So I was never really his floor assistant. As a floor assistant to the Speaker—while initially, when we first took over, we held meetings every day right before we went into session over in the ceremonial office and just talked about what was going on, his interest waned very quickly as far as the floor was concerned. He was more interested in other aspects of the Speakership and meetings and strategy.

PUMP: In the late '80s and early '90s it seems that the Republican Party was changing a great deal. How would you describe the party during that period?

LASCH: Well, I think the party was basically very frustrated for being in the minority forever and never being able to say this is what we want to do and be able to push through a bill that we wanted. Now we did some of that even as the minority when Reagan was elected for the first several years because there were a lot of Democrats whose districts Reagan carried. So they were initially a little concerned about voting against things that he wanted—the tax stuff and some other things. But it was basically frustration that kept building, and as we had new waves of Members come in, that just kept growing.

Then Newt took the bull by the horns through the outside GOPAC stuff. Then with the inside and the Gang of Seven when we were still the minority and stirring the pot on the [House] banking situation. He basically forced Speaker Wright to resign over his book deal and selling it through the labor unions or whatever it was. I've forgotten now at this stage of the game. The banking scandal, the [House] Post Office stuff, and that drumbeat. Then the issues that were out there got sharper and culminated in the combination of the corruption in the Congress and some of the things that Clinton pushed in his first term, including the crime bill, which is where the gun stuff was in there. That really defeated a lot of the Democrats like Jack Brooks. There were a large number of other southern and western Democrats who basically had been able to exist, but they got dragooned into buying this giant bill. It was the precursor of a little bit of the current Obama health care situation.

PUMP: What are your memories of the banking scandal? And how did the Sergeant at Arms' Office—how was that viewed? How did it work?

LASCH: It had been in existence for years. It was there when I first came, and I didn't realize at first that it wasn't really truly a bank. Over a period of time I learned that it was basically a service that was being provided to Members and as far as check cashing for staff. And all of the most important transactions were facilitated by this bank downtown, which at the time was union-owned. Can't remember what it was called, First National Bank or Washington National Bank or something. And so every day someone from the Sergeant at Arms' Office and the police went down to that bank and they got their cash for the operations of their offices. They facilitated loans through the bank down there for Members who wanted to borrow money. It was a relaxed situation—obviously, as it came out later, when you saw all the people, the checks that they bounced, and the loans they didn't pay.

It was a small operation, very in-house. There was a fellow that had been there for years, Elwyn Raiden, who was like the manager of the bank, so to speak.[46] They did

the best they could as far as clamping down, but when I think sometimes the Members said no, they just said, "Well, we'd appreciate it if you could," whereas maybe if you were dealing with a real bank they might say, "Well, pay up or else." I don't know how many favors were done along those lines. I think that's what happened. But when they first started it, there was a little trepidation on our side. And, of course, there were a number of our Members who were guilty and lost the election because of that situation.

PUMP: Yes, because it seems that Members from both parties used the Sergeant at Arms' services.

LASCH: Oh, absolutely. It was a great convenience. I think they provided them a checking account. So when you're busy, it's convenient in the building where you work to just walk in the door and cash your checks or make deposits or make loans. It was a service that was established—I don't really know when actually. It got out of hand like lots of times things do. People didn't say no when they should have said no.

PUMP: One of the posters that you brought criticizes then-Sergeant at Arms Jack Russ. I imagine you knew him fairly well because you had similar roles in your respective parties' cloakrooms.

LASCH: Right.

PUMP: Could you describe what his role was? Was he viewed as a party functionary?

LASCH: To some extent. He basically inherited the situation when he took over as Sergeant at Arms. I think people from time to time had said, "Well, you ought to tighten things up." But that's not always easy to do on Capitol Hill, and I think he was caught in that himself. Then he had done some other things—I'm not sure why it happened, but he had a business on the side where he was making triangular cases to put a flag in. They were selling them out of the stationery room.

Then he also lost his mind. One of the fellows in the Democratic Cloakroom, it was his birthday, and they were having a birthday party for him at the Monocle or someplace. So he got a couple cops and as a joke went to the Monocle to arrest him. It got out of hand and created a real stink because the guy didn't think it was very funny. He didn't know what was really going on—that it was a joke. So that was a problem—his own poor judgment. Plus the issues of the bank, which he didn't really have any control over because there was no oversight. It was the Sergeant at Arms' responsibility, and nobody really bothered to oversee it because well, I don't want to know about what's going on there. You know it's going on, but you don't want to get involved. You don't want to get beat up about it. And like everything on Capitol Hill, people expect certain things, and when you try to change them you run into resistance.

PUMP: The idea of one party attacking the other about these sorts of issues seemed to be relatively new at that time. How did that come about? Was that something that was consciously orchestrated? Or did events conspire that allowed an opening for that to happen?

LASCH: Well, my personal opinion on that is that events conspired to open it. And it was called M-O-N-E-Y. The introduction of enormous amounts of money. When I first came, when people ran for Congress, they spent $20,000, $30,000, or whatever. Today they're spending millions on a seat in the House of Representatives. The first $1 million candidate was a guy named [Michael] Huffington out in California. That was big news at the time.

Then the other big thing—and it's related to money too—is the single-issue groups. They weren't there when I first came in 1958, but it didn't take long before they started on the question of abortion. School busing was another big thing which was a leftover from the '54 desegregation decision, particularly in the South but also in the North in Boston and those kind of areas, where they were trying to equalize the

situation by busing students to non-neighborhood schools. In fact, it was so rampant in Boston that when John McCormack left office, he was succeeded by a woman who ran as an independent, and her issue was school busing.[47] She only lasted one term, and Joe Moakley took her out. But that's how hot the issue was at that particular time. And then ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] was out there at that particular time and the start on the whole abortion issue. Then it just grew from there, all these special interest groups that are out there for one reason or another. Money and contributions to the campaigns—and raising money for your campaign—has contributed to the situation.

PUMP: But the notion that the House of Representatives was corrupt, or that Washington was corrupt, and it was something to run against, seemed to be fairly novel at the time that Gingrich developed it.

LASCH: Well, they hunted for these things that had been around for years. The ethics rules were extremely lax for a long period of time—including nepotism rules—because nobody thought about it. The other aspect is the way the media has grown. Initially, when I came to town, there were three television stations: ABC, NBC, and CBS. Then the Public Broadcasting System [PBS] came about. Then you got cable. In the print area, you had all that, and now you've got Twitter and bloggers—it's a whole explosion. Every day there's some aspect that someone's complaining about out there.

PUMP: Did you notice any tension between those agitating for change and those who had been here for a while? In particular, Bob Michel on the one hand and Newt Gingrich on the other.

LASCH: Yes, exactly. There definitely was when Cheney was elected Whip after Trent Lott was elected to the Senate. There was no opposition. He just basically walked in and he was the Whip. He wasn't the Whip very long because Senator [John Goodwin]

Tower was defeated for the nomination for Secretary of Defense. I think that was in February. Then the next thing you know, [Cheney] was selected to be the replacement. And he held the Whip's job and stayed in office until he went through the confirmation process. But in the meantime, while that was going on, the race for Whip was going on. It basically was change versus I guess you could call it status quo. I don't know for sure. The whole aspect of, "Are we going to be the minority forever? How are we going to get out from being the minority?" And Newt was that person. When the vote was finally counted, he won by a narrow margin. I can't remember exactly what the number was, whether it was three or six or something like that.

PUMP: I think even two.

LASCH: Two? Is that what it was? I don't know whether he could have been defeated if there had been a different candidate. Ed [Edward Rell] Madigan was an odd personality to some extent—and he was from Illinois. That hurt his candidacy by being from the same state as Bob Michel was, when people said, "Well, no, things are changing, we don't want both leaders to be from the same state." They may have even been neighboring districts for all I know. So that was the watershed of change at that point because you had Newt stirring the pot up there. It did make some people uncomfortable. But in the long run, he was the one that succeeded, and no one thought he was going to. Most of the Members didn't expect to become the majority when it happened. Again, it was one of those watershed events that the Clinton presidency caused to happen.

PUMP: How contentious were the Republican Conference meetings during that time, given the divide in the party?

LASCH: They were contentious. In the early days we went to the conferences or they were held on the floor. But then with some of the ethics issues that came along like

Irangate and Koreagate, they ended up closing the conferences. Initially it was all staff except the elected minority officers.[48] But then they even closed us out too, so it was just Members. Of course, things got leaked out of these meetings. It was always the staff that leaked them quote, unquote, when in fact it was 99 percent of the time other Members who had their own agendas that they were working.

PUMP: You mentioned a couple of different scandals there. With the Iran-Contra issue, I imagine.

LASCH: Well, no. I was thinking there was something else earlier than that.

PUMP: Abscam?[49]

LASCH: Yes, I guess that's what it was.

PUMP: Could you also explain the Korea scandal?

LASCH: It had something to do with rice and the funding of the rice supports and campaign contributions—I think it was from Korea—involved mostly people from agricultural districts that grew rice, and some benefits that they got. I'm foggy at this stage of the game.

PUMP: How much of strategy was actually discussed at the conference meetings that you attended? How many of the problems were aired at those? They seemed to be rather large meetings.

LASCH: I think the issues were aired, but I don't think any strategies necessarily came out of it. It gave the leadership group—when they had their meeting—the direction maybe they wanted to go. I don't think there was ever any final strategy at the conference meeting because it was too big and there were too many people there. There wasn't enough control over where that information was going to go as far as strategy was concerned.

PUMP: At the time I think Jerry [Charles Jeremy] Lewis was one of the Republican Conference chairs. He had been conference chair for a couple of terms in the late '80s, early '90s. How did he run those meetings? How was his relationship with Bob Michel and Newt Gingrich?

LASCH: I think his relationship with Bob Michel was fine. I think with Newt it didn't do it. He was not very good at running the conferences. I don't know whether it was a lack of interest, or he didn't quite know how to do it. I don't know what it was. But there definitely were problems there. I think the main thing is he didn't control them as much as some people thought they should be controlled. It was a lackadaisical thing. He ended up being replaced. I think that might have been part of the Gingrich strategy. Can't remember who replaced him—was it Dick Armey?

PUMP: Yes, at first. And then Boehner.

LASCH: Right. And then J. C. [Julius Caesar] Watts [Jr.].

PUMP: Right. Could you describe what the Republican Conferences were like? You had a chair. Did they mirror what the House Floor looks like?

LASCH: Yes. There were subjects—lots of times there was a predetermined subject. They basically ran it like they ran the floor, recognizing people to get up and give their viewpoint on the subject. Occasionally they had a conference vote but most of the time it was just discussion. Then it would fall back on managing it through the committees, and then strategy on the floor, that kind of thing.

PUMP: Did a lot of the same people talk across meetings? Or was it more free-flowing?

LASCH: Well, it was free-flowing, but like all of the situations there are just certain people who dominate and need to make their viewpoint known depending on what the issues were—whether it was farming or defense or that kind of thing.

PUMP: Now did the leadership—I guess at this point the Republican Party is still in the minority. Did they go through the issues that would be coming up over the course of the week?

LASCH: Right. The conference put out a lot of paperwork in those days—the Whip program for the following week, the bills that were going to be considered, all that kind of stuff. They produced a lot of material that they sent to the Members on those issues—not every subject, but things that were the major subjects that really were talked in the conference.

PUMP: There are a great deal of older staff members and staff organizations and legislative service organizations. What role on the Republican side did those organizations have, particularly when it comes to informing Members of issues that are coming up on the floor?

LASCH: I think it was fairly limited committee by committee. There was the major staff organization—the minority staff banding together because they didn't have much in the way of support in the committees. I think at those meetings, which I never attended, they discussed issues and sometimes tried to figure out how they could work together, especially if there was something that was bifurcated—a bill that was between two different committees and that kind of thing.

PUMP: At what point was your expertise called in either at the conference level or the floor?

LASCH: The truth of the matter is it was never. I was never part of that as far as issues were concerned. My whole role was to try to figure out what's going on on the floor, what legislation was pending, what the issues were there, and what the votes were—and on the parliamentary procedure to help that process.

PUMP: So you didn't have much time to prepare.

LASCH: Well, I read all the material that was out there, whether it was *Congressional Quarterly* or the other things that blogged out over the years all the stuff from the conference. I went through the major newspapers every day to see what they had to say—*Washington Times*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, that kind of thing.

It was more to familiarize myself as far as the amendments were concerned so that I knew what they were, who was on what side, and what the issue was. And then once it was on the floor, to be sure that once the amendments started—they don't do that very much anymore. But initially there was no process for amendments being made known other than by your colleagues. They finally changed the rules after a push that said you should publish your amendment, and then the amendment section of the *Record* came about, so you knew what was going on there. Of course, the outside groups were promoting their amendments or opposing the amendments as they went along. My personal thing is dealing with the Members on an individual basis to try to figure out how to answer questions without offending people.

PUMP: Could you give an example of that?

LASCH: What do you mean?

PUMP: Well, the type of question that you might get and then the type of response that you would give.

LASCH: Well, it was different per Member. I had one Member who I was kind of his legislative assistant on the floor. He had one in the office. I don't know whether he ever talked to him. Every vote he would come in and ask what was going on, and sometimes he wanted to know more than other times. He was a Member who was from a fairly conservative district, but he had an interest in some labor issues. From time to time, I'd say to him, "Well, this has labor issues involved in it," particularly when it was the Rust Belt versus the Sun Belt. Sometimes he'd say, "Okay," and other times he'd say, "I don't care."

PUMP: Then one final question about the conference. Was there a great deal of regional variation especially between maybe midwesterners and southerners?

LASCH: Well, yes. The conference shifted dramatically over the time that I was here. When I first came before the '58 election, most of New England and the Rust Belt states were dominated by Republicans. After the '58 elections, Massachusetts, Connecticut, they went from being majority Republican to majority Democrat. The same happened in the other big states like Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Illinois.

Then the '64 election came along. For years we had virtually no representation in the South except a district here or there. Even though Goldwater got trounced, he did win a couple states, and he brought Republican congressmen from Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, I think. Well, what happened is the Democrats—Albert [William] Watson was a Democratic Member from South Carolina, and he endorsed Goldwater. So after Goldwater won, the Democrats wanted to discipline him and a fellow named John Bell Williams from Mississippi. So he just said, "I'll resign my seat, and then I'll run for re-election as a Republican," which he did and got elected as a Republican.

Then as the population shifted to the West, there were lots of the Western states that there were really very little in the way of Republicans. First of all, they didn't have many Representatives to begin with. So it's been a gradual shift for the party where in the last election—not this immediate one [2012], but the one before that [2010]—Republicans got wiped out in the Northeast to a large extent from Maine right on down through Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio. The only thing that brought us back to some extent is the redistricting process where we had elected governors in a lot of those states, and they managed to shuffle things around a bit.

But the whole emphasis of the party has really moved south and west to a large extent, except for the coasts. The coasts are pretty much what I call rotten borough

districts—not pejoratively, but you don't elect Republicans much in the way of Washington State or Oregon or California. The same on the East Coast whether it's New York or New Jersey or Maryland. I remember when Maryland was a divided state where there were four Republican Representatives and four Democratic Representatives. Now there's one Republican Representative on the Eastern Shore, and all the rest are Democrats, as well as are all the elected state officers.

END OF PART ONE — BEGINNING OF PART TWO

PUMP: We ended with a discussion of the Republican Conference and how it was changing in the late '80s and early '90s. At the same time, the Democratic Caucus was changing a great deal. From your perspective what sorts of changes happened between the O'Neill Speakership and the Wright Speakership in particular?

LASCH: Well, the main thing was that sunshine in government was a big issue in those days. At one point, there they were having open caucus meetings. They had them when Wright got elected [Democratic] Leader [in December 1976]—I've forgotten how the vacancy occurred. But anyway, Phil Burton was a candidate, as was Richard Bolling. There were three—and Wright. Bolling was chairman of the Rules Committee, and Phil Burton was "Mr. Power Broker" behind the scenes, and I think he may have been chairman of the Interior Committee by that time.[50] Burton was really pushing to get elected Leader, was from California—he figured it was time for them to have a Leader from a big state like that. I sat in the gallery and watched. They would cast their ballots in the Speaker's Lobby. I think they used the voting boxes that they used in the teller votes in those days, and then the red and green cards or whatever. They were doing the counting in the Speaker's Lobby as well.

After the first vote, Bolling was out very quickly. He didn't get very many votes because he was a very bright guy and had been around a long time, knew the rules, but he was pretty arrogant, and he was from the school of not suffering fools gladly,

so he was out very quickly. It was down between Wright and Phil Burton. [Charles] Charlie Wilson—the famous Charlie Wilson of movie fame, from Texas—was monitoring what was going on out in the Speaker's Lobby as they were counting the votes on the Burton-Wright thing. He walked through from the Speaker's Lobby onto the floor and held up one finger. So everyone assumed that Wright had won by one vote, which is what it turned out to be. And then Phil Burton spent about the rest of his time trying to figure out who that vote was—who hadn't cast the vote for him. He finally decided it was Norman [Y.] Mineta, who was a Member from San Jose, California. And, of course, Burton died somewhat after that [in 1983].

PUMP: When Tip O'Neill retired and Wright became Speaker, what sort of changes occurred in the House at that point?

LASCH: I think the big change was that Tip was all-inclusive and let the chairmen do their thing. I think Wright tried to get control of that himself—more centralized control over the operation of the House. I think that rubbed a lot of people the wrong way.

PUMP: Did Bob Michel or Trent Lott—I guess Trent Lott had already gone by then.

LASCH: Trent left in '88.

PUMP: So it would have been just the beginning of Cheney and Gingrich's turn as Whip. Gingrich was obviously well known and hated Wright. But was that sentiment shared throughout the conference?

LASCH: No, I don't think so. He was somewhat of an anomaly being pretty liberal for representing a Dallas-Fort Worth district, so there was some of that, but he was the last of the old-time, what I would call "stump speakers." He could get up [and give] old-fashioned speeches and could ramble on for long periods of time. I think a lot of our people just didn't take him seriously. That was one of the things.

Tony Coelho was the Whip at that particular time. As you know, shortly after Jim Wright resigned so did Tony Coelho over a budding financial bond thing or something like that. He took the quick way out and resigned, which stopped all the investigations as far as the House was concerned. I'm trying to think who replaced Coelho. It must have been Foley.

PUMP: It seems that Bob Michel and Tom Foley had an incredibly close relationship.

LASCH: They did.

PUMP: In what ways would that show itself on the floor from your perspective?

LASCH: Well, they were both very gregarious. Foley was a listener and not particularly into getting involved in fights, and so I think probably gave in to some of the things that Bob Michel wanted to do or gave us a better rule or better opportunity to offer amendments or stuff like that. I think that's basically what the deal was there. They were just from different schools. Bob Michel had been there for a long time, and then Foley came after I think it was the '64 election.

Their personalities just worked together better than otherwise. Foley used to visit on our side, I remember. Sometimes he'd be looking for someone, and he'd come over and ask me if I'd seen someone. Or every now and then if there was a disturbance on the floor, he would come over and say, "What's going on?" I think he represented that district which I think [Cathy] McMorris Rodgers has now. It was an initially Republican-leaning district. Once he got the seat, I think they then juggled the lines around and made it a pretty safe seat until '94.

PUMP: Was it like night and day between Wright's leadership style and Foley's leadership style?

LASCH: Oh, yes. Wright had an agenda and he was in the office to push that agenda. So in order to satisfy his supporters—and I'm sure he was pushed by Phil Burton to some extent. He was just a different personality, frankly. That's what so much of it works on.

PUMP: Did you have any memorable interactions with either Wright or Foley?

LASCH: Oh, no. With Foley it was just routine stuff. With Wright I don't recall having any interactions. He wasn't in office that long. He took over from Albert. No—

PUMP: O'Neill.

LASCH: O'Neill left in '86, I think it was. And so he was only there for like a year and a half or two years. Maybe my memory—it was not a very long period of time, because I remember when Coelho left we were in Turkey, and the news came over there among the Democrats that Coelho had resigned. So he didn't have that much action. And as happens with those things, then all the staff changes to a large extent. I guess that's when Peter Robinson went downtown. {laughter}

PUMP: The '92 elections were a big watershed moment for the Republicans even though Clinton was elected President. By that point did you feel the tide turning in the country and the election results more towards your party?

LASCH: To some extent based on the issues, and I think maybe the census redistricting helped with that too. And then the push for health care, which went nowhere, and the big crime bill or whatever you want to call it with Clinton. I think those were the things that pushed it over. And the outside groups were the NRA and others who were arguing their points of view, and the money in those days, and the drumbeat that Newt had been—I think Newt was about the only one who thought we were going to win, which he actually did.

PUMP: What about the time that the Democrats lost the rule, I think for one of the versions of the crime bill in '93? Do you remember anything about that?

LASCH: No.

PUMP: Losing a rule on the floor is a fairly—

LASCH: They did occasionally where they went a little bit too far and lost some of their own people. That was what happened in the early Reagan era on the tax bill. Actually that was one of the things Jim Wright did when he was Speaker. I can't remember what the bill was. Motion to recommit became a big issue—and he wasn't going to allow a motion to recommit. He relented, but he said, "You can offer the motion to recommit, and this is what your motion to recommit will be." So he essentially wrote our motion to recommit. We fought it, and we got enough Democrats where that was—and I don't remember. Maybe that was the issue. That wasn't the crime bill at the time—I can't remember what it was.

PUMP: Was that the China trade bill?

LASCH: No, I don't think so. Age fogs the memory, unfortunately.

PUMP: In October of 1993, Bob Michel announces that he's going to not seek re-election and resign the leadership. From your perspective, did that change any of your plans or your thoughts about the party or where things were going to be headed?

LASCH: No, I hadn't really thought that much about it. Obviously, when leadership changes, you never know for sure what's going to happen, as I had witnessed over the years starting after the '58 election and the '64 election. I had a good relationship with Newt, so I just assumed that I would be okay. I think at that point maybe I had enough time to retire if it didn't work out. I was always there. That was the thing—I was there when I needed to be there. I had answers to the questions all the time.

Fortunately, through an extra sense I was able to sort things out that a lot of people couldn't figure out. The Members would come and argue with me. "Well, you're the only one that thinks that's going to happen." Then they'd come back and someone would say, "Well, you got it right." There was a grudging kind of thing.

But no, I hadn't really thought about it. And I was never a partisan employee per se, and I was never—I worked for Bob Michel, so they just assumed that I was a Bob Michel person, which I was, of course. But I don't think Newt ever felt threatened. He stopped and visited, and I gave him answers. Sometimes he didn't like them, but he was tolerant of my sometimes being on the other side or at least having reservations about that kind of thing.

The only time it was unclear what might happen was when Jerry Ford took over, and they had like a 10-Member personnel committee that he appointed. Everyone was interviewed and asked about their job. That was really the only time. The other time was when Bob Michel was first running for Leader, and Guy Vander Jagt, who had been the chair of the campaign committee for quite a long time. It wasn't clear if Vander Jagt won whether or not I'd still have a job. I didn't think about it much. I had a good relationship with him, so I just assumed I was there. I did my job. And it was hard to find someone that had the same knowledge that I did at that stage of the game as far as trying to sort things out.

PUMP: There was never a true contemporary on the Democratic side because they had the majority and they never needed to develop floor assistants. How important would you say the institutional knowledge that you had or that Jay Pierson had was to the operation of the floor and the operation of the Republican Conference?

LASCH: Basically it was that we could anticipate things that were going on to try to keep the leadership informed as to things that we could see that were going on. There was a meeting going on over there, and it looked like it was a Ways and Means kind of

thing. Or if committee staff that didn't have a bill on the floor are visiting with the Parliamentarian, you wondered what the deal was there, whether they were getting ready to bring a bill up. That just is a matter of you have to be there, and you have to know who the people are, and you have to know who they represent, and you have to know what's out there as far as legislation that's coming along. There's only one way to get that.

The Democrats didn't need that because they had their leadership staff who did the scheduling and all that kind of stuff and their Whip organization. So they didn't need it. Donn [Anderson] did that to some extent as the manager of the cloakroom. They did have a guy who was on the floor and sort of did what I did, but he didn't have the knowledge. But it didn't matter. Because of where I was and the comings and goings of Members—including a lot of senior Democrats who were in the Rayburn Building—they frequently stopped and asked what was going on. I gave them the same answer that I gave everybody, except in a few cases, where we were maybe springing something or that kind of thing. Even with voting, lots of times they'd come in and ask what the vote was on and ask questions. And sometimes they'd say, "Well, what is my vote?" I said, "Well, you can look up there. I think you'll find most of your Members are voting 'no' or 'yes' or whatever the deal is."

PUMP: Gingrich wins the Speakership. He didn't really face much competition for that.

LASCH: Well, he was the one who'd been out in front, and there wasn't anybody else out there. Bob Michel was leaving. He was the Whip, so there wasn't really anybody out there tested to do it. I think a lot of people gave him the credit for all his rabble rousing that caused the—

PUMP: Did you think that it was a harbinger of a new era in the House of Representatives regardless of winning the majority? That his leadership would change the issues and tactics that were used?

LASCH: Well, yes, because they had been under the thumb of the Democrats all that time. I thought because of Newt's interest in history that he might be a somewhat more benevolent Speaker, maybe try to be more inclusive. But it didn't happen. I don't know whether that was all his fault or whether his Leader and his Whip had absolutely no interest in working along that fashion, at least I didn't think from that point of view. Plus Newt, he's a brilliant guy, but he doesn't stay focused very long. He just has this idea, and then the next thing you know, he's on to the next idea. And having had no one ever be in the majority in our caucus when we took over—people just didn't know. They didn't pay attention to the process because they were frozen out of it most of the time. Their only thing was to vote.

Then the new group that came in. They were roaring to stick it to the Democrats because they stuck it to us all those years—even the older Members who got along working with the Democrats in Appropriations and some of the other committees. Initially, before Tip O'Neill took over. He did the two-to-one routine on the Ways and Means Committee and on the Rules Committee and didn't really use the actual ratio of Democrats to Republican to allot seats. I think that started the slow boil, if you will, at that stage of the game. That was all after Watergate.

PUMP: And then Dick Armey won the Majority Leader spot uncontested. The real race seemed to be with Tom DeLay at Whip.

LASCH: Right, which turned out not really to be. He won handily.

PUMP: When that leadership team started coalescing, what was your opinion of it? What did you think would be its strengths and weaknesses?

LASCH: Well, number one, I was surprised that there were two Texans in the leadership, considering the vast number. But DeLay had been working for it, as had Armey. What I didn't realize initially is that there seemed to be a bit of tension between the two of them, particularly at the staff levels. So it was settling into the job. DeLay's

view and his staff's view was that they had to win every vote no matter what. They were very good at it, but that's why we sat around a long time not doing things lots of times while we were waiting to be sure we had the votes to pass the stuff. It just made things difficult. I think DeLay developed a situation where to some extent what's going on with the Tea Party. There was a little bit of that going on when we first took over with people like [Charles Joseph] Joe Scarborough and [Lindsey O.] Graham of South Carolina and is it Stanford of South Carolina?

PUMP: [Mark] Sanford.

LASCH: Sanford. There was this group like that that wanted to vote against everything. Yet we needed votes. So they developed this hierarchy of "I'll vote with you if we need my vote in order for it to pass, otherwise I'm voting no." So they had like different levels of people as each vote was going on. The Whip organization had one group over here and one group over there. I think that was very hard. I had said at one point early on in one meeting, they should only really be worried about the major votes. That lots of times when we were allowing amendments in the committee, we usually weren't allowing mostly major amendments. I said, "Some of the little amendments you don't need to have a vote and kill everything. Just let it go. The process can work where you go to conference, and some of these little things that you don't have votes on you can dump in the conference." That was not well received. That changed the whole atmosphere of the way things were.

Of course, I fed that because having been in the minority for so long on certain things on rules and other procedural issues, our Members just were on automatic. Come in the door and vote no. So initially, when we first took over, on a lot of the procedural votes, I told the guys in the cloakroom, "When you make the recording of what this is, at the end you say the Republican majority vote is yes," in order to get them used to voting the right way instead of the wrong way. I watched the vote on the floor, and frequently went around and said, "You sure that's the vote you want to

cast up there?" "Well, what is it?" And then they'd say, "Oh no. I just wasn't paying attention." That's all part of the process. Even though I wasn't part of the official Whip organization, I did pay attention to how people were voting.

PUMP: The "Contract with America" was a campaign document. I was wondering what your opinion of that was, as a unifying document or manifesto for the party?

LASCH: Newt was involved in it, but so was Dick Armey when he was chair of the conference. That's where a lot of it came from. I may have my own personal opinions on various issues, but it was generally put together to try to craft a majority in some ways. And, obviously, it succeeded. It gave them a unified position on a lot of issues. On some of the issues where there was some squeamishness on either side, they did their own thing and said, "I support the general concept but on X and Y that's not my position." I think for some people it annoyed them that there was this document that everyone was supposed to sign on the dotted line, like the pledge not to raise taxes. But they pulled themselves together, and they went out and did the rallies on the steps and that kind of thing. It paid off in the long run.

PUMP: You mentioned earlier that no one but Newt thought that the Republicans would be able to win the majority. Was there any point leading up to election night '94 that you thought it was looking very likely?

LASCH: Well, I thought the polls looked good, but I just had been so used to the situation over the years where we thought we were going to do well, and we ended up not. Even with the Reagan landslide we didn't. We increased our numbers, but we didn't get over 200. I hoped we would do it, but I just didn't really—I wouldn't bet any money on it. But I think Newt had tasked some of the people who worked for him to think about a transition. I think some of Armey's people were involved in that aspect of it too.

PUMP: Where were you on election night?

LASCH: I was home watching it on TV.

PUMP: What was your reaction when you finally saw some of the numbers?

LASCH: I was surprised at some of the senior Democrats that were defeated like Jack Brooks and—

PUMP: Tom Foley.

LASCH: Tom Foley among others. Obviously, the issues were important to those districts at that particular time. I think sometimes it's a rarefied atmosphere here, and people get caught up, and they forget a little bit about back home. "Well, they've always supported me, so they'll support me again." But now with all the news and the blogs and the tweets and 24-hour-a-day reporting—I think some people tune it out, but other people, it does make a difference frankly. I think some of the 24-hour reporting that they have on a lot of major things that go on are not beneficial in the long run. They're reporting the same story over and over again. No new things, but every five minutes they're talking about the flood or that kind of thing. It makes it hard to govern when it comes to things like going to war and just doing other things. It makes it very hard to govern.

PUMP: What was the atmosphere like after the elections when so many Democrats lost their seats?

LASCH: Well, they were pissed off because they thought it was their God-given right to be the majority forever after all that they had done for the people of this country. It was a lot of, first of all, disbelief on the Democratic side and then a lot of anger because of the issues that we won on. It wasn't fair and that kind of thing. They resisted. They couldn't do too much. But from being king of the hill to being the minority, it's a big-time change. And particularly the more senior Members like [Charles Ellis (Chuck)] Schumer and others, it was a bitter, bitter blow to be in the minority. I

think that's why you see some of the senior Democrats that announced their retirement here recently. They realize that they're not going to be back in the majority maybe till the next round of redistricting. So it was hard.

The feelings on our side were just as strong in the other direction—that we waited all these years, and we're going to do it our way, even though we don't know what that is because we've never been in the majority before. I think it was hard trying to forge the majority because no one had been here in the majority before. And what is the majority? The right had captivated our side to a large extent through money and the leadership. Feeling our way along. How we do the committee stuff? How that process works, and then once it gets there what happens in the Rules Committee? The role of the Rules Committee in sending it to the floor and limiting amendments or rewriting the bill before it gets to the floor. There wasn't any tradition to guide that because we didn't want to follow the Democratic traditions—even though some of them weren't all bad.

The whole job of a Member these days has changed so dramatically. They're not here, they don't get to know each other, they're always raising money, they're always on an airplane traveling back and forth because they're in the district more than they used to be. So when they get here they're running around trying to get caught up on what they're supposed to know, and then they're raising money for their campaigns. Unless you're like [Richard Joseph] Durbin and George Miller and Schumer living in that flophouse that they live in, you don't get to know anybody. You don't get to go out with people because you're not here that long. It doesn't make for much in the way of melding the pot if you will.

PUMP: What sort of meetings did you attend? What were the issues discussed during the transition period?

LASCH: The honest answer: I didn't attend any of them. I was a little disappointed that I wasn't asked because I knew the people who had been appointed to the transition committee didn't know anything about the institution. It's not their fault. They just didn't have any reason to know about it because they didn't have anything to do with it. Newt obviously knew his idea of where he wanted to go, and so did DeLay, and particularly his staff, and Armey. They had their 10-Member group that was the transition people, and they were doing whatever Newt wanted them to do. They were busy with room assignments and committee assignments and that kind of thing, which really has nothing to do with where I was.

Newt and Dick Armey had both made it clear right after the election. Armey was the first one that came to me and said, "Now you're not going anyplace, are you?" I said, "Well, I didn't know what the situation was going to be." He said, "You have to stay on the floor." I said, "Well, someone has to offer me a job." He said, "Don't worry about that." And he said, "Nobody knows on our side what it means to be in the majority. We need someone who knows the floor that can make sure that our people that are there—even though they don't know, there's someone that can help them do what needs to be done." Then Newt came shortly thereafter and said essentially the same thing. "You're not going anyplace, are you?" I said, "Well, I don't know. What did you have in mind?" And he said, "I want you to stay on the floor."

There were other Members who came to me and said they thought I should be Clerk. I said, "Well, the problem with being Clerk is that there is a mantra that has been determined that we're going to cut the staff by one third. With all due respect, a lot of people don't know what that means. Committee staff easily can be cut because they blossomed tremendously. But a lot of the staff offices, as far as the floor is concerned and in the Clerk's Office, there's not a large number of excess people there." I didn't think it was fair to just pick a number out of the air and say, "We're going to reduce this by that." They appointed people to the jobs who didn't have any

knowledge of the House either, whether it was the Clerk or the new CAO [Chief Administrative Officer]. They didn't last very long. They lasted about two years or whatever it was. The Sergeant at Arms is the only one who—I did meet with him briefly after he was selected and tried to talk with him a little bit about the office and how he needed to think a little bit about some of the staff in the office. He said he would. But he had been with the FBI. I think it was the FBI.

PUMP: Secret Service.

LASCH: Secret Service for 20 years or whatever it was. He knew the Democrats on the committees that handled the funding for the Secret Service and worked with them, and so he knew it was all going to work out.[51]

PUMP: How did Robin Carle become Clerk?[52]

LASCH: I don't know the answer to that. She had been at the [Republican] National Committee, I think, with Frank Fahrenkopf at one point.[53] I don't know who her juice was if you—that propelled her into that position or whether she lobbied for it or whether there was someone in Newt's operation who knew her. I don't really know.

PUMP: Was Jay [Pierson] involved at any point with the transition?

LASCH: I don't think so.

PUMP: How closely did you work with him? Because I know you two shared an office in HT13.

LASCH: Well, we basically shared the same information, and then we went at it from our own perspectives. So we were a team with slightly different views on things. But he knew what he was supposed to be doing. He had worked in the cloakroom before then. He sat down at the leadership desk by the computer there, and he wrote up all the notes

on the leadership desk. People came in and could look on the board there—what we were voting on, and what we were planning to do, what the issues were and all that.

PUMP: But it sounds like you may have been receiving your orders from different people?

LASCH: Well, no. That's the odd thing about my job. I never really was given orders. I basically was an independent agent, surprisingly. I obviously knew what I had to do. I worked with the Armey's staff and with DeLay's staff. And Jay did to the same extent, only less so, at the desk down there. The big thing was being careful that you didn't tread on toes that gave the wrong answer to a question.

I did get in trouble one time when the big pow wow was going on at Andrews Air Force Base with Clinton. Do you remember when they were all closeted out there in the barracks? A Member who I had a close relationship came and asked me after they did the thing, asked me what I thought about it. I said, "Well, I don't have to think about it because I don't have a vote on it." He said, "Oh, that's not an answer. You can tell me." So I said, "Well," and I pointed one or two things out. He said, "Yes, I agree with you." I said, "I think they're going to need all the votes they can get."

There was someone standing nearby because it was in the back there on the floor who overheard what I said. I wasn't proposing that he vote against it. He just was asking my opinion. Well, that person, whoever it was, went and reported back to Bob Michel's office that I was opposing the deal. So Bill Pitts came around, said he had heard I was opposing the deal. I said, "I'm not opposing the deal." He said, "Well, it was reported to me that you were." I said, "I was asked on a personal basis by a Member who I have a close relationship with what my opinion was." And he said, "Well, unless you have a better idea of what we could do better, then you need to be supporting the bill." I said, "Well." That was what happened.

PUMP: How do you remember the first 100 days of the Republican majority in '95?

LASCH: Exhausting. We were there forever. We had all these things we were doing, which you wonder where they are today. We were there a lot of long hours. A lot of it was waiting around. Sometimes it was trying to round up the votes to do what needed to be done. I don't know. I'll be interested to see how the history of that is written. They did pass a lot of things, which is what they said they would do. So that was a good thing.

PUMP: But outside of institutional reforms for the House, very little actually became law.

LASCH: No.

PUMP: What was your opinion of the institutional reforms?

LASCH: That they were minor. I wasn't a big fan of taking the rules and putting them into the statutory basis like they've done. I didn't think that left us enough wiggle room lots of times. It was confusing because I knew where things were, and then they rearranged where things were, and things disappeared. But it didn't really make any difference because nobody knew what they were. The rules that we wrote were so tight as far as allowing participation, and debate was controlled. We bifurcated it by not taking the bill up and going from start to finish. We would do the general debate on one day or one week, and then when we got around to doing amendments people had half forgotten what the deal was. I was just disappointed that we weren't more open in the way we did the process—but realizing that our margin of victory was very narrow. They always had to fight over that situation as far as on most bills they had to be very careful and watch the votes all the time.

PUMP: One person who I've talked to about this period said that they went through this very long process with the Contract, but then they really didn't think too much about how the Senate was going to react.

LASCH: Well, the Senate didn't exist at that stage of the game, although we had a Republican majority. But that doesn't mean anything. A lot of the Senators were former House Members. It's a different institution over there. Some of the folks over there would say, "Well, the Republican Members from the House that have gone to the Senate have corrupted the Senate and created the problem over there," which may be partly true. I don't think that's the whole problem.

PUMP: There was the standoff in Congress with the President and the government shutdown that were happening in '95 and '96. What is your memory of that period—the shutdown, budget battles during the first year?

LASCH: Well, the big problem was that as I recall Newt and Bob [Robert Joseph] Dole felt that they had the public behind them. Unfortunately, in my opinion, they didn't realize that they were the face of the shutdown because you didn't hear Bill Clinton saying anything. Every time you turned around it was either Bob Dole and Newt together or one of the others talking about it. And Clinton wasn't saying anything. So they became the face of the shutdown. As always, a shutdown is tricky because the people who are in control of the levers can pull those levers and make the worst out of the things that people use the most. The national parks—the same thing as we saw this last time [in 2013]. All the little things, getting passports and things that generally people need and use, those are the things that are pushed out to the fore to make it look bad, whereas a lot of the vast majority of the rest of it just bumbles along in the meantime.

The same thing happened this time. I think if Boehner had had his way, he probably wouldn't have been really in favor of it. But his troops had a different idea, so he was trapped. I think he did the best that he could under the circumstances of letting them flow through until finally he stepped in and said, "Okay," and there were enough soldiers to go along with the Democrats to sort it through.

PUMP: Were you still involved with personnel decisions after the Republican majority?

LASCH: No, just the Page appointments.

PUMP: So the other floor positions you weren't as involved with.

LASCH: No. Well, Jay was there. And Newt's people with their process. The leadership, the floor people between the Armey people and DeLay and Newt, did their own thing.

PUMP: When it came to the positions like reading clerk or any of the bill clerks?

LASCH: No. They basically kept everybody that was on there, and the only time where there was any kind of an issue was when Paul Hays had his whatever it was. I can't remember. He was out for quite a long time and Bob Berry, the former reading clerk, came back and filled in for six months or something like that.

PUMP: There were on the House Administration side some other issues with Bill [William Marshall] Thomas as well. I think Newt and Thomas had some difficulties with one another. What was the result of that sort of problem?

LASCH: I think that was a longstanding issue there of power, more or less. Once we had taken over, I think Thomas was only there for a brief period of time because didn't he become chair of the Ways and Means Committee after [William Reynolds] Archer [Jr.]?

PUMP: I think he had four years as chair of House [Administration] before he went over and became Ways and Means chairman. It was after the 2000 election that he became Ways and Means chair.

LASCH: Well, obviously, the House Administration is supposed to do the wishes of the Speaker. They, over the years, were at loggerheads on different things and the way things should be done. Thomas had been around a long time, and he had his own

idea of the way things should be done. Plus they were somewhat limited in that they were under the edict of the cut the third.

PUMP: How firm was Gingrich's control of the conference?

LASCH: I think it was pretty firm, as long as all the leadership was on the same side. There were occasionally disagreements on tactics, I think. I sometimes think the Whip's operation frequently dominated that aspect of things because of the Whip's staff. I sometimes look back and think Newt achieved his goal, but once he got there he wasn't sure exactly what he wanted to do. Then he lost interest because that's the way Newt is. He's hot on this issue, and then the next thing you know he's moved over to another issue. As someone said at the very beginning, "Newt is going to be a transitional Speaker, he's not going to be around very long." I said, "Well, it's hard to tell that at this stage of the game, but I suspect he'll be around for as long as he wants." That was not exactly the case because of some of the things that he did.

PUMP: So that was part of the other question about the summer of '97 and the coup attempt and what you might recall from that period.

LASCH: Well, I was not really involved. I didn't know except for what I read in the paper. I think it was fairly closely held. But in all those things when there's a coup, sometimes the coup leaders can't see the nose on the front of their face. Obviously, it succeeded by the time the next election was around. They let it be known that he wasn't going to be able to be elected Speaker again. I think he realized that because the first time he was re-elected, there were no votes against him—not the first time he was elected, but his first re-election.

Even at that point, I had a phone call from the Whip office asking questions about the vote for Speaker. How were the votes counted vis-a-vis if a person voted for a named person, the vote counted. If the person voted present, the vote didn't count. Therefore, it reduced the number of votes needed to be elected Speaker at that point.

You wouldn't necessarily lose the majority; you just couldn't get maybe a majority vote of those voting for Speaker. That didn't really leave the option of the Democrats electing a Speaker, unless there were Republicans who were going to—but I don't think there were ever any Republicans who were interested in doing that. By the time the second re-election came around, there were more people opposed. And we saw what the end result of that was.

PUMP: But there was no indication on the floor in conversations from what you could tell that something was up in '97?

LASCH: No. There was unrest, but there was nothing I could put my finger on. No one was talking to me about that aspect of it.

PUMP: The other major story of the Gingrich period was [the Clinton] impeachment. I was curious what your memories of that were?

LASCH: I think initially there was a huge divide of opinion as to what was really there and what to do about it. I don't think there was any clear position. It became a little clearer, particularly with the business of Clinton's testimony before—was it the grand jury? But it was still for a lot of people's minds a stretch of the imagination in some respects. It reminded me years ago when there was some impeachment talk, and Jerry Ford made the comment, "Well, impeachment is whatever the House of Representatives says it is." That rattled around out there for years. I think, for many Members on our side of the aisle, their heart wasn't in it. But it was the animosity, too, unfortunately that was swirling around out there in the atmosphere. You saw what the result was.

Not all the articles of impeachment passed. By the time the Senate was done, it left a bad feeling on our side that people weren't more enthusiastic or maybe the people who presented the impeachment case in the Senate could have done a better job. There were recriminations along those lines. But when you have a large influx of

people who don't have any institutional knowledge or maybe even historical knowledge—and the interest groups that weren't there years ago were certainly there in great numbers at that stage of the game. I think they played a large role in it, frankly.

PUMP: After the '98 elections, Newt Gingrich steps aside from leadership, and Bob Livingston gets elected very quickly or becomes the Speaker-designate very quickly thereafter. What do you recall from that period where he made the move to become the Speaker because he had been previously the chair of Appropriations? It seems that he had a lot of ideas for where he wanted to go as the Speaker. I was curious what your recollections of that period were.

LASCH: The odd thing to me was that you would think there would have been a natural progression. Armey would become Speaker, DeLay would become Majority Leader, and they'd elect a new Whip. Well, that apparently was never in the picture, and Livingston got into it. I think Armey never even thought about getting into it because, if you recall, he had been challenged for Majority Leader the time before that with Steve Largent and Jennifer Dunn. I think they were the two challengers for the first re-election go-around. DeLay, I think, knew he was too controversial. But anyway, Livingston got in there, and he was the natural pick. There was no real opposition to him until the rumors started around. And that, obviously, did him in.

A couple Members came to me and said, "What do you know about this?" I said, "I don't know anything about it." I said, "The only thing I can tell you is after he was first elected in the special election as the first Republican representing a seat in Louisiana, he was hanging out in the bars in Georgetown telling everybody who he was. He was lonely, and he was looking for company." It was in one of the gossip columns in the *Washington Post* or the *Washington Star*, whatever it was. Beyond that I don't know anything about it." "Well, what do you think?" I said, "I don't know what to tell you, but I would tell you this. If you have any questions or any problems,

you need to hash them out before Opening Day. Opening Day is not the time to figure out that, "Oh, my God, we've got a 'whatever the situation is,' and you can't elect a Speaker. Any of you guys have problems, you need to either go directly to him, or you need to sort it out now, not wait until Opening Day." One Member looked at me. He said, "Oh, you have strong opinions." I said, "I only have a strong opinion that, for the good of the country and the good of the party and the good of our majority in the House of Representatives, it doesn't need to be decided on Opening Day. Now is the time to figure it out." Obviously it got figured out.

It all happened in such a swirl that no one was really prepared to jump into the race for Majority Leader. Armey wasn't going to do it, and DeLay wasn't going to do it. There were people who I think were interested, but they didn't move quickly enough—didn't make their mind up whether they wanted to run. DeLay decided Hastert was going to be the candidate, and he used the Whip organization to round up votes before anyone else had a chance to announce that they might be interested. It was a done deal, which has always amazed me in elections where when people were running, people made commitments. My view of that situation then is if I were being asked, I would say, "Well, who are the other candidates?" That never seemed to happen. That's how a lot of elections were won with the first person that got to you, you got their vote.

PUMP: Did you staff the '98 conference meeting where the Armey challenge happened and where Livingston was elected?

LASCH: Well, staffed it in that I was there. I passed out the ballots. I collected the ballots. I helped the tellers count the ballots by unfolding them and putting them in a flat pile for them to go through.

PUMP: How were various elements of that process handled? At the time, Chief Deputy Whip Hastert was nominated for Majority Leader, but he didn't run a campaign. He, in fact, gave Armey's speech. So I was curious how well-received that was.

LASCH: You mean initially when he first took over?

PUMP: Yes. At the '98 conference meeting, Hastert gave Armey's speech. And I was curious how that was interpreted by the people who were there.

LASCH: To nominate him without any opposition.

PUMP: Well, to nominate him at all, given that his name was also in.

LASCH: Oh. See, I don't remember that part of it. Hastert was a candidate for—

PUMP: Well, Tom [Thomas W.] Ewing and Mike [Michael Newbold] Castle nominated Hastert.

LASCH: For Leader?

PUMP: For Leader.

LASCH: After Armey was already the sitting [Republican] Leader?

PUMP: Yes.

LASCH: Oh, I forgot that.

PUMP: Then Steve Largent and Jennifer Dunn had waged campaigns against Armey, but at the meeting apparently on the first ballot Hastert was on it for Majority Leader.

LASCH: Don't remember that, sorry to say. What I remember is Jennifer Dunn was the first one out. And then it was between Largent and Armey, and he got a substantial vote, but I don't think it was razor-thin. Sometimes they don't announce the votes in

those meetings. They just say, "So-and-so won." Then it's left to the whispering galleries to figure out what the vote might be.

PUMP: How were those sorts of things determined as far as when to announce a vote total or when not to?

LASCH: Don't know. I was never part of that. That was basically done at the chairman of the Conference and maybe by direction of the Leader or the Speaker in that case. I'm not sure.

PUMP: Were you made privy to any of Bob Livingston's plans to alter the House after he became the Speaker-designate?

LASCH: Not completely. I knew some of his staff people, and they asked me if I would go with them to some meetings that were taking place with Gephardt and some of the others, which I did. But meeting with Gephardt was always one of those things where you thought you had a good meeting, and he said he'd take it to the [Democratic] Caucus. From my perspective, once he said he'd take it to the Caucus, that meant it wasn't going anywhere. Maybe he was acting in true faith, but sometimes I thought it would have been better to say, "Well, I don't think I can sell that to the conference."

PUMP: But you don't recall anything about the role of deputy speakers or—

LASCH: No, I was never part of that process.

PUMP: During the debate on impeachment and the articles, where were you during all that?

LASCH: Sitting in the back in my usual seat and leaving because the droning sometimes was a little too much. Ran out, go downstairs to the office in the basement where there was peace and quiet—even though I had the TV on. That frequently happened. I would go down there to eat lunch because I never had a moment of peace if I ate at the

counter in the cloakroom. Everyone would run up and say, "Oh, I'm sorry to interrupt your lunch, but I need to know this, or I need to know that," even though I was only taking five minutes. So I would go to the carryout and carry something back to the office and try to eat there. But the TV was always on, and there were any number of times where I had to leave it sitting there and race up to the floor to sort through some point of order or whatever.

PUMP: Did you have any foreknowledge or sixth sense about what Bob Livingston was going to announce when he went to take the floor?

LASCH: No.

PUMP: So that caught you completely by surprise?

LASCH: I think the decision—I don't know how it was made, but I think it was abrupt. And I think he probably made it because there was some truth—I don't know how much truth—there. He didn't want to go through all that crap, and even if you win under those circumstances, it's constantly hanging out there. Beat over the head by the news media or the blogs or whatever. I think he just made the decision he didn't want to—he'd been there long enough. He could retire.

PUMP: What was your reaction to that announcement?

LASCH: I was a little shocked. But in today's world—the 24-hour news cycle constantly going on—you don't want to be there at that stage of the game because then you maybe have the gavel, but people there are constantly poking at you. At some point, you're probably going to have to throw in the towel, like Jim Wright did, if you're in that position. The better part of valor.

PUMP: What do you remember about the rest of that day?

LASCH: Well, it was like mass chaos. Everyone's running around saying, "Oh, now what are we going to do? Who's going to be the candidate?" Chris [Charles Christopher] Cox I know thought about it. There were a couple others who thought about it. But by the time they finished thinking about it, it was a done deal. It happened very, very swiftly. By late in the afternoon, DeLay had secured the votes through the Whip organization for Hastert before anyone else ever announced anything.

PUMP: DeLay was actively involved in that process?

LASCH: Yes, absolutely. I don't know who he consulted or if he consulted anybody. But it was clear that Armey wasn't actually in the picture, in my opinion. I think maybe that's why Armey retired. I think the next go-around, didn't he retire?

PUMP: Before the 2000 election, yes. Well, actually no. It was before the 2002 election he retired. What were your impressions of Mr. Hastert?

LASCH: Well, if you had asked me, "Where was he on the line to be Speaker?" I would have said he was probably number four after Armey and DeLay and whatever. So I was a little bit surprised. But it was such a whirlwind of activity going on there that without someone who had said they might be interested in the job and no candidate out there, it was all said and done. So it was an "accidental Speaker" in some respects. Obviously, DeLay was for him. I don't know what Armey's position was. I guess he was for him, I don't really know. I think the impeachment added a lot of internal problems within the leadership.

PUMP: Were you witness to any of those problems that came up?

LASCH: No. You could see that there was tension. You could see it between the staff levels. But otherwise . . .

PUMP: What was your role then over the course of the Republican majority, since as you mentioned earlier you weren't really taking instructions from any one person? How was it different than your time in [the] minority?

LASCH: It really wasn't—other than trying to make sure that our Members who were managing the floor knew what they were doing and didn't get bollixed up by the Democrats' activities. Obviously, they're going to have help because we control the chair. The Parliamentarians are going to help the chair sort the situation out. But even so, you still have to be sure that people are there to do what needs to be done.

PUMP: When the Republicans took over the majority, the Parliamentarian's Office had always been controlled by Democrats. Was there concern about that office at that time?

LASCH: Huge concern among the Members who had been there for a while. There was a large group of them who said, "Fire them all, clean the office out." I said, "If you think we're going to be able to run the House of Representatives without people who have knowledge of the rules. . ." "Well, we have people. We have people on the Rules Committee." I said, "The knowledge of the rules when it comes to the chair is much more vast than anybody in our sphere has the ability to do that kind of stuff." Don Wolfensberger had been at the Rules Committee for a long time. He obviously knew. Pitts was another one who obviously knew. But for them to be thrown into there cold with everybody else gone and to have to know all the stuff that you need to do with all the paperwork you have to hand the person that's presiding, and the precedents, all the split-second decisions that need to be made—you just can't do it with two people that hadn't been there before. They could try.

Fortunately, I think Newt realized that in order for us to function, you couldn't clean house. And Bill Brown was retired, so that took care of that situation. Then it was Charlie Johnson. I think the Republicans felt he had always been fair to them, so

that helped him. Finally I think it sorted itself out. Newt finally leaned in heavily and said, "No, if we feel we're not being well served, then we'll make some decisions. But for the moment, we're going to leave it where it is." I did hear through the grapevine that he did have a go-around with Charlie Johnson at one point over something. I can't remember what it was. He more or less told Charlie Johnson, "You will find a way to do what I want to do, or you'll be out of a job." That was secondhand information. But I wouldn't be surprised. Charlie figured a way around it.

PUMP: There were lots of policies and lots of things that happened after the Republican majority took office, but I was curious if you had any vivid memories about that time. Any time from '94 through the end of your career that I didn't bring up.

LASCH: No, not really. It was a day-to-day process. It was just a process of making sure all of our people were in place when they needed to be around, and make sure that they knew what they were doing and the chair knew what they were doing. Obviously, had to depend on the Parliamentarians for that. It took a while, I think, for a lot of our Members—presiding at first. But a lot of them did it, caught on very quickly, and did it very well, and realized that the Parliamentarians were there. If they were going to do the job right, they needed to listen to what the Parliamentarians had to say without jumping to decisions before they knew what the Parliamentarians thought about the situation. I don't think we really had any giant disasters. Obviously, the votes were close here and there. There were bitter feelings on the sides. But I don't think we really had any, other than our internal issues of Newt and the Hastert thing. I think the DeLay and the impeachment stuff, I think that's really where that came from to a large extent. I think that left some bad feelings here and there.

NOTES

[1] The first African American appointed as a Senate Page was Andrew Slade in 1869. Alfred Q. Powell was named as the first African-American House Page in 1871. In 1965 Lawrence Bradford was named the first African-American Senate Page since Reconstruction and Frank Mitchell was named the first African-American House Page since Reconstruction. For more information, see Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, "History of the House Page Program," https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/Page-History/Historical-Essays/Barriers/.
[2] The Office of the House Historian conducted a series of oral history interviews with Donnald K. Anderson, who was a House Page and went on to work in the Democratic Cloakroom and served as Clerk of the House from 1987 to 1995: http://history.house.gov/Oral-History/People/Donnald-Anderson/.
[3] William "Fishbait" Miller was Doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1949 to 1953 and 1955 to 1974. He was also Minority Doorkeeper from 1947 to 1949 and 1953 to 1955.
[4] Kenneth R. Harding was the Sergeant at Arms of the House from 1971 to 1981.
[5] Tommy Lee Winebrenner was the House Minority Doorkeeper from 1964 to 1986.
[6] Helen Sewell was the longtime manager of the Republican Cloakroom lunch and snack bar. She retired in 2005.
[7] Ralph R. Roberts was Clerk of the House from 1943 to 1967.
[8] Harry Brookshire was the longtime House Minority Clerk. He retired in 1969.
[9] Lewis Deschler was Parliamentarian of the House from 1927 to 1975. William Cochrane was an Assistant Parliamentarian for the House from 1962 to 1979. William Holmes Brown was Parliamentarian of the House from 1973 to 1995. Peter Robinson was Assistant Parliamentarian in the House from 1973 to 1986 and was Senior Assistant Parliamentarian for the U.S. Senate from 2002 to 2014.
[10] Charles W. Johnson was Parliamentarian of the House from 1993 to 2004.
[11] John V. Sullivan was Parliamentarian of the House from 2004 to 2013.
[12] Clarence Cannon, *Cannon's Procedure in the House of Representatives*, H.Doc. 610, 87th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1963). This is a companion volume that summarizes the information available in Clarence Cannon, *Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives of the United States* (Washington: GPO, 1935-1941), vol. 6-11.
[13] Bill Pitts held various positions in the House from 1979 to 2005, including an aide in the House Republican Cloakroom, aide to Representative Robert Henry Michel, staff director of the House Rules Committee, and floor assistant.
[14] The Rayburn Office Building was completed in 1965.
[15] Peggy Sampson worked as the House Republican Page Supervisor and as the House Republican Floor Operations Clerk.
[16] In the 1964 election, Republicans lost 36 seats, reducing their total number of Members to 140 for the 89th Congress (1965–1967). In the 1966 election, Republicans gained 47 seats, increasing the Republican Conference to187 Members during the 90th Congress (1967–1969).
[17] U.S. Congress, House, *Constitution, Jefferson's Manual, and Rules of the House of Representatives of the States, One Hundred Fourteenth Congress*, H.Doc. 114-192, 114th Cong., 2nd sess., [compiled by] Thomas J. Wickham, Parliamentarian (Washington: GPO, 2017).
[18] Lewis Deschler and William Holmes Brown, *Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives: A Summary of the Modern Precedents and Practices of the House: 86th Congress–99th Congress* (Washington: GPO, 1987).
[19] Arthur Cameron was a longtime member of the Democratic floor staff. Robert V. Rota was the House Postmaster from 1972 to 1992.
[20] Bob Berry was the reading clerk from 1971 to 1988. Paul Hays started working in the Clerk's Office in 1966 and was the reading clerk from 1988 until his retirement in 2007.
[21] The Office of the House Historian conducted a series of oral history interviews with Joe Bartlett, who was House reading clerk from 1953 to 1971 and Minority Clerk from 1971 until his retirement in 1979: http://history.house.gov/Oral-History/People/Joe-Bartlett/.
[22] James T. Molloy was Doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1973 to 1995.

[23] Donald R. Wolfensberger worked for the U.S. House of Representatives for 28 years. He worked for Member offices as well as serving as Minority Counsel on the House Rules Subcommittee on Rules of the House and the Rules Subcommittee on Legislative Process.
[24] Jay Pierson worked in the Republican Cloakroom from 1979 to 1986, when he became the floor assistant to the Republican Leader—a position he held until his retirement in 2012.
[25] Hyde Murray was the minority counsel and staff director for the House Committee on Agriculture for 20 years. He was also an aide to Minority Leaders John Rhodes and Bob Michel.
[26] During the Ford administration, the Republican Conference established a personnel committee to standardize the hiring process and position titles for House Republican staff members.
[27] In 1991 James Allen Nussle gave a speech on the House Floor while wearing a paper bag over his head to protest the actions of Members implicated in the House Banking Scandal, in which Members were able to take advantage of a lack of overdraft fees to receive extended periods of interest-free access to funds from the House Bank.
[28] Jody Powell was President Carter's press secretary.
[29] Leslie Cornelius Arends retired December 31, 1974.
[30] The "queen of the hill rule" was created during the 104th Congress to structure the amendment process. When voting on potential amendments to a bill, the amendment with the largest number of affirmative votes prevails. Unlike a previous rule change ("king of the hill rule") that favored the result of the final vote taken—no matter if two or more amendments received majority approval—the "queen of the hill rule" does not privilege the final vote. The order is inconsequential; only the number of affirmative votes matters.
[31] The Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 was sponsored by Representative Jack Kemp and Senator William Victor Roth Jr.
[32] House Republican clerk Thomas Lankford was employed to print material for party leaders from 1954 to 1992. At the same time, he operated a private printing business available to Members from within House office buildings.
[33] Walter Kennedy worked for 44 years in the House Republican staff, retiring in 1993 as a minority floor assistant.
[34] Timothy Harroun was the minority manager of the cloakroom. Joelle Hall and James Oliver were the minority assistants in the cloakroom. Barbara Schaeffer was assistant legislative clerk in the Clerk's Office. Eve Butler-Gee was a longtime journal clerk.
[35] GOPAC is a Republican advocacy organization that focuses on training Republican politicians for electoral victories.
[36] Susan F. Rasky, "Maneuver Over Flag Pledge Trips Up House Democrats," *New York Times*, 10 September 1988.
[37] Dan Meyer was Gingrich's chief of staff from 1989 to 1996.
[38] Jack Russ was Sergeant at Arms of the House from 1983 to 1993.
[39] The Gang of Seven were seven freshmen Republican Members in the 102nd Congress (1991–1993) who prioritized using the House Ethics Committee to force congressional leadership to investigate Members accused of corrupt practices..
[40] The Office of Compliance was created in 1995.
[41] Congressman Josiah Robins (Jo) Bonner Jr. was Chairman of the Ethics Committee during the 112th Congress until his resignation on August 2, 2013.
[42] Lasch traveled to the meetings of the North Atlantic Assembly, an independent interparliamentary organization for member states of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
[43] John J. "Jack" Brady Jr. was the chief of staff of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs from 1976 to 1994. He was a retired Army lieutenant colonel.
[44] The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, monitors the implementation of the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which emphasized human rights, national sovereignty, and cooperation in Europe. Representative Christopher Henry Smith of New Jersey is the current chairman of the CSCE, and he served on the Foreign Affairs Committee with Fascell. The CSCE contributes to the creation of U.S. policy on the Office of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), a Vienna-based partner organization of the United Nations. Lasch refers to the Office of Economic Security and Development, which does not exist. He may be referring to the OSCE, and cites

the CSCE as its predecessor. The OSCE was previously known as the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, a different organization from the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.
[45] Leonard Swinehart was on Newt Gingrich's staff from 1989 to 1999.
[46] Elwyn Raiden worked in the House from 1955 to 1986, including time as a cashier and manger of the bank in the House of Representatives and 25 years as Deputy Sergeant at Arms.
[47] Lasch is referring to Louise Day Hicks, Democratic Congresswoman from Massachusetts who served one term in the House from 1971 to 1973.
[48] "Irangate" was a term used to describe the Iran-Contra affair, in which the Reagan administration sold arms to Iran in the hopes of freeing American hostages and funding the Contras' military effort to come to power in Nicaragua. "Koreagate" refers to a 1976 effort by the South Korean government to provide bribes and favors through a South Korean businessman to Democratic Members of Congress, with the goal of preserving an American military presence in South Korea, among other priorities of the South Korean government.
[49] "Abscam" was the name used to refer to the FBI investigation into corrupt practices by Members of Congress, as well as state and local officials, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Six Members and one Senator were convicted of accepting bribes from a fictitious company in return for political favors. The company was created by the FBI for the purpose of enticing public officials into accepting bribes.
[50] Burton was a member of the Interior Committee, but not the chair, in December 1976.
[51] Lasch is referring to Wilson "Bill" Livingood, Sergeant at Arms of the U.S. House of Representatives from the 104th through the 111th Congress (1995–2011).
[52] Robin H. Carle was the first woman to be named Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. She held the position from 1995 to 1998.
[53] Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr. was head of the Republican National Committee from 1983 to 1989.